



Questioned Documents Section – 2011

J6 A Study of Modified Genuine Signatures by Teenage Writers

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After attending this presentation, attendees will gain a better understanding of the forensic handwriting examination of modified genuine signatures and the handwriting characteristics observed and evaluated in these writings.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing information relating to a specific problem addressed when assessing a particular type of disguise (modified genuine signatures) in forensic handwriting examination and also providing information regarding the characteristics found in the natural signatures of individuals. Modified genuine signature is a term used to describe a type of handwriting in which a writer attempts to sign his/her name with the intention of later denying authorship. In some literature, this type of signature has been referred to as an autoforgery. It is believed that modified genuine signature is a more correct term to describe these signatures, and therefore, the term autoforgery will not be used.

The original idea to conduct research in the forensic handwriting examination of modified genuine signatures came as a result of a search in the forensic document examination literature. As reported in the literature, the writer would attempt to alter some of the natural handwriting characteristics that would be present in a naturally written signature. Some suggest that modified genuine signatures, formerly called autoforgeries, merely bear the characteristics of disguise while others write that there are additional characteristics. In recent years, disguise in handwriting, simulated written signatures, traced signatures, and modified genuine signatures have been popular areas of forensic handwriting examination discussion. As additional research studies are needed, this study proposes to provide information on the occurrence of characteristics that were found in the comparison of attempt modified genuine signatures by teenage writers.

Handwriting samples from a group of one hundred teenage writers were collected. These writers, both male and female, were enrolled in one high school and were between the ages of sixteen and eighteen years. Among the writings supplied by the core group, there were samples of naturally written signatures and samples of modified genuine signatures. Along with requested naturally written signatures, the writers were requested to produce samples of their signatures modified in a manner that made the signatures suitable to be denied as being their genuine signatures at a later date. The manner in which the writer chooses to perform this type of signature modification will be examined and discussed.

The collected sample signatures and the examination and evaluation conducted will be discussed. The literature regarding modified genuine signatures will also be discussed. The collected samples were examined for characteristics that are indicative of the methods of production when compared to naturally written signatures. Various characteristics of disguise were also assessed. Information drawn from the conclusions of this study of modified genuine signatures by teenage writers will be presented, and hopefully, the data will assist in the forensic examination of signatures.

Forensic Handwriting Examinations, Signatures, Disguise