

## *An essay on crime and justice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century\**

Por Chris Eskridge

### **ABSTRACT**

There are host of crime and punishment challenges facing the nations of the world at the outset of this new century, and there seem to be few if any answers. In many ways, criminologists today are much akin to physicians 200 years ago; we, like they, have a few ideas, but very little knowledge. Since 1800 however, the field of medicine has seen nearly incommunicable levels of advancement. Of course death, like crime, will never be eliminated, but some diseases have been virtually eliminated and the impact of others significantly reduced, life expectancy has nearly doubled, and the quality of that life greatly enhanced. If the field of criminology wishes to advance, it should adopt the same procedural model as utilized by medicine. That procedural model includes the adoption of cross-national education, the utilization of experimental design and evidence-based evaluation, embracing an inter-disciplinary perspective, and the integration of scientific criminology with political criminology.

### **1. 21<sup>ST</sup> Century crime forces and factors**

I have been asked to address to the topic of crime and justice issues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There are indeed a host of forces and factors on the present and/or near horizon, many of which are inter-related, that will drive crime and security matters for decades to come. My laundry list includes the following:

a) *Migration*. There will be massive migration of individuals across nations and across continents in this next century, both legal and illegal, and the world will experience a significant measure of disruption because of it. This will come about due to a variety of reasons:

1) *Globalization*. Human capital markets will become increasingly fluid in a geographic context due to constantly shifting employment supply and demand needs. Better markets (and better hunting grounds) have always driven the human race to move, and the globalized economic system feeds directly into and off of that basic element of human nature. As an aside, I must mention that globalization and its closely related cousin, the internet, have and will continue to spawn new kinds of white collar and economic crimes in this next century.

2) *Persistent poverty*. One of the dark aspects of globalization, and of capitalism in general, is the problem of persistent poverty. Those at the lower end of the economic scale will, in this globalized world, seek job security and job enrichment in response to their present state of unemployment/underemployment, and will move accordingly. Migration of the poor and disenfranchised from transitional nations into developed ones is already a political hot button item the world over, and a most prof-

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itable market for organized crime. Human smuggling will become a huge concern for law enforcement in this next century.

3) Rising energy costs/decreased energy access. Individuals will gravitate to regions where costs are lower and access is greater out of a pure survival instinct.

4) Environmental degradation and the accompanying famine and overall health concerns. As agricultural productivity declines and food and water supplies diminish, masses will flock to regions where basic food, nutrition and health needs can be met. A 50 percent increase in food production is needed by 2030, and we are not likely going to see that in the increasingly erratic and volatile agricultural environment. Consider the strife and turmoil surrounding the African feminine scenarios of the last 25 years; multiply that by several fold, and the magnitude of the problem becomes most overwhelming.

5) Population growth. As implied, the world's population continues to grow at what now appears to be an unsustainable rate. As food, water, and energy supplies become taxed, social peace and basic security may become undeliverable.

b) *Youth demographics*. In nations where 40 percent of the population are youth age 25 and under (the so-called youth bulge), there is a two fold increase in the probability of a revolution, and a higher than usual rate of violence. Countries that have significantly more males than female, which obviously presents a situation where males have a lesser chance of marriage, are more likely to experience revolution, and have higher violent crime rates. This is known as the bare branch syndrome. These youth demographics have profound potential international impacts due to the globalization of trade and commerce. A nation in the midst of a multi-year spike in violence and/or one experiencing revolution, will of course be less likely to be engaged in international trade, and less likely to attract external investment. Interestingly, 21 of the 22 Arabic League states, most of which are oil producers, are currently dealing with both of the demographic realities.

c) *Internal strife*. It is my premise that this next century will see violence between sovereign states diminish. Violence within nations, however, will escalate due to many of the factors we are exploring today. The world's military units (the US in particular) will need to re-tool themselves, and instead of preparing for World War III, focus instead on carrying out appropriate responses to these internally-based, asymmetric conflicts. A new type of law enforcement will also be needed, a law enforcement geared to policing in disruptive zones where law and order are not generally present.

