



National Institute of Justice

Justice-Involved Young Adults Research Planning Meeting

Meeting Minutes

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U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
810 Seventh St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20531

Howard Spivak

Acting Director, National Institute of Justice

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Justice-Involved Young Adults Research Planning Meeting

Welcome and Opening Comments

Howard Spivak, Principal Deputy Director, National Institute of Justice

Dr. Howard Spivak thanked everyone for coming. He noted that justice-involved young adults are a high priority for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), and the area has a relatively new agenda. He also noted that he is personally very interested and involved in the issue. Dr. Spivak introduced Brent Cohen.

Brent Cohen, Senior Advisor to the Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice Programs

Mr. Brent Cohen welcomed participants and thanked them for attending. He stated that within the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), they have prioritized justice-involved young adults within the past couple of years. He noted that bringing expertise to this work is critically important. They will be working with NIJ and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) on the issue over time.

Ground Rules and Introductions

Carrie Mulford, National Institute of Justice

Dr. Carrie Mulford told a story explaining how the issue of justice-involved young adults came to NIJ's attention. In 2008, NIJ funded a study group resulting in a book entitled *Transitions Between Juvenile Delinquency and Adult Crime*. A few years later, new leaders came to OJP and NIJ who began prioritizing the needs of young adults in the justice system. NIJ and the Harvard Kennedy School hosted a meeting on this topic as part of the Executive Session on Community Corrections, which resulted in a bulletin entitled *Community-Based Responses to Justice-Involved Young Adults*, which highlighted some of the findings from the study group's book. To coincide with the release of the bulletin, a roundtable was planned to bring more attention to the issue. OJP and NIJ leadership were interested in the development of this work and conducted an environmental scan of legislation, strategies, and programs across the country that try to meet the needs of justice-involved young

adults. The research team then assembled the group of individuals present in the room. Dr. Mulford noted that the story is “to be continued” and welcomed the group’s contributions.

John Laub, Moderator

Dr. John Laub noted the many areas covered on the agenda. He explained that there were five topic areas. Each area followed a structure with two presentations on each topic, one from a researcher and one from a practitioner, followed by facilitated discussion. There were three discussion prompt questions for each topic.

Area 1. Linking Developmental Research to Practice

Brain Development and Neuroscience

Researcher: Duncan Clark, University of Pittsburgh

Dr. Duncan Clark outlined neuroimaging approaches, such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), used to study young adult brain development. They include:

- Structural MRIs: volumes and anomalies.
- Microstructure: diffusion tensor imaging (DTI)/diffusion-weighted imaging (DWI).
- Task-based functional activation.
- Resting state connectivity.

Structural MRIs are quantitative measures of regional brain tissue. Dr. Clark displayed pictures of structural MRIs showing tissue segmentation, SRI24 — white matter regions, and FreeSurfer — gray matter regions. He noted that cortex gray matter thins throughout adolescent and young adult development, and there is considerable individual variation. The prefrontal cortex decreases in volume, perhaps because of the synaptic pruning process, until the third decade of life.

Dr. Clark provided information on the National Consortium on Alcohol and Neurodevelopment in Adolescence (NCANDA). They hope to study adolescents and young adults into their late 20s. Study features include:

- Accelerated longitudinal design.
- Large sample ($N = 831$).
- Ages 12 through 21 at baseline.
- Extensive assessments (clinical, neuropsychological, substance use).
- Annual assessments for eight years.
- MRI structural, DTI, connectivity.
- Integrated functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) sub-studies.

Dr. Clark noted that NCANDA has observed anomalies on clinical readings. Anomalies, such as cysts that deform the temporal lobe, occur in about 10 percent of subjects who have no apparent problems on psychological or cognitive tests. Findings include:

- There was an 11-percent incidence of structural anomalies.
- In studies comparing subjects without and with anomalies, there was no difference between the two groups in the following domains: performance accuracy, attention, balance, emotion, episodic memory, working memory, or general cognitive ability.

A second neuroimaging technique covered was diffusion-weighted imaging (DWI), which shows white matter microstructure. White matter contains axons that group together into bundles connecting gray matter regions. Fiber bundles restrict diffusion of water molecules, and this technique allows researchers to see the mapping of white-matter tracts.

Dr. Clark noted differences among machines and used an example of two machines (3T General Electric Discovery MR750 and 3T SIEMANS TIM TRIO scanners) to illustrate the differences. They've addressed these differences by transforming data from three human phantoms who travel to the various sites on a regular basis.

A third MRI technique presented was the task-based fMRI. One area of measurement is behavioral data; they study behavioral regulation using an anti-saccade task, which investigates the flexible control people have over their behavior.

The fourth technique looked at IFN differences between age groups (i.e., resting state connectivity). Adolescents were categorized into three age groups: ages 12-14, 15-17, and 18-21. Connectivity in the executive and salience networks was stronger and spatially more distributed in older adolescents, with boys showing greater spatial distribution than girls.

Dr. Clark noted that they are participating in the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) study, which has just begun. It's a longitudinal study of about 10,000 children ages 9-10 through early adulthood to assess factors that influence individual brain development trajectories and functional outcomes using the techniques he described. They will conduct neuroimaging assessments every two years.

He stated that a variety of techniques have been developed indicating that brain development continues into young adulthood. He said it's important that those working with young adults know that they can't directly relate MRI results to behavioral characteristics. There is substantial individual variation.

Dr. Clark closed by summarizing neuroscience research issues:

- There are several MRI techniques.
- Brain development continues in adolescence and young adulthood.
- There is substantial individual variation.
- Anomalies do not equal dysfunction; they may not change the performance of the brain, as the brain has been able to adapt to the anomalies.

- There is publication bias; studies tend to be published if they confirm the hypotheses.
- Large ongoing studies are taking place (e.g., NCANDA); these could address issues relevant to justice-involved youth because they have high statistical power and use the best techniques currently available. There is also transparency of data; it will be available for others to use very soon.

Practitioner: Dan Busso, FrameWorks Institute

Dr. Dan Busso is from the FrameWorks Institute, a think tank working on communicating science for policy and to the public. They are working on several projects related to adolescents. There are Ph.D.s on staff who understand the gaps between experts and the public in how they think about issues. Policymakers generally tend to think more like the public than like the research community. FrameWorks devises new communication tools to shift the way the public thinks about research.

Dr. Busso noted that “science doesn’t speak for itself.” The average person doesn’t understand articles in scientific journals or the policy implications of the findings. He said that two people can be given the same data but arrive at different policy conclusions. Researchers need to be attentive to the way the public thinks.

He shared some work the FrameWorks Institute has done in the early childhood domain. They worked with Harvard on knowledge related to early childhood development and the brain, asking, “How can we communicate findings?” In talking with the research community, one of the core principles indicates that the first few years of life lay the foundation for early learning and development. However, the public tended to think that the foundation for children doesn’t start until they begin walking and talking. To change these perspectives, FrameWorks came up with explanatory metaphors. One metaphor was “brain architecture,” describing that a child’s brain develops like a house, from the bottom up. Thus, strong foundations early in life are necessary for a stable and healthy structure. He said testing such metaphors plays an important role in getting the public to understand research and change people’s minds about policy.

Facilitated Discussion

Prompt Questions

- How has science around brain development in adolescence and young adulthood been useful to practitioners and policymakers in the criminal justice system?
- How can messaging of the science be more effective or used differently?
- What, if any, additional science is needed in this area to inform better practice and policy?

Discussion

Dr. Clark was asked whether we are at the point where it has been established that there is more variation in brain characteristics in 15-year-old subjects than in 20-year-old subjects. He answered no, as many studies have focused on a narrow age window with small sample sizes. There is also considerable variation because of measurement problems, not just biological differences. The type of software and hardware used can account for some variation. On an individual basis, some people move more in the MRI during studies.

He said that the change between the brains of people age 15 and of people age 20 is not as dramatic as one might think. The scatter is quite large. He noted a tendency to jump forward and over-interpret the results of one study. Although the data are amazing, researchers are in an early stage of understanding the relationship between brain development and behavioral characteristics.

