



Implementation of Blind Reviewing in a Forensic Biology Laboratory

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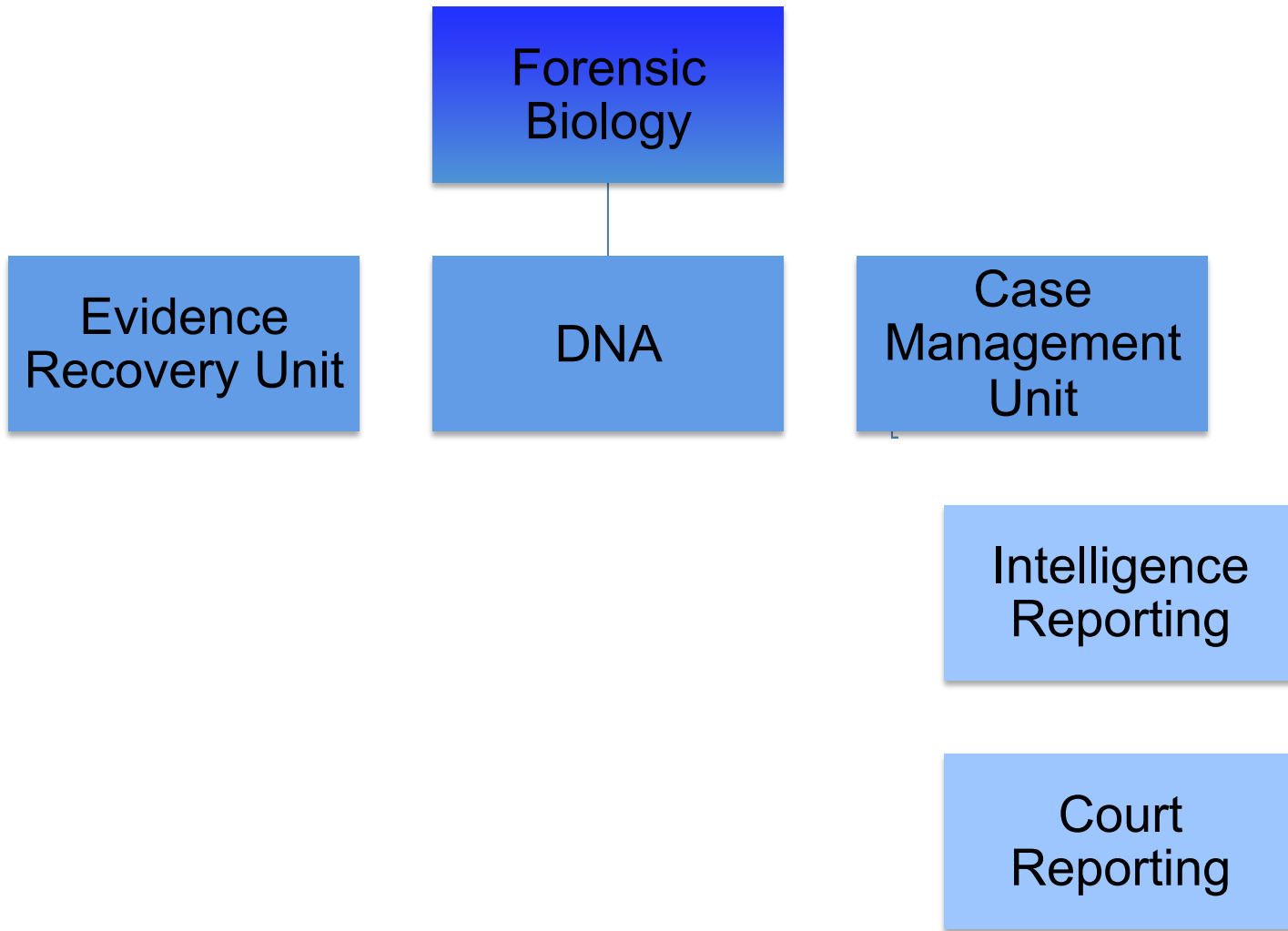




Photo illustration by David Sleight/ProPublica, DNA illustration by Saemilee via Getty Images



