

The Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research

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The Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (SCCJR) was formally launched on 4th June 2007, representing a significant moment in the development of criminological and criminal justice research in Scotland. The launch took place at Glasgow University and was attended by over 120 academics, policy makers, and criminal justice practitioners.

SCCJR is a research consortium forged from a unique partnership between Glasgow, Edinburgh, Stirling and Glasgow Caledonian Universities, in alliance with Aberdeen, Dundee, Strathclyde and St Andrews Universities. SCCJR conducts and disseminates research, and offers training, consultancy and knowledge transfer in relation to crime and criminal justice. It has received core funding of £2.6 million over four years from the Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Executive Justice Department, with considerable additional investment from all of the partner universities to support staffing and infrastructure.

SCCJR has had a long genesis. Its formal establishment represents the culmination of several years work by a number of people, starting in late 2002 when Professor Sir Anthony Bottoms was commissioned by the Scottish Executive Justice Department, in collaboration with the Scottish Funding Council, to provide an appraisal of the nature, quality and capacity of the criminal justice research capability in Scotland and to consider the case for a university-based Scottish criminal justice research centre. Professor Bottoms review was, happily, in favour of such a centre, and thus began a lengthy and lively proposal process, and a very productive period of discussion and negotiation involving academic criminologists in several Scottish universities, the university senior officers and the potential funders. Professor Hans-Juergen Kerner of Tuebingen University in Germany brought an astute international perspective to the assessment process, and the collaborative proposal submitted by the partner institutions was accepted in 2005. We are therefore most grateful to both Tony Bottoms and to Hans-Juergen Kerner, as well as to the other (unknown) reviewers for their sustained efforts in helping us bring this initiative, finally, to fruition.

As we all know, Scotland is a small country, yet it has distinctive criminal

justice, education and social work systems which result in distinctive rules, practices and procedures. Particular arrangements, alliances and objectives characterise Scottish criminal justice. We have unique systems of prosecution, criminal procedure, sentencing, prison and parole. We still remain committed to an ethos that is expressed in the continuing commitment to social work with offenders and the welfarism of our Children's Hearing System, although there are increasing signs of neo-correctionalist interventions and the introduction of unsustainable short-term policies. Taken together, Scotland's unique institutional arrangements and particular political and legislative structures render it academically and politically interesting.

In Scotland's changing political landscape, high quality research on crime and criminal justice has possibly never been more important. Devolution saw the establishment of a Justice Department, and two Justice Committees. The Scottish Nationalist Party have recently become Scotland's first minority administration, and their manifesto outlines plans for increased community safety, 'tougher' community penalties, and the possibility of a sentencing council for Scotland. In recent years, the restructuring of the funding and delivery of criminal justice has placed increased demands on Scottish policy-makers, highlighting the need for sensible, evidence-informed policies. Post-Devolution, there has been the assimilation of human rights into Scots law, the introduction of efficiency measures in the governance of crime and the delivery of criminal justice, the inception of the new Community Justice Authorities, and a raft of legislative changes. These include the restructuring of youth justice interventions, the introduction of restriction of liberty orders, anti-social behaviour orders, drug treatment and testing orders, sex offender orders and measures to deal with racial harassment. There have been developments such as local authority community safety planning initiatives, specialist courts (drug courts, youth courts and domestic abuse courts), and the introduction of the national Risk Management Authority (among other initiatives aimed at increasing the protection of the public from serious offenders). Crime and community safety concerns have increasingly been integrated within other areas of public policy and intervention. Scotland has invested heavily in area regeneration, and crime prevention and community safety are prioritised, along with housing and jobs, in all new initiatives. At the same time, like many other jurisdictions, we are seeing increasingly heavy expectations placed on finding criminal justice solutions to complex social and economic problems. There is not only a need for a better understanding of the forces that create a safer, more just society. With major changes in our Government, the time is right to take stock and reflect on what criminal justice agencies can realistically achieve in reducing crime and increasing public safety.