Dr. Busso was asked whether, in his work, it is important to make distinctions between policymakers and practitioners. He said that it depends and that it is worth looking into how practitioners think. They seem to sit somewhere in the middle between the lay public and policymakers and researchers when it comes to their understanding of research.

Dr. Rolf Loeber said that this was a good discussion. There is a large body of literature related to young people and relevant issues such as consequences and sensation-seeking. It suggests that in this age group, there are major improvements in these areas over time.

Dr. Clark was asked to provide more detail on the meaning of the anomalies found. He explained that the anomalies don't seem to affect functioning. Subjects with brain disease, such as a tumor (about 1-2 out of 1,000), are removed from the study. Every scan is examined by a neuroradiologist who can identify significant anomalies or disease characteristics. In most situations, the cysts found had been present for a long time; they deformed the brain, but the brain had adapted and brain functioning had not been affected.

Mr. Cohen was intrigued by the research on development and how it impacts decision-making. He was trying to connect the dots between the development of the prefrontal cortex and the fact that a person's ability to make decisions is not fully developed by age 18. He asked how that tied in with the brain anomalies.

Dr. Clark explained that the brain anomaly conversation was a different topic and didn't relate directly to the area under discussion. They were there to discuss normal brain development. He said he focused on the thinning of the cortex because it's the organization of the brain that's important, not its size; the cortex is an indirect measure. With synaptic pruning, the foundations are laid down early; then some parts drop off. This is reflected in white matter organization that can be examined directly.

A participant made a point about brain development, decision-making, and the age/crime curve. There are huge individual differences. They need to understand biological development, but science is far from making this connection. They first need to understand what "normal" is and then look at deviations.

In response to a question about messaging specifically for law enforcement, Dr. Busso said they don't try to segment the lay public to that degree. He noted that people are motivated by different professional interests, but in their work, they don't address messaging at that level.

He also addressed a participant's question about intragroup and between-group messaging and how the message could be misinterpreted. She asked: Have you thought about how to tell an honest message about research that's complicated? He responded, yes; they decide what is appropriate to translate and what isn't. They try to determine which pieces of knowledge really drive people's opinions about policy change. Some are too nuanced and not critical for the public to understand, although they are important for research.

A comment was made about linking the age-crime curve with biological development and the need to recognize complexity due to a wide range of environmental factors such as poverty, hunger, stress, sleep deprivation, and exposure to violence. Noise in urban areas also affects healthy development. The participant asked: What part of your budget are you willing to devote to this? Can you partner with NIH to move some of this research? Dr. Spivak said that there are studies that relate to these issues, but NIJ primarily funds applied science, rather than basic science. Another participant noted that the ABCD study is investigating these environmental factors. Eventually the ABCD study will provide fantastic data on these issues.

It was noted that there is a general understanding that there is no “magic line” (age at which development is considered mature), but translating that into policy and practice is difficult. The boundary of age 18 that was set 100 years ago is now somewhat understood as outdated, but it has not significantly changed policy. Can the science ever point to certain markers that can be attached to policy change? Dr. Clark said they need to talk to neuroscientists.

Mr. Cohen commented that people think adulthood is defined as being 18 years old. It’s hard for people to wrap their minds around the issues of young adults and the adult justice system. He said that it’s not a dead end, though; people are starting to understand that college-age people do “dumb stuff.” This gave him hope for future criminal justice reform efforts.

Dr. Maryann Davis said that the mental health system has been having this debate for about 20 years. How do we solve this problem? Do you extend the age of adolescent mental health services, or do you lower the age of adult services? There is no clear answer to this, but some experiments are taking place in the mental health space that could inform response to justice-involved young adults.

Dr. Chris Uggen asked Dr. Busso about messaging related to racism and reductionist arguments. He asked: Does NIJ or do we need to change our message? Dr. Busso said that we tend to look at individual behaviors, which reflects a lack of understanding regarding the range of variables that affect behavior.

A participant cautioned the group about socioeconomic issues, specifically to be careful not to villainize young adults in underserved communities by saying: “Your brain didn’t develop properly.” She agreed with the medical data. They’ve heard young adults are harder to deal with in institutions around the country. She added that including young adults in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) by allowing them to stay on their parents’ insurance until the age of 26 has been an important step. They also see the “falling off the cliff” problem in foster care.

The science on brain development has been useful. There’s a difference in conversations with policymakers compared with the general public. Research findings are not reaching the general public. Although elected officials “get it,” they are often not comfortable drawing a distinction that goes further (e.g., an older age).

Dr. Laub said that the idea of emerging adulthood has not taken hold in criminal justice. He asked: Has it taken hold in developmental psychology? The response was yes; whether you call it emerging adulthood or not, researchers are investigating that age range, and there is an ongoing conversation in the field. However, there has not been a strong

connection linking the concept of emerging adulthood to “what does this mean for society.” Dr. Davis noted that the field has tended to not use the phrase “emerging adults,” because it seems to refer strongly to middle class white individuals, and this has contributed to a split in the field.

Psychological and Social Development

Researcher: Edward Mulvey, University of Pittsburgh

Dr. Edward Mulvey provided remarks about what we know regarding psychological and social development, where this research effort is headed, and where it should go. He said that the summary the group heard was accurate. There is no clear demarcation in the literature regarding people beyond age 18. There are no obvious or strict cutoff points, and there is a curve. There is also major intra- and inter-individual variability across groups. Young adults don’t develop at the same rate, as shown in MRIs. This creates problems for the justice system, because it relies on clear age demarcations and predictions.

He noted that the selling point for the justice system is that the psychosocial factors involved throughout the developmental stages of adolescence/young adulthood (e.g., heightened influence of emotional states on judgment, heightened influence from peers, dampened ability to weigh costs and benefits, especially regarding risks and rewards) clearly relate to antisocial behavior and criminal activity. These factors correspond to brain development (e.g., myelination). So far, the field has not changed significantly in response to the new insights from psychological and developmental neuroscience research. He stated that malleability is the issue: Can these things be changed and pushed forward by brain development? This is the key question that can force the justice system to say, “We have a responsibility to promote more positive interactions than are currently taking place.”

In terms of how research findings have been applied, there has been less “line drawing.” He mentioned U.S. Supreme Court decisions, specifically the *Miller v. Alabama* decision (Kagan stated, “incorrigibility is inconsistent with youth”). It calls for consideration of developmental maturity as a mitigating factor. This has affected case law. Dr. Mulvey also noted the age of juvenile court jurisdictions. There are some calls for youth courts and different ways to supervise young offenders. Methods need to be integrated into practice that influence kids in a more positive way. There is a difficulty in practice; the system hasn’t gotten where it needs to be in terms of guidelines and regulations. Some central questions relate to the link between malleability and interventions: Will interventions push development forward in a substantial way? Also, what is the impact of factors such as trauma on psychological development in realms that are relevant to offending?

Another key question is how should the idea of deterrents be viewed? There is a substantial number of people who see the justice system as a way to punish or teach kids a lesson. The field needs to know if there is any payoff from deterrents, and whether they can be made to work better. In the National Academy of Sciences report, they reworked punishment into accountability. What does that really mean for kids in the system? What is the role of fairness in the process?

This leads to the need for integration into community-based services. We want limited institutionalization of kids, but is that enough? Is that the end goal? What can we do to have a positive influence on community-based services?

Dr. Mulvey closed with a point about parole decision-making for adults who have been incarcerated since adolescence. He asked: How do you assess adults who have been in prison for 20 years but were incarcerated as teens?

Practitioner: Katherine Miller, Office of San Francisco District Attorney George Gascón

Ms. Katherine Miller noted that their Young Adult Court was influenced by talks with the Roca program. The underpinnings of their court pulled from research on brain development and trauma. The data on who is in the system in San Francisco indicate that at every stage it is disproportionately made up of young adults. They see disproportionate numbers of robberies and gun violence perpetrated by young adults. They want to find a way to address all crimes, but their current focus is primarily on serious felonies, with a majority of the cases being robberies.

They have also been influenced by problem-solving courts (e.g., drug courts) that have a well-documented history. This is a nonadversarial team approach that addresses the underlying issues (e.g., untreated mental illness, substance abuse). Their court includes judges, prosecutors, probation officers, the district attorney's office, defense counsel, and service partners who work with participants in an individualized way to come up with their own plans. There are repeat court appearances over an extended period. They use sanctions and incentives to promote behavior change and achieve better legal outcomes.

