Competence and Culpability: Delinquents in Juvenile Courts, Youths in Criminal Courts

Barry Feld

University of Minnesota Law School, feldx001@umn.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.law.umn.edu/faculty_articles

Part of the Law Commons

Recommended Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Minnesota Law School. It has been accepted for inclusion in the Faculty Scholarship collection by an authorized administrator of the Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact lenzx009@umn.edu.
Article

Competence and Culpability: Delinquents in Juvenile Courts, Youths in Criminal Courts

Barry C. Feld†

Introduction ............................................................................... 474
I. Delinquents in Juvenile Court: Custody, Racial Disparity, and Competence ................................................. 480
   A. Pretrial and Post-Conviction Custody Status .......... 480
      1. Preventive Detention of Delinquents ............... 481
      2. Punitive Delinquency Dispositions ................. 485
      3. Conclusion ................................................... 499
   B. Juvenile Court Procedures: Adolescents' Competence to Exercise Rights ............................................. 501
      1. Police Interrogation of Juveniles .................. 503
      2. Competence to Stand Trial ......................... 517
      3. Access to Counsel ........................................ 522
      4. Jury Trial: Factfinding, Governmental Oppression, and Collateral Consequences .......................... 531
II. Youths in Criminal Court .................................................. 542
   A. Transfer to Criminal Court .................................... 542
      1. Juveniles in Prison ....................................... 545
      2. Policy Justifications for Waiver: Unarticulated and Unrealized ..................................................... 546
   B. Sentencing Youths as Adults: Children Are Different ................................................................. 549
      1. Roper v. Simmons: Banning the Death Penalty for Juveniles ......................................................... 551

† Centennial Professor of Law Emeritus, University of Minnesota Law School. B.A., University of Pennsylvania; J.D., University of Minnesota Law School; Ph.D., Harvard University. I received outstanding research assistance from Nadia Anguiano-Wehde, University of Minnesota Law School Class of 2017. Copyright © 2017 by Barry C. Feld.
C. Youth Discount ............................................................................................................................. 569
Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................... 573

**INTRODUCTION**

The juvenile court lies at the intersection of youth policy and crime policy. How should the legal system respond when the kid is a criminal and the criminal is a kid? Since juvenile courts’ creation more than a century ago, they have evolved through four periods: the Progressive Era (1899–1960s), the Due Process Era (1960s–’70s), the Get Tough Era (1980s–’90s), and the contemporary Children Are Different Era (2005–Present).\(^1\) In each period, juvenile justice policies have reflected different views about children and crime control and appropriate ways to address youths’ misconduct. With the U.S. Supreme Court recognizing again that children are not miniature adults, we have an opportunity to enact policies for a more just and effective justice system for youth.\(^2\)

Competing conceptions of adolescents—immaturity and incompetence versus maturity and competence—and differing strategies of crime control—treatment or diversion versus punishment—affect the substantive goals and procedural means that juvenile courts use. Substantively, conceptions of youths’ culpability or criminal responsibility affect juvenile courts’ decisions to detain and sentence delinquents, transfer youths to criminal court, and sentence children as adults. Competence focuses on youths’ capacity to employ rights, ability to understand and participate in the legal process, ability to exercise *Miranda* rights, competence to stand trial, and ability to exercise right to

---

counsel and right to a jury trial. The historical epochs of the juvenile court reflect the differing views of youths’ culpability and competence.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the transition from a rural agrarian to a manufacturing economy increased immigration, fostered rapid urbanization, and posed problems of assimilation and integration. During the Progressive Era, upper and middle class child-savers promoted a social construction of children as vulnerable, immature, and dependent, requiring protection and supervision. Positivist criminology attributed criminal behavior to external antecedent forces and Progressive reformers adopted discretionary policies to rehabilitate offenders: probation, parole, indeterminate sentences, and juvenile courts. They created a separate justice system to shield children from criminal courts, jails, and prisons. Two goals animated juvenile courts’ creators: an interventionist rationale and a diversionary one. The more-expansive interventionist vision expected juvenile courts to identify causes of youths’ misbehavior, to intervene, and to promote their development into responsible adults. Juvenile courts’ less-articulated diversionary purpose was to minimize the harms the criminal justice system inflicted on young people. They could accomplish their diversionary goal simply by providing an alternative to criminal courts, even if their rehabilitative goal proved more elusive. Juvenile courts melded the new ideology of childhood with the new theory of crime control, introduced a judicial-welfare alternative to remove children from the criminal justice system, and promised individualized treatment in a nonpunitive child welfare system.

Juvenile courts’ rehabilitative mission envisioned a specialized judge trained in social work and child development whose empathy and insight would enable him to make dispositions in


7. See Zimring, supra note 6, at 2480.
the child’s best interests. Progressive defined the court’s jurisdiction broadly to include youths accused of crimes, noncriminal-status offenders at risk to become delinquents, and abused and neglected children. Juvenile courts’ rehabilitative dispositions focused on youths’ future welfare rather than their past offenses and imposed indeterminate sentences that could continue for the duration of minority. The courts’ founders conceived of children as immature and irresponsible and opposed procedural safeguards which could impede open communication between judge and child. Progressive reformers intended juvenile courts to discriminate: to control poor and immigrant children, to assimilate and Americanize them, and to distinguish between their own children and other people’s children. While probation was the disposition of first resort, the institutions to which judges disproportionately committed poor and immigrant children more closely resembled youth prisons than clinics.

Despite the Progressives’ rehabilitative aspirations, the 1967 President’s Commission on Law Enforcement issued a task force report on juvenile delinquency and youth crime revealing juvenile courts’ procedural deficiencies, inadequate correctional institutions, and racial disparities. Drawing on its critique, the Supreme Court in In re Gault highlighted the disjunction between juvenile courts’ rehabilitative rhetoric—long used to justify the dearth of procedural safeguards—and the reality of court and correctional practices. Mandating procedural safeguards, the Court envisioned youths as competent to exercise legal rights and to participate in an adversarial system. Subsequent decisions further criminalized delinquency proceedings. In re Winship required states to prove delinquents’ guilt by the criminal law standard of proof beyond a reasonable doubt. Breed v. Jones applied the ban on double jeopardy based on the functional

8. See generally TANENHAUS, supra note 3; Allen, supra note 5.
9. FELD, EVOLUTION OF JUVENILE COURT, supra note 1, at 32.
10. See e.g., FELD, EVOLUTION OF JUVENILE COURT, supra note 1, at 33–38.
See generally FELD, BAD KIDS, supra note 1.
11. See generally FELD, BAD KIDS, supra note 1; ROTHMAN, supra note 3.
equivalence of criminal trials and delinquency proceedings.\textsuperscript{16} However, \textit{McKeiver v. Pennsylvania} denied delinquents the constitutional right to a jury trial available to criminal defendants because it might adversely affect juvenile courts’ informality, flexibility, and confidentiality.\textsuperscript{17} Although granting delinquents some procedural rights might impair juvenile courts’ ability to intervene in children’s lives, safeguards would not impede their ability to divert youths and avoid the harms of the criminal justice system. But granting delinquents some procedural safeguards legitimated increasingly punitive penalties that fell most heavily on minority offenders.\textsuperscript{18} The Court’s due process revolution coincided with a synergy of campus disorders, escalating crime rates, urban racial rebellions, dissatisfaction with the treatment model, and emerging politics of crime that prompted calls for a return to classical criminal law and paved the way for get-tough policies.\textsuperscript{19}

Structural, economic, and racial demographic changes in American cities during the 1970s and 1980s contributed to escalating black youth homicide rates at the end of the 1980s and provided the context within which states adopted get-tough policies.\textsuperscript{20} The Great Migration increased the concentration of impoverished African Americans consigned to inner-city ghettos. Federal housing, highway, and mortgage policies combined with bank redlining, real estate block-busting, and sales practices to create increasingly poor minority urban cores surrounded by

\textsuperscript{16} 421 U.S. 519, 528–33, 541 (1975). See infra notes 134, 381 and accompanying text.
\textsuperscript{18} See Feld, \textit{Constitutional Tension}, supra note 17, at 1145.
\textsuperscript{19} Youth crime increased in the 1960s as baby-boomer children reached adolescence. The increased urbanization of blacks led to higher crime rates in minority areas. Race riots rocked many American cities between 1964 and 1968. These broader structural and demographic changes provided the backdrop for the Warren Court’s civil rights decisions, criminal procedure rulings, and juvenile court opinions. See generally FELD, \textit{BAD KIDS}, supra note 1; FELD, \textit{EVOLUTION OF JUVENILE COURT}, supra note 1; DAVID GARLAND, \textit{THE CULTURE OF CONTROL: CRIME AND SOCIAL ORDER IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY} (2001); Barry C. Feld, \textit{Race, Politics, and Juvenile Justice: The Warren Court and the Conservative "Backlash"}, 87 MINN. L. REV. 1447 (2003) [hereinafter Feld, \textit{Race, Politics}].
\textsuperscript{20} See generally FELD, \textit{BAD KIDS}, supra note 1; FELD, \textit{EVOLUTION OF JUVENILE COURT}, supra note 1.
predominantly white affluent suburbs. Beginning in the early 1970s, the globalization of manufacturing and technological innovations eliminated many jobs of less-skilled workers and produced a bifurcation of economic opportunities based on education and technical skills. The economic changes adversely affected blacks more deeply than other groups because of their more recent entry into the manufacturing economy, their vulnerability in the social stratification system, their lower educational attainments, and their spatial isolation from sectors of job growth.21 By the 1980s, deindustrialization and white flight left an impoverished black underclass trapped in urban ghettos.22 The introduction of crack cocaine and proliferation of guns sparked turf wars over control of drug markets.23 Black youth homicide rates sharply escalated and gun violence provided political impetus to transform juvenile-justice policies.24

Beginning in the 1960s, the rise in youth crime and urban racial disorders evoked fear of crime in the streets. National Republican politicians decried a crisis of law and order, pursued a southern strategy to appeal to white southern voters’ racial antipathy and resistance to school integration, and engineered a conservative backlash to foster a political realignment around race and public-policy issues.25 Political divisions about race and social policy enabled conservative politicians to advocate punitive crime and welfare policies for electoral advantage. In the 1980s and 1990s, those policies produced longer sentences and mass incarceration for adult offenders and punitive changes in juvenile courts’ transfer and sentencing laws.

Contemporary juvenile justice policies reflect the harsh legacy of the 1980s’ and 1990s’ get-tough policies—extensive pre-


trial detention, punitive delinquency sanctions, increased transfer to criminal courts, and severe sentences as adults—all of which are rife with racial disparities. Although serious youth crime and violence peaked around 1993 and has dropped precipitously over the subsequent two decades, those harsh laws remain on the books in most states. The recent Supreme Court trilogy of Eighth Amendment decisions—Roper, Graham, and Miller—reaffirmed that children are different, relied on developmental psychology and neuroscience research to support its conclusions about youths’ diminished criminal responsibility, and limited the most draconian sentences. However, they provided affected youths with limited relief and gave state courts and legislatures minimal guidance to implement their jurisprudence of youth.

I divide this Article into two parts: delinquents in juvenile courts and youths tried in criminal courts. I analyze the contexts within which questions of adolescents’ competence and culpability arise. Part I.A examines substantive decisions that affect delinquents’ custody status: (1) pretrial detention; and (2) delinquency sanctions—and the increased punitiveness and racial disparities associated with each decision. Part I.B examines procedural issues associated with delinquency adjudications: (1) youths’ ability to exercise Miranda rights; (2) competence to stand trial; (3) waivers of counsel; and (4) right to a jury trial. Juvenile courts’ increased punitiveness, procedural deficiencies, and assembly-line process compound youths’ developmental limitations, heighten risks of excessive and discriminatory interventions, and raise the specter of wrongful convictions. Part II examines transfer of youths to criminal court, and their sentencing as adults. Part II.A describes: (1) state laws’ shift from a focus on offenders to offenses; (2) the increased role of prosecutors to make adulthood determinations; (3) transfer laws’ failure to achieve their legislative intent; and (4) their racially disparate impacts. Part II.B examines Supreme Court decisions—Roper, Graham, and Miller—that: (1) somewhat mitigated the harshest sentencing policies; (2) reaffirmed that children are different; and (3) used developmental psychology and neuroscience research to bolster its conclusions about youths’ diminished responsibility. The Article concludes with proposals for substantive and procedural reforms to address juvenile and criminal courts’ failure to provide developmentally appropriate justice for children.

26. See generally Feld, Evolution of Juvenile Court, supra note 1.
I. DELINQUENTS IN JUVENILE COURT: CUSTODY, RACIAL DISPARITY, AND COMPETENCE

Social welfare and social control operate in fundamental tension. How do we balance young offenders’ best interests with punishment for their offenses? How do we safeguard children and protect communities? The Progressives’ interventionist juvenile court asserted a social welfare mission in which children’s and society’s interests were congruent, but get-tough politicians subordinated welfare to crime control. This imbalance inevitably occurs because states define delinquency jurisdiction based on criminal behavior rather than children’s welfare needs, which diverts attention from the criminogenic conditions in which many youths live.

By the 1990s, punitive policies supplanted juvenile courts’ earlier emphases on offenders’ rehabilitation and had a disproportionate impact on children of color. This section focuses on juvenile court decisions that reflect judgments about delinquents’ culpability and affect their custody status: (1) pretrial detention—the delinquency equivalent of jail; and (2) changes in delinquency sanctions that emphasized offense-based punishment rather than offender rehabilitation.

A. PRETRIAL AND POST-CONVICTION CUSTODY STATUS

Questions about effectiveness of rehabilitation emerged in the 1960s, eroded juvenile courts’ interventionist rationale, and evoked a sense of failure among practitioners and the public. In 1974, Robert Martinson’s essay, What Works?, concluded that “[w]ith few and isolated exceptions, the rehabilitative efforts that have been reported so far have had no appreciable effect on recidivism.”27 “Nothing works” became the conventional wisdom for several decades thereafter, undercut efforts to treat offenders, and reinforced conservatives’ distrust of government efforts to reduce crime or ameliorate social problems.

Violence and homicide in the late 1980s and early 1990s enabled conservative politicians to promote a stereotype of dangerous superpredators—cold-eyed young killers suffering from moral poverty—rather than traditional images of disadvantaged youths who needed help. Based on erroneous demographic pro-

jections, they predicted a bloodbath of youth crime, even as juvenile violence declined precipitously. Relying on those flawed predictions, legislators preemptively enacted laws that emphasized suppression of crime—punishment, deterrence, and incapacitation—rather than efforts to rehabilitate children. Juvenile justice shifted from a welfare to a penal orientation and assumed responsibility to manage and control delinquents rather than to treat them. Beginning in the 1970s, just deserts and retribution displaced rehabilitation as rationales for adult and juvenile sentencing policy. Judges focused primarily on offenders’ present offense and criminal history.

1. Preventive Detention of Delinquents

Conservatives claimed that juvenile courts’ lenient sanctions failed to protect the public and emphasized punishment. Detention laws give judges broad discretion to confine youths prior to trial. Judges overuse and abuse detention facilities and disproportionately detain children of color. Reform efforts can reduce unnecessary and inappropriate use of pretrial confinement.

Pretrial detention involves a youth’s interim custody status pending trial. In 1984, the Supreme Court in Schall v. Martin upheld a statute that authorized preventive detention if a judge found there was a “serious risk” that the child “may . . . commit an act which if committed by an adult would constitute a crime.” The law did not specify the type of present offense, the likelihood or seriousness of any future crime, burden of proof, criteria, or evidence a judge should consider to make the prediction. Despite these flaws, Schall held that preventive detention “serves a legitimate state objective, and that the procedural protections afforded pre-trial detainees” satisfy constitutional requirements.

Social scientists question Schall’s confidence in judges’ clinical prognostication abilities. Research comparing statistical-versus-clinical prediction strongly supports the superiority of ac-

31. Id. at 256–57.
tuarial risk-assessment instruments over professional judgments. The fallibility of prediction is compounded because judges at an initial appearance often lack the types of information—psychometric tests, professional evaluations, and social histories—on which clinicians would rely.

States hold about twenty percent of youths referred to juvenile courts in pretrial detention facilities—between one-quarter and one-third of a million juveniles annually. In 2011, judges detained a larger proportion of youths arrested for person offenses (25.4%) than for property crimes (16.5%), but because police arrested so many more youths for property crimes, they confined roughly equal numbers. Rates of detention rose and peaked between 1998 and 2007, even as the absolute numbers of youths referred to juvenile courts declined. Courts detained older youths at higher rates than younger juveniles, proportionally more boys than girls, and more children of color than white youths.

Inadequate and dangerous conditions have characterized detention facilities for decades. Get Tough Era policies exacerbated overcrowding as states detained more youths to impose short-term punishment or to house those awaiting postadjudica-

32. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) has long disclaimed psychiatrists' competence to predict future dangerousness because they tend to not use information reliably, to disregard base rate variability, to consider factors that are not predictive, and to assign inappropriate weights to relevant factors. Barefoot v. Estelle, 463 U.S. 880, 899–902 (1983) (discussing APA misgivings regarding expert testimony, but nonetheless declining to bar psychiatric expert testimony with respect to future dangerousness); Feld, Bad Kids, supra note 1, at 140–45.


34. Sickmund et al., supra note 33 (reporting that 80,472 youths were detained in connection with 316,602 person crimes, and 73,474 youths were detained in connection with 444,070 property crimes in 2011).

35. Id. (reporting that detention numbers began to decline after their peak in 2007, a year in which 349,274 juveniles were detained).

36. Snyder & Sickmund, supra note 33, at 169–70; Sickmund et al., supra note 33 (reporting that between 2005 and 2012, youths under the age of twelve were detained in 7.3% of cases, while seventeen-year-olds were detained in 23.5% of cases; males were detained in 23.1% of cases, while females were detained 16.3% of the time; whites were detained at a lower rate than any other reported race, at 17.1%, compared to 24.5% for black youths and 23.3% of Hispanic youths).
tion placement. Conditions of confinement studies report inadequate physical and mental health care, poor education, lack of treatment services, and excessive use of solitary confinement and physical restraints.37 Pretrial detention disrupts youths’ lives, weakens ties to family, school, and work, stigmatizes them, and impairs legal defenses. Judges convict and institutionalize detained youths more often than similar youths released pending trial.38 There are substantial racial disparities in rates of detention. States detain black youths more often than similarly situated white offenders.39 Detention rates for drug crimes exacerbated racial disparities. Between 1988 and 1991—the peak of the crack cocaine panic and the Get Tough Era—judges detained about half of all black youths charged with drug offenses, a rate twice

38. William H. Barton, Detention, in THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF JUVENILE CRIME AND JUVENILE JUSTICE 636, 645, 648 (Barry C. Feld & Donna M. Bishop eds., 2012) (finding that detention “may foster further delinquency rather than suppress it,” and that youths are “more likely to receive formal and punitive treatment by the juvenile justice system simply as a result of having been detained”).
39. Donna M. Bishop, The Role of Race and Ethnicity in Juvenile Justice Processing, in OUR CHILDREN, THEIR CHILDREN: CONFRONTING RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCES IN AMERICAN JUVENILE JUSTICE 23, 31–32 (Darnell Hawkins & Kimberly Kempf-Leonard eds., 2005) [hereinafter OUR CHILDREN, THEIR CHILDREN]; Kimberly Kempf-Leonard, Minority Youths and Juvenile Justice: Disproportionate Minority Contact After Nearly 20 Years of Reform Efforts, 5 YOUTH VIOLENCE & JUV. JUST. 71, 73 (2007); Alex R. Piquero, Disproportionate Minority Contact, 18 FUTURE CHILD. 59, 62 (2008) (reporting racial disparity at “each decision point” in the juvenile justice system, from arrest to detention to post-adjudication placement). Between 1985 and 2014, juvenile court judges detained about one-fifth of all youths referred to them. Sickmund et al., supra note 33 (reporting 21.1% detention rate among all juvenile defendants between 1985 and 2011). During that period, judges on average detained 18% of white youths compared to 24.5% of black youths. Id. Judges detain youths charged with person offenses at higher rates than youths charged with other crimes. Id. (finding that 26.4% of youths charged for person crimes are detained, while only 16.8% and 16.9% of youths charged with property and drug crimes, respectively, are subject to detention). On average, judges detained 23.1% of white youths charged with person offenses compared with 28.3% of black youths. Id. The racial disparities for drug crimes are especially disturbing because, since the 1970s, self-report research consistently reports that black youths use and sell drugs at lower rates than do white youths. NAT’L RESEARCH COUNCIL, THE GROWTH OF INCARCERATION IN THE UNITED STATES: EXPLORING CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES 60 (2014) (finding higher drug use among whites than blacks in both high school and adult self-report surveys).
that of white youths. While race affects detention decisions, detention adversely affects youths’ subsequent case processing and compounds disparities at disposition.

a. Reform Efforts

In the late 1980s, the Annie E. Casey Foundation launched the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) which aimed to reduce use of detention, develop alternatives to institutions, reduce overcrowding, improve conditions of confinement, and lessen racial disparities. JDAI reforms enlist justice system stakeholders to develop consensus rationale for detention, to adopt objective intake and risk assessment criteria, to use alternatives to secure detention—home detention, electronic monitoring, after school or day reporting centers—and to expedite cases to reduce pretrial confinement. Stakeholders develop criteria to determine which youths to detain based on present offense, prior record, and other factors. Although not all efforts

40. Sickmund et al., supra note 33 (reporting 9600 detentions out of 49,200 total white youths processed for drug crimes in 1988 (19.5%), and 15,500 detentions out of 31,200 black youths processed for drug crimes in the same year (49.7%)). In 1989, 9900 of the 45,300 white youths processed for drug crimes were detained (21.9%), while 16,900 of the 33,600 black youths processed for drug crimes were detained (50.3%). Id. This trend continued through 1990, when 48% of black youths processed for drug offenses were detained, compared to 19.7% detention rate among white youth processed for drug offenses. Id.

41. Michael J. Leiber, Race, Pre- and Post-detention, and Juvenile Justice Decision Making, 59 CRIME & DELINQUENCY 396, 399 (2013) (“Race has . . . indirect effects on decision making through detention . . . [B]eing detained strongly predicts more severe treatment at judicial disposition.”); Nancy Rodriguez, The Cumulative Effect of Race and Ethnicity in Juvenile Court Outcomes and Why Pre-Adjudication Detention Matters, 47 J. RES. CRIME & DELINQ. 391, 391 (2010) (reporting that youths who are detained preadjudication are more likely to have a petition filed, less likely to have a petition dismissed, and more likely to be removed from the home at disposition).


43. See id. (outlining strategies including implementation of “new or expanded alternatives to detention programs” and combatting racial disparities in youth detention through data analysis and policy reform). See also NAT’L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 1, at 5 (outlining the advantages of community service over “unduly harsh interventions” in reducing the likelihood of re-offense, and discussing specific procedural and assessment reforms necessary to improving the juvenile system); Barton, supra note 38, at 660–68 (discussing the systematic improvements in confinement conditions and successful reform of youth detention policies achieved by JDAI).
have been equally successful, many sites have reduced the numbers of youths detained with no increases in crime or failures to appear.44 JDAI efforts to reduce racial disparities among detained youths have been less successful.45

b. Policy Recommendations

Juvenile court judges, in collaboration with other stakeholders and social scientists, should develop validated risk-assessment instruments to better identify youths who pose a high risk of offending. Statutes should presume release of all nonfelony offenders and place a heavy burden (clear and convincing evidence) on the state to prove that a youth needs secure detention and that nonsecure alternatives—house arrest, electronic monitoring, shelter-care, and day-reporting—have been exhausted or would fail. Other than youths who pose a risk of flight or who have previously absconded from an institution, states should reserve detention for youths charged with serious crimes—felonies, violence, or firearms—for whom, if convicted, commitment to a secure facility would likely result. States should bolster detention hearing procedures with a non-waivable right to counsel and an opportunity to meet with defense counsel prior to the hearing.

2. Punitive Delinquency Dispositions

Supreme Court decisions identify factors distinguishing punishment from treatment: (1) legislative purpose clauses; (2) indeterminate or determinate sentencing laws; (3) judges’ sentencing practices; (4) institutional conditions of confinement; and (5) intervention outcomes.46 In the 1980s and 1990s, law-

---

44. Barton, supra note 38, at 666.
46. Allen v. Illinois, 478 U.S. 364, 371–74 (1986) (analyzing the differences in conditions and procedures applied to inmates held under criminal sentences, versus the conditions and procedures applied to persons held for sex offender treatment, and finding the State act in question was non-punitive based on these differences); McKeiver v. Pennsylvania, 403 U.S. 528, 540, 550 (1971) (pointing to “various diagnostic and rehabilitative services” in the juvenile system as evidence that the intent of the system is to provide treatment rather than punishment, and rejecting arguments that the juvenile system is punitive based on procedural similarities between juvenile court and criminal proceedings); Kennedy v. Mendoza-Martinez, 372 U.S. 144, 168 (1963) (identifying “tests traditionally applied to determine whether an Act . . . is penal or regula-
makers repudiated offender-based treatment, shifted delinquency sanctions toward offense-based punishments, and fostered a punitive convergence between juvenile and criminal courts’ sentencing policies.47

States repeatedly amended their juvenile codes’ purpose clauses to endorse punishment.48 The revisions focused on accountability, responsibility, punishment, and public safety rather than, or in addition to, a child’s welfare or best interests.49


47. Feld, Punishment, Treatment, supra note 46, at 850–57 (discussing the shift to determinate sentencing, legislative guidelines emphasizing uniformity, and proportionality over rehabilitation as the predominant sentencing justification in juvenile court); Gardner, Punitive Juvenile Justice, supra note 46, at 22–25 (discussing the emergence of punishment rather than the original rehabilitative goals of the juvenile system).

48. PATRICIA TORBET ET AL., STATE RESPONSES TO SERIOUS AND VIOLENT JUVENILE CRIME: RESEARCH REPORT 11 (1996) (noting evolution from “traditional emphasis on . . . future welfare of the juvenile” to punishment, incapacitation, public safety, and accountability); Barry C. Feld, Juvenile and Criminal Justice Systems’ Responses to Youth Violence, 24 CRIME & JUST. 189, 222–23 (1998) [hereinafter Feld, Responses to Youth Violence] (“[M]ore than one-quarter of the states have revisited their juvenile codes’ statement of legislative purpose, deemphasized rehabilitation and the child’s best interest, and asserted the importance of . . . punishment.”); See generally FELD, BAD KIDS, supra note 1.

