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Court system treats women better than men, study shows

By Ann Lowe
Daily Nebraskan Senior Reporter

Women defendants are just as likely to be convicted as men, said Susan Welch, UNL professor and chairwoman of the political science department. But women are 5 percent more likely to have charges dropped without a trial, and convicted women are 12 percent less likely than men to get prison sentences, she said.

Welch is studying race and sex discrimination in U.S. court systems with John Gruhl, UNL associate professor of political science and Cassia Spohn, associate professor of the Goodrich program at UNO. They have studied courts in several cities for about five years, Welch said.

could "infer that the difference has to do with gender," she said.

Women judges tend to sentence men and women the same, Welch said. However, judicial paternalism still exists in most men-dominated courts, Welch said.

"Judges — and, presumably, prosecutors and juries as well — treat women more leniently than men because they do not want to subject the supposedly weaker sex to the harsh conditions of prison...or because they assume that many women are the sole caretakers of young children and that incarcerating them may leave the children homeless," the study revealed.

black women-run households have dependent children under six years of age.

Statistics differ from state to state, Welch said. Differences in how men and women are treated may vary among state court systems, she said.

Judy Zangari, assistant administrator of the Nebraska Supreme Court, said state court officials have not read the UNL study, nor have they researched gender bias in Nebraska courts.

The Supreme Court may conduct its own study with the Nebraska Commission on the Status of Women and the State Bar Association, Zangari said.

Welch said the differential treatment may or may not be intentional.

"It may be that a lot of it is subconscious," she said. "They (men judges) may not know they have these kinds of attitudes."

Welch said she is not surprised at the findings, and she doesn't expect the pattern to change soon.

"I suspect it will change over time as traditional ideas about sex roles break down and more women become judges," she said. "But I don't expect any immediate change."

The sex discrimination study is based on data from the Los Angeles prosecutor's office. The researchers looked at the files of more than 10,500 black, white and Hispanic felony defendants, Welch said.

They compared men and women defendants of the same race and criminal records who were charged with the same crimes, Welch said. By keeping these factors consistent, they

Differential treatment is least common among white defendants and most common among blacks, the study indicated. Black men are treated no differently than white and Hispanic men, but often receive much harsher sentences than black women, Welch said.

One reason may be that black households are more likely to be headed by women with dependent children, Welch said. The study said about 75 percent of

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Shoplifting...

Continued on Page 1

Stores aren't the only ones that lose money to shoplifters. A Lincoln police publication said that two to three cents of each consumer's dollar could be going to shoplifting.

Consumers also can help in prevention, Campbell said. Often people will see something, then turn their head. They should report shoplifters to management and personnel, he said.

A film, "Caught Shoplifting," will be shown on cable television, channel 10, Campbell said. The film focuses on the consumer costs of shoplifting, as well as the repercussions if a person is caught, he said.

The film will be shown Thursday at 10 a.m.; Monday at 11:30 a.m.; and Dec. 19 at 8:30 p.m.

If a person is caught shoplifting, the following penalties could be expected:

- If the value of the item stolen is less than \$100, it is a class two misdemeanor: Maximum of six months imprisonment, \$1,000 fine or both.
- If the value is between \$100 and \$300, it is a class one misdemeanor: Maximum of up to one year in prison, \$1,000 fine or both.
- If the item stolen is worth more than \$300, the act is a felony: Maximum five years in prison, \$10,000 fine or both.

Two UNL engineering students have been awarded \$1,000 scholarships by the Society of Women Engineers for use during the 1984-85 academic year. They are: **Lisa Ann Jensen**, daughter of Jesper and Norma Jensen of

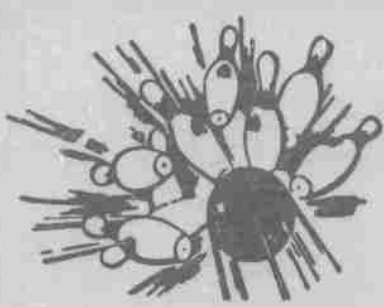
Hemingford, who received the society's Hewlett-Packard Scholarship. She is a computer science major.

Shelley Elizabeth Peters, daughter of Daniel and Elizabeth Peters of Omaha, recipient of the

society's Bechtel Corporation Scholarship. She is a chemical engineering major.

The national scholarships are sponsored by the Society of Women Engineers, which is based in New York City.

Who's News



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LEAGUE	STARTING DATE AND TIME
Kingpin Kegler	Monday, January 21, 6 p.m.
Pin Pounders	Monday, January 21, 8:00 p.m.
Strike N' Spare	Tuesday, January 22, 7:00 p.m.
Nite Owls	Wednesday, January 23, 7:30 p.m.
Gutter Dusters	Thursday, January 24, 5:30
50/50 Mixed	Thursday, January 24, 7:30 p.m.
Parent Child	Sunday, January 20, 4:00 p.m.

Each league consists of six teams; four persons per team. Teams and individuals must preregister and pick up a copy of league rules at the North 40 desk. Students, faculty, staff and friends are eligible.

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