Their Young Adult Court started in August 2015 and was filled immediately. Young adult participants were paired with clinical case managers. They are seen for 12-18 months in four phases. The participants move into identifying the plan they want with their case managers and work to stabilize their needs and goals. There are weekly therapy groups, skills groups, and clinician sessions. Participants stay busy during their time in the program. They are engaged because they have a voice in the program. The first graduation took place in November 2016. The legal benefits may be that after they complete the program, the participants have no record at all or have a reduced charge.

Ms. Miller inquired about what would be most helpful for justice-involved young adults, specifically how to accelerate psychosocial development. Some options include family engagement/involvement, including the ability for the court to speak with parents. Engagement (e.g., feeling of belonging) is likely indicated, rather than treatment.

The court is still in development; they're figuring it out as they go along. Ms. Miller said that it's been a great ride and a privilege to work on this effort. She noted that the judge involved greatly enjoys these cases; she feels they are accomplishing something.

Facilitated Discussion

Prompt Questions

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Discussion

In response to questions, Ms. Miller explained that the Young Adult Court program has about 70-75 participants. The judge sees about 35 participants a week and has a dialogue with each one that lasts approximately three minutes. There is also case conferencing. They would like to add mentors. Family involvement depends on the young person. The case manager works to engage the family and get input from them throughout. However, there are not many examples where the family is heavily involved. The team uses validated assessment tools to determine levels of trauma, depression, anxiety, and social supports. They redo the assessments at intervals. The typical length of time participants spend in the program is 12-16 months. Because the program is new, they don't yet have data regarding completion rates. They lost approximately 20 participants in the first year for several reasons; some wanted to plead guilty and get out right away, while others were better served in drug courts or in behavioral health courts because of addiction or mental illness. In addition, participants who commit new offenses are sometimes asked to leave.

In response to a question about the key pillars he would prescribe, Dr. Mulvey noted proportional punishment, determination of at-risk kids, and family engagement. He said that mothers have been the most important persons in these young adults' lives. There is a need for better integration for kids who aren't high risk. Better services for high-risk kids are very important.

Mr. Yotam Zeira said that the Roca program assesses risk levels and focuses on the highest risk young people. They're serving 700 men a year. There is a lack of family support, and no simple answer to the questions: How do you create a network? What services can be made available for the highest risk level young people?

Ms. Miller pointed out that, as a system, they come in and take kids from their families. That ruptures family engagement. They have to achieve a balance; they can't pretend the mother doesn't exist and leave her out of the situation. Yet, they must allow young adults to define their own networks of support. At this age, they can make these decisions for themselves. It's a unique opportunity.

A participant asked the speakers if the kids come in pre- or post-plea and whether they had to rework the benefits for them. Mr. Zeira said that they come in when they are in the pre-contemplation stage, and most come in as high risk. Certain offenses can come in pre-plea, while some require a plea. Others come in on probation. It depends on the offense. The goal is to engage them at each of these levels. A major issue is not having strikes on their record.

Ms. Hannah Furstenberg-Beckman asked about balancing the demands placed on justice-involved young adults: Are participants kept busy or do the requirements become overwhelming and then it becomes hard for them to succeed in the program? Mr. Zeira said that participants articulate their goals and are kept busy. The program is patient and flexible about this. It's attentive to where participants are and their capacity to move forward; it's very individualized.

One participant who visited Ms. Miller's San Francisco program heard from a small group of young adults who said they wanted probation officers to be like coaches.

Dr. Davis asked Dr. Mulvey: Concerning program development, do you know from the literature which pieces are needed for success (e.g., social capital, mentors)? Are there developmental areas where more research is needed? Dr. Mulvey said that the field doesn't know what research is needed. Success has a lot to do with a feeling of belonging; engagement, rather than treatment. This observation is not based on studies. Also, in the literature, the evidence-based programs using cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) see this with a developmental lens. The things that make developmental sense to him are the kids' abilities to think through their actions, interpret situations, and push forward through a structured intervention.

In Connecticut, the majority of cases are gun charges. The San Francisco Young Adult Court program currently excludes those cases. One participant asked Ms. Miller: Why would the judges and district attorney decline to take on those with gun charges? What would they need to see to take those cases? The response was that they would need research showing the model is working. A process evaluation is underway.

Dr. Laub commented on deterrence, saying that Dr. Mulvey sees it as inevitable within the criminal justice system, and our culture believes in it. Dr. Laub has done some work on how risk changes based on the likelihood of arrest. He noted that they don't yet know developmentally how kids change their thinking about crime, related to deterrence. This is a big gap in the literature. They need to know which rewards will work and what the social capital needs are for an 18-year-old. This could be affected through policy.

A participant asked if interventions could address psychosocial factors to try to accelerate psychosocial development. Dr. Mulvey did not know, but asked if others could weigh in. Dr. Davis said that CBT programs seem to be working in psychosocial domains. Perhaps it could be done better in terms of developmental thinking. A question was also raised about whether treating the effects of trauma and stress would be helpful, as these affect development.

A participant asked about research on the system effects of incarceration and how it can delay the aging-out process. Is there valid research on this, and can it be described? Dr. Mulvey said that low-risk kids do worse. He's skeptical that kids will be permanently thrown off their development path by incarceration. It might be true for some kids, but not for others. It's hard to know which variables affect re-arrests. Dr. Laub noted a gap in the literature related to talking to people inside prisons. Who do they connect with inside the institution? How does the prison experience affect them?

A study on a vocational training program to decrease criminal activity was mentioned.

Area 2. Life Course Perspective

Researcher: Chris Uggen, University of Minnesota

Dr. Chris Uggen asked: What do we know and not know about the importance of life transitions for justice-involved young adults?

Dr. Uggen showed a graph indicating age and arrest for various crimes; there is some variation by type of offense, but we know that the rate of crimes such as burglary, homicide, rape, and embezzlement rises in the teens, peaks in the late teens and early 20s, and declines sharply in young adulthood.

Dr. Uggen also noted the importance of social context. His recent article in *Criminology* on genocide in Rwanda indicated a more symmetrical age-genocide curve, with the peak age of participation occurring in the 30s. The social meaning of crimes, such as killing, changes dramatically during periods of mass violence.

He presented on how crime affects the transition to adult status, and how this has changed over time.

- The markers of adult status include self-sufficiency, marriage, parenthood, and school completion, which all may be affected by a criminal record.
- Fifty years ago, these commonly occurred at younger ages than they do today.
- As people desist from crime, they are much more likely to think of themselves as adults.
- There is now an extension of adolescence and a gig economy (jobs are less stable).

Structural Opportunities

- Recession and cohort size also affect the transition to adulthood; youth are competing for limited jobs and justice-involved youth face stigma.
- Transitions such as parenthood, marriage, and work each have a different effect on the person when they occur in the late-20s than when they occur “precociously” in the mid-teens.
 - Age norms have changed for each of these markers. Previously, people became parents and started working at age 17; compare this with hitting these milestones at age 24 and at age 38.

Over the past 40 years, the national incarceration rate has more than quintupled. At the same time, the number of 25-year-olds attaining all these markers of adulthood has declined significantly; from 43 percent of men and 71 percent of women in 1960, to only 14 percent of men and 28 percent of women in 2000.¹ Some of this is likely due to the increased involvement of young people with the justice system.

Dr. Uggen presented survey research showing that adulthood is closely tied to activities such as working, limiting one’s drinking, voting, spending time with children, and volunteering. On the other hand, it is not tied to activities such as violating the law or doing something one knows is wrong. This suggests a link between crime and punishment, on the one hand, and making a successful transition to adulthood.

Dr. Uggen then showed a graph that contrasted arrestees and nonarrestees on whether they considered themselves “off-time” (i.e., behind schedule) related to reaching the milestones of marriage, children, education, work, and other events. People who had been arrested were significantly less likely than nonarrestees to feel “on time” for getting married, completing education, getting a job, and attaining financial independence.

¹ Dr. Uggen referenced his article, Massoglia and Uggen, “Settling Down and Aging Out: Toward an Interactionist Theory of Desistance and the Transition to Adulthood,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 10 no. 2 (2010): 543-582.

