

Crime and criminal justice research at the University of Sydney

Research brief 1

At the University of Sydney we're conducting exciting research into diverse crime and criminal justice issues.

This is the first in a series of briefing papers showcasing some of our projects and introducing you to our research staff. It looks at the work we're doing in psychology, law, social work, and data science.

Thinking about domestic violence from different perspectives

Can violent men be 'poor partners' as well as 'good fathers'? How does the parenting methods of a violent man affect women, children and young people in their lives?

Interviews with Australian men in a behaviour change program revealed that gender, class, culture and health can affect fathering practices.

Dr Susan Heward-Belle is investigating the fathering experiences of violent men in Australia. Her work reveals that men's identity and masculinity influences practices around being a father, and a partner.

Susan's work breaks down stereotypes which assert that a man can be a 'good father', but a 'bad partner' – showing instead that there is continuity and interaction across these roles. This has different consequences for the types of risks that are likely to occur for women and children.

Susan is also involved in national research investigating and building the workforce capacity of child protection and family services working with fathers who have engaged in domestic and family violence.

Find out more about Dr Heward-Belle and her work:
http://sydney.edu.au/education_social_work/about/staff/profiles/susan.hewardbelle.php

Understanding eyewitness memory

How reliable is eyewitness memory? Is it possible to improve its accuracy?

Dr Helen Paterson is a Senior Lecturer in Forensic Psychology. Her main area of expertise is eyewitness memory. She looks at how best to question witnesses in order to elicit accurate and complete memory accounts – for both one-off and repeated events.

Helen is currently interested in examining how contemporaneous accounts (that is, accounts taken at the time or shortly after an event has occurred) can influence memory for the event, psychological responses, and legal processes.

Helen is also interested in investigating how the use of body-worn cameras can influence memory for an event.

Find out more about Dr Paterson and her work:
<http://sydney.edu.au/science/people/helen.paterson.php>
<http://sydney.edu.au/science/psychology/lab/forensic/>

Applying techniques used in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning to crime reduction and prevention

What if you could create a computer program to tell you useful information for future crime policy? How about using data modelling to predict crime and criminal behaviour across time and space?

Dr Roman Marchant, from the newly established Centre for Translational Data Science, is applying his knowledge of machine learning to help pioneer the next generation of statistical and probabilistic modelling to address criminal justice issues.

Roman is currently interested in predicting crime and criminal behaviour by using his expertise in stochastic models and quantitative analysis.

The application of fully probabilistic spatio-temporal models for crime and criminal behaviour allows a full quantification of the uncertainty which can transform the way policy decisions are made, allowing decisions makers to effectively allocate scarce resources.

Find out more about Dr Marchant and his work:

<http://sydney.edu.au/engineering/people/roman.marchant.php>

Righting wrongs: Addressing miscarriages of justice in Australia

Not Guilty: The Sydney Exoneration Project
Did you know that we have no reliable data on how frequently wrongful convictions occur?

Commencing in 2016, Not Guilty is a joint initiative between the psychology and law schools at the University of Sydney. It demonstrates how collaborations across disciplines can provide a stronger response to improving justice outcomes – but more importantly, seeks justice for people who were wrongfully convicted.

Under academic staff supervision, students are working together to review cases which relied primarily on eyewitness testimony and possible false confessions to gain a conviction.

Find out more about the project:

http://sydney.edu.au/science/psychology/lab/notguilty/?page_id=22

<http://sydney.edu.au/law/jurisdiction/leadership-in-research/sydney-exoneration-project.shtml>

Supporting and promoting practitioner-led research in areas of social justice
Community Justice Fellowship Program

In 2014 the Sydney Social Justice Network (SSJN), a collaborative research hub established by the University, introduced the Community Justice Fellowship Program. The fellowships provide funding to organisations for 3 months full-time equivalent employee release.

During their time at the University, participants have access to academic research and support services, as well as resources such as the library and training programs. It's coupled with research guidance and support from leading academic mentors.

For practitioners, the program provides the chance to conduct relevant research with people who are well placed to identify and respond to issues in their sector.

Fellowships in 2017 have been awarded to investigate issues such as mandatory alcohol treatment in the Northern Territory and its effects on Aboriginal people; policies and programs addressing housing insecurity and homelessness for women prisoners on their release from gaol; and trauma informed bystander education in relation to domestic violence.

Find out more about the program fellowships:

http://sydney.edu.au/arts/research/social_justice_network/about/research_fellows.shtml

For more information on these or other crime and criminal justice work at the University of Sydney, contact Dr Garner Clancey: garner.clancey@sydney.edu.au



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