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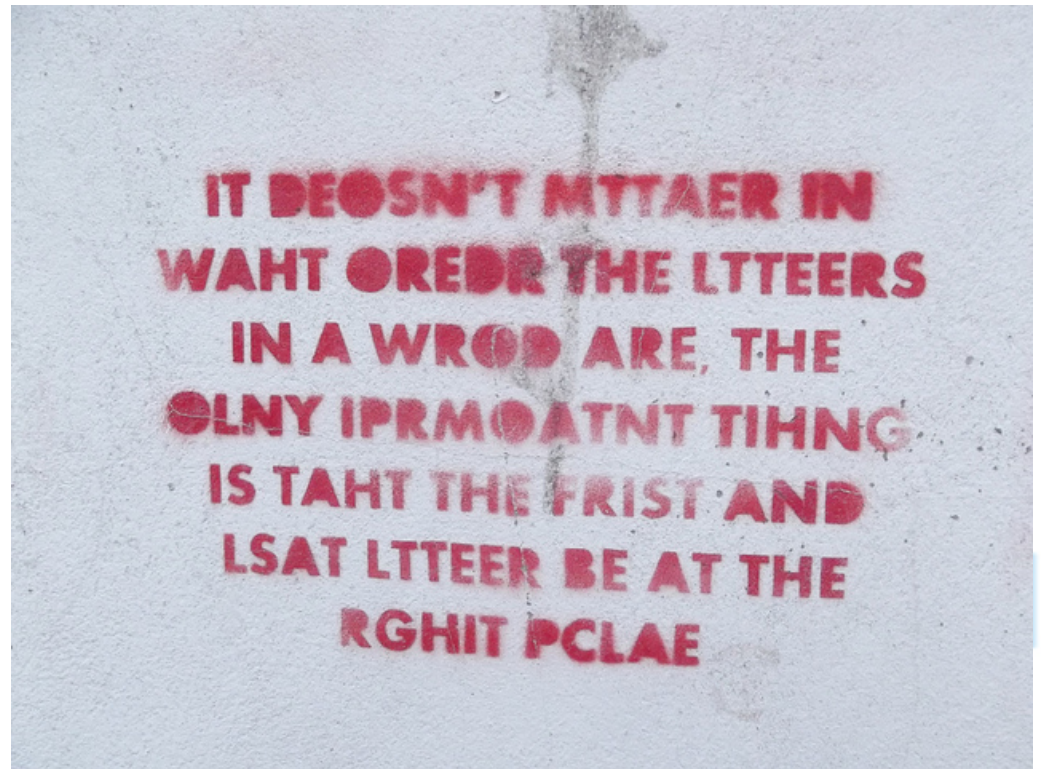
Cognitive Bias

'...bias is a by-product of processing limitations – because information processing time and ability are limited, humans must use shortcuts or rules of thumb that are prone to breakdown in systematic ways'