In the face of all of these far-reaching developments, the scope of the crime and criminal justice problems and research puzzles thrown up are almost as great in a small jurisdiction like Scotland as they are in a larger one, but until recently, the number of researchers available to research them in Scotland has been far smaller than in a typical larger jurisdiction. Academic researchers of crime and criminal justice were scattered across several universities, often working alone. A strong research community is needed to ensure the provision of a strong research evidence base. SCCJR allows for the first time in Scotland, a 'critical mass' of criminologists working collectively across institutions to widen the research agenda, engage in international research endeavours, and take forward a programme of high quality, relevant research. Any academic research centre has to ensure it engages in wider theoretical debates, as well as international comparative work. As well as addressing Scottish priorities we need to look outwards to appropriate comparative analyses, as is essential for the optimum development of criminal justice research and policy in a small jurisdiction such as ours.

The main aim of SCCJR is to:

- expand the Scottish research infrastructure in crime and criminal justice by integrating existing research capabilities and creating new expertise;
- carry out integrated programmes of research which improve the evidence base of crime reduction and criminal justice policies;
- make informed conceptual, methodological, and analytical contributions to theoretical thinking and policy development, both nationally and internationally.

Exciting opportunities and challenges have been created by the need to develop theoretically informed and methodologically sound research, which will stimulate and inform understandings of crime and its governance in Scotland's multi-level, multi-agency system of government. Within SCCJR, we are trying to create the conditions whereby an informed and sustained debate about crime and criminal justice can take place. SCCJR draws together individual researchers from the participating institutions to provide a point of reference locally and internationally for criminological research and scholarship. We are developing an active multi-disciplinary academic environment for research and postgraduate teaching, with a series of seminars and workshops, and offer a range of opportunities for postgraduate and early career researchers. In the near future, we will also be introducing secondment opportunities and visiting fellowships for national and international visitors

Core funding has allowed Scottish universities to invest in additional researchers, and offer opportunities for new scholars and for postgraduate study. SCCJR has been very fortunate in attracting talented staff with diverse expertise and skills from a range of social science disciplines. Criminology is distinguished by its inter-disciplinarity – and we have a very good example of this here – with researchers drawn from across the social science base. Those working within SCCJR have international reputations in the broad fields of criminology and criminal justice policy research, especially in the areas of crime prevention, community safety, victims, gender and crime, violence, restorative justice, youth justice, surveillance, the governance of crime, sentencing, prisons, the politics of crime control, and the supervision of offenders. We also have strengths in social theory, criminal law and process, and criminological theory, and staff combine commitments to quantitative and qualitative methods in empirical research.

The work of SCCJR is realised through six thematic Networks, each involving researchers from a number of the participating universities. Five of the networks focus on substantive research, whereas the fifth is concerned with expanding capacity in research expertise, an important component of our work. Together, the Networks provide a framework for the core research programme and a structure for developing communities of enquiry involving researchers and other stakeholders. The Network themes have been adopted as broad contexts in which national policy requirements may be addressed, but which also link with wider theoretical, political and methodological concerns, debates and developments in crime and criminal justice research.

The Networks are:

- Structures and Processes in Criminal Justice Systems
- Evaluating Interventions
- Crime and Communities
- Violence, Risk and Public Health
- CJ-Quest (**Q**uestions, **E**vidence, **S**tatistics, and **T**rends)
- Capacity Building

Each Network is engaged in network building; research programme development; dissemination and knowledge transfer; and development of technical and research expertise. The Networks are each headed up by a Network leader and a senior research fellow who together take the lead in planning research and undertaking projects, liaising with Network members, and integrating capacity building within the work of the Network.

Each Research Network is assisted by an Advisory Committee of academics, and criminal justice practitioners from the public and voluntary sectors, as well as those affected by criminal justice policies. SCCJR is building on good professional links with a range of academics internationally, with policy makers working across a range of government departments and with practitioners working in both statutory and voluntary criminal justice agencies in Scotland, and internationally.

Structures & Processes in Criminal Justice Systems

Work within this Network is concerned with both formal and informal justice processes and practices; with modes of governance and regulation of these processes and practices; with their impact on individuals and communities; and with media representations of and public attitudes towards them. Recent and current research projects include a study of risk assessment and management in relation to children and young people (for the Risk Management Authority); a systematic literature review concerning the cultures of criminal justice organisations and their responses to change; development of a code of practice for the provision of therapeutic services for adult witnesses (for the Scottish Executive Justice Department), and; an assessment of the impact of the gender equality duty on criminal justice agencies (for the Equal Opportunities Commission). Work in this Network incorporates a strong comparative element, an example of this being ongoing work in comparative youth justice undertaken with colleagues from over 30 European states and funded by the European Commission.

