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Forensic investigation of a firing case

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Abstract

Trials are becoming the new TV dramas, with the traditional and social media following cases from time of arrest through the trial process and beyond (e.g., Casey Anthony, Jodi Arias, George Zimmerman, and Aaron Hernandez). With the insatiable appetite of the media in high profile cases, and the explosion of the use of social media in these cases, the issue whether defendants in high profile cases can receive a fair trial, after most in the jury pool have been exposed to pretrial publicity (PTP), has become an increasingly important issue. Before the courts can effectively deal with PTP bias, social scientist and the courts must know what variables are responsible for the biasing effects of PTP on juror/ jury decision. It is important to understand not only how PTP affects individual jurors, but also how it affects the deliberation process. This talk discusses PTP's influence on both jurors and juries. At the juror level, it focuses on variables that have been found to mediate the relationship between PTP and verdict bias. The next step would be to explore whether jury deliberations increase or reduce PTP bias and how the discussion of PTP is handled during the deliberation process. Finally, what do these findings suggests that is of practical importance to the Courts. That is, how can PTP effects be reduced or eliminated to ensure that the jurors' decisions are based on trial evidence and not pretrial information?

Biography

Christine L. Ruva earned her Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of South Florida (USF) in 2001. She is currently an Associate Professor of psychology and psychology area Chair at the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee. She runs research laboratories on both the Tampa and Sarasota campuses of USF. Dr. Ruva has published more than 10 papers in prestigious journals and books on the topic of pretrial publicity and serves on the editorial board of the International Journal of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences.