

Failure to Properly Document the Comparison

I've talked about the shortcomings of law enforcement when it comes to documenting and proving they followed the ACE-V process. In the analysis phase of ACE-V they should be able to provide a properly documented analysis of their evidence prior to conducting a comparison of that same evidence.



Next, we can discuss the notes made by an examiner with respect to the Comparison phase of ACE-V.

More often than not, THERE ARE NONE.

The comparison phase of ACE-V is where a great deal of work is done. This work should be completely documented and articulated.



The following subjective considerations are made by examiners during a comparison process.

- * Is there sufficient data in the questioned print to compare to another record?
- * Does the comparison print encompass a similar region of friction skin?
- * Is there corresponding level one feature (Ridge Flow/Pattern) similarity in both images?
- * Is there correlation between the features the examiner places value upon in both records?
- * What is the quality of that correlation?
- * Were the features used located within the tolerances afforded to flexible friction skin?
- * Can the examiner establish and demonstrate a continuous uninterrupted path that links the friction ridge formations in the questioned print to a corresponding uninterrupted continuous path of similar friction ridge formation features in a comparison print.
- * What is the extent (strength) of that correlation between both records.
- * Was there any significant dissimilarity present? Can that be addressed?


After consideration of the above, what was the value of the comparison?

Friction Ridge Analysis Reports rarely discuss ANY of these important comparison aspects.

Why is this important?

The data determined in a comparison forms the basis for an evaluation. Without understanding what the examiner considered in the initial comparison phase nobody reading a report will understand the basis for the Evaluation (Conclusion).

When cross examining an examiner that has provided no notes regarding their



comparison phase be sure to ask, “Can you reproduce the comparison you made during the initial ACE-V process you conducted?” If no, “why didn’t you make any comparison notes?”

Every subsequent comparison performed by an examiner will be biased in favor of the conclusion reached in the initial process.

Finally, fingerprint charts are not complete comparisons. They usually only represent a fraction of a comparison. There is no way to determine the strength of a comparison from an incomplete chart that was created after the initial examination took place.