



The Voluntary Sector Role in Youth and Young Adult Justice Services: A Comparative Case Study of Finland and England/Wales

Youth Justice

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Abstract

This comparative case study investigates the voluntary sector interface with criminal justice systems for youth and young adults in England/Wales and Finland. Methods included document review and stakeholder interviews. Across cases, key differences were found in the training of corrections and probation officers, funding sources and structures, and use of actuarial models and evidence. The organization of these relationships was also different for youth and young adult services, particularly in England/Wales where clear lines are drawn between age groups. The results contribute to an understanding of how system-level factors can drive relationships between the voluntary and criminal justice sectors.

Keywords

case study, reintegration, voluntary sector, youth justice

Introduction

The voluntary sector interface with juvenile and criminal justice systems has a long and complicated history. The voluntary sector includes the work of volunteers, but also refers to paid and contracted non-governmental (or non-profit) services within prisons as well as in probation, parole, and aftercare service settings (Abrams et al., 2016). The penal voluntary sector has a history of adapting to political, cultural, and economic shifts that affect funding as well as the types of services offered inside prisons and in probation and parole settings. These services continue to be integral to the field of offender management and rehabilitation around the globe (Ellis et al., 2018; Hucklesby and Corcoran, 2016; Ransley and Mazerolle, 2017).

Scholarship on the interface between the voluntary sector and the government-run criminal justice sector has recently taken a deeper, more critical look at roles and boundaries,

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ideologies, insider/outsider negotiations, and the degree to which the voluntary sector is becoming subsumed within the goals and discourses of a neoliberal criminal justice enterprise or alternatively, can remain a more independent entity (Abrams et al., 2016; Helminen and Mills, 2019; Hucklesby and Corcoran, 2016; Miller, 2014; Tomczak, 2016). Yet with few exceptions (Salole, 2016), this body of literature has not focused specifically on youth or young adult populations and has not examined multiple countries or systems simultaneously.

This exploratory comparative case study of England/Wales and Finland investigates the voluntary sector interface with state-governed youth and young adult criminal justice institutions and settings (i.e. prisons, detention centers, probation, parole, and aftercare settings). Services geared toward youth (i.e. those under age 18) and young adults (i.e. 18–24) are included in this article to align with discursive, operation, and shifting definitions of what is considered ‘youth justice’ in various contexts and systems around the globe (Abrams et al., 2018). Two primary questions drive this study: In these two cases, how are the boundaries between the ‘youth’ and ‘young adult’ justice sector organized? and What macro factors influence how these systems operate together? These questions are significant in that alignment between the voluntary and criminal justice sectors has implications for how services are delivered for youth and young adults involved in prison and probation/parole services.

Background and Significance

This study examines youth and young adult justice systems in England/Wales and Finland as case studies; however, in this section, we consider the broader literature on the voluntary sector role in criminal justice systems. A body of research has found that the presence of voluntary sector services in prisons is quite beneficial for incarcerated individuals as well as the voluntary sector staff and volunteers who are able to cross the seemingly impenetrable barrier of prison walls. Voluntary sector, prison-based programming offers incarcerated individuals the opportunity to take a break from solitude and hostile prison environments to spend time in spaces that facilitate pro-social relationships. These supports may ultimately improve the prison experience and the environment itself (Duwe and Johnson, 2016; Tomczak and Albertson, 2016; Wilson, 2007).

In addition, participation in voluntary sector programs can lead to positive recognition and accomplishment in institutional settings where negativity and stigma is normative (Hughes, 2016). Non-profit sector staff and volunteers bring a piece of the outside world into the correctional facilities they serve, helping those who are imprisoned feel less isolated and disconnected, which is a common experience of institutionalization. The connections between incarcerated people and voluntary sector service providers (who are distinct from correctional staff) help those behind bars to prepare for post-prison adjustment, form pro-social relationships, and may even counter the negative effects of trauma and institutionalization (Tomczak and Albertson, 2016).

Barriers to voluntary sector participation in criminal justice systems

Despite the numerous benefits associated with voluntary sector programs, institutional barriers often make it difficult for voluntary sector providers to enter correctional

institutions or to work with individuals who are on probation or parole. Research has found that these institutional barriers can be both logistical and ideological. Scholarship from the United Kingdom suggests that ‘institutional inconvenience’ weakens the relationship between voluntary sector organizations and prison staff as the voluntary sector is often met with unwillingness, regime factors, security concerns, or staff who simply do not have time to connect service providers to those who need them (Mills et al., 2012). In addition, relationships between prison staff and voluntary sector staff are sometimes strained due to mistrust, as prison staff often view outside providers as overstepping their boundaries (Gill and Mawby, 1990; Mills et al., 2012). Ideologically, correctional and probation staff are trained in a law and order approach to their work, while voluntary sector providers focus more on education, rehabilitation, and spiritual support (Mills et al., 2011, 2012). Ideological clashes may prevent coordination or a welcoming of outsiders within the prison walls.

Securing ample funding for voluntary sector services is another obstacle to sustained voluntary sector involvement in criminal justice institutions. One component of the neoliberal turn in criminal justice is to inspire competition for funding through the contracting out of services to not-for-profit agencies. The demands of competitive funding have a particular set of implications for who is allowed ‘in’ to provide services in the penal sector (Helminen and Mills, 2019; Mills et al., 2012). For example, in the United Kingdom, voluntary sector organizations that work with offenders are fractured in terms of who receives the majority of the funding. The larger organizations are most likely to have sufficient funding to pay their staff and advertise their services, while smaller organizations are primarily volunteer-based and viewed as inexperienced (Mills et al., 2012). Requirements for the reliability of organizations and professional qualifications may change the logic of small voluntary organizations based on peer support. In general, the dependence of service production resources on the public financier seems to weaken the organizations’ ability to criticize and promote the issues important for their own clients (Helminen, 2016).

