

Juries not as racially diverse as the communities from which they are drawn

December 3 2008

A new review of the literature in the journal *Social Issues and Policy Review* examines obstacles that prevent diversity on juries and the implications this has on jury performance. Results reveal that there are a wide range of factors that conspire to prevent juries from being as racially diverse as the communities they represent.

Samuel R. Sommers, Ph.D., of the Department of Psychology at Tufts University shows how racial bias in the legal system is not an outdated or obsolete concern, and race still influences many processes.

In his article, Sommers notes how a county in the U.S. has a sizeable number of African-American citizens. Across various trials, not a single jury had enough black jurors to indicate a jury composition representative of the more general racial demographics. The facts describe Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, just prior to Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Various reasons exist why juries are often less diverse than the surrounding communities. Members of racial minority groups are often relatively underrepresented when it comes to driver's licenses and voter registration, both of which are lists often used to select people for jury duty.

Even when a diverse group of people shows up for jury duty, lawyers often consider race in deciding whom to challenge during jury selection. Prosecutors are often inclined to remove minority jurors from the panel

because of expectations that such individuals are less likely to vote guilty in a case, even though the U.S. Supreme Court prohibits them from excluding jurors based on race.

Source: Wiley

Citation: Juries not as racially diverse as the communities from which they are drawn (2008, December 3) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2008-12-juries-racially-diverse-drawn.html>

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