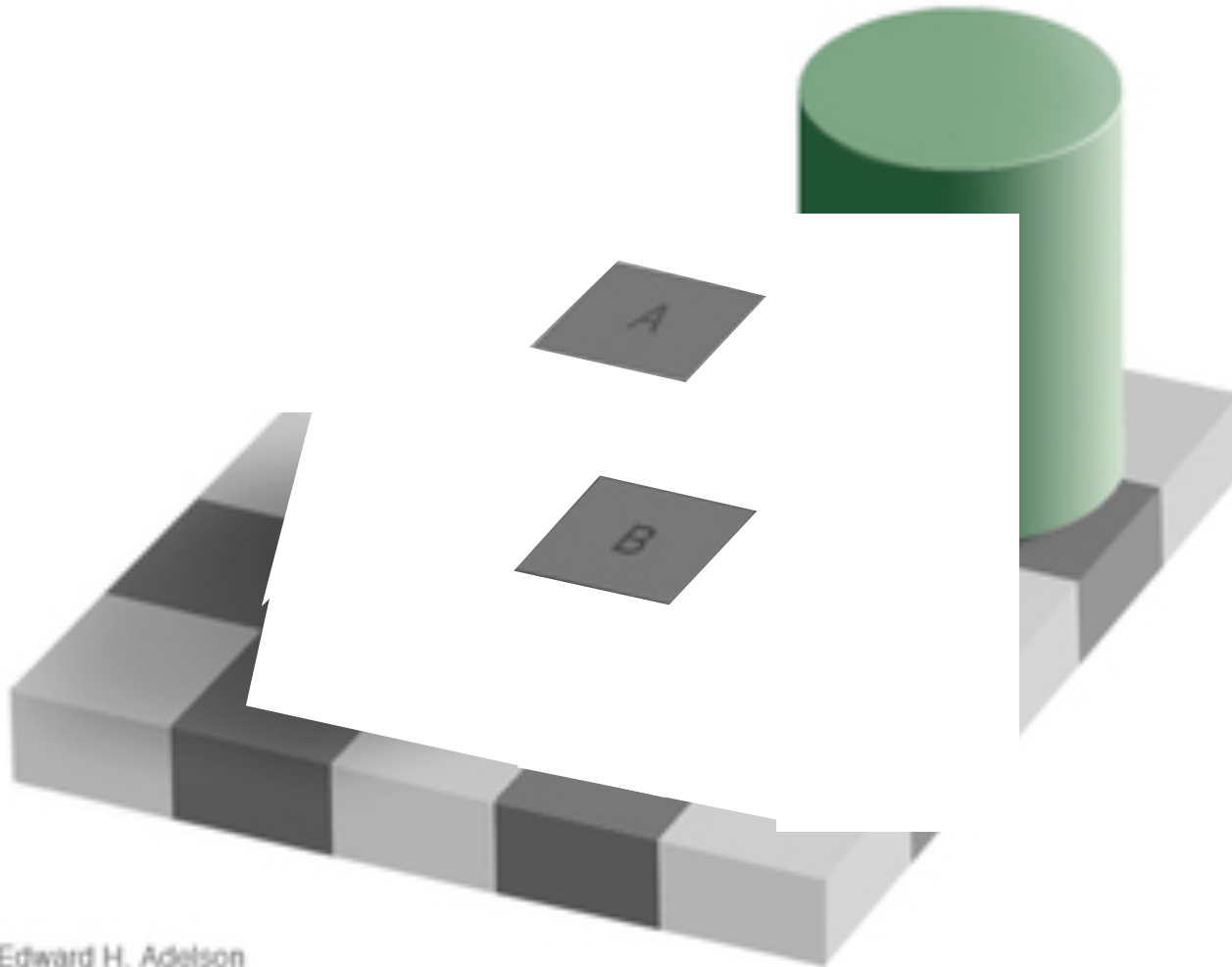
Haselton, M. G., Nettle, D. and Andrews, P. W. (2015) The Evolution of Cognitive Bias, in The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology (ed D. M. Buss), John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

After reading the **the** sentence, you are now aware that the **the** human brain often does not inform you that the **the** word 'the' has been repeated twice every time.

