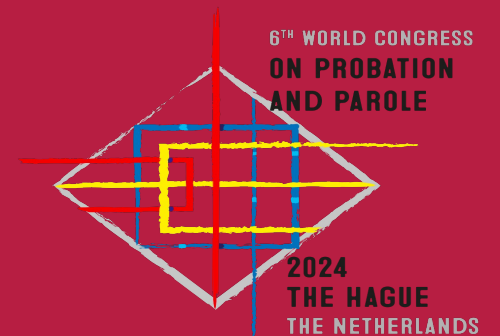




FUTURE SESSION: ASSESSING THE LIKELY IMPACT OF POLITICAL CHANGES ON THE SIZE, SCOPE, AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS SYSTEM

JAMES M. BYRNE, PROFESSOR EMERITUS
SCHOOL OF CRIMINOLOGY AND JUSTICE STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL



DECONSTRUCTING POLITICAL POPULISM: WHAT DOES THE PUBLIC REALLY WANT THE CORRECTIONS SYSTEM TO ACCOMPLISH?

I suspect that three factors will affect the future direction of each country's corrections system in the coming years:

(1) how the public views the seriousness of various crimes and the legitimacy of various sanctioning strategies,

(2) Public support for rehabilitation versus punishment-oriented crime control policies, and

(3) The Public's view of the relative effectiveness of prisons versus community corrections as crime control strategies

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ABOUT THE SIZE, SCOPE, AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CURRENT COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS SYSTEM

How many individuals are under total correctional control—both in carceral settings and in community corrections—globally?

Is there intra-regional and/or inter-regional variation in the relative size of the Prison and Community Corrections population globally?

Do Countries with the largest prison populations also have large community corrections populations?

What do we know about the effectiveness of community corrections?

HOW MANY INDIVIDUALS ARE UNDER TOTAL CORRECTIONAL CONTROL—BOTH IN CARCERAL SETTINGS AND IN COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS—GLOBALLY?

The size of the global corrections population is currently close to 24 million:

- 11.5 million people in the prison system (i.e., 48% of the estimated total) and
- 12.5 million individuals in the community corrections system (52% of the estimated total corrections population).

**IS THERE
REGIONAL
VARIATION ON
THE RELATIVE
SIZE OF THE
PRISON AND
COMMUNITY
CORRECTIONS
SYSTEM?**

Countries in three global regions—South America, Asia, and Africa—with large prison systems appear to prioritize carceral control over community-based alternatives.

Countries with equally large prison systems located in three other regions—North America, Europe, and Oceania—have built systems with greater community corrections than carceral capacity.

Some minor Intra-regional variations in the relative size of the prison and community corrections system were identified.

**DO COUNTRIES
WITH THE
LARGEST
PRISON
POPULATIONS
ALSO HAVE
LARGE
COMMUNITY
CORRECTIONS
POPULATIONS?**

- **Close to 60% of the Global Prison Population is located in just 10 countries.**
- **We can only estimate the community corrections populations in 7 of the top 10 largest prison systems globally.**
 - **In these top 10 countries, the prison system is larger than the community corrections system in 5 of the 7 (top-10) countries.**
- **Exceptions:**
 - **United States, whose community corrections system was 2.1 times larger than its prison system**
 - **Russian Federation, whose community corrections system is marginally larger than its current prison population.**

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BOTH PRISON-BASED AND COMMUNITY-BASED SANCTIONS?

- **Available Measures of Probation Effectiveness**
 - compliance with probation conditions, and
 - evidence of desistance from crime, either while under supervision or post-release.
 - Using these outcome measures, many probation systems were identified with high compliance rates, and several were also effective in limiting re-offending while the individual was under supervision.
- **Measures of Parole Effectiveness**
 - data on the effectiveness of parole systems was harder to find. For countries that provided data, significant variations in parole completion rates, re-arrest rates, and return to prison rates were identified.

HOW DO WE MAINTAIN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SUPPORT IN A TIME OF GROWING SCIENCE SKEPTICISM AND THE RISE OF POLITICAL POPULISM?

- **Observation One: We need to document the punishment component of Probation** to counter the argument that probation is not punishment. Punishment – as it is applied via probation – is a multi-dimensional concept:
 - *loss of liberty* (e.g. freedom is conditional on ongoing compliance)
 - *loss of rights* (e.g. right to vote, occupational disqualification),
 - *loss of privileges* (e.g. driving, drinking, socializing) and
 - *loss of freedom* (e.g. residential location restrictions, movement restrictions, curfews, mandated reporting, mandated treatment, mandated employment, drug testing, computer monitoring)

HOW DO WE MAINTAIN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SUPPORT IN A TIME OF GROWING SCIENCE SKEPTICISM AND THE RISE OF POLITICAL POPULISM?

- **Observation Two: We need to Develop and Disseminate Global Metrics on the Performance and Impact of Community Corrections**

- **Why Performance measures matter:** You have a right to your own opinions, but not your own facts
- **The Challenge:** There are no standard performance measures that are routinely collected and disseminated by community corrections systems in the countries we profiled. The absence of these globally agreed upon performance measures means that every country can depict the performance of their community corrections system in a manner that is suitable for them, given their stated priorities.
- **Shifting Priorities:** Changes in Governments provide an opportunity to examine what we hope to achieve in our community corrections system.

SMALL GROUP TASKS

Please offer your group's response to each of the following questions:

- Do you anticipate an upcoming change in your country's political leadership? Make a list in your group.
- Does your country collect and examine performance measures for probation and parole? If yes, please list them.
- Have researchers in your country conducted evaluation research on the effectiveness of current probation and parole strategies and/or programs? If yes, what did they find?
- Suggest a strategy for gaining popular support for community corrections from both the public and the political leadership in your country?

Time – 30 min.

Feedback in the group – 15 min.

Wrap-up – 5 min.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS: WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE THE COMMUNITY CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY-BASED CORRECTIONS

1. **Community attitudes** toward punishment and various offender control strategies help shape both sentencing and correctional policy.
2. **Community tolerance** for various forms of misbehavior will affect both who ends up in court and how individuals are supervised in community settings.
3. **Community support** (i.e., resource availability) for individuals at risk, due to substance abuse, unemployment, a plethora of individual and family problems, and general living conditions, will directly affect probation and parole officers' assessments, referrals, and follow-up procedures.
4. **Community structure** defines the general context in which traditional offender-based community control strategies must operate, in that certain kinds of community structure either weaken forms of social control that induce conformity to law-abiding norms or generate controls that inhibit conformity

