JOINING THE LEGAL SIGNIFICANCE OF ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENTAL CAPACITIES WITH THE LEGAL RIGHTS PROVIDED BY IN RE GAULT

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Almost forty years after the United States Supreme Court decided In re Gault,1 the Court in Roper v. Simmons ruled that the death penalty is a disproportionate punishment for persons under the age of eighteen, in violation of the Eighth Amendment’s prohibition against cruel and unusual punishments.2 Perhaps the most compelling reasons the Roper Court offered for its decision were those that drew upon recent scientific insights into the biopsychosocial aspects of adolescent development to corroborate the view that juveniles are less culpable for their crimes than adults.3 The Court made three bold findings in distinguishing juveniles from adults: (1) “[A] lack of maturity and an underdeveloped sense of responsibility are found in youth more often than in adults...[T]hese qualities often result in impetuous and ill-considered actions and decisions;”4 (2) “[J]uveniles are more vulnerable or susceptible to negative influences and outside pressures, including peer pressure...Youth is...a time and condition of life when a person may be most susceptible to influence and to psychological damage;[J]”5 and (3) “[T]he character of a juvenile is not as well formed as that of an adult. The personality traits of juveniles are more transitory, less fixed.”6 Although Roper will always be best known as the case that abolished the juvenile death penalty in America, the decision is at least equally noteworthy for its endorsement and application of scientific findings relating to adolescent developmental immaturity. This Article considers the

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1. 387 U.S. 1 (1967).
3. Id. at 669-70.
4. Id. at 669 (quoting Johnson v. Texas, 509 U.S. 550, 367 (1993)).
5. Id. (quoting Edwards v. Oklahoma, 455 U.S. 104, 115 (1982)).
6. Id. at 670.
implications of Roper’s findings for the application of the Fifth and Sixth Amendment rights extended to juveniles in Gault.

Although Gault introduced striking and much needed reforms to the juvenile court by its extension of Fifth and Sixth Amendment rights to juveniles, the Court applied a constitutional jurisprudence that views adolescents as sufficiently autonomous and self-determining to exercise their legal rights in an adult manner. Forty years later, the understandings about adolescence that shaped Gault and its progeny are ripe for reconsideration. The Court’s acceptance of a very different jurisprudence of youth in Roper may well chart a new course for due process analysis in the Fifth and Sixth Amendment contexts. This Article aims to join the legal significance of adolescent developmental capacities recognized in Roper with the due process rights established in Gault.

Our discussion is presented in seven parts. In Part I, we briefly sketch historical conceptions of adolescence and its relationship to foundational principles of the juvenile court, and juvenile court practice from its inception in the late nineteenth century through the mid-1960s. In order to more fully appreciate both the strengths and weaknesses of the Gault decision, we pay special attention to its larger social and legal context in which the case was decided. Part II is devoted to a discussion of Gault. We argue that although Gault represents a valiant attempt to impose the rule of law on a lawless system, the Court’s failure to appreciate the uniqueness of childhood and adolescence produced a juvenile justice system characterized by procedural rights that remain, for the most part, empty promises, due to young people’s inability to exercise those rights in a meaningful way. In Part III, we analyze the post-Gault cases that fleshed out the application of Fifth and Sixth Amendment rights to juveniles, and highlight the limitations of these applications.

In Part IV, we consider Roper, and argue that it offers an important corrective to what came before. It creates a new lens through which to conceptualize juveniles in delinquency proceedings, and, as seen in Part V, has great potential to become the basis for a legal paradigm shift that can transform Fifth and Sixth Amendment jurisprudence as applied to juveniles. In Part VI, we ask: What are the implications of the distinguishing features of adolescence for the meaningful exercise of due process rights? To answer this question, we look to empirical studies on adolescents’ developmental capacities and their understanding of, and abilities to waive, the right to remain silent and the right to counsel. We argue that the findings stipulated in Roper, coupled with the findings of recent empirical research, support a nonwaivable right to counsel at police interrogation and in juvenile delinquency proceedings.

Finally, in Part VII, we discuss how these rights might be implemented to maximize benefits to youth, by integrating knowledge of youth development with recommendations for legal advocacy. We consider some steps that attorneys can take to ameliorate adolescents’ developmental deficiencies and to represent them more effectively. Our goal is to create the image a juvenile justice system that adapts to the realities of children and their needs, in order to safeguard their fundamental right to be treated fairly.

I. CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN THE EARLY JUVENILE COURT

From its inception in 1899 and throughout most of its hundred-year history, the American juvenile court was firmly rooted in the doctrine of parens patriae. This doctrine encompasses two related principles: (1) that the state has an obligation to intervene in the lives of children whose parents fail to provide adequate guidance and supervision or to shield them from harmful community influences; and (2) that when the state intervenes in the place of a parent, it must act—as a loving parent would—in the best interests of the child.

Nineteenth-century ideas about the status and needs of children were especially influential in shaping the juvenile court. Established almost simultaneously with the fledgling discipline of developmental psychology, the juvenile court was premised on fresh insights into differences between young people and adults that grew out of the new science of psychology and the child study movement.

According to Ryerson, two ideas about juveniles that were advanced in the child-study literature were especially influential in animating a separate juvenile court. The first idea focused on childhood innocence, about which there were two views: one suggested that juveniles were not responsible for their actions; the

7. First asserted in the United States in a proceeding involving a juvenile in Ex parte Crouse, 4 Whart. 9 (Pa. 1839), the parens patriae power justifies governmental intervention in the lives of citizens who are unable, by virtue of immaturity, mental illness, or mental retardation, to care for themselves. It is a broadly sweeping authority that was long left unchecked because of the presumption that the state was acting for the good of those on whose behalf it intervened. This authority stands in contrast to the police power, under which the state takes coercive action against those who pose a danger to the public welfare. The police powers of the state have always been carefully circumscribed by law.


9. RYERSON, supra note 8, at 28.
other held that children were naturally pure and virtuous. Darwin's theory of evolution greatly influenced the "lack of responsibility" camp, which claimed that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. According to this view, children were amoral from birth, yet were biologically destined to gradually develop "civilized," altruistic sentiments and to evolve naturally into moral and law-abiding adults. From this perspective, children and adolescents were not responsible for their bad acts; misdeeds were normal and temporary, and would be naturally outgrown in due course (so long as corrupt adults did not bungle natural processes of development). Proponents of this perspective argued that youth should never be placed in environments such as criminal courts and adult correctional institutions, where exposure to depraved adults might derail their natural development. A second view claimed that children were naturally good and moral. They might occasionally commit bad acts, not out of a desire to do harm, but out of ignorance of the rules that it was incumbent on adults to teach them. If they persistently engaged in antisocial behavior, it was because adults were destroying their innate sensibilities. Judge Benjamin Barr Lindsey, the first judge of the Denver Juvenile Court, espoused this view. He was instrumental in passing the first legislation to impose penalties on parents and guardians for "contributing to the delinquency of any child," which institutionalized the view that juvenile delinquents were largely blameless for their behavior, and deserving of sympathy and guidance rather than punishment.

16. Ryerson, supra note 8, at 24-27.
18. Id. at 83.
20. As Timothy Hurley, the juvenile court's first chief of probation, averred: “[T]he state is, after all, the first great father, and has a right, in the absence of proper care from the natural parents, to step in and take upon itself the work which the natural parents had proved themselves unable to do." CHICAGO VESTIVATION AND AID SOCIETY, THE JUVENILE COURT RECORD 1 (1903).
21. For example, the 1899 Revised Laws of Illinois defined delinquents to include anyone who:

(V)iolates any law of this State; or is incorrigible, or knowingly associates with thieves, vicious or amoral persons; or without just cause and without the consent of its parents, guardian, or custodian abandons itself from its home or place of abode, or is growing up in idleness and crime; or knowingly frequents any policy shop or place where any gaming device is operated; or frequents any saloon or dance shop where any intoxicating liquors are sold or patronizes or visits any public pool room or bucket shop; or wanders about the streets in the night time without being upon any lawful business or lawful occupation; or habitually wanders about any railroad yards or tracks or jumps or attempts to jump onto any moving train; or enters any car or engine without lawful authority; or uses vile, obscene, vulgar, profane or indecent language in any public place or about any schoolhouse; or is guilty of indecent or lascivious conduct.
court as a social welfare institution that could benefit all needy youth, so they did not limit delinquency jurisdiction to those who committed crime: "Better laws make the definition much more inclusive so that the court will not be unable, because of any technical lack of jurisdiction, to place a child under the care of the court and its officers, if that seems to be for the best interest of the child."22

A naive optimism—some would say arrogance—prevailed: the founders were confident that the court could save children by intervening on their behalf.23 The court would serve the best interests of the child by shielding him from the harshness of the criminal process, and more, by "substitut[ing] constructive efforts for the purely negative and destructive effects of the customary punishments."24 Because the aim of the court was to treat children in need, the offense became secondary to concern for the child and her circumstances. Just how unimportant it became is illustrated in the fact that, from the inception of the court until the late 1960s, social history investigations were routinely completed prior to adjudication: the court first determined whether and how it needed to treat the child, and only then decided whether to find him delinquent.25