49. See NAT’L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 1, at 31–32 (noting that the 1980s saw the advent of a “harsher attitude toward juvenile crime,” leading to policy reform which lasted through the 1990s as lawmakers “reformed juvenile crime policy to facilitate the adult prosecution and punishment of young offenders”); Feld, Punishment, Treatment, supra note 46, at 833–47 (contrasting purposes of treatment and punishment in juvenile systems and noting states’ movement to include concepts of public safety and punishment in legislative purpose legislation).
Accountability became synonymous with retribution, deterrence, and incapacitation, and state courts affirmed punishment as a legitimate element of juvenile courts’ treatment regimes.\textsuperscript{50}

Originally, juvenile courts viewed delinquency as a symptom of a child’s needs and imposed indeterminate nonproportional dispositions. The shift from an interventionist to a criminalized court culminates a trend \textit{Gault} set in motion by providing modest procedural safeguards that legitimated harsher sanctions.\textsuperscript{51} In subsequent decades, states amended delinquency sentencing laws to emphasize individual responsibility and justice-system accountability, and adopted determinate or mandatory minimum sentences.\textsuperscript{52} The National Research Council concluded that:

\begin{quote}
State legislative changes in recent years have moved the court away from its rehabilitative goals and toward punishment and accountability. Laws have made some dispositions offense-based rather than of-
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{In re Seven Minors}, 664 P.2d 947, 950 (Nev. 1983) (discussing the juvenile court’s original conception of a “child-centered” institution, and praising the court’s evolution to a harsher ethic, stating that the early court lacked the “moralizing and socializing influence associated with the operation of criminal courts”); \textit{State v. Lawley}, 591 P.2d 772, 773 (Wash. 1979) (finding that the state legislature may have rationally determined that “accountability for criminal behavior . . . does as much to rehabilitate, correct, and direct an errant youth as does the prior philosophy of focusing upon the particular characteristics of the individual juvenile” in enacting punitive legislation); \textit{Feld, Bad Kids}, supra note 1, at 232–53; \textit{Ashley Nellis, A Return to Justice: Rethinking Our Approach to Juveniles in the System} 47–48 (2016); \textit{Feld, Punishment, Treatment, supra} note 46, at 844–47 (explaining that punishment came to be viewed as an “acceptable purpose” of juvenile court proceedings and cataloging judicial decisions highlighting accountability and punishment as legislative purposes of the juvenile justice system).

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Feld, Evolution of Juvenile Court}, supra note 1, at 57–68 (outlining Supreme Court decisions regarding process in juvenile court, ultimately leading to a procedural and substantive convergence with criminal courts, and noting that the provision of “meager” procedural safeguards “legitimated the escalation of penalties” imposed by juvenile courts); \textit{Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on Sentencing Policy Toward Young Offenders, Confronting Youth Crime} 15–17 (1978).

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Torbet et al.}, supra note 48, at 11–16 (discussing the juvenile court’s emphasis on punishment and accountability); \textit{Feld, Punishment, Treatment, supra} note 46, at 850–79 (addressing determinate sentencing in juvenile court, and providing state-specific analysis of legislative changes to juvenile codes); \textit{Feld, Responses to Youth Violence, supra} note 48, at 220–28 (discussing the effects of reframing the juvenile system’s purpose in terms of punishment and accountability and states’ adoption of determinate and mandatory sentences).
\end{footnotesize}
fender-based. Offense-based sanctions are to be proportional to the of-
fense and have retribution or deterrence as their goals. Strategies for
imposing offense-based sentences in juvenile court include blended
sentences, mandatory minimum sentences, and extended jurisdic-
tion.53

Several factors influence juvenile court judges’ sentencing
decisions. States define juvenile courts’ delinquency jurisdiction
based on criminal violations. The same factors that influence
criminal court judges’ sentences—present offense and prior rec-
ord—influence juvenile court judges’ sentences as well.54 An-
other consistent finding is that juveniles’ race affects the sever-
ity of dispositions.55 Several factors account for racial
disparities: differences in rates of offending, differential selec-
tion, and juvenile courts’ context—the interaction of urban locale
with minority residency.56 As a result, juvenile courts’ punitive
sanctions fall disproportionately heavily on African American
youths.

Delinquency case processing entails a succession of deci-
sions by police, court personnel, prosecutors, and judges. Com-
pounding effects of disparities produce larger cumulative differ-
ences between white youths and children of color.57 Although the
greatest disparities occur at earlier less visible stages of the pro-
cess, differences compound, prior records accumulate, and blacks
and other racial minorities comprise the largest plurality of
youth in institutions.

53. NAT’L RESEARCH COUNCIL, JUVENILE CRIME, JUVENILE JUSTICE 210
(Joan McCord et al. eds., 2001).
54. FELD, BAD KIDS, supra note 1, at 264–67 (discussing the sentencing of
juveniles, particularly in the context of racial disparities in sentencing); SCOTT
& STEINBERG, supra note 1, at 229–31 (exploring sentencing factors in juvenile
courts including a youth’s prior criminal record).
55. FELD, BAD KIDS, supra note 1, at 267–72 (citing studies finding that
juvenile courts detain black youths at higher rates than white youths, even
when controlling for relevant variables); NAT’L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note
53, at 228 (noting “major disparities” in the involvement of minority and white
youth in the juvenile justice system). See generally Donna Bishop & Michael
Leiber, Racial and Ethnic Differences in Delinquency and Justice System Re-
sponses, in THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF JUVENILE CRIME AND JUVENILE JUS-
TICE, supra note 38, at 445.
57. In 2005, Black youths comprised about 16.6% of the population aged
10–17, 31.4% of juvenile arrests, 33.2% of delinquency referrals, 38.1% of juve-
niles detained, 40% of youths charged, and 40% of youths placed out of home.
Bishop and Leiber, supra note 55, at 446–53. See also NAT’L RESEARCH COUN-
CIL, supra note 53, at 231–34 (providing similar statistics for 1997); EILEEN
POE-YAMAGATA & MICHAEL A. JONES, AND JUSTICE FOR SOME: DIFFERENTIAL
TREATMENT OF MINORITY YOUTH IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM 7–10 (2000) (provid-
Justice system decisions amplify racial differences in processing youths. At each stage of the process, arrest, court referral, detention, petition, and sentencing decisions amplify disparities. Police stop and arrest youths of color more frequently than white youths. Probation officers attribute white youths’ offenses to external circumstances and black youths’ crimes to internal fault or character failings, which affects their referral, detention, and sentencing recommendations.

Judges’ focus on present offense and prior records further contribute to racial differences. Black youths commit violent crimes at higher rates than white juveniles, which account for some disparities. By contrast, police arrest black youths at

---


59. Factors contributing to heightened risk of arrest include: self-fulfilling deployment of police in neighborhoods, racial profiling, aggressive stop-and-frisk practices, and youths’ attitude and demeanor during encounters. Bishop & Leiber, supra note 55, at 461 (explaining that minority youths have more exposure than white youths to “contexts of risk,” including socioeconomic, geographic, and family conditions). See generally Bishop, supra note 39.

60. See Nat’l Research Council, supra note 53, at 257 (reporting that black adolescents are “being channeled to correctional facilities” while their “equally aggressive white counterparts are directed toward psychiatric treatment facilities”). See generally George S. Bridges & Sara Steen, Racial Disparities in Official Assessments of Juveniles Offenders: Attributional Stereotypes as Mediating Mechanisms, 63 Am. Soc. Rev. 554 (1998).

61. Nat’l Research Council, supra note 1, at 214–21; Piquero, supra note 39, at 64. The higher rates of violent offending by black youth reflect their greater exposure to risk factors associated with criminal involvement, many of which are corollaries of living in dire poverty. See Bryanna Hahn Fox et al., Serious, Chronic, and Violent Offenders, in Juvenile Justice Sourcebook 553, 559–60 (Wesley T. Church II et al. eds., 2014); J. David Hawkins et al., A Review of Predictors of Youth Violence, in Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders: Risk Factors and Successful Interventions 106, 140–46 (Rolf Loeber & David P. Farrington eds., 1998). Concentrated poverty, limited employment opportunities, broken or unstable families, poor parental supervision, harsh discipline, abuse or maltreatment, failing schools, gang-infested neighborhoods, and community disorder contribute to higher rates of crime and violence in segregated urban areas. See generally Nat’l Research Council, supra note 39, at 96–97; Michael Tonry, Punishing Race: A Continuing American Dilemma 30 (2011); Wilson, More than Just Race, supra note 22, at 143–55 (2009) (advocating for a framework for understanding the formation and maintenance of racial inequality that integrates both cultural and structural forces); Wilson, The Truly Disadvantaged, supra note 22 (discussing how increasing rates of social dislocation are the product of a complex web of factors). Some inner-city black youths may be socialized in a code of the street that em-
higher rates for drug crimes, although white youths use drugs more often.62

Juvenile courts’ context also contribute to disparities. Urban courts are more formal and sentence all delinquents more severely than do suburban or rural courts.63 They have greater access to detention facilities, detain more minority youths, and sentence all detained youths more severely.64 Because more minority youths live in cities, judges detain them at higher rates, and sentence them in more formal, punitive courts.65

Punitive sentencing laws have exacerbated racial disparities in confinement. Over the past quarter-century, the proportion of white youths removed from home declined by about ten percent, while that of black youths increased by ten percent.66 In 1985, states removed 105,830 delinquents from their homes and placed them in residential facilities.67 The number of youths who received out-of-home placements increased steadily during the

phasizes masculinity, risk taking, autonomy, and violent responses to challenges or disrespect. See generally ELIJAH ANDERSON, THE CODE OF THE STREET: DECENCY, VIOLENCE, AND THE MORAL LIFE OF THE INNER CITY (1999) (explaining that street culture has evolved a “code of the street” as a set of informal rules which govern interpersonal public behavior, particularly violence); Jeffrey A. Fagan, Contexts of Choice by Adolescents in Criminal Events, in YOUTH ON TRIAL: A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE 371, 382 (Thomas Grisso & Robert Schwartz eds., 2000). The presence of gangs can lead to intragang violence over status and intergang violence to settle territorial disputes or perceived disrespect. Id. at 377–78.


64. Barry C. Feld, The Right to Counsel in Juvenile Court: An Empirical Study of When Lawyers Appear and the Difference They Make, 79 J. CRIM. L. & CRIMINOLOGY 1185, 1337–39 (1989) [hereinafter Feld, Right to Counsel]; Rodriguez, supra note 41 (finding that minority juveniles were treated more severely in juvenile court outcomes than their white counterparts).

65. FELD, BAD KIDS, supra note 1, at 271–72; SNYDER & SICKMUND, supra note 33; Timothy M. Bray et al., Justice by Geography: Racial Disparity and Juvenile Courts, in OUR CHILDREN, THEIR CHILDREN, supra note 39, at 270, 292–94 (finding that a court’s rural or urban location was a significant predictor of placement decisions in juvenile cases).

66. FELD, EVOLUTION OF JUVENILE COURT, supra note 1, at 141; see generally NELLIS, supra note 50 (explaining how the juvenile justice system changed focus from rehabilitation to retribution during the 1990s).

67. See sources cited supra note 66.
1990s and peaked at 168,395 delinquents in 1997—a 59% increase that reflects Get Tough Era changes and judicial sensitivity to the punitive ethos. Since the peak in the late 1990s, the number of youth removed from home has declined dramatically.68 Although we do not know why residential placements have decreased, fiscal considerations may have driven confinement decisions.

Despite the recent decline, the racial composition of youths in confinement changed substantially. In 1985, judges removed 68.5% of non-Hispanic and Hispanic white youths, 28.5% of black youths and 2.9% of youths of other races from their homes.69 By 2012, the proportion of white youths removed from home declined to 57.8% of all youths—a 10.7% decrease—while the proportion of black youths increased to 39.3%—an offsetting 10.8% increase.70 Despite dramatic overall reduction of youths in confinement, the racial composition of institutionalized inmates became ever darker. During the decade, the proportion of white inmates declined from 37.2% to 33.8% of all residents, the proportion of black inmates hovered around 40%, and that of other youths of color increased.71

Congress amended the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) in 1988 to require states receiving federal juvenile-justice funds to examine sources of minority over-representation in detention and institutions.72 It amended the JJDPA in 1992 to make reporting disproportionate minority confinement a core requirement and again in 2002 to require states to reduce disproportionate minority contact.73 States responded to the 1988 JJDPA requirement by conducting evaluations and reporting disproportionate overrepresentation of minority youths in institutions.74

68. Feld, Evolution of Juvenile Court, supra note 1, at 141–42; see generally Nellis, supra note 50 (explaining how the juvenile justice system changed focus from rehabilitation to retribution during the 1990s).

69. Feld, Evolution of Juvenile Court, supra note 1, at 143; see generally Nellis, supra note 50 (explaining how the juvenile justice system changed focus from rehabilitation to retribution during the 1990s).

70. Feld, Evolution of Juvenile Court, supra note 1, at 143.

71. Id. at 144; see generally Nellis, supra note 50 (explaining how the juvenile justice system changed focus from rehabilitation to retribution during the 1990s).


73. Nat'l Research Council, supra note 1, at 211–12.

74. Feld, Bad Kids, supra note 1, at 268; Nat'l Research Council, supra note 1, at 212.
Minority juveniles receive disproportionately more out-of-home placements, while white youths receive more probationary dispositions. Judges commit black youths to public institutions at rates three and four times that of white youths, and send larger proportions of white youths to private residential treatment programs. Black youths serve longer terms than do white youths committed for similar offenses.

Researchers have evaluated programs in community and residential settings to determine what works, how well, and at what costs. The diversity of facilities and programs, the variability of populations they serve, and the lack of control groups make it difficult to attribute positive outcomes to intervention or to sample selection bias of youths committed to them. Correctional meta-analyses combine independent studies to measure effectiveness of different strategies to reduce recidivism or other outcomes. Evaluations have compared generic strategies (counseling, behavior modification, and group therapy), more sophisticated interventions and replications of brand-name programs (Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and Multisystemic Therapy (MST)), and cost-benefit appraisals of different treatments. Substantial literature exists on effectiveness of probation and other forms of noninstitutional treatment.

Delbert Elliot developed the Blueprints for Prevention program that certifies programs as proven or promising. Proven pro-

---

76. Nat'l Research Council, supra note 1, at 221–22; Poe-Yamagata & Jones, supra note 57, at 18–21.
78. Id. at 726–28; Doris Layton MacKenzie & Rachel Freeland, Examining the Effectiveness of Juvenile Residential Programs, in The Oxford Handbook of Juvenile Crime and Juvenile Justice, supra note 38, at 771, 790.
79. See, e.g., Greenwood & Turner, supra note 77; MacKenzie & Freeland, supra note 78.
grams demonstrate reductions in problem behaviors with rigorous experimental design, continuing effects after youths leave the program, and successful replication by independent providers.\textsuperscript{81} Although some proven programs treat delinquents, most programs aim to prevent school-aged youths’ involvement with the juvenile justice system.\textsuperscript{82} Mark Lipsey’s ongoing meta-analyses report that treatment strategies such as counseling and skill-building are more effective than those adopted during the Get Tough Era that emphasize surveillance, control, and discipline.\textsuperscript{83} The Campbell Collaboration conducted meta-analyses of rigorous empirical evaluations of treatment programs for serious delinquents in secure institutions and concluded that cognitive-behavioral treatment reduced overall and serious recidivism.\textsuperscript{84} Cost-benefit studies use meta-analytic methods to evaluate program costs and benefits to the individual and community—recidivism reduction, costs to taxpayers, and losses for potential victims.\textsuperscript{85} While there is a paucity of high-quality evaluations, research suggests that prevention programs—preschool enrichment and family-based interventions outside of the juvenile justice system—provide benefits that exceed their costs and improvements in education, employment, income, mental health, and other outcomes.\textsuperscript{86}

Cumulatively, evaluations conclude that states can handle most delinquents safely in community settings with cognitive-behavioral models of change.\textsuperscript{87} The most successful Blueprints programs—FFT and MST—focus on altering family interac-

\textsuperscript{81} NELLIS, \textit{supra} note 50, at 83–86; MacKenzie & Freeland, \textit{supra} note 78, at 790–91.
\textsuperscript{82} Greenwood & Turner, \textit{supra} note 77, at 728.
\textsuperscript{86} Id. at 267–70.
\textsuperscript{87} MacKenzie & Freeland, \textit{supra} note 78, at 793–95.
tions, improving family problem-solving skills, and strengthening parents’ ability to deal with their children’s behaviors. But effective programs require extensive and expensive staff training, for which most state and local agencies are unwilling to pay. Despite decades of research, “only about 5% of the youths who could benefit from these improved programs now have the opportunity to do so. Juvenile justice options in many communities remain mired in the same old tired options of custodial care and community supervision.”

Gault mandated procedural safeguards, in part, because of conditions in training schools. Cases contemporaneous with Gault described inmates beaten by guards, hog-tied, or becoming psychotic through prolonged isolation. Recent lawsuits challenging institutional conditions reveal gang-conflict, inadequate education programs, deficient mental health and health care services, suicide, heavy reliance on solitary confinement, and inmates’ sexual abuse and deaths at the hands of staff.

Analysts criticize training schools as sterile and unimaginative, as inappropriate venues in which to treat juveniles, as schools for crime where children learn from more delinquent peers, and as settings in which staff and residents abuse and mistreat inmates. During the 1960s and 1970s, investigators conducted in-depth ethnographic research in correctional facilities. Studies in different states reported similar findings—violent environments, minimal treatment or educational programs, physical abuse by staff and inmates, make-work tasks, extensive use of solitary confinement, and the like. In the ensuing decades, little has changed. States continue to confine half of all

88. NELLIS, supra note 50, at 84; Greenwood & Turner, supra note 77, at 738–40.
89. Greenwood & Turner, supra note 77, at 744.
92. Id. at 754–57.
93. MacKenzie & Freeland, supra note 78, at 775.
94. See generally CLEMENS BARTOLLAS ET AL., JUVENILE VICTIMIZATION: THE INSTITUTIONAL PARADOX (1976) (conducting ethnographic research on correctional facilities); BARRY C. FELD, NEUTRALIZING INMATE VIOLENCE: JUVENILE OFFENDERS IN INSTITUTIONS (1977) [hereinafter FELD, NEUTRALIZING INMATE VIOLENCE] (examining juvenile inmate subculture as influenced by organizational structure of correctional institutions).
95. See generally BARTOLLAS ET AL., supra note 94 (reporting on juvenile victimization in correctional settings); FELD, NEUTRALIZING INMATE VIOLENCE,
youths in overcrowded facilities, more than three-quarters in large facilities, and more than one-quarter in institutions with 200 to 1000 inmates.96

Over the past four decades, juvenile inmates have filed nearly sixty lawsuits that challenge conditions of confinement, asserting that they violate the Eighth Amendment’s prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment, and deny their Fourteenth Amendment right to treatment.97 Eighth Amendment litigation is proscriptive, defines constitutionally impermissible practices, and delineates the minimum floor below which institutional conditions may not fall. Judicial opinions from around the country describe youths housed in dungeon-like facilities, beaten with paddles, drugged for social control, locked in solitary confinement, housed in overcrowded and dangerous conditions, and other punitive practices.98 The Fourteenth Amendment litigation is prescriptive and asserts that the denial of criminal procedural protections imposes a substantive right to treatment and creates a duty to provide beneficial programs.99

Do institutional treatment programs reduce recidivism, enhance psychological well-being, improve educational attainments, provide vocational skills, or boost community readjustment? There are no standard measures of recidivism—rearrest, reconviction, or recommitment—and most states do not collect data on programs’ effectiveness or recidivism, which complicates judges’ ability to distinguish treatment from punishment.100 Despite these limitations, evaluations of training schools provide scant evidence of effective treatment.101 Programs that emphasize deterrence or punishment—insti-

---

96. PARENT ET AL., supra note 37, at 7–8; SNYDER & SICKMUND, supra note 33; MacKenzie & Freeland, supra note 78, at 774.
97. FELD, BAD KIDS, supra note 1, at 274–77; NELLIS, supra note 50, at 113–15; Krisberg, supra note 91, at 753–54.
98. FELD, BAD KIDS, supra note 1, at 275–76; Krisberg, supra note 91, at 754–55.
99. FELD, CASES AND MATERIALS, supra note 29, at 969–81.
100. Greenwood & Turner, supra note 77, at 743–44; Krisberg, supra note 91, at 761–62.
101. FELD, BAD KIDS, supra note 1, at 279–83; Krisberg, supra note 91, at 782–64.
Corrections Policy: What Should a Responsible Legislature Do?

Justice system involvement impedes youths’ transition to adulthood and aggravates minority youths’ social disadvantage. Like the Hippocratic Oath, the first priority of juvenile court intercession should be harm reduction: to avoid or minimize practices that leave a youth worse off. Adolescence is a developmentally fraught period of rapid growth and personality change. Most delinquents will outgrow adolescent crimes without extensive treatment and interventions should be short-term, community-based, and as minimally disruptive as possible. “The best-known cure for youth crime is growing up. And the strategic logic of diversion and minimal sanctions is waiting for maturation to transition a young man from male groups to intimate pairs and from street corners to houses and workplaces.”

More than four decades ago, the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (DYS) closed its training schools and replaced them with community-based alternatives—group homes, mental

---

102. MacKenzie & Freeland, supra note 78, at 794.
103. NELLIS, supra note 50, at 57–58, 84–85; MacKenzie & Freeland, supra note 78, at 784.
104. SNYDER & SICKMUND, supra note 33; Krisberg, supra note 91, at 763; McKenzie & Freeland, supra note 78, at 729.
105. FELD, EVOLUTION OF JUVENILE COURT, supra note 1, at 149; NELLIS, supra note 50, at 65–67.
107. Id. at 174.
health facilities, and contracts for services for education, counseling, and job training. Evaluations reported that more than three-quarters of DYS youths were not subsequently incarcerated, juvenile arrest rates decreased, and the proportion of adult prison inmates who had graduated from juvenile institutions declined. More recently, Missouri has replicated and expanded on the Massachusetts experiment and used continuous case management, decentralized residential units, and staff-facilitated positive peer culture to provide a rehabilitative environment. Although proponents claim reduction in recidivism rates, no rigorous evaluations demonstrate its effectiveness.

Other states have adopted deinstitutionalization strategies. The California Youth Authority has closed five large institutions and reduced its incarcerated population from about 10,000 juveniles to around 1600—changes driven in part by fiscal considerations. New York’s Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) announced plans to close six youth correctional facilities after a study found that nearly eighty percent of young people released from its facilities were rearrested within three years.

b. Punishment or Prevention

Delinquency prevention programs provide an alternative to control or suppression strategies and reflect the adage, a stitch in time saves nine. Prevention programs intervene with children and youths before they engage in delinquency. Risk-focused prevention identifies factors that contribute to offending and em-

109. JEROME MILLER, LAST ONE OVER THE WALL 177–90 (1991); see generally FELD, NEUTRALIZING INMATE VIOLENCE, supra note 94 (describing how the Department of Youth Services in Massachusetts became a highly visible symbol of a new approach to juvenile corrections by repudiating training schools and advocating for community-based services).
111. NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 1, at 416.
112. Id. at 422–24; NELLIS, supra note 50, at 86–87.
113. Krisberg, supra note 91, at 748.
ploys programs to ameliorate or counteract them. Some interventions apply to communities and others to individuals, and their families, at risk of becoming offenders.\textsuperscript{115}

Some prevention strategies identify individual risk factors—low intelligence or delayed school progress—and provide programs to improve cognitive skills, school readiness, and social skills.\textsuperscript{116} The Perry Preschool project—an enhanced Head Start program for disadvantaged black children—aims to provide intellectual stimulation, improve critical-thinking skills, and enhance later school performance.\textsuperscript{117} Cost-benefit analyses and evaluations report that larger proportions of experimental youths graduated from high school, received postsecondary education, had better employment records (higher income and paid taxes), had fewer arrests, and reduced public expenditures for crime and welfare.\textsuperscript{118}

Other delinquency prevention programs address the families in which at-risk youths live. Family-based risk factors include poor child-rearing techniques, inadequate supervision, lack of clear norms, and inconsistent or harsh discipline.\textsuperscript{119} Home visitation, nurse home visitation, and parent management training can produce positive outcomes in the lives of children.\textsuperscript{120} Family interventions for adjudicated delinquents that operate outside of the juvenile justice system—MST, FFT, and multidimensional treatment foster care (MTFC)—also produce positive outcomes.\textsuperscript{121}

David Farrington and Brandon Welsh, in \textit{Saving Children From a Life of Crime}, provide a comprehensive review of risk factors and effective interventions to prevent delinquency.\textsuperscript{122} They identify individual-, family-, and community-level factors and effective programs to ameliorate delinquency. At each level,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{116} Welsh, Delinquency Prevention, supra note 115, at 397–98.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Id. at 398–99.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Id. at 398.
\item \textsuperscript{119} Welsh et al., supra note 85, at 248.
\item \textsuperscript{120} Greenwood, Changing Lives, supra note 80, at 51; Welsh et al., supra note 85, at 248–51.
\item \textsuperscript{121} Greenwood, Changing Lives, supra note 80, at 70–73; Welsh et al., supra note 85, at 249–50.
\item \textsuperscript{122} Farrington & Welsh, supra note 115, at 395.
\end{itemize}
they report proven or promising programs to improve youths’ lives and recommend risk-focused evidence-based prevention programs.\textsuperscript{123}

Peter Greenwood, in \textit{Changing Lives: Delinquency Prevention as Crime-Control Policy}, provides a comprehensive review of prevention programs. He focuses on interventions across the developmental spectrum, from infancy and early childhood through elementary-school-aged children, and into adolescence. Some prevention programs have been adequately evaluated and clearly do \textit{not} work—for example, Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE).\textsuperscript{124} Many prevention programs have no evidentiary support; they either have not been evaluated or used such flawed design that researchers could draw no conclusions.\textsuperscript{125} Greenwood uses cost-benefit analyses to evaluate various delinquency and prevention programs. While cost-benefit analyses could rationalize delinquency policy and resource-allocation decisions, politicians do not embrace prevention programs because they lack a punitive component and do not demonstrate immediate impact.\textsuperscript{126} While highly visible crimes evoke fear and elicit a punitive response, delinquency prevention takes longer to realize and has a more diffuse impact.\textsuperscript{127} Despite effective programs, delinquency prevention “holds a small place in the nation’s response to juvenile crime. Delinquency control strategies operated by the juvenile justice system dominate.”\textsuperscript{128}

3. Conclusion

Progressive reformers created juvenile courts to divert youths from the criminal justice system and rehabilitate them in a separate system. Politicians in the Get Tough Era assaulted the idea that children are different, repudiated the court’s welfare role, and rejected its premise to keep youths out of prisons. Despite their punitive turn, changes in juvenile justice were less extreme than the mass incarceration that overtook the adult criminal justice system.

While juvenile courts served their diversionary function, lawmakers sharply shifted their interventions from rehabilitation toward offense-based punitive policies. During the last third

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{Id.}
\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Id.} at 84.
\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Id.} at 167.
\textsuperscript{127} \textit{Id.} at 168.
\textsuperscript{128} Welsh, \textit{Delinquency Prevention}, supra note 115, at 409.
of the twentieth century, lawmakers abandoned even nominal commitment to treatment in favor of punishment. They changed juvenile codes’ purpose from care and treatment to accountability and punishment. They amended delinquency sentencing statutes to define length and location of confinement based on offense. In practice, judges focused primarily on present offense and prior record when making dispositions. All of these punitive changes had a disproportionate impact on black youths and other children of color. Although most delinquents received probation, between 1987 and 1997, institutional confinement rose by fifty-four percent. Training schools more closely resembled prisons than clinics and seldom improved delinquents’ life trajectories. Training schools are the least effective way to respond to youths’ needs. Meta-analyses and other evaluations identify effective programs and most of them are not administered by juvenile justice personnel.

I emphasize juvenile courts’ explicitly punitive turn because it implicates their procedural safeguards. The Court in McKeiver v. Pennsylvania denied delinquents a right to a jury and In re Gault granted only watered-down safeguards because it assumed that delinquents received treatment. But as juvenile courts punish youths, their justification for reduced safeguards evaporates. Finally, the turn toward punishment falls most heavily on black youths. At every critical decision, black youths receive more punitive sanctions than white youths. Differences in rates of violence by race contribute to some disparity in justice administration. But many black youths experience very different childhoods than do most white youths.129 Public policies and private decisions created segregated urban areas and consigned children of color to live in concentrated poverty with criminogenic consequences. Race affects decision-makers’ responses to children of color: the way they see them, evaluate them, and dispose of them. It is not coincidental that the turn from welfare to punishment and from rehabilitation to retribution occurred as African Americans gained civil rights and the United States

129. See generally Feld, Evolution of Juvenile Court, supra note 1, at 87–88 (examining the causes of overrepresentation of minority youths in the juvenile justice system); Robert Putnam, Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis (2015) (describing the growing inequality gap between children of high school and college educated parents in their ability to achieve the American Dream).
b Briefly flirted with integration and inclusionary, rather than exclusionary, racial policies.  

B. JUVENILE COURT PROCEDURES: ADOLESCENTS’ COMPETENCE TO EXERCISE RIGHTS

Progressive reformers created juvenile courts to divert children from criminal courts and to treat rather than punish them. Envisioned as a welfare agency, juvenile courts rejected criminal procedural safeguards and dispensed with formalities like lawyers, juries, and rules of evidence. In 1967, In re Gault began to transform the juvenile court from a social welfare agency into a more formal legal institution. The Court emphasized juvenile courts’ criminal elements—youths charged with crimes facing institutional confinement, stigma of delinquency labels and records, judicial arbitrariness, and high rates of recidivism—and required proof of guilt using fair procedures. Although Gault did not adopt adult criminal procedural protections, it precipitated an operational convergence between juvenile and criminal courts. Subsequent decisions further emphasized delinquency proceedings’ criminal character. In re Winship required states to prove delinquency by the criminal standard—proof beyond a reasonable doubt—rather than by the lower civil standard of proof. Breed v. Jones posited a functional equivalency between juvenile and criminal trials and applied the Fifth Amendment’s Double Jeopardy Clause to delinquency prosecutions. However, McKeiver v. Pennsylvania posited a benevolent juvenile court, denied delinquents a constitutional right to a jury trial, and rejected procedural parity between delinquency and criminal proceedings. Punitive changes have eroded McKeiver’s rationale and the absence of a jury adversely affects accurate fact-finding, the presence and performance of counsel, and increases the likelihood of wrongful convictions.

130. FELD, BAD KIDS, supra note 1, at 79; FELD, EVOLUTION OF JUVENILE COURT, supra note 1, at 155.
131. FELD, BAD KIDS, supra note 1 at 80; see generally TANENHAUS, supra note 3 (explaining how child advocates built up a separate court system for juveniles).
132. Feld, Criminalizing Juvenile Justice, supra note 29, at 141–42; FELD, BAD KIDS, supra note 1, at 80–81; SCOTT & STEINBERG, supra note 1, at 89.
Juvenile courts handle about half the youths referred to them informally without filing a formal petition or proceeding to trial.137 Court intake workers or prosecutors perform a triage function and conduct a rapid assessment to determine whether a youth’s crime or welfare requires juvenile court attention or can be discharged or referred to others for care. Diversion minimizes formal adjudication and provides supervision or services in the community. Proponents of diversion contend that it is an efficient gatekeeping mechanism, avoids labeling minor offenders, and provides flexible access to community resources that referral after a formal process might delay.138 Most youths desist after one or two contacts and diversion conserves judicial resources for those youths who distinguish themselves by recidivism.139

Critics of diversion contend that it widens the net of social control and exposes to informal supervision youths that juvenile courts otherwise might have ignored.140 Probation officers or prosecutors who do preliminary screening of cases make low-visibility decisions which are not subject to judicial or appellate review.141 Many states do not use formal screening or assessment tools and discretion at intake constitutes the most significant source of racial disparities in case processing.142 Although the criteria and administration of diversion raise many significant policy concerns, cases handled informally do not raise the procedural issues of formal adjudication.

During the Get Tough Era, juvenile courts increasingly punished delinquents and increased their need for protection from the state. Gault made delinquency hearings more formal, complex, and legalistic, and required youths to participate in making

---


138. Mears, supra note 137, at 585.

139. Id. at 594.

140. Id. at 596.

141. Id. at 596–97.

142. NAT’L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 53, at 6; NAT’L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 1, at 221; Bishop, supra note 39, at 39–40; Mears, supra note 137, at 587.
difficult decisions. Developmental psychologists question whether younger juveniles possess competence to stand trial and whether adolescents have the ability to exercise *Miranda* rights or to waive counsel. Despite clear developmental differences between youths and adults in understanding, maturity of judgment, and competence, the Court and most states do not provide either additional safeguards to protect them from their immaturity or procedural parity with criminal defendants, thus increasing the likelihood of excessive interventions and erroneous outcomes.

This section examines juvenile court practices and youths’ competence to exercise procedural rights: *Miranda* rights, competence to stand trial, access to counsel, and jury trial. Subsection 1 analyzes juveniles’ ability to exercise *Miranda* rights. It contrasts states’ use of adult legal standards with psychological research that describes juveniles’ questionable competence, heightened vulnerability during interrogation, and increased likelihood to make false confessions. Subsection 2 reviews legal standards and developmental research on adolescents’ competence to stand trial. Subsection 3 examines juveniles’ competence to waive counsel, the impact of waivers on delivery of legal services, and appellate courts’ inability to oversee juvenile justice administration. Subsection 4 examines juveniles’ right to a jury trial. *McKeiver*’s denial of a jury undermines accurate fact-finding, makes it easier to convict delinquents than criminal defendants, and heightens risks of wrongful convictions. States use these flawed convictions to punish delinquents, to enhance criminal sentences, and to impose collateral consequences.

1. Police Interrogation of Juveniles

The Supreme Court has decided more cases about interrogating youths than any other issue of juvenile justice. Although it repeatedly has questioned juveniles’ ability to exercise

---


Miranda rights or make voluntary statements, it does not require special procedures to protect them. Rather, Fare v. Michael C. endorsed the adult standard—knowing, intelligent, and voluntary under the totality of circumstances—to gauge juveniles’ Miranda waivers.145

Most states’ laws equate juveniles with adults even though formal equality results in practical inequality. By contrast, developmental psychological research on juveniles’ competence to exercise Miranda rights questions adolescents’ ability to understand warnings or exercise them effectively.146 Empirical research on how youths respond to interrogation practices designed for adults highlights how developmental immaturity and susceptibility to manipulation increase juveniles’ likelihood to confess falsely.

a. The Law on the Books

In the decades prior to Miranda, the Court cautioned trial judges to examine closely how youthfulness affected voluntariness of confessions and found lengthy questioning of youth and the absence of a lawyer or parent could render confessions involuntary.147 Gault reiterated concern that youthfulness adversely


145. Michael C., 422 U.S. at 725.


147. Haley, 332 U.S. at 599–601 (“That which would leave a man cold and unimpressed can overawe and overwhelm a lad in his early teens . . . . [W]e cannot believe that a lad of tender years is a match for the police in such a contest. He needs counsel and support if he is not to become the victim first of fear, then of panic. . . . The age of petitioner, the hours when he was grilled, the duration of his quizzing, the fact that he had no friend or counsel to advise him, the callous attitude of the police toward his rights combine to convince us that this was a confession wrung from a child by means which the law should not sanction.”); Gallegos, 370 U.S. at 54 ("[A] 14-year-old boy, no matter how sophisticated . . . is not equal to the police in knowledge and understanding . . . and . . . is unable to know how to protect his own interests or how to get the benefits of his constitutional rights . . . . Without some adult protection against this inequality, a 14-year-old boy would not be able to know, let alone assert, such constitutional rights as he had.").
affected the reliability of juveniles’ statements. It ruled that
delinquency proceedings based on criminal allegations that
could lead to institutional confinement “must be regarded as
‘criminal’ for purposes of the privilege against self-incrimina-
tion.” It recognized that the Fifth Amendment contributes to
accurate factfinding and maintains the adversarial balance be-
tween (and protects the individual from) the State. Gault as-
sumed that youths could exercise rights and participate in the
legal process.

Fare v. Michael C. departed from the Court’s earlier con-
cerns about youths’ vulnerability and held that the legal stand-
ard used to evaluate adults’ waivers—knowing, intelligent, and
voluntary under the totality of the circumstances—governed ju-
veniles’ waivers as well. Michael C. reasoned that Miranda
provided an objective basis to evaluate waivers, denied that chil-
dren’s developmental differences demanded special protections,
and required them to assert rights clearly.

Miranda provided that if police question a suspect who is in
custody—arrested or “deprived of his freedom of action in any
significant way”—they must administer a warning. The Court
in J.D.B. v. North Carolina considered whether a thirteen-year-

148. Gault, 387 U.S. at 52 (“[A]uthoritative opinion has cast formidable
doubt upon the reliability and trustworthiness of ‘confessions’ by children.”); see
also Grisso, Juveniles’ Capacities to Waive Miranda Rights, supra note 146, at
1137 (“Gault recognized that even greater protection might be required where
juveniles are involved, since their immaturity and greater vulnerability place
them at a greater disadvantage in their dealings with the police.”).
150. Id. at 47. The Court recognized a number of significant benefits of the
Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination:

The privilege against self-incrimination is, of course, related to the
question of the safeguards necessary to assure that admissions or con-
fessions are reasonably trustworthy, that they are not the mere fruits
of fear or coercion, but are reliable expressions of the truth. . . . One of
its purposes is to prevent the state, whether by force or by psychological
domination, from overcoming the mind and will of the person under
investigation and depriving him of the freedom to decide whether to
assist the state in securing his conviction.

Id.
151. Fare v. Michael C., 442 U.S. 707, 724–25 (1979); Feld, Kids, Cops, and
Confessions, supra note 144, at 35. The Court decided Michael C. as a Mi-
randa case rather than as a juvenile interrogation case. Kenneth J. King, Waiv-
ing Childhood Goodbye: How Juvenile Courts Fail to Protect Children from Un-
knowing, Unintelligent, and Involuntary Waivers of Miranda Rights, 2006 Wis.
152. Michael C., 442 U.S. at 724–25; Feld, Kids, Cops, and Confessions,
supra note 144, at 35; Feld, Behind Closed Doors, supra note 144.
old juvenile’s age affected the Miranda custody analysis.\textsuperscript{154} The Court concluded that age was an objective factor that would affect how a young person might experience restraint.\textsuperscript{155} J.D.B. recognized that juveniles could feel restrained under circumstances in which an adult might not, and drew on Roper and Graham’s diminished responsibility rationale to emphasize youths’ immaturity, inexperience, and heightened vulnerability during interrogation.\textsuperscript{156}

Despite J.D.B.’s renewed concern about youths’ vulnerability, the vast majority of states use the same Miranda framework for juveniles and adults.\textsuperscript{157} Miranda only requires that suspects understand the words of the warning and not collateral consequences of a waiver. Most states do not require a parent or lawyer to assist juveniles.\textsuperscript{158} When trial judges evaluate Miranda waivers, they consider characteristics of the offender (age, education, IQ, and prior police contacts) and the context of interrogation (location, methods, and length of interrogation).\textsuperscript{159} The leading cases provide long lists of factors for trial judges to consider.\textsuperscript{160} Appellate courts identify many relevant elements, do not assign controlling weight to any one variable, and defer to trial judges’ decisions whether a juvenile made a valid waiver.\textsuperscript{161}

Without decisive factors, Michael C. provides no meaningful check on judges’ discretion to find that youths waived their rights. Judges regularly find valid waivers made by children as young as ten or eleven years of age, with limited intelligence or significant mental disorders, with no prior police contacts, and without parental assistance.\textsuperscript{162}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{155} Id. at 272 (“[A] reasonable child subjected to police questioning will sometimes feel pressured to submit when a reasonable adult would feel free to go. We think it clear that courts can account for that reality.”).
\item \textsuperscript{156} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{157} FELD, KIDS, COPS, AND CONFESSIONS, supra note 144, at 41.
\item \textsuperscript{158} Id. at 42; Barry C. Feld, Juveniles’ Waiver of Legal Rights: Confessions, Miranda, and the Right to Counsel, in YOUTH ON TRIAL: A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE, supra note 61, at 105, 105–06 [hereinafter Feld, Juveniles’ Waiver of Legal Rights].
\item \textsuperscript{159} FELD, KIDS, COPS, AND CONFESSIONS, supra note 144, at 42–43; Feld, Juveniles’ Waiver of Legal Rights, supra note 158.
\item \textsuperscript{160} Fare v. Michael C., 441 U.S. 707 (1979); FELD, KIDS, COPS, AND CONFESSIONS, supra note 144, at 42–43.
\item \textsuperscript{161} Feld, Criminalizing Juvenile Justice, supra note 29, at 183; FELD, KIDS, COPS, AND CONFESSIONS, supra note 144, at 43.
\item \textsuperscript{162} See In re Joseph H., No. E058942, 188 Cal.Rptr.3d 171, at *176, *186–87 (Cal. Ct. App. 2015) (holding that Joseph H., a ten-year-old with low intelli-
About ten states presume that most juveniles lack capacity to waive *Miranda* and require a parent or other adult to assist them.¹⁶³ Some states require a parent for juveniles younger than fourteen years, presume that those fourteen or sixteen years or older are incompetent to waive, or oblige police to offer older youths an opportunity to consult.¹⁶⁴ Most commentators endorse parental presence, even though many question the value of their participation.¹⁶⁵ Parents’ and children’s interests may conflict,


¹⁶³. FELD, KIDS, COPS, AND CONFESSIONS, *supra* note 144, at 43; Hillary B.

¹⁶⁴. See, e.g., *In re BMB*, 955 P.2d 1302, 1312–13 (Kan. 1998) (holding that “a juvenile under 14 years of age must be given an opportunity to consult with his or her parent, guardian, or attorney as to whether he or she will waive his or her rights to an attorney and against self-incrimination”); Commonwealth v. A Juvenile, 449 N.E.2d 654, 657 (Mass. 1983) (holding that for juveniles under the age of fourteen, a parent or interested adult must be present and have “had the opportunity to explain [the juvenile’s] rights to [him or her] so that [he or she] understands the significance of waiver of these rights”); State v. Presha, 748 A.2d 1108, 1114 (N.J. 2000) (holding that “when a parent or guardian is absent from an interrogation involving a juvenile [under the age of fourteen], any confession resulting from the interrogation should be deemed inadmissible as a matter of law, unless the adult was unwilling to be present or truly unavailable”).

¹⁶⁵. States assume that a parent will understand rights, provide legal advice, mitigate coercive influences, prevent unreliable statements, and reduce feelings of isolation. Feld, *Juveniles’ Waiver of Legal Rights*, *supra* note 158, at 117–18; see Lisa M. Krzewinski, *But I Didn’t Do It: Protecting the Rights of Juveniles During Interrogation*, 22 B.C. THIRD WORLD L.J. 355, 374–77 (2002) (outlining several states’ approaches to safeguarding juveniles’ *Miranda* rights and expressing the view that those approaches which “render inadmissible any statement by a juvenile made during the interrogation outside the presence of an interested adult, such as a parent or attorney” are the “best way to provide protection for a juvenile”). See generally Steven A. Drizin & Beth A. Colgan, *Tales from the Juvenile Confession Front: A Guide to How Standard Police Interrogation Tactics Can Produce Coerced and False Confessions from Juvenile Suspects*, in *INTERROGATIONS, CONFESSIONS, AND ENTRAPMENT* 127, 153–55 (G. Daniel Lassiter ed., 2004) (endorsing a parental presence requirement even though interrogators reduce parents’ role to passive observer). Parents may pressure their children to tell the truth and confess. See, e.g., FELD, KIDS, COPS,
for example, if the juvenile assaulted or stole from a parent, victimized another sibling, or if the parent is a suspect. Parents may have a financial conflict of interest if they have to pay for their child’s attorney; they may have an emotional reaction to their child’s current arrest or chronic trouble; they may expect their child to tell the truth, urge her to stop lying, or physically threaten her to confess. Additionally, parents may not understand legal rights or consequences of waiver any better than their child.

If youths differ from adults in understanding *Miranda*, conceiving of or exercising rights, or susceptibility to pressure, then the law establishes a standard that few can meet and enables states to take advantage of their limitations. *Miranda* requires police to advise suspects of their rights, but some juveniles do not understand the words or concepts. Psychologists studied the vocabulary, concepts, and reading levels required to understand warnings and concluded that they exceed many adolescents’ abilities. Key words require an eighth-grade level of education and most juveniles thirteen years or younger cannot grasp their meaning. Some concepts—the meaning of a right, the term appointed to secure counsel, and waiver—require a high school education and render *Miranda* incomprehensible. Many juveniles cannot define critical words in the warning. Special dumbed-down juvenile warnings are often longer and more difficult to understand. If demanding reading level or verbal complexity makes a warning unintelligible, then it cannot serve its protective function.

Psychologist Thomas Grisso has studied juveniles’ exercise of *Miranda* for more than four decades. He reports that many, if not most, do not understand the warning well enough to make a

---


168. See Rogers, *Comprehensibility and Content*, supra note 166, at 78.

169. See id.

170. See id.
valid waiver. Although age, intelligence, and prior arrests correlated with *Miranda* comprehension, more than half of juveniles, as contrasted with less than one-quarter of adults, did not understand at least one of the four warnings and only one-fifth of juveniles, as compared with twice as many adults, grasped all four warnings. Juveniles fifteen years of age or younger exhibited significantly poorer comprehension of *Miranda* rights, waived more readily, and confessed more frequently than did older youths. Other research reports that older youths understand *Miranda* about as well as adults, but many younger juveniles do not understand the words or concepts. Adolescents with low IQs perform more poorly than adults with low IQs, and delinquent youths typically have lower IQs than do those in the general population. The higher prevalence of mental disorders compounds juveniles’ cognitive limitations, although police seldom are able to assess youths’ impairments when they question them.

Even youths who understand *Miranda*’s words may be unable to exercise its rights. Juveniles do not appreciate the function or importance of rights as well as adults and they are less competent defendants. They have greater difficulty conceiving of a right as an absolute entitlement that they can exercise without adverse consequences. Juveniles view rights as something

---


175. *Id.* at 53.

176. *Id.* at 52–53.


that authorities allow them to do, but which they may unilaterally retract or withhold. 179 They misconceive the lawyer’s role and attorney-client privilege. 180 Generally, youths with poorer understanding of rights waive them at higher rates than those with better comprehension. 181

Miranda characterized custodial interrogation as inherently compelling because police dominate the setting and create psychological pressures to comply. 182 The differing legal and social status of youths and adults render children questioned by authority figures more suggestible. We expect youths to answer questions posed by police, teachers, parents, and other adults; social expectations and children’s lower status increase their vulnerability during interrogation.

Juveniles may waive rights and admit responsibility because they believe they should obey authority, acquiesce more readily to negative pressure or critical feedback, and accede more willingly to suggestions. 183 They impulsively confess to end
an interrogation, rather than consider long-term consequences.\textsuperscript{184}

The Court requires suspects to invoke \textit{Miranda} rights clearly and unambiguously.\textsuperscript{185} However, some groups of people—juveniles, females, or racial minorities—may speak indirectly or tentatively to avoid conflict with those in power.\textsuperscript{186} \textit{Davis v. United States} recognized that to require suspects to invoke rights clearly and unambiguously could prove problematic for some.\textsuperscript{187} If a suspect thinks she has invoked her rights, but police disregard it as an ambiguous request, then she may feel overwhelmed by their indifference and succumb to further questioning.

\textit{b. The Law in Action}

Research on police interrogation reports that about eighty percent of adults and ninety percent of juveniles waive their \textit{Miranda} rights.\textsuperscript{188} The largest empirical study of juvenile interrogations reported that 92.8% waived.\textsuperscript{189} Juveniles’ higher waiver rates may reflect lack of understanding or inability to invoke \textit{Miranda} effectively.\textsuperscript{190} As with adults, youths with prior felony arrests invoked their rights more often than those with fewer or less serious police contacts.\textsuperscript{191} Youths who waived at prior arrests may have learned that they derived no benefit from cooperating, spent more time with lawyers, and gained greater understanding.

---

\textsuperscript{184} See GUDJONSSON, supra note 182, at 381.
\textsuperscript{185} See GRISSO, JUVENILES’ WAIVER OF RIGHTS, supra note 165, at 158–59; Grisso et al., Juveniles’ Competence to Stand Trial, supra note 143, at 357.
\textsuperscript{188} Davis, 512 U.S. at 460 (“[R]equiring a clear assertion of the right to counsel might disadvantage some suspects who—because of fear, intimidation, lack of linguistic skills, or a variety of other reasons—will not clearly articulate their right to counsel although they actually want to have a lawyer present.”).
\textsuperscript{189} Feld, Kids, Cops, and Confessions, supra note 144, at 94; RICHARD A. LEO, POLICE INTERROGATION AND AMERICAN JUSTICE 280 (2008).
\textsuperscript{190} Id. at 98–101; Feld, Behind Closed Doors, supra note 144, at 431.
Once officers secure a juvenile’s waiver, they question him just like an adult. They employ the same maximization and minimization strategies used with adults to overcome young suspects’ resistance and to enable them to admit responsibility.\(^{192}\) Maximization techniques intimidate suspects and impress on them the futility of denial; minimization techniques provide moral justifications or face-saving alternatives to enable them to confess.\(^{193}\) Despite youths’ greater susceptibility, police do not incorporate developmental differences into the tactics they employ.\(^{194}\) They do not receive special training to question juveniles and use the same tactics as with adults.\(^{195}\) Techniques designed to manipulate adults—aggressive questioning, presenting false evidence, and using leading questions—create unique dangers when employed with youths.\(^{196}\)

Some states require a parent to assist juveniles in the interrogation room although analysts question their protective role.\(^{197}\) Parents—as adults—may have marginally greater un-

\(^{192}\) Feld, Kids, Cops, and Confessions, supra note 144, at 110; Kassin et al., supra note 183, at 12.

\(^{193}\) See, e.g., Feld, Kids, Cops, and Confessions, supra note 144, at 110, 126; Saul M. Kassin, On the Psychology of Confessions: Does Innocence Put Innocents at Risk?, 60 Am. Psychologist 215, 223 (2005) (discussing various interrogation techniques); Kassin et al., supra note 183, at 12 (explaining that maximization tactics “convey the interrogator’s rock-solid belief that the suspect is guilty and that all denials will fail. Such tactics include making an accusation, overriding objections, and citing evidence, real or manufactured, to shift the suspect’s mental state from confident to hopeless.”). Minimization techniques “provide the suspect with moral justification and face-saving excuses for having committed the crime in question. Using this approach, the interrogator offers sympathy and understanding; normalizes and minimizes the crime.” Kassin et al., supra note 183, at 14.


derstanding of *Miranda* than their children, but both share misconceptions about police practices.\(^{198}\) Often parents do not provide useful legal advice, they increase pressure to waive rights, and many urge their children to tell the truth.\(^{199}\) Parents may be emotionally upset or angry at their child’s arrest, believe that confessing will produce a better outcome, or may think their child should respect authority or assume responsibility. If a parent is present, police either enlist them as allies in the interrogation or neutralize their presence and render them as passive observers.\(^{200}\) In the vast majority of interrogations that parents attended in a pertinent study, parents did not participate after police gave their child a *Miranda* warning, sometimes switched sides to become active allies of the police, and rarely played a protective role.\(^{201}\)

c. **Vulnerability and False Confessions**

Research on false confessions underscores juveniles’ unique vulnerability.\(^{202}\) Younger adolescents are at greater risk to confess falsely than older ones; in one study, police obtained more than one-third (thirty-five percent) of proven false confessions from suspects younger than eighteen.\(^{203}\) In another study, false confessions occurred in fifteen percent of cases, but juveniles accounted for forty-two percent of all false confessors and two-thirds (sixty-nine percent) of those aged twelve to fifteen confessed to crimes they did not commit.\(^{204}\) Significantly, research on exonerated juveniles who confess falsely involves only the small group of youths prosecuted as adults. This reflects the seriousness of their crimes, the greater pressure on police to solve them, and the longer period available to youths and their attorneys to correct the errors.