<http://www.abrarjeh.com/2016/09/01/jim-kwik-speed-reading-crash-course/>



<https://au.pinterest.com/joshhazell/miscellaneous/>

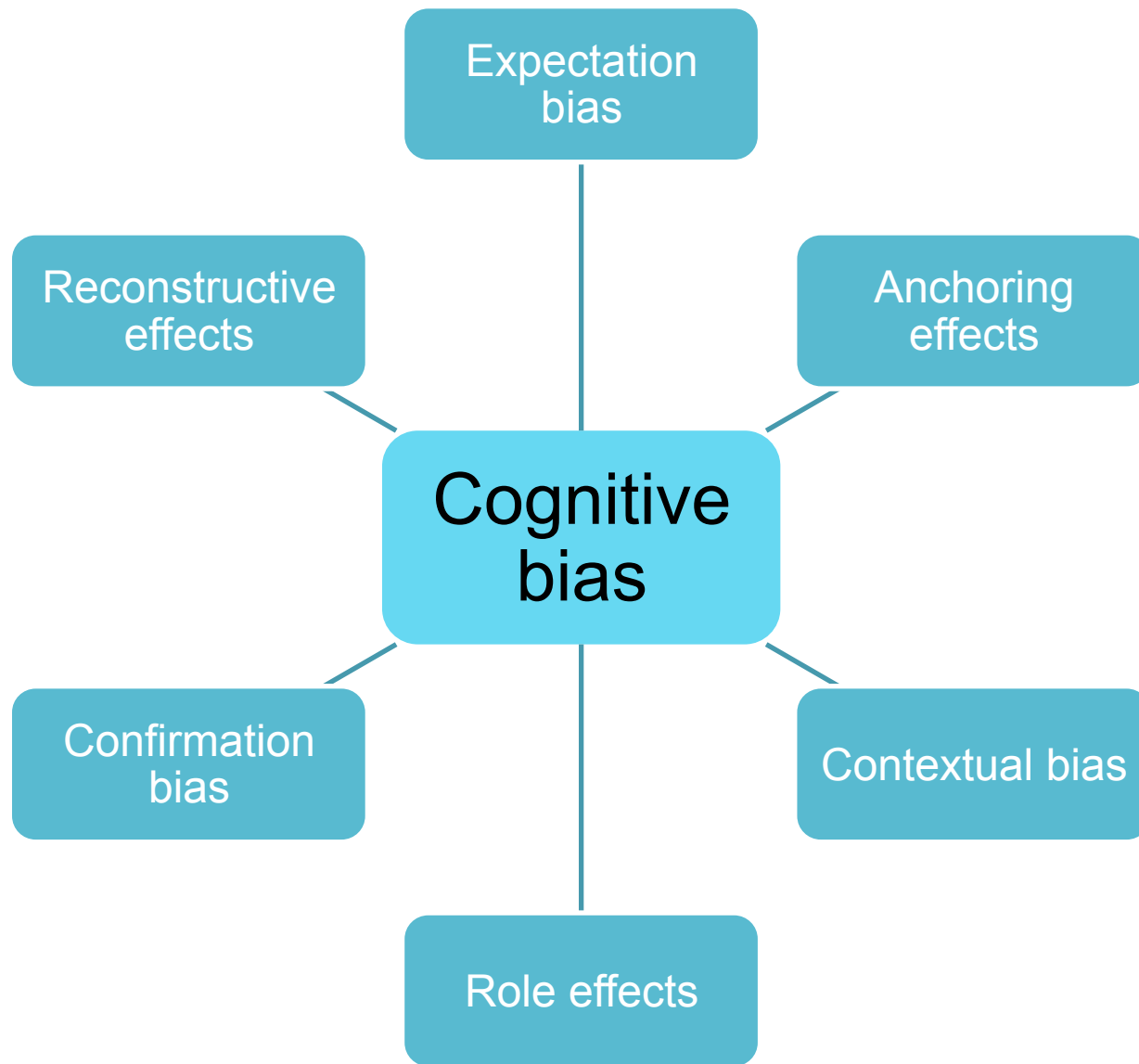


Edward H. Adelson



victory





Confirmation Bias



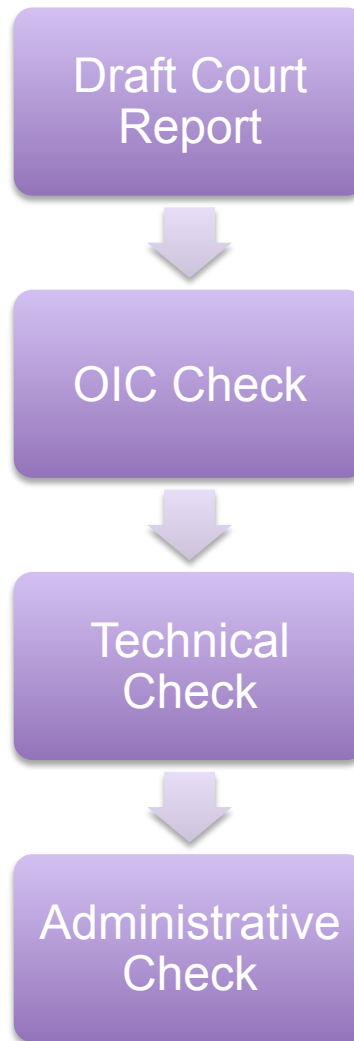
Limiting Gender Bias

- In 1970, less than 5% of people in the top five US orchestras were female
- ‘Blind’ auditions became industry standard in the 1970s and 1980s
- Increased a woman’s chance of getting to the next round by 50%
- Female musicians increased to around 25% in the mid-90s