For much of the court's history, juvenile court proceedings were defined as civil proceedings. Proof of the offense—which might be seen as a logical and necessary predicate to an inquiry into the child's needs and circumstances—was often handled in a peremptory way. In many jurisdictions, standards of proof were low, if the court acknowledged any at all.26 There was little concern about protecting children from erroneous adjudications of delinquency because the

25. Author Donna Bishop served as a juvenile probation officer in a large city on the eastern seaboard during the late 1960s. She reports that, even at the time that Gault was decided, it was standard practice for social history investigations to be read by the judge prior to adjudication.
26. Gault provides an illustration of the laxity of juvenile court procedure. There the judge was unable to recall under child (the charge) he had found the boy delinquent, let alone the standard of proof he applied in reaching the adjudicatory decision. In re Gault, 387 U.S. 1, 8-9 (1967).
(petition, adjudication, disposition) replaced the stigmatizing lexicon (complaint, indictment, prosecution, conviction, sentencing) of the criminal court. Because the judge needed to understand the child's problems and needs, it was essential that the child be encouraged to talk freely. A privilege to remain silent was antithetical to that aim. Similarly, defense counsel was seen not only as unhelpful but as impedimentary to the court's purposes. Procedural informality would best serve the objectives of understanding and treatment planning.

In practice, idealistic visions of individualized assessment and benign and effective treatments fell far short of being realized. Tools for evaluation and assessment were crude and unreliable. Probation and institutional corrections programs were chronically understaffed, and their personnel—those responsible for clinical assessments and delivery of services—were poorly paid and poorly trained. Moreover, in juvenile correctional facilities, humanitarian aims gave way, as they most often do in institutional settings, to impulses to control and punish. The secrecy of the juvenile system, its lack of procedural safeguards, and the broad scope of its authority over delinquent and predelinquent youth—all viewed as essential to the child-saving mission—invited arbitrariness and abuses of power.

II. GAULT AND ITS HISTORICAL CONTEXT

During the 1960s, under the leadership of Chief Justice Earl Warren, the Supreme Court's view of its role in protecting individual liberties took a remarkable turn. In 1954, concern about the unequal treatment of minority populations at the hands of the majority animated the Court's landmark decision ending school segregation in Brown v. Board of Education. By the early 1960s, the same sort of concern about the treatment of minority populations that had motivated the Court's decision in Brown was transmuted into a more general concern about abuses of state power and mistreatment of powerless populations in the criminal and juvenile contexts. The Supreme Court had not looked seriously at the adult criminal process since Betts v. Brady in the early 1940s, but by the 1960s, a "due process revolution" took hold as the Court turned out a series of decisions in some of the most important cases in our nation's history.

In 1961, the exclusionary rule was given national application in a case involving a flagrant violation of minority rights. The Sixth Amendment right to counsel was extended to all indigent felony defendants in 1963, while the Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination was made applicable to state trial proceedings in 1964. The Sixth Amendment rights to confront and cross-examine witnesses were made enforceable in the states in 1965. One year later, in Miranda v. Arizona—a case involving minority suspects—the Court ruled that custodial interrogation is inherently coercive, and mandated that police advise suspects of their right to remain silent and the right to counsel prior to questioning. Two years later, the Court authored Duncan v. Louisiana, which overruled a racially motivated prosecution and conviction, and guaranteed state defendants the right to a trial by jury in nonpetty cases.

In 1966, the Supreme Court decided the first case it had ever decided involving the juvenile court process, signaling the beginning of the end of an era of unbridled discretion. In Kent v. United States, the Court ruled that a decision to transfer a boy from juvenile court to criminal court for prosecution and punishment as an adult could not—in light of the consequences at stake—be made without a hearing. In 1967, the United States Supreme Court decided In re Gault, which extended many of the same procedural protections to juveniles as apply to adults in criminal proceedings.

33. Further, because rehabilitation was the goal, dispositions were necessarily open ended rather than time limited. In most jurisdictions, commitments to juvenile corrections departments were indeterminate, extending until the child turned twenty-one, or until the juvenile corrections department made a determination that the youth had been rehabilitated.
34. See, e.g., PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON LAW ENFORCEMENT & ADMIN. OF JUST., TASK FORCE REPORT: JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AND YOUTH CRIME (1967).
Three years later, in *In re Winship*, the Court held that the beyond a reasonable doubt standard of proof applicable in adult criminal proceedings must be satisfied in juvenile delinquency proceedings as well. With that decision, the Court granted to juveniles nearly all of the due process guarantees that apply in adult criminal proceedings.

