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April 2007

Investigating the Worldwide Popularity of Forensics

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Stankiewicz, Heather, "Investigating the Worldwide Popularity of Forensics" (2007). *Pell Scholars and Senior Theses*. 12.

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Over the past decade, there has been an increasing fascination with the field of forensic science around the globe. “Forensic science is undergoing a global expansion and becoming increasingly important, both as an area of study and to the criminal justice system. The police, courts and juries are also increasingly demanding more objective scientific evidence” (Chiesa 5). “Although the first book of forensic medicine was published in 1400 in China, the scientific investigation of crimes has become more sophisticated only in the past 100 years. The 1990s saw enormous advances in the field of forensic science and, like medical care, has moved away from generalization toward specialization” (drhenrylee.com). Television shows, such as “CSI,” “Law and Order,” “24,” “Crossing Jordan,” and “Forensic Files,” have had such high ratings that producers are having a hard time keeping up with the demand from their viewers. These popular shows are broadcasted to various countries around the world including, the United States, England, Thailand, India, and many more. Because of the popularity of these shows, there is an overwhelming interest for educational programs so that others can establish careers that imitate their favorite actors on television. Worldwide, colleges have established undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs pertaining to the study of forensics. Such colleges include, the University of New Haven in Connecticut, the University of Wisconsin, the Philippine College of

Criminology, and the University of Glamorgan in England, just to name a few. Similar programs are even being introduced into high schools and middle schools in the United States, the UK, and even Australia. To keep up with the growing interest in the study of this field, international conferences have been held by various forensic science organizations in order for professionals to share their knowledge and aid less fortunate countries, such as Turkey and Nigeria, in establishing successful forensic science units for their police forces. In recent years, the popularity of forensic science has become a universal phenomenon ever since countries around the world have been exposed to this field through the powerful influence of media and television, specialized educational programs, international forensic science organizations, and field relating conferences.

Even though the word “forensics” has become a part of every day language, one may ask to elaborate on its true definition. The British Forensic Science Service (FSS) defines forensics as “the application of science to the law” (Evening Gazette 5). Similarly, the South African Sunday Times defines forensics as “the use of scientific techniques to gather evidence for use in legal cases...It can help the police to identify criminals responsible for assault, robbery, kidnappings, rape and murder.” Forensic scientists provide scientific evidence for use in the courts to support either the prosecution or defense in criminal and civil investigations. A common misconception about the work of forensic scientists is that they merely investigate murder and homicide. However, their job entails much more by focusing on numerous specializations, including DNA analysis, drug analysis, forensic chemistry, forensic anthropology, forensic photography, latent fingerprints, crime scene investigation, and the list continues. For instance, some forensic scientists use scientific techniques in order to determine if “industries are releasing harmful chemicals into the environment in dangerous quantities” (South

Africa Sunday Times). Because of the unimaginable detail that goes into each investigation, forensic scientists often specialize in specific areas including toxicology, which is the study of poisons and drugs; odontology, the study of teeth and bite patterns; pathology, the study of body fluids and tissues; and even entomology, the study of the type and degree of development of maggots on a corpse to determine how long ago the victim died (South African Sunday Times).

One factor that adds to the worldwide popularity of forensics occurs through the world of television. Because of the powerful influence that media and television has on individuals, it is not surprising that the plethora of television shows based on the law and criminal investigations have become a part of one's daily schedule. Shows, such as "CSI," "Law and Order," "24," "Crossing Jordan," and "Forensic Files," tend to be at the top of one's favorite television show list. Although these shows are most popular at the present time, there have been many others prior to these, including "Murder She Wrote," "Matlock," "Perry Mason," and "Diagnosis Murder." Since these shows appear on various channels at all times of the day, a person can watch the leading story on their local news about the overnight shooting while eating breakfast, watch "Murder She Wrote" reruns during their lunch hour, and get together with their family to watch "CSI" after dinner.