Dr. Uggen said that a central challenge for the future is how society can produce more “grown-ups” and fewer people under criminal justice supervision. In an aging society, the need for prime-age workers (and taxpayers) will become increasingly urgent, as will the need to help young people transition out of crime and into adult roles. He said that voting and participating as an adult citizen in the community is one possibility. In terms of their subjective sense of adulthood, getting arrested knocks people back, whereas getting married and getting a job moves them forward.

Dr. Uggen then presented the question: Can institutions ease the transition?

- Demography, taxpayers, and justice reform.
- “Seeing oneself” as an adult in good standing.
- Moving from “hell-raiser” to good citizen, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the community.
- But criminal records are more “sticky” today (see, e.g., Sarah Lageson: digital punishment).
 - mugshots.com versus removemymug.com.
 - easy access, any contact, \$399 to remove, errors.

Efficacy: Move the Needle and Affect Crime

Dr. Uggen mentioned several research studies on various topics:²

- Educational attainment: strong correlations with desistance from crime.
 - Duwe and Clark, 2017: a postsecondary degree is more important than a secondary degree.
 - Stewart and Uggen, 2016: college admissions.
- Employment: age and drug involvement.
 - Uggen, 2000: jobs less effective for those under age 26.
 - Uggen and Shannon, 2014: reduce crime, not drug use.
 - Verbruggen et al., 2015 (Dutch): work reduces crime for both men and women.
- Marriage: a changing institution.
 - Sampson, Laub, and Wimer, 2006: large effect on subsequent crime in Glueck data.
 - King, Massoglia, and Macmillan, 2007: propensity — least likely to marry benefit most.

² For full citations, see Some Resources Mentioned section at end of document.

- Warr: changing networks and time with friends.
- Bersani and Doherty, 2013: how marriage and divorce work; varies across groups (Bersani and DiPietro, 2016).
- Skardhamer et al., 2013 (Norway): desistance starts before marriage (but marriage is more rare, later).
- Li and Guo, 2015: gen-X — marriage interaction.

Dr. Uggen continued his discussion on employment.

He noted Devah Pager’s experimental research showing that prison records have a dramatic effect on employment and his own experimental research showing that even a low-level arrest can reduce the rate of positive call-backs from employers. His study gave an example of someone with a 3-year-old disorderly conduct record with no conviction.

Dr. Uggen presented data and information on education effects for justice-involved young adults.

Dr. Uggen showed a graph from Robert Stewart’s research called “Rejection Rate by Race and Felony Status (full sample, $n = 271$ colleges/542 applications).” The researchers sent identical dossiers to educational institutions. There was a high rejection rate for low-level felony records (e.g., one robbery), creating barriers to traversing the markers of educational attainment.

The research needs are:

- Designs more suited for causal inference, particularly in the area of education.
 - Easier in education/work than marriage.
- Stronger, more intensive treatments; starting treatments earlier during incarceration, while still inside correctional facilities.
 - Supported work had larger effects. They stuck with people. It was effective with drug-involved folks but did not reduce drug offenses; it did reduce robbery. Graduated stress? Recession context?
- Multimethod design.
 - Quantitative effects and qualitative mechanisms — to understand how it works.

Practitioner: Gregg Croteau, UTEC

Mr. Gregg Croteau is the executive director of UTEC in Lowell, MA. UTEC’s intensive program is for youth who are seriously gang involved or criminally involved (with a priority on violent crimes, felony convictions, and reentry from prison). Mr. Croteau was part of a grassroots effort to launch UTEC. They work with young people and target key players involved in action in the neighborhoods, mostly young men with felony charges. Their street workers think about how to get there at the right moment. They are involved in rival gang

peacemaking work. They partner with hospitals, but the biggest opportunity is in prisons. UTEC has a mixed model of education and employment; they use a social enterprise model.

They have found that people's life trajectory changes in their mid-20s, so they "zoom in" on those young people. All youth are paired with a case manager, called a transitional coach, who works with them on a wide set of goals. Social enterprise allows the program to extend the clock and provide additional positive contact time. Participants can create their own rules, and they have a safe place to fail.

They do extensive work "behind the walls" with those who are in criminal justice institutions. They engage those participants at least nine months prior to release in individual meetings and circle groups. There is a young adult unit for participants from ages 18-24 coming to life in Massachusetts; they want to mirror the UTEC experience behind the prison walls a year or so prior to release.

The biggest emphasis for them is engagement. They need to be with young people ages 18-24 in some capacity.

The gang will offer these youth money, so UTEC needs to offer employment. There is the risk of relapse, but the model allows UTEC to be flexible to relapses and in some cases prevent them. Some people might come in and out of the program from four to five times.

As a good portion of these young adults are parents, they are building an onsite early education center, because parents working with their children is a life-changing opportunity to grow. They work with the participants' kids in an intergenerational approach. They also believe strongly in the ability to vote; expungement is a big opportunity to move forward.

Facilitated Discussion

Prompt Questions

- How has the science around positive life transitions, such as educational attainment, employment, and marriage in young adulthood, been useful to practitioners and policymakers in the criminal justice system?
- How can messaging of the science be more effective or used differently?
- What, if any, additional science is needed in this area to inform better practice and policy?

Discussion

In response to a question, Mr. Croteau said that supported work through the social enterprise is one of the most promising new parts of their model. Some programs get participants working the first day, and they are sometimes paid right away. Services can be built onto that. Over time, work gradually decreases stress and helps people succeed. Concerning relapse, he acknowledged that there is a high probability that young people will relapse. This is one of the issues they deal with. Using a work intervention is difficult in the shifting economy. He worries about getting people into jobs and not knowing how long the jobs will be there.

Ms. Furstenberg-Beckman asked how parenthood can be leveraged to make interventions more effective for young people. Mr. Croteau said working with two generations is a promising approach. He also noted that kids are a source of stress. It's difficult to generalize, but on average children have had a more positive influence on the young mothers than on the young fathers.

A participant said a lesson he was realizing was that they learn by doing. It makes sense, as that's how we all learn. It's true not just for jobs, but for life in general. He asked, "How can we push psychosocial development in other ways besides jobs?" Mr. Croteau said that young people come to the program with a 6th- or 7th-grade education, so college is not an option right away. Research on GEDs indicates it might not have strong impacts, but locally, they do see changes.

Mr. Zeira said that in the first six to seven months of their program, participants spend one hour after another in different activities. This distracts them from gang involvement. It's important to do something with them.

Ms. Amina Adossa-Ali said they are a pretrial agency [U.S. Pretrial Services Agency, Eastern District of New York]. They get young adults from the time they're released and on bail. They try to get them completely diverted, avoid jail, or get their sentences reduced in a reasonable time. She noted that the U.S. Attorney's office doesn't want cases open for three to four years while they develop the person. They have 29 participants, and less than 15 percent have high school diplomas. She was asked if there are cognitive issues. She replied that in the GED program, it could be six to nine months before participants receive an assessment. Instead, they refer participants to mental health services so they get an assessment right away on their cognitive abilities. If they're not cognitively ready, it will weigh on their self-esteem. Once her program knows about participants' cognitive issues, they can refer participants to specifically tailored programs for those with disabilities. Their participants are completing vocational training and getting jobs. Also, in the area of mental health, the providers have a CBT group called "Thinking for Change." Ms. Adossa-Ali said she's seeing fewer issues with these young adults. The assessments help them identify participants' needs and refer them appropriately.

Ms. Emily Morgan asked how research and best practices can be better messaged for the business community to encourage hiring of young adults. She also suggested developing case studies to share with employment programs, agencies, as well as prospective employers and/or private partners who are hesitant to hire justice-involved young adults. Dr. Uggen said some employers can tell their stories of hiring these young people convincingly to other employers. He believes in public-private partnerships.

