Welcome

It is my pleasure to introduce the SCCJR 2019 Annual Report which showcases the range and richness of activity across and between our partner universities. The Centre’s researchers collectively were managing £7 million in research funds during 2018-19. These projects are very much the result of their own hard work and imaginative thinking about crime, justice and inequalities. It has been my hope and focus that SCCJR can support researchers to undertake such projects by providing a supportive community and stimulating environment for research development, collaboration and dissemination.

This report presents our efforts towards these ends. We have provided seed corn grants to pilot research and build new relationships; hosted symposia and workshops to explore timely ideas; funded PhD led initiatives; funded trips to develop our international partnerships; and more.

I am now stepping down after over three years as Director. It has been a great pleasure to serve in this role and I leave feeling confident of the Centre’s future. I am delighted that Dr Alistair Fraser (University of Glasgow) will be taking over as Director from January 2020. He and the rest of the Centre’s leadership will no doubt take SCCJR in new directions and to new heights in encouraging the best quality research that can support new ways of thinking about and building just societies. I wish him every success.

Sarah Armstrong
Director, SCCJR

Who we are and how we work

SCCJR operates with a single Director (Sarah Armstrong) supported by Associate Directors from each partner institution to carry out annual plans; this constitutes the Management Committee and includes: Anna Souhami and Lesley McAra (Edinburgh); Alistair Fraser (Glasgow); Niall Hamilton-Smith and Margaret Malloch (Stirling); and Laura Piacentini and Beth Weaver (Strathclyde). The SCCJR Board of Governance includes the Vice Principals or Deans of Research from the partner universities who review the work and plans of the centre and approve its expenditure plan.

The Centre is supported by an Administrator (Jennifer Arthur until September 2018; Diane McGrattan from November 2018) and a Communications Officer (Rachelle Cobain).
Awards & Achievements in 2018/19

MICHELE BURMAN
(Glasgow) was made CBE (Commander of the British Empire) in the Queen’s Birthday Honours in recognition of services to Criminology and particularly to research on violence against women and girls.

MARGARET MALLOCH
(Stirling) was made Professor of Criminology and as part of a team of researchers was awarded funding by NSPCC to research ‘The experiences of victims in the criminal justice system’.

RICHARD SPARKS
(Edinburgh) was awarded an honorary doctorate by the KU Leuven Faculty of Law in April, also honouring the 90th anniversary of criminology in Leuven.

FERGUS MCNEILL
(Glasgow) successfully launched his book, Pervasive Punishment: Making Sense of Mass Supervision which encourages readers to look at, listen to and imagine punishment beyond the prison, through the use of innovative and creative methods including photography, song-writing and story-telling to explore and to represent ‘mass supervision.’

LAURA PIACENTINI
(Strathclyde) joined the Advisory Board of the Centre for Criminology at the University of Oxford in June 2019.

LESLIE MCARA and SUSAN McVIE
(Edinburgh) received the 2019 ESRC Impact Prize for Outstanding Public Policy in July for their work on the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime (ESYTC) which followed the lives of 4,300 young people over two decades, tracking development, interactions with police and courts, and the physical and social structure of the neighbourhoods where they lived.

MARGUERITE SCHINKEL
(Glasgow) in the Queen’s Birthday research ‘The experiences of offending and criminal justice Community Justice Scotland services to Criminology and MARGUERITE SCHINKEL
(Glasgow) was made CBE (Commander of the British Honours in recognition of services to Criminology and particularly to research on funding by NSPCC to Escaping violence against women

CAITLIN GORMLEY
(Edinburgh) was elected President of the European Society of Criminology, taking up her role in September 2019.

RICHARD SPARKS
(Edinburgh) was invited to join the KU Leuven Faculty of Law Advisory Board for their 90th anniversary in April 2019.

LESLEY MCARA
(Stirling) is carrying out research as part of a Community Justice Scotland funded project, Escaping a Life Sentence, which examines how people manage and/or fail to leave offending and criminal justice punishment behind.

HANNAH GRAHAM
(Stirling) was invited to become a member of the National Council of the Scottish Association for the Study of Offending (SASO), joining fellow SCCJR colleagues Fergus McNeill and Michele Burman as a member.