\(^{198}\) Woolard et al., *supra* note 197, at 688.


\(^{200}\) FELD, *KIDS, COPS, AND CONFESSIONS*, *supra* note 144, at 200–03.

\(^{201}\) *Id.* at 203–06.


\(^{203}\) See Drizin & Leo, *supra* note 183, at 945.

\(^{204}\) See Gross et al., *supra* note 202, at 545.
Developmental psychologists attribute juveniles’ overrepresentation among false confessors to reduced cognitive ability, developmental immaturity, and increased susceptibility to manipulation. They have fewer life experiences or psychological resources with which to resist the pressures of interrogation. They are more likely to comply with authority figures, tell police what they think they want to hear, and respond to negative feedback. Their impulsive decision-making and tendency to obey authority heightens those risks, especially for younger juveniles with limited understanding. The stress and anxiety of interrogation intensifies their desire to extricate themselves in the short-run by waiving and confessing. The vulnerabilities of youth multiply when coupled with mental illness, mental retardation, or compliant personalities.

d. Policy Recommendations

Research on false confessions underscores the unique vulnerability of younger juveniles. Miranda is especially problematic for younger juveniles who may not understand its words or concepts. Miranda requires only shallow understanding of the

205. See Bonnie & Grisso, Adjudicative Competence and Youthful Offenders, in YOUTH ON TRIAL: A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE, supra note 61, at 73, 87 (“[Y]ouths[] . . . may have significant deficits in competence-related abilities due . . . to developmental immaturity.”); Allison D. Redlich et al., The Police Interrogation of Children and Adolescents, in INTERROGATIONS, CONFESSIONS, AND ENTRAPMENT, supra note 165, at 107, 114 (examining research showing an inverse relationship between age and suggestibility); Ann Tobey et al., Youths’ Trial Participation as Seen by Youths and Their Attorneys: An Exploration of Competence-Based Issues, in YOUTH ON TRIAL: A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE, supra note 61, at 225, 231–34 (discussing how juveniles are difficult clients for attorneys because they have difficulty remembering information, maintaining attention, and making decisions appropriately); Drizin & Luloff, supra note 136, at 260.

206. See GUDJONSSON, supra note 182, at 381 (summarizing research which showed that juveniles are “markedly more suggestible than adults” when subjected to interrogative pressure); LEO, supra note 188, at 233 (“Many juveniles . . . are highly compliant. They tend to be . . . acquiescent[] and eager to please . . . when questioned by police.”).

207. See generally GARRETT, supra note 202 (discussing false confessions and the unique vulnerability of adolescents compared to older juveniles and adults); Drizin & Leo, supra note 183 (analyzing 125 interrogation-induced false confession cases using a variety of demographic criteria and finding that juveniles are uniquely vulnerable); Gross et al., supra note 202 (finding that false confessions were heavily concentrated among the most vulnerable groups of innocent defendants, including juveniles and individuals with mental disabilities); Tepfer et al., supra note 202 (finding that younger exonerees falsely confessed to crimes at nearly twice the rate of adult exonerees).
words which developmental psychologists conclude most sixteen- and seventeen-year-old youths possess. By contrast, psychologists report that many, if not most, children fifteen or younger do not understand *Miranda* or possess competence to make legal decisions.208

i. Mandatory Counsel for Younger Juveniles

Younger juveniles’ limited understanding and heightened vulnerability warrant greater procedural protections: a nonwaivable right to counsel. The Supreme Court’s juvenile interrogation cases—*Haley*, *Gallegos*, *Gault*, *Fare*, *Alvarado*, and *J.D.B.*—excluded statements taken from youths fifteen years of age or younger and admitted those obtained from sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds. The Court’s de facto functional line—fifteen and younger versus sixteen and older—closely tracks what psychologists report about youths’ ability to understand the warning. Courts and legislatures should adopt that functional line and provide greater protections for younger juveniles.

Psychologists advocate that juveniles younger than sixteen years of age “should be accompanied and advised by a professional advocate, preferably an attorney, trained to serve in this role.”209 More than three decades ago, the American Bar Association (ABA) endorsed mandatory, nonwaivable counsel because it recognized that “[f]ew juveniles have the experience and understanding to decide meaningfully that the assistance of counsel would not be helpful.”210 Juveniles should consult with an attorney, rather than rely on parents, before they exercise or waive rights.211 Requiring consultation with an attorney assures a functioning legal services delivery system and an informed and voluntary waiver. If youths fifteen years of age or younger consult with counsel, it will somewhat limit police’s ability to secure confessions. However, if younger juveniles cannot understand or

211. Id. at 89–94 (discussing the “[s]cope of the juvenile’s right to counsel”); Donna M. Bishop & Hillary B. Farber, *Joining the Legal Significance of Adolescent Developmental Capacities with the Legal Rights Provided by In re Gault*, 60 RUTGERS L. REV. 125, 167 (2007) (summarizing the findings of a variety of studies and concluding that “fairness requires that juveniles have the benefit of a nonwaivable right to counsel at every step in delinquency proceedings in order to fulfill the promise of *Gault*”).
exercise rights without assistance, then to treat them as if they do enables the state to exploit their vulnerability. Constitutional rights exist to assure factual accuracy, promote equality, and protect individuals from governmental overreaching. Michael C. emphasized lawyers’ unique role in the justice system, and Haley, Gallegos, and Gault recognized younger juveniles’ exceptional need for their assistance.

ii. Limiting the Length of Interrogation

The vast majority of interrogations are very brief. In previous studies, police completed nearly all interviews in less than an hour and few took longer than two hours.212 By contrast, interrogations that elicit false confessions are usually long inquiries that wear down an innocent person’s resistance—eighty-four percent took at least six hours—and youthfulness exacerbates those dangers.213 The Supreme Court has recognized that questioning juveniles for five or six hours renders their statement involuntary.214 Thus, states should create a sliding-scale presumption that a confession is involuntary and unreliable based on length of interrogation.

iii. Mandatory Recording of Interrogation

Within the past decade, legal scholars, psychologists, law enforcement, and justice system personnel have reached consensus that recording interrogations reduces coercion, diminishes dangers of false confessions, and increases reliability.215 More than a dozen states require police to record interrogations, albeit some under limited circumstances, such as with homicide or very young suspects.216 Recording creates an objective record and provides an independent basis to resolve credibility disputes about

---

213. Drizin & Leo, supra note 183, at 948–49.
215. See generally Feld, Kids, Cops, and Confessions, supra note 144 (discussing the benefits of recording interrogations); Garrett, supra note 202 (relaying the positive experiences of police and judges regarding the electronic recording of interrogations); Leo, supra note 188 (discussing how the recording of police interrogations benefits all parties who value accurate factfinding and more informed decision-making).
216. See Garrett, supra note 202, at 248 ("Eleven states and the District of Columbia now require or encourage electronic recording of at least some interrogations by statute, and seven more state supreme courts wrote opinions either
Miranda warnings, waivers, or statements. It enables a judge to decide whether a statement contains facts known to a guilty perpetrator or whether police supplied them to an innocent suspect. Recording protects police from false claims of abuse, enhances professionalism, and reduces coercion. It enables police to focus on suspects’ responses, to review details of an interview not captured in written notes, and to test them against subsequently discovered facts. Recording avoids distortions that occur when interviewers rely on memory or notes to summarize a statement.

Police must record all interactions with suspects (preliminary interviews and interrogations) rather than just a final statement (a post-admission narrative). Otherwise, police may conduct a preinterrogation interview, elicit incriminating information, and then construct a final confession after the cat is out of the bag. Only a complete record of every interaction can protect against a final statement that ratifies an earlier coerced one or against a false confession contaminated by nonpublic facts that police supplied a suspect.

2. Competence to Stand Trial

Gault’s procedural rights are of no value to youths unable to exercise them. The Supreme Court long has required that defendants be competent to preserve the integrity of trials, to promote factual accuracy, to reduce risk of error, and to enable them to play a part in proceedings.\(^217\) *Dusky v. United States* held that a defendant must possess “sufficient present ability to consult with his lawyer with a reasonable degree of rational understanding . . . [and have] a rational as well as factual understanding of the proceedings against him.”\(^218\) *Drope v. Missouri* held that “a person whose mental condition is such that he lacks the capacity to understand the nature and object of the proceedings against him, to consult with counsel, and to assist in preparing his defense may not be subjected to a trial.”\(^219\) The standard is functional and binary: a defendant either is or is not competent to stand trial.

---


The standard for competency is not onerous because the more capability it requires of moderately impaired defendants, the fewer who will meet it.\textsuperscript{220} Juveniles must understand the trial process, have the ability to reason and work with counsel, and rationally appreciate their situation. If a person understands that he is on trial for committing crimes, knows he can be sentenced if convicted, and can communicate with his attorney, a court likely would find him competent. Significant mental illness—psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia—or severe mental retardation typically render adult defendants incompetent. However, psychotic disorders typically do not emerge until late adolescence or early adulthood and the American Psychiatric Association’s \textit{Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders} cautious against diagnosing profound illnesses in younger populations.\textsuperscript{221} Despite that reservation, researchers report that the prevalence of mental disorders among delinquent youths is substantially higher than in the general population—half to three-quarters exhibit one or more mental illnesses.\textsuperscript{222}

Developmental psychologists contend that immaturity per se—especially for younger juveniles—produces the same deficits of understanding and inability to assist counsel that mental illness or retardation engender in incompetent adults.\textsuperscript{223} Youths’ developmental limitations adversely affect their ability to pay attention, absorb and apply information, understand proceedings, make rational decisions, and work with counsel.\textsuperscript{224}

Significant age-related differences appear between adolescents’ and young adults’ competence, judgment, and legal decision-making.\textsuperscript{225} Developmental psychologists report that many juveniles younger than fourteen years of age were as severely impaired as adults found incompetent to stand trial.\textsuperscript{226} Some


\textsuperscript{221} See AM. PSYCHIATRIC ASS’N, \textit{DIAGNOSTIC AND STATISTICAL MANUAL OF MENTAL DISORDERS} 88–89 (5th ed. 2013).

\textsuperscript{222} Grisso, \textit{DOUBLE JEOPARDY}, supra note 143, at 10–11.

\textsuperscript{223} See Scott & Steinberg, supra note 1, at 151–52; Scott & Grisso, supra note 217, at 796.

\textsuperscript{224} See Scott & Steinberg, supra note 1, at 158–60; Scott & Grisso, supra note 217, at 795–96.

\textsuperscript{225} See Grisso et al., \textit{Juveniles’ Competence to Stand Trial}, supra note 143, at 343–46.

\textsuperscript{226} See Scott & Steinberg, supra note 1, at 162–65; Grisso et al., \textit{Juveniles’ Competence to Stand Trial}, supra note 143, at 356.
older youths also exhibited substantial impairments.\textsuperscript{227} Age and intelligence produced higher levels of incompetence among adolescents with low IQs than adults with low IQs.\textsuperscript{228} The MacArthur study reported that about one-fifth of fourteen- to fifteen-year-olds were as impaired as mentally ill adults found incompetent; those with below-average intelligence were more likely than juveniles with average intelligence to be incompetent.\textsuperscript{229} Even nominally competent adolescents may suffer from cognitive deficits—borderline intelligence, limited verbal ability, short attention span, or imperfect memory—that adversely affect understanding and decision-making.

While incompetence in adults stems from mental disorders, which may be transient or treatable with medication, it is less clear how to accelerate legal capacities in adolescents whose deficits result from developmental immaturity.\textsuperscript{230} Competency restoration may be especially problematic for younger juveniles who never possessed relevant knowledge or understanding to begin with.\textsuperscript{231} Moreover, adolescents deemed incompetent due to mental retardation may be especially difficult to remediate or restore to competence.\textsuperscript{232}

The prevalence of mental illness among delinquents compounds their developmental incompetence. In many jurisdictions, the juvenile justice system has become the de facto mental health system as a result of inadequate mental health services for children.\textsuperscript{233} Analysts estimate that half or more of male delinquents and a larger proportion of female delinquents suffer

\textsuperscript{227} See Grisso et al., Juveniles’ Competence to Stand Trial, supra note 143, at 344 (reporting that seven percent of sixteen to seventeen-year-olds showed “significantly impaired [u]nderstanding,” compared with twenty percent of eleven to thirteen-year-olds and thirteen percent of fourteen to fifteen-year-olds).

\textsuperscript{228} See Grisso et al., Juveniles’ Competence to Stand Trial, supra note 143, at 355; Sanborn, supra note 220, at 171–72.

\textsuperscript{229} Grisso et al., Juveniles’ Competence to Stand Trial, supra note 143, at 356.


\textsuperscript{231} Scott & Grisso, supra note 217, at 797.

\textsuperscript{232} See Viljoen et al., Competence and Criminal Responsibility, supra note 230, at 530; Sanborn, supra note 229, at 145–47.

\textsuperscript{233} GRISSO, DOUBLE JEOPARDY, supra note 143, at 5 (discussing the lack of
from one or more mental disorders.\textsuperscript{234} Youths suffering from Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) may have difficulty concentrating or communicating with their attorney and those suffering from depression may lack the motivation to do so.

The issue of competence to stand trial arises both for youth transferred to and tried in criminal court and for those prosecuted in juvenile court. For youths tried as adults, criminal courts apply the \textit{Dusky}/\textit{Drope} standard, but focus on mental illness rather than developmental immaturity.\textsuperscript{235} For youths tried in juvenile courts, about half the states have addressed competency in statutes, court rules, or case law.\textsuperscript{236} However, most statutes consider only mental illness or retardation as sources of incompetence rather than developmental immaturity per se.\textsuperscript{237}

Even after states recognize juveniles’ right to a competency determination in delinquency proceedings, they differ over whether to apply the \textit{Dusky}/\textit{Drope} adult standard or a juvenile-normed standard. Some courts apply the adult standard in delinquency as well as criminal prosecutions because both may result in a child’s loss of liberty and punitive consequences.\textsuperscript{238} Other jurisdictions opt for a relaxed competency standard on the theory that delinquency hearings are less complex and penalties less severe.\textsuperscript{239}

Advocates for a watered-down standard of competence in delinquency proceedings contend that a youth who might be found incompetent to stand trial as an adult or if evaluated under an

\textsuperscript{234} Id. at 6–13; Viljoen et al., \textit{Competence and Criminal Responsibility}, supra note 230, at 529 (reporting that “approximately 60% of detained male adolescents and 70% of detained female adolescents met criteria for a current mental disorder”).

\textsuperscript{235} See Sanborn, supra note 220, at 147–49; Scott & Grisso, supra note 217, at 804–05.

\textsuperscript{236} See Sanborn, supra note 220, at 140–42. See generally FELD, CASES AND MATERIALS, supra note 29, at 117–33 (discussing various states’ frameworks for addressing competency); Scott & Grisso, supra note 217 (discussing juvenile competency schemes in a variety of jurisdictions).

\textsuperscript{237} Viljoen et al., \textit{Competence and Criminal Responsibility}, supra note 230, at 532; Sanborn, supra note 220, at 141–42.


adult standard in juvenile court should still be found competent under a relaxed standard.\textsuperscript{240} They insist that if delinquency sanctions are less punitive than criminal sentences and geared to promote youths’ welfare, then they require fewer procedural safeguards.\textsuperscript{241} However, the constitutional requirement of competence hinges on defendants’ ability to participate in proceedings and the legitimacy of the trial process, and not the punishment that may ensue. Although delinquency dispositions, especially for serious crimes, may be shorter than criminal sentences, as I argued above, it is disingenuous to claim they are not punitive. \textit{Baldwin v. New York} held that no crime that carried an authorized sentence of six months or longer could be deemed a petty offense.\textsuperscript{242} While proponents of a watered-down standard argue that a rule that immunizes some incompetent youths from adjudication could undermine juvenile courts’ legitimacy,\textsuperscript{243} adjudicating immature youths under a relaxed standard enables the state to take advantage of their incompetence and undermines the legitimacy of the process. A finding of delinquency requires proof of guilt. Either defendants understand the proceedings and can assist counsel or they cannot; if they cannot perform those minimal tasks, then they should not be prosecuted in any court.

Juvenile courts do not routinely initiate competency evaluations, even for young offenders, and many delinquents may face charges without understanding the process or the ability to work with counsel. Defense attorneys may be best positioned to detect whether a competency evaluation is warranted, but often fail to do so because of heavy caseloads, limited time spent with a client, and an inability to distinguish between immaturity and disabling incompetence.\textsuperscript{244} Defense counsel tactically may not raise a juvenile’s incompetence because of the delays for competency evaluation and restoration.\textsuperscript{245} And justice system personnel may lack evaluation instruments or clinical personnel who can administer them.\textsuperscript{246}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{240} See \textit{Scott \& Steinberg}, supra note 1, at 168–77; \textit{Scott \& Grisso}, supra note 217, at 831–39.
\textsuperscript{241} See \textit{Scott \& Grisso}, supra note 217, at 840–43.
\textsuperscript{243} \textit{Scott \& Steinberg}, supra note 1, at 173.
\textsuperscript{244} Viljoen et al., \textit{Competence and Responsibility}, supra note 230, at 533–34.
\textsuperscript{245} \textit{Grisso}, \textit{Double Jeopardy}, supra note 143, at 168–70.
\textsuperscript{246} \textit{Id.} at 77–80.
\end{flushleft}
3. Access to Counsel

_Gideon v. Wainwright_ applied the Sixth Amendment to the states to guarantee criminal defendants' right to counsel.247 _Gault_ relied on _Gideon_, compared a delinquency proceeding to a felony prosecution, and granted delinquents the right to counsel.248 However, _Gault_ used the Fourteenth Amendment Due Process Clause rather than the Sixth Amendment and did not mandate automatic appointment of counsel.249 _Gault_, like _Gideon_, left to state and local governments the task to fund legal services. Over the past half-century, penurious politicians who want to get tough on crime and avoid coddling criminals have shirked their responsibility to adequately fund public defenders' offices and have severely undermined the quality of justice.

_Gault_ required a judge to advise the child and parent of the right to have a lawyer appointed if indigent, but ruled that juveniles could waive counsel.250 Most states do not use special procedural safeguards—mandatory nonwaivable appointment or prewaiver consultation with a lawyer—to protect delinquents from improvident decisions.251 Instead, they use the adult standard—knowing, intelligent, and voluntary—to gauge juveniles' relinquishment of counsel. As with _Miranda_ waivers, formal equality results in practical inequality—lawyers represent delinquents at much lower rates than they do criminal defendants.252

Despite statutes and court rules of procedure that apply equally throughout a state, juvenile justice administration varies with urban, suburban, and rural context and produces justice by geography.253 Lawyers appear more frequently in urban

---

248. _In re Gault_, 387 U.S. 1, 36 (1967).
250. _Gault_, 387 U.S. at 41–42.
251. _Gault_, 387 U.S. at 42; Feld, _Criminalizing Juvenile Justice_, supra note 29, at 183–90. See generally FELD, _JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN_, supra note 63 (discussing a lack of procedural safeguards in most jurisdictions).
253. Buruss & Kempf-Leonard, supra note 252, at 60–65; Feld, _Justice by Geography_, supra note 63, at 157–58; Barry C. Feld & Shelly Schaefer, _The
courts than in more informal rural courts. In turn, more formal urban courts hold more youths in pretrial detention and sentence them more severely. Finally, a lawyer’s presence is an aggravating factor at disposition; judges sentence youths who appear with counsel more severely than they do those who appear without an attorney. Several factors contribute to this finding: (1) lawyers who appear in juvenile court may be incompetent and prejudice their clients’ cases; (2) judges may predetermine sentences and appoint counsel when they anticipate out-of-home placements; or (3) judges may punish delinquents for exercising procedural rights.

a. Presence of Counsel

When the Court decided Gault, lawyers appeared in fewer than five percent of delinquency cases, in part because juvenile court judges actively discouraged juveniles from retaining counsel and the courts’ informality prevented lawyers from playing an advocate’s role. Although states amended their juvenile codes to comply with Gault, evaluations of initial compliance found that most judges did not advise juveniles of their rights...
and the vast majority did not appoint counsel.259 Studies in the 1970s and 1980s reported that many judges did not advise juveniles of their right to a lawyer and most did not appoint counsel.260 Research in Minnesota in the mid-1980s reported that most youths appeared without counsel, that rates of representation varied widely in urban, suburban, and rural counties, and that one-third of youths whom judges removed from home and one-quarter of those in institutions were unrepresented.261 A decade later, about one-quarter of juveniles removed from home were unrepresented despite legal reforms to eliminate the practice.262 A study of delivery of legal services in six states reported that only three of them appointed counsel for a substantial majority of juveniles.263 Studies in the 1990s described juvenile court judges’ continuing failure to appoint lawyers.264 In 1995, the General Accounting Office confirmed that rates of representation varied widely among and within states and that judges tried and sentenced many unrepresented youths.265

In the mid-1990s the ABA published two reports on juveniles’ legal needs. America’s Children at Risk reported that many children appeared without counsel and that lawyers who represented youth lacked adequate training and often failed to provide effective assistance.266 A Call for Justice, which focused on the quality of defense lawyers, again reported that many youths

259. In re Gault, 387 U.S. 1 (1967); Feld, Right to Counsel, supra note 64, at 1199–1200. See generally Feld, Justice for Children, supra note 63 (reviewing research on delivery of legal services).

260. See Feld, Right to Counsel, supra note 64, at 1199–1200. See generally Feld, Justice for Children, supra note 63 (reviewing research on delivery of legal services).

261. Feld, In re Gault Revisited, supra note 252, at 394–95; Feld, Justice by Geography, supra note 63; see Feld, Right to Counsel, supra note 64, at 1199–1200, 1213–44.

262. Feld & Schaefer, Right to Counsel, supra note 253, at 730; see Feld & Schaefer, Law Reform, supra note 253, at 333–35 (discussing Minnesota’s reform laws to improve legal representation of juvenile delinquents).

263. Feld, In re Gault Revisited, supra note 252, at 396, 416.


265. GAO, supra note 264, at 13.

appeared without counsel and that many attorneys failed to appreciate the challenges of representing young clients.\textsuperscript{267} Since the late 1990s, the ABA and the National Juvenile Defender Center have conducted more than twenty state-by-state assessments, reporting that many, if not most, juveniles appeared without counsel and that lawyers who represented youth often encountered structural impediments to effective advocacy—heavy caseloads, inadequate resources, lack of training, and the like.\textsuperscript{268}

\textit{b. Waivers of Counsel}

Several factors account for why so many youths appear in juvenile courts without counsel. Public defender services may be less available or nonexistent in nonurban areas.\textsuperscript{269} Judges may give cursory advisories of the right to counsel, imply that waivers are just legal technicalities, and readily find waivers to ease their administrative burdens.\textsuperscript{270} If judges expect to impose non-custodial sentences, then they may dispense with counsel. Some jurisdictions charge fees to determine a youth’s eligibility for a public defender and others base youths’ eligibility on their parents’ income.\textsuperscript{271} Parents may be reluctant to retain or accept an attorney if, as in many states, they may have to reimburse attorney fees if they can afford them.\textsuperscript{272}

The most common explanation for why fifty to ninety percent of juveniles in many states are unrepresented is that they

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{267. AM. BAR ASS’N JUVENILE JUSTICE CTR., A CALL FOR JUSTICE: AN ASSESSMENT OF ACCESS TO COUNSEL AND QUALITY OF REPRESENTATION IN DELINQUENCY PROCEEDINGS 52–56 (1995).}

\footnote{268. Drizin & Luloff, supra note 136, at 220; see NAT’L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 1, at 200–01; NAT’L JUVENILE DEF. CTR., supra note 264, at 34. For more detail and access to the state assessments from the National Juvenile Defender Center, see State Assessments, NAT’L JUVENILE DEF. CTR., http://www.njdc.info/our-work/juvenile-indigent-defense-assessments (last visited Nov. 15, 2017) (providing state assessments through “comprehensive examinations of the systemic and institutional barriers that prevent children from receiving high-quality legal representation”).}

\footnote{269. FELD, BAD KIDS, supra note 1, at 127.}

\footnote{270. AM. BAR ASS’N JUVENILE JUSTICE CTR., supra note 267, at 44–45; NAT’L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 1, at 199; Mary Berkheiser, The Fiction of Juvenile Right to Counsel: Waiver in the Juvenile Courts, 54 FLA. L. REV. 577 (2002).}

\footnote{271. NAT’L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 1, at 199.}

\footnote{272. FELD, BAD KIDS, supra note 1, at 127–28; NAT’L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 1, at 199.}
\end{footnotes}
waive counsel.\textsuperscript{273} Judges in most states use the adult standard to gauge juveniles’ waivers of counsel and consider the same factors—age, education, IQ, prior police contacts, or court experience—as those in \textit{Miranda} waivers.\textsuperscript{274} Many juveniles do not understand their rights or the role of lawyers and waive counsel without consulting with either a parent or an attorney.\textsuperscript{275} Although judges are supposed to conduct a dialogue to determine whether a child can understand rights and represent herself, they frequently fail to give any waiver of counsel advisory, often neglect to create a record, and readily accept waivers from manifestly incompetent children.\textsuperscript{276} Many juveniles’ marginal competence to stand trial exacerbates the dangers of improvident waivers. Judges who give waiver of counsel advisories often seek waivers to ease their administrative burdens, which affects how they inform juveniles of their rights and interpret their responses.\textsuperscript{277} As long as the law allows juveniles to waive counsel, judges can find valid waivers regardless of youths’ incompetence. Juveniles’ diminished competence, inability to understand proceedings, and judicial incentives and encouragement to waive counsel results in larger proportions of delinquents adjudicated without lawyers than criminal defendants.\textsuperscript{278}

c. \textit{Pleas Without Bargains}

Like adult criminal defendants, nearly all delinquents plead guilty and proceed to sentencing.\textsuperscript{279} Even though pleading guilty is the most critical decision a delinquent makes, states use adult waiver standards to evaluate their pleas.\textsuperscript{280} Judges and lawyers

\textsuperscript{273} Feld, Bad Kids, supra note 1, at 128; Berkheiser, supra note 270, at 649–50; see Feld, Justice for Children, supra note 63, at 4; Nat’l Research Council, supra note 1, at 199–200.