Dr. Laub raised the issue of mandatory military service. He asked if the transition is different in Israel or other places that require national service. Dr. Uggen said that it may be important for young adults to feel part of a broader community; national service could conceptually fill that need. However, he has not seen the research. The military, among other public service options, can be considered as a prosocial activity. He toured the system in Germany. There is a lower than 1 percent run rate. Germany moved the dial somewhat by having people develop relationships with their parents. National service could be one part of building social relationships. Mr. Zeira said that he served in the Israeli military. He

said it developed a sense of responsibility. However, the military is far removed from regular social norms. He felt the general idea is a good one, although it will not be applied in terms of policy. There's a need to find more tools to engage young people. Dr. Laub said the World War II veterans they studied were given the GI Bill, which they used to get education and move into the work world. Internships are important. People can be given more scaffolding to help bridge their experiences.

Mr. Cohen has talked to people at DoD about the war atmosphere. It can have adverse impacts on people's development. People need to transition after returning from war due to trauma.

Dr. Uggen stated that Job Corps is designed for this age group, but it lacks the residential component. The military has a residential component. That could be part of the "secret sauce" (underlying mechanism) to why certain interventions work.

Area 3. System Responses

Practitioner: Vincent Schiraldi, Harvard Kennedy School

Mr. Vincent Schiraldi discussed the environmental scan, which puts programs into several buckets, including young adult courts. These programs are exemplified by special assessments and the ability to prevent those going through them from being fully processed or to help those going through them get a better deal (e.g., no record, probation instead of incarceration). Many of these programs are recent. They can result in special discretion in probation and parole requirements. Mr. Schiraldi said 90 percent of sentences in federal courts result in some form of incarceration; that means it's harder to widen the net of social control in federal court and more important to succeed in the presentence phase.

He listed the following programs described in the environmental scan:

- Young adult courts.
- Probation and parole programs.
- District attorney-led special programs.
- Community-based partnerships, sometimes systemic.
- Hybrid partnerships (e.g., Roca and UTEC), which are systemic.

He stated that there's not much research on these approaches. He mentioned Multisystemic Therapy for Emerging Adults (MST-EA). The scan reported that since this approach has research documenting its effectiveness with this population, it was anticipated that some programs might be using it, but the researchers on the MST-EA project (including Dr. Davis) reported that research examining the outcomes for MST-EA were based on a single team, but there are currently two teams, both in Connecticut, providing MST-EA, and both engaged in a randomized controlled trial. Mr. Schiraldi noted Dr. Davis's precursor study and said Roca will have a randomized clinical trial published in three years. He stated that a great deal of research is needed; the field doesn't know what to do programmatically or systemically.

Mr. Schiraldi closed by mentioning recent work that examined the age-crime curve decline in a state that implemented a policy to raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction to 21. They were expecting no change in the number and slope of the decline in arrests, as offending tends to decrease into adulthood anyway. However, there was a noticeable difference and decline (58 percent) in the number of 16-year-olds arrested after the age of juvenile jurisdiction was raised from 16 to 17, in excess of what was predicted by the previous rates of decline for that age group. He was not sure why this happened. He noted that incarceration rates nationally were declining sharply for both juveniles (i.e., under 18) and young adults (18-25) while there has been a slight increase in incarceration for those older than age 25. Again, there has been insufficient research to understand what is behind these sharply diverging trends.

Researcher: Jen Woolard, Georgetown University

Dr. Jen Woolard asked, what needs to happen next? She noted that Shay Bilchik has brought teams together in the area of juvenile justice to work on system reform. This could be paralleled in the same way for young adults. She asked the following questions:

- Where are the levers for change?
- What goals do we want to accomplish?
- What do systems need to do to reach young adults (e.g., reduce recidivism, case flow)?
- What are the roles of various stakeholders, and how can we identify the changes needed in their roles?

She indicated that perhaps incarceration declines are occurring for young adults because the age of juvenile jurisdiction has been raised. The conversation should be about public safety instead of culpability, and focus on the back end; the true opportunity is to take control of rapid brain development by changing behaviors with interventions.

She noted that not everyone has heard the current research on neuroscience and brain development.

District attorneys need to be reached; they control the lever of entry. There are added political consequences for district attorneys if things go wrong. They are less aware of these issues than private-practice attorneys.

Dr. Woolard closed by asking what the core components would be when a program is created and what changes they should try to implement. What systems are receptive to moving forward? Is there a grand vision for this effort?

Facilitated Discussion

Prompt Questions

- What have we learned from prior research on system responses about how to best meet the needs of young adults involved in the justice system?
- What are some of the most innovative or promising approaches that have been attempted based on developmental science on young adults?

- What are the one or two most critical gaps in knowledge that need to be filled to allow criminal justice practitioners to develop the best programs and practices to meet the needs of young adults who are involved in the justice system?

Discussion

Mr. Schiraldi said many states are now able to “juvenilize” young adults to get them less prison time or treat them differently. In Europe, four out of five countries treat young adults differently. Many countries feel they should be treated as a separate population. In Croatia, Germany, and the Netherlands, they start these efforts at a young age.

Judge Joan Azrack said we have been fortunate so far, but we need support from the U.S. Attorney’s Office. She noted that the new administration might make changes. She hopes they will be open to empirical data.

Ms. Miller said that it’s not just about culpability; there will be arguments from the other side.

It was stated that Judge Lippman wanted to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 18 in New York; meanwhile, he diverted young adults in some jurisdictions around the state. Some jurisdictions widened the net and had worse outcomes (e.g., Buffalo). Brooklyn and the Bronx did well; they had lower recidivism rates. They had many funded programs. Some defender associations did not want to raise the age because they were already getting good outcomes. Mr. Zeira asked if they are educated about the science and about this age group.

Ms. Miller said that, at the national level, there is a discussion on developmentally appropriate assessment strategies, but it’s unknown how many have used these strategies. It’s been difficult in general to bring people around to the idea that protocols for assessment should be modified for juveniles and young adults. She said that the culpability issue should be addressed from the beginning.

When it was proposed to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 18 in New York, the Vera Institute of Justice did a study. In Connecticut and Illinois, which had 18 as the age of criminal responsibility, the arrest curve shifted down, but this could not be attributed to the raising of the age of criminal responsibility to 18, as it was too soon after the change was implemented. Perhaps declines in incarceration are occurring for young adults because the system handles people differently if they’re called juveniles; perhaps cops don’t arrest them. A judge doesn’t want to be the first one to lock a kid up. Both states want to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 21. A participant added that Connecticut and Illinois did not “throw resources” at this effort; they just changed the way their systems responded to young people.

Mr. Cohen noted that, at the very least, experience indicates that the sky did not fall once the age of criminal responsibility was raised, even if the lower rates can’t be explained. Rather than culpability, the focus should be on the opportunity for changed behavior. This will increase public safety; we should have this kind of conversation with people to convince them to change. If we can change behavior, public safety will be improved. This is an argument for doing things differently. A participant said that would measure behavior change, when what is needed is to measure system change; this is a problem of study design. Mr. Cohen suggested that perhaps some system response can be observed and measured to serve as a proxy.

In Connecticut, adults are out of their cells only two hours a day. The young adult unit will have them out of their cells 10 hours a day and involved in programming. This can make a profound difference in recidivism when they are released.

A participant noted that in Washington, D.C., they can keep kids in the juvenile system up to age 21 if they are adjudicated as juveniles. She asked if there is research on this, compared with forcing them out at age 18. The response was no; there was one study that showed worse outcomes, but it was unique to New York City.

Additional comments:

- In New York State, if you are charged with an adult crime but are under age 16, you are placed in the juvenile justice system.
- In San Francisco, they have separate juvenile and adult probation departments; they are doing a better job with young adults.
- One participant said the question that comes up for him is: If we raise the age of criminal responsibility in the criminal justice system, how do young adults get the services they need from the other systems that have not raised the age? The justice system will be out of sync with mental health and other systems.
- Youth are feeling very mismatched; 18-year-olds are incarcerated with 40-year-old heroin addicts.
- Even as they're maturing developmentally, they're detaching themselves from education and family, which has negative effects on stabilization.
- Concerning framing the issue in terms of public safety, they could look at a reduction in the severity of crimes. They need to articulate that case and present any research out there.
- Dr. Grant Duwe's work in Minnesota indicates that visitation behind the walls leads to a reduction in recidivism.³ The programming inside also has positive results.
- A paper was soon to be presented on Connecticut's consideration of raising the age of responsibility; the governor wanted data. The paper will be sent to the group when available.