The television show, "CSI," which is short for crime scene investigation, has become a topic at many dinner tables throughout the world after debuting on October 6, 2000 (Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia). After its debut, this show immediately received some of the highest ratings on television. To meet the demands from its viewers, additional shows were added such as, "CSI Miami," which debuted in September 2002 and "CSI New York," which debuted two years later in May 2004. The show has its own website containing many helpful definitions of forensic science terms, tools, and procedures in order for its viewers to better understand what is

taking place on their favorite show. “CSI” has also released various seasons on DVD, has its very own board game, video game, computer program, clothing apparel, and created numerous posters. This show has not only taken the United States by storm, but has also become popular in a number of other countries, large and small, around the world. Some of the larger countries that air the show include Canada, England, China, Germany, and India. “Ever since AXN started beaming its investigative series ‘Crime Scene Investigation’ (or ‘CSI’ as it’s better known), featuring Grissom and his team, into Indian homes, a captive audience has been captivated even more” (The Hindu). The show is also popular in smaller countries, such as Croatia, Kenya, Paraguay, Turkey, and Thailand (Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia). “The show is one of the most popular programmes in the US and also a hit with Thai forensic scientists, as it is all about what they do in every day life” (The Nation). Even though the show’s title may be translated into various languages, such as Thailand’s “*ทีมงานตามล่าหาความจริง*” (“The Truth Chasing Team”), viewers across the globe seem to be fascinated by “CSI.”

Another popular show similar to “CSI” is “Law and Order.” This show, which debuted on September 13, 1990, is the “longest running crime scene series and second longest drama series in the history of television” (NBC). This hour-long show “Law and Order” focuses on the daily life of the New York Police Department. The first half hour of the show deals with the crime and the investigation, whereas the second half hour looks mainly at the court system. To meet the overwhelming interest of the viewers, “Law and Order,” like “CSI,” also created additional shows, such as “Law and Order: Criminal Intent” and “Law and Order: Special Victims Unit.” Another similarity with “CSI” is that “Law and Order” also has numerous video and computer games in order to allow others to solve similar crimes as they see on television. Like “CSI,” “Law and Order” also has worldwide viewers in numerous countries around the

world, including Canada, Australia, Israel, France, Poland, Serbia, and the list continues (Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia).

Three other shows that are on the same lines as the previous two mentioned, are “24,” “Crossing Jordan,” and “Forensic Files.” The show, “24,” debuted on November 6, 2001 and pulls in high ratings across the globe. It not only airs in United States, but also in Canada, Hong Kong, Finland, Mexico, Portugal, and again, the list keeps on going. This show also has its own video game, board game, and an upcoming movie to be released in 2008. Around the same time as “24’s” debut, “Crossing Jordan” joined the world of crime-solving television. The website for this show reaches out to its viewers with a section entitled, “forensic reports,” which lists the name of the victim or victims, the cause of death, and the lab work done for each episode. This show also broadcasts around the world to such countries as Belarus, Australia, Italy, Spain, etc., etc. One more television show that has aired more than nine hundred episodes is “Forensic Files,” which airs daily on Court TV. The show came to Court TV in 2000, but originally aired on TLC in 1995 as “Medical Detectives.” The website for “Forensic Files” is the most elaborate and the most informative of all the shows’ websites. It lists a variety of forensic techniques, a forensic timeline, and a glossary of terms. Through this site, one can be directed to a forensic lab, which plays certain videos pertaining to DNA evidence, the investigation of bite marks, and fingerprinting.

Although all of these shows mentioned were created in the United States, other countries, such as the UK, have also created similar television shows. For example, the show, “Waking the Dead,” is a British television crime drama produced by the BBC featuring a team of CID police officers, a psychological profiler, and a forensic scientist or pathologist. Since its debut on

September 4, 2000, the show has not only aired in the UK, but also in the United States as well as Australia (Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia).