Moreover as limited funding has fostered competition among voluntary sector organizations, some may grapple with compromising their core values in an effort to make themselves more competitive to funders and ultimately obtain access to the clients that they want to serve (Hucklesby and Worrall, 2007). A recent report on the state of the voluntary sector in the United Kingdom found that voluntary services in criminal justice settings receive funding from a variety of sources, but mainly rely on grant funding from trusts and private foundations (Clinks, 2017), rather than government contracts. Organizations that serve some of the most vulnerable populations such as young people from minority backgrounds, families, and women are more at risk of reducing services or closing altogether due to difficulty obtaining funding. The same report found that 67 percent of third-sector organizations support young people aged 18–25 years, but only 9 percent considered their organizations to specialize in this population. Incentive mechanisms for financing play a major role in voluntary sector service production; at worst, they can lead to the distortion of client base and ‘cherry-picking’ of clients (Helminen, 2016).

Differences in views regarding the value of evidence, risk assessment, and outcomes can also be a barrier to compatibility and cooperation between voluntary and criminal justice sectors. In the 1990s, responding to public and political criticism that criminal justice

services lack rigor and successful outcomes, reform efforts in several Western nations, including the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, shifted from a rehabilitation orientation to a risk-reduction model (McNeill et al., 2012). This model emphasizes use of evidence through standardized risk assessment, outcomes, and service efficiency (i.e. the best outcomes achieved with optimal dosage). Werth (2019) offers a concise definition, ‘. . . the term risk is generally used to reference a particular set of methods by which penal institutions evaluate offenders and predict their likelihood of future offending’ (p. 2). Proponents of this logic argue that actuarial assessments can reduce costs, increase efficacy, and enhance public safety (Andrews and Bonta, 2010). These influences have also spread to the Scandinavian countries. For example, after the economic recession of the 1990s the Finland probation service adopted new types of security and risk-oriented practices from the Anglo-Saxon ‘what works’ debates (Harrikari and Westerholm, 2015).

The idea of risk reduction is not necessarily new to criminal justice but, over the past 20 years, has been bolstered a particular set of neoliberal logics and policies (Werth, 2019). In this sense, the ‘actuarial’ model can be seen as one which is consumed often technocratic control over socially disadvantaged groups (Goddard and Myers, 2017; McNeill et al., 2012; Miller, 2014). Some have argued that this model can have the effect of marginalizing relational and creative work of voluntary sector organizations, such as arts-based programming, that may be harder to quantify or measure impact (Goddard, 2014; Salole, 2016). With funding requirements tied to the use of these models or quantitative evaluations, these developments can also be viewed as a source of control over the voluntary sector and providers themselves (Salole, 2016).

Service coordination and barriers

A host of empirical research on youth and young adult incarceration suggests that a holistic and sustained approach to offender rehabilitation must consist of both formal and informal supports. This approach often requires complex coordination between entities, including probation staff as well as the variety of non-profit organizations and volunteers that work with young people both while incarcerated and upon their release, such as social workers, educators, mentors, substance abuse, and family counselors, among others (Abrams and Snyder, 2010; Anthony et al., 2010; O’Neill et al., 2017). The difficulty in achieving a cooperative relationship between all of those who work with youth can emerge when correctional officers and service providers possess and display conflicting aims and values. Differing ideologies regarding the primary goal of serving youth in penal and probation settings has long been a contentious issue, particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States. The purpose of youth incarceration itself has historically varied between rehabilitation and punishment with the goals of successful reintegration and public safety (Abrams, 2013). Voluntary sector providers tend to see themselves as the ‘social workers’ or ‘treatment staff’, while correctional officers tend to view their main role as keeping facilities safe and orderly, rendering other services as tangential (Anthony et al., 2010). Moreover, correctional officers are often gatekeepers to the outside services that come into youth facilities, meaning that they decide which services or organizations granted access and which youth are able to receive such services (Jurik et al., 2000).

Research has also found that institutional barriers to service provision may be unique to the youth (or juvenile) justice sector in relation to larger adult criminal justice institutions. In particular, it may be harder to connect youth under age 18 with services due to access, parental consent, and privacy concerns. One UK study found that youth respondents were less aware of and had more limited involvement with voluntary sector organizations than adults (Meek et al., 2013). This is especially problematic as research indicates that resettlement programs that are delivered by the voluntary sector are more effective in promoting positive readjustment post-incarceration than traditional, probation-only services (Bouffard and Bergseth, 2008).

Although more limited, a few studies have illustrated that developmentally specialized aftercare services and supportive relationships are also quite critical for young adults (cf. Mizel and Abrams, 2018). In most countries, however, individuals who are over age 18 are considered ‘adults’ and are not differentiated in regard to the types of prison-based, probation, parole, or aftercare services they may receive (Abrams et al., 2018). As a growing area of study, more research is needed on how the voluntary sector can play a role in offering developmentally specialized services to young adults.