In historical context, *Gault* must be viewed as one in a series of cases aimed at extending the same procedural rights that apply to affluent, white adults to poor, oppressed, marginalized, and powerless groups. In the juvenile cases, the Court aimed to put an end to unbridled discretion in the state’s handling of powerless young people, just as it would later do in the context of mentally ill and developmentally disabled populations. The Court in *Gault* focused on the comparable liberty interests at stake in delinquency and criminal proceedings, and mandated procedural parity for juveniles and adults. The framing of the issues in this way perhaps explains why *Gault* is basically silent on the differences between children and adults.

In *Gault*, the Court determined that due process rights must be part of the juvenile adjudicatory process. The facts in the case are emblematic of the type of arbitrariness that transpired during the era of *pares patriae*. Gerald Gault was fifteen when police took him into custody without ever notifying his parents. The petition charging his alleged delinquent act was devoid of any factual allegations, and was not served on Mr. and Mrs. Gault. Gerald was not provided a lawyer, nor was he given an opportunity to confront his accuser; furthermore, despite requests from Gerald’s mother that the complainant appear, she was never required to come to Court. The entire proceeding was held in the judge’s chambers, where Gerald was questioned by the judge without being advised that he did not have to incriminate himself. No recording or transcript of the proceeding was ever made. Gerald Gault was ultimately committed to a state institution until his twenty-first birthday for making lewd remarks over the phone to a neighbor. The same offense, if committed by an adult, would have yielded at most a sentence of two months in jail or a fifty-dollar fine.

Attuned to the fundamental unfairness of the process, the Court limited its consideration to the importance of procedural rights. Rather than create a set of due process rights tailored to children, the Court turned to an already existing and seemingly workable set of rights—adult rights. The Court imported into juvenile adjudicatory proceedings: (1) a right to notice of the charges; (2) a right to counsel; (3) a right to confrontation and cross-examination of witnesses; and (4) the privilege against self-incrimination.

By turning to the criminal justice system for constitutional protections, the Court’s aim was to achieve procedural parity for children in the adjudicatory process. Its effort was largely unsuccessful: *Gault* delivered a “prize” that, for all intents and purposes, was out of the reach of its intended beneficiaries. By failing

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48. Id. at 309.
50. See *Gault*, 387 U.S. at 57.
51. Id.
52. Id. at 4-5.
53. Id. at 5. The petition cited only that Gerald was a delinquent minor in need of protection by the court. Mrs. Gault asked that the complainant, Mrs. Cook, be summoned to court, but the judge denied her request on the grounds that there was no procedure requiring witnesses to come to court. Id. at 5-7.
54. Id. at 7.
55. Id. at 5.
to consider qualities of children that distinguish them from adults, and by straightforwardly extending to juveniles procedural rights that were created for adults, the Court implicitly assumed that children do not require special protections or special processes on account of their age and immaturity. It would have been appropriate for the Court in Gault to inquire about juveniles’ immaturity, particularly as it might affect adolescents’ ability to exercise those rights to which the Court declared they were entitled. This was a major missed opportunity. In essence, Gault placed the expectation on children to access and exercise due process rights in the same way adult criminal defendants are expected to. The Court erred in failing to recognize that procedures that succeed in securing fairness for adults may not be sufficient to secure fairness for children. What followed in the ensuing years was a series of cases involving challenges to criminal justice practices as applied to children in which special accommodations appropriate for children were not made. Nowhere is this clearer than in the case law surrounding the Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination.

III. THE IMPACT OF GAULT IN THE FIFTH AND SIXTH AMENDMENT CONTEXTS

It is ironic that, prior to Gault, the Supreme Court had long recognized that age and immaturity affect a child’s ability to protect her interests and to benefit from her constitutional rights, particularly in the face of state interrogation. For example, in Haley v. Ohio, the Court showed a great deal of sensitivity to differences between children and adults, and to the consequent dangers of unreliability and unfairness in police elicited confessions from youth. There, police interrogated a fifteen-year-old boy in the wee hours of the morning, questioning him in relays of officers over a period of nearly five hours. In ruling that the confession was involuntary, the Court admonished that the vulnerability of youth demands that a juvenile’s waiver of rights be examined with “special care.”