This new generation of peacemaking/order-creating police will need to not only maintain law and order in the present sense, but more importantly help engineer environments where law and order have a greater long-term presence. They will need to take on a community building/problem solving orientation. They will need to partner with civic, business, educational, and religious leaders within the neighborhoods. Success will be measured not just by standard crime and victimization rates, but more importantly by other indicators of social stability such as the establishment of communal institutions, level of citizen involvement in governance, literacy rates, unemployment rates, high school graduation rates, level of economic growth, illegitimate pregnancy rate, communal diseases rates, etcétera.



d) *Ineffective government-based security institutions in transitional nations.* When government based security institutions are ineffectual, people tend to look to extended family, tribal, ethnic, and/or religious entities for protection. These entities have taken the form of militias and insurgency groups in the Middle East. They will not go away until the government can provide security, and even then, since the militias have so firmly established themselves, it will likely take some years to dismantle them, and the dismantling will of necessity come via an internal velvet glove, not an external iron fist.

e) *Islamic inspired terrorism.* Terrorism, emanating from the Muslim world, will continue to be a geo-political factor for decades to come. There appears to be two primary sources:

1) The young and disenfranchised who can be turned from terrorism with hope and legitimate socio-economic opportunity structures.

2) The religious zealots who will not be so easily turned as they wish to destroy all there is in the West for Allah, who is standing by, even at the gates, to start a new world, an Islamic world, with the scraps of the old.

It is my premise that Islam is now experiencing much the same internal strife that characterized Western Christianity in the Middle Ages, when Catholic and Protestants engaged in virtual non-stop war throughout Europe for hundreds of years, and even exporting the conflict to other continents as well. We are in for much of the same, but now emanating from the Islamic community. The real question is whether we, the West, can absorb from the Islamic East, the same level of blood and horror that we wreaked upon the world when we were in the midst of our reformation period. Having said that, there are some promising signs of progress on the horizon. Operationally, Al-Qaeda for example has been somewhat quiet of late, it is being ideologically challenged by numerous Imams and clerics, and polls show a diminished support for Al-Qaeda in particular and fundamentalism in general among the Arabic body politic. The proverbial time will tell if these are just short-term iterations or part of a long-term de-escalation.

f) *Power vacuum.* The current status of the United States as the world's sole superpower, the hyperpower, is clearly coming to an end for a variety of reasons (debt, loss of moral authority, the "rise of the rest"). What is of concern is that once that power becomes diminished, the world currently seems poised to move, not toward a balance of power, but one where there is an absence of power... a power vacuum, for there is no other entity in place at present to take the lead. A true power vacuum would be calamitous religious fanaticism would emerge, economic stagnation, waning social cohesion, de-globalization, fear and xenophobia reigning supreme. These are the Dark Age experiences that such a world would encounter, and it is a sobering notion.

As a counterpoint, there are a host of transnational organizations that, taken together, have the potential to fill this void; the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the United Nations, the World Trade Organization. At present, however, these entities are too splintered and more representative of an adolescent in puberty than a mature statesman capable of mitigating international crises. The contemporary American decline and the coming power vacuum will clear center stage, however, and it will be most interesting to see who, if anyone, can step up and hold center court.



I wish to digress for a moment and focus for a few minutes on the much-discussed topic of decline of America. The American “brand-name” has indeed been tarnished, economically, diplomatically, morally, and militarily in the past decade. It has suffered from a disastrous foreign policy, poor government and private sector fiscal management which has resulted in a weakened dollar and colossal national and personal debt. Its international moral and political leadership has been in a free-fall ever since 9/11. In that light, I would like to make four points:

1) The United States is still the military superpower and will be for decades to come. There is no military on earth that can match America’s military technology or firepower. The time, money and expertise needed to reach that level is out of reach to all but a handful of countries, and those countries are choosing to spend their time, money and expertise on industrial growth and domestic development. Consider, for example, that in 2007, the United States defense budget was nearly \$550 Billion. The second largest defense budget was the UK at \$60 Billion, nearly ten times less. China was third at \$58 Billion, the bulk of which covered not research and development but rather domestic maintenance of its largest army in the world. Consequently, the US will remain the world’s sole military superpower for at least another 50 years. However, the 21<sup>st</sup> century will see violence between sovereign states diminish and violence within states escalate in the form of regional and civil conflicts. The US military is prepared to fight a large-scale international war, a World War III if you would, and it is not oriented toward regional/civil war. Consequently, its massive military might in a 21<sup>st</sup> century context, will likely prove to be irrelevant.

2) America is, in fact, slipping in every other sphere moral (particularly in the aftermath of Iraq, Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib; we have completely lost our good example), industrial, financial, political, social, cultural. America’s decline will not be the catastrophic collapse of the Soviet Union, but more like the British empire’s long ride into the sunset that began at the end of the previous century. In a positive sense, our influence, like theirs, will be felt for decades, if not centuries, akin to the Roman Empire, but our influence is clearly waning.

3) America’s decline is best viewed not in an absolute sense, but rather in a relative one. The issue is not so much that the US power has subsided, but rather that there are a host of other nations rising....other nations are catching up. I turn to my own experience. I lived in the Philippines in the early 1970s. I returned 30 years later and was shocked by the progress I saw. The 30 year time frame from 1940 to 1970 saw little or no economic and social development, but the 30 year time period from 1970 to 2000 saw massive growth, and the Philippines are not even a good example for they are still a developing nations. Better examples of “the rise of the rest” as Zakaria describes it, would be Turkey, Brazil, the United Arab Emirates, India, Thailand, Taiwan, China, Russia, Chile, Argentina, many of the former Soviet states that are now in the EU.

There are a host of decidedly modern, peaceful, industrialized states who have risen into the developed, industrialized ranks, who are producing top scholars and involved in cutting edge research, who are culturally absorbing the notion of the rule of law, who have clearly moved to a post-war orientation, who now have a stake in and rightfully wish to influence world affairs, and who are ready and totally capable of taking their place at the table.



4) The United States needs to recognize these changes in the international landscape and move away from the arrogant, sanctimonious, monologue diplomacy model that became so particularly prominent in the Bush years. The Bush administration was a government of zealots and extremists, belligerently intolerant of those with divergent views, who, filled with certitude, did not weigh alternative views nor considered the possibility of personal error. Civilization requires a shunning of monologue and certitude; its foremost threat, a surplus of both. The greatest asset the United States possessed in the post World War II era was its good example. That is now gone, replaced with the nauseating stench of arrogance and condescending superiority. Such an orientation is passé, and the United States needs to now engage in a diplomacy of cooperative dialogue with its accompanying egalitarian orientation. American has been the rule maker and the enforcer, but has not always played by those rules. This too needs to end. This will be hard to do for a nation with a proud sense of deistic manifest destiny, but America's time is over. Its manifest destiny has been realized, and the world is now entering a new phase of global power and influence, a phase where the US will no longer be dominant... a major player, but no longer ascendant.

g) *Ethnic and religious tension.* Ethnic and religious divisions are growing increasingly pronounced in some quarters, and as a result, the notion of a cooperative and peaceful international community is increasingly threatened. The power and influence of fundamentalists of every ilk (Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh) cannot be ignored. Fundamentalism by nature advances monologues and mantras, retreatism, de-globalization, tribal/local/regional autonomy, the creation of social and cultural enclaves with an extreme focus on the preservation of identity, independence manifested in the form of isolation, an irrational demand for absolute sovereignty, culminating in outbreaks of xenophobia with all its destructive manifestations. By the same token there is a countervailing force seeking collective governance and cross-national commerce, trade and social/cultural intercourse. There is tension now, and there will be tension for centuries to come, between fundamentalism and globalization, between monologue and dialogue, between the drive for collective governance, and local sovereignty and retreatism, as there has been in this world for centuries. The struggle simply continues, with new verses and new faces.

Longitudinally, I tend to put my faith in the eventual emergence of collective governance, in enhanced trade and cross-national social and culture intercourse, in economic integration, in globalization. In the end, economic interests will trump belligerence. Economic vibrancy will yield domestic tranquility. As evidence I offer the past ten years. Over the past decade, political turmoil has swept the world. There have been the 9/11 attacks, bombings in Bali, Casablanca, Istanbul, Madrid and London.

There have been two major American-lead wars in Afghanistan and Iraq which have been protracted and horribly destabilizing. Add to this the war between Israel and Lebanon, Iran's bid for regional supremacy, North Korea's nuclear sword-rattling, the Chinese-Tibet crisis, Russia's continuing clashes with its neighbors. Yet, during this same period, the world economy has experienced unprecedented growth. We are experiencing today something that has not happened in recorded history simultaneous growth worldwide.



The US, Europe and Japan are doing well, but so is China, and India and Brazil and Argentina and Chile and Turkey and Thailand and the United Arab Emirates. Their rise is powering the new global order.