OONA BROOKS-HAY
(Glasgow) was awarded funding from SFC’s Global Challenges Research Fund to examine a Ugandan parenting programme and how it reduced gender-based violence.

CAITLIN GORMLEY
(Edinburgh) was awarded an ESRC grant to fund research on ‘Mental Health and Wellbeing of Young People in Custody’ which was part of a larger review carried out by HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland following the deaths of young people in custody.

MARGUERITE SCHINKEL
(Glasgow) was commissioned with John McGhee to produce documentary on the fifth anniversary of the Global Centre for Criminology at the University of Oxford.

BETH WEAVER
(Strathclyde) and colleagues from the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow Caledonian and Northumbria secured funding from the Scottish Universities Insight Institute (SUII) on a project called ‘Coproducing Justice: International Social Economy Network’ which seeks to inform the development of social enterprise and cooperative structures of employment in both work generation and integration for people involved in the justice system.

MICHELE BURMAN and OONA BROOKS-HAY
(Glasgow) won a major grant from Horizon 2020 carry out the Scottish strand of the €2.9 million IMPRODOVA project, a three-year study which will see SCCJR researchers conduct extensive fieldwork across the country.

A paper co-authored by ALISTAIR FRASER
(Glasgow) won an ‘outstanding paper’ award from the Hong Kong Studies Association. The paper was called ‘The Second Life of Kowloon Walled City: Crime, Media and Cultural Memory.’

Caitlin Gormley
(Edinburgh) was awarded an ESRC grant to fund research on the ‘Impact of Prison Visitation’ and to represent the project at a number of conferences.

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SARAH ARMSTRONG
(Glasgow) was awarded an ESRC grant to fund research on the ‘Impact of Prison Visitation’ and to represent the project at a number of conferences.

LESLEY MCARA
(Stirling) was invited to join the KU Leuven Faculty of Law Advisory Board for their 90th anniversary in April 2019.

HANNAH GRAHAM
(Edinburgh) was appointed to the Equality and Human Rights Commission to research into violence.

DONNA MACLELLAN
(Strathclyde) joined the Advisory Board of the Centre for Criminology at the University of Oxford in June 2019.

CAITLIN GORMLEY
(Edinburgh) was awarded an ESRC grant to fund research on the ‘Impact of Prison Visitation’ and to represent the project at a number of conferences.

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Events

Collaboration and partnership are at the heart of the Centre’s work. Bringing the criminal justice community together to discuss, learn and engage is an essential part of furthering our understanding of crime and justice in Scotland and beyond. Here are some of the notable events we organised in 2018/19.

SEPTEMBER 2018  Policing’s Edge Roundtable Discussion
SCCJR in partnership with the Evolving Securities Initiative, Griffith Criminology Institute, Griffith University held an informal roundtable discussion to showcase the work of scholars undertaking innovative research which engages with existing and emerging security challenges in the 21st Century.

NOVEMBER 2018  Pervasive Punishment Book Launch
Prof Fergus McNeill celebrated the publication of his book, Pervasive Punishment: Making sense of mass supervision with readings from the sociological fiction that is a central part of the text and a number of live performances of songs developed to explore aspects of the book.

NOVEMBER 2018  SCCJR 2018 Annual Lecture by Prof Maggy Lee
Prof Maggy Lee, University of Hong Kong delivered the 2018 lecture: ‘The Changing Nature of Border, Criminalization and Mass Deportation in an Age of Migration Control’ to an audience at the University of Strathclyde.

FEBRUARY 2019  Desisting in Prison
Drawing on a sample of long-term prisoners in France, Prof Kazemian presented on her study which examined the processes of adaptation to prison and desistance from crime in the French context. Her talk, ‘Desisting in Prison’ took place at the University of Glasgow.

FEbruary 2019  SCCJR 2018 Annual Lecture by Prof Maggy Lee
Prof Maggy Lee, University of Hong Kong delivered the 2018 lecture: ‘The Changing Nature of Border, Criminalization and Mass Deportation in an Age of Migration Control’ to an audience at the University of Strathclyde.