Area 4. Evaluation

Researcher: Jeffrey A. Butts, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Dr. Jeffrey Butts said that evaluation should play a large role in policy and practice. Human development is not finished at some "magic birthday." Prosecutors and judges need to know that extending the developmental frame beyond age 18 will not endanger them politically and public safety will not be harmed.

³ Duwe and Clark, "Blessed Be the Social Tie That Binds: The Effects of Prison Visitation on Offender Recidivism," *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 24 no. 3 (2011): 271-296.

The demand for evidence has been increasingly critical when seeking funding for innovative approaches, but lately there has been some pushback. Evaluation evidence is not carefully balanced. Researchers tend to follow the principle of convenience. For instance, people like to do research on issues that can quickly result in publications and recognition. Because of this, there is a great deal of research on detained or incarcerated populations, as they're easy to access and interview. This means the broader population of young adults at risk of incarceration is not being studied as closely. People also favor research on interventions at the individual level rather than the community level because it is easier and cheaper to get the data, and this lends support to the perspective that crime is solely a function of individual culpability rather than combinations of individual, group, and community factors. The field doesn't have many evidence-based programs that intervene at the community level because it's hard to do RCTs (randomized controlled trials). Not enough is being done in this area.

It's also more convenient to use single-sector data, such as justice system only or schools only. However, this measures only one system's contribution to a solution, and no single system is wholly responsible for ensuring positive social outcomes. In addition, how do we define "the justice system"? Too many programs define it as incarceration. There are not enough evidence-based prevention programs for young people not headed for incarceration. And in the case of primary or even secondary prevention programs, it's hard to generate evidence of long-term connection to justice involvement and public safety.

If we were to look earlier in the process at the front door of the system, the risk of long-term justice involvement would be lower, but that is where we should want to intervene because there are big cost-benefit gains to be had. We just have to intervene without escalating risk and harm. We need to build intervention in concert with child welfare, education, job supports, and other systems surrounding the justice system. The field needs to think about developmental context and prevention issues and not just retreat to researching whatever is most convenient.

Practitioner: Yotam Zeira, Roca

Mr. Zeira described the Roca program. Programming is tailored to the individual participant's cognitive and behavioral abilities and provides education and employment. Young adults can be engaged for different periods of time. Relationships are crucial. Participants are often in the pre-contemplation stage, but are developing their skills and becoming more willing to change. Roca stays with them over time, engages institutions, and partners with law enforcement, judicial, corrections, and government agencies.

One challenge is how to serve other populations: How can they break down the pieces in a way that will be helpful for others? Roca knows many of the components that work.

Concerning risk levels, the higher the risk, the more resources are used.

Mr. Zeira said that when they think about evaluation, a common language is needed about who they are serving. For various levels of at-risk youth, different things are effective. There are many things that can be done both within and outside the system.

They use various levels of engagement. Roca's work with high-risk young men has reduced recidivism by two-thirds and doubled employment rates; they are focused on reducing recidivism. To measure outcomes, including short-term and intermediate benchmarks, the

program uses a customized, web-based data tracking and performance-based management system. It provides Roca staff with a feedback loop for both individual participant outcomes and staff efforts. They also can analyze patterns in aggregate, organizationwide data.

Roca engaged in theory of change processes. They have worked with eight evidence-based practices in community corrections. They are attempting to align with the current state of the science. In Roca's Pay for Success project, over five years, they will serve around 1,000 young people. Participants come from probation, parole, the sheriff's department, and all over the criminal justice system. Roca works with all of them. They serve whoever is referred to them, as long as the participant meets the criteria.

A study was conducted by Roca evaluation staff, in collaboration with the Harvard Social Impact Bond Lab and the Massachusetts Department of Administration and Finance. Approximately 900 high-risk young men served by Roca over a five-year period were compared to a control group of juvenile and adult justice system-involved young men across Massachusetts. Compared to the control group, Roca's outcomes showed a 65-percent reduction in recidivism and a 100-percent increase in employment.

Roca has developed a specialized CBT curriculum in partnership with Massachusetts General Hospital. CBT has been very effective.

Facilitated Discussion

Prompt Questions

- What do we need to know to understand the “core components” of effective developmentally informed programs for justice-involved young adults?
- Are there emerging or existing promising programs that are good candidates for evaluation?
- What should success look like for programs and the justice-involved young adults they serve? What data would be needed?

Discussion

Ms. Furstenberg-Beckman said that at ideas42, in New York City, they have various partners, such as the Cook County Detention Center, and some of their work has resulted in lower recidivism.

Dr. Loeber stated that prevention is not only reducing the risk of later serious offending but also the lengths of the criminal career. There is not a lot of literature on this topic, but it is relevant to the group's focus. This is a footnote about what they want to see in evaluations of programs. Dr. Laub said that this raises the stakes on data collection.

Dr. Mulvey asked: What is the role of quality improvement in the system? Thousands of kids' lives are touched in these programs. How should they tackle the fact that a great program this year may not be a great program next year? It might be useful to realize that many programs are not used for an extended period of time.

Mr. Schiraldi said that there is a rub of programs and systemic changes. It applies to the programmatic element; it might be hard to prove what the outcomes are. They don't want to miss this piece.

Ms. Miller stated that there is pressure to have evaluation results after a short time. They start programs and are pressured for results too soon. However, they need time to conduct the evaluation. She said that their young adults can really only be evaluated after graduation. There is an arc for them to develop, and they don't yet know what it looks like. She said longitudinal studies are needed. She loves Roca because of the large numbers of young people that go through it and are evaluated. They can't do that in her program.

Dr. Uggen said that he was turned around on evaluation by a graduate student in his class who had been incarcerated. The student pointed out that he had three years of his life that he otherwise would not have had. He asked Dr. Uggen: How do you build that into an evaluation? Dr. Uggen said he had been myopically focusing on one outcome. If there's no danger to public safety, there's value in the individual's time out of prison being a productive citizen.

When asked to explain how Pay for Success works, Mr. Zeira said that the Massachusetts Juvenile Justice Pay for Success Initiative is a \$28-million partnership between Roca, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the intermediary Third Sector Capital Partners, and a host of private investors. Through the project, Massachusetts' criminal justice agencies refer high-risk young men to Roca on a monthly basis, and Roca's success in reducing incarceration and increasing employment with these young men is measured by an external evaluator. The private funders cover 85 percent of Roca's costs and assume most of the financial risk upfront, and they would be repaid by the Commonwealth only if the projected incarceration reduction outcomes are met. Roca has invested in the program and has skin in the game. If Roca is successful, it's a win-win for everyone; private funders get their money back, the government only pays for what works, and more young people are served. However, it's a very complicated process, when getting referrals from the state, to comply with all the systems involved. He said that they are three years in; two years from now, they will have real data. They will be able to look at the models and decide what they want to do differently. He explained that an intermediary selects the evaluation.

Dr. Laub was struck by Greg Bernam's book, *Trial and Error in the Criminal Justice System: Learning From Failure*. If a program doesn't show the desired effect, we tend to say, what's next? But there's an opportunity to learn from the work on how to do things better. It's good to look at the underlying mechanisms and strengthen areas that need change. Ms. Miller said that there are moments when you have to say, this is not working, but she was confident they would find the right model.

Ms. Miller said that the most interesting research question that could be answered for these programs that support youth is "When do we feel confident enough to let them live their lives?" We don't want to keep them for four years or even one year. Judge Azrack said that there is no magic number. Sometimes it takes four or five years for an individual to be successful, while others may be successful within 18 months.

Dr. Davis said that we don't ask enough: How does it work and under what circumstances? And for how long? Much more research is needed. There might be markers that indicate how long a person will need to be in a program. In mental health, there is a model for a subpopulation that comes back for as long a period as they need help.

Mr. Zeira was asked for guidance on the success process; that is, what works and what doesn't work. He stated that if you don't have a defined model and theory of change, it's

very hard to do this kind of program. Roca was originally a youth center for younger kids. Many were immigrants and refugees. It's hard to engage someone if you don't know what it's going to look like for the next six months. Their partners would not be on board with a four-year timeframe. Engagement is needed at the beginning as well as follow-up. The intensive services are in the first two years (e.g., CBT, workforce). During the next two years, participants receive services, but they are working outside of Roca and Roca mainly provides support and follow-up.