This Network is also involved in disseminating findings from an ESRC funded study of sentencing and social enquiry (with colleagues from the Centre for Sentencing Research); in an assessment of the impact of the Routes out of Prison Project (with colleagues in the Criminal Justice Social Work Development Centre at Edinburgh University).

Research proposals are being developed for a study of oral histories of probation in Scotland, of compliance with community penalties, on the regulation of prisons and on the operation and impact of the new Community Justice Authorities.

Evaluating Interventions

This Network is concerned with the appraisal and evaluation of new initiatives, changes and reforms introduced in criminal justice policies, practices and procedures with a view to how best policy and practice might be identified

and developed. This kind of research, specifically empirical work that has included the experiences of those drawn into the criminal justice process (the experiences of offenders, victims and witnesses), has developed a high international profile, and research in this Network draws on relevant developments in other jurisdictions.

Those interested in evaluating interventions and innovations in criminal justice, particularly critical analytical research, face increased competition for funding in a vital area of criminal justice research. This Network aims to encourage high quality and mutually beneficial networking amongst those interested in evaluating interventions in criminal justice, by facilitating research-related activities, forging new research partnerships and possibilities for knowledge transfer, and encouraging dissemination of research and practice.

A range of research and related activities are being undertaken in relation to parole, alternatives to imprisonment, problem-solving justice, sentencing, desistance and rehabilitation. A priority research focus is the emergence of the new community justice model in Scotland, and an assessment, within a comparative international framework, of the distinctive ways in which that model seeks to engage with issues of crime control, and the impact of this approach on offending.

Violence, Risk and Public Health

Violence is a deeply emotive topic that excites much political and public attention, in Scotland, as elsewhere. It is a source of media fascination and the subject of fiction. Yet violence is a slippery term, with no standard definition, which can take on several different meanings dependant on the context in which it takes place. Violence, in whatever its variant forms, is widespread. It is experienced in families, in public situations, at work and in people's treatment of themselves. It is both experienced and used by individuals and by organisations. As a complex phenomenon, its understanding requires the examination of both systemic, situational variables and the dynamics of individual behaviour.

Policy interest in violence in Scotland is stimulated by both notorious events and comparative data, and there is a very high demand for research answers to presenting problems. The task of this Network is to meet that demand but in so doing develop the public discourse about violence, and stimulate a more critical interest in the nature of the phenomenon. The Network is particularly interested to collaborate with agencies that work with violent offenders to

undertake research into interventions designed to reduce levels of violent crime. Current research in this Network includes a study of young women's pathways into violent offending (funded by the ESRC); and the development of theoretical frameworks for the analysis of criminal violence

Crime and Communities

This Network is concerned with the complex inter-relationship between crime and offending and the communities within which this takes place. Communities are, in many ways, the central institution for crime prevention. Families, schools, labour markets, retail establishments, and the police must all confront the consequences of community life. Much of the success or failure of these other institutions is affected by the community context in which they operate. Empirical investigation of the relationship between crime and communities focuses largely on the spatial distribution of crime and the role of the community as both victim and perpetrator; the characteristics of communities that may be key explanatory variables in the causes of crime and disorder, and; the role of the community as an agent with responsibility for the management of crime and disorder.

The Network is currently investigating two themes of key international academic and policy interest: community safety and (in)civility. The community safety portfolio is growing rapidly, posing new challenges to those engaged in service delivery. A major research application is currently under preparation for submission for funding to the EU Framework 7 programme.

Anxiety about the nature and scale of incivility in contemporary society appears to dominate political and community agendas. Work in this Network actively seeks to contribute to the theoretical and empirical understanding of incivility and, crucially, to contemplate the meaning and foundations of civility in a range of settings. A key focus is the critical evaluation of the emergence of anti-social behaviour as a growing problem in terms of its scale, impact on, and consequences for residential communities.

