



## **ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **PANEL QUESTIONS – PANEL #1**

### **JUVENILE JUSTICE**

1. McCord's article mentions that "retained students have more negative attitudes about school and develop characteristics of "learned helplessness", whereby they blame themselves for their failure....There is a consistent relationship between retention and school dropout. (p. 84) given these negative consequences, should children and adolescents have more say into whether or not they should be retained? What kinds of decision making power should children and adolescents have in this situation, if any?
2. McCord as well as lecture topics from Dr. Blum have mentioned the protective role of families. Given that delinquency is affected by poor family environments, what kinds of interventions have been conducted on parents and how effective have these interventions been?
3. In many inner city areas, young people are forced to engage in violence because of the circumstances under which they find themselves. Many live in very violent communities without the possibility of leaving most of their lives, are faced with crowded schools with few caring adults, have very little hope for good employment, have parents that are addicted to drugs, are responsible for emotionally and financially taking care of younger siblings and have to face a brutal police force that is sometimes racist. Should we as a society blame a child who grows up in such an environment for criminal acts? What role should society play in making sure that crime is prevented at an earlier age?
4. Where is the parental role in adolescent crime? If we are willing to punish a crack addicted mother who commits a crime under the influence of drugs, why don't we punish them for their failure to be good parents? As a society we have standards of parenting younger children and punish parents who are negligent. Shouldn't we also have similar guidelines for failure to adequately monitor and parent adolescents? Would punishing the parents provide a solution for the youth crime problem?
5. In many communities, young people and other residents who witness crimes usually do not willingly provide information on the criminals even when confidentiality is guaranteed. Should we keep believing that criminals are protected merely for fear of retaliation or are communities where failure to identify criminals is ripe simply irresponsible? In the face of this lack of cooperation from community residents, should we really blame the police for not responding to crime the way they do in higher income communities?
6. How does the role of the family tie into the recurrent offenders? By stabilizing relationships can we reduce the chance a first offender will repeat the offense.
7. If we realize the reporting system is not correctly representing the overall picture of youths, how can we then report so confidently and represent particular groups more negatively?

8. There is a skewed view that offenders usually are from low socioeconomic backgrounds. What is the data on offenders from higher socio economic backgrounds and how are they treated comparatively?
9. What mental health services are offered to adolescent offenders? Is there routine mental health screening? Are families provided with counseling?
10. How can we successfully rehabilitate adolescent offenders if the system seeks to condemn as adults?
11. It is known that an adolescent's social environment plays a major role in the development of delinquent behavior and today, many youth have had to grow up under the fear of terrorism. Through out the day many children watch and hear the latest news going on in the war in Iraq and on terrorism. Most of these news reports consist of violence using bombs and firearm. With that said do you think that today's youth, who have to grow up under these conditions, are being negatively influenced and becoming more violent?
12. In 1995, one-quarter of known juvenile offenders came from five counties- New York City, Houston, Los Angeles, Detroit, and Chicago. If this statistic still holds true today, ten years later, what youth programs are being put into action to help cut down on juvenile offenders in inner cities? If this statistic still does not hold true today, what new trends are we starting to see in the geographical concentration of juvenile offenders?
13. What, if any, weight should be put on parents for the decisions adolescents make? Would co-indicting parents cause more parents to be more active and consistent in their parenting?
14. Types of offences are different among boys and girls, and gender difference is also observed in timing of puberty. If we use age as cutoff point distinguishing juvenile and adults' crimes, how to deal with gender differences in quality and quantity of crimes? Should there be additional criteria for trading off punishments for different types of crimes depending on criminals' gender?
15. What is the data on hate crimes committed by adolescents (or young people)?  
Question 2: What is the tipping point for neighborhood level characteristics as they relate to high crime rates and delinquency?
16. How have large scale political and social interventions affected crimes committed by juveniles (ie: has the nation's willingness to invest in social programs affect these rates eg, 1960s vs. 1980s).
17. In deciding to try a juvenile as an adult how does one take into consideration the community and neighborhood norms as an indication of severity of offense? Is the adolescent exhibiting adult behavior independent of environment or has the environment influenced and construed what is considered to be adult behavior?
18. Seeing that most juvenile crime is committed in pairs or groups does the severity of the crime increase or decrease due to this group dynamic? What does this dynamic say about an adolescent's ability to make decisions?