66. Why the Court did not contemplate creating a set of rights crafted to account for the biological and psychological development of adolescents is uncertain. Certainly the neuroscience that the Court later relied upon in Roper v. Simmons, 543 U.S. 551 (2005), was not available or known at that time, but much was known about young people’s impressionability and their tendency to make poor judgments.
67. See infra Parts IV and V.
68. See, e.g., infra cases discussed Part III.
70. 332 U.S. at 599-601.
71. Id. at 598.
72. Id. at 599-600.
73. Gallegos, 370 U.S. at 53-54.
74. Id. at 50. The boy made initial admissions almost immediately in response to questioning at the crime scene, and was thereafter held in detention for five days before “formalizing” his confession at juvenile hall. Id. He had no contact with his parents over this period. Id. at 54. Prior to the stationhouse questioning, he was advised that he could be charged with murder, that he did not have to make a statement, and that he could have an attorney or his parents present if he chose. Id. at 59 (Clark, J., dissenting). At the stationhouse, and without his parents present, he confessed. Id. In deciding the case, it mattered little to the Court that the second confession was made after warnings had been given, or that the second confession merely confirmed the first. Id. at 64-65 (majority opinion).
with his interrogators. Without some adult protection against this inequality, a 14-year-old boy would not be able to know, let alone assert, such constitutional rights as he had. 76

A. Right Against Self-Incinitation

Post-Gault, the analysis of challenges to the constitutionality of juvenile confessions shifted. Case law pertaining to the Fifth Amendment privilege has been devoid of legal recognition that children are different from adults, with different capacities that demand or justify a different set of rules. 77 A few years after Gault was decided, the Court granted certiorari in the case of Fare v. Michael C. 78 In Fare, a sixteen-year-old boy under investigation for murder asked to see his probation officer upon being read the Miranda warnings. 79 The police denied his request, whereupon the

76. Id. at 64.

77. See generally Kenneth J. King, Waiving Childhood Goodbye: How Juvenile Court Fail to Protect Children from Unknown, Unintelligent, and Involuntary Waivers of Miranda Rights, 2008 WM. & M. L. REV. 431, 465-66 (examining several state cases that evaluate a juvenile’s Miranda waiver and concluding that there is uniformly little or no accommodation for the age of the suspect). See also Barry C. Feld, Competence, Culpability, and Punishment: Implications of Atkins for Executing and Sentencing Adolescents, 32 HOFSTRA L. REV. 663 (2003).

78. 442 U.S. 707 (1979). Compare id. at 717 n.4 (demonstrating that, although Gault had not explicitly stated that Miranda applies to juvenile proceedings, the Court in Fare “assumed[] without deciding that the Miranda principles were fully applicable to the present [juvenile] proceedings”), with In re Gault, 397 U.S. 1, 55 (1969) (“[T]he constitutional privilege against self-incrimination is applicable in the case of juveniles as it is with respect to adults.”).

79. The following is the exchange between respondent Michael C. and the officers:

Q. . . . do you understand all of these rights as I have explained them to you?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay, do you wish to give up your right to remain silent and talk to us about this murder?
A. What murder? I don’t know about no murder.
Q. I’ll explain to you which one it is if you want to talk to us about it.
A. Yeah, I might talk to you.
Q. Do you want to give up your right to have an attorney present here while we talk about it?
A. Can I have my probation officer here?
Q. Well I can’t get a hold of your probation officer right now. You have the right to an attorney.
A. How know you guys won’t pull no police officer in and tell me he’s an attorney?
Q. Huh?
A. [How know you guys won’t pull no police officer in and tell me he’s an attorney?]
Q. Your probation officer is Mr. Christiansen.
A. Yeah.

boy signed the standard Miranda waiver form and made incriminating statements. 80 At issue in the case was whether the boy had knowingly and intelligently waived his Fifth Amendment rights under Miranda. 81 The Court applied a totality of the circumstances approach, which requires consideration of all of the circumstances surrounding the interrogation—including, inter alia, the suspect’s age, education, and experience. 82 The Court considered Michael’s age—especially in light of his extensive history with police and probation—and inferred from these that he understood his rights and the consequences of waiver. 83

