

# Racial Prejudice, Juror Empathy, and Sentencing in Death Penalty Cases (Criminal Justice: Recent Scholarship)

Bryan C. Edelman

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In capital trials archival research documents race-of-victim discrimination while the experimental research supports a race-of-offender effect. Using interviews with jurors, Edelman sought to reconcile this conflict and explain how and when race effects are likely to occur. White jurors were more likely to discount mitigating evidence when the victim was white. White jurors empathized more with a white than black victim. Victim race also had an indirect effect on the evaluation of the defendant. Killers of whites were evaluated less positively than killers of blacks. These two effects suggest that white jurors were less likely to hold a life sentence position when a black defendant was convicted for murdering a white victim.

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