Area 5. Legislation and Policy

Researcher: Rolf Loeber, University of Pittsburgh

Dr. Rolf Loeber drew from the study group report and recent developments. He based his presentation on the following three discussion questions.

Question 1: How has science about brain, psychosocial, and life course development been useful to inform criminal justice reform for justice-involved young adults?

- The evidence is not clear about the brain and psychosocial and life course development; the research is incomplete.
- The problem of causal inferences is crucial to these questions; this is an elusive topic in criminology.
- There's a lack of longitudinal studies, particularly the study of within-individual change.
- Key parameters are individual differences in brain development, social development, cognitive and emotional development, and the age-crime curve.
- Development of research priorities is needed; recent efforts are described below.

Recent Developments in the United States

- The Assistant Attorney General expressed interest in special courts for young adult offenders ages 18-24.
- In September 2015, an NIJ series, *New Thinking in Community Corrections*, was launched in the Great Hall of Justice in Washington, D.C., with the first issue presenting the paper, *Community-Based Responses to Justice-Involved Young Adults*, proposing new ways for dealing with young adult offenders ages 18-24.
- In November 2015, the Council of State Governments Justice Center published *Reducing Recidivism and Improving Other Outcomes for Young Adults in the Juvenile and Adult Criminal Justice Systems*.

Question 2: What legislation or policy changes should we be tracking that can inform practices and programming for young adults involved in the justice system?

- Creating an inventory of state and city court rules and regulations concerning young adult offenders.

- Preparing a list of states/cities that are open to critically examining current practices.
 - Needed for cities with major crime by juveniles and young adults (e.g., programs developed in San Francisco; see Katherine Miller’s presentation).
- Convening experts from selected states/cities to:
 - Inform them about the state of science concerning young adult offenders.
 - Find options for change.
 - Specify the mechanisms of change; a scientific issue: How can change be brought about by changing some things and not others?
 - Determine how to evaluate change.

Question 3: Are there initiatives or policies that are commonly used with justice-involved young adults, and have they been evaluated for effectiveness?

- Influenced by the Dutch Study Group, the Netherlands Department of Justice proposed legislative change, which subsequently was approved by the Dutch parliament in 2013 and implemented in 2014.
 - Social scientists and the legislature communicate closely in Holland.
- New legislation was passed to legally recognize a period of young adulthood (ages 18-23), during which offenders can be sentenced according to juvenile criminal law.
 - It is still possible for offenders ages 16-17 to be sentenced according to adult criminal law in exceptional cases (serious offenses).
- Court decisions about juvenile and young adult offenders in the Netherlands are now based on a risk/needs assessment.
- This legislative change is currently being rigorously evaluated (WODC evaluation program of sentencing of adolescents between the ages of 16 and 23 in the Netherlands, 2016). The evaluation is required by the legislation.

Most Recent Developments in the U.K.

- On October 26, 2016, the House of Commons Justice Committee released a report titled *The Treatment of Young Adults in the Criminal Justice System*.
- It concluded that the system does not adequately address the specific needs of young adult offenders.
- It noted that the Youth Justice Board did not want to extend the youth justice system to include young adult offenders.
- It recommended that special courts for young adult offenders be tested.

- It concluded that the Ministry of Justice did not give sufficient weight to brain maturation and welcomed its commitment to developing a maturity assessment for offenders (using proxy measures).
- It recommended that criminal justice system personnel receive training in brain development.

Practitioner: Marc Schindler, Justice Policy Institute

Mr. Marc Schindler is the executive director of the Justice Policy Institute (JPI), and JPI identified this issue as one of significant interest.

- JPI brought people together for facilitated conversations (two focus groups last year, one in Washington, D.C.; one on the west coast, a diverse group of representatives).
 - Released a paper the previous week; not a quantitative analysis but an effort to communicate the diverse voices in the focus groups.
- Consensus takeaway was “seize this moment”; there is an opportunity now to do something with the young adult population.
 - Includes community-based settings and nonjustice-system players.
- The big recommendations were focus on the community in the least restrictive environment consistent with public safety, be individually tailored and developmentally appropriate, and seek to minimize justice-system involvement.
 - This is what the juvenile justice system is attempting to do, although not always successfully.
 - Should there be a third system?
- Change or adjust the law in the adult justice system to make it more similar to the juvenile justice system.
 - Value of peer navigators; employ people who have been in the system, look at hiring obstacles for those with criminal backgrounds.
- JPI report released the previous week; distills brain research development and relates it to various systems, including criminal justice.
- Coincidentally, *The Washington Post* recently published an article on young adults in the justice system, followed by an op-ed article and a new editorial on 12/12/2016.
 - This media coverage has been counter to the ideas discussed by the group; that is, young offenders should not get a second chance
- JPI report had policy recommendations, including continued research at NIJ.
- Talks with local officials were fairly positive; they want to do something different with this population in Washington, D.C.

- Local Attorney General was inspired by a panel presentation at DOJ last year to implement a grant; should talk to San Francisco about its restorative justice program.

Facilitated Discussion

Prompt Questions

- How has science around brain, psychosocial, and life course development been useful to inform criminal justice reform for justice-involved young adults?
- What legislation or policy changes should we be tracking that can inform practices and programming for young adults involved in the justice system?
- Are there initiatives or policies that are commonly used with justice-involved young adults, and have they been evaluated for effectiveness?

Discussion

Mr. Zeira said that there's a lot to learn from efforts in the U.K.; they funded pilots with local agencies. It's interesting to see how they developed over time. Efforts in Massachusetts are also important (e.g., Mr. Schiraldi's work).

A participant concluded that the practices needed to look like the juvenile justice system; it might be worthwhile to replicate the Connecticut model.

Mr. Zeira mentioned a three-pager on options for model policy changes they developed and will send the document to the group. Mr. Schiraldi will send additional materials related to his presentation to the group.

Ms. Miller explained San Francisco's local legislative and policy changes and shared them with the group. A city ballot funds the bulk of community-based services; in 2015, legislation was changed to make the age of people eligible for services up to age 24. The jury is out on how this will be implemented. There are housing needs for participants; many are living in their cars, have unstable housing, and are aging out of the foster care system; they need housing for the transition period.

Dr. Loeber said that the editorial in *The Washington Post* was quite damning. Offenders were said to have committed many crimes, but those who had their records expunged were not included in the analysis. This is a one-sided view.

A participant said that there are different ways policies could be implemented. They could affect youth of color, as they need access to the same benefits. There is a campus police system that disproportionately helps white youth.

Dr. Laub is working with Mr. Schiraldi through an effort with Harvard to develop a learning community around justice-involved young adults under a three-year grant. It will help those working in the field with research, messaging, and examining components of programs targeted towards justice-involved young adults.

Prioritizing Exercise

Dr. Carrie Mulford led the group in a closing exercise with the goal of prioritizing research issues. Participants wrote down their top research issues of concern. The information will be used to inform an NIJ strategic plan for research in this area. The research topics were consolidated and reviewed for relevancy and redundancy. A version of the list was later reviewed by participants to ensure the breadth and depth of topics were retained. A final list of the research topics and issues can be found in the Appendix.

Concluding Comments

Dr. Mulford closed the meeting by stating that she is optimistic about how far along the programs and initiatives related to meeting the needs of this population have come. She said she felt hopeful that we are closer to evaluating some of these strategies than she had thought was the case before the day began. She thanked everyone for their participation, particularly Dr. Laub for moderating the discussion.