In holding that the waiver was valid, the Court also ruled that Michael’s request to see his probation officer was not tantamount to a request for a lawyer—viz. probation officers and lawyers serve different functions—nor did it constitute an invocation of the right to remain silent. 84 Despite its assertion that a juvenile needs only to indicate in "any manner" the desire to invoke the Fifth Amendment privilege, the Court opined, "there is nothing inherent in the request for a probation officer that requires us to find that a juvenile’s request to see one necessarily constitutes an expression of the juvenile’s right to remain silent." 85 In Fare, the Court applied a legal
analysis to a juvenile custodial interrogation that is wholly inconsistent with pre-Gault recognition of children as different from adults. The Court's ruling shows a remarkable insensitivity to the awareness and intentions of a juvenile. From the exchange between Michael C. and the officer, it seems reasonably clear that the boy wanted guidance from his probation officer—whom he knew and trusted, and who had directed him to call should he ever get into trouble—before talking to the police. The Justices did not consider what the boy intended or hoped to achieve by requesting his probation officer. Rather than following its own admonition in Gault, and acknowledging the significance of a sixteen-year-old boy's request for the assistance of a trusted and authoritative adult in the face of state interrogation, the Court applied a rigid framework, thereby rejecting the idea that developmental differences between juveniles and adults require different rules or special procedural protections.

Although Fare contemplates that, in applying the "totality of the circumstances" test, trial courts will attend to the child's age, his capacity to understand the Miranda rights, and his capacity to appreciate the consequences of waiver, in practice these matters receive little consideration. Waivers from preteens, youth of very limited intelligence, and emotionally disturbed youth have been upheld in several states. Lower courts have ruled that the comprehension requirement is satisfied if a child merely understands the words used in the Miranda warnings, can paráphrase each right after it is read, or says that he understands his rights (notwithstanding the fact that, to save embarrassment, children frequently claim to understand things that they do not).
issue presented in Alvarado, it endorsed a reasonable juvenile standard, which took account of the suspect’s age.99 It reasoned that if a youth, by virtue of age and immaturity, is more susceptible to police coercion during a custodial interrogation, she is also more likely to believe that she is in custody in the first place.100 In reversing the Ninth Circuit, the Supreme Court held that consideration of age, which is applicable in a claim of involuntariness under the Due Process Clause and Miranda-waiver contexts, is inapplicable in the Miranda custody analysis.101 The majority held that age and inexperience are not relevant considerations under the “reasonable person” test.102 The Court explained that age and inexperience are not objective factors, but involve subjective inquiries that would place an undue burden on law enforcement to apply.103

Fare and Alvarado demonstrate the Court’s post-Gault intransigence when it comes to applying a “sensitive to children” due process analysis in situations where characteristics specific to youth may have a profound impact on their perceptions and choices.104

B. Right to Counsel

The touchstone to exercising one’s due process rights in a meaningful way begins with representation by counsel.105 Many constitutional and procedural due process rights can and do go unrealized in the absence of legal counsel; with the expertise of counsel, an accused evaluates which tactics to employ and which rights to invoke.106 This could not be more clear than in a delinquency proceeding.107 In 1955, one scholar wrote:

To say that trials without counsel can be fair is to assume either that the defense which counsel might have presented would not have changed the result in the case or that in certain types of cases counsel serves no useful function. The first assumption is hindsight and unprovable. The second, if true, would convict a portion of the bar of taking money under false pretenses in all those “simple” cases where counsel accepts a retainer but apparently cannot influence the result.108

More recently, we have witnessed some highly notable trials involving pro se defendants who sabotaged their own legal defense by refusing the assistance of counsel.109

The facts of Gault highlight the importance of counsel in delinquency proceedings. The Court noted that there is no significant difference between the right to counsel in adult criminal proceedings

99. Id. at 660.
100. Id.
101. Id. at 667-68.
102. See id. at 667. In her concurrence, Justice O’Connor stated that age may be relevant to the custody inquiry under Miranda. However, because the defendant here was seventeen and a half (‘‘too close to the age of majority’’), in this case age was all but irrelevant. Id. at 669 (O’Connor, J., concurring).
103. Id. at 667 (majority opinion).
104. The irony is that in Gault itself, the Court drew upon the language of Haley and held that, in ‘‘the administration of justice,’ confessions of juveniles require special caution.’’ In re Gault, 387 U.S. 1, 45 (1967). The Court also observed that: ‘‘If counsel wasn’t present for some permissible reason when an admission was obtained, the greatest care must be taken to assure that the admission was voluntary, in the sense not only that it was not coerced or suggested, but also that it was not the product of ignorance of rights or of adolescent fantasy, fright, or despair.’’ Id. at 55.
106. The most informal and well-intentioned of judicial proceedings are technical; few adults without legal training can influence or even understand