

CRIMVOL: The International Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Research Network

Launch event: CRIMVOL virtual
working paper series



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.

New 'virtual' working paper series: Launch event

The International Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Research Network (CRIMVOL) hosted their first virtual event on Tuesday 21st May 2020, launching a new working paper series for early career scholars with a presentation from [Dr Gillian McNaull](#) (Queen's University Belfast).

Gillian's paper – *The personal and political consequences of penal voluntary sector practice: The practitioner dilemma* – drew on auto-ethnographic experiences and reflections of a volunteer 'supporting' individual prisoners. The paper considered the place of the voluntary sector in delivering services under *imaginary* discourses of

rehabilitation and reintegration, and the operational realities of doing this within the prison estate. Gillian's work reflected on the dilemma faced by many volunteers and voluntary organisations in the penal (and broader criminal justice) sector – the decision to participate within harmful regimes in order to 'support' marginalised individuals. Gillian insightfully captured the '*personal and political consequences*' of these decisions, drawing on Jane Fenton's research in to criminal justice social work to highlight the ethical stress and ontological guilt that can shape volunteer practitioners' experiences. The paper concluded with a consideration of counter discourses, with a vision of the penal voluntary sector as a site for radical social change.

Gillian's research is thought provoking and speaks directly to the work of many CRIMVOL scholars, including my own. As a researcher of volunteers in policing, my field is a slight (although, I am assured, very welcome!) 'outlier' in the CRIMVOL world. Despite this, I frequently draw parallels with themes emerging from fellow network members' findings, with Gillian's paper being no exception. Indeed, principles that underlie volunteering – time freely



The practitioner dilemma: sustaining the 'imaginary' prison

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Gillian McNaull's working paper

given for the benefit of others or a collective good – generally imbue positivity. However, such narratives take on a different guise within the statutory criminal justice system, where volunteer participation risks inadvertently endorsing, reinforcing, and reproducing problematic structures and regimes.



CRIMVOL-ers in Microsoft Teams 'action'

One of the (many) reasons why I enjoy being part of the CRIMVOL network is that it offers a fresh lens through which to consider my own findings, challenge my often police-centric thinking, and consider future directions for research. As an Early Career Researcher (ECR), fresh from a very recently completed PhD and a very recently started first academic role, opportunities such as these are priceless, as is the support and encouragement in ready supply from the collegial group of enthusiastic and experienced international CRIMVOL scholars.

The second virtual CRIMVOL working paper session will take place on 9th July, with a presentation from [Ruwani Fernando](#) (PhD Candidate at the University of Sheffield), *Comparing desistance: the role of the third sector in assisting change in England and France*, followed by ECR career development support on organising research priorities.