Comparative research on Northern and Western European youth justice systems

While much of the research on the voluntary sector interface with youth and young adult criminal justice services has focused on specific countries or cases, there is relatively little comparative research on this issue. However, the Scandinavian Countries often serve as interesting comparisons due to their unique ideologies, policies, and practices related to the welfare state – such as provision of housing and a basic income for all citizens – as well as the justice system. Even if many things have changed since Esping-Andersen’s (1990) welfare state regime classification (e.g. Kangas and Palme, 2005), the perception of social democratic welfare state and presumption of the Scandinavian exceptionalism are still strong in criminal policy research (Pratt, 2008; Ugelvik and Dullum, 2012).

The Scandinavian model of criminal justice is known for restricted use of incarceration and humanitarian treatment of prisoners, shorter sentences, and preparation for citizenship upon release (Lahti, 2000; Lappi-Seppälä, 2007, 2012). Although these countries most certainly have differences in the structure and delivery of youth and young adult justice services, as a whole the Scandinavian model has been characterized as more child welfare oriented than punitive (Harrikari and Hautala, 2018); the age of criminal responsibility is high (relative to the international norm of 12; see Abrams et al., 2018), and incarceration rates for minors and adults are far lower than other European countries with similar sized populations (Lappi-Seppälä, 2007). Finland in particular uses a minimum intervention model which largely redirects youth under age 18 to the child welfare system in an overall effort toward decriminalization (Satka and Harrikari, 2008). However, the substitution of child welfare for juvenile justice services can result in a different type of state social control due to the absence of limits on or scrutiny on child welfare placements (Allen, 1993; Satka and Harrikari, 2008). In recent years, a wide range of risk-oriented

practices for children and young people in the pre-crime area have increased in Finland (Harrikari, 2013; Saarikkomäki, 2018).

In an extensive comparative research study of youth justice structures in Eastern, Central, and Western European countries, Dünkel (2014) credits the neoliberal model of youth justice emerging from the United States as influencing models in several European countries, particularly England/Wales. Finland and other Scandinavian countries have certainly been exposed to neoliberal influence (Harrikari and Westerholm, 2015; Helminen and Mills, 2019); however, most accounts suggest that these countries have not fully adopted risk assessment or actuarial approaches (Pitts and Kuula, 2005). Much remains to be known about neoliberal influences in the Nordic systems, and how, in particular, youth control is exercised.

In sum, neoliberal discourse and practices continue to be an interesting point of reflection in criminal justice system and services (Goddard and Myers, 2017) that can shape how the voluntary sector is able to work with youth and young adults in criminal justice settings. Research has examined focal points of comparison in Western European and Nordic criminal justice systems including policies, ideologies, and use of evidence (Dünkel, 2014). However, scholars have not widely examined these factors in relation to how the voluntary sector interfaces with government-run criminal justice institutions. This comparative case study addresses this gap by investigating the voluntary sector interface with youth and young adult justice systems in two countries: England/Wales and Finland.

Method

The overarching methodology for this article is an exploratory comparative case study in England/Wales and Finland. England and Wales share a national criminal justice infrastructure that is distinct from Scotland and Ireland, which is why we focus on England/Wales as a 'case' and not the United Kingdom as a whole. We define the 'youth justice system' as the constellation of government and law enforcement agencies serving those who are defined as 'minors' under state law. Young adults can be defined as up to age 25 or even older, but in these two countries, mitigated sentences and other 'young adult' services are mostly directed at those aged 18–21 years thus constructing the parameters for 'young adults' in this study.

These purposively selected cases follow the advice of Seawright and Gerring (2008), who recommend the selection of cases that lend themselves to variation and key axes of difference. For this analysis, we selected two countries with some shared features, but with very different youth and young adult criminal justice paradigms. The comparison in this study focuses on how these sectors align and how they operate in relation to one another.

Data collection

Data were drawn from an extensive review of scholarly articles covering the legislative history and practices pertaining to youth justice in each country, reports from global and

regional organizations and agencies, and interviews with criminal justice, legal experts, voluntary sector service directors and providers, and foundation/charity experts in both countries.

Interviews with experts were conducted in person in March–April 2016. Participants were selected through a blend of purposive and snowball sampling. The authors intentionally selected directors of agencies related to youth court, reentry services, and prominent voluntary sector agencies working with youth and young adult justice, and known academic experts. When potential interviewees responded, they were also asked to nominate additional interviewees. A total of 31 people were interviewed across the two countries, which included eight individual and eight group interviews (i.e. situations wherein one or more agency representatives were present). The total sample included 15 experts in England/Wales and 16 in Finland. These included individuals who were currently or formerly incarcerated as youth or young adults ($n = 2$); voluntary sector executive directors, program managers, and/or direct service providers ($n = 7$); government officials working in corrections or probation ($n = 4$); judges specific to juvenile justice, child welfare, or criminal courts ($n = 3$); criminal justice wardens, probation officers, or corrections officers ($n = 9$); and criminal justice academics/experts ($n = 6$). The average length of experience for experts in the field (excluding the currently or formerly imprisoned participants) ranged from 5 to 40 years, and most (25 out of 29) had been working in the criminal justice or penal voluntary sector field for over 20 years. Additional details on the individuals who took part in the study is not included in order to protect the confidentiality of the respondents.

The semi-structured interviews covered a range of topics, including the structure and mission of youth and young adult services, policy changes and goals, and relationships between the voluntary and government sectors. Interviews were all conducted in English by the principal investigator, lasted 1–3 hours, and were digitally recorded. Along with the interviews, site visits were conducted at youth and young adult prisons and courts in both countries. All study protocols were approved by the Office for the Protection of Human Subjects at the sponsoring University.