MARCH 2019  Traces of Law Symposium
The symposium, organised by Dr Andy Aydin-Aitchison (Edinburgh), explored the ways in which archives and other material traces of law can be used in criminology, socio-legal and other social science research. Aura Kostiainen, a visiting PhD candidate from the University of Helsinki, wrote an excellent blog for SCCJR reflecting on the event.

MARCH 2019  The Trouble with ACEs
SCCJR partnered with the ESRC project Understanding Inequalities to host a panel of experts on how ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and trauma informed approaches are an increasingly important means of guiding criminal justice practices. Discussions took place around the enlightened and regressive potential of these as lenses of understanding.

MARCH 2019  Community experiences of Organised Crime: Research and Practice Innovations
In light of the 2018 report ‘Community Experiences of Serious Organised Crime in Scotland’ this event, organised by SCCJR and Scottish Government aimed to strengthen our understanding of the links between Serious Organised Crime (SOC) and communities and provide a platform for raising awareness of some of the latest research developments in this area from across the UK.

APRIL 2019  Scoping a Criminological Research Agenda for the ESRC
Through its Editorship of the journal Criminology and Criminal Justice, many SCCJR colleagues joined academics, policymakers, students and third sector professionals at a half day event in Edinburgh. Richard Sparks (Edinburgh) prepared a paper on the future of criminological research with responding presentations from the President of the British Society of Criminology, Sandra Walklate, among others.

MAY 2019  Stories of Imprisonment and Meaning Graphic Novel Launch
Dr Marguerite Schinkel and illustrator Morag Kewell’s graphic novel, A Life in Pieces, which follows the story of ‘Alison’ as she experiences a number of traumatic events and is repeatedly imprisoned for drug and alcohol related offences was officially launched in Glasgow.

MAY - JULY 2019  Perspectives from the Edges of Exclusion and Punishment (PEEP)
Dr Cara Jardine (Strathclyde) and Dr Louise Brangan (Stirling) launched a new research network for Early Career Researchers with an interest in punishment called PEEP. Three half-day workshops were held across the summer where ECR’s were encouraged to refine and advance work-in-progress, such as articles, book proposals etc.

JUNE 2019  Re-crafting Ethnography: Crime, Harm and Control in the 21st Century
SCCJR formed the organising committee for the 4th Annual Ethnographies of Crime and Control Symposium where emerging and established ethnographers were invited to share and discuss old and new ways of doing ethnography, whilst seeking out innovative conceptual, methodological, and practical responses to these challenges and opportunities.
Research in Focus
Here we profile a selection of projects from 2018/19.

Justice Journeys: Informing policy and practice through lived experience of victim-survivors of rape and serious sexual assault


This research documents the journeys of 17 victim-survivors who engaged with the Scottish criminal justice system following rape or sexual assault, beginning with the decision to report to the police and continuing through to reporting, investigation, prosecution, trial and court verdict. The research sought to develop a greater understanding of victim-survivor experiences and perspectives of criminal justice with a view to informing and improving policy and practice developments in the area.

‘Survivors continue to face challenges at each stage of the criminal justice process.’

During previous evaluations of advocacy services in Scotland for those who have experienced rape and sexual assault (Brooks et al. 2015; Brooks-Hay et al., 2018; Brooks and Burman, 2017), victim-survivors indicated that they valued the opportunity to contribute to knowledge about user experiences of the criminal justice process. Whilst these evaluations focused on advocacy service provision, the interviews uncovered rich and difficult to attain data about the wider criminal justice process. Building on this, the current research adopted a qualitative approach, utilising in-depth interviews with victim-survivors.

The findings from this research, published in August 2019, reveal that victim-survivors continue to face challenges at each stage of the criminal justice process. Some difficulties occur at identifiable points, such as the re-traumatising experience of providing and hearing back a police statement or during questioning at trial about intimate sexual matters, including challenges to credibility and reliability within an adversarial context. However, other difficulties occur throughout the process. In particular: disparities between victim-survivor expectations and experiences; inadequate communication from officials; the lengthy duration of the process; the uncomfortable physical environments of police stations and courts; concerns about personal safety; feeling marginal to the process; perceptions of the system being weighted in favour of the accused; and belief that the current system does not adequately represent their interests.

The final report, including its recommendations for improving victim-survivor experiences in the criminal justice system and their ability to give best evidence, can be accessed via the SCCJR website.

