

CRIMVOL: The International Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Research Network

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CRIMVOL
CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESEARCH

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About CRIMVOL: The International Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Research Network

[CRIMVOL](#) is an international, multidisciplinary criminal justice voluntary sector research network for academics, practitioners, and policymakers. The network fills an important gap in scholarship and infrastructure: the criminal justice voluntary sector is more topical than ever before, but has not received academic attention commensurate with its importance anywhere in the world. The network is chaired by [Dr Philippa Tomczak](#) (Senior Research Fellow, University of Nottingham, Author of *The Penal Voluntary Sector*). CRIMVOL was established with the generous support of the British Academy (Rising Star Engagement Award) and the Socio-Legal Studies Association (Seminar Competition). A core focus is the development of [specialist early career researchers](#) and scholar-activist work.

Conference introduction

CRIMVOL arranged two thematic sessions at the 2019 American Society of Criminology (ASC) conference. The ASC is a globally leading criminological society. The conference ran from 12th – 16th November 2019, in San Francisco, California. Volunteers and voluntary organisations have long played significant roles pervading criminal justice. They are now key actors with unrecognised potential to shore up criminal justice and/or collaboratively reshape social justice. Unlike for-profit involvement, criminal justice volunteers and voluntary organisations have been neglected by scholars. CRIMVOL works to fill this scholarly gap.

The Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector: Thematic Panel A

Discussant: Dr Philippa Tomczak

1. What we talk about when we talk about the penal voluntary sector

KAITLYN QUINN (*University of Toronto, Canada*) Just published: [“Inside the Penal Voluntary Sector: Divided Discourses of “Helping” Criminalized Women”](#). [Punishment & Society](#).

The growth of the penal voluntary sector (PVS) is one of the defining shifts in the management of marginalised and criminalised populations globally. Yet, in spite of scholarly consensus that these changes are of international importance, comparative analyses have scarcely been attempted. Existing literature in individual jurisdictions has focused on the increasingly neoliberal PVS policy environments, yet research has paid limited attention to how these policies are implemented and experienced. Addressing this gap, we draw on interviews, ethnographic observation, and

document analysis, to investigate *what it is like* to work and volunteer in the PVS amidst increasing neoliberal policy reforms. Providing the first international comparison centring PVS practitioners' experiences and voices, our findings show that actors in the PVSs of England and Canada are, albeit to different extents, working as much to keep their organisations afloat amidst widespread restructuring, as they are to support criminalised individuals. We demonstrate that increasing marketisation, managerialism, and monitoring of the PVS in neoliberal policy environments serves to directly dilute, and at worst destroy this sector's capacity to both support service users and press for responses to the structural exclusions associated with criminalization.



From L-R: Dr Annette Olesen; Kaitlyn Quinn, Abigail Salole

2. Don't shoot the messenger: Emotional rehabilitative work between (ex)offenders and voluntary sector organisations (VSO)s in Denmark and Norway

Dr ANNETTE OLESEN (Aalborg University, Denmark) [Publications](#)

Previous research has explored how prison officers manage their emotions related to the security and rehabilitative work they perform. However, prison systems in many western countries are currently facing significant changes, which include VSOs undertaking greater penal and rehabilitative responsibility. Literature examining emotional penal and rehabilitative work performed by other than prison officers is just beginning to emerge. This paper contributes to this emerging literature through a qualitative study of a Danish and Norwegian VSO offering in/post-prison rehabilitative legal debt programmes. Original interviews and observations provide an (ex-)offender and volunteer perspective on case handling proceeding and trustworthy relationship development in a VSO context. Findings suggest that restrictive debt collection practices frame and limit rehabilitative legal debt work, which leave volunteers to deliver the message about (ex-)offenders often hopeless and depressing financial future prospects while simultaneously trying to incentivize crime-free living to this vulnerable target group. Rehabilitative legal debt work is considered emotionally challenging for both (ex-)offenders and volunteers, and findings further show how volunteers are lacking emotional supervision and how they develop different criteria for 'rehabilitative success' to cope with the many practical and emotional obstacles they face.