In addition to reading and cataloging all of the background materials, inductive coding was used to analyze the interview transcripts. The authors extracted areas of the interviews that discussed the relationships between voluntary sector and criminal justice sector systems, institutions, and probation services for youth and young adults. These portions of the interviews were then coded and extracted, and areas of similarity and difference were compared between the two countries. The four main areas that emerged were the following: structure and function of the youth justice system, training of corrections and probation officers, funding, and actuarial models/use of evidence. This analysis lies at the ‘case’ level rather than the person level. This does not mean that within-case disagreements were dismissed; rather, the analysis for this article focuses on between-case analysis rather than within-case analysis (Yin, 2017).

Overview of cases

England/Wales and Finland have both similarities and differences in size, population profiles, economics, and incarceration rates (see Table 1). The United Kingdom is one of the

Table 1. Demographic comparisons (2016).

	Finland	England
GDP (in USD)	225 billion	2.68 trillion
Income per capita (in USD)	41,000	41,000
Total population	5.5 million	61 million
Prison population (total)	3105	11,834
Youth under 18 in custody	5	1834
Incarceration rate (per 100,000)	57	148

Sources: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA; 2017), RISE (2016), and Youth Justice Board (2017).

GDP: gross domestic product.

most populous nations in Europe (61-million persons), with England/Wales constituting 57.9-million persons (Office of National Statistics, 2015). The unemployment rate in 2016 was 5.4 percent although one in five individuals still live in poverty, reflecting wide wealth disparities (Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 2017). Finland has a smaller population (at 5.5-million persons) and a smaller overall GDP (gross domestic product) than England (see Table 1). A member of the European Union since 1995, Finland has a high per capita income of \$41,100 and virtually no households falling below the poverty line (CIA, 2017).

Moreover, as Table 1 displays, Finland's rate of incarceration is significantly lower than England/Wales for both youth and adults. The youth incarceration rate in England/Wales has dropped precipitously in the last 10 years; although as some scholars have pointed out, it is still concentrated among certain regions and among ethnic/racial minority groups (Briggs, 2017). In sum, the two cases are notably different in rates of incarceration per capita.

Findings

The structure and function of youth and young adult justice

This section details how each case handles youth and young adult justice, including the structure and function of these systems, as well as the distinctiveness or connectedness of criminal justice sector policies and programs for youth and young adults.

England/Wales. In England/Wales, the Ministry of Justice is the central governmental branch overseeing criminal justice programs. The Youth Justice Board (YJB), housed in the Ministry of Justice, is the designated government entity that monitors the operation and provision of services for congregate care and probation supervision for children and adolescents aged 10–17 years. One key feature of YJB services is local, multidisciplinary Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), which one expert characterized as follows: 'local authority based multi-agency teams are those that are responsible for working with young people' and that 'operate with a blend of a public safety and prevention approach distinct from probation'. YOT services are uniquely provided to those under 18 in England/Wales and include voluntary sector providers as part of the teams.

The law in England/Wales draws sharp legislative boundaries between youth and adults based on chronological age (Abrams et al., 2018). For example, no person under 18 can be housed in a correctional facility alongside an adult. Under the law, youth capable of possessing criminal responsibility are defined as persons aged 10–17 years. Expert stakeholders agreed that the England/Wales treats youth and young adults quite differently, in that the youth justice system is at least partially focused on prevention and rehabilitation alongside punishment, whereas systems surrounding young adults are almost solely about punishment and accountability.

However, for young adults, the law permits judicial discretion in reduced sentencing of persons between 18 and 21 years of age. There are also several Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) that are designated for young adults aged 18–21 years, which are co-located but still administered separately in the same spaces as the ‘under 18’ YOIs. Yet broadly speaking, there are few special services or courts for young adults, which a few of the stakeholders interviewed viewed as an area ripe for change. One voluntary sector expert stated, ‘We’re stuck in a real dilemma because we feel that young adults should be treated different in the system, but by-and-large, the young adult estate is awful. You wouldn’t want anybody to be in that system’. At the time of this study, the Ministry of Justice had contracted some of its adult probation supervision to private security corporations as well as voluntary sector providers. However, as of 2018, the governmental contract with private security companies was in the process of being terminated due to the absence of proven or positive outcomes (Davey, 2018).

Finland. The Finnish criminal justice system as a whole emphasizes prevention, diversion, and minimal use of incarceration, or as one expert succinctly described it as ‘very radical and lenient’. Finland has a national offender management model and does not have a distinct juvenile court. According to the Finnish Penal Code, the age of criminal liability is fifteen and children below this age cannot be subject to criminal sanctions (Penal Code, Ch. 3, Section 4(1)). A specific provision that children under 15 years of age may be subject to child protection measures was removed from the Penal Code in 2003. However, the more serious the child’s crime is, the more likely the police will report on child protection. The law has a special classification for young people between the ages of 15 and 17 years. For cases of youth (i.e. ages 15–17) who are tried in criminal court, a mitigated penal latitude can be applied. In determining punishment in these cases, at most three-fourths of the maximum sentence of imprisonment or fine and at least the minimum sentence provided for the offense may be imposed. If the offense is punishable by life imprisonment, the maximum sentence is 12 years (Penal Code, Ch. 6, Section 8(1)).

