

An Abstract of the Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies Thesis of:

Michele Nielsen

Accepted on June 4, 2006

Prejudice and Justice in Valuing Life

When people are catastrophically injured through automobile accidents, medical negligence, and product failures, they turn to the courts for redress. If a person is of a minority status, the question is whether he or she is treated with fairness or if a negative bias exists among the jury rendering (or not rendering) an award for economic damages and pain and suffering. To study this matter empirically, emphasis was placed on the non-English-speaking plaintiffs in Oregon who requested jury verdicts after experiencing significant injuries.

“Prejudice and Justice in Valuing Life” reviews literature regarding development of the jury in America, controversies about juries, experiences of immigrants in their own court systems, medical malpractice, and the process of placing a value on one’s life. Field research attempts to quantify this rather subjective hypothesis. By demonstrating the possibility of such bias, recommendations are made for further study.