This study is also linked to a Justice Journeys creative project which adopts collaborative, arts-based methods to support participants in writing and representing their ‘journey’ through photos, audio and objects. The production of a curated book of case-studies, accompanying website, and an exhibition are to follow throughout 2020. The work is funded by the ESRC Impact Acceleration Account.

The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime (ESYTC)

Lesley McAra and Susan McVie (University of Edinburgh) Nuffield Foundation (from 2019 onwards)

The ESYTC is a prospective longitudinal study of pathways into and out of offending amongst an original cohort of around 4,300 young people who started secondary education in the City of Edinburgh in 1998. It is the biggest UK-based criminological life-course study and one of a few world-wide which includes both girls and boys, now women and men in their mid-30s, in its cohort.

The research has involved multiple methods and data sources, including: repeated self-report questionnaires; semi-structured interviews with sub-samples of the cohort; data from official records – police, social work, juvenile justice, criminal conviction, and schools; a parents’ survey; a pastoral teachers’ survey; and a geographic information system based on census data and police recorded crime.

Findings from the ESYTC showed that offending behaviour in the teenage years was common, but only a small proportion of young people became persistent and serious offenders.

‘Depivation, vulnerability and adversity were strongly associated with persistent and serious offending, but were also strong drivers of justice system responses to offending.’

System intervention in early childhood was a significant predictor of both later offending and criminal conviction, and repeated justice system contact perpetuated cycles of poverty and inequality; whereas, diversion from formal intervention promoted desistance from offending and better long term outcomes. The ESYTC research led to widespread reform of youth justice policy in Scotland, including Getting It Right for Every Child and the Whole Systems Approach to dealing with children and young people who offend. These policies led to sustained and long term reductions in the numbers of young people being referred to the juvenile justice system; being convicted in adult courts; being sent to prison; and being excluded from school. It also influenced the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019, a landmark piece of legislation that will increase the minimum age of criminal responsibility in Scotland from eight to twelve.

Corners of Community: Exploring the role of the “outside” in prison life

Cara Jardine (University of Strathclyde) Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship (2019 –2022)

While Goffman’s (1961) image of the prison as a “total institution” has shaped criminological thinking in numerous and important ways, there is now a growing recognition that the prison boundary is in fact porous. As my own research has shown, families may offer various forms of connection, from physically visiting the prison, to receiving telephone calls, and providing personal property (Jardine, 2019). Other bodies, such as prison officers, justice professionals, and prisoners themselves (released permanently or temporarily), move in and out of the prison. In addition, many prisons now offer numerous opportunities to engage with arts, sports and education; arts programs, social enterprises and community projects increasingly are not only moving into prison spaces, but also taking this work back out into the community. New technologies have the
potential to aid all of these initiatives, or to provide their own means of community connection.

‘Arts programs, social enterprises and community projects increasingly are not only moving into prison spaces, but also taking this work back out into the community.’

However, researchers have not as yet began to explore how these connections to the world outside in their totality are experienced by those in custody. This project, supported by a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship, seeks to address this by exploring how, and to what effect, such previously neglected micro-community practices, or “corners of community”, manifest within the prison. The proposed methods are qualitative, and it is hoped that both men and women in custody, and also prison officers and other criminal justice professionals, can be invited to share their experiences of how connected they feel to their community whilst working and living within the prison. This will generate new insights into both how imprisonment is experienced, and how imprisoned people might be better supported in maintaining a role as active citizens, with a contribution to make to their community.

Child Trafficking in Scotland

Paul Rigby and Margaret Malloch (University of Stirling)
Scottish Government Social Research (2018-19)

This project is a collaboration between SCCJR and the Centre for Child Wellbeing and Protection, University of Stirling (Jane Callaghan and Tanya Beetham).

In 2016, Edinburgh University Press published Margaret Malloch and Paul Rigby’s edited book Human Trafficking: The Complexities of Exploitation. The contributors to the book explored the complex nature of exploitation and the significant challenges of obtaining consistent definitions and accurate information in relation to this, in Scotland and internationally. Child Trafficking in Scotland further explores the issue of trafficking and exploitation in a Scottish context, with a particular focus on children and young people.

