‘A Society of Captives’?
New Findings from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime
The Justice Strategy for Scotland (Scottish Government 2012)

“Our vision is of a justice system that contributes positively to a flourishing Scotland, helping to create an inclusive and respectful society in which all people and communities live in safety and security, individual and collective rights are supported and disputes are resolved fairly and swiftly.”
Key messages from the Edinburgh Study: Phase 7

• Patterns of detention indicate that the criminal justice system serves to punish poverty, social marginalisation and individual vulnerability, as much as serious offending

• For children who are identified by agencies as presenting ‘the greatest risk’ at an early age:
  - early identification does NOT lead to desistence from offending
  - RATHER, early identification ‘grooms’ children for later imprisonment
On the basis of these findings…

Scottish Government vision will not be realised unless and until:

(i) there is greater recognition that criminal justice systems construct, reproduce and constantly recycle their client-base

(ii) greater efforts are made to align criminal justice with social justice (an ethical approach to policy-making)
Structure of paper

Overview of the Edinburgh Study
Part 1. Punishing the vulnerable: patterns of detention within the wider cohort
Part 2. Damaging the ‘at-risk’ child: longer-term outcomes
Part 3. Using this research evidence to promote ethical policymaking: reflections on the Scottish case
The Edinburgh Study
The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime: overview

- Funded by ESRC, Nuffield Foundation and Scottish Government
- Longitudinal study tracking 4,300 young people since 1998
- Aims to explore pathways into and out of offending
- Multiple data sources including self-reports; semi-structured interviews; and official records (social work, children’s hearing, school, criminal convictions); GIS (police recorded crime and census data)
Phase 7

- Funded by Nuffield Foundation and undertaken in collaboration with the Scottish Government
- Aims:
  - to map the *criminal justice* careers of all cohort members (from age 8, the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland, to 22)
  - to explore transitions from the juvenile to adult system
  - to assess the impact of these careers on desistance from criminal offending.
- Includes follow up of sub-sample:
  - those with offence referral to the children’s hearing system
  - two control groups (one matched to those with early history of referral; one matched to those who had a first referral at age 15).
Phase 7: study team

• Lesley McAra and Susan McVie
• Aileen Barclay and Sarah MacQueen

____________________
Richard Withington
Bob Bonnar
Steve Kirkwood
Karen Cooper
Briedge Nugent
Liz Levy
Jackie Palmer
Phase 7: achieved sample (50% response rate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(61% male)</th>
<th>n=252</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early offence referral (by 12)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early matched group</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late hearings offence referral</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(at age 15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late matched group</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First offence referral at age</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 or 14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 1

Punishing the vulnerable: patterns of detention within the wider cohort
Detention by age 24

- Boy
- Early history violence
- Early police contact
- Ever looked after

%
Punishing the vulnerable

- **Victimisation**: Mean value for Detention is much higher than for Other.
- **Adult harassment**: Mean values for Detention and Other are relatively similar.
- **Family crises**: Mean values for Detention and Other are similar, with Detention slightly higher.
Punishing the vulnerable

- Persistent truant: Detention - 40%, Other - 10%
- School exclusion: Detention - 60%, Other - 10%
- Early leaver: Detention - 80%, Other - 20%
Punishing the vulnerable

Bar chart showing the percentage of individuals in different socio-economic statuses, free school meals, and deprived neighbourhoods who have experienced detention or other forms of punishment.
Deprivation across Edinburgh

Based on data extracted from 2001 Census
Police recorded violent crime
Incivilities observed by cohort (S4)
School exclusion across Edinburgh

Based on data extracted from 2001 Census

Top 10 excluding schools

Index (mean sum of z scores)
-3.4 - -2.59
-2.59 - -1.43
-1.43 - 0.16
0.16 - 1.77
1.77 - 9.91
Detention across Edinburgh

Based on data extracted from 2001 Census
Part 2: Damaging the ‘at-risk’ child: longer-term outcomes

