

Competence To Stand Trial-Related Skills in a Sample of Urban Youth

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Recent trends in the management of juveniles through juvenile and family courts have brought increased attention to the trial-related abilities of children and adolescents. In the present study, we surveyed 294 low income, urban public school students in grades 5, 7, 9, and 11 to measure their knowledge of court proceedings. Students' responses to a group-administered version of the Georgia Court Competence Test revealed that the majority do not possess basic information about court proceedings. Not surprisingly, younger students demonstrated less understanding than older students, but even older students were not able to demonstrate a competent level of understanding using criteria developed in previous studies. The results are discussed in light of emerging studies, and with reference to the challenges that such findings pose for juvenile courts.

The Effects of Eyeglasses and Race on Juror Decisions Involving a Violent Crime

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Past research has demonstrated the influence of appearance on legal decision-making at trial. We investigated how defendant race and eyeglass wearing affect juror decisions. We used a 2 (defendant race: African-American versus Caucasian) x 2 (eyeglasses: present versus not present) experimental design. Two hundred and twenty undergraduates were given a vignette and 1 of 4 photographs of the defendant. Participants rendered a verdict and rated the defendant on a number of characteristics. Eyeglasses had an indirect effect on verdict by increasing ratings of intelligence, which decreased guilty verdicts. Overall, eyeglasses did not affect ratings of defendants' attractiveness, friendliness, or threateningness. However, there were several significant interaction effects for race of the defendant and the presence of eyeglasses on these ratings.

Peripheral Arterial Tone: A Missing Channel in Polygraph Examination?

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The present study describes and evaluates a novel and under-used method for detecting lies. The method assesses autonomic nervous system (ANS) activation based on changes in peripheral arterial tone (PAT) at the fingertip. To demonstrate the value of this method, we show that it is

useful for lie detection in a real-world situation, using a single-channel apparatus. In two experimental studies participants had the opportunity to win monetary prizes if they succeeded in lying in response to target questions presented by a computer, without being detected. In Experiment 1 participants were asked to indicate the names of their relatives and friends as well as their own name, and in Experiment 2 they were asked questions about past behaviors. Significant enhanced arterial vasoconstriction, indicating autonomic arousal, was evident post lie in comparison to truth responses. The results showed that for 89% of the participants in Experiment 1 and for 73% in Experiment 2, the differences between lies and truthful responses were detected using the current technique. In both studies the PAT was found to be more sensitive than an index of arousal measured through the same device (heart rate).