Globalization is more powerful, widespread and resilient than even the economists realized. It is amazingly elastic, but, we should probably not be so surprised, for globalization in micro appeals to the individual interests of the world's body politic who see it as a way out, a way for them and for their families to move forward. There are, in point of fact, massive numbers of persons, entire nations visualizing hope en masse for the first time in human history. That power will trump civic strife and turmoil in the end. There will be more body bags, too many more, but the spirit of globalization has reached the four corners of this globe. It has been universally embraced, and as previously noted, that genie will not be put back into the bottle. While globalization has some decidedly negative impacts, I see it, in sum total, as a mitigating factor to many of the global crime problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I have an additional thought on this matter. One particular family of collateral demands of globalization is the entire notion of civic stability and order; the establishment of a genuine rule of law, creation, growth and development of equitable and efficient institutions of public order and dispute resolution, conformity to international trade norms, rational governance, and political transparency. These will simply be demanded, as without them, a nation will be decidedly handicapped as it attempts to compete in the global economy, which is a reason to simultaneously embrace justice education, but more on that later.

h) *A rise in nationalism.* This has been a sleeping phenomenon for the last half-century. As economic fortunes rise, so inevitably will nationalism, and also inevitably will some of the negative aspects of nationalism. Pride, an interest in attaining international recognition and respect, frustrated over having been forced to accept an American narrative of world events for so long, aggravated with having been cast as bit players for so long and accompanied by the concurrent drive to now have a viable seat at the table, a desire to right historic wrongs; these are all factors that will aggravate the issue. Newly arising nations are going to be strongly assertive of their ideals and interests. How are we going to get so many actors to work together? As mentioned a moment ago, the traditional mechanisms of international cooperation are fraying, and are nearly all out of step with the times. The G8 does not include China, India or Brazil.

The IMF is always headed by a European, the World Bank by an American. These country club ideals are passé, but finding a way, finding mechanisms that can include more countries and more NGOs as viable and empowered players with a seat at the table will be hard, but it does need to be done. If China, India, Brazil, Thailand, etc. all have a contributing stake in the world order, there will be less chance of war, depression, and general social unrest, and less chance of unbridled nationalism raising its ugly head. But, that is not the only answer, for some may have a seat at the table and still want more power. Then of course there are those nations that will feel left out, cheated, betrayed, and the negative aspects of nationalism will be easily fanned into flames by opportunistic politicians in such settings. Heaven forbid that another Hitler arrive on the world scene, especially in this nuclear age.



I would note that we are already seeing some of the negative elements of nationalism emerge in several countries. North Korea is certainly one example, where nationalism is being driven by an internal engine of propaganda, isolation, and hero worship, and with nuclear warheads on the table, this nationalistically driven state cannot be taken lightly. Then there are several nations (Russia, Venezuela, Iran), all empowered and embolden by oil wealth, that are rattling the saber of forward-leaning, self-serving nationalism, to the current and potential further detriment to communal peace and prosperity of their neighbors. Note that all of these nations are currently headed by a propaganda spouting sole ruler who is plucking at the nationalistic heartstrings of his body politic as a means of staying in power. Whatever the factors, and there will be unique justifications and motives based on contingencies of the moment, customs, and cultures, the 21<sup>st</sup> century will see the re-emergence of the negative side of nationalism, and the world community will need to contend with its potentially destructive ramifications.

i) *Organized crime*. I add to this list the usual suspect of organized crime with all its offerings drugs, arms, prostitution, money laundering, human trafficking, production and distribution of counterfeit goods, and organized crime's Siamese twin, government corruption. There is strong evidence that organized crime entities around the globe are beginning to build partnerships in a classic division of labor context. Globalization's impact in illegitimate trade and commerce is just as vibrant and dynamic as it is in the legitimate. Law enforcements fragmented responses will be no match.

j) *Middle class revolt*. I see on the horizon, some social unrest percolating from the middle class sector of the industrialized nations as social welfare commitments go unmet. We are a few years away yet, but I think this has the potential for some serious social disruption.

k) *The seemingly endless cycle of interpersonal violence*. As a former criminal investigator, I am personally concerned with the seemingly eternal cycle of violence that is settling in to many communities, especially in those nations with high socio-economic inequity coefficients. The child abuse and spousal abuse that runs from one generation to the next to the next is most distressing.

l) *The overuse of prisons*. I wish to add as item #12, the truly irrational and utterly counterproductive over use of prisons particularly in the United States, which is contributing significantly to the crime problem, both in the short term and in the long term. A full 25 percent of the world's prison population is in the United States, and this is contributing to the American crime problems, not mitigating it.