Older shows, including “Murder She Wrote,” “Matlock,” “Perry Mason,” and “Diagnosis Murder,” have also led to the widespread popularity of forensics. For example, “Murder, She Wrote” starring Angela Lansbury debuted on September 20, 1984 and became TV’s longest-running mystery series before ending on May 19, 1996. Reruns of this show still air on various television stations in countries around the globe including Finland, Greece, Japan, and Romania. Another show entitled “Matlock” ran from September 23, 1986 to May 7, 1995. This is an American legal drama that is still showed on various television channels across the country. “Perry Mason” is an older show that has set a precedent for some of the present-day crime television shows. This American series ran from September 21, 1957 to May 22, 1966 and currently has a seasonal DVD set in stores today. Lastly, “Diagnosis Murder” is another murder mystery television show ran from October 29, 1993 to May 11, 2001. Reruns of this show still appear on televisions in the United States, Australia, Japan, Slovenia, Spain, and the United Kingdom (Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia).

Because of the high ratings these shows have received, many of their viewers have been inspired to study the field and make this a career for themselves. “Television series such as *Silent Witness* and *CSI* packed with forensic investigations have become recruitment adverts for careers in forensics” (Pandya 25). As a result, various educational programs have become offered at colleges, high schools, and even middle schools in order for viewers to imitate their favorite actors on these shows. Currently, colleges and universities throughout the world either have a forensic science program or are soon initiating one. Countries around the world including

the United States, have allowed such programs to even reach the high school and middle school levels.

In 2004, the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater wanted to build a forensic science major in order to “educate students to use science in criminal investigations” (Jaeger C1). Various University of Wisconsin campuses had programs related to forensics, but nothing that studied the field in particular detail. Today, this forensic science major is up and running at the Whitewater campus.

Other colleges and universities in the United States joining the University of Wisconsin include the University of New Haven, Drexel University, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, George Washington University, and even Salve Regina University, just to name a few. The University of New Haven in Connecticut offers an undergraduate program as well as a master’s program in forensic science. John Jay College of Criminal Justice goes one step further by offering an undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral program. Even small, liberal arts colleges such as, Salve Regina University, are adding similar programs. As the work study student for Dr. Robin Hoffmann, chairperson of the Administration of Justice Department, I have helped her and Dr. Zuccarelli, the chairperson of the biology and chemistry departments, to construct a forensic science concentration. Hopefully, this option will be available to students within the next year or two.

However, such programs are not only offered in the United States, but also in countries around the world. For example, the University of Glamorgan located in the United Kingdom, is one of the first universities in the UK to establish a degree course in forensic science. The University of Glamorgan’s “well established and respected courses in forensic science and police sciences are proving to be extremely popular” (Lewis 33). Another school, Queensland

University of Technology, located in Australia, expanded its forensic science course to a full major in 2004. Through this major, “students can expect to immerse themselves in activities such as crime scene investigation, fingerprinting, forensic photography, toxicology and pharmacology and other important analytical techniques” (Mulhall E26). India’s Punjabi University began offering a masters and doctorate program in forensic science in 1974. Over the years, their department has held many national and international conferences, workshops, and seminars. Their most recent workshop focusing on facial reconstruction took place in April 2005. These programs offer numerous specialty areas within the majors including, fire and explosion investigation, chemistry, molecular and cell biology, criminalistics, forensic geology, psychology, analytical science and toxicology, DNA analysis, and interpretation of forensic evidence.

Similar programs have also become offered in numerous high schools and middle schools, especially in the United States. Professor of forensics at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Lawrence Koblinsky, stated, “I spoke to about 150 high school guidance counselors looking to add forensic science classes” (Richardson 1G). Examples of such high schools include Marysville High School in California, Granite Bay High School also in California, River Hills High School in Maryland, and Penn Hills High School in Pennsylvania.

After forty years of teaching high school science, Marysville High School science teacher, Vera Bryan, wanted to find a new way to captivate her students. The typical science experiments were no longer doing the trick, so Bryan decided that she would introduce aspects of forensics into her course. She believed that this would be something that her students were familiar with by watching the various television shows mentioned earlier. Like Bryan, Sharry Colnar, a science teacher at Granite Bay High School in California, decided to create a similar

curriculum. Colnar's courses look at real life cases and have become the region's most sophisticated program. Her students have studied the details of the O.J. Simpson case, the "I-5 Strangler, and the raid of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas. Kori Faber, one of Colnar's students, has been so inspired by her class that "she wants to attend the University of California, Davis, and earn a master's degree in forensic science" (Yost B1). "Marysville and other Sacramento-region campuses, like Granite Bay and Sheldon high schools, are part of a nationwide phenomenon, thanks, in part, to the enormous popularity of TV crime programs such as 'CSI' and 'Law and Order'" (Yost B1).