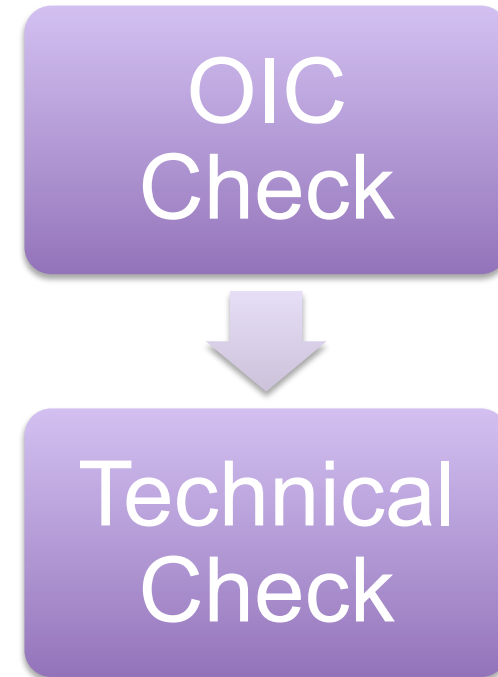
<http://www.astridbaumgardner.com/blog-and-resources/blog/ysm-mock-auditions/>

Standard Court Report Checking

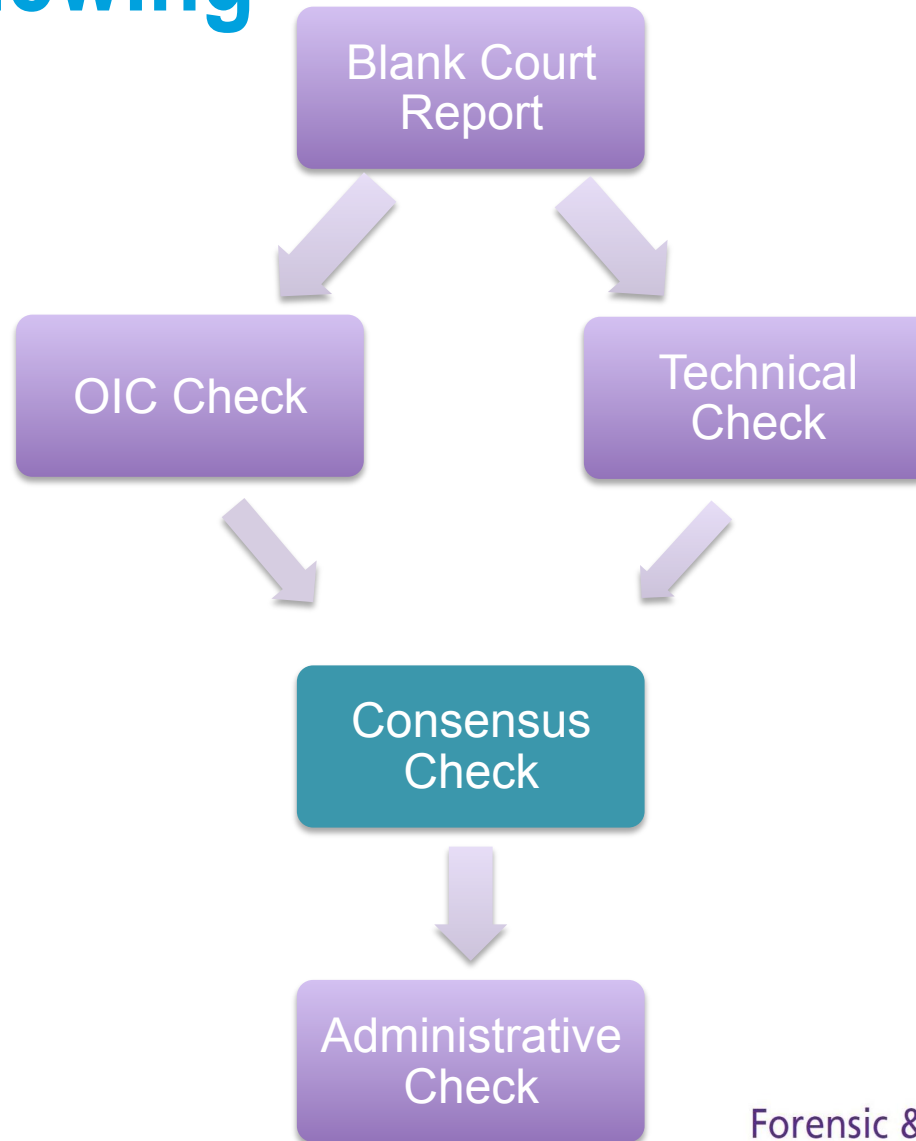


Standard Court Report Checking

- OIC checker amends the Court Report
- Technical Checker is aware of any changes made by the OIC
- Identities of both checkers are known to each other