In 1990, the Penal Code was amended with a provision stating that there must be weighty reasons for incarcerating young people under the age of 18. However, in assessing the significance of a weighty reason, consideration shall be taken of the placement of the offender in a child welfare institution referred in the Child Welfare Act (Penal Code, Ch. 6, Section 9; Child Welfare Act, Ch. 10, Section 57). As a consequence, only in extremely rare circumstances are youth under age 18 sentenced to serve time in prison. Due to these low numbers, there are currently no prisons in the country designated as ‘juvenile’ facilities. Although there are many different types of prison facilities in Finland, ranging from open

Table 2. Youth justice comparisons.

	Finland	England
Ideology	Rehabilitative	Rehabilitative/punitive
Separate youth court/facilities?	No	Yes
Age of 'juvenile' sentencing	15-17	10-17
Separate young adult services?	Some	Some
Age of 'young adult'	18-21	18-21
Prisons/jail management	Public	Public/private
Reentry/probation services management	Public	Public/private

to closed facilities, some stakeholders expressed the need to fund youth-specific facilities. As one judge stated, 'I don't care if it more cost-effective. I still want to have one specific institution <for youth>'. Following a court sentence, minors who are on probation are supervised by the government-run Community Sanctions Agency (CSA), which has regional offices throughout the country and also offers team-driven case management services (similar to the YOTs).

'Young adults' are defined under national law as individuals between the ages 18 and 21 (Criminal Procedures Act, Act 633/2010). Young adults are sentenced to only two-thirds of the severity of adult sentences for similar crimes, and sentences for first-time offenses among young adult may be only one-third to one-half the severity of typical adult sentences. While imprisoned, young adults are often (but not always) housed in separate wards and the probation services offered to young adults are also supervised by the local CSA staff. Table 2 summarizes the main features differentiating the youth and young adult justice systems in the two cases.

Training and approach of corrections and probation officers

Stakeholders in both countries suggested that the training and value-orientation of corrections and probation officers (termed here as 'officers') is relevant to the alignment and relationships between sectors. This section describes perceptions of these values and how officer orientation influences these relationships in the design and delivery of youth and young adult justice services in these two cases.

England/Wales. Pertaining to young adults, the National Probation Service in England/Wales imposes a minimal degree requirement for officers, often in probation studies, social work, or an equivalent degree. However, for the private probation companies, the level of training is at the employer's discretion. This makes for complicated requirements, or as one advocate described about training, 'the whole area is unclear'. Some experts believed that the training for probation officers or private prison employees does not meet the unique needs of young adults and that the justice system is uninterested in this specific population. One voluntary sector agency director explained,

The current arrangements in custody <for young adults> are totally inadequate. There's almost no specialist training. There's no selection of people who want to work with young adults . . .

In probation it is horrible for the young adults that have got an unsympathetic adult. Much better to have people who've got an empathy with that age group.

While stakeholders suggested that there some movement to train a separate 'young adult' workforce in the private prison and probation corporations, this is not consistent practice across England/Wales. Experts thus characterized the training of probation officers for young adults was as 'unspecialized' for this population.

In the youth justice system, the YOTs that supervise youth in conflict with the law are staffed by multidisciplinary professionals, including law enforcement and social workers, along with community social services and education representatives. One academic expert described the constellation of YOTs as follows: 'They're part of the local authority. You will have social work qualified staff working within them, but you'll also have some seconded staff from probation, seconded staff from health, usually they would be psychiatric nurses, you get seconded police officers'. The multidisciplinary team reflects the blended goals of prevention, rehabilitation, and public safety.

However, some interviewees questioned the ability of probation officers working directly with youth, feeling that type of intensive work requires the ability to 'recognize learning difficulties and mental health, particularly in that age group'. Those working within government, by contrast, were confident that the proper staff are assigned to youth cases, which are considered to be more highly trained than those working directly with adults.

In sum, the training of officers was described as more 'specific' and aligned toward multidisciplinary team work, including voluntary sector services at the youth level as compared to the young adult level. There was overall agreement that corrections and probation officers do not receive specialized training in working with young adults and that their value orientation is more punitive. Thus for young adults, corrections and probation officer training was not aligned with the more rehabilitative and developmentally specialized orientation of the voluntary sector.

Finland. The standard training of a correctional or probation officer in Finland is to obtain a degree as a 'Counselor of Social Services' with a specialization in criminal sanctions. One expert described this degree as 'a cross between social work and law enforcement'. This 2-year training requirement also includes aspects of mental health, human development, and trauma and is required of anyone working inside prisons. According to one expert, CSA staff used to consist of masters-level social workers, but around the year 2000 due to a shortage of social workers, the government lowered the standard to a 2-year post-secondary degree.

Social work's emphasis on rehabilitation and the dignity and worth of all humans was apparent throughout the workers who were interviewed. Government experts described the CSA staff as forming relationships with young people who have 'quite good connections' with them, offering them 'the help that they need'. The prison warden said of the corrections officers at his institution 'we behave, so they behave', suggesting that those who work with imprisoned individuals do so with the utmost respect and care. The prisoners and former prisoners who participated in this study concurred that system currently

supports probation officers in their emphasis on rehabilitation, programs to stimulate their own development and knowledge as probation staff, and that emphasizes mutual respect between staff and those who are confined.