Another school, River Hills High School, located in Maryland, experienced a similar situation. Science teacher, Terri Bradford, also wanted to keep her students interested in her class. Therefore, she incorporated forensic techniques, complete with fake corpses and bloody footprints, to solve mock crime scenes. By the year 2002, Bradford's class became so popular that she began teaching three to four classes a year focusing solely on forensic science. Sarah Favinger, one of Bradford's freshman science students, stated, "I think [forensic science] is a fun science, more than just laws. ...I watch CSI and the Discovery Channel, and I think it's cool that we have the opportunity to understand what they do" (Richardson). "Nationally, classes in forensic pathology are increasing in popularity, buoyed by attention from hit television crime programs such as CSI. Nine of eleven high schools in Howard County offer forensic science classes" (Richardson 1G).

Similar to the schools mentioned above, teacher Jim Rocco of Penn Hills High School in Pennsylvania, has also initiated a forensic science program to keep up with the rest of the schools in the country. "Rocco set up the crime scene in the varsity boys' locker room at the high school -- with ketchup -- as a part of the new 'Forensic Science' class offered as an elective for the first

time this school year” (Cannon). As Jim Rocco stated, “I could lecture about cell respiration or the digestive system all day in class and maybe no one would be interested, but when you start talking about analyzing food as evidence in a decomposing body, then they listen” (Cannon).

A man who can identify with Jim Rocco is Scott Rubins, an investigator stationed in a *forensics* lab in New York City working to identify the remains of 9/11 terrorist-attack victims. Rubins has brought the knowledge he gained to his day job--in a public high school. Scott Rubins teaches five sections of high school *forensic science* at New Rochelle High School just outside New York City. As Rubins states, "It turns out that processing the world's largest crime scene is very much like processing the world's smallest crime scene. My students and I had a lot of discussions about 9/11 this past year. And now we have the chance to teach it as *science* and work to understand the whole process. This is real life” (Colgan 59).

Not only are such programs popular in high schools throughout the country, but these courses are also surfacing in various middle schools. Such schools include Carey Junior High in Cheyenne, Wyoming; Eberhart Elementary School in Chicago, Illinois; Caesar Chavez Middle School in Hayward, California; and Brentwood Middle School in Colorado.

These high school and middle school teachers can access the Court TV website to find ideas for experiments to bring to their forensic science classes through the newly developed, Forensics in the Classroom (FIC). This educational program was developed as a part of a continuing educational partnership with the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. “FIC was launched on Court TV’s website in 2002 as the first-ever, free standards-based forensic science curriculum for high school science teachers” (PR Newswire). Since that time, this educational material has also reached numerous middle schools around the country. From 2002 when this program was created, teachers have been able to simply download the activities, which lists the

situation and the tools needed to investigate the make-believe crime scene. Such activities include, “The Cafeteria Caper,” “It’s Magic!,” and “Renters Beware.” Through “The Cafeteria Caper,” students are able to determine who vandalized the school’s cafeteria by using forensic science techniques such as, enzyme tests, as well as hair, blood, and DNA analysis. In order that they might find out who snatched the award-winning pooch from his master’s home, “It’s Magic!” teaches students how to use handwriting analysis, pH paper, and paper chromatography. Through “Renters Beware,” students are faced with “a makeshift chemistry laboratory, strange vials of liquid, and a money-hungry landlord all combine to create this puzzle. To solve the mystery, students will first use a flame test to determine the contents of the vials, then a Kastle-Meyer test and fingerprint matching to find the owner of the lab and uncover the plot” (Court TV). “Since its debut, more than 6,000 teachers have downloaded the materials” (PR Newswire).

