

SpringerBriefs in Criminology

Ellen G. Cohn · David P. Farrington ·
Guy C.M. Skinner

**Most Influential
Scholars in Criminology
and Criminal
Justice, 1986-2020**

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Preface

This book documents the most-cited scholars in major criminology and criminal justice (CCJ) journals, and their most-cited works, over a 35-year period. It is based on the belief that the most-cited scholars also tend to be the most influential in the field. Three series of longitudinal analyses are described: (1) the most-cited scholars in four international journals from 1986–90 to 2016–20, (2) the most-cited scholars in six American journals from 1986–90 to 2016–20; and (3) the most-cited scholars in 20 American and international journals from 1990 to 2020.

We studied citations in a small number of the most prestigious CCJ journals in order to overcome the many problems (described in Chap. 1) of using large-scale online sources of citations such as Web of Science, Google Scholar, or Scopus. The main strength of our research lies in its careful checking and correcting of citations, its exclusion of self-citations, and its longitudinal comparative analyses (using exactly the same methods) over a 35-year period.

Circumstances were very different when we began our research in 1988. There was no Internet and very little interest in citation analysis or any other research on scholarly influence in criminology and criminal justice. In the past 35 years, there has been a massive increase in interest in research on scholarly influence in general and citation analysis in particular. The Internet and the various electronic resources that are now available make large-scale citation analyses a lot easier, but such analyses are typically full of problems and errors, many of which have been corrected in our analyses.

We trace the waxing and waning of scholarly influence over time, as older scholars such as Marvin E. Wolfgang give way to younger scholars such as Robert J. Sampson, who in turn are now being usurped by still younger scholars such as Alex R. Piquero. We carried out this research without funding because we were curious about the results. Citation research is highly controversial. While many scholars are fascinated by the results, others (especially those who are not highly cited) are very hostile to citation analysis. Nevertheless, it is clear that citation analysis is very important, and it has the advantage of being a scientific, objective, and quantitative technique. The raw data (citations in journals) are freely available to anyone who wishes to replicate our analyses. However, researchers should be

warned that there were well over 500,000 cited scholars in nine major CCJ journals during our 35-year period.

We hope that readers will find our results fascinating. We are very grateful to Maureen Brown for providing excellent secretarial assistance.

Miami, FL, USA
Cambridge, UK
London, UK
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Ellen G. Cohn
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Contents

1	Citation Analysis in Criminology and Criminal Justice	1
1.1	Overview	1
1.2	Uses of Citation Analysis	2
1.3	Sources of Data	3
1.4	Cohn and Farrington's Citation Research	4
1.5	Most-Cited Scholars and Works in Four Major International Journals	4
1.6	Most-Cited Scholars and Works in Six Major American Journals	8
1.7	Most-Cited Scholars and Works in 20 Journals	11
1.8	Criminal Career Concepts in Citation Analysis	14
1.9	Limitations of Citation Analysis	15
1.10	Conclusion	15
	References in the Text	16
2	Methodology	21
2.1	Selecting a Source of Citation Data	21
2.2	Journal Selection	23
2.3	Selecting Four International Journals	24
2.4	Selecting Six American Journals	24
2.5	Selecting 20 American and International Journals	26
2.6	Obtaining the Citation Data	27
2.7	Counting Citations	29
2.8	Limitations of This Methodology	30
2.9	Strengths of This Methodology	31
2.10	The Current Research	32
	References in the Text	32
3	Most-Cited Scholars in Four International Journals	35
3.1	Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology (ANZ)	35
3.2	British Journal of Criminology (BJC)	36
3.3	Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice (CJC)	40

3.4	Criminology (CRIM)	41
3.5	Most-Cited Scholars in all Four Journals.	45
3.6	Most-Cited Works of the Most-Cited Scholars	48
3.7	Conclusion	48
	References in the Text.	53
4	Most-Cited Scholars in Six American Criminology and Criminal Justice Journals	55
4.1	Journal of Quantitative Criminology (JQC).	55
4.2	Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency (JRCD).	58
4.3	Justice Quarterly (JQ)	60
4.4	Journal of Criminal Justice (JCJ).	62
4.5	Criminal Justice and Behavior (CJB).	63
4.6	Most-Cited Scholars in Six American Journals	67
4.7	Most-Cited Works of the Most-Cited Scholars	71
4.8	Conclusion	73
	References in the Text.	74
5	Most-Cited Scholars in 20 Journals	75
5.1	Citations in 20 Journals	75
5.2	Most-Cited Scholars in Each Journal.	77
5.3	Most-Cited Scholars in Groups of Five Journals.	77
5.4	Most-Cited Scholars in Groups of 10 Journals	81
5.5	Most-Cited Scholars in all 20 Journals	84
5.6	Most-Cited Works of the Most-Cited Scholars	87
5.7	Prevalence, Frequency, Specialization, and Versatility	87
5.8	Conclusion	90
	References in the Text.	92
6	Conclusions	93
6.1	The Main Contribution of this Book	93
6.2	Policy Implications	94
6.3	The Way Forward.	97
6.4	Final Conclusions.	99
	References in the Text.	99
	References	101
	Index.	109

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Chapter 1

Citation Analysis in Criminology and Criminal Justice



1.1 Overview

Our purpose in writing this book is to create a comprehensive documentation of the prestige and influence of scholars and works in the field of criminology and criminal justice (CCJ), as well as changes in influence and prestige over a period of 35 years, based on citation analysis. This book builds upon decades of research we have conducted in the field of citation analysis. Our previous research has examined changes within and across specific time periods and across a wide range of major CCJ journals, examining citations in a variety of CCJ journals beginning in 1986. Our most recent book, *Most-Cited Scholars in Criminology and Criminal Justice, 2006–2010* (Cohn, Farrington, & Iratzoqui, 2014) focused on citations in major journals in 2006–10, comparing them to previous years from 1986–90 onwards.

The current book updates and extends the prior research to citations in 2016–20, to examine changes over a longer time period, in groups of 4 major international CCJ journals, 6 major American CCJ journals, and 20 major international and American criminology and criminal justice journals. Our analysis covers 35 years of data (1986 through 2020) on the most-cited scholars in these major journals. This chapter reviews the importance of citation research as a means of examining prestige and influence in CCJ, including studies using citation analysis to evaluate scholars, journals, published works, and university departments. More specifically, this chapter describes existing studies that used the methodology we developed, and provides a sense of direction for our current research on the most-cited scholars in American and international criminology and criminology justice journals from 1986 to 2020.