3. Mapping the youth penal voluntary sector in Canada

ABIGAIL SALOLE (University of Toronto, Canada) Just published (2019): ['It's Kinda Punishment': Tandem Logics and Penultimate Power in the Penal Voluntary Sector for Canadian Youth. *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, 58\(3\), 298-312.](#)

The Penal Voluntary Sector (PVS) has played a role in Canada's youth justice system even before the separate youth justice system was formalized. The youth PVS includes voluntary agencies working with youth in conflict with the law, their families and victims. A segment of the youth serving PVS is enmeshed in the operation of the criminal justice system and exclusively takes referrals from police, courts and probation. These PVS organizations operate custody facilities, play a supervisory role for youth before court appearances and offer programs designed to divert youth from the traditional criminal justice system in the form of extra-judicial measures and extra-judicial sanctions programs. In this paper I demonstrate the significance of the PVS by examining the significant number of youth that are referred by the police, courts, and probation to the PVS and the types of programs they are referred to. I apply Tomczak and Buck's (2019) hybrid sociology model in order to map and demonstrate the multiplicity of activity, claims and discourses activated in youth justice PVS work.

The Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector: Thematic Panel B

Discussant: Dr Philippa Tomczak

1. God Help Us: Religious Neoliberalism in American Prisons

Prof MICHAEL HALLETT (University of North Florida, USA) [Publications](#)

This paper foregrounds the outsourcing of rehabilitative programming to religious volunteers in US prisons. The research specifically examines the use of religious volunteers as educators, counselors, and staff authorized to vest inmates with religious authority as "ministers" and implications of the "wounded healer" paradigm for correctional programming.

2. Navigating Boundaries, Weaving Worlds: US Volunteers' Experiences of Running Theatre Programmes in Prisons

[KAREN HAMER](#) (University of Cambridge, UK)

Contributing to both the small body of literature on prison arts volunteers and, specifically, on volunteers' experiences accessing prisons and navigating their roles within volunteer-led programmes, this paper shares results of a US-based study involving a nationwide survey of prison theatre practitioners and semi-structured interviews with over 30 theatre practitioners who, whether funded or not, operate within their states' Departments of Corrections as volunteers. Volunteers must navigate dual boundaries in their theatre-based practice in prisons: on the one hand, to "count" as theatre, physical and emotional experience is supported, to the degree that it does not cross over the boundary into "riot". On the other hand, emotional playfulness, openness, and exploration is encouraged within the group to develop a sense of trust, teamwork and community, and yet, for the volunteer, it must stop short of crossing over into "inappropriate intimacy". The boundaries of "riot" and "intimacy" are experienced at various levels of fluidity and contestation by volunteers who navigate them using a variety of public and private tactics. Volunteers describe experiencing both a high level of joy in working with incarcerated men and women, and, depending on the institutional supports or constraints they encounter, various degrees of personal and professional strain as they seek to facilitate meaningful, collaborative - and what they frequently describe as "transformative" - theatre-making experiences in state prisons and jails across the United States.

3. Transcarceral Control by Circles of Support and Accountability: A Problem or a Necessity?

Dr DAVID THOMPSON (University of Sheffield, UK) [Publications](#)

This paper examines the expanding web of control which penal voluntary organisations contribute to when delivering services within the criminal justice system. Focusing specifically on one such voluntary initiative, Circles of Support and Accountability, this paper examines the control functions of CoSA with particular reference to the transcarceration literature (Lowman et al, 1987). Despite 'Accountability' being in the name of CoSA, the 'control' or 'accountability' functions of the initiative remain relatively under-theorised. Similarly the concept of transcarceration has been largely overlooked by criminology. Here it is argued that in providing this role, CoSA is both a part of the expanding web of control, and also offering alternatives and avenues to less intrusive control. Using empirical data collected from research in England and Wales, this paper will examine the strengths and implications of CoSA as being another part of what Lowman et al (1987) referred to as the 'help-control' complex and joining the wider 'carceral archipelago' of organisations involved in supervising and managing high risk sex offenders who are released into the community.

Lowman, J. Menzies, R.J. and Palys, T.S. (1987) *Transcarceration: Essays in the Sociology of Social Control*. Aldershot: Gower Publishing.



Prof Michael Hallett



Karen Hamer