## 2. Medical analogy

As I looked over this list, I thought of myself for a moment, not as a criminologist, but rather as a physician, and instead of addressing crime problems, addressing medical problems, and not of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but rather of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. And the reason I draw this analogy is that I believe that the field of criminology today is very much like the field of medicine 200 years ago.



There were seemingly insurmountable health issues then, as there are seemingly insurmountable crime problems today... small pox, bubonic plague, malaria, infections, consumption, scurvy. There was a lot of guesswork in medicine in 1800, a very limited epistemological understanding, no body of knowledge of consequence, no consistently proven treatment modalities. What did medicine do to move from where it was then, when life, as Thomas Hobbes wrote, was nasty, brutish and short (short indeed as life expectancy at the time was roughly 40 years of age) to the situation of today. Death has not been eliminated, and yes, there is still some guesswork in medicine, but there is a body of knowledge today, there is epistemological understanding, there are hundreds and hundreds of proven, successful treatment modalities, many of life's serious diseases have been eliminated and the severity of the nature of disease in the aggregate has been significantly mitigated. Life expectancy has been extended to nearly 80 years of age in the developed nations, and it is a markedly improved quality of life in the health context. What has happened? What accounts for this progress? What can we in criminology learn? The field of Medicine did four things:

a) It moved toward a ubiquitous, cross-national educational model. Schools of medicine have sprouted up in quality institutions of higher education the world over in the last 200 years and there is an extensive amount of professional cooperation, interaction and exchange.

b) It adopted the principle of experimental design and evidence-based evaluation.

c) It embraced an inter-disciplinary perspective and sought intellectual conciliation, combining different types, levels, and areas of exploration in an attempt to etiologically explain and understand. It is not unusual today to see an article in a medical journal authored by half-a-dozen researchers from half-a-dozen different disciplines (and from half-a-dozen different institutions, per point #1).

d) It integrated scientific inquiry with the political. Medicine realized that it needed to get its message out to the masses to realize real preventative and curative progress.

I wish to return to the theme that there are great parallels between medicine and criminology. We in criminology cannot eliminate crime anymore than physicians can eliminate death, but we can, like medicine, reduce the severity of the nature of crime through preventative and curative mechanisms, just as medicine can reduce the severity of disease through preventative and curative means.

There was little understanding in 1800 that different diseases needed different treatments, and that different people with the same diseases sometimes needed different treatments. There was no understanding as to the difference between a bacteria based and a viral based disease. But, once the four basic premises were implemented (cross national education, experimental design, interdisciplinary orientation, political medicine), and once Louis Pasteur came along, the field of medicine exploded. No, it cannot nor ever will eliminate death, we cannot eliminate crime, but we both can reduce the severity of the nature of crime and disease, and we can do so by embracing the four principles-cross national education, experimental design, interdisciplinary orientation, political criminology.





Improvements in crime and punishment matters and the reduction of corruption throughout the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, depend upon criminology moving in this same strategic direction.

As the American writer Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, for every 100 people hacking at the leaves, there is only one digging at the root of the problem. We cannot address the crime problems by hacking at the leaves in a piecemeal fashion. We need to come at this from a fundamental, etiological, epistemological, systemic orientation and adopt the same procedural model as did medicine. I wish to briefly address all four procedural methodologies which medicine embraced, and apply them to criminology.

### **3. Cross national criminology education**

We need to embrace a cross national educational model, and seek to enhance the level of growth and development of criminology in universities throughout the world. I see three major benefits to this, as follows:

a) Over time, graduates from university justice education programs will gradually begin to fill justice system positions within their respective countries, which will help to further professionalize justice operations within each country.

b) Most who take university classes in criminology will not seek employment in the justice system per se, but they become the body politic, and their exposure to the principles and concepts outlined in their criminology classes will have increased their understanding as to the proper role and function of the justice system and its personnel. Subsequently this more attuned and aware general populous will hold justice system personnel to a higher standard. The synergy of this proposal is that the justice system personnel who are going to be held more accountable by the more attuned public, will have had the academic background to draw upon which will give them more tools to be able to respond positively.

c) Justice officials will also be able to respond more positively to increased public demand due to perhaps the most important aspect of all research. The faculty and students of the criminology programs will engage in research activities that will produce a more complete knowledge base and shed further light on ways and means of improving justice system practices, programs and policies.