One teacher using the material provided by Court TV’s FIC is Caitlin Engle of Norwalk High School in Connecticut. Due to the FIC program, Engle’s traditional biology courses now have a crime solving twist. “Unusual items add realism to discussions and case studies, such as catalog-purchased glass fragments, ammunition casings, as well as skulls and skeletons” (District Administration).

The question now raised is whether or not high schools and middle schools in other countries are doing the same. Like the United States, there are plenty of forensic science programs within colleges and universities worldwide. This leads one to believe that these countries also have high schools and middle schools offering similar courses in forensics that influence their career direction. For instance, the Cheshire Police’s crime scene investigators in England have teamed up with schools in Winsford, specifically Woodford High School, to allow students to “conduct experiments on forensic evidence and question suspects relating to a crime

involving the kidnappers of a rare dog” (BBC News). Also, an Australian physicist and graduate of Queensland University, Ruben Meerman, has involved more than 100,000 Australian children in solving a fictional crime using forensics. Meerman has turned his teaching program into a competition, Planet Science Whodunit, to the UK in hopes of getting 500,000 eight to 15 year olds to do the same. Through the program, children must use ink chromatography tests, handwriting analyses, and fiber scrapings in order to win the competition by solving the crime (BBC News).

Once the students are intrigued enough by these educational resources that they choose a career path in the forensic science field, many of them join the various international organizations that are available pertaining to their field of study. Such forensic science organizations include the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS), the Forensic Science Service (FSS), the International Association of Forensic Sciences (IAFS), the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors (ASCLD), and the International Information Systems Forensics Association (IISFA). These international organizations work at sharing information, knowledge, and advancements within the field to help each other as well as establishing effective forensic units in other less fortunate countries.

The American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) serves the United States, Canada, as well as fifty other countries worldwide. This organization, which has been in existence for over fifty years, is committed to the education of forensics. Its members include criminalists, educators, attorneys, physicians, engineers, psychiatrists, and so on and so forth. As one of the most prestigious forensic organizations in the world, it gains its popularity through its international journal entitled, “Journal of Forensic Sciences,” as well as its newsletters and annual meetings. The AAFS recently held their fifty-ninth annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas

from February 19-24, 2007 and will also hold their next annual meeting entitled “The Forensic Sciences- An International Treasure” in Washington D.C. in February 2008. The AAFS also co-sponsors the Forensic Science Educational Conferences that are held in order to develop challenging and innovative curricula for high school as well as middle school teachers in establishing forensic science courses. Three conferences are already scheduled for the summer of 2007 around the country including Minnesota, Hawaii, and Virginia. The AAFS is also offering a ten-day trip to Israel in the summer of 2007 in order to meet forensic science colleagues in Israel and learn about the country’s policies. A similar tour is also scheduled for Italy in the summer of 2008 (AAFS.org).

The Forensic Science Service (FSS) serves police forces in England and Wales as well as sharing its expertise internationally. It has eleven facilities located throughout the United Kingdom and is the leading employer of forensic scientists in England providing jobs for over twenty-five hundred people. “The Forensic Science Service (FSS) employs scientists to work in areas such as DNA to firearms, toxicology to accident investigation, electronic caseworkers to scene of crime examiners as well as administration staff” (Pandya). From the year 2004 to 2005, the FSS dealt with one hundred thousand cases, attended eighteen hundred crime scenes, and appeared as expert witnesses in court on twenty-five hundred occasions. The members’ main roles are to investigate property crime, crimes against persons, international crime, organized crime, road policing, hi-tech crime, and commercial testing. The FSS mission statement is “to retain and reinforce our leading position as the principal provider of forensic science to the UK criminal justice system (UKCJS), and use this platform to become the leading provider world-wide, thereby enhancing long term shareholder value” (Forensic Science Service).

