

Friday, October 14

8:00am-9:30am **REGISTRATION/HOSPITALITY DESK** **Lobby**

8:30am **CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST** **Silver Baron E**
Sponsored by: Western Association of Criminal Justice

9:00am - 10:00am **EVENT # 14** **Silver Baron E**
PAPER PRESENTATIONS: Post-Punishment Realities
Chair: Doris Schartmueller, California State University, Chico

Hoping for Release from Life-without-Parole in California: A Narrative Analysis of Commutation Application Letters

Doris, Schartmueller, California State University, Chico
Jessica Ramos, California State University, Chico
Sunshine Verma, California State University, Chico
Brenna Wren, California State University, Chico

A commutation is rarely granted to someone serving a life-without-parole (LWOP) sentence. Recently, however, California governors have become more favorable to commuting LWOP. According to their executive clemency reports, 160 individuals were granted a commutation of LWOP between 2018 and 2021. The applicants' personal letters to the state, published on the governor's official website, are the focus of this study. A narrative analysis of these letters exposes multi-faceted stories around receiving and serving LWOP and the applicants' self-narrated paths towards redemption. The narratives also illuminate the social and political context in which these sentences have been served.

Assessing Public Perceptions of Prisoner Characteristics and Parole Release Decisions

Jennifer L. Lanterman, University of Nevada, Reno
Monica K. Miller, University of Nevada, Reno
M. Katie Cunius, University of Nevada, Reno
Sarah A. Moody, University of Nevada, Reno

Public opinion research is important because policymakers often make decisions based on the opinions of their constituents, but research on public opinion of parole is limited. We conducted two online studies (Study 1 N=195, Study 2 N=460) with participants acting as mock parole board members. Participants read vignettes that varied prisoners' age, gender identity, illnesses, apology, and crime type, and then indicated their opinion whether each prisoner should be released. Results indicate moderately strong support for parole, but prisoner age, gender identity, illness, apology, and crime type did influence release decisions. Implications for parole board policy are discussed.

ReGroup: A New Approach to Reentry Using Multidirectional Strategies and Responses

Taryn VanderPyl, Western Oregon University

ReGroup is a new twist on the traditional support group model, specifically for people who have recently returned to the community after time spent behind bars. The members of this group help one another celebrate their new freedom, get established in the next chapter of their lives, refocus when life becomes distracting or overwhelming, learn valuable life skills to help ease reentry, and provide a support system for various areas of need. ReGroup capitalizes on the valuable lived experiences of the members to help one another from a position of genuine understanding. This presentation will share the lessons learned in establishing this new community of change directly from the founders and participants.

10:10am-10:50am

EVENT # 15

Silver Baron E

PAPER PRESENTATIONS: International Criminal Justice

Chair: Michael K. Dzordzormenyoh, Kent State University

Crime & Immigration in Ghana: What Factors Influence Public Acceptance of Immigrants & Foreign Workers in their Neighborhoods in Ghana?

Michael K. Dzordzormenyoh, Kent State University

The current literature on the relationship between crime and immigration in Africa is limited because of the almost exclusive focus on the Global North compared to the Global South by researchers. In Ghana very little is known about the extent of the influence of crime on public attitudes toward immigrants. In this study, an initial attempt is made to assess the effect of crime victimization in three areas – theft, physical attack, and armed robbery on public attitudes toward immigrants and foreign workers by analyzing the responses of 2400 Ghanaians. Descriptive and ordinary least square regression results indicate that political party affiliation, access to facilities, political party competition and violence, type of government preferred by citizens, and lived outside before are significant predictors. However, crime victimization was not a significant predictor. The results from this study provide partial support for structural opportunity, cultural, and social disorganization explanations of the crime-immigrant and public attitude nexus. Future studies can use the results of current study as the foundation to add to nuance the existing literature.

Understanding Voter Turnout effects on Sexual Violence during Armed Conflict

Cortney Dalton, Washington State University

Past research has found a relationship between elections and violence and sexual violence, but the connections are still unclear. With increased research addressing sexual violence rates, this presentation works to understand these connections between elections and sexual violence using voter turnout as the primary variable. This utilizes the data collected by Cohen and Nordås (2014) and looks specifically at the effects of elections and voter turnout on international sexual violence rates between 1989 and 2009.

11:00am

CLOSING REMARKS

Silver Baron E

Taryn VanderPyl, 2022-2023 WACJ President