Participant List

Amina Adossa-Ali

U.S. Pretrial Services Agency, Eastern District of New York
225 Cadman Plaza East, Room 219
Brooklyn, NY
Amina_Adossa-Ali@nyept.uscourts.gov
Non-Local Federal

Hon. Joan M. Azrack

joan_azrack@nyed.uscourts.gov
Non-Local Non-Federal

Dan Busso

FrameWorks Institute
1333 H St. NW, #700
Washington, DC
dbusso@frameworksinstitute.org
Local Non-Federal

Jeffrey Butts

John Jay College of Criminal Justice
524 West 59th St.
BMW605
New York, NY
jbutts@jjay.cuny.edu
Non-Local Non-Federal

Duncan Clark

University of Pittsburgh
Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic
3811 O'Hara St.
Pittsburgh, PA
clarkdb@upmc.edu
Non-Local Non-Federal

Brent Cohen

Office of Justice Programs
810 7th St. NW
Washington, DC
brent.cohen@ojp.usdoj.gov
Local Federal

Gregg Croteau

UTEC
Lowell, MA
gcroteau@utec-lowell.org
Non-Local Non-Federal

Maryann Davis

University of Massachusetts Medical School
Department of Psychiatry
222 Maple Ave.
Chang Building
Shrewsbury, MA
Maryann.Davis@umassmed.edu
Non-Local Non-Federal

Hannah Furstenberg-Beckman

ideas42
80 Broad St., 30th Floor
New York, NY
hfurstenberg-beckman@ideas42.org
Non-Local Non-Federal

Marie Garcia

National Institute of Justice
810 7th St. NW
Washington, DC
Ruth.Garcia@ojp.usdoj.gov
Local Federal

Micah Haskell-Hoehl

American Psychological Association
750 1st St. NE
Washington, DC
mhaskell-hoehl@apa.org
Local Non-Federal

Seri Irazola

National Institute of Justice
810 7th St. NW
Washington, DC
seri.irazola@ojp.usdoj.gov
Local Federal

John Laub

University of Maryland
Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
2220 LeFrak Hall
7251 Preinkert Drive
College Park, MD
jlaub@umd.edu
Local Non-Federal

Rolf Loeber

University of Pittsburgh
Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic
3811 O'Hara St.
Pittsburgh, PA
loeberr@upmc.edu
Non-Local Non-Federal

Marina Mendoza

National Institute of Justice
810 7th St. NW
Washington, DC
marina.mendoza@ojp.usdoj.gov
Local Federal (Visiting Fellow)

Katherine Miller

San Francisco District Attorney's Office
850 Bryant St., Room 322
San Francisco, CA
katherine.miller@sfgov.org
Non-Local Non-Federal

Emily Morgan

Council of State Governments Justice Center
22 Cortlandt St., 22nd Floor
New York, NY
emorgan@csg.org
Non-Local Non-Federal

Carrie Mulford

National Institute of Justice
810 7th St. NW
Washington, DC
carrie.mulford@ojp.usdoj.gov
Local Federal

Edward Mulvey

University of Pittsburgh
Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic
3811 O'Hara St.
Pittsburgh, PA
mulveyep@upmc.edu
Non-Local Non-Federal

Christin Ogle

National Institute of Justice
810 7th St. NW
Washington, DC
christin.ogle@ojp.usdoj.gov
Local Federal (Visiting Fellow)

Yunsoo Park

National Institute of Justice
810 7th St. NW
Washington, DC
park.yunsoo@gmail.com
Local Federal (Visiting Fellow)

Marc Schindler

Justice Policy Institute
1012 14th St. NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC
mschindler@justicepolicy.org
Local Non-Federal

Vincent Schiraldi

Harvard Kennedy School
79 John F. Kennedy St.
Cambridge, MA
Vincent_Schiraldi@hks.harvard.edu
Non-Local Non-Federal

Ryan Shanahan

Vera Institute of Justice
233 Broadway, 12th Floor
New York, NY
rshanahan@vera.org
Non-Local Non-Federal

Howard Spivak

National Institute of Justice
810 7th St. NW
Washington, DC
Howard.Spivak@ojp.usdoj.gov
Local Federal

Christopher Uggen

University of Minnesota-Sociology
 267 19th Ave. South, #909
 Minneapolis, MN
 ugg001@umn.edu
Non-Local Non-Federal

Jen Woolard

Georgetown University
 306H White Gravenor/Psychology
 3700 O St. NW
 Washington, DC
 jennifer.woolard@gmail.com
Local Non-Federal

Yotam Zeira

Roca
 101 Park St.
 Chelsea, MA
 Yotam_Zeira@rocainc.com
Non-Local Non-Federal

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Appendix

Meeting participants identified the following research topics to build a strong knowledge base about the development of justice-involved young adults.

- Explore the associations among neurobiological development, psychosocial maturity, and criminal justice involvement. Test these models while also considering the effects of trauma, stress, social deprivation, age, gender, race, social class, and life transitions.
- Explore how criminal justice involvement affects normative development in young adulthood. Individual developmental factors may include neurobiological development, executive functioning, decision-making, impulsiveness, perceptions of risk and reward, emotion regulation, self-regulation, and psychosocial maturity.
- Identify key social and environmental factors (e.g., social support, stressors, food insecurity, economic hardships, trauma, and noise levels), conditions of incarceration, and encounters with the criminal justice system that delay psychosocial development and normative life course transitions.
- Explore whether there are sensitive periods (including life transitions), such as parenting, during this period of development for young adults that provide an opening for greater impacts of intervention and an opportunity to promote and, in some cases, accelerate positive development and outcomes for those who interact with the justice system.
- Identify factors that promote successful life transitions into adulthood and subsequently deter young adults from criminal behaviors or provide pathways to desistance.
- Assess situational factors, routine activities, and neighborhood characteristics that influence young adults' engagement in criminal activity.
- Understand the contribution that a sense of belonging has on psychosocial development and criminal behavior for justice-involved young adults.
- Develop a better understanding of offending patterns between ages 18 and 24: prevalence, frequency, types of crimes, co-offending, motives for offending, specialization, escalation, persistence as opposed to desistance, intermittency, and adult-onset offending. This understanding should include how patterns vary by subgroups (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, and social class).
- Examine factors associated with offending trajectories. Focus on environmental factors (e.g., stressors, noise, food insecurity), length of criminal careers, conditions of incarceration, social connections (e.g., sense of belonging, peers, and social support), and life transitions (e.g., employment, marriage, and parenthood).

Meeting participants identified the following research topics to build a strong knowledge base around identifying and evaluating developmentally appropriate programs, policies, and legislation targeted to justice-involved young adults.

1. Evaluate approaches within the criminal justice system and community-based programs

- Identify and elevate developmentally appropriate and trauma-informed strategies for justice-involved young adults and understand how to best implement these strategies.
- Identify the core features and impact of successful programs across the continuum of the criminal justice system and community-based programming.
- Identify indicators of success that go beyond measuring recidivism.
- Identify the unique needs of young adult women and understudied groups in the justice system.
- Understand how programming for young adults differs from programming for juveniles and adults older than age 25.
- Explore how parenting (and other significant adult roles) is key to improving outcomes for justice-involved young adults.
- Evaluate whether young adult courts work and if they work across jurisdictions.
- Identify markers that indicate that a justice-involved young adult is ready (developmentally and psychosocially) to exit court supervision.
- Test the intervention effects of specialized young adult units in adult correctional facilities and which housing models are most effective for justice-involved young adults, particularly those with small social networks and limited resources.
- Test the impact of incarceration and the conditions of confinement (e.g., solitary confinement) on short- and long-term outcomes, including but not limited to recidivism rates and social and economic well-being.
- Understand what aspects of mental health services are most critical for success for justice-involved young adults.
- Understand the impact of coordinating across the criminal justice system to promote comprehensive services on outcomes for justice-involved young adults.
- Determine the cost-benefit aspects of programs for justice-involved young adults.
- Evaluate efforts that assist young adults in gaining employment, attaining education, and increasing parenting and other life skills.

2. Evaluate policy and legislation that are targeted to justice-involved young adults

- Test the impact of legislation (e.g., raising juvenile jurisdiction, youthful offender laws, and laws that require separate housing and facilities) on life and criminal trajectory outcomes for justice-involved young adults.
- Evaluate the impact of sealing records and expungement of records on outcomes for justice-involved young adults.
- Evaluate ban-the-box legislation on employment outcomes for justice-involved young adults.
- Explore the impact of youthful offender policies on outcomes for those who are granted specialized status compared to cases where it was not granted.
- Understand which circumstances lead to better outcomes for justice-involved young adults either by extending juvenile jurisdiction and/or providing specialized programs within the adult criminal justice system.
- Understand the behavioral changes of young adults that occur in response to policy and legislation (e.g., raising the age of juvenile justice jurisdiction).