In 2017, the Scottish Government Trafficking and Exploitation Strategy identified the need for Scotland-wide research to explore experiences of child trafficking in Scotland. This study, commissioned by the Scottish Government, aims to provide an overview of the numbers of children and young people identified as victims of human trafficking, to establish their geographic and demographic routes into Scotland and their experiences of professional responses.

The study involves an overview of the routes and circumstances that young people traverse prior to arrival in Scotland and/or journeys within Scotland.’

Alongside this, the study aims to highlight the experiences of a range of professionals across the country who work with these young people. The study employs a mixed methodology of documentary analysis, case file analysis and in-depth qualitative interviews involving a sample of professionals and young people.

Given recent attention to human trafficking, and in the absence of clear definitions and accurate date, this study aims to support the Scottish Government Trafficking and Exploitation Strategy. It explores the individual, multifaceted social and demographic circumstances, journeys, and multiple exploitative experiences of children and young people. The findings will be used to inform policy makers and professionals working with young people who may have been trafficked, and to inform future strategic developments.

Our Projects

AGMeN Data Science Training and Capacity Building
Susan McVie (University of Edinburgh)

Community Experiences of Organised Crime
Narelle Hamilton-Smith, Andy Clark (University of Stirling), Alastair Fraser (University of Glasgow) and William Graham (Abertay University)

Co-producing Distance from Crime: The Role of Social Cooperative Structures of Employment
Beth Weaver (University of Strathclyde)

Distant Voices
Fergus McNeill (University of Glasgow), Oliver Escobar (University of Edinburgh), Jo Collinson Scott (University of the West of Scotland) and Vox Liminis

Employment and Employability in Scottish Prisons
Laura Piacentini, Beth Weaver, Cara Jardine (University of Strathclyde)

‘Escaping A Life Sentenced’
Marguerite Schnirken (University of Glasgow)

Family Justice: Exploring experiences and challenges across criminal and civil legal processes
Jane Mair and Michele Burman (University of Glasgow)

GlassWalls – Shining A Light on Domestic Abuse Community Art Project
Emma Forbes (University of Glasgow)

Identifying the presence of children and young people who have been trafficked and establish their routes to arrival
Margaret Malloch and Paul Rigby (University of Stirling) with the Centre for Child Protection and WellBeing

IMPRODOVA – Improving Frontline Responses to High Impact Domestic Violence
Michele Burman and Oona Brooks-Hay (University of Glasgow)

In the Gulag’s Shadow: Producing, Consuming and Perceiving Prisons in the former Soviet Union
Laura Piacentini (University of Strathclyde) and Gavin Slade (University of Glasgow)

Justice Journeys: Informing policy and practice through research and exhibition of sexual assault survivors’ lived journeys through criminal legal processes
Oona Brooks-Hay and Michele Burman (University of Glasgow)

Measuring Justice: Defining Concepts, Developing Practice
Sarah Armstrong (University of Glasgow) and Beth Weaver (University of Strathclyde), Trish McCulloch (University of Dundee)

Network on Intelligence and Security Practices in African Countries (NISPAC)
Julie Berr (University of Glasgow)

Parenting for Respectability
Oona Brooks-Hay (University of Glasgow)

Scoping a Criminological Research Agenda for ESRC
Richard Sparks (University of Edinburgh)

Taking Stock of Violence in Scotland
Susan Batchelor, Sarah Armstrong and Donna MacLellan (University of Glasgow)

The Experiences of Victims in the Criminal Justice System
Jane Callaghan, Margaret Malloch (University of Stirling) along with colleagues from additional Universities.

The Experiences of Disabled Defendants or Accused in the Criminal Justice System
Caitlin Gormley (University of Glasgow)

The Right to Health in Brazilian & Scottish Prisons
Laura Piacentini (University of Strathclyde) along with colleagues from the Universities of Stirling and Dundee.

Understanding Inequalities
Susan McVie (University of Edinburgh) and partners across several universities
Communicating, Engaging and Collaborating

We regularly provide updates on our latest research findings, activities and projects through a variety of channels including our website, bulletins, blogs, twitter, press coverage and consultation responses.