19. For those who committed crimes and arrested at their minor of age, and were at the trial after they became major, their cognitive abilities and criminal culpabilities are different at these different points in time. What to do with the gaps in cognitive and psychological development during the time lag between the crime committed and the trial/conviction. How much should we account 'neurocognitive development' itself responsible for each crime? How to measure the developmental state in the past? (The use of MRI or other diagnostic techniques at a trial, even if it's used, may not be able to retrospectively predict the past state because there is no single association that we can apply to predict.)
20. If suspension has been shown to be ineffective, why does it continue? Has there been evidence of California's "zero-tolerance" policy?
21. Neurocognitive development and its trajectory vary largely across individuals. It is not practical to pinpoint the age at which individuals reach maturity in abstract thinking and probabilistic reasoning so that one can be responsible and eligible for capital punishment. In crimes committed under cold condition, adolescents could be comparably competent decision maker to adults. Is there a better criterion (or additional criterion with age) with which we can judge appropriately those who are young yet committed thorough and vicious crimes? How can we allow the law to have flexibility to deal with individual cases in which age should not be used as a cutoff point?
22. What is the most common crime committed by an adolescent?
23. What is the most common indicator of whether or not an adolescent will commit a crime (as far as race, socioeconomic status, etc.)?
24. How to deal with the social forces that may disproportionally drive minority races (especially Blacks) and younger minors to commit crimes? How to identify and take account for social cause of crimes by juveniles with such poor social environment? What kind of prevention programs for juvenile crimes can be specifically effective not only to affect juveniles but also social forces, the important cause of crimes?
25. Is it a frequent occurrence for households with adolescents to move? I was under the impression that on average people move only every seven years or so. In this case, is this really an important weakness with NCVS?
26. How is the trend in proportion of arrests attributed to youths related to the trend in the proportion of adolescents in the general population?
27. How do adolescent arrest rates correlate with household location or income?
28. The majority of juveniles in detention are minorities, particularly African-Americans. Even though the statistics have shown that blacks do not commit more crimes than whites, somewhere in the juvenile justice process, black youth are STAYING in the system at a disproportionate rate. Does the panel believe that the juvenile justice system unfairly discriminate against minorities, particularly African-American youths?

29. What are the potential sequelae to minority communities with disproportionate number of minority youth being impacted by juvenile justice, and expanded state laws that try youth as adults?
30. It has been shown that girls in the juvenile justice system exhibited more risks than do boys for problem behaviors. Are there any recommendations for either different preventive mechanisms for girls in order to avoid the juvenile justice system? Are there any specific recommendations for females within the juvenile justice system to better help girls within the system?
31. To what extent does television and other media contribute to violent juvenile crime?
32. Today in the United States, with a population of 14.3 million, Latinos are considered the largest minority. In the year 2000, Latino youth made up the second largest population among all U.S. adolescents. Yet, the UCR doesn't provide any estimates for Latino juveniles. With that said, how do you think this large population of Latino youth is influencing the trends in found in the juvenile system? Will the UCR start collecting data on this group of adolescents in the future?
33. Does lenient punishment contribute to growing violent crime rates among young adults?
34. Does lenient punishment increase the likelihood of repeat offenses during young adulthood or later in life?
35. To what extent is violent criminal behavior due to environmental factors? Would removing young adults from high poverty neighborhoods decrease the likelihood of violent criminal behavior? Given that some investigators believe that the crack/drug trade has more to do with the increase in adolescent homicide rates, what information do we have about drug related homicide in Baltimore compared to other violent crimes committed by youth.
36. What is your opinion on the relative importance of peers vs. families during adolescence? Clearly, both are important, but would it be fair to say that families tend to be more important because families "set the stage" for peer interactions during adolescence and because peers are less influential when adolescents have high levels of positive interaction with their families?
37. We have learned that adolescents often believe that their peers are more antisocial and rebellious than they really are, and that adolescents may be more influenced by what they believe their peers are doing than by what they are actually doing. Have interventions been designed to try to make adolescents' perceptions of their peers more accurate? If so, have they been effective?
38. If we make the argument that adolescents should not be tried for crimes as adults due to cognitive differences or differences in maturity between adults and adolescents, is it possible to make an intellectually consistent argument that adolescents should be given the right (equal to adults) to decide whether to have an abortion?
39. Many studies have reported that boys are more likely to use physical aggression while girls are more likely to use verbal aggression. However,

the use of physical aggression and verbal abilities may be biological in origin. For example, boys and girls with more testosterone tend to show more aggression. Girls are also shown to do better on verbal tests, an indication that it is genes. If behavior (i.e.: aggression) is determined by biology, what does this mean about intervention programs?

