

Advanced Two - Unit Four - Summary

Recently, especially in the 21st century, the proof of accuracy for different crimes such as robbery, murder, etc., and identification of the right person for that case has been proved via science. Fingerprinting!

As you know, science is satisfactory but not perfect sometimes ! for the first time Simon Cole did research on this case, the accuracy of fingerprinting itself. Unfortunately, the result was that it's not flawless. These findings may raise a lot of questions ...

This research doesn't claim that all prisoners have been behind bars on a wrong decision, but it says it needs to be examined with more details and scientifically!

The fingerprinting science goes back to the 19th century when Galton studied the pattern and whorls of a finger's tip and proved that the chance for two same fingerprints is 1 in 6400000000. Almost impossible !!

After introducing this new science of identification by Galton, after 100 years, there have been claimed some significant flaws in it! First of all, Galton didn't try this claim on many different groups of people; he just deducted this via induction. Second, there are some points on fingers tip, which help identify the person with about 40-50 points that can be characterized, but in criminal cases, to prove someone's guiltiness, 16 mutual points are enough !!

After all of these, the deficiency of Galton's method has been categorized into two questions: first, the fingerprint on the crime scene tends to be incomplete, then how can it be compared with a full recorded fingerprint? Second, normal eyes can not see the fingerprint on a crime scene; to make it visible, we need to spark ultra-violet radiation on it. The question is again, how can this limited sample be compared with a recorded fingerprint.

As mentioned in previous paragraphs, studying fingerprinting scientifically, especially in the DNA field, has set some rules in 1993 to accept fingerprinting evidence.

Bringing an example for the previous paragraph, Mitchell was supposed to be the car driver at a robbery. Seven years after Mitchell requested a new trial. Reinvestigating the case, officers found two fingerprints in the car. But his lawyer was trying to convince the judge against the value of the technique of fingerprinting!

In response to the appeal, the justice department did sth unexpectedly for the first time. It sent the fingerprints to the laboratories of the 53 state law enforcement agencies. Unfortunately, eight of the 35 could not match one of the fingerprints, which means a failure of 20 %!

In response to the shocking upcoming, the department compared latent and Mr.Mitchell fingerprints and marked the sleeves red to show the matchpoints. After resending to the laboratories, most of the examiners took the hint this time and approved that fingerprints match after all!

This case raised many questions against the fingerprinting's reliability; moreover, the 20% error demand more studies on this matter! If these vague questions are not going to be answered soon, they will trouble distinguishing innocent people and guilty ones!