\textsuperscript{274} See Feld, Behind Closed Doors, supra note 144, at 402; see also Feld, Kids, Cops, and Confessions, supra note 144, at 41–45.

\textsuperscript{275} Berkheiser, supra note 270, at 629–31.

\textsuperscript{276} See In re Manuel R., 543 A.2d 719, 722 (Conn. 1988) (concluding the juvenile did not “knowingly and voluntarily” waive the right to an attorney, notwithstanding court records indicating an affirmative response to the judge’s question about waiving counsel); Berkheiser, supra note 270, at 633–34; Drizin & Luloff, supra note 136, at 285–86.

\textsuperscript{277} Feld, Bad Kids, supra note 1, at 128.

\textsuperscript{278} See generally Feld, Kids, Cops, and Confessions, supra note 144 (discussing law and policy concerning juveniles’ encounters with the law).

\textsuperscript{279} Nat’l Research Council, supra note 1, at 201–02. See generally Feld, Justice for Children, supra note 63 (discussing and analyzing the juvenile justice system and the right to counsel).

\textsuperscript{280} See Joseph B. Sanborn Jr., Pleading Guilty in Juvenile Court: Minimal Ado About Something Very Important to Young Defendants, 9 Just. Q. 127, 127
often speak with juveniles in complicated legal language and fail to explain long-term consequences of pleading guilty.\textsuperscript{281} A valid guilty plea requires a judge to conduct a colloquy on the record, in which an offender admits the facts of the offense, acknowledges the rights being relinquished, and demonstrates that she understands the charges and potential consequences. Because appellate courts seldom review juveniles’ waivers of counsel, pleas made without counsel receive even less judicial scrutiny.\textsuperscript{282} Guilty pleas by factually innocent youths occur because attorneys fail to investigate cases, assume their clients’ guilt—especially if they have already confessed—and avoid adversarial litigation, discovery requests, and pretrial motions that conflict with juvenile courts' cooperative ideology. Juveniles’ emphasis on short-term over long-term consequences and dependence on adult authority figures increases their likelihood to enter false guilty pleas.\textsuperscript{283}

d. Counsel as an Aggravating Factor in Sentencing

Historically, juvenile court judges discouraged adversarial litigants and impeded effective advocacy. Today, lawyers in juvenile courts may put their clients at a disadvantage when judges sentence them.\textsuperscript{284} Research that controls for legal variables—present offense, prior record, pretrial detention, and the like—consistently reports that judges remove from home and incarcerate delinquents who appeared with counsel more frequently than unrepresented youths.\textsuperscript{285} Legal reforms to improve

\textsuperscript{281} Nat’l Research Council, supra note 1, at 201–02.
\textsuperscript{282} See Berkheiser, supra note 270, at 633. See generally Sanborn, supra note 280 (examining the juvenile guilty plea process through statutes, court rules, and case law from all fifty states).
\textsuperscript{283} See Feld, Kids, Cops, and Confessions, supra note 144, at 48–49.
\textsuperscript{284} Burruss & Kempf-Leonard, supra note 252, at 41–45; Feld, In re Gault Revisited, supra note 252, at 418–19; Feld, Right to Counsel, supra note 64, at 1330–31. See generally Feld & Schaefer, Right to Counsel, supra note 253 (discussing attorneys as an aggravating factor in juvenile dispositions).
\textsuperscript{285} Burruss & Kempf-Leonard, supra note 252. See generally Feld, Justice for Children, supra note 63 (reviewing research on aggravating impact of representation); Feld, Right to Counsel, supra note 64 (analyzing variations in rates of representation and the effects of attorneys in juvenile delinquency and status proceedings in Minnesota in 1986); Feld & Schaefer, Law Reform, supra note 253 (reporting on inconsistent judicial compliance with the Gault requirement for appointment of counsel in juvenile courts); Feld & Schaefer,
delivery of legal services actually increase the aggravating effect of representation on dispositions.286

Several factors contribute to lawyers’ negative impact at disposition. First, juveniles may not believe lawyers’ explanations of confidential communications and withhold important information to their detriment.287 Second, lawyers assigned to juvenile court may be incompetent and prejudice their clients’ cases; public defender offices often send their least capable or newest attorneys to juvenile court to gain trial experience.288 Third, lack of adequate funding for defender services may preclude investigations, which increases the risk of wrongful convictions;289 defense attorneys seldom investigate cases or interview their clients prior to trial because of heavy caseloads and limited organizational support.290 Fourth, court-appointed lawyers may place a greater premium on maintaining good relations with judges who assign their cases than vigorously defending their revolving clients.291 Juvenile courts’ parens patriae ideology discourages zealous advocacy and engenders adverse consequences for attorneys who rock the boat or for their clients.292 Fifth, and most significantly, many defense attorneys work under conditions that create structural impediments to quality representation.293 Assessments in dozens of states report derisory working conditions—crushing caseloads, penurious compensation, scant support services, inexperienced attorneys, and inadequate supervision—that detract from or preclude effective representation.294 Ineffective assistance of counsel, for whatever reason, is a significant factor in one-quarter of wrongful convictions.295
Another explanation of lawyers’ negative impact on dispositions is that judges may appoint them when they anticipate more severe sentences. The Court in *Scott v. Illinois* prohibited “incarceration without representation” and limited an indigent adult misdemeanant’s right to appointed counsel to cases in which judges ordered defendants’ actual confinement. In most states, the same judge presides at a youth’s arraignment, detention hearing, adjudication, and disposition and may appoint counsel if she anticipates a more severe sentence. Judges typically appoint counsel, if at all, at the arraignment, detention hearing, or on the day of trial. Court practices that appoint lawyers who meet their clients for the first time on the day of trial create a system conducive to inadequate representation and wrongful convictions.

Finally, judges may sentence delinquents who appear with counsel more severely than those who waive because the lawyer’s presence insulates them from appellate reversal. Juvenile court judges may sanction youths whose lawyers invoke formal procedures, disrupt routine procedures, or question their discretion in ways similar to an adult defendant’s trial penalty—the harsher sentences imposed on those who demand a jury trial rather than plead guilty.

**e. Appellate Review**

*Gault* rejected the juvenile’s request for a constitutional right to appellate review because it had not found that criminal defendants enjoyed such a right. However, states invariably provided adult defendants with a statutory right to appellate review. By avoiding the constitutional issue, the Court undermined the other rights that it granted delinquents because the only way to enforce its rules would have been through rigorous appellate review of juvenile court judges’ decisions. Regardless of how poorly lawyers perform, appellate courts seldom can correct juvenile courts’ errors. Juvenile defenders appeal adverse decisions far less frequently than lawyers representing adult criminal defendants and often lack a record with which to

298. See NAT’L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 1, at 198–99.
299. *In re Gault*, 387 U.S. 1, 58 (1967).
challenge an invalid waiver of counsel or trial errors.\textsuperscript{301} Juvenile court culture may discourage appeals as an impediment to a youth assuming responsibility. The vast majority of delinquents enter guilty pleas, which waive the right to appeal and further precludes review.\textsuperscript{302} Moreover, juveniles who waive counsel at trial will be less aware of or able to pursue an appeal.

\textbf{f. Conclusion}

The formal procedures of juvenile and criminal courts have converged in the decades since \textit{Gault}. Differences in age and competence would suggest that youths should receive more safeguards than adults to protect them from punitive delinquency adjudications and their own limitations. However, states do not provide juveniles with additional safeguards—mandatory nonwaivable appointment of counsel or prewaiver consultation with a lawyer—to protect them from their own immaturity. Instead, they use adult legal standards that most youths are unlikely to meet.

High rates of waiver undermine the legitimacy of the juvenile justice system because assistance of counsel is the prerequisite to the exercise of other rights.\textsuperscript{303} Youths require safeguards which only lawyers can provide to protect against erroneous and punitive state intervention. The direct consequence of delinquency convictions—institutional confinement—and use of prior convictions to sentence recidivists more harshly, to waive youths to criminal court, and to enhance criminal sentences makes assistance of counsel imperative. A justice system that recognizes youths’ developmental limitations would provide, at a minimum, no pretrial waivers of \textit{Miranda} rights or counsel without prior consultation with counsel. Only mandatory nonwaivable counsel can prevent erroneous convictions and collateral use of adjudications that compound injustice. Lawyers can only represent delinquents effectively if they have adequate support, resources, and specialized training to represent children.


\textsuperscript{302} See Feld, \textit{Kids, Cops, and Confessions}, \textit{supra} note 144, at 20.

As Michael C. repeatedly emphasized, lawyers play a unique role in the legal process and only they can effectively invoke the procedural safeguards that are every citizens’ right. A rule that requires mandatory nonwaivable appointment of counsel would impose substantial costs and burdens on legal services delivery in most states. But after Gault, all juveniles are entitled to appointed counsel. Waiver doctrines to relieve states’ fiscal or administrative burdens are scant justifications to deny fundamental rights.

4. Jury Trial: Factfinding, Governmental Oppression, and Collateral Consequences

States’ laws treat juveniles just like adults when formal equality produces practical inequality. Conversely, they use juvenile court procedures that provide less effective protection when called upon to provide delinquents with adult safeguards. Duncan v. Louisiana gave adult defendants the right to a jury trial to assure accurate factfinding and to prevent governmental oppression.304 By contrast, McKeiver v. Pennsylvania denied delinquents protections the Court deemed fundamental to criminal trials.305 The presence of lay citizens functions as a check on the State, provides protection against vindictive prosecutors or biased judges, upholds the criminal standard of proof beyond a reasonable doubt, and enhances the transparency and accountability of the justice system. Despite those salutary functions, McKeiver insisted that delinquency proceedings were not yet criminal prosecutions despite their manifold criminal aspects.306

The McKeiver plurality reasoned that a judge could find facts as accurately as a jury, rejected concerns that informality could compromise factfinding, invoked the imagery of a paternalistic judge, and disregarded delinquents’ need for protection from punitive state overreaching.307 The Court feared that jury trials would interfere with juvenile courts’ informality, flexibility, and confidentiality, make juvenile and criminal courts procedurally indistinguishable, and lead to abandonment of the juvenile court.308

306. Id. at 541.
307. Id.; Feld, Constitutional Tension, supra note 17, at 1143–45; see also NAT’L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 53, at 160 (questioning McKeiver’s reasoning based on evidence suggesting that judges convict defendants at higher rates than juries).
308. McKeiver, 403 U.S. at 550–51.
The *McKeiver* dissenter insisted that when the State charged a delinquent with a crime for which it could incarcerate her, she should enjoy the same jury right as an adult.\(^{309}\) For them, *Gault’s* rationale—criminal charges and the possibility of confinement—required comparable procedural safeguards.\(^{310}\) The dissenter feared that juvenile courts’ informality would contaminate factfinding.\(^{311}\) Although the vast majority of delinquents, like criminal defendants, plead guilty, the possibility of a jury trial provides an important check on prosecutorial overcharging, on judges’ evidentiary rulings, and the standard of proof beyond a reasonable doubt. Despite the prevalence of guilty pleas, lawyers are supposed to evaluate cases as if they were to go to trial and practice in the shadow of the jury. The possibility of a jury trial increases the visibility and accountability of justice administration and the performance of lawyers and judges. The jury’s checking function may be even more important in highly discretionary, low visibility juvenile courts that deal with dependent youths who cannot effectively protect themselves.

A few states give juveniles a right to a jury trial as a matter of state law, but the vast majority do not.\(^{312}\) During the Get Tough Era, states revised their juvenile codes’ purpose, opened delinquency trials to the public, adopted determinate or mandatory sentencing laws, fostered a punitive convergence with criminal courts, imposed collateral consequences for delinquency convictions, and eroded the rationale for fewer procedural safeguards.\(^{313}\) Despite the explicit shift from treatment to punishment, most state courts continue to deny juveniles a jury.\(^{314}\)

Constitutional procedural protections serve dual functions: assure accurate factfinding and protect against governmental oppression. *McKeiver’s* denial of a jury fails on both counts. First, judges and juries find facts differently and when they differ, judges are more likely to convict than a panel of laypeople.

---

\(^{309}\) *Id.* at 559 (Douglas, J., dissenting); Feld, *Constitutional Tension*, supra note 17, at 1145–46.

\(^{310}\) *McKeiver*, 403 U.S. at 559 (Douglas, J., dissenting).

\(^{311}\) *Id.* at 564 (Douglas, J., dissenting).

\(^{312}\) Feld, *Constitutional Tension*, supra note 17, at 1155.

\(^{313}\) See generally, TORBET ET AL., supra note 48 (reporting states’ punitive legislative actions from 1992 to 1995 in response to an increase in juvenile arrests and public perception of crime).

Second, punitive sanctions increase the need to protect delinquents from direct and collateral consequences of convictions. Providing delinquents with a second-rate criminal court denies them fundamental fairness, undermines the legitimacy of the process, and increases the likelihood of wrongful convictions.

a. Accurate Factfinding

*Winship* reasoned that the seriousness of proceedings and the consequences for a defendant—juvenile or adult—required proof beyond a reasonable doubt.\(^{315}\) *McKeiver* assumed that judges could find facts as accurately as juries.\(^{316}\) Its rejection of jury trials undermines factual accuracy and increases the likelihood that outcomes will differ in delinquency and criminal trials. Although juries and judges agree about defendants’ guilt or innocence in about four-fifths of criminal cases, when they differ, juries acquit more often than do judges.\(^{317}\)

Factfinding by judges and juries differs because juvenile court judges may preside over hundreds of cases a year, while a juror may only participate in one or two cases in a lifetime.\(^{318}\) Several factors contribute to jurors’ greater propensity to acquit than judges. The presence of jurors affects the ways in which lawyers present their cases.\(^{319}\) As judges hear many cases, they may become less meticulous when they weigh evidence and apply less stringently the reasonable doubt standard than do jurors.\(^{320}\) Judges hear testimony from police and probation officers on a recurring basis and form settled opinions about their credibility.\(^{321}\) Similarly, judges may have formed an opinion about a youth’s credibility, character, or the case from hearing earlier charges against her or presiding at a detention hearing.


\(^{316}\) *See McKeiver*, 403 U.S. at 541.


\(^{319}\) *See Guggenheim & Hertz*, supra note 303, at 579–80 (discussing differences in attorneys’ use of opening statements between a jury trial and a bench trial).

\(^{320}\) *See id.* at 564 (describing examples of convictions by judges that were based on scant evidence).

\(^{321}\) Ainsworth, supra note 318.
Delinquency proceedings’ informality compounds differences between judge and jury factfinding and further disadvantages delinquents. Judges in criminal cases instruct jurors about the applicable law. By contrast, a judge in a bench trial does not discuss either the law or the evidence before reaching a conclusion, which makes it more difficult for an appellate court to determine whether the law was correctly understood and applied. Further, a lack of diverse opinions increases the variability of outcomes. Ballew v. Georgia recognized the superiority of group decision-making over individual judgments. In jury trials, some group members remember facts that others forget, and deliberations air competing views and promote more accurate decisions.322 By contrast, in bench trials, judges administer the courtroom, make evidentiary rulings, take notes, and conduct sidebars with lawyers, which divert their attention during proceedings.323

The greater flexibility and informality of closed juvenile proceedings compounds the differences between judge and jury reasonable doubt. When a judge presides at a youth’s detention hearing, she receives information about the offense, criminal history, and social background, which may contaminate impartial factfinding.324 Exposure to nonguilt related evidence increases the likelihood that a judge subsequently will convict and institutionalize her.325 Some differences between judges and juries reflect the latter’s use of a higher threshold of proof beyond a reasonable doubt.326

The youthfulness of a defendant is a factor that elicits jury sympathy and accounts for some differences between judge and jury decisions.327 By contrast, juvenile court judges may be more predisposed to find jurisdiction to help a troubled youth.328 Finally, without a jury, judges adjudicate many delinquents without an attorney, which prejudices factfinding and increases the likelihood of erroneous convictions.

323. Guggenheim & Hertz, supra note 303, at 578.
324. Feld, Constitutional Tension, supra note 17, at 1167.
325. Id.
326. See Kalven & Zeisel, supra note 317, at 185–90.
327. Id. at 209–10.
328. Feld, Constitutional Tension, supra note 17, at 1166.
i. Suppression Hearings and Evidentiary Contamination

In bench trials, judges typically conduct suppression hearings immediately before or during trial, a practice that exposes them to inadmissible evidence and prejudicial information. A judge may know about a youth’s prior delinquency from presiding at a detention hearing, prior adjudication, or trial of co-offenders. Similarly, a judge who suppresses an inadmissible confession or illegally seized evidence may still be influenced by it. The presumption that exposure to inadmissible evidence will not affect a judge is especially problematic where the same judge typically handles a youth’s case at several different stages. An adult defendant can avoid these risks by opting for a jury trial, but delinquents have no way to avoid the cumulative risks of prejudice in a bench trial. Critics of juvenile courts’ factfinding conclude that “judges often convict on evidence so scant that only the most closed-minded or misguided juror could think the evidence satisfied the standard of proof beyond a reasonable doubt.” As a result, states adjudicate delinquents in cases in which they could not have obtained convictions with adequate procedural safeguards. The differences between the factual reliability of delinquency adjudications and criminal convictions raise questions about the use of juveniles’ records to enhance criminal sentences.

b. Preventing Governmental Oppression and Get Tough Policies

McKeiver uncritically assumed that juvenile courts treated delinquents rather than punished them, but it did not review any record to support that assumption. The Court did not analyze the indicia of treatment or punishment—juvenile code purpose clauses, sentencing statutes, judges’ sentencing practices, conditions of confinement, or intervention outcomes—when it denied delinquents a jury.

The Court long has recognized that juries serve a special role to prevent governmental oppression and protect citizens facing punishment. In our system of checks and balances, lay cit-

---

329. See Feld, Criminalizing Juvenile Justice, supra note 29, at 231–41; Guggenheim & Hertz, supra note 303, at 571.
331. See Feld, Criminalizing Juvenile Justice, supra note 29, at 231–41; Guggenheim & Hertz, supra note 303, at 564–65, 571.
izen jurors represent the ultimate restraint on abuses of governmental power, which is why it is the only procedural safeguard listed in three different places in the constitution. Duncan v. Louisiana, decided three years before McKeiver, held that the Sixth Amendment guaranteed a jury right in state criminal proceedings to assure accurate factfinding and to prevent governmental oppression. Duncan emphasized that juries inject community values into the law, increase visibility of justice administration, and check abuses by prosecutors and judges. The year after Duncan, Baldwin v. New York again emphasized the jury’s role to prevent government oppression by interposing lay citizens between the State and the defendant. Baldwin is especially critical for juvenile justice because an adult charged with any offense that carries a potential sentence of confinement of six months or longer enjoys a right to a jury trial. 

McKeiver feared that granting delinquents jury trials would also lead to public trials. However, as a result of Get Tough Era reforms to increase the visibility, accountability, and punishment powers of juvenile courts, about half the states authorized public access to all delinquency proceedings or to felony prosecutions. States limited confidentiality protections to hold youths accountable and put the public on notice of those who pose risks to the community.

i. Punitive Juvenile Justice

The vast majority of states deny delinquents the right to a jury and youths have challenged McKeiver’s half-century old

333. See U.S. CONST. art. 3, § 2, cl. 2.; id. amends. VI, VII.
335. Duncan, 391 U.S. at 156.
336. Baldwin v. New York, 399 U.S. 66, 72 (1969) (“[T]he primary purpose of the jury is to prevent the possibility of oppression by the Government; the jury interposes between the accused and his accuser the judgment of laymen who are less tutored perhaps than a judge or panel of judges, but who at the same time are less likely to function or appear as but another arm of the Government that has proceeded against him.”); Duncan, 391 U.S. 145.
337. See Baldwin, 399 U.S. at 73–74.
339. TORBET ET AL., supra note 48, at 36.
340. NAT’L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 1, at 81.
341. Feld, Constitutional Tension, supra note 17, at 1190; Gardner, Punitive Juvenile Justice, supra note 46, at 49 n.292.
rationale in light of Get Tough Era changes. Most state appellate courts have rejected their claims with deeply flawed, uncritical analyses, which often conflate treatment with punishment. Few courts engage in the careful analysis of purpose clauses, sentencing statutes, judicial practices, and conditions of confinement required to distinguish treatment from punishment. States rejected juveniles’ challenges to Get Tough Era changes—open hearings, mandatory sentences, and the use of delinquency convictions to enhance criminal sentences—by emphasizing differences in the severity of penalties imposed on delinquents and criminal defendants convicted of the same crime. However, once a penalty crosses Baldwin’s six-month authorized sentence threshold, further severity is irrelevant. By contrast, the Kansas Supreme Court in In re L.M. concluded that legislative changes eroded the benevolent parens patriae character of juvenile courts and transformed it into a system for prosecuting juveniles charged with committing crimes.

c. Delinquency Convictions to Enhance Criminal Sentences

Apprendi v. New Jersey ruled that “any fact that increases the penalty for a crime beyond the prescribed statutory maximum,” other than the fact of a prior conviction, “must be submitted to a jury, and proved beyond a reasonable doubt.” The Court exempted the “fact of a prior conviction” because criminal defendants enjoyed the right to a jury trial and proof beyond a

342. McKeiver, 403 U.S. 528; see In re D.J., 817 So. 2d 26, 30–35 (La. 2002) (rejecting the juveniles’ argument that the policy-based analysis in McKeiver is outdated, specifically in light of recent changes in state law and ongoing national critique of the juvenile justice system); In re J.F., 714 A.2d 467, 471 (Pa. Super. Ct. 1998) (“As appellants correctly point out, the juvenile justice system has undergone a transformation over the past two decades in which there has been a move away from the rehabilitation and protection of juvenile offenders toward more punishment and correctional oriented policies. Nonetheless, we cannot conclude that a juvenile adjudication has, in essence, become the equivalent of an adult criminal proceeding.”); State v. Hezzie R. (In re Hezzie R.), 580 N.W.2d 660, 667–68 (Wis. 1998) (rejecting the juveniles’ argument that Wisconsin’s Juvenile Justice Code is criminal in nature and thus McKeiver’s rationale is inapposite).

343. Gardner, Punitive Juvenile Justice, supra note 46, at 50–51.

344. See In re J.F., 714 A.2d 467; In re Hezzie R., 580 N.W.2d 660.

345. See In re D.J., 817 So. 2d at 33 (arguing that the juvenile would face a maximum of eight years of detention if found delinquent while an adult convicted of the same charge could receive a maximum of fifty-five years imprisonment at hard labor).


reasonable doubt, which assured reliability of prior convictions.\textsuperscript{348} \textit{Apprendi} emphasized the jury’s role to uphold \textit{Winship}’s standard of proof beyond a reasonable doubt.\textsuperscript{349} While \textit{McKeiver} approved jury-free delinquency proceedings to impose rehabilitative dispositions, they would not be adequate to punish a youth.

Juvenile courts historically restricted access to records to avoid stigmatizing youths.\textsuperscript{350} Criminal courts lacked access to delinquency records because of juvenile courts’ confidentiality, practice of sealing or expunging delinquency records, physical separation of juvenile and criminal court staff and records, and the difficulty of maintaining systems to track offenders and compile histories across both systems.\textsuperscript{351} But criminal courts need to know which juveniles’ delinquent careers continue into adulthood to incapacitate them, punish them, or protect public safety.\textsuperscript{352} Therefore, despite a tradition of confidentiality, states have long used some delinquency convictions. Some states use juvenile records on a discretionary basis.\textsuperscript{353} Many state and federal sentencing guidelines include some delinquency convictions in defendants’ criminal history score,\textsuperscript{354} although some vary in how they weigh delinquency convictions.\textsuperscript{355}

As a matter of policy, however, states should not equate delinquency and criminal convictions for sentence enhancements. Despite causing the same physical injury or property loss as older actors, juveniles’ reduced culpability makes their choices less blameworthy and should diminish their weight.\textsuperscript{356} Moreover, their use to enhance criminal sentences raises questions about the procedures used to obtain those convictions. Juvenile courts in many states adjudicate half or more delinquents without counsel.\textsuperscript{357} The vast majority of states deny juveniles the

\textsuperscript{348} Id.; see Feld, \textit{Constitutional Tension}, \textit{supra} note 17, at 1120–24.
\textsuperscript{349} \textit{Apprendi}, 530 U.S. at 483–84.
\textsuperscript{350} Feld, \textit{Bad Kids}, \textit{supra} note 1, at 233–35.
\textsuperscript{351} Id.
\textsuperscript{352} Id.; James B. Jacobs, \textit{Juvenile Criminal Record Confidentiality, in Choosing the Future for American Juvenile Justice, supra} note 106, at 149, 155.
\textsuperscript{353} See Feld, \textit{Constitutional Tension, supra} note 17, at 1184–88.
\textsuperscript{354} Id. at 1184–85; see United States v. Davis, 48 F.3d 277, 280 (7th Cir. 1995); United States v. McDonald, 991 F.2d 866, 872 (D.C. Cir. 1993).
\textsuperscript{355} For example, under California’s three strikes law, some juvenile felony convictions count as strikes for sentence enhancements. Feld, \textit{Constitutional Tension, supra} note 17 at 1187–88.
\textsuperscript{356} See \textit{infra} Part II.B.
\textsuperscript{357} Feld, \textit{Bad Kids}, \textit{supra} note 1, at 128.
right to a jury trial. Because some judges in bench trials may apply Winship’s reasonable doubt standard less stringently, more youths are convicted than would be with adequate safeguards.

Federal circuits are divided whether Apprendi allows judges to use delinquency convictions to enhance criminal sentences. State appellate court rulings reflect the federal split of opinion.

358. Id. at 158.
359. Apprendi v. New Jersey, 530 U.S. 466, 490 (2000). The Ninth Circuit in United States v. Tighe reasoned that delinquency adjudication does not fall within the prior conviction exception. 266 F.3d 1187, 1194 (9th Cir. 2001). Tighe explains:

[T]he “prior conviction” exception to Apprendi’s general rule must be limited to prior convictions that were themselves obtained through proceedings that included the right to a jury trial and proof beyond a reasonable doubt. Juvenile adjudications that do not afford the right to a jury trial and a beyond-a-reasonable-doubt burden of proof, therefore, do not fall within Apprendi’s ‘prior conviction’ exception.

