

Capital punishment jurors may not understand their task

People called upon to sit on juries for capital crimes often do not understand the language of the law, the factors they are supposed to weigh in considering a sentence, or even that they have final responsibility for imposing punishment.

New research funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) seeks ways to improve the judgment of jurors who literally make life and death decisions.

Richard L. Wiener, a psychologist at Saint Louis University who

studies how juries make decisions, has received a three-year research grant for almost \$200,000 from NSF to identify the most pervasive and problematic errors jurors commit which may influence deliberations and final sentencing in first-degree murder trials.

Earlier research shows that potential jurors do not reliably comprehend instructions which direct them to weigh "aggravating" and "Mitigating" factors to determine whether to sentence a defendant to

life in prison or to death.

Wiener says many jurors are not clear about the legal definition of these terms, and are often confused about the difference between "counting" and "weighing" these critical factors. Many misunderstand what it means to find a defendant worthy of the death penalty "beyond a reasonable doubt," he says.

Not only do many jurors not comprehend legal terms; they may not understand legal procedures.

"Some jurors may base a decision

to impose the death penalty on the belief that the final responsibility of imposing a sentence rests with the judge," says Wiener; "however, punishment in first-degree murder cases is the responsibility of the jury."

In the first part of his NSF-supported research, Wiener will interview potential jurors to assess their understanding of the legal process, such basic terms as "mitigating," and what the law in their states expects of juries in capital cases. Wiener and his team of researchers

will develop modifications to common court procedures to help jurors better understand their responsibilities and make decisions that are more consistent with the law.

Wiener intends next to test his innovations with potential jurors. During jury simulations, he plans to show volunteers videotapes of the guilt and penalty phases of re-enacted murder trials and allow them to arrive at their own decisions.

Wiener's modifications include presenting jurors a list of common

conceptual errors to avoid in court, and using a diagrammed flow chart to trace the procedural path for jury decision-making rather than relying on a traditional description in legal language.

Evaluating the resulting decisions of mock juries should "contribute to a better understanding of how to improve the present process of guiding jurors in America's courtrooms," says Harmon Hosch, who directs NSF's Law and Social Science Research Program.

The Gift Program addresses gangs affected youth

BY DANNY BELL

In an era in which the perpetrators of violence, drug traffic and gang activity has been traditionally associated with young males, there has evolved a program initiated by Multnomah County and implemented by various Portland agencies to address the needs of young women and girls who are affected by gang related behaviors.

Due to the fact that 100% of the gang shooting were in three geographic regions of Portland's City limits in 1994, The Gift Program

was set-up in those three areas North, Northeast and Southeast. The De Launay Family of Services Gift Project works with young women in North Portland. They provide services to clients ranging between the ages of 16-20.

Among the services is case management. A case manager along with support components in the community provide: individual and family counseling; life skills development; education, including high school completion or GED, and college or vocational programs; job training

and employment; parenting skills development; health services; recreational activities and childcare.

In practical terms this may mean literally rescuing a homeless young mother off the street or from a shelter and finding them a more stable place to stay.

Case manager Sandra Johnson of the De Launay Family of Services comments that "Sometimes we have taken a young woman off the street or negotiated with a landlord who is willing to take someone without references or work history, in order to

find them a place to stay."

Johnson also states "we have a program that is volunteered (participation of young women) and our mission is to build life skills, parenting skills, any skills that are necessary to move within and access the community and to understand the system."

Under the life skills development there are a number of objectives; academic progress and monitoring; employment skills development; knowledge and ability to access health care services, including fam-

ily planning and well baby care; independent living skills; personal safety and violence prevention and parent-youth relationship building.

Among the activities that the preceding agenda may entail are going to the library, cooking classes, rap sessions, looking at community bulletin boards to find things to do about what's happening in the community. "We usually have babies with us all the time," says Johnson... "we like to observe the babies with the moms parenting."

Although not all the clients who

partake of the program succeed, there are a number of successes as well. A case in point is Marty Johnson, a young woman who completed her high school education while on the program and who will be completing the Gift Program this year. In the words of her mother Tammy Johnson... "The most rewarding part that I get out of this whole thing is my daughter. Her life has totally flipped and totally turned around. I no longer see her with the gangs...she finished school and that was something!"

St. Vincent de Paul, the caring temporary service

BY DAN BELL

Gearing to work with people with disabilities, St. Vincent de Paul Staffing Services began in 1991 as the temporary services division of the St. Vincent de Paul Rehabilitation Services. After receiving their first contract from the State of Oregon a second office opened in Portland due to the rapid expansion of services.

To date, St. Vincent de Paul Staffing Services is the largest provider of temporary services to the state; St. Vincent also has contract with county government and most recently with the Port of Portland.

St. Vincent de Paul Rehabilitation Services employs permanent personnel and St. Vincent de Paul Staffing Services employs temporary personnel which has no affiliation with de Paul Drug Treatment, The St. Vincent de Paul Society, or St. Vincent Hospital. During its evolu-

tion St. Vincent Staffing Services has become a model throughout the United States for temporary services. Employing 300-500 people a week in which 75 percent of the temporary jobs fall under the category of clerical workers, ranging from data entry to administrative assistants and secretaries. The other 25 percent of the jobs available are labor jobs such as janitorial jobs available at all Portland Community College campuses.

St. Vincent offers multiple job related experiences and free tutorial opportunity. A person can get on the job experience, improve their resume and get introductions to hiring managers.

There is no buy out fee, no employment contracts, and an applicant can utilize the computer lab as long as needed while upgrading their skills.

The staffing services also offer a comprehensive benefit package for

their temporary employees. Medical benefits are offered to employees after they have worked 260 hours and maintained at least 80 hours of work per month at which time they become eligible for medical benefits with PacifiCare or Kaiser. St. Vincent de Paul pays half and the employee pays the other half. Vacation is available after 1500 hours in a calendar year; employees will receive 5 paid vacation days. St. Vincent de Paul contributes 5% of employees annual salary into a retirement plan. Other benefits include: weekly paychecks, employees may join Costco and sign up for credit union privileges; employees are also covered by workmans compensation. Anyone with a documented disability may apply at St. Vincent de Paul Staffing Services, located at 500 NE Multnomah, Suite 240 or phone 232-8807 for more information.

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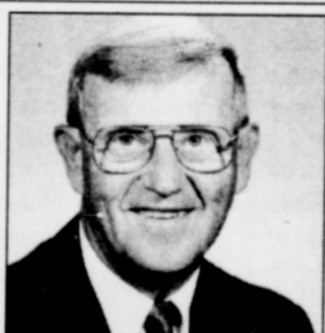
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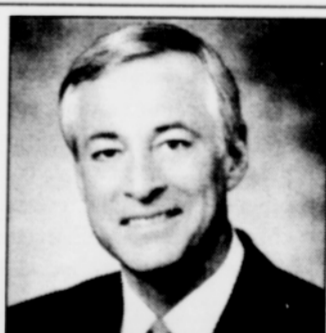
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