

## Death and Politics:

### The Role of Demographic Characteristics and Testimony Type in Death Penalty Cases Involving Future Dangerousness Testimony

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Past research examining expert future dangerousness prediction testimony in death penalty cases and civil confinement hearings for sex offenders has found that jurors tend to be more persuaded by less scientific “clinical” testimony and less influenced by “actuarial” based testimony. Jurors demonstrate greater receptivity for clinical testimony despite the fact that actuarial testimony has been shown to be a better predictor of future dangerousness. Research in this area has focused on identifying cognitive factors that can potentially be manipulated during a trial to increase the effectiveness of actuarial testimony on jurors. A mock jury study was conducted to extend these findings and identify demographic characteristics that predict juror responsiveness to the more scientifically reliable actuarial testimony. The results indicate that political orientation may operate in a counterintuitive manner and should be carefully considered during voir dire in cases where future dangerousness testimony is presented.