Id.

By contrast, the Eighth Circuit in United States v. Smalley reasoned that Apprendi excepted prior convictions from its general rule because the procedural safeguards of trial by jury and proof beyond a reasonable doubt assured their reliability. 294 F.3d 1030, 1032 (8th Cir. 2002). While Apprendi identified those procedural safeguards that clearly established the reliability of prior convictions—notice, right to a jury trial, and proof beyond a reasonable doubt—it did not hold that they were essential prerequisites to a valid conviction. 530 U.S. at 476–78. The court in Smalley reasoned:

We think that while the Court established what constitutes sufficient procedural safeguards (a right to jury trial and proof beyond a reasonable doubt), and what does not (judge-made findings under a lesser [preponderance] standard of proof), the Court did not take a position on possibilities that lie in between these two poles. In other words, we think that it is incorrect to assume that it is not only sufficient but necessary that the “fundamental triumvirate of procedural protections” . . . underly [sic] an adjudication before it can qualify for the Apprendi exemption.

Smalley, 294 F.3d. at 1032.

Rather than focusing on the specific procedural safeguards of a criminal prosecution, Smalley focused on “whether juvenile adjudications, like adult convictions, are so reliable that due process of law is not offended by such an exemption.” Id. at 1033. The court reviewed the procedural safeguards available to juveniles as a result of Gault and Winship and concluded that “these safeguards are more than sufficient to ensure the reliability that Apprendi requires.” Id. at 1033. The court reiterated McKeiver’s assertion that the absence of a jury would not detract from the accuracy of factfinding in delinquency adjudications. Id. However, Smalley did not examine McKeiver’s “treatment” rationale for less stringent procedural safeguards or the inconsistency of using convictions obtained for a benign purpose subsequently to be used for a more punitive one. Feld, Constitutional Tension, supra note 17, at 1196–1222.
about the reliability of delinquency convictions and the require-
ment for a jury right. Until the Court clarifies Apprendi, de-
fendants in some states or federal circuits will serve longer sen-
tences than those in other jurisdictions based on flawed
delinquency convictions.

Finally, the use of delinquency convictions to enhance crim-
inal sentences further aggravates endemic racial disparities in
justice administration. At each stage of the juvenile justice sys-
tem, racial disparities compound, cumulate, create more exten-
sive delinquency records, and contribute to disproportionate mi-
nority confinement. Richard Frase’s magisterial analysis of
racial disparities in criminal sentencing in Minnesota concludes
that “seemingly legitimate sentencing factors such as criminal
history scoring can have strongly disparate impacts on nonwhite
defendants.”

Collateral Consequences of Delinquency Convictions

In addition to direct penalties—confinement and enhanced
sentences as juveniles or as adults—extensive collateral conse-
quences follow from delinquency convictions. Although state pol-
cies vary, collateral consequences may follow youths for decades
and affect future housing, education, and employment opportu-
nities. States may enter juveniles’ fingerprints, photographs,
and DNA into databases accessible to law enforcement and other
agencies. Some get-tough reforms opened delinquency trials
and records to the public, and media reports on the internet cre-
ate a permanent and easily accessed record. Criminal justice
agencies, schools, child care providers, the military, and others
may have access to juvenile court records automatically or by
petition. Expungement of delinquency records is not auto-
matic and requires a petition and court hearing. Delinquency
convictions may affect youths’ ability to obtain professional li-
censure, to receive government aid, to join the military, to obtain

362. See NAT’L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 1, at 3; NELLIS, supra note 50, at 61.
363. See FELD, CASES AND MATERIALS, supra note 29, at 369–76.
364. See NELLIS, supra note 50, at 69–73.
365. See id. at 63–65; Jacobs, supra note 352, at 161.
366. See NELLIS, supra note 50, at 63–65 (discussing the complex process for juvenile record expungement).
or keep legal immigration status, to live in public housing, and more. The response to juvenile sex offenders is among the most onerous collateral consequence of delinquency adjudication. The federal Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act—Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA)—requires states to implement registration and notification standards for individuals convicted as adults or juveniles for certain sex offenses. Some states require lifetime registration, limit where registered offenders can live, work, or attend school, and require neighborhood notification.

d. Conclusion

The procedural as well as substantive convergence between juvenile and criminal courts since Gault has placed greater demands on juveniles’ competence to exercise rights. Despite greater punitiveness and increased formality, most states do not provide delinquents the formal or functional procedural protections afforded adults. Juveniles waive Miranda rights and counsel under an adult legal standard that many do not understand and cannot meet. The denial of juries undermines the reliability of delinquency convictions and their subsequent use for long-term collateral consequences.

State legislatures that define juvenile courts should recognize that “children are different,” and provide greater assistance. Lawmakers passed punitive laws and simultaneously eroded juvenile courts’ meager protections—closed and confidential proceedings, limited collateral use of delinquency convictions, and the like. Legislators failed to appropriate adequate funds for legal services and fostered crippled public defenders incapable of providing effective assistance of counsel. A half-century after

367. See NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 1, at 127; see also NELLIS, supra note 50, at 61.
368. See NELLIS, supra note 50, at 69–73. See generally FRANKLIN E. ZIMRING, AN AMERICAN TRAVESTY: LEGAL RESPONSES TO ADOLESCENT SEXUAL OFFENDING (2004) (discussing the societal and legal response to the juvenile sex offender).
370. See ZIMRING, supra note 368, at 147–50; see also Michael F. Caldwell, Juvenile Sexual Offenders, in CHOOSING THE FUTURE FOR AMERICAN JUVENILE JUSTICE, supra note 106, at 55, 80 (discussing studies of registration laws, concluding that these laws impede “community reintegration of less resilient offenders, who are then rearrested more rapidly”).
Gault, many juveniles in many states are still waiting for a lawyer to advocate on their behalf.371

II. YOUTHS IN CRIMINAL COURT

A. TRANSFER TO CRIMINAL COURT

During the Get Tough Era, lawmakers changed the theory and practice of transfer and increased the numbers of youths tried as adults. States use one or more often-overlapping transfer strategies: (1) judicial waiver; (2) legislative offense exclusion; and (3) prosecutorial direct-file.372 For around 200,000 youths, states’ juvenile court jurisdiction ends at fifteen or sixteen, rather than seventeen years of age.373 States transfer another 50,000 youths via judicial waiver (7500), prosecutorial direct-file (27,000), and the remainder with prosecutor-determined excluded offenses.374 We lack precise numbers because states only collect data on judicial transfers, which account for the fewest number of youths waived.375

During the Get Tough Era, legislators shifted control of transfer decisions from judges to prosecutors to avoid the former’s relative autonomy from political pressures.376 Legal changes lowered the age for transfer, increased the numbers of excluded offenses, and strengthened prosecutors’ charging powers.377 Despite the prevalence of judicial waiver statutes, prosecutors’ excluded offenses or direct-file charging decisions determine the adult status of eighty-five percent of youths.378

---

371. See generally Nat’l Juvenile Def. Ctr., supra note 264 and accompanying text.
372. Snyder & Sickmund, supra note 33, at 110; Barry C. Feld & Donna M. Bishop, Transfer of Juveniles to Criminal Court, in The Oxford Handbook of Juvenile Crime and Juvenile Justice, supra note 38, at 801, 802.
373. Feld & Bishop, supra note 372, at 815.
374. Id.
375. Feld, Evolution of Juvenile Court, supra note 1, at 110.
The vast majority of states have judicial waiver laws that specify the ages and offenses for which a judge may conduct a transfer hearing.\(^{379}\) Kent v. United States required judges to conduct a procedurally fair hearing (counsel, access to probation reports, and written findings for appellate review) because the loss of juvenile courts' benefits (access to treatment, confidentiality, limited collateral consequences, and the like) was a critical action.\(^{380}\) Breed v. Jones applied the Fifth Amendment double jeopardy prohibition to delinquency adjudications and required states to decide whether to prosecute a youth in juvenile or criminal court before proceeding to trial.\(^{381}\) Kent appended a list of factors for judges to consider and state courts and statutes incorporated those criteria.\(^{382}\) Judges have broad discretion to interpret those factors and studies of judicial waiver document inconsistent rulings, justice by geography, and over-representation of racial minorities.\(^{383}\) For decades, studies reported racial disparities in judicial transfer decisions.\(^{384}\) Judges transfer minority youths more often than white youths especially for violent and drug crimes.\(^{385}\) In the seventy-five largest counties in the United States, racial minorities comprised more than two-thirds of juveniles tried in criminal court and the vast majority of those sentenced to adult prison.\(^{386}\)

A dozen states set their juvenile courts' age jurisdiction at fifteen or sixteen years—rather than seventeen—for certain felonies, which results in the largest numbers of youths tried as adults.\(^{387}\) In addition, some states' laws exclude youths sixteen

\(^{379}\) Feld & Bishop, supra note 372, at 802–05.


\(^{382}\) Kent, 383 U.S. at 566–67.


\(^{384}\) See, e.g., GAO, JUVENILE JUSTICE: JUVENILES PROCESSED IN CRIMINAL COURT AND CASE DISPOSITIONS 59 (1995); see also AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, supra note 378, at 39 ("[M]inority youths receive harsher treatment than similarly situated white youths at every stage of the criminal justice system.").

\(^{385}\) NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 53, at 216; POE-YAMAGATA & JONES, supra note 57, at 12–14.

\(^{386}\) NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 53, at 220.

\(^{387}\) Feld & Bishop, supra note 372, at 806, 809–10.
or older charged with murder, while others exclude more extensive lists of offenses. During the Get Tough Era, many states excluded more offenses—crimes against the person, property, drugs, or weapons offenses—to evade Kent's hearing requirement. Appellate courts uniformly reject youths' claims that prosecuting them for an excluded offense denies Kent's procedural safeguards.

In more than a dozen states, juvenile and criminal courts share concurrent jurisdiction over some ages and offenses—older youths and serious crimes—and prosecutors decide through direct file in which forum to charge a youth. Under offense exclusion, the crime charged determines the venue; direct-file laws allow prosecutors to select either system to try the crime. Direct file elevates prosecutors' power at judges' expense and creates a model more typical of criminal courts. Most direct-file laws provide no criteria to guide prosecutors' choice of forum. Prosecutors lack access to personal, social, or clinical information about a youth that a judge would consider and base their decisions primarily on police reports. Locally elected prosecutors exploit crime issues just as get-tough legislators do, introduce justice by geography and racial disparities, and exercise their discretion as subjectively as do judges, but without appellate review. Nationally, prosecutors have determined the criminal status of eighty-five percent of youths tried as adults and have acted as gatekeepers to the juvenile justice system, a role previously reserved for judges—who have more experience, information, and less political motivations.

Another Get Tough Era innovation was blended sentences, which provide judges with mixed juvenile-criminal sentencing options. Because juvenile courts lose jurisdiction when youths reach the age of majority or other dispositional age limit, judges

388. Id. at 809–10.
389. See id. at 806.
391. See Feld, Legislative Exclusion, supra note 377 at 98–101; Feld & Bishop, supra note 372, at 819.
392. See Feld & Bishop, supra note 372, at 819.
393. Id. at 820.
394. Id.
395. Id. at 821.
may be unable to sentence appropriately older offenders convicted of serious crimes. States increase judges’ sentencing powers by allowing juvenile courts to impose extended delinquency sentences with a stayed criminal sentence, or by giving criminal courts authority to use a delinquency disposition in lieu of imprisonment.397 Regardless of approach, blended sentencing laws require criminal procedural safeguards, including the right to a jury trial, to enable a judge to punish and thereby gain greater flexibility to treat.398 Although states adopted blended sentences as an alternative to transfer, they had a net-widening effect, and juvenile court judges frequently impose them on less-serious offenders whom they previously handled as delinquents.399 Judges have imposed blended sentences on younger, less-serious offenders, have subsequently revoked their probation—primarily for technical violations—and have doubled the number of youths sent to prison.400 Prosecutors have used the threat of transfer to coerce youths to plead to blended sentences, to waive procedural rights, to increase punishment imposed in juvenile courts, and to risk exposure to criminal sanctions.401

1. Juveniles in Prison

Criminal court judges sentence transferred youths like adults, which increases their likelihood of subsequent offending.402 While all inmates potentially face abuse, adolescents’ size, physical strength, lesser social skills, and lack of sophistication increase their risk for physical, sexual, and psychological victimization.403 To prevent victimization, some states place vulnerable youths in solitary confinement for twenty-two hours a day.404 Prisons are developmentally inappropriate places for youths to form an identity, acquire social skills, or make a suc-

397. See Podkopacz & Feld, supra note 396, at 999.
398. Id. at 1009.
399. Id. at 1028, 1071.
400. See id. at 1063, 1070.
401. See id. at 1003, 1029–30.
402. See Feld & Bishop, supra note 372, at 828.
cessful transition to adulthood. Imprisoning them exacts different and greater developmental opportunity costs than those experienced by adults.405 It disrupts normal development—completing education, finding a job, forming relationships and creating social bonds that promote desistance—and ground lost may never be regained.

2. Policy Justifications for Waiver: Unarticulated and Unrealized

States will prosecute some youths in criminal court as a matter of public safety and political reality. Legislative changes that targeted violent and drug crimes increased the likelihood and severity of criminal sentences; judges incarcerate transferred youths more often and for longer sentences than youths retained in juvenile courts.406 Although approximately three-quarters of youths convicted of violent felonies in criminal court go to prison, overall nearly half of all transferred youths are not convicted or placed on probation, fewer than twenty-five percent are sentenced to prison, and ninety-five percent are released from custody by their twenty-fifth birthday.407

Although legislators assumed that threat of transfer and criminal punishment would deter youths, studies of juvenile crime rates before and after passage of get tough laws found no general deterrent effect.408 Studies of specific deterrence report that transferred youths had higher recidivism rates than did those sentenced as delinquents.409 Studies compared outcomes

405. NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 1, at 135.
407. Deitch & Arya, supra note 403, at 251; Carol A. Schubert et al., Predicting Outcomes for Youth Transferred to Adult Court, 34 L. & HUM. BEHAV. 460, 468 (2010).
409. See generally Redding, supra note 406 (exploring the effects of juvenile transfer mechanisms); Jeffrey Fagan et al., Be Careful What You Wish For: Legal Sanctions and Public Safety Among Adolescent Felony Offenders in Juvenile and Criminal Court (Columbia Law Sch., Pub. Law Research Paper No. 03-61,
of youths transferred to criminal courts with those who remained in juvenile courts and concluded that youths tried as adults had higher and faster recidivism rates, especially for violent crimes, than their delinquent counterparts.410

Although judges do not imprison all transferred youths, they sometimes treat youthfulness as an aggravating rather than a mitigating factor when they do. Prior to Miller v. Alabama, more youths convicted of murder received life without parole (LWOP) sentences than did adults sentenced for murder.411 Compared with young adult offenders, transferred juveniles convicted of the same crimes often received longer sentences.412

Punitive transfer laws have targeted violent crimes, which black youths commit more often.413 Even prior to the Get Tough Era, studies reported racial disparities in judicial transfer decisions.414 Subsequently, judges transferred youths of color more often than white youths charged with similar violent and drug crimes.415 The vast majority of juveniles transferred to criminal court and sentenced to prison are youths of color, primarily black youths.416

3. Waiver Policy: What Should a Rational Legislature Do?

Expansive transfer policies further no legitimate penal goals. Equating younger and older offenders ignores developmental differences and disproportionately punishes less blameworthy adolescents. Transfer does not deter youths because their


411. FELD, EVOLUTION OF JUVENILE COURT, supra note 1, at 121.


413. See NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 53, at 216; POE-YAMAGATA & JONES, supra note 57, at 12–14.

414. FELD, EVOLUTION OF JUVENILE COURT, supra note 1, at 122.

415. See Feld, Responses to Youth Violence, supra note 48, at 194–95; NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 53, at 216, 250; POE-YAMAGATA & JONES, supra note 57, at 17.

416. NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 53, at 220.
immature judgment, short-term time perspective, and preference for immediate gains lessen the threat of sanctions. Youths tried as adults reoffend more quickly and more seriously, thereby increasing the risk to public safety and negating any short-term crime reduction by incapacitation.\(^{417}\)

The vast majority of juvenile justice scholars agree that if some youths must be transferred, then it should occur in a judicial waiver process and be used rarely.\(^{418}\) A state should waive only those youths whose serious and persistent offenses require minimum lengths of confinement that greatly exceed the maximum sanctions available in juvenile court. A retributive policy would limit severe sanctions to youths charged with homicide, rape, robbery or assault with a firearm or substantial injury. However, severely punishing all youths who commit serious crimes would be counterproductive because youths arrested for an initial violent offense desist at similar rates to other delinquents.\(^{419}\) Chronic offenders may require sentences longer than those available in juvenile court because of persistent criminality and exhaustion of juvenile court resources.\(^{420}\)

A legislature should prescribe a minimum age of eligibility for criminal prosecution. Developmental psychological and neuroscience research reports a sharp drop-off in judgment, self-control, and appreciation of consequences as well as in competence to exercise procedural rights for youths fifteen years of age or younger.\(^{421}\) The minimum age for transfer should be sixteen years of age.

A juvenile court hearing (1) guided by offense criteria and clinical considerations; and (2) subject to rigorous appellate review is the only sensible way to make transfer decisions.\(^{422}\) 

\(^{417}\) See Feld, EVOLUTION OF JUVENILE COURT, supra note 1, at 122.

\(^{418}\) See id. at 122–23; Scott & Steinberg, supra note 1, at 242–43; Zimring, supra note 23, at 125–27; Donna Bishop, Injustice and Irrationality in Contemporary Youth Policy, 3 CRIMINOLOGY & PUB. POL’Y 633, 640 (2004); Jeffrey Fagan, Juvenile Crime and Criminal Justice: Resolving Border Disputes, 18 FUTURE OF CHILD., Fall 2008, at 108.

\(^{419}\) See NAT’L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 1, at 23–25; Marvin Wolfgang et al., Delinquency in a Birth Cohort 251, 254 (1972); Alex R. Piquero et al., Criminal Career Patterns, in FROM JUVENILE DELINQUENCY TO ADULT CRIME: CRIMINAL CAREERS, JUSTICE POLICY, AND PREVENTION, supra note 85, at 14, 24.

\(^{420}\) Feld, EVOLUTION OF JUVENILE COURT, supra note 1, at 123.

\(^{421}\) See supra notes 166–81, 229–29, 273–76; infra notes 457–87 and accompanying text.

\(^{422}\) See Feld, BAD KIDS, supra note 1, at 210; Scott & Steinberg, supra
Criteria should focus on violent offenses, prior record, offender culpability, criminal participation, clinical evaluations, and aggravating and mitigating factors which, taken together, distinguish youths who deserve sentences substantially longer than those juvenile courts can impose. Appellate courts should closely review waiver decisions and develop substantive principles to define a consistent boundary of adulthood. Although waiver hearings are less efficient than prosecutors’ charging decisions, it should be difficult to transfer youths—juvenile courts exist to keep them out of the criminal justice system. An adversarial hearing at which prosecution and defense present evidence about offense, culpability, and treatment prognoses will produce better decisions than will politically-motivated prosecutors acting without clinical information.

B. SENTENCING YOUTHS AS ADULTS: CHILDREN ARE DIFFERENT

The Supreme Court developed its jurisprudence of youth—children are different—in response to punitive laws that ignored adolescents’ reduced culpability. It was a judicial assertion that enough is enough. In a trilogy of cases beginning in 2005, the Court applied the Eighth Amendment prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment to juveniles. 423 Roper v. Simmons prohibited states from executing offenders for murder committed before they were eighteen years of age. 424 The Justices concluded that youths’ immature judgment and lack of self-control, susceptibility to negative peers, and transitory personalities reduced their culpability and precluded the most severe sentence. 425 Graham v. Florida extended Roper’s diminished-responsibility rationale and prohibited states from imposing LWOP sentences on juveniles convicted of nonhomicide offenses. 426 It repudiated the Court’s Eighth Amendment doctrine that “death is different.”

425. Id. at 569–70.
427. Id. at 74 (majority opinion); id. at 103 (Thomas, J., dissenting).
Miller v. Alabama extended Roper and Graham's diminished-responsibility rationale and barred mandatory LWOP sentences for youths convicted of murder.\textsuperscript{428} Miller required judges to make individualized culpability assessments and to weigh youthfulness as a mitigating factor.\textsuperscript{429}

Despite the Court's repeated assertions that children are different, Graham provided nonhomicide juvenile offenders very limited relief—"some meaningful opportunity to obtain release"\textsuperscript{430}—without requiring either rehabilitative services or eventual freedom. Miller required a judge to make an individualized assessment of a juvenile murderer's culpability, but did not preclude a LWOP sentence.\textsuperscript{431} State courts and legislatures have struggled to implement juveniles' diminished responsibility when sentencing them as adults.\textsuperscript{432}

The increased numbers and immaturity of many juveniles sentenced as adults impelled the Court to review states' criminal sentencing laws as applied to children. Roper held that youths are categorically less criminally responsible than adults.\textsuperscript{433} Graham rejected the Court's death is different jurisprudence and reformulated the Court's proportionality analyses to account for the doubly diminished responsibility of juveniles who did not kill.\textsuperscript{434} Miller barred mandatory LWOP sentences for juveniles who murder and relied on death-penalty precedents to require individualized assessments and to weigh youths' diminished responsibility.\textsuperscript{435} State courts and legislatures have struggled unsuccessfully to implement the Court's children are different jurisprudence because the opinions' broad language provides scant guidance on several critical questions. This Section concludes by proposing a youth discount—shorter sentences for younger offenders—to formally recognize youthfulness as a mitigating factor.

As noted above, states annually try upwards of 200,000 (2012).

\textsuperscript{428} Miller v. Alabama, 567 U.S. 460, 479 (2012).
\textsuperscript{429} Id. at 481, 489.
\textsuperscript{430} Graham, 560 U.S. at 75.
\textsuperscript{431} Miller, 567 U.S. at 479.
\textsuperscript{433} Roper v. Simmons, 543 U.S. 551, 570 (2005).
\textsuperscript{434} Graham, 560 U.S. at 72.
\textsuperscript{435} Miller, 567 U.S. at 474–79.
chronological juveniles as adults. The fallacious predictions during the Get Tough Era of an impending bloodbath by super-predators propelled punitive policies. States lowered the age for transfer, increased the number of excluded offenses, and shifted discretion from judges to prosecutors, all of which exacerbated racial disparities. Racial stereotypes taint culpability assessments and reduce youthfulness’ mitigating role. Children of color comprise the majority of juveniles tried in criminal court and three-quarters of those who enter prison. For adults, states’ Get Tough Era criminal laws lengthened sentences, adopted mandatory minimums, and imposed mandatory LWOP sentences for homicide and other crimes. The laws applied equally to juveniles as to adults; judges sentenced them as if they were adults and sent them to the same prisons.

1. Roper v. Simmons: Banning the Death Penalty for Juveniles

The Eighth Amendment prohibits states from inflicting cruel and unusual punishments. Prior to Roper v. Simmons, the Court thrice considered whether it prohibited states from executing juveniles convicted of murder. Before Roper in 1989,
Stanford v. Kentucky upheld the death penalty for sixteen- or seventeen-year-olds convicted of murder and allowed juries to assess their personal culpability on a case-by-case basis. Finally, in 2005, Roper overruled Stanford and prohibited states from executing youths for crimes committed prior to age eighteen.

Roper gave three reasons why states could not punish juveniles as severely as adults. First, their immature judgment and limited self-control causes them to act impulsively and without adequate appreciation of consequences. Second, their susceptibility to negative peers and inability to escape criminogenic environments reduce their responsibility. Third, their transitory personality provides less reliable evidence of enduring blameworthiness. Because juveniles’ character is transitional, the...
Court concluded that there is a great likelihood that they can be reformed.\footnote{Id.} For \textit{Roper}, youths’ diminished responsibility undermined retributive justifications for the death penalty.\footnote{Id. at 571. \textit{Roper} noted the two penal functions served by the death penalty—retribution and deterrence—and concluded that: Whether viewed as an attempt to express the community’s moral outrage or as an attempt to right the balance for the wrong to the victim, the case for retribution is not as strong with a minor as with an adult. Retribution is not proportional if the law’s most severe penalty is imposed on one whose culpability or blameworthiness is diminished, to a substantial degree, by reason of youth and immaturity. \textit{Id.}} Similarly, the Court concluded that impulsiveness and limited self-control weakened any deterrent effect.\footnote{Id. at 572–73 (emphasis added). Clinicians do not diagnose people younger than eighteen with antisocial personality disorder, and \textit{Roper} declined to allow jurors to make culpability assessments that clinicians eschew. \textit{Id.} at 573 (noting that psychologists cannot differentiate between a transiently immature juvenile and the “rare juvenile offender whose crime reflects irreparable corruption”). The Court feared that a brutal murder could overwhelm the mitigating role of youthfulness. \textit{Id.; see also} Elizabeth F. Emens, \textit{Aggravating Youth: Roper v. Simmons and Age Discrimination}, 2005 SUP. CT. REV. 51, 83 (2005) (arguing that “to the extent we see or want to see childhood as a time of innocence, cognitive dissonance may prompt us to reconceive a child who does terrible things as an adult”). \textit{See generally}, Feld, \textit{Adolescent Criminal Responsibility}, supra note 423 (tracing the Court’s jurisprudence on youth as a mitigating factor); Feld, \textit{Youth Discount,} supra note 423 (advocating a categorical rule of mitigation based on offenders’ youth).} \textit{Roper} imposed a categorical ban rather than allowing juries to evaluate youths’ culpability individually because the “unacceptable likelihood exists that the brutality or cold-blooded nature of any particular crime would overpower mitigating arguments based on youth as a matter of course, even where the juvenile offender’s objective immaturity, vulnerability, and lack of true depravity should require a sentence less severe than death.”\footnote{Id.} Because a brutal murder could overwhelm the mitigating role of youthfulness, \textit{Roper} used age as a categorical proxy for reduced culpability.