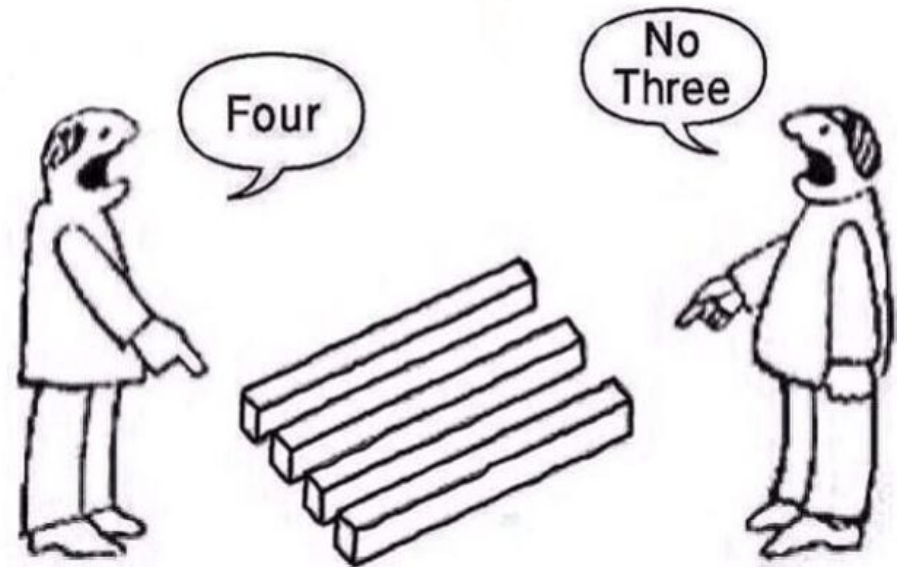


Blind Reviewing



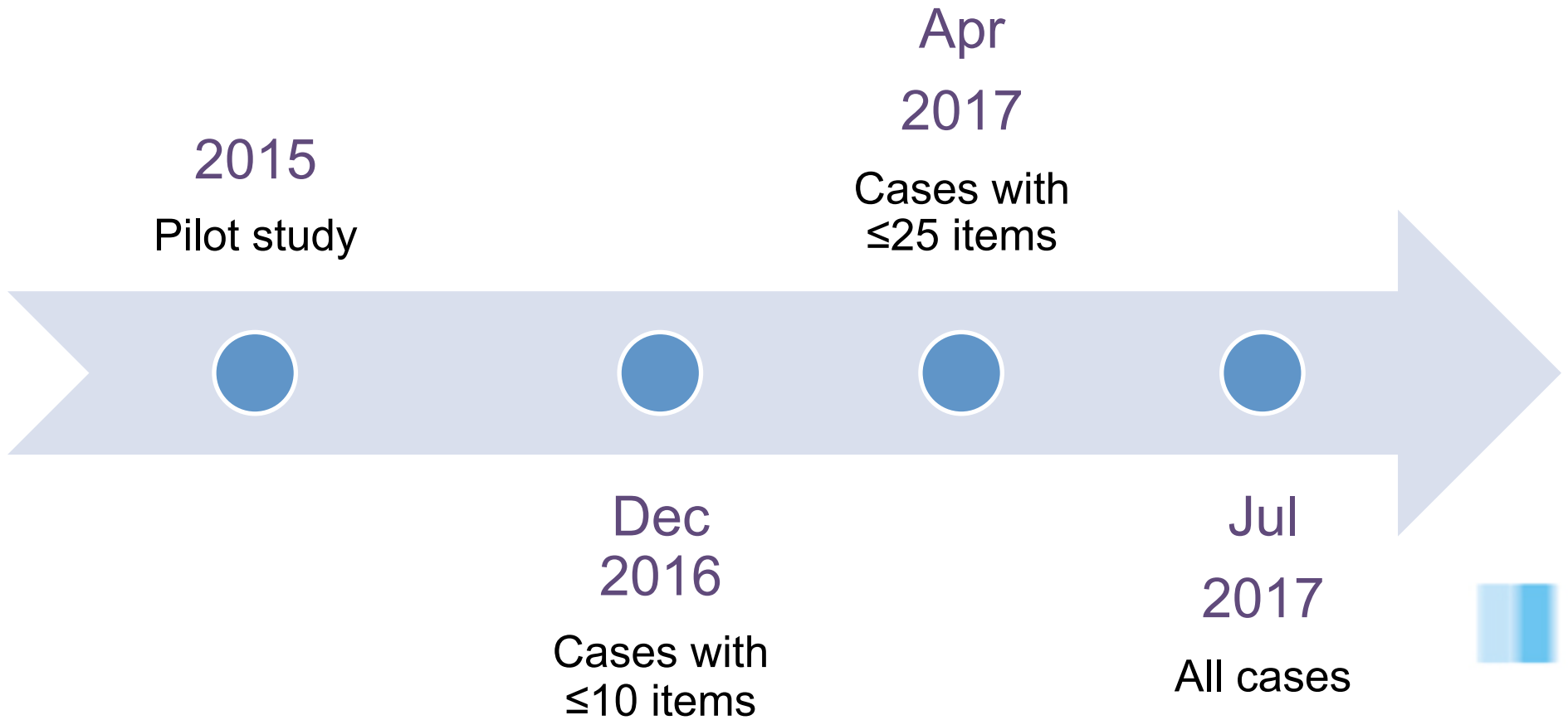
What if there is no consensus?

- A third opinion is requested:
 - Fair and transparent selection process
 - Blind review of the contested result
- Discussions are recorded and the process is transparent



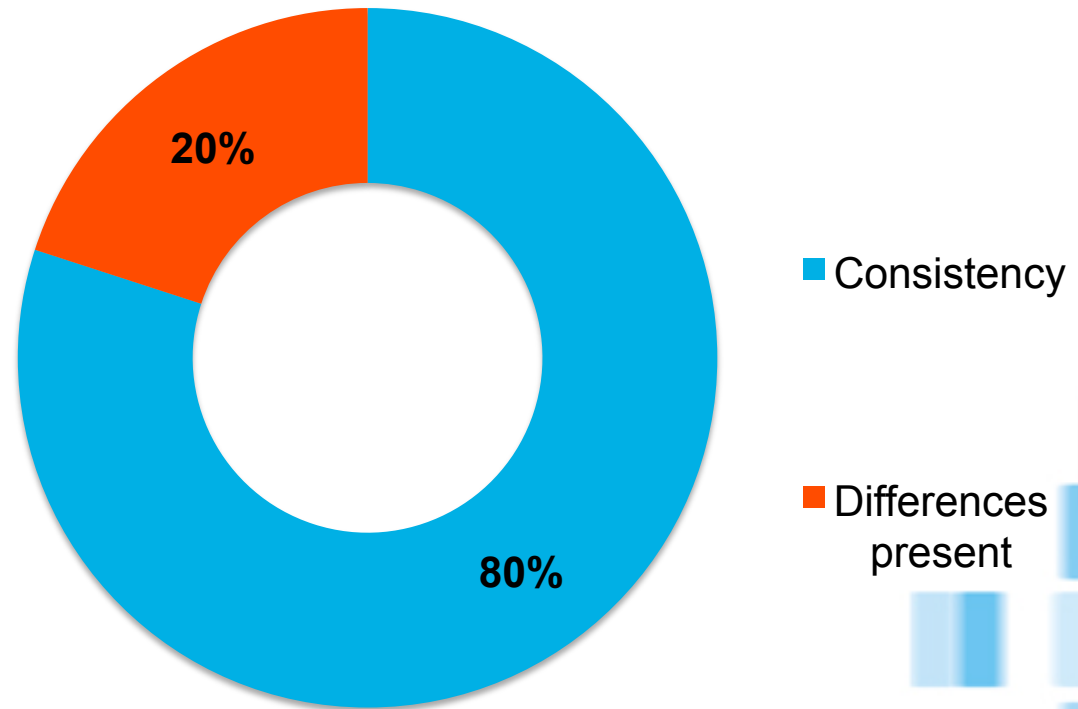
Blind Reviewing Implementation

- Staff consultation meetings
- Monitoring the process
- Amending the procedure
- Feedback surveys



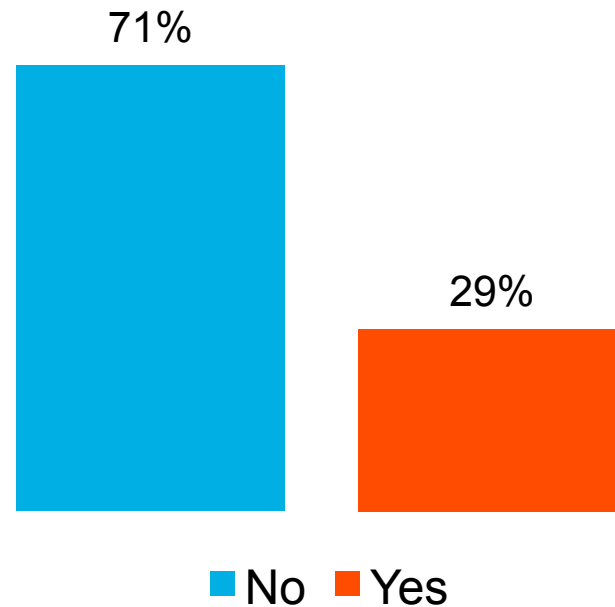
Monitoring the Process

- Reviewed 50 cases
- Differences were only present in cases with complex DNA mixtures
 - The number of contributors was the main variable
- All differences were resolved at the consensus stage

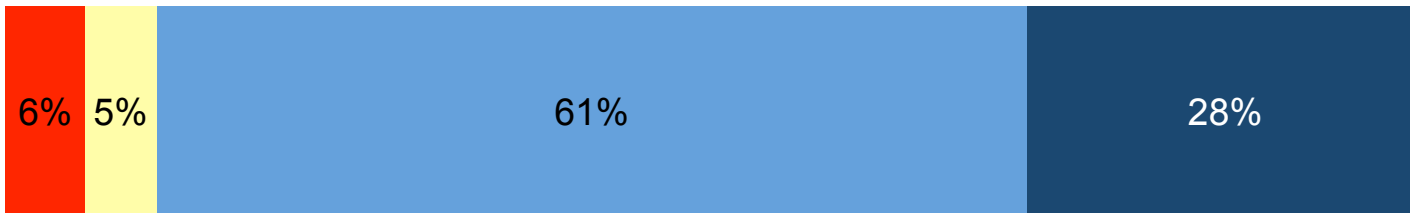


Monitoring the Process

Do you feel that the time taken to check a court report has increased (n = 7)?



I think that the introduction of Blind Peer Reviewing has increased quality of work (n = 19):



Regarding Blind Peer Reviewing, the balance between efficiency and quality is right (n = 18):



Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Blind Peer Review happens (n=18):



■ Too much ■ Right amount ■ Not enough ■ Should be every time

Outcomes

- Court report checking is more immune to potential biasing effects
- Greater transparency for potential court challenges
- Excellent training tool for new senior staff
- Balance between efficiency and quality achieved
- Junior staff training is affected as they are no longer drafting court reports

Future Plans

- Electronic court report checking
 - Automated comparison and non-conformance flagging
 - Improve efficiency for large cases
- Introduce blind reviewing to intelligence reporting
- Expand to other disciplines at FASS

Thanks

- Clint Cochrane
- Carole Field
- Sharon Neville

Questions?

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