Although the law distinguishes between youth, young adults, and adults very clearly in regard to level of sanctions and sentences, the training of officers appeared to be fairly uniform across the various entities who work with different age groups. When asked about specialized youth training, stakeholders agreed that youth cases are seen more in child welfare, and that youth justice work is similar in model to how work with adults is accomplished; all with similar values of addressing unmet personal or family needs that give rise to criminal behavior. In essence, Finland appears to apply a similar model to all of their corrections work, and one that aligns with voluntary sector services that emphasize rehabilitation and meeting basic needs.

Funding structures and competition

The theme of funding for services emerged as an important system-level factor in how sectors collaborate and function side by side in service-delivery systems. This section covers stakeholders' views of funding structures operating at the level of large-scale government criminal justice agencies, as well as funding of voluntary sector programs.

England/Wales. In England/Wales, the government regulates funding for all criminal justice services, relying on a blend of governmental delivered services as well as outsourced private for-profit and voluntary sector services. Stakeholders expressed concerns about how this funding structure creates conflicts between sectors, primarily at the young adult level and less so at the youth level.

At the time of the study, the government contracted with private probation firms to handle 'low and medium risk' adult probation cases, whereas high-risk offenders remained in the oversight of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). According to stakeholders, the contracts with for-profit providers were 'controversial' because of the need to demonstrate efficiency and cost savings in the form of results in order to 'win a contract'. The idea of opening up the 'marketplace' for bids to provide services (geared toward all adults, but applies to this discussion of young adults) led to strong and diverse opinions. Some experts expressed appreciation that a contracted provider needs to demonstrate their value. One prison employee explained that the current model may prevent waste:

There's a lot of these charities. They're all going to government for lots of money, and they're all trying to work with the same people. They're not coordinating. Part of the issue with this is that it is hard to determine who is in it for the right reasons, and who is going to do good work. My perception where I'm working is that there's a lot of wasted money going out.

Contrasted with the opinion above, other experts expressed concern that the funding environment has created competition over service domains, which places voluntary sector organizations in an unfair race with the for-profit sector. Another criminal justice sector employee explained,

It also seems unfair with these providers, often third-sector providers, where you say to them, ‘Come and run some programs for us, and we want reoffending figures afterwards, and we want all the soft outcomes’, etcetera, etcetera. Yet, they’re in the office running a program for an hour or two a week in the evening with a group, most of whom don’t really want to be there. Then you enter them at the end. Did those six weeks produce a reoffending?—It does seem a little bit unfair.

In this view, the process disadvantages voluntary sector services who are already fighting an uphill battle to provide services within prisons and then being asked for accountability data that they cannot provide within their more limited capacity. Moreover, the competitive funding environment appeared to create suspicion between entities, including between voluntary sector providers. This has resulted in some fracturing of services aimed to help the young adult group post-release.

Stakeholders were less concerned about funding tensions pertaining to voluntary sector services for youth, where these services are more routinely contracted to work with the youth in various localities. Moreover, an overriding perception for those under 18 housed in the YOIs was that they receive many more community-based educational and vocational services than those on the young adults on the ‘other side’ of the wall’ – aged 18–21. One corrections employee stated,

The problem, it does <the services> taper off. I’ve worked in prisons where you’ve got a split site. You have 15 through 18 year olds in one part of the prison and 18 to 21s in the other side of the prison. The 18 to 21s seem almost like a poor relation into – in comparison to the juveniles, because the funding is not there to deliver the same when they’re now older.

In sum, the main points of contention regarding funding were centered at the young adult level, where competition and private sector engagement created a more competitive playing field.

Finland. According to stakeholders, the fiduciary relationship between the voluntary sector and the government sector in Finland is distinct, yet mutually supportive. In the analysis, we did not discern major differences between funding for young adult and youth justice systems, particularly because these systems are not distinct. Municipalities in Finland are responsible for providing services for those returning to their communities after imprisonment or who have received a criminal sanction (both youth and adults), and most are served through local CSA offices. However, government-sector services may not have all the necessary expertise to meet the social service needs for those released from prison, so they often rely on the voluntary sector to provide additional aftercare services, including substance abuse programs or halfway houses.

These services are particularly critical for young adults who are likely to have higher recidivism risk. As one voluntary sector provider explained,

In Finland, in legislation, there is no one agent that is named to be responsible for the aftercare. It goes like that. That is when you are released from prison is to the task of the municipalities to take care of people.

Finland voluntary sector services are largely funded through gambling, including the numerous slot machines found in the local supermarkets. Service providers described these resources to be ‘mostly adequate’, but also worried that smaller municipalities would not have the ‘same resources’ as larger areas.

As a result of the government CSA and voluntary sector services working in distinct, yet complementary roles, stakeholders described this relationship as ‘mostly cooperative’. However, some discussed the importance of advocates working as intermediaries in order to get clients the services that they need upon transitioning out of prison, such as housing, substance abuse treatment, or to report a problem with benefits or income maintenance. In that sense, the voluntary sector served as a necessary entity alongside the state-run services. One judge stated in relation to a question about how sectors work together as follows: ‘We are based on the cooperation approach, in a way. That all the experts will provide their expertise, but then not to interfere in the other system’.

Actuarial models and use of evidence

Actuarial models and use of evidence were a major theme in discussions of relationships between sectors. This section describes how experts discussed these tensions as they apply to the organization and evaluation of services for young adults and youth in the justice system.

