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Certainty and Uncertainty in Reporting Fingerprint Evidence

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Certainty and Uncertainty in Reporting Fingerprint Evidence

Disciplines

Forensic Science and Technology

Comments

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CERTAINTY AND UNCERTAINTY IN REPORTING FINGERPRINT EVIDENCE

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Outline

1. The scenario
2. The statements
3. Graphs

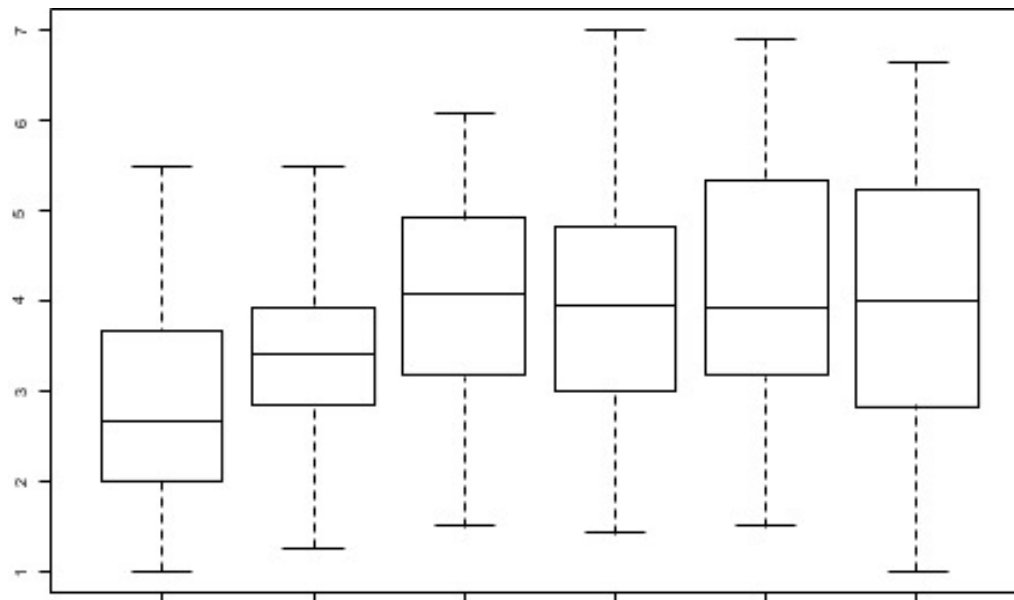
1. The Scenario

Mr. Richard Johnson was charged with robbing a convenience store. Although the perpetrator of the crime wore a hood that covered his face, Mr. Johnson became a suspect when the store owner told police that he thought the perpetrator sounded very much like one of his frequent customers, Mr. Richard Johnson. The store owner also told police that the perpetrator reached into the opened cash register with his bare hand and lifted one of the trays. When a police fingerprint examiner examined the cash register and its inside trays for fingerprints, he found 19 prints that were suitable for comparison purposes. The fingerprint examiner eliminated Mr. Johnson as a potential source of 18 of those prints. However, the fingerprint examiner was not able to eliminate Mr. Johnson as a possible contributor of one of the prints that was found on the cash register tray. At Mr. Johnson's robbery trial, the fingerprint examiner was called to testify for the prosecution.

