**Case Study on Shoeprints and the OJ Simpson Case**

On the night of June 12, 1994, Nicole Brown, ex‑wife of foot­ball star O.J. Simpson, and her friend Ron Goldman were bru­tally murdered on the grounds outside her home in Brentwood, California. O.J. Simpson was arrested for their murders, but maintained his innocence. The bloody crime scene revealed bloody shoe impressions along the concrete walkway leading up to the front door of her condominium. These shoe impressions were of extremely high quality and of intricate detail. The news media broadcast countless images of these bloody shoeprints on television, making it obvious to the killer that those shoes would surely link him to the crime.

William J. Bodziak, the famed FBI shoeprint examiner, investigated the footwear evidence from the scene. His first un­dertaking was to identify the brand of shoe that made these marks. Since the pattern was very clear and distinct, with complete associated toe‑to‑heel detail, this seemed a simple task at first. Bodziak compared this pattern to the thousands of sole patterns in the FBI's database. None matched. He then went to his reference collection of books and trade show brochures with no success. His experience told him these were expensive, Italian‑made casual dress shoes with a sole made from synthetic material. He shopped the high‑end stores for a similar tread pattern, but he was still unable to identify the shoes. Then he drew a composite sketch of the sole and faxed the image to law enforcement agencies and shoe manufacturers and distributors worldwide. The owner of the American distributing company for Bruno Magli shoes was the only one to respond.

Further exhaustive investigation revealed these were ex­tremely rare shoes. There were two styles of shoe bearing this exact sole design. They were available for only 2 years, and from a mere forty stores in the United States and Puerto Rico. The *Lorenzo* style shoe had a boot‑like upper that came to the ankle. The *Lyon* style shoe had the lower, more typical dress shoe cut. Since the impressions were made by a size 12 shoe, it was later determined that only 299 pairs of size 12 with this tread pattern were sold in the United States. Simpson flatly denied ever owning these shoes, adding he would never wear anything so ugly. However, he was known to wear a size 12.

Photographs taken almost 9 months prior to the murders show Simpson wearing a pair of black leather Bruno Magli *Lorenzo* shoes. These shoes were available in several colors, so this narrows the number of shoes matching Simpson's pair of *Lorenzos* (this size, color, and style) sold in the United States to twenty‑nine pairs.

Proving Simpson owned a pair of shoes that had the exact pattern found printed in blood at the crime scene was an es­sential component of the case, but it was not done in time to be used during the criminal prosecution. The photographs of Simpson in his Bruno Magli shoes were released after the cul­mination of the criminal trial, so the jury never heard the direct evidence that Simpson owned these shoes. This proved to be an important link uniting Simpson with the crime scene in the civil trial. O.J. Simpson was acquitted of the murders of Nicole Brown and Ron Goldman in the criminal trial, but found to be responsible for their murders in the civil court case.

**Questions:**

1. Was the footwear evidence found out the scene class or individual evidence? Explain.
2. Was there a match to any sole patterns in the FBI database?
3. Do you think the jury would have acquitted O.J. Simpson had they been presented with the footwear evidence?