\textit{Roper} reasoned that immature judgment, susceptibility to adult...). Because juveniles’ character is transitional, “[f]rom a moral standpoint it would be misguided to equate the failings of a minor with those of an adult, for a greater possibility exists that a minor’s character deficiencies will be reformed.” \textit{Id.}
peer and environmental influences, and transitional personalities reduced adolescents’ criminal responsibility.\(^{453}\) Roper—and subsequently Graham and Miller—analyzed youths’ reduced culpability within a retributive sentencing framework: proportionality and deserved punishment. Retributive sentencing proportions punishment to a crime’s seriousness.\(^{454}\) A crime’s seriousness is defined by two elements, harm and culpability, which determine how much punishment an actor deserves. An offender’s age has no bearing on the harm caused—children and adults can cause the same injuries. But proportionality requires consideration of an offender’s culpability, and immaturity reduces youths’ blameworthiness.\(^{455}\) Youths’ inability to fully appreciate wrongfulness or to control themselves lessens, but does

\(^{453}\) Roper, 543 U.S. at 569–70.

\(^{454}\) See E. Thomas Sullivan & Richard S. Frase, Proportionality Principles in American Law: Controlling Excessive Government Actions 161 (2009) (arguing that “the offender’s blameworthiness for an offense is generally assessed according to two elements: the nature and seriousness of the harm foreseeably caused or threatened by the crime and the offender’s culpability in committing the crime (in particular, the offender’s degree of intent (mens rea), motives, role in the offense, and mental illness or other diminished capacity”); Andrew von Hirsch, Doing Justice: The Choice of Punishments 48 (1976) (“[P]unishing someone conveys in dramatic fashion that his conduct was wrong and that he is blameworthy for having committed it.”). According to Professor Frase:

[T]he degree of blameworthiness of an offense is generally assessed according to two kinds of elements: the nature and seriousness of the harm caused or threatened by the crime; and the offender’s degree of culpability in committing the crime, in particular, his or her degree of intent (mens rea), motives, role in the offense, and mental illness or other diminished capacity.


\(^{455}\) Offender culpability is central to proportional sentencing. See Tison v. Arizona, 481 U.S. 137, 156 (1987) (reasoning that “[d]eeply engrained in our legal tradition is the idea that the more purposeful is [sic] the criminal conduct, the more serious is the offense, and, therefore, the more severely it ought to be punished”); see also Elizabeth S. Scott & Thomas Grisso, The Evolution of Adolescence: A Developmental Perspective on Juvenile Justice Reform, 88 J. Crim. L. & Criminology 137, 176 (1997) [hereinafter Scott & Grisso, Evolution of Adolescence] (“[A]dolescents’ criminal choices are presumed less to express individual preferences and more to reflect the behavioral influences characteristic of a transitory developmental stage that are generally shared with others in the age cohort. This difference supports drawing a line based on age, and subjecting adolescents to a categorical presumption of reduced responsibility.”); Laurence Steinberg & Elizabeth Cauffman, The Elephant in the Courtroom: A Developmental Perspective on the Adjudication of Youths’ criminal responsibility.\(^{456}\)
not excuse, responsibility for causing harms. They may have the minimum capacity to be criminally liable, that is, the ability to distinguish right from wrong, but still deserve less punishment.\textsuperscript{456}

\textit{a. Developmental Psychology, Neuroscience, and Diminished Responsibility}

Developmental psychology focuses on how children and adolescents' thinking and behavior change with age.\textsuperscript{457} By mid-adolescence, most youths reason similarly to adults, such as when, for example, they make informed-consent medical decisions.\textsuperscript{458} But the ability to make reasonable decisions with complete information under laboratory conditions differs from the ability to act responsibly under stress with incomplete information. Emotions influence youths' judgment to a greater extent than adults

[their impulses, to manage [their] behavior in the face of pressure from others to violate the law, or to extricate [themselves] from a potentially problematic situation," and that these deficiencies render them less blameworthy). Franklin Zimring uses the term “diminished responsibility” to refer to adolescents who possess “the minimum abilities for blameworthiness and thus for punishment . . . [whose] immaturity . . . still suggests that less punishment is justified.” Franklin E. Zimring, Penal Proportionality for the Young Offender: Notes on Immaturity, Capacity, and Diminished Responsibility, in YOUTH ON TRIAL: A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE, supra note 61, at 271, 273 [hereinafter Zimring, Penal Proportionality]; see also SCOTT & STEINBERG, supra note 1 at 123–24; ZIMRING, supra note 23, at 75 (arguing that “even after a youth passes the minimum threshold of competence, this barely competent youth is not as culpable and therefore not as deserving of a full measure of punishment as a fully qualified adult offender”); Elizabeth S. Scott & Laurence Steinberg, Blaming Youth, 81 TEX. L. REV. 799, 830 (2003) [hereinafter Scott & Steinberg, Blaming Youth] (arguing that compared with adults, youths act more impulsively, weigh consequences differently from adults, and discount risks because of normal developmental processes that “undermine [their] decision-making capacity in ways that are accepted as mitigating culpability”).


\textsuperscript{458} Cf. NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 1, at 95 (“Adolescents are similar to adults in their reasoning and abstract thinking abilities.”); Stephen J. Morse, Immaturity and Irresponsibility, 88 J. CRIM. L. & CRIMINOLOGY 15, 52–53 (1997) (concluding that the cognitive capacity and formal reasoning ability of mid-adolescents does not differ significantly from that of adults).
and compromise adolescents’ decision-making and self-control.\textsuperscript{459} Youths are more heavily influenced by the reward centers of the brain, which contributes to riskier decisions.\textsuperscript{460}

In response to states’ adoption of punitive laws, in 1997 the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation sponsored the Research Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice (ADJJ). Over the next decade, the ADJJ network conducted research on adolescent decision-making, judgment, and adjudicative competence.\textsuperscript{461} The research distinguishes between cognitive abilities, judgment, and self-control: controlled thinking versus impulsive behaving.\textsuperscript{462} Cognitive capacities involve understanding, the ability to comprehend information, and reasoning, the ability to use information logically.\textsuperscript{463} Self-control requires the ability to think before acting, to choose between alternatives, and to interrupt a course in motion.\textsuperscript{464} Although sixteen-year-olds’ understanding and reasoning approximate adults, their ability to exercise mature judgment and control impulses takes several more years to emerge.\textsuperscript{465}

Youths differ from adults in risk perception, appreciation of consequences, impulsivity and self-control, sensation-seeking, and compliance with peers.\textsuperscript{466} The regions of the brain that control reward-seeking and emotional arousal develop earlier than


\textsuperscript{460} See Inst. of Med. & Nat’l Research Council, supra note 457, at 40; Dahl, supra note 459, at 62.


\textsuperscript{463} See Woolard, supra note 462, at 107–10.

\textsuperscript{464} Id. at 108.

\textsuperscript{465} Scott & Steinberg, supra note 1, at 36–37; Laurence Steinberg, Age of Opportunity: Lessons from the New Science of Adolescence 69 (2014); Scott & Steinberg, Blaming Youth, supra note 455, at 813.

\textsuperscript{466} See Nat’l Research Council, supra note 1, at 2; Scott & Steinberg, supra note 1, at 37–44; Feld, Youth Discount, supra note 423, at 115–17.
do those that regulate executive functions and impulse control. Adolescents underestimate the amount and likelihood of risks, emphasize immediate outcomes, focus on anticipated gains rather than possible losses to a greater extent than adults, and consider fewer options. They weigh costs and benefits differently, apply dissimilar subjective values to outcomes, and more heavily discount negative future consequences than more immediate rewards. They have less experience and knowledge to inform decisions about consequences. They prefer an immediate, albeit smaller, reward than do adults, who can better delay gratification. In a risk-benefit calculus, youths may view not engaging in risky behaviors differently than adults. Researchers attribute youths’ impetuous decisions to a heightened appetite for emotional arousal and intense experiences, which peaks around sixteen or seventeen years of age.

Neuroscience research reports that the human brain continues to mature until the early to mid-twenties. Adolescents on average do not have adults’ neurobiological capacity to exercise mature judgment or control impulses. The relationship between

467. SCOTT & STEINBERG, supra note 1, at 48.
469. INST. OF MED. & NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 457, at 54–56; Elizabeth S. Scott & Laurence Steinberg, Adolescent Development and the Regulation of Youth Crime, 18 FUTURE OF CHILD. (Fall 2008), at 15, 20 (suggesting that because youths assess and weigh risks differently than adults, they are less likely to anticipate that someone might get hurt or killed in the commission of a felony); Elizabeth S. Scott, Criminal Responsibility in Adolescence: Lessons from Developmental Psychology, in YOUTH ON TRIAL: A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE, supra note 61, at 291, 304–05 (“Adolescents, perhaps because they have less knowledge and experience, are less aware of risks than are adults. . . . [The fact that adolescents have less experience and knowledge than adults seems likely to affect their decision making in tangible and intangible ways.”).
470. NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 1, at 91, 93.
471. Barry C. Feld et al., Adolescent Competence and Culpability: Implications of Neuroscience for Juvenile Justice Administration, in A PRIMER ON CRIMINAL LAW AND NEUROSCIENCE 179, 188 (Stephen J. Morse & Adina L. Roskies eds., 2013); see also SCOTT & STEINBERG, supra note 1, at 42; INST. OF MED. & NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 457, at 50; Scott & Steinberg, Blaming Youth, supra note 455, at 814–15.
472. See Feld et al., supra note 471, at 186–88; INST. OF MED. & NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 457, at 42; NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 1, at 91–93; SPEAR, supra note 458, at 140–41.
473. See NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 1, at 96–100 (citing studies showing the difference in adolescent brain function relative to adults, including
two brain regions—the prefrontal cortex (PFC) and the limbic system—underlie youths’ propensity for risky behavior. The PFC is responsible for judgment and impulse control. The amygdala and limbic system regulate emotional arousal and reward-seeking behavior. The PFC performs executive functions: reasoning, planning, and impulse control. These top-

the ability to exercise self-control). See generally SPEAR, supra note 459 (explaining how neurobiological developments in the brain affect how adolescents think and behave).

474. Dahl, supra note 459, at 69 (“Regions in the PFC that underpin higher cognitive-executive functions mature slowly, showing functional changes that continue well into late adolescence/adulthood.”). While summarizing research on brain development and its implications for adolescent self-control, Scott & Steinberg note:

[Regions of the brain implicated in processes of long-term planning, regulation of emotion, impulse control, and the evaluation of risk and reward continue to mature over the course of adolescence, and perhaps well into young adulthood. At puberty, changes in the limbic system—a part of the brain that is central in the processing and regulation of emotion—may stimulate adolescents to seek higher levels of novelty and to take more risks; these changes also may contribute to increased emotionality and vulnerability to stress. At the same time, patterns of development in the prefrontal cortex, which is active during the performance of complicated tasks involving planning and decision-making, suggest that these higher-order cognitive capacities may be immature well into middle adolescence.]

Scott & Steinberg, Blaming Youth, supra note 455, at 816. See also Laurence Steinberg, A Dual Systems Model of Adolescent Risk-Taking, 52 DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOBIOLOGY 216, 217 (2010) [hereinafter Steinberg, Dual Systems] (reviewing the “neurobiological evidence for changes in brain structure and function during adolescence and early adulthood that facilitate improvements in self-regulation”), See generally Laurence Steinberg, A Social Neuroscience Perspective on Adolescent Risk-Taking, 28 DEVELOPMENTAL REV. 78 (2008) [hereinafter Steinberg, Social Neuroscience] (analyzing how changes in the brain during adolescence are related to a decline in risk-taking behavior).

475. Scott & Steinberg, Blaming Youth, supra note 455, at 816.

476. Feld et al., supra note 471, at 191 (identifying the amygdala and limbic system as the parts of the brain that govern desire and emotion); Steinberg, Social Neuroscience, supra note 474, at 95 (linking maturity in the prefrontal cortex to improved emotional regulation and cognitive control).

477. The prefrontal cortex operates as the CEO of the brain and controls planning, goal-directed responses, risk assessment, and impulse control. ELKHONON GOLDBERG, THE EXECUTIVE BRAIN: FRONTAL LOBES AND THE CIVILIZED MIND 144 (2001); see also B.J. Casey et al., Structural and Functional Brain Development and Its Relation to Cognitive Development, 54 BIOLOGICAL PSYCHOL. 241, 244 (2000) [hereinafter Casey et al., Structural and Functional] (associating the PFC with a variety of cognitive abilities and behavior control); B.J. Casey et al., The Adolescent Brain, 1124 ANNALS N.Y. ACAD. OF SCI., March 2008 at 111, 112 (reporting that the brain’s ability to control behavior continues to mature through late adolescence); Staci A. Gruber & Deborah A. Yurgelun-Todd, Neurobiology and the Law: A Role in Juvenile Justice?, 3 OHIO ST. J. CRIM. L. 921, 925 (2006) (“The frontal cortex has been shown to play a major
down capabilities develop gradually and enable individuals to exercise greater self-control.478

During adolescence, two neurobiological processes—myelination and synaptic pruning—enhance the PFC’s functions.479 Myelin is a white fatty substance that forms a sheath around neural axons, facilitates more efficient neurotransmission, and makes communication between different brain regions faster.480 Synaptic pruning involves selective elimination of unused neural connections, promotes greater efficiency, speeds neural signals, and strengthens the brain’s ability to process information.481
The limbic system controls emotions, reward-seeking, and instinctual behavior—the fight-or-flight response.\(^{482}\) The PFC and limbic systems mature at different rates and adolescents rely more heavily on the limbic system—bottom-up emotional processing—rather than the top-down cognitive regulatory system.\(^{483}\) The developmental lag between the PFC regulatory system and the reward- and pleasure-seeking limbic system contributes to impetuous behavior driven more by emotions rather than reason.\(^{484}\) The imbalance between the impulse-control and reward-seeking systems contributes to youths' poor judgment, impetuous behavior, and criminal involvement.\(^{485}\)

Roper attributed juveniles' diminished responsibility to greater susceptibility to peer influences. As their orientation shifts toward peers, youths' quest for acceptance and affiliation in the adolescent brain show that the prefrontal cortex does not mature until the end of adolescence). See generally SPEAR, supra note 459, at 75–76 (describing how synaptic pruning occurs in the brain); Feld et al., supra note 471 at 189–91 (citing to studies that use brain imaging to measure changes in brain circuitry).

482. SPEAR, supra note 459, at 68–69 (identifying the components of the limbic system that control learning and emotional response); STEINBERG, supra note 465, at 72–74 (explaining the function of the limbic system).


484. INST. OF MED. & NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 457, at 38 (“The limbic system develops on a steeper curve than the prefrontal cortex . . . . The result can be an imbalance that may favor behaviors driven by emotion and response to incentives over rational decision making.”); STEINBERG, supra note 465, at 74 (“[S]ensation seeking . . . rises and falls during adolescence, peaking around age sixteen.”); Dahl, supra note 459, at 64 (“When the control of emotional behavior includes a cognitive process that is abstract in the temporal domain (such as weighing the possibility of a future consequence), these processes are also likely to engage systems in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex.”); Steinberg, Dual Systems, supra note 474, at 221 (noting that “heightened reward-seeking is most clearly and consistently seen during mid-adolescence”); Steinberg, Social Neuroscience, supra note 474, at 96–97 (proposing that maturation of the prefrontal cortex and the limbic system at different points in adolescence explains impulsive behavior among adolescents).

485. Feld et al., supra note 471, at 193–94; see also SCOTT & STEINBERG, supra note 1, at 48–49 (“This gap in time, between the increase in sensation seeking around puberty and the later development of ‘regulatory competence,’ may combine to make adolescence a time of inherently immature judgment.”); Steinberg, Dual Systems, supra note 474, at 222 (“Middle adolescence appears to be a time of growing vulnerability to risky behavior . . . heightened reward-seeking impels adolescent[s] toward risky activity, and immature self-regulatory capabilities do not restrain this impulse.”); Steinberg, Social Neuroscience, supra note 474, at 89 (observing that scores on measures of impulse control and resistance to peer influence improve with age).
makes them more susceptible to influences than adults. Peers increase youths’ propensity to take risks because their presence stimulates the brain’s reward centers.

Neuroscience research about brain development bolsters social scientists’ observations about adolescents’ impulsive behavior and impaired self-control. Despite impressive advances, neuroscientists have not established a direct link between brain maturation and behavior, nor have they found ways to individualize assessments of developmental differences.

486. Inst. of Med. & Nat’l Research Council, supra note 457, at 50 (“The drive for affiliation and acceptance at this stage makes adolescents more open to peer influence . . . .”); Scott & Steinberg, supra note 1, at 51 (“[A]s part of normal emotional development, youths individuate from parents, a process that sometimes involves engaging in risky behavior that reflects both challenges to parental control and a shift in orientation from parents to peers.”); Spear, supra note 459, at 155–57 (summarizing research on the social behavior of adolescents); Feld, Youth Discount, supra note 423, at 120–21 (citing to studies of the impact of peer influences on juveniles’ behavior).

487. Steinberg, supra note 465, at 98 (“Just by being around their friends, adolescents’ heightened sensitivity to social rewards makes them more sensitive to all kinds of rewards, including the potential rewards of a risky activity.”); Scott & Steinberg, Blaming Youth, supra note 455, at 815–17 (discussing empirical research on brain development, peer-influence, and risk-taking behavior).

2. *Graham v. Florida*: Banning LWOP for Nonhomicide Juvenile Offenders

Prior to *Graham v. Florida*, the Court asserted that “death is different.”489 *Graham* extended *Roper*’s diminished responsibility rationale to nonhomicide juvenile offenders who received LWOP sentences. *Graham* raised “a categorical challenge to a term of years sentence”—a life without parole sentence applied to the category of juvenile offenders.490 *Graham* repudiated the Court’s “death is different” distinction, extended *Roper*’s reduced culpability rationale to term-of-year sentences, and “declare[d] an entire class of offenders immune from a noncapital sentence.”491 *Graham* rested on three features: offender, offense, and sentence. It reiterated *Roper*’s rationale that juveniles’ re-

---


490. *Graham v. Florida*, 560 U.S. 48, 61 (2010). *Graham* arose at the intersection of two lines of Eighth Amendment proportionality cases. One line of cases raised “gross disproportionality” claims and challenged term-of-years sentences that greatly exceeded the seriousness of the crime. See Harmelin v. Michigan, 501 U.S. 957, 996–97 (1991) (Kennedy, J., concurring in part and concurring in judgment) (elaborating upon principles of “narrow proportionality” review in noncapital cases); Solem v. Helms, 463 U.S. 277, 284, 286 (1983) (emphasizing that the Eighth Amendment’s ban on cruel and unusual punishments “prohibits . . . sentences that are disproportionate to the crime committed” and that the “constitutional principle of proportionality has been recognized explicitly in this Court for almost a century”); *Rummel*, 445 U.S. at 284–85 (approving a mandatory life sentence for a recidivist following his third conviction for minor property crimes).

The other line of cases made “categorical disproportionality” claims and challenged imposition of the death penalty on categories of offenders or offenses. E.g., Kennedy v. Louisiana, 554 U.S. 407 (2007) (prohibiting execution for raping a child); Roper v. Simmons, 543 U.S. 551 (2005) (barring the execution of juveniles); Atkins v. Virginia, 536 U.S. 304 (2002) (barring the execution of defendants with mental retardation); Enmund v. Florida, 458 U.S. 782 (1982) (barring execution for a felony murderer who did not kill or intend to kill the victim); Lockett v. Ohio, 438 U.S. 586 (1978) (holding that the sentencer in a capital case should not be precluded from considering as mitigating factors the defendant’s character or the circumstances of the crime); Coker v. Georgia, 433 U.S. 584 (1977) (barring the execution for rape of an adult woman).

duced culpability warrants less severe penalties than those imposed on adults convicted of the same crime.\textsuperscript{492} Unlike \textit{Roper}, \textit{Graham} explicitly based young offenders’ diminished responsibility on developmental and neuroscience research.\textsuperscript{493}

Focusing on the offense, \textit{Graham} invoked the Court’s felony murder death-penalty decisions and concluded that even the most serious non-homicide crimes “cannot be compared to murder in their ‘severity and irrevocability.’”\textsuperscript{494} The combination of diminished responsibility and a nonhomicide crime made a LWOP sentence grossly disproportional.\textsuperscript{495}

Finally, the Court equated a LWOP sentence for a juvenile with the death penalty.\textsuperscript{496} \textit{Graham} found no penal rationale—retribution, deterrence, incapacitation, or rehabilitation—justified the penultimate sanction for nonhomicide juvenile offenders.\textsuperscript{497} While incapacitation might reduce future offending, judges cannot reliably predict at sentencing whether a juvenile will pose a future danger to society. Nevertheless, most states deny vocational training or rehabilitative services to youths

\textsuperscript{492} \textit{Id.} at 67 (citing \textit{Roper}, 543 U.S. at 568) (“The juridical exercise of independent judgment requires consideration of the culpability of offenders at issue in light of their crimes and characteristics, along with the severity of the punishment in question.”).

\textsuperscript{493} \textit{Id.} at 68 (noting that “developments in psychology and brain science continue to show fundamental differences between juvenile and adult minds. For example, parts of the brain involved in behavior control continue to mature through late adolescence”).

\textsuperscript{494} \textit{Id.} at 69 (quoting \textit{Kennedy}, 554 U.S. at 438); see also \textit{Coker}, 433 U.S. at 598.

\textsuperscript{495} \textit{Graham}, 560 U.S. at 69 (“When compared to an adult murderer, a juvenile offender who did not kill or intend to kill has a twice diminished moral culpability. The age of the offender and the nature of the crime each bear on the analysis”).

\textsuperscript{496} \textit{Id.} at 79 (noting that “life in prison without the possibility of parole gives no chance for fulfillment outside prison walls, no chance for reconciliation with society, no hope”); Eva S. Nilsen, \textit{From Harmelin to Graham—Justice Kennedy Stakes Out a Path to Proportional Punishment}, 23 FED. SENT’G REP. 67, 69 (2010) (quoting \textit{Graham}, 560 U.S. at 74) (noting the inconsistency between rehabilitation and an LWOP sentence that “forswears altogether the idea that the defendant can change”); Leslie Patrice Wallace, “And I Don’t Know Why It Is That You Threw Your Life Away”: Abolishing Life Without Parole, the Supreme Court in \textit{Graham} v. Florida Now Requires States to Give Juveniles Hope for a Second Chance, 20 B.U. PUB. INT. L.J. 35, 58 (2010) (arguing that the rationale of \textit{Graham} should also preclude lengthy term-of-years sentences that deny juveniles hope of release as well).

\textsuperscript{497} \textit{Graham}, 560 U.S. at 71–74.
serving LWOP sentences in favor of those who might return to the community.498

Although Graham adopted a categorical rule, it only required states to provide “some meaningful opportunity to obtain release based on demonstrated maturity and rehabilitation.”499 It did not prescribe states’ responsibility to provide resources with which to change or specify when youths might become eligible for parole. Parole consideration would not guarantee young offenders’ release and some might remain confined for life.500

Although Graham barred LWOP for juveniles convicted of a nonhomicide crime, many more youths are serving de facto life sentences—aggregated mandatory minima or consecutive terms totaling fifty to one hundred years or more—than those formally sentenced to LWOP.501 Some state courts have found that very long sentences imposed on a juvenile convicted of several nonhomicide offenses do not provide a meaningful opportunity to obtain release.502 By contrast, other courts have read Graham narrowly, limiting its holding to formal LWOP sentences, and upholding consecutive terms that exceed youths’ life expectancy.503


500. Id. at 82 (“A State need not guarantee the offender eventual release, but if it imposes a sentence of life it must provide him or her with some realistic opportunity to obtain release before the end of that term.”).

501. See Feld, Adolescent Criminal Responsibility, supra note 423, at 306 (observing that judges can create “virtual life sentences” by imposing stacked consecutive terms in lieu of formal LWOP sentences).


503. Bunch v. Smith, 685 F.3d 546, 552 (6th Cir. 2012) (identifying a split in opinion among courts as to “whether Graham bars a court from sentencing a juvenile nonhomicide offender to consecutive, fixed terms resulting in an aggregate sentence that exceeds the defendant’s life expectancy”).