In sum, criminology research helps develop and improve justice-based institutional structures, the classroom course content helps prepare the individuals who work in them and ingrains the concept of the justice and the rule of law into the body politic. I defer to the thoughts of H. G. Wells in this matter “human history is a race between education and catastrophe.” Under that premise, it is crucial that the educational model be adopted, and particularly in the area of criminology as nations seek to enhance the level of collective communal peace and equality, and overall social justice. I would add that developing and transitional nations in particular need to establish justice education programs. These nations typically have weak rule of law traditions and publically disparaged legal infrastructures.

Justice education programs will help overcome these deep-seated problems, and in addition, it will help these nations professionalize and stabilize their justice

systems so that they will be more likely to attract investment dollars and participate more fully in the global economy.

#### **4. An interdisciplinary academic model**

The hard sciences and medicine were two of the great success stories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Conspicuously absent in this great leap, however, were the social and behavioral sciences. Some twenty years ago, Allan Bloom (1987) criticized the academic social and behavioral sciences for being scholastically stagnant. He argued that there have been no new ground-breaking perspectives, no new paradigms, no theories of value or impact proffered for decades. Compared with the hard sciences and medicine, the traditional disciplines of sociology, psychology, anthropology, economics, history, political science are comatose, if not all-together dead. The primary reason he argues, is intellectual incest; an unwillingness to engage in cross-disciplinary and cross-national fertilization and exchange.

Much of the reason behind the rather rapid rise of justice education as a field of study in the United States has been its cross-disciplinary diversity. A marginal field of study in the 1960s and 1970s, it exploded onto the academic scene in the 1980s and 1990s. This was due in part to the emergence of crime as a fundamental topic of interest to the American body politic, but also in large part due to its academic diversity and multi-disciplinary character. It is not unusual to see American university criminal justice program faculty members with degrees in history, psychology, sociology, public administration, law, political science, urban studies, as well as criminology and criminal justice.

There is a need to continue to cling to the multi-disciplinary model, and to extend the reach to include colleagues from all nations. We must emulate the progressive hard science research centers and reach out to all fields and disciplines, and to colleagues from all nations, and in this interdisciplinary, cross-national context, collectively seek to address crime and justice issues.

#### **5. Evidence based criminology**

What do we know about reducing the severity of crime? How do we go about systemically reducing the severity of crime? A comprehensive United States Congress sponsored study undertaken about ten years ago concluded that we simply do not know. What we do know and where we have made great strides, is in enhancing the efficiency and the professionalism of our justice agencies. American law enforcement in particular has seen a light year of improvement in the last 40 years. This has been due, in large part, to the presence of criminology/criminal justice programs in the US higher educational system, there are now better prepared recruits, a heightened sense of awareness and demand for proper performance coming from the educated body politic and a growing body of research-based knowledge that has examined police (and other) justice agency operations and procedures.

What we don't know is how to systemically reduce the severity of crime and deviance overall in society at large. Some programs and policies seem successful, others are clearly dismal failures, but we are not sure why, on either count. We have not



been able to crack the cause and effect barrier with any degree of surety. The knowledge base in the field of criminology is somewhat thin as compared with the hard sciences.

As a consequence, justice policies and programs that are adopted are generally implemented due more to political consideration rather than scientific merit. In the final analysis, academic criminology is generally polluted by political criminology, for in the absence of sound knowledge, public policy tends to be a pinch of science (and often bad science at that), and a pound of ideology.

## 6. Scientific versus political criminology

This then brings me to the 4<sup>th</sup> and final, and yes, somewhat cynical point, scientific versus political criminology. Let me address that idea and tie it in with the other notions presented today, with two stories. In 1799, the former president of the United States, George Washington, lay in bed with a bad case of strep throat. The finest physicians of the day concluded that he needed to be bled, a common treatment modality of the day that was used for virtually every ailment.

Bleeding, among other impacts, contributes to dehydration. Ironically in the end, Washington died not due to the strep throat infection per se, but primarily due to the complications brought on by the bleeding induced dehydration. We know today that when a patient contracts a case of strep throat, they need to be hydrated, not dehydrated. Yet ironically, the well-meaning physicians of the day, using the popular mode of treatment, did exactly the opposite of what they needed to do and of course made the situation worse.

