

Comments from Prof. David T. Johnson, PhD

The creation of the *Pakistan Journal of Criminology* is a welcome development for at least three reasons. For one thing, Pakistan is one of the most important countries to the future of the world, and its crime and justice challenges are formidable. For another, criminology journals in the West tend to be parochial and provincial. In *Criminology*, for example, the flagship journal of the American Society of Criminology, only 7.4 percent of articles published in the decade between 1990 and 1999 had any kind of international or comparative focus. That is less than one article in thirteen for a journal that was established in 1963! The third reason to be delighted about the advent of this journal is personal: Pakistan is, criminologically speaking, not only a fascinating place but also one that can be understood in significant part through the vehicle of English. For outsiders like me, that makes criminology in your country penetrable in ways that criminologies in many other countries are not.

Editor-in-Chief Fasihuddin has asked me to offer a few suggestions for this new journal; here are three. First, there are many interesting criminological topics to explore in Pakistan itself, but it is my hope that the *PJC* will cast its net broader than its own backyard. There are important historical and cultural connections between the nations of South Asia, and that means it will often make sense to compare Pakistan to India and Bangladesh (among other nations in the region). As the eminent American sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset often stressed, it is impossible to understand a country without seeing how it varies from others; those who know only one country know no country. Perhaps in eight or ten years *PJC* will be known as the preeminent criminology journal *in and of* South Asia.

Second, aim for intellectual rigor, but please don't get preoccupied with trying to be "scientific." The scientific method is powerful, of course, and some criminology subjects are amenable to exploration with it, but many more are not. There are and ought to be many legitimate forms of research in criminology, from true and pseudo-experiments to ethnography, statistical analysis, case study, and historical speculation. In the end, the aim of all of these approaches is to weave narratives about human behavior, and all of these approaches (and more) ought to be admissible as ways of telling stories: the less concern about method, the better.

Finally, the ultimate purpose of research should be not so much to add to the "field" of criminology as to contribute to human understanding and decency. We might even take a hint from great works of fiction. Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* were not written by persons who wanted to improve the art of the novel but by persons who wanted to improve the art of living together. I hope this journal will aspire to do what great novelists and religious saints do well: rediscover the truths of social life (much of the best social research never really discovers anything, it rediscovers what we once were told and need to be told again); comment on and criticize the behavior of people (perhaps criminology should be regarded as a branch of moral philosophy?); and put forward ideas, images, and metaphors that will help humans live with some measure of understanding and dignity.

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