40. The paper addresses the risk factor of single parent households versus 2 parents, but does not address the influence of each parent. Are delinquents more likely to come from a single parent household with the female as the head, or the father? Does gender matter? If it does, what is the pattern of delinquents from 2 parent households of the same gender?
41. What makes an adolescent crime different than an adults'? Are the outcomes more severe?
42. Why do we say adolescents are more vulnerable than adults? Don't adults go through peer pressure and stress also? Why are we more likely to excuse adolescent behavior than adults'? Are our views about adolescents (giving them special treatment) wrong?
43. McCord et al. (p. 54) suggested that "public discussions" prior to the passage of the Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 may have influenced states in their decision to change policies about arresting juveniles for status offenses. What drives "public discussion" and what is its role in current (juvenile justice) policy development?
44. McCord et al. noted that certain school policies (grade retention, expulsion, suspension, tracking)--especially those that are punitive or isolate individuals with problem behaviors--may have detrimental effects on the adolescent (academically and emotionally), may not modify misbehavior, but may be associated with increased delinquency. Is it possible that punitive policies in the juvenile justice system have similar detrimental effects? Where is the evidence that punitive measures work?
45. How have (juvenile justice) policies or interventions addressed environmental factors such as the availability of guns and the increasing presence of open-air drug markets? With a reported drop in gun-related homicide and suicide in the 1990's, how has the availability of guns to adolescents changed?
46. How might the use of criminal and arrest data and subsequent forecasting perpetuate the disproportionate representation and discrimination of black male adolescents?
47. What proportion of crimes committed by juveniles goes unreported or unrecorded because no arrest was made? How will the NIBRS account for these cases in order to get accurate data on juvenile crime rates?
48. Could the fact that the offenders age is generally difficult to estimate by the victim account for the apparent decrease in juvenile crime rates observed in the mid-nineties?
49. Juvenile crimes, both violent and total, generally seemed to decrease around the mid-nineties. What was responsible for this decrease, especially in crimes that are not necessarily gun-related or drug-related?
50. Possession of weapons seems to be strongly associated with increase in crimes among adolescents. Is it possible to target an intervention towards reducing access to guns or has

such an intervention been considered in the past and what are the obstacles to such an intervention.

51. It seems the break down of the family system and increase in single parenting is a significant risk factor for juvenile delinquency. How can this be approached and what is the hope of youths in the near future as the family system does not appear to be getting any better.
52. One of our readings described the "broken window" hypothesis where a car with a smashed window invited more vandalism than an untouched car did. Urban design as public health is a relatively new concept. Does the built environment have a role in preventing youth violence and promoting healthy living among youth?
53. What factors have led to increased access to firearms among youth in the U.S.?
54. What do you think of Baltimore's Operation Safe Kids program?
55. How do laws that would hold an adolescent minor equally responsible as an adult take into account development and behavioral problems that are part of maturation? Are law-makers generally aware of such developmental issues?
56. If we think that some young people are too violent to leave in the community, is it fair to the other residents to imprison them for relatively short periods of time and release them without evidence of having provided any psychological help? If we are saying that youth crime is a combination of the individual, family and community, should we really expect these young people to be different upon return and if not, what solutions do we have? Do we want to consider making young adolescent criminals wards of the state and placing them in different families and communities upon release?
57. It was presented previously in this course that adolescents may not have a level of brain maturity to project future events or consequences. With this theory in mind, it can be argued that stricter punishments will not have a major effect on youth violence. Is there evidence to support this argument, and what is your opinion?
58. It was mentioned in the article by Joan McCord that the relative leniency of juvenile sanctions compared to adults may account for increased violence among juveniles. Isn't this a narrow view that does not take into account other determinants of adolescent behavior, including social and economic factors?
59. Is the juvenile system today simply teaching adolescents how to be better criminals (e.g. by introducing them to other offenders, networking, etc.)? What is the evidence to support or dispute this?
60. How do juvenile justice laws differ by state? Is there any evidence that one system works better than another?
61. Since this development of the frontal lobe has implications on the behavioral development processes of planning and managing risks and rewards, should adolescents be held responsible (to the same degree as adults are) for impulsive behaviors such as aggression,

aggravated assault and violent crimes to the extent that they lack substantial abilities to plan and manage impulsivity when compared to adults with fully matured frontal lobes?