The International Association of Forensic Sciences (IAFS) is an international organization inaugurated in 1957 whose goal is to develop the forensic sciences, assist forensic scientists and others to exchange knowledge, and organize meetings to share new advancements. Its members consist of anyone working in the related forensic science field. The IAFS holds a meeting every three years to create worldwide enthusiasm about the fascinating field of forensics. Some of these meetings have been held in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Continental Europe, Australia, and Japan. The most recent meeting was held at the Convention and Exhibition Centre in Wan Chai, Hong Kong from August 21-26, 2005 where over 1300 forensic scientists from 55 countries attended (IAFS2008.com). The main theme of five-day meeting was “Justice Through Science” in which participants discussed the relationship between forensic science and a variety of aspects such as education, drug abuse, pathology, nursing, computer forensic and digital evidence (China Daily). The eighteenth IAFS triennial meeting is planned for July 21-26, 2008 in New Orleans, Louisiana (IAFS2008.com).

The American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors (ASCLD) is another international organization whose goal is “to provide leadership in the forensic community and to assist its members by providing information, training and networking opportunities” (The American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors). This organization has various international liaisons who work at sharing information to create a well educated society in the field of forensic science. The ASCLD recently toured South America in order to observe how the transfer of forensic science knowledge is developing at major crime laboratories in certain countries such as, Colombia, Chile, and Argentina. While touring South America, the ASCLD joined up with the AAFS in Argentina to hold the first Congreso Internacional de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses (International Meeting of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences). A variety of countries were

represented at the meeting, including Brazil, Peru, Cuba, Spain, Mexico, the United States, and many others.

Another powerful organization in the field of forensics is the International Information Systems Forensics Association (IISFA). The IISFA is “a nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote the discipline of information forensics in the form of evangelism, education, and certification” (International Information Systems Forensics Association). Like most of the other organizations, the IISFA’s members include professionals from all areas of the forensic science field. This international association is rapidly expanding with the opening of its new chapters in Italy and South Africa.

One more organization is The Northern Ireland Forensic Science Agency, which “has earned an international reputation for its work in firearms and explosives” (BBC News). Professionals from all over the world have come to Northern Ireland to study their methods of forensic examination. Indonesia is just one of these countries who has visited Northern Ireland. Major Bambang of the Indonesian National Police Force proclaimed, “I know that the forensic laboratory in Northern Ireland is the best laboratory in the world in firearms and explosives” (BBC News).

There have also been many other organizations which have held numerous international conferences to share information and advancements of this captivating field. For example, the Northeastern Association of Forensic Scientists held their 30th annual meeting in New York in 2004 where “there were more young women than at an Upper East Side singles bar; 86 people, almost a third of those in attendance, were students – not long ago it was more like 10 – and new forensics programs are popping up almost monthly on college campuses. And television shows like “C.S.I.” and its various imitators have become so popular that middle schools and high

schools are using materials from forensic courses to get their students interested in chemistry and biology” (Applebome 5).

In 2003, the First African Forensic Science Conference was held in Pretoria, South Africa. This conference was hosted by the South African Police Service’s forensic science laboratory (FSL) and sponsored by the European Union. Approximately 400 delegates from countries, such as the United Kingdom, Namibia, Mauritius, Tanzania, Germany, France and Australia, attended the conference. A police spokesman stated that this four-day conference that “local and African forensic examiners stand to benefit most from this, as they will gain first hand knowledge of the latest developments in various subject fields including forensic biology, chemistry, toxicology, explosives and crime scene management” (Global News Wire).

Another international conference was the Beyond Tomorrow- Forensics for the Future Conference held in April 2004 at the Belfry in Warwickshire, England. This two-day conference was hosted by the National Crime Squad to develop a definitive handbook to tackle everything from terrorism and the drugs trade to human trafficking as well as creating its new Forensic Services Unit, its specialist Illicit Labs Unit and a research and development program which offers PhD scholarships to support academic research. National Crime Squad Assistant Chief Constable Jim Gamble stated, “by bringing together an army of experts from around the world, we intend to pool their knowledge and trade secrets to formulate a co-ordinated high-tech assault on organized crime” (Birmingham Post). Home Office Minister Caroline Flint summed it up best saying, “cutting edge forensic technology is key to combating crime in the 21st century” (Birmingham Post).