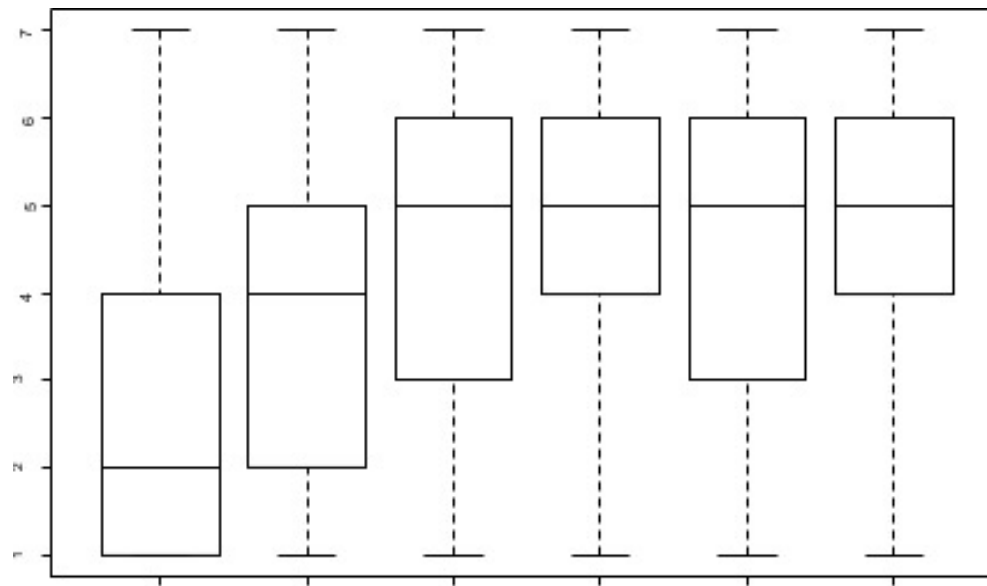
2. The Statements

1. *“... I cannot exclude the defendant, Mr. Johnson, as a possible contributor of that print.”*
2. *“... the likelihood of observing this amount of correspondence when two impressions are made by different sources is considered extremely low.”*
3. *“... in my opinion, the defendant, Mr. Johnson, is the source of that print.”*
4. *“... in my opinion, the defendant, Mr. Johnson, is the source of that print to a reasonable degree of scientific certainty.”*
5. *“... I was able to effect an individualization on that latent print to the defendant, Mr. Johnson.”*
6. *“...I was able to effect an individualization on that latent print to the defendant, Mr. Johnson, to the exclusion of all other possible sources in the world.”*

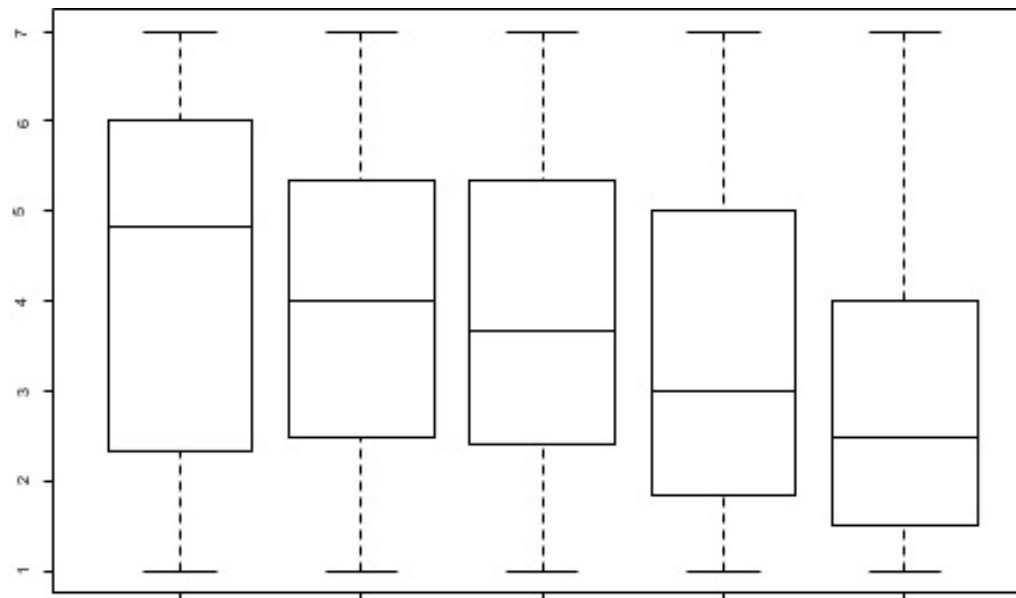
3. Graphs



Comparison of Indices of the Conditions



Examiner Certainty by Condition



Index by Conviction Proneness