

Gender and demographic differences are poor predictors of juror satisfaction

Communication Theory explored the impact of gender, demographic differences, and emotion on the experience of jury deliberation. Researchers found that neither gender nor demographic characteristics affected juror satisfaction with overall service experience. Both men and women reported experiencing emotions during their trials.

John Gastil of the University of Washington in Seattle administered surveys to over 3,000 jurors who served in local courthouses in Washington State. Women comprised essentially half of the sample. Jurors were questioned about their satisfaction with their courthouse experience. Andrea Hickerson used this data for analysis.

Neither cultural nor status differentials appear to affect individuals' evaluations of the jury experience, as measured in terms of satisfaction with the deliberation, the verdict, treatment by other jurors, and overall service. Even when gender is compounded by other status differentials such as race, education, and work status, there was no clear pattern of difference in the subjective assessment of jury deliberation.

The overwhelming majority of both men and women consistently reported an emotional jury experience, regardless of jury and trial characteristics. Emotion appears to figure into the jury deliberation experience independent of individual differences and other variables surrounding the trial.

"Our findings suggest that concerns that deliberation inherently privileges men over women and reason at the expense of emotion are likely incorrect, at least in the context of one's subjective experience of jury deliberation," the authors conclude. "Our results challenge deliberation's critics to find compelling examples of difference effects in well-structured and consequential deliberative spaces."

Source: Wiley-Blackwell

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