It is important to share such information so that citizens in all countries, including less fortunate countries, will feel safe. For example, due to the few forensic scientists in Hong Kong,

it “would not have enough forensic scientists to carry out investigations and mass victim identification in a major catastrophe” (Moy 2). Hong Kong is not the only country that is behind in this field. “Turkey has around two hundred and fifty forensic scientists, with most of them located in Istanbul...some medical facilities even lacked a proper forensic science department” (Turkish Daily News). Like Hong Kong and Turkey, Nigeria is also suffering from the lack of a successful forensic science program. “The efficiency of the Nigeria Police has been severely limited in carrying out scientific analysis of crimes because of lack of a standard forensic laboratory” (Africa News). As a result, countries such as the UK have stepped in to rehabilitate the forensic science laboratory in Nigeria. “By the time the forensic science laboratory is fully rehabilitated the Nigeria Police Force will be in a better position to scientifically detect and analyze crime and criminality with greater precision” (Africa News). After receiving the necessary funding from the United Nations, two Kosovan doctors, Aida Berisha and Zarife Miftari, have studied forensic science at the University of Dundee in the UK in order to identify the victims of war, conduct homicide investigations, and assist in rape and child abuse cases in their homeland (BBC News). While these Kosovan doctors were studying in the UK, forensic experts from around the world, including the UK, set out to investigate the way in which thousands of Kosovans met their deaths in the Balkans (BBC News). Also with this shared knowledge, Taiwan used its learned forensic techniques to identify victims of the Tsunami that occurred in 2004; Sarajevo has been able to identify the human remains of those who went missing in the 1991-1995 conflict; and DNA evidence contributed to the identification of over ninety percent of the victims of the Twin Towers attack (BBC- Science & Nature). Without this shared knowledge, the criminals of underdeveloped countries would be set free due to poor scientific evidence.

One man who has shared his knowledge around the world is renowned forensic scientist, Dr. Henry Lee, who is often referred to as a modern-day Sherlock Holmes or Bill Nye, the Science Guy of forensics. At the age of sixty-eight, this Chinese American has made numerous contributions to the field. According to his very own website, drhenrylee.com, Lee has “assisted in the investigations of more than 6,000 cases, including war crimes in Bosnia and Croatia, the suicide of President Clinton's former White House attorney, Vince Foster, review of the JFK assassination, and the death of Jon Benet Ramsey.” However, he is probably most known for his work in the O.J. Simpson trial. He is currently the Chief Emeritus of the Connecticut State Police and has held many other respectable titles, such as Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Public Safety; Chief Criminalist, State of Connecticut; Director, Connecticut State Police Forensic Science Laboratory; Professor, Forensic Science Program, University of New Haven; Research Scientist, New York University Medical Center; Captain, Taipei Police Headquarters, Taiwan. His work is not only found in the United States, but around the globe. For instance, he has recently opened a training center for Chinese detectives at the Hubei University of Police in Wuhan, China. The focus of the new center will be on forensic research, covering the areas of DNA, fingerprints, gathering of evidence, and crime scene investigation (China Daily).

The topic, “Investigating the Worldwide Popularity of Forensics,” addresses many of the Salve Regina University Pell Honors Program’s themes, including global issues, cultural differences and advancements, and international relations and influences. Unfortunately, crime is a global issue that occurs each and every day. Through the use of forensic science, these crimes can be solved by well-educated professionals. Although there are many cultural differences among the various scientists from different countries, they have managed to form international relations in order to share knowledge and continue in making advancements within the field.

Countries around the globe have become united to learn about the world of forensics by watching the same television shows, such as “CSI” and “Law and Order,” educating themselves from the middle school age all the way up to the doctoral degree age, joining numerous forensic science organizations, attending international conferences, and learning about other successful professionals in the field, such as Dr. Henry Lee. As Isaac Asimov stated, “There is a single light of science, and to brighten it anywhere is to brighten it everywhere” (Wikiquote).

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