There is, in this story, a stunning analogy with respect to the use of prisons in an American context. Just as bleeding was used as the response to virtually all ailments of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and just as it made things worse, prison is used as the response to virtually all crimes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and is making things worse; strep throat, consumption, the plague... bleed them drug user, burglar, robber... imprison them. Just as medicine in that day had no concept of inter and intra disease specificity and the need for individualized treatment modalities, we in criminology also suffer today with an inability to deal with inter and intra crime variation.

Had George Washington's health improved (and there was a chance it could have for he was a man of large stature), the physicians likely would have suggested it was due to the bleeding, and perhaps touted his case as yet another example of the value of that treatment modality. But of course, such treatment is de-habilitating, and any improvement in Washington's health subsequent to the bleeding would have been *despite*, not because of the treatment received.

A systematic analysis would have revealed this to be the case of course, but, there were few systematic analyses undertaken within the field of medicine prior to the 1800s. By in large, the crime prevention programs that we utilize in the United States have not been systematically evaluated. Quite an interesting state of affairs. Imagine a pharmaceutical firm introducing a new drug into the market that has not been adequately tested and approved by the Food and Drug Administration. We need a criminological FDA. No crime response or prevention program should be im-



plemented until it has been adequately tested, until it has been subjected to repeated, thorough, systematic quantitative evaluation, and one way to facilitate this is to develop justice education programs in universities all around the world.

We should also consider the fact that there are programs that have been shown via systematic evaluation to be viable, but are not politically palatable. This situation is not limited to criminology. Consider, for example, the case of Joseph Goldberger, sent by the United States government to the southern American states in 1913 in an attempt to discover the cause and cure for pellagra, a disease that was ravaging that area of our nation. He discovered that the disease was due to a lack of niacin in the diet. Goldberger, a Jew from the northern United States, then began to relay his findings to the southern community populous and leadership. His work was summarily rejected, due in part to the fact that he was a Jew, in part due to the fact that he was from the North, and in part because of a general fear of change, a xenophobia amongst the populous. He was eventually recalled by the United States federal government due to the animosity spreading throughout the American South on this matter. He died, definitively knowing he had found the cause and cure of pellagra, but infinitely frustrated in that he had been unable to reach the body politic with the findings.

This account highlights the need for scientific criminologists to recognize that there are actually two fields that need to be surmounted if impact is to be achieved... scientific criminology and political criminology. As quantitatively sound as it is, removing handguns from the American public is just not going to happen, despite the fact that a successfully implemented policy of this nature would result in fewer murders. As quantitatively sounds as it is, the horribly unbalanced social inequality quotient is not going to be addressed in America, despite the fact that this is clearly a precipitating factor when it comes to crime issues. There is no political capital for seriously addressing either notion in the United States. They are not politically palatable themes. There are political truths and there are scientific truths. Consequently, our role as criminologists and justice professionals is to not only uncover scientific truths, but to also be attuned to the zeitgeist and seek to bring about change when the timing is right, and, we must engage in activities that create an environment where truths can be implemented.

## **7. Conclusions**

Criminology today, like medicine 200 years ago, is faced with a literal plethora of concerns, and only if it adopts the same procedural model as medicine (cross national education, experimental design, interdisciplinary orientation, a focus on the political as well as the scientific), will we see progress. I do call upon you to markedly increase the presence of criminology in the colleges and universities in your country as a first step. If you are serious about enhancing justice, about heightening the sense of peace and improving socio-economic stability, about obtaining more external investment, about reducing corruption, you need to bring justice education programs to your universities. It may take a generation to have the desired impact, but this will work.



Great challenges lay ahead, for you and for me, in our lives, in our response to the inequities and injustices in the world around us. There are people to be fed, reefs and forests to be protected, life in all forms to be preserved, and wrongs to be righted in many spheres. In your contemporary quest of that which is great and good, as you pursue knowledge and truth, more will be asked of you than has perhaps ever been asked of you before. You must seek out and contribute, you must plant the seeds for a culture of long-term thinking and you must do so with an eternal tenacity that is in defiance of the hopelessness.

I wish you well in your endeavors as you extend the limits of your abilities through collective innovation and creativity, and will watch with excitement as you reach out and take a more active role in your region, and in the world arena.

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