CJ- Quest (Criminal Justice Questions, Evidence, Structures, Trends)

This Network aims to improve the quantitative criminological research base in Scotland by expanding expertise and capacity in survey methodology, statistical analysis and complex data modelling. Quantitative criminology is an area in which there is limited expertise, yet high demand for particular forms of quantitative and statistical analysis. A key aim of this Network is to provide technical training in relevant quantitative methodologies, and

encourage the wider utilisation of statistical and modelling techniques in applied research endeavours. Amongst the skills prevalent within SCCJR are survey design (including various methods of sampling and experience of large scale survey development); survey administration and data collection (including hands on experience of conducting surveys as well as fieldwork management); data quality assurance (such as checking, validation and cleaning); data analysis (from simple descriptive and inferential analysis to complex statistical techniques); and publication of data aimed a wide range of audiences (such as public information documents, policy briefings, research reports, peer reviewed journal articles and books and monographs).

One of the key objectives of this Network is to expand the awareness and use of existing Scottish datasets which contain valuable information for studying crime and criminal justice. CJ-Quest hopes to play a role in the design, methodological development and analysis of the Scottish Crime and Victimization Survey. The Network was recently asked to conduct a review of the questionnaire used for the 2006 Scottish Crime and Victimization Survey. A simultaneous consultation with policy stakeholders was also undertaken (internally by the Scottish Executive), and it is anticipated that the results of both exercises will be used to inform the development of the new Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2007, due to launch in the autumn.

We are also keen to advance methodological development in criminological research more generally by exploring different ways of answering particular research questions. Part of our remit is the promotion and facilitation of Scottish datasets as tools for teaching and training purposes, and we are planning a range of training events which will focus on learning analytical techniques.

Capacity Building

Although all Networks incorporate capacity-building through their research and associated activities, this Network is devoted primarily to capacity building in the area of criminal justice research, with a remit for developing and consolidating applied expertise and liaison with stakeholders.

A key initial project of this Network involves the co-ordination of information about postgraduate training, the development of training resources and provisions for postgraduate students in Scotland. This also involves the identification of, and meeting of demand for, conventional academic and professional training in criminology and criminal justice issues in Scotland. SCCJR is also working closely with the Scottish Institute for Policing

Research (SIPR) (see <http://www.sipr.ac.uk/>) to develop opportunities for cross-fertilisation of both research-related activities, and capacity building.

This Network is developing mechanisms for the introduction of secondment opportunities and visiting fellowships to SCCJR, as well as opportunities for new scholars to engage in the work of SCCJR. A very significant development in this regard has been the recent collaboration of SCCJR with the European Society of Criminology and the Centre for Criminological Research at Sheffield University to support the European Postgraduate and Early Stage Researchers Working Group (<http://www.sccjr.ac.uk/project.php?id=8>). This Working Group provides the opportunity for members to present their research, and provides information on publishing work, pursuing academic/research careers, applying for research funding and working collaboratively.

Promoting a ‘civic criminology’

Effective knowledge transfer is a key goal of SCCJR, and we are developing a unified strategy across the participating universities for a programme of Network-based activities to ensure that there are opportunities for an effective interface between the research community and practitioners and policy makers.

Encouraging a multi-disciplinary approach to criminal justice research in Scotland is a major objective, and the strategic enhancement of capacity building and information sharing through knowledge transfer is crucial here. Inter-sectoral links are being developed with the criminal justice policy community, most notably the Justice Department, but also with the relevant statutory and voluntary agencies, as well as the private sector who are increasingly involved in the prevention of crime and delivery of criminal justice.

Whilst Professor Paul Wiles of the Home Office argues that criminology in England and Wales has “lost the knack of engaging in public debate,” within Scotland we have not yet lost the opportunity to try to foster a more reflexive, civic criminology – explicitly engaging in public dialogues about crime and justice whilst at the same time contributing to critical, theoretical and professional debates in criminology. Within SCCJR, we hope to promote a civic criminology in Scotland by developing research questions in dialogue with affected communities and groups; by using innovative ways to bring criminological research and findings home to the individuals, communities, and institutions that are its focus of study; by engaged scholarship; by better and more effective dissemination of what we already know; by undertaking

innovative and rigorous new research and evaluations; and the promotion of sensible policies. This is ambitious admittedly, but we have the opportunity here.

For more information on the work on SCCJR and all those involved, see <http://www.sccjr.ac.uk/>.