

**YORK COLLEGE
CRIMINOLOGY AND
CRIMINAL JUSTICE
FORUM**

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York College Criminology and Criminal Justice Forum Posting

The current York College Criminology and Criminal Justice Forum posting comes from Dr. Pete Leasure and highlights a recent work in the *Journal of Experimental Criminology*. The paper found that a defendant's immigrant status or ethnicity might influence the juror decision-making process in death penalty cases. The article is available at this link <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11292-020-09411-4> and the abstract is presented below:

How mock jurors' cognitive processing and defendants' immigrant status and ethnicity relate to decisions in capital trials

ABSTRACT

Objectives

This study examined how defendants' immigrant status and ethnicity interact with evidence strength and mock jurors' cognitive processing traits to influence decisions in a capital trial.

Methods

A sample of jury-eligible participants acted as mock jurors and read a trial summary in which defendant immigrant status, defendant ethnicity, and evidence strength were experimentally manipulated. They then weighed aggravators relative to mitigators, recommended a sentence, and completed measures of rational and experiential processing. Logistic regression was used to test predicted interactions.

Results

Mock jurors weighed aggravators over mitigators when the defendant was a Latino citizen and when the defendant was an undocumented immigrant. There were no interactions on sentencing decisions. Evidence strength and experiential processing were positively related to rendering a death sentence.

Conclusions

A defendant's immigrant status and ethnicity might indirectly lead to punitive decisions in capital cases because they influence how jurors weigh aggravators and mitigators.

For questions or comments about this post, Dr. Leasure can be reached at pleasure@ycp.edu.