Sarah Armstrong (Glasgow) joined a panel to provide oral evidence to the Scottish Parliament’s Justice Committee on their inquiry into the Presumption Against Short Sentences (PASS). You can read Sarah’s written evidence on the SCCJR website.

In December 2018 it was announced the SCCJR would be included in the Scottish Government’s new expert group the Victims Taskforce which brings together senior decision-makers from justice agencies, the legal profession, academia and the voluntary sector. Margaret Malloch (Stirling) represents the Centre on this taskforce.

The Herald featured an interview with Fergus McNeill (Glasgow) where he discussed his latest book, Pervasive Punishment. The article ‘Criminologist and songwriter re-imagine an alternative to prison system’ was published 24 November.

Beth Weaver (Strathclyde) featured in a number of news articles including on the BBC and Sky News discussing her recent work which looked at criminal record declarations.

Sarah Armstrong (Glasgow) and John McGhee published their evidence review into mental health and wellbeing of young people in custody which review received widespread media attention including an interview with the Sunday National newspaper.

Susan McVie (Edinburgh) contributed to an article published in Wired Magazine, “Why it’s so hard to blame a rise in UK knife crime on police cuts.”

Alistair Fraser (Glasgow) featured on BBC Radio 3’s The Essay programme in June. Recorded with an audience at the York Festival of Ideas Alistair’s essay, Hard Man in the Call Centre traces the story of Glasgow’s unpredictable tough guy, schooled in both fist and knife, a symbol of the city’s industrial past. But what does being a hard man mean in the Glasgow of today, now call-centre capital of Europe? And what lessons can be drawn from his changing fates and fortunes to understand masculinity and violence elsewhere?

PHD student Francesca Soliman (Edinburgh) appeared on BBC Scotland’s news programme, The Nine on Monday 11 March where she was interviewed by Rebecca Curran and Martin Geissler on her research on Mediterranean migration.

Niall Hamilton-Smith (Stirling) was interviewed by a number of media outlets, offering a research-informed analysis of factors affecting football violence and anti-social behaviour in Scotland, including in The Herald, ‘Strict liability will not rid football of anti-social behaviour, claims senior university lecturer in sociology and criminology’ and Rocksport Radio.

GlassWalls, a project developed by Emma Forbes (PhD Student, Glasgow) which sees victims of domestic abuse work collaboratively on a piece of stained glass artwork, received coverage in the Evening Times as it sought funding for the project.

Follow us
@TheSCCJR

Visit our Blog
www.sccjrblog.wordpress.com
International Engagement

We are continuing to strengthen our partnerships and collaborative links with universities around the world. The SCCJR’s international links allow staff and students to participate in and contribute to building knowledge and debate in criminology globally:

This year we are continuing to develop our international partnerships with the Universities of Toronto, Oslo, Hong Kong, Queensland University of Technology and the University of Leuven, which connects us to some of the most leading research centres in the world.

Staff and students can utilise our international mobility fund to support inward and outward mobility across these institutions. The following were awarded a mobility grant in 2018-19:

- Hannah Graham (Stirling) visited Queensland University of Technology
- Susan Batchelor (Glasgow) visited Queensland University of Technology
- Maggy Lee (HKU) visited the University of Glasgow
- Valentin Pereda (Toronto) visited the University of Stirling and University of Glasgow
- Ellen Van Damme (Leuven) visited the University of Glasgow

Visitors
In 2018-19 we hosted the following international visitors:

Dr Annette Hübschle visited from the University of Cape Town thanks to a Newton Mobility Grant awarded by the Royal Society. Dr Hübschle, whose work concerns the flows of illicit commodities and whose past research focused on the trafficking of rhinoceros horn, was at the SCCJR to work with Dr Donna Yates (Glasgow) and Dr Julie Berg (Glasgow).

Olivia Nederlandt, a PhD student from Université Saint-Louis – Bruxelles, visited the University of Glasgow in the summer of 2019. Olivia is currently working on her PhD thesis which focuses on the Belgian parole processes.

Scottish Justice Fellowship

This year we announced the launch of a unique initiative funded by the Scottish Government in partnership with SCCJR and the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR) called the Scottish Justice Fellowship. The main purpose of the fellowships is to put academic research into action through innovative means including textual, visual and audio materials.