England/Wales. For the past 20 years, England/Wales has increasingly relied on actuarial and results-based offender management models (Lewis, 2005). For young adults (as is the case with all adults), the NOMS relies on actuarial assessments to determine level of risk (low, medium, or high), and this score is used to assign young adults to various oversight agencies for community supervision. Government sector stakeholders appreciated the results-based accountability that is emphasized in current government contracts for outsourced services for both private and voluntary sector providers. For example, one government official stated that in the absence of an accountability system, ‘discretion can be a dangerous thing and regional difference can be a dangerous thing’. Those from the voluntary sector, by contrast, felt that the risk and accountability model had gone too far and has not, by and large, improved services for young adults.

According to the stakeholders interviewed, standardized risk assessments are also used to determine suitable interventions and placements for youth in conflict with the law. The results of these assessment can determine, for example, how often a young person will be supervised in the community, or their level of security in placement. Models for interventions with youth are also heavily driven by a slate of known evidence-based practices such as cognitive behavioral interventions. Stakeholders expressed mostly negative views about the focus on the actuarial models as applied to youth (under 18) cases. According to one academic expert, the strategy had gone too far at one point: ‘We had this mantra that said the only way you can work with offenders is cognitive-behavioral. This is what works. There was this crisis of what you do. Everything was evidence-based’. Another expert labeled this trend ‘nonsense’ because it ‘fails to get to the heart of the relationship’ between officer and client, or what ‘youth really need to avoid crime in dangerous neighborhoods’.

One government-sector manager who was generally in support of risk-based models cautioned against YOT staff becoming ‘technicians who tick off boxes’ rather creating positive and supportive relationships with youth.

All in all, stakeholders expressed that perhaps there is middle ground to be had; while that the evidence-based approach had gone too far, there is room for thoughtful approaches to youth and young adult justice that take into account the most recent evidence on brain development, youth needs, and other science. These stakeholders called this approach an ‘evidence base in practice’. With this approach, they continued, there is more room for the voluntary sector to succeed in outsourced services.

Finland. According to experts, the Finnish model uses some actuarial metrics for incarceration, probation, or aftercare services. The CSA, for example, publishes routine statistics regarding crime, incarceration, and recidivism. Moreover, some stakeholders suggested that particularly when crime fears rise or there is an economic downturn, the Finnish system is more susceptible to demands for results-based accountability.

Yet at the time of this study, and across the sectors interviewed, stakeholders stressed that service models are mostly based on a relational, rather than an actuarial paradigm. For example, CSA staff build rapport and get to know those who are system involved to better understand how to help them. Voluntary sector service providers who assist in providing reentry services on the local level seem to share this mentality in that they develop a relationship with those they serve in order to deliver personalized care.

Finland experts also stressed the essence of probation work is not about ‘success and failure’ but rather about ‘providing for people’s unmet needs’. Within this paradigm, they strive to prevent youth from remaining involved with the system as adults by using least restrictive sentences. As one CSA employee stated, the mind-set of law enforcement agencies is ‘. . . what do you need? what would help you keep out of trouble?’ To apply this approach, they rely on the voluntary sector as partners. One government-sector employee stated,

What is very important is that we try to connect them <youth> with other services. Maybe with the social services, if there isn’t a connection already, or maybe NGOs. Even the law requires that we have to make sure that when the supervision time is over, that the juvenile has connections to the Social Welfare Office or other, for example, NGOs, so that the situation will be something they can follow.

This ideology of relational approaches and connections appeared to pave the way for voluntary sector services to work as cooperative allies. This does not mean evidence-based interventions are not utilized with youth or that outcomes are not measured in service provision; rather, stakeholders agreed that there ought to be a flexible approach to the work that considers the unique circumstances of each client.

Discussion

Recent scholarship on the voluntary sector interface with criminal justice systems and services has identified a gradual process of neoliberal control over poor and marginalized groups through the mechanisms of decentralization, actuarial models, control over

contracted services, and a competitive funding environment (Goddard and Myers, 2017; Helminen and Mills, 2019; McNeill et al., 2012; Miller, 2014; Werth, 2019). However, much of the research is confined to singular (or case) examples and/or the adult criminal justice sector. This study explored the interface between the voluntary and criminal justice sectors in two countries, including institutions and system geared to manage and serve youth and young adults. While the analysis was more exploratory than evaluative, we write this study with the assumption that a more cooperative relationship between sectors will reduce service fracturing and potentially lead to better outcomes for youth.

Our analysis consistently found that Finland had much more cooperative relationships between sectors, both in regard to services geared toward those under age 18 (which was indeed a very small system due to laws and institutional structure) and with services geared toward young adults (aged 18–21). There also appeared to be fewer conflicts in negotiating the boundaries of service delivery and ‘insider/outsider’ statuses. Three primary ingredients appeared to drive this relationship: shared values behind the work itself, ample funding without direct or interfering competition, and less emphasis on actuarial and evidence-based models.

In regard to values, the Finnish corrections and probation officers along with experts and employees of the voluntary sector appeared to share values of prevention, minimal use of incarceration, and meeting unmet needs of system impacted individuals and families. These values appeared to permeate systems that are in place for minor youth and young adults (as well as adults). In addition, these shared values were reflected in the training of officers, whose education involved some exposure to social work and human development in addition to law enforcement and safety techniques. The value orientation and training can be contrasted to the case of England/Wales, wherein expressed or consistent values were less clear. Of note, the training of criminal justice officers for youth and young adults was noted as fairly distinct, with those assigned to youth more focused on prevention and rehabilitation and those for young adults adhering to a stronger public safety model (as applied to all adults). In particular, there appeared to be some shared values of prevention and supportive relationship among those working with the YOTs, but those from different sectors (government vs voluntary) did not appear to be aligned in relation to working with young adults.