When the Court decided *Miller v. Alabama,* forty-seven states permitted judges to impose LWOP sentences on any offender—adult or juvenile—convicted of murder.504 In twenty-seven states, LWOP sentences were mandatory for those convicted of murder, precluded consideration of actors’ culpability or degree of participation, and equated juveniles’ criminal responsibility with adults.505 Courts regularly upheld mandatory LWOP and extremely long sentences imposed on children as young as twelve or thirteen years of age.506 One in six juveniles

---

504. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, supra note 378, at 25 (“Only Kentucky, New York, Oregon, and the District of Columbia specifically exclude anyone under the age of eighteen who is tried as an adult from life without parole sentencing.”).  
505. Id.  
506. Id. at 1 (specifying that children as young as ten years old are subject to prosecution as adults in forty-two states and under federal law); Feld, Adolescent Criminal Responsibility, supra note 423, at 269; Feld, Youth Discount, supra note 423, at 129 (citing AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, supra note 378, at 25 n.44); see, e.g., Rice v. Cooper, 148 F.3d 747, 752 (7th Cir. 1998) (affirming a mandatory LWOP sentence imposed on an illiterate, mildly retarded sixteen-year-old murderer, even though the statute excluded consideration of any mitigating factors, including youthfulness, and holding that “we cannot find any basis in decisions interpreting the Eighth Amendment, or in any other sources of guidance to the meaning of ‘cruel and unusual punishments,’ for concluding that the sentence in this case was unconstitutionally severe”); Harris v. Wright, 93 F.3d 581, 583–85 (9th Cir. 1996) (rejecting a fifteen-year-old juvenile’s constitutional challenge to a mandatory LWOP sentence imposed for murder); Tate v. State, 864 So. 2d 44, 54 (Fla. Dist. Ct. App. 2003) (rejecting the argument that “a life sentence without the possibility of parole is cruel or unusual punishment on a twelve-year-old child”); State v. Foley, 456 So. 2d 979, 984 (La. 1984) (affirming a LWOP sentence imposed on a fifteen-year-old juvenile convicted of rape); State v. Pilcher, 655 So. 2d 636, 644 (La. Ct. App. 1995) (upholding a LWOP sentence imposed on a fifteen-year-old); Swinford v. State, 653 So. 2d 912, 918 (Miss. 1995) (upholding a LWOP sentence imposed on fourteen-year-old convicted of murder); Edmonds v. State, 955 So. 2d 864, 895–97 (Miss. Ct. App. 2006) (approving a mandatory life sentence imposed on a youth convicted of murder committed at thirteen years of age), rev’d, 955 So. 2d 787 (Miss. 2007); State v. Green, 502 S.E.2d 819, 832 (N.C. 1998) (upholding life imprisonment sentence for a thirteen-year-old convicted of rape, recognizing that “the chronological age of a defendant is a factor that can be considered in determining whether a punishment is grossly disproportionate to the crime,” but emphasizing that Green was morally responsible for the crime because he possessed sufficient mental capacity to form criminal intent); State v. Standard, 569 S.E.2d 325, 329 (S.C. 2002) (upholding a “two-strike” LWOP sentence imposed on a fifteen-year-old convicted of burglary based on his prior juvenile conviction for a serious felony, a sentence presumably invalid after *Graham*); Paul G. Morrissey, Do the Adult Crime, Do the Adult Time: Due Process and Cruel and Unusual Implications for a 13-Year-Old Sex Offender Sentenced to Life Imprisonment in
who received a LWOP sentence was fifteen years or younger at the time of their crime; for more than half, it was their first ever conviction.507 States may not execute a felony-murderer who did not kill or intend to kill, but one-quarter to one-half of juveniles who received LWOP sentences were convicted as accessories to a felony murder.508 Although the Supreme Court viewed youthfulness as a mitigating factor, many trial judges treated it as an aggravating factor and sentenced young murderers more severely than adults convicted of murder.509

Miller v. Alabama extended Roper and Graham and banned mandatory LWOP for youths convicted of murder.510 Miller invoked death penalty cases that barred mandatory capital sen-

State v. Green, 44 VILL. L. REV. 707, 738 (1999) (citing Green, 502 S.E.2d 819) (explaining that age was not a dispositive factor in the case of State v. Green).

507. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, supra note 378, at 1.


509. See Donna Bishop & Charles Frazier, Consequences of Transfer, in The CHANGING BORDERS OF JUVENILE JUSTICE, supra note 377, at 227, 236–37 (comparing the sentences imposed on youths transferred to criminal courts with those of adults and noting that “transferred youths are sentenced more harshly, both in terms of the probability of receiving a prison sentence and the length of the sentences they receive. In other words, we see no evidence that criminal courts recognize a need to mitigate sentences based on considerations of age and immaturity”); Kurlychek & Johnson, Juvenility and Punishment, supra note 412, at 747 (reporting that judges sentenced juveniles waived into adult court more harshly than similar young adult offenders in four states); Tanenhaus & Drizin, supra note 196, at 665 (citing the impact of “get tough” politics and arguing that “[b]y the mid-1990’s [sic], youth had ceased to be a mitigating factor in adult court, and instead had become a liability”).

Youths convicted of murder are more likely to enter prison with LWOP sentences than are adults convicted of murder. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, supra note 378, at 33 (reporting that judges sentenced juveniles convicted of murder more frequently than they did adults and concluding that “states have often been more punitive toward children who commit murder than adults . . . age has not been much of a mitigating factor in the sentencing of youth convicted of murder”); HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, supra note 508, at 4 (reporting that “in more than half the cases where there was an adult co-defendant, the adult received a lower sentence than the young person who was sentenced to life without parole”).

510. Miller v. Alabama, 567 U.S. 460, 489 (2012) (“Graham, Roper, and our individualized sentencing decisions make clear that a judge or jury must have the opportunity to consider mitigating circumstances before imposing the harshest possible penalty for juveniles . . . . [M]andatory-sentencing schemes . . . violate [the] principle of proportionality, and so the Eighth Amendment’s ban on cruel and unusual punishment.”).
sentences and required an individualized culpability assessment before a judge could impose LWOP on a juvenile murderer.\footnote{511} Miller emphasized that "children are constitutionally different from adults for purposes of sentencing" and "mandatory penalties, by their nature, preclude a sentencer from taking account of an offender’s age and the wealth of characteristics and circumstances attendant to it."\footnote{512} The Court asserted that once judges considered a youth’s diminished responsibility individually, very few cases would warrant LWOP.\footnote{513}

The Court’s recognition that children are different reflected a belated correction to states’ punitive excesses, but its Eighth Amendment authority to regulate their sentencing policies is very limited. Graham and Miller raised as many questions as they answered. Several years after Miller held mandatory LWOP unconstitutional, the Court in Montgomery v. Louisiana resolved lower courts’ conflicting decisions about Miller’s retroactive application to more than 2500 youths sentenced prior to the decision, and ruled that youths who received a mandatory LWOP sentence prior to Miller would be eligible for resentencing or parole consideration.\footnote{514}

\footnote{511. Id. at 461 (citing cases within two strands of precedent that underpin the Court’s decision); see, e.g., Woodson v. North Carolina, 428 U.S. 280, 304 (1976) (holding that “in capital cases the fundamental respect for humanity underlying the Eighth Amendment . . . requires consideration of the character and record of the individual offender and the circumstances of the particular offense”). Woodson condemned:

A process that accords no significance to relevant facets of the character and record of the individual offender or the circumstances of the particular offense excludes from consideration . . . the possibility of compassionate or mitigating factors stemming from the diverse frailties of mankind. It treats all persons convicted of a designated offense not as uniquely individual human beings, but as members of a faceless, undifferentiated mass to be subjected to the blind infliction of the penalty of death.


\footnote{512. Miller, 567 U.S. at 471, 476.}

\footnote{513. Id. at 479 (noting that “we think appropriate occasions for sentencing juveniles to this harshest possible penalty will be uncommon”); see also id. at 484 n.10 (observing that “when given the choice, sentencers impose life without parole on children relatively rarely”).}

\footnote{514. Montgomery v. Louisiana, 136 S. Ct. 718 (2016).}
Miller gave lawmakers and judges minimal guidance to make culpability assessments. The factors it described—age, immaturity, impetuosity, family and home environment, circumstances and degree of participation in the offense, youthful incompentence, and amenability to treatment—enable judges to make subjective decisions without meaningful controls.515 As a result, state courts’ interpretations and legislatures’ responses to Miller vary substantially.516

Miller required twenty-eight states and the federal government to revise mandatory LWOP statutes to provide for individualized assessments.517 Some states adopted Miller factors for a judge to consider;518 a few states abolished juvenile LWOP sentences entirely; and others replaced them with minimum sentences ranging from twenty-five years to life with periodic reviews, or determinate sentences of forty years to life.519 Other states provide age-tiered minimum sentences for parole consideration: twenty-five years for youths fourteen or younger convicted of murder; thirty-five years for those fifteen or older.520 None of these changes approximate the American Law Institute’s Model Penal Code recommendations that juveniles should be eligible for parole consideration after ten years.521

State courts are divided over whether Miller applies to mandatory sentences other than murder that preclude consideration

515. See Miller, 567 U.S. at 477–80 (identifying features of adolescence that judges should consider when sentencing juvenile offenders).


517. Drinan, supra note 516, at 1795.

518. Id. at 1816–17.

519. THE SENTENCING PROJECT, SLOW TO ACT: STATE RESPONSES TO 2012 SUPREME COURT MANDATE ON LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE 2 (2014); Moriearty, supra note 432, at 975–76 (2015) (describing how states have reformulated sentencing schemes after Miller).

520. Drinan, supra note 516, at 1818.

of youthful mitigation. Several post-Miller courts have approved twenty-five year mandatory minimum sentences without any individualized culpability assessments, whereas others have found all mandatory minimum sentences violate the state constitution.

Miller’s prohibition of mandatory LWOP may affect transfer provisions—offense exclusion and prosecutorial direct file—that do not provide individualized assessments. Both result in automatic adulthood without any knowledge of a juvenile’s circumstances, opportunity to present mitigating evidence, or appellate review.

C. YOUTH DISCOUNT

There is a straightforward alternative to the confusion and contradiction reviewed above. States should formally incorporate youthfulness as a mitigating factor in sentencing statutes. Youthful mitigation does not excuse criminality; it holds juveniles accountable for their crimes, but proportions punishment to their diminished responsibility. Roper and Graham adopted a categorical prohibition because the Court feared that a judge or jury could not properly consider youthful mitigation when confronted with a heinous crime.

There are two reasons to prefer a categorical rule over individualized discretion. First, judges and legislators cannot define or identify what constitutes adult-like culpability. Culpability is not an objectively measurable thing, but a subjective judgment

522. Drinan, supra note 516, at 1818.
523. Id.
524. E.g., State v. Lyle, 854 N.W.2d 378, 404 (Iowa 2014) (holding that mandatory minimum sentences for juveniles violate the Iowa Constitution).
525. See AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, supra note 378, at 113 (“In order to achieve [the] goal of proportionality, both the nature of the offense and the culpability of the offender must be taken into account.”); FELD, BAD KIDS, supra note 1, at 315–16 (reasoning that youthfulness as a mitigating factor requires proportional punishment); ZIMRING, supra note 23, at 139 (arguing for the general applicability of the doctrine of diminished responsibility in sentencing); Feld, Youth Discount, supra note 423 (arguing that the use of age as a mitigating factor is consistent with the principle of proportionality in sentencing); Scott & Grisso, Evolution of Adolescence, supra note 455, at 172–76 (explaining how policy changes can support a presumption of diminished responsibility without providing a blanket excuse from responsibility); see also Lyle, 854 N.W.2d at 398 (“The Constitutional analysis is not about excusing juvenile behavior, but imposing punishment in a way that is consistent with our understanding of humanity today.”); State v. Null, 836 N.W.2d 41, 75 (Iowa 2013) (“[W]hile youth is a mitigating factor in sentencing, it is not an excuse.”).
about criminal responsibility. Development is highly variable—a few youths may achieve competencies prior to eighteen years of age, while many others may not attain maturity even as adults. Despite individual developmental differences, clinicians lack tools with which to assess youths’ impulsivity, foresight, and preference for risk, or a metric by which to relate maturity of judgment with criminal responsibility. The inability to define, measure, or diagnose immaturity or validly to identify a few responsible youths introduces a systematic bias to over-punish less culpable juveniles. The law uses age-based categorical lines to approximate the level of maturity required for particular activities—voting, driving, and consuming alcohol—and restricts youths without individualized assessments of maturity.

The second reason to adopt a categorical rule of youthful mitigation is judges’ or juries’ inability to fairly weigh the abstraction of diminished responsibility against the aggravating reality of a horrific crime. Roper rightly feared that jurors could not distinguish between a person’s diminished responsibility for causing a harm and the harm itself, and that the heinousness of a crime would trump reduced culpability. When courts sentence minority offenders, unconscious racial stereotypes compound the difficulties of assessing immaturity. Treating youthfulness categorically is a more efficient way to address immaturity when every juvenile can claim some degree of diminished responsibility.

527. Feld, Evolution of Juvenile Court, supra note 1; Scott & Steinberg, supra note 1, at 140 (“We currently lack the diagnostic tools to evaluate psycho-social maturity reliably on an individualized basis or to distinguish young career criminals from ordinary adolescents who, as adults, will repudiate their reckless experimentation.”).

528. James C. Howell et al., Young Offenders and an Effective Justice System Response, in FROM JUVENILE DELINQUENCY TO ADULT CRIME: CRIMINAL CAREERS, JUSTICE POLICY, AND PREVENTION, supra note 85, at 200, 229 (“Despite adolescents’ developmental differences, clinicians lack the tools with which to assess youths’ impulsivity, foresight, or preference for risks in ways that relate to maturity of judgment and criminal responsibility.”); Scott & Steinberg, supra note 1, at 154–57 (discussing how courts are trying to develop methods to assess competence); Scott & Steinberg, Blaming Youth, supra note 455, at 836.

529. Roper, 543 U.S. at 553–54.

530. Feld, Adolescent Criminal Responsibility, supra note 423, at 270–71 (“Racial stereotypes taint culpability assessments, reduce the mitigating value of youthfulness for children of color, and contribute to disproportionate numbers of minority youths tried and sentenced as adults.”); see also Moriearty, supra note 439, at 850–51 (citing studies of racial bias in the juvenile justice system).
The abstract meaning of culpability, the inability to measure or compare moral agency of youths, administrative complexity of individualization, and the tendency to overweigh harm requires a clear-cut alternative. A categorical youth discount would give all adolescents fractional reductions in sentence lengths based on age as a proxy for culpability.\footnote{FELD, BAD KIDS, supra note 1, at 317 ("A statutory sentencing policy that integrates youthfulness . . . with principles of proportionality and reduced culpability would provide younger offenders with categorical fractional reductions of adult sentences."); SCOTT & STEINBERG, supra note 1, at 139 ("The uniqueness of immaturity as a mitigating condition argues for the adoption of . . . a categorical approach in the context of youth crime policy."); Feld, Adolescent Criminal Responsibility, supra note 423, at 322 ("A Youth Discount would require a judge to give a substantial reduction off of the sentence that she would impose on an adult convicted of the same crime."); Feld, Slower Form of Death, supra note 489, at 55–65 (urging legislators to enact changes in sentencing for juvenile offenders); Feld, Youth Discount, supra note 423, at 108 ("A Youth Discount provides a straightforward way for legislatures to recognize juveniles’ categorically diminished responsibility and formally to incorporate youthfulness as a mitigating factor in sentencing."). See generally Howell et al., supra note 528, at 227–29 (providing policy recommendations for juvenile sentencing practices).} While age may be an incomplete proxy for maturity or culpability, no better bases exist on which to distinguish among young offenders. Miller recognized that same-length sentences exact a greater penal bite from younger offenders than older ones.\footnote{Miller v. Alabama, 567 U.S. 460, 475 (2012) ("[LWOP] is an ‘especially harsh form of punishment for a juvenile,’ because he will almost inevitably serve ‘more years and a greater percentage of his life in prison than an adult offender.’" (quoting Graham v. Florida, 560 U.S. 48, 50 (2010))).}

Imprisonment per se is more developmentally disruptive and onerous for adolescents than adults.\footnote{Andrew von Hirsch, Proportionate Sentences for Juveniles: How Different Than for Adults?, 3 PUNISHMENT & SOC'Y 221, 227 (2001); see also Barry C. Feld, Abolish the Juvenile Court: Youthfulness, Criminal Responsibility and Sentencing Policy, 88 J. CRIM. L. & CRIMINOLOGY 68, 81 (1997) [hereinafter Feld, Abolish Juvenile Court] (explaining how differences in adolescents’ culpability “raise issues of sentencing policy and fairness”).} Thus, a statutory youth discount would require judges to give substantial reductions to youths based on a sliding scale of diminished responsibility with the largest reductions to the youngest offenders.\footnote{Feld, Abolish Juvenile Court, supra note 533, at 115–21 (describing how a youth discount would operate in the courts); Scott & Steinberg, Blaming Youth, supra note 455, at 837 (proposing a systematic discount in sentencing for youthful offenders); see also SCOTT & STEINBERG, supra note 1, at 140 ("The use of an age category is justified because the presumption of immaturity can be applied confidently to most persons in the group.").} If tried as an adult, a fourteen-year-old would receive a sentence substantially shorter than that an adult would receive—perhaps...
ten or twenty percent of the adult length. A sixteen-year-old would receive a maximum sentence no more than one-third or half the adult length. Deeper discounts for younger offenders correspond with their greater developmental differences in judgment and self-control. A judge can more easily apply a youth discount in states that use sentencing guidelines under which present offense and prior record dictate presumptive sentences. In less structured sentencing systems, a judge would have to determine the going rate or appropriate sentence for an adult convicted of that offense and then reduce it by the youth discount.

The youth discount’s diminished responsibility rationale would preclude mandatory, LWOP, or de facto life sentences for young offenders. Although some legislators may find it difficult to resist penal demagoguery, states can achieve all of their legitimate penal goals by sentencing youths to a maximum of no more than twenty or twenty-five years for even the most serious crimes, as recommended by the American Law Institute’s Model Penal Code. Several juvenile justice analysts and policy groups have endorsed the youth discount as a straightforward way to proportionally reduce sentences for younger offenders.

535. Howell et al., supra note 528, at 367; SCOTT & STEINBERG, supra note 1, at 246–47; see also AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, supra note 378, at 5–6 (outlining the types of sentences that juveniles receive and why culpability should be diminished by the youth of the offender).


537. Several academic analysts have explicitly endorsed my proposal for the youth discount. See, e.g., SCOTT & STEINBERG, supra note 1, at 246 (“Proportionality supports imposing statutory limits on the maximum duration of adult sentences impose[d] on juveniles—a ‘youth discount,’ to use Feld’s term.”); Tanenhaus & Drizin, supra note 196, at 698 (“We endorse Feld’s proposals [for a youth discount] because they respect the notion that juveniles are developmentally different than adults and that these differences make juveniles both less culpable for their crimes and less deserving of the harsh sanctions, which now must be imposed on serious and violent adult offenders.”); von Hirsch, supra note 533, at 227 (arguing for categorical penalty reductions based on juveniles’ reduced culpability).

While actual appreciation of consequences varies highly among youths of the same age, the degree of appreciation we should demand depends on age: we may rightly expect more comprehension and self-control from the 17-year-old than a 14-year-old, so that the 17-year-old’s penalty reduction should be smaller. Assessing culpability on the basis of individualized determinations of a youth’s degree of moral development would be neither feasible nor desirable.

Id. at 226. See also MODEL PENAL CODE: SENTENCING § 6.11A(g) Reporter’s Note (AM. LAW INST., Tentative Draft No. 2, 2011) (acknowledging that the framework of the MPC’s recommendation for “specialized sentencing rules and mitigated treatment of juvenile offenders sentenced in adult courts, owes much”
For example, a National Institute of Justice study group concluded that youths’ diminished responsibility required mitigated sanctions for youths sentenced as adults. Additionally, the ABA has condemned juvenile LWOP sentences, and has proposed that statutes formally recognize youthfulness as a mitigating factor, and provide for earlier parole release consideration.

CONCLUSION

The time is right to reform juvenile courts’ jurisdiction, jurisprudence, and procedures. Although most states’ juvenile court jurisdiction extends to youths under eighteen years of age, North Carolina, for example, sets the boundary at sixteen, and ten other states set it at seventeen years of age. Developmental psychology and neuroscience research strengthens the case to raise the age of jurisdiction to eighteen in every state. Indeed, it would be appropriate to extend to young adults aged eighteen to twenty-one some of the protections associated with juvenile courts: shorter sentences like a youth discount, rehabilitative treatment in separate facilities, protected records, and the like. Many European countries’ criminal laws provide separate young adult sentencing provisions and institutions to afford greater leniency and use of rehabilitative measures.

to Feld’s proposal for a youth discount—“a sliding scale of developmental and criminal responsibility”.

538. A study group funded by the National Institute of Justice determined that “[y]ouths’ diminished responsibility requires mitigated sanctions to avoid permanently life-changing penalties and provide room to reform.” Rolf Loeber et al., Overview, Conclusions, and Key Recommendations, in FROM JUVENILE DELINQUENCY TO ADULT CRIME: CRIMINAL CAREERS, JUSTICE POLICY, AND PREVENTION, supra note 85, at 315, 353. Following the rationale of Roper and Graham, the study group concluded that “[a] categorical rule of youthfulness as a mitigating factor in sentencing is preferable to individualized discretion.” Howell et al., supra note 528, at 229; David P. Farrington, Rolf Loeber & James C. Howell, Young Adult Offenders: The Need for More Effective Legislative Options and Justice Processing, 11 CRIMINOLOGY & PUB. POL’Y 729, 743 (endorsing a “maturity discount” that provides a “decrease in the severity of penalties that take account of younger persons’ lesser culpability and diminished responsibility”).


541. Loeber et al., supra note 538, at 350–51.
Most youths involved with the juvenile justice system will outgrow their youthful indiscretion without significant interventions. We can facilitate desistance by reinforcing the two-track system—one informal, one formal—proposed by the President’s Crime Commission a half-century ago. For youths who require services, diversion to community resources provides a more efficient and flexible alternative to adjudication and disposition. If states explicitly forgo home removal, then juvenile courts can use summary processes to make noncustodial dispositions. \textit{Scott v. Illinois} prohibits incarceration without representation. \textit{Alabama v. Shelton} prohibits revocation and confinement of an unrepresented defendant who violated probation. \textit{Baldwin v. New York} affords a jury right to any person facing the prospect of at least six months incarceration. By clearly foregoing home removal or incarceration dispositions, states can administer a streamlined justice system for most youths. Diversion raises its own issues because low-visibility decisions contribute to racial disparities at the front end. States can adopt formal criteria, 

\textsuperscript{542} The President’s Crime Commission suggested that the juvenile court ultimately might evolve into a two-track system with separate crime control and social welfare functions. In such a system, public officials would divert and handle informally most minor delinquents and status offenders. “In place of the formal system, dispositional alternatives to adjudication must be developed for dealing with juveniles . . . . The range of conduct for which court intervention is authorized should be narrowed with greater emphasis upon consensual and informal means of meeting the problems of difficult children.” \textit{PRESIDENT’S COMM’N, supra} note 12, at 2. The Commission also acknowledged that juvenile courts intervened to control crime rather than simply to treat youths and recommended that public officials refer more serious offenders for formal adjudication:

The cases that fall within the narrowed jurisdiction of the court and filter through the screen of prejudicial, informal disposition methods would largely involve offenders for whom more vigorous measures seem necessary. Court adjudication and disposition of those offenders should no longer be viewed solely as a diagnosis and prescription for cure, but should be frankly recognized as an authoritative court judgment expressing society’s claim to protection. While rehabilitative efforts should be vigorously pursued in deference to the youth of the offenders and in keeping with a general commitment to individualized treatment of all offenders, the incapacitative, deterrent, and condemnatory aspects of the judgment should not be disguised.

\textit{Id.}


\textsuperscript{546} Mears, \textit{supra} note 137, at 587 (“[C]onsiderable room exists for front-end decision-making, especially arrest and intake decisions, to contribute to racial disparities in the processing of young people.”).
risk assessment instruments, data collection, and ongoing monitoring to rationalize diversion decisions and reduce disparities. Finally, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Prevention programs that target at-risk youths, families, and communities, have demonstrated efficacy, provide cost-benefit returns, and would reduce the number of youths referred to juvenile courts in the first instance.

For delinquents facing custodial restraints—pretrial detention or postconviction confinement—juvenile courts are criminal courts and require criminal procedural safeguards including the right to a jury. Increasing protections and costs of formal adjudication provide financial and administrative incentives to divert more youths. Although delinquency sanctions are shorter than those imposed by criminal courts, it is disingenuous to claim that they do not pursue deterrent, incapacitative, and retributive goals. Apart from those who pose a risk of flight, states should reserve secure detention for youths whose offense and prior record indicate that they likely would be removed from home if convicted. Risk assessment instruments, other JDAI strategies, and effective assistance of counsel could reduce pretrial detention and disproportionate minority confinement. Juvenile court interventions should keep youths in their community and avoid out-of-home placements and secure confinement to the greatest extent possible and use evidence-based programs to rehabilitate and reintegrate them.

The procedural safeguards of juvenile courts should be greatly enhanced to compensate for adolescents’ developmental immaturity: automatic competency assessment for children younger than fourteen years of age, mandatory presence of counsel during interrogation for those younger than sixteen, and mandatory nonwaivable counsel for youths in court proceedings. Any system of justice will fail without a robust public defender system to enable youths to exercise rights. Delinquents should enjoy the right to a jury trial to assure reliability of convictions and to increase the visibility and accountability of judges, prosecutors, and defense lawyers. States should strengthen appellate oversight of delinquency proceedings. Records of youths should be easily sealed or expunged to reduce impediments to education and employment. In keeping with juvenile courts’ rationale to avoid stigmatizing youths, states should eschew collateral consequences of delinquency convictions.

For those few youths whom policymakers believe should be tried as adults, a judicial hearing guided by offense criteria and
clinical considerations and subject to rigorous appellate review is the only sensible way to make transfer decisions. Criteria should focus on serious offenses and extensive prior records, criminal participation, clinical evaluations, and aggravating and mitigating factors which, taken together, distinguish the few youths who might deserve sentences substantially longer than the maximum sanctions that juvenile courts can impose. A judicial hearing will produce better decisions than will politically motivated prosecutors. Appellate courts should closely review waiver decisions and develop substantive principles to define a consistent boundary of adulthood. A legislature should prescribe a minimum age of eligibility for criminal prosecution.

Developmental psychological and neuroscience research reports a sharp drop-off in judgment, self-control, and appreciation of consequences as well as in competence to exercise rights for youths fifteen years of age or younger. The minimum age for transfer should be sixteen. Sentences of youths convicted as adults should be substantially reduced—through a youth discount—to reflect their diminished culpability. Once judges properly consider youths’ generic developmental limitations and diminished responsibility, there will be very few youths or crimes for which prosecution as an adult would be appropriate.

It will take political courage for legislators to enact laws that recognize the diminished responsibility of serious young offenders—and even greater political courage when they are charged with being soft on crime. However, the legislators of the Get Tough Era produced punitive delinquency sanctions as well as unjust and counterproductive waiver and criminal sentencing laws—all of which have had a disproportional impact on youths of color. The legislators who enacted these laws are obliged to undo the damage and adopt sensible policies that reflect our greater understanding of adolescent development—that children are different.

547. SCOTT & STEINBERG, supra note 1, at 178–79 (proposing a new standard for juvenile dispositions in delinquency proceedings); ZIMRING, supra note 23, at 107–29 (concluding that case-by-case determinations are preferable to categorical transfer rules). See generally FELD, BAD KIDS, supra note 1, at 208–44 (detailing juvenile transfer policies); Bishop, supra note 418 (discussing automatic and prosecutorial transfer to adult court); Feld, Responses to Youth Violence, supra note 48, at 195–220 (summarizing research on transfers of juvenile offenders to criminal courts and sentences to prisons).

548. Miller v. Alabama, 567 U.S. 460, 479 (noting that “we think appropriate occasions for sentencing juveniles . . . will be uncommon”).