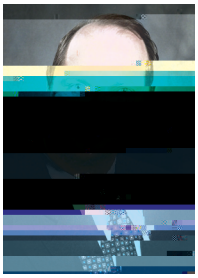

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Loyalty to the Truth

Mario Stefani, a Venetian poet, is quoted in John Berendt's new book, *The City of Falling Angels*, as saying "Telling the truth is the most anticonformist act I know." However, a friend of mine once remarked that he did not find pursuit of the truth "controversial" – just uncommon.

What is truth? There are both objective and subjective "truths." In Akira Kurosawa's film, *Rashomon* (1950), the details of a brutal crime are recounted differently by the killer, the victim, his wife and a witness. Each of these individuals distorts the objective truth into a subjective truth, for reasons of personal interest.

So first let us distinguish truth from belief. What we believe is our "truth." What we "know" determines our beliefs. There are people who believe in Bigfoot, in a flat earth, in weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and in intelligent design. There are others who do not believe in these phenomena. Therefore, they have different subjective "truths" (though arguably there is an ultimate objective truth in most cases).

Sources of knowledge include deduction, induction, authority, faith and intuition. Sources of deceit (or "untruths") include lying, aggrandizing, minimizing, omission (Mark Twain's "silent lie"), distraction (as we see in United States politics right now), and bias.

If we all believed in the same thing, there would be only one "truth," and there would be no controversy. Of course, this is rarely the situation.

In a perfect world, there would be a direct and unbiased relationship between the accumulation of evidence and our realization something is true. As evidence accumulates, our certainty should increase. But objective certainty and personal realization do not always track well because of personal biases. If the outcome is neutral, the relationship may be one-to-one. If the realization is undesirable, it may take more evidence (a higher level of certainty) to convince us that something is true. The greater the undesirability of the realization, the greater this distortion may be. Conversely, we may believe in desirable outcomes sooner than is justified by the evidence.

I want to go off on a tangent to make a point here. One of the things I am proud of is that geographic profiling is now being used in other disciplines. While it is common for criminology to borrow from the more senior sciences of chemistry, physics or biology, it is uncommon for them to borrow from criminology. We have worked with biologists from the University of London to study bat, bee and mosquito movements. With zoologists from South Africa we have examined predation patterns of Great White sharks off Cape Town. I recently saw a slide of a shark leaping into the air. People don't believe sharks can do that. Yes, they can. In this slide, the one-tonne shark was completely in the air, pirouetting around, tail up, head down, with a Cape Fur seal firmly in its jaws. Very impressive, very interesting, and very scary.

Now, because I was working on this project, I decided to watch Steven Spielberg's film, *Jaws* (1975). In the movie, the Mayor of Amity Island refuses to believe there is a shark problem and refuses to close the beaches. He is worried about the loss of summer business, especially over the Fourth of July weekend. It takes four deaths before he realizes the true nature of the situation. He explains the first three deaths as "boating accidents," or attributes them to a shark already caught, even though physical evidence shows the deaths were not accidents, and the caught shark had too small of a bite radius. The last attack occurs while the mayor's own children are playing on the beach. He lied to himself. He really believed there was no shark problem because he let his personal bias distort the relationship between evidence and "truth."

How do we discover the truth? We need objective scientific and logical tests, and comprehensive knowledge bases.

In 1969, 16-year-old David Milgaard was arrested for the murder of Gail Miller and spent 23 years in prison. Professor Neil Boyd and I conducted an independent assessment of the case. Amongst other things, we read the trial transcript, reviewed the evidence, visited the murder scene, interviewed witnesses and did a geographic/temporal analysis. This last was accomplished with a video camera and timer. We determined that some witnesses could not have been in the right place at the right time for Milgaard to have had an

Some of the theories put forward by the Major Crime Section were:

The women were only missing, and would eventually be found (this turned out not to be true).

The women were the victims of pimp murders (you do not kill 28 working women to make a point).

The women were the victims of drug murders (the drug trade involves more men than women, so why were there no missing men?).

The women had died as a result of drug overdoses (why were their bodies not found, and why were there no missing men?).

The women had died naturally, but hospitals were not keeping proper records (why had this not happened before, and why were there no missing men?).

The women were the victims of multiple "little" serial killers, but not of one big one (this is just bizarre, as well as incredibly unlikely).

As you can see, every one of these theories is inadequate in explaining the four critical analytic questions. The last retreat of the Major Crime Section was to argue there was nothing they could do because no bodies had been found. This is equivalent to a fire department saying they cannot respond because they only see smoke, not fire.

As we now know, the women were killed, and Willie Pickton has been charged with 27 counts of murder. He was arrested in February 2002, and the case is expected to go to trial in the fall of 2006. Police have collected 100,000 exhibits and something like 200,000 DNA samples. The cost of the investigation to