Emma Forbes, Kirsty Deacon and Annie Crowley (all University of Glasgow), Shane Horgan (University of the West of Scotland) and Fern Gillon (University of Strathclyde) were all awarded fellowships and received £3,000 in funding and mentoring support throughout their fellowship.

The Fellows have worked on topics including cybercrime and security, domestic abuse, imprisonment’s impact on families, early intervention in youth justice, and working with at risk young women.

The Fellows’ work will be launched towards the end of 2019.

PhD Snapshots

Our PhD students work at the cutting edge of crime and justice research and each year we profile a selection of projects.

Examining Scotland’s diversion practices for people who use drugs

Tracey Price
UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING
SUPERVISORS: Tessa Parkes and Margaret Malloch
FUNDING SOURCE: Co-funded by the Scottish Government and ESRC

My PhD research examines how Scotland’s systems of criminal justice and health intersect to provide diversions to treatment for people who use drugs which are currently subject to legislative controls. A growing body of evidence indicates that drug use should be re-conceptualised as a complex health condition, rather than a matter of criminal or deviant behaviour. The PhD research is timely given that a landmark special assembly on drugs was conducted by the United Nations in 2016 in which all member states agreed to review responses to drug use.

‘Drug use should be re-conceptualised as a complex health condition, rather than a matter of criminal or deviant behaviour’

During this event, governments widely acknowledged that criminalisation processes frequently acted as a barrier to accessing drug treatments, presenting a considerable public health issue requiring further contextually situated analysis. In 2017, the Scottish Government moved their Substance Misuse Unit from criminal justice, bringing it under the health portfolio. In the 2018 alcohol and drug treatment strategy, the Scottish Government emphasised the importance of using criminal justice contact to provide diversions to treatment and out of criminal sanctions, in recognition that people who use drugs are ‘often vulnerable’, requiring support rather than sanctions.

The PhD research examines the Scottish context of diversion in depth, creating new knowledge about Scottish discourses on drugs and the extent to which these support reduced criminal sanctions and increased drug treatment routes for people who are vulnerable. This analysis is particularly important given that the preliminary qualitative analysis conducted as part of this project revealed that Scottish diversion occurs both pre- and post-conviction which is highly unusual in the international context of such practices. The final stage of the work will examine international diversion approaches and identify elements which stakeholders from a range of positions in the Scottish sector believe could be adapted to fit the needs of the Scottish context. This phase of the work will assess the viability of potential alternative models of diversion.

Exploring the relationship between capital, inequality, and antisocial behaviour in Mexican schools

Fernando Pantoja
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
SUPERVISORS: Susan McVie and Paul Norris
FUNDING SOURCE: CONACyT (Mexican Government)

Some scholars and policy makers have associated poverty and inequality with many problems in the school context in Mexico, including antisocial behaviour (ASB). However, I found that this apparent relationship was mainly based on studies that contained theoretical and methodological...
problems. On the one hand, most research in the area has been carried out only in a few countries of the so-called ‘global North’, whose reality is very different from that observed in Latin American countries. Even from these studies, the lack of a consistent framework makes it difficult to establish whether ASB is linked to the levels of inequality within schools (i.e. differences between students of the same school) or the levels of poverty and deprivation.

‘The terms ‘poverty’ and ‘inequality’ refer only to economic resources, but the needs of individuals depend on many other factors that cannot be converted into money’

Additionally, most studies use the terms ‘poverty’ and ‘inequality’ to refer only to economic resources, despite the fact that the needs of individuals depend on many other factors that cannot be converted into money or measured using economic assets (i.e. access to services, education, social connections).

My thesis provides a quantitative analysis of the relationship between economic, social and cultural capital, their associated inequality, and the perceived frequency of antisocial behaviour in Mexican schools. The results showed that differences in economic (i.e. services, infrastructure, and equipment of each student and school) and cultural capital (i.e. education, cultural goods, and expectations about schooling) within and between schools explained important variations in the perceived frequency of ASB, but only among students and principals of some types explained important variations in the perceived frequency of antisocial behaviour in Mexican schools. The results associated inequality, and the perceived frequency of (i.e. differences between students of the same school) or the levels of poverty and deprivation.