(i) Early identification does not lead to desistence from offending (criminal justice careers and self-reported offending careers bear very little relation to each other)

(ii) RATHER, early identification ‘grooms’ children for later imprisonment
Phase 7: tracking criminal justice and self-reported offending careers

Comparing two groups:
(i) Early cases: offence referral to Reporter by age 12
(ii) Early matches: no referral (any ground) by age 12

Groups matched at age 12 on following criteria
- Gender
- Parental separation
- Family socio-economic status
- Free school meal entitlement
- Neighbourhood deprivation
- Serious offending (self-report)
- Drug use
- Hanging about public places
- Adversarial police contact
- Truancy
- School exclusion
Subsequent offending careers: violence

(robbery, weapon carrying, assault)
Subsequent offending careers: ‘serious’ offending

(Robbery, weapon carrying, assault, fire-raising, house-breaking, riding in stolen car, theft from mv)
Subsequent police warnings/charges

Subsequent offending careers: violence

Early case
Early match
Subsequent offence referrals to Reporter

Subsequent offending careers: violence
Court appearance

Subsequent offending careers: violence
Earlier analysis (Phase 6): conviction trajectories (McAra and McVie 2010)

- At age 12 no significant differences between the early onset groups on all study measures of poverty, school problems, moral attitudes, peers, family problems, personality
- Key change between 13-15 is chronics experience increased rates of truancy, school exclusion and police adversarial contact
- Variant trajectories NOT explained by self-reported offending – no significant differences between groups at any study sweep
Part 2 cont.

(ii) Early identification ‘grooms’ children for later imprisonment
Outcomes poorer on all criminal justice measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Early cases</th>
<th>Early matches</th>
<th>Late cases</th>
<th>Late matches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% conviction in adult system by 18</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% conviction in adult system by 22</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% custody at 18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% custody at 21</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% custody by 24</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Predicting custody and exclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predicting custody by age 24 (amongst those with a hearings referral by age 12)</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em><strong>Excluded from school by age 12</strong></em></td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential care by age 12</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offence history includes violence by age 12 (self report)</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## Predicting custody and exclusion

### Predicting custody by age 24

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### Predicting school exclusion at age 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent or non-parental carer</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low socio-economic status</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live in top 25% most deprived neighbourhoods</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluded in first year secondary school</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rated by teachers as disruptive at age 13</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High volume of bad behaviour at age 15</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The revolving door

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential care by 16\textsuperscript{th} birthday</th>
<th>77</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% criminal conviction by age 22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential care by 16\textsuperscript{th} birthday</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% imprisonment by age 22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period of imprisonment by age 18</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% further criminal conviction by age 22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period of imprisonment by age 18</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% further period of imprisonment by age 22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort members with no care history by 16\textsuperscript{th} birthday</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% criminal conviction by age 22</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Cohort members with no care history by 16\textsuperscript{th} birthday</td>
<td>0.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>% period of imprisonment by age 22</td>
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Part 3

Using this research evidence to promote ethical policymaking: reflections on the Scottish case
Bronfenbrenner/Martens (1993)

- Child
- Parents
  - Mother
  - Father
- Siblings
- Friends
- Dwelling
  - Child health centre - medical care
- TV/mass media
- School
- Leisure time
  - Parents’ work situation
- Neighbourhood
  - Job security legislation
  - Hours of work
- Housing policies
- Labour market policies
- Social security
- Cultural policies
  - Communal support of voluntary agencies and leisure activities
- Child care policies
- Family policies
- Housing policies
Key publications


McAra and McVie, 2007a, Youth Justice? The Impact of System Contact on Patterns of Desistance from Offending, *European Journal of Criminology*, 4 (3)

McAra and McVie, 2007b, Criminal Justice Transitions, *Research Digest*, no. 14

McAra and McVie, 2010, Youth Crime and Justice: Key Messages from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime, *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 10 (2)


Find out more about the Edinburgh Study at:

www.law.ed.ac.uk/cls/esytc/