Department of Psychology  
Distinguished Emeritus Lecture Series  

DR. ROD LINDSAY, Queen’s University  

TALK: How showups and mugshot searches guarantee that many suspects in lineups are innocent  

ABSTRACT  
Identification from a lineup has long been considered strong evidence of guilt. However, re-  
search over the past 40 years has demonstrated that identification errors are easily generated  
in the research context while DNA exoneration cases demonstrate conclusively that real-world  
identification errors frequently lead to wrongful convictions. Various identification procedures  
have been tested in attempts to reduce false identifications and thus make lineup evidence  
more reliable. An issue that has received too little attention is how someone becomes a suspect  
in a lineup. Many people appear in lineups because they were identified either from a showup  
or mugshot first. Discussion of the impact of this pattern will lead to the conclusion that many  
suspects (possibly most suspects) in lineups are factually innocent. If true, none of the avail-  
able lineup techniques will deal effectively with the eyewitness misidentification problem.  

BIOGRAPHY  
Rod Lindsay is a Social Psychology (BSc, Toronto; MSc & PhD, Alberta). Rod was a professor  
of Psychology at Queen’s for 34 years. His research examines eyewitness identification issues,  
particularly police identification procedures. He has testified as an expert on eyewitness issues  
in both criminal and civil cases and consulted with individual police identification officers and  
departments re identification procedures. Dr. Lindsay co-authored the American national guide-  
lines for obtaining and preserving eyewitness evidence. He has had extensive experience interact-  
ing with legal professionals: Judges (National Judicial Institute of Canada), police (Ontario Police  
College), and lawyers (numerous invited addresses). Dr. Lindsay co-edited the Handbook of Eye-  
ewitness Psychology (2007), the most comprehensive collection of scientific views on eyewitness  
issues to date. Among his awards are the 2002 Canadian Psychological Association award for  
Distinguished Contributions to the Application of Psychology, a Queen’s Research Chair, and the  
2013 American Psychology-Law Society award for “Outstanding Teaching and Mentoring in the  
Field of Psychology and Law”. Dr. Lindsay has published over 100 papers and made more than  
160 conference presentations.  

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