Moreover, in England/Wales, the voluntary sector’s emphasis on developmental differences and needs of young adults stood in contrast to the government sector/probation’s emphasis on risk assessment and containment. These findings support prior literature pointing out that shared values can foster mutually supportive relationships between the voluntary and government sectors, particularly when sharing clients and negotiating service roles and responsibilities (Anthony et al., 2010; Mills et al., 2011, 2012). In addition, this study provides further evidence that structural arrangements, including the uniform training of officers, may contribute to this type of alignment, in as much as it can prevent the types of systems clashes and a sense of ‘outsider-ness’ that has often characterized the voluntary sector role in prison and probation systems (Abrams et al., 2016).

Fiduciary relationships also lie at the heart of arrangements and boundaries between sectors. In Finland, the voluntary sector is not dependent on winning contracts with the

criminal justice sector for their work, and instead receives a separate stream of government funding from gambling (Helminen and Mills, 2019). Ample funding sources for both sectors and absence of direct competition appeared to facilitate mutual trust.

In contrast, the structure of voluntary sector programs bidding on government contracts to serve youth and young adults (both within penal institutions and in community settings such as probation and aftercare) seemed to lead to the impression that the voluntary sector might 'take away' something that the government sector ought to own. Moreover, from the voluntary sector standpoint, the contractual services arrangement sparked competition with private sector services and with one another. Adequate and sustained funding of the voluntary sector remains an issue to be reckoned with in many systems around the globe and is not an issue with simple solutions (Dolnicar et al., 2008). The impact of funding streams appeared to be less problematic in services geared toward youth, where the voluntary sector appeared to be more routinely funded to work alongside government through the multidisciplinary YOT structure.

One key point of discussion is that while the criminal justice and voluntary sectors in Finland appeared to share common values (as mentioned), their roles and boundaries, separated by funding streams, appeared complementary. Thus, the absence of competition for resources appeared to reduce the idea of suspicion or competition over territory. However, without that competition, there is also potential risk of less incentive to innovate. Future research ought to probe more deeply into funding arrangements, competition, and how to produce models between sectors that are complementary even in the absence of factors that make Finland a unique case.

Echoing prior research (Dünkel, 2014; Goddard, 2014; Salole, 2016), this study found that issues pertaining to risk assessment, actuarial models, and a focus on outcomes can drive wedges and can push the voluntary sector out of viable competition for government contracts due to the lack of research capacity within small organizations. We do not intend to use these findings support or refute the value of actuarial or evidence-based models in youth or young adult justice; indeed, this argument goes beyond the scope of this article, and there are other papers addressing this matter (cf. Werth, 2019). Rather, the favoring of evidence-based models in England/Wales appeared to pose barriers to the various sectors together with similar goals and ideologies. While stakeholders in England/Wales did not suggest that all services are actuarial or evidence-based, the issue loomed as important in regard to the types of services that the government might view as more beneficial and subsequently fund. Critics feared that this focus would require workers to just 'tick off boxes', rather than meet the real needs of clients. Stakeholders also did not express uniform confidence that these newer models or competition translated to better outcomes for youth or young adults.

Although not conclusive from this study, perhaps the key to a mutually beneficial and aligned relationship between sectors lies not in the actual approach applied, but rather a clear idea of how outcomes will be utilized in assessing proposals and evaluating the quality of services. While prior research has suggested that evidence-based models can eclipse and even subsume the values of and benefits of voluntary sector services (Salole, 2016), these findings suggest that some of the best practices of youth and young adult justice also might remain flexible and relational, while still relying on the best available evidence to

meet the challenges of the given population. Further research perhaps also using a comparative case study approach would be needed in order to confirm these suggestions.

Limitations

Several limitations remain important to the interpretation of these results. Using the case study approach, it is uncertain if key structural arrangements between sectors drive the relationships between sectors, or if the relationships between sectors fuels the structural arrangements. In other words, without a time element or a different research approach, it is difficult to make causal assertions. Moreover, as a result of the snowball and expert sampling approach, some key interviews or stakeholders may have been overlooked, which can bias the findings toward more homogeneous views. The researchers interviewed many key stakeholders with a strong depth of experience, yet many additional perspectives from a larger sample might have resulted in more diverse perspectives. Last, from a primarily outsider's point of view (the principal investigator is US based), some nuances of the system and/or the culture of how key actors or programs work together might not have been captured through this method. With data collected in 2016, some structures and arrangements between sectors also may have changed since that time. In particular, the partially privatized system for young adult probation has shifted in England/Wales, which may then pave the way for enhance voluntary sector presence.


Conclusion

This comparative case study sought to examine the interface between the voluntary and criminal justice sectors in relation to youth and young adult systems and services. Particular attention was paid to issues affecting relationships between sectors as well as negotiations of boundaries and roles. A strength of this study is the ability to tease out system-level factors that are not captured by purely quantitative methods or a single-case study. In looking at two countries, the analysis found that factors such as expressed values (including how corrections and probations officers in both sectors are trained), funding, and use on evidence-based models influence cohesion and boundary negotiation between sectors. Future research ought to examine these factors and how they operate across systems as well as over time. As this case study was conducted at one slice in time and practices/policies are rapidly changing, it will be interesting to note how relationships between sectors respond to policy developments and emerging knowledge on the young adult population in particular.

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