Vulnerability, decision making and protection of prisoners in Scotland and England

Neil Cornish
UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW
SUPERVISORS: Sarah Armstrong, Monica Barry and Marguerite Schinkel
FUNDING SOURCE: ESRC Collaborative Award with Positive Futures

My research study aims to learn more about conceptualisation and management of vulnerability in prison settings, specifically, types of ‘vulnerability’ exhibited by prisoners that may require ‘protection’ in specialist housing. From a prisoner’s perspective, I am especially interested in contexts within which requests to re-locate to a protection hall in Scotland or a Vulnerable Prisoner Unit (VPU) in England and Wales are made. What are the thought processes, prior to request and how and from where in the prison are these appeals to staff made? Once living in protection or VPU’s, do prisoners think they made the right choice by re-locating and is a return to mainstream population possible? Equally, I am interested in legal context, administrative process and admission criteria used by staff to determine who does, or does not require, specialist housing. What impacts upon the staff decision-making process? Are the ‘most suitable’ prisoners being chosen for these units and how does this selective mix influence both prisoner and staff relationships?

‘How do prison staff decide who does, or does not require, specialist housing.’

I was granted research access from HMPPS and SPS, emphasizing comparative aspects of the study. In May 2018, I therefore began a two-week fieldwork period within a large, local prison in the north of England, conducting ten qualitative interviews each with VPU prisoners and staff, alongside ethnographic observation of the unit. In Scotland, in August 2018, I undertook one week’s fieldwork in a central belt establishment, holding long-term sentenced prisoners. I accessed a second establishment in March 2019, conducting interviews with a further three prisoners and five staff members within a large, local prison.

Emerging themes from both systems include a lack of understanding of consequences of seeking protection or ‘vulnerable prisoner’ status, how extensive media coverage of a crime can influence both decision making processes of prisoners and staff, and there is a ‘deserving/undeserving’ dichotomy of vulnerability. This research matters, in academic terms, because of a surprising lack of research on meanings of and responses to vulnerability in prisons. Most importantly, it provides an opportunity for exchange of knowledge and good practice to help the most vulnerable.

Bereavement and imprisonment: an exploratory study on prisoners’ experiences of death-related grief prior to and/or during custody

Tia Simanovic
UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE
SUPERVISORS: Sally Paul and Beth Weaver
FUNDING SOURCE: REA Scholarship

My study is exploring prisoners’ experiences of death (such as of family, friends and others in their orbit) prior to, and/or during their imprisonment. My aim is to examine the form and the extent to which individual and social responses to death are expressed in prison contexts in the Western world; to understand the interplay of bereavement and imprisonment from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Between November 2018 and July 2019, I conducted 33 semi-structured interviews in two Scottish prisons, with convicted male and female prisoners over the age of 18, who experienced death prior to and/or during custody. Further planned fieldwork consists of focus-groups with prison officers in the same two prisons. The interviews focused on participants’ views of the impact of prison on their bereavement. A life-history component in to interviews enabled participants to tell their stories and gave them control in choosing which stories to share.

My preliminary findings indicate that the initial reaction to death is similar in prison and in the community, namely shock and disbelief, but lack of privacy and immediate support aggravate these experiences for prisoners.

‘Lack of privacy and support aggravates experiences of bereavement’

The often fractured kin relationships among this population increased the relevance of their families of choice. Yet, prisoners can only attend funerals of immediate family (if granted permission), whereby deaths of other important individuals remain (officially) unrecognised. In addition, many prisoners who experienced death while imprisoned, expressed difficulties in processing death from afar, isolated from the community where the deceased used to be. My study further supported findings from other research, that unexpected, violent, and sudden deaths are more difficult to work through.

Studies have shown that unprocessed grief can have long-lasting consequences, including the overall deterioration of individual’s mental-health and well-being. Furthermore, some coping mechanisms employed in grief can include drugs and alcohol use, which can initiate or perpetuate the substance abuse, violence, and crime cycle. Despite the increased likelihood of having experienced death amongst prisoners and the negative effects death can have on the individual, bereavement experiences of the criminal justice population are still very much under-researched.

The terms ‘poverty’ and ‘inequality’ refer only to economic resources, but the needs of individuals depend on many other factors that cannot be converted into money.
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