62. Based on the second recommendation made at the close of our reading, are their current efforts to review Baltimore City School System policies related to grade retention, tracking, suspensions and expulsion?
63. My real question! When I was in high school almost 30 years ago I was able to get credit toward graduation for having a job my last year. Why are we not focused on employment? I am asking about actual employment, not just half-baked academies that don't provide real job experience or job developers who get youth paying positions!
64. How different are the results of a punishment when a juvenile is tried as an adult compared to one tried as a child?
65. Considering the high rate of property theft, what is an average value of the property stolen by an adolescent?
66. Since our current systems of monitoring juvenile crime through arrest rates, victimization rates, and self-report give an inadequate picture of the true magnitude and character of youth crime, what can we do to improve our surveillance and data collection methods? How might we get past the political and economic barriers that probably limit the feasibility of more comprehensive methods?
67. According to the McCord et al. panel, family interactions are most important during early childhood, and these interactions have long-lasting effects. In early adolescence, relationships with peers take on greater importance, but family interactions are still enormously influential in predicting delinquent behavior. Since delinquency is greater among peers with no interaction with parents, are there measures that schools can take such as after school mentorship programs or community service projects that would provide more positive mentorship and support for children in high risk, impoverished neighborhoods coming from homes that are unstable and provide a lack of supervision?
68. If adolescents are not held responsible for their actions and their behaviors, what message is that sending to them about responsibility? In terms of fostering a moral environment and providing guidance on how to become productive members of society, how would you suggest the Department of Justice (or the courts) should balance forgiveness with discipline within the context of adolescent crime? If we are to assume adolescents are not held culpable for their crimes and are not tried in the courts of adults, then how are we to provide adequate discipline while still fostering their maturation and developmental process?
69. In March 2005, the Supreme Court *Roper v. Simmons* (No. 03-0633) ruled that the death penalty for those who had committed their crimes under 18 years of age was "cruel and unusual punishment and hence barred by the Constitution." Considering this decision, what are characteristics of a crime that would give the impetus to try an adolescent as an adult? Is it justifiable to ever try an adolescent as an adult considering that adolescence is a period of significant development and learning? Is entering into prison (rather than a juvenile suspension or disciplinary center) a positive method of disciplining adolescents?

70. Although the trends indicate that males are arrested for drug use and other crimes more frequently than girls (with the exception of shoplifting and running away from home), the literature tends to focus on males and delinquent behavior even though girls account for 25% of all adolescent arrests (McCord et al.) What programs are currently being implemented that are developing research programs for investigating female juvenile offending and trends in female adolescent delinquency?
71. How does a conviction as an adult change the amount/type/quality of services provided for the adolescents for rehabilitation? What message does this then send to the youth?
72. What is the goal of trying an adolescent as an adult? It seems to be primarily to deter future crimes (a deterrent for other violent youth). Should we be "sacrificing" one youth for the benefit of others?
73. If we agree that environmental rather than individual factors are primarily responsible for violence, why do we hold adults and children to different standards of culpability when they experience the same environmental factors?
74. What makes a person mature (life experiences, brain function, age, power (however we define), and parenthood)? How does this definition impact how we determine responsibility for actions?
75. If we say that life experiences rather than age dictates adulthood, doesn't the very act initiating a violent crime make someone an adult?
76. In the article, The Development of Delinquency, the author mentioned that prenatal and perinatal complications are risk factors for delinquency. Is this more common for physical abnormalities later in life, or some kind of chemical imbalance that makes these children more prone to deviant behavior?
77. In the past few years there have been increasing security measures implemented in public schools, for example, armed police officers and metal detectors at the doors. What effect, if any, has this added security had on school violence among youth, given the number of students who still bring weapons to school and harm their teachers and classmates?
78. Should minors who commit violent crimes, i.e. school shootings, be given the death penalty?
79. The school campaign using Scruff McGruff and uniformed officers to promote anti-drug and anti-violence among students was a very successful initiative when I was in middle school (I don't know if it is still done). What important lessons can be taken from this initiative that can be applied to a similar campaign to deter adolescent crimes and violence?
80. Black youth are disproportionately arrested for crimes compared to their counterparts, especially those that live in the inner city. In order to fully address this phenomenon, one must assess the social factors that foster delinquent behaviors in the neighborhoods where these adolescents grow up. What are some interventions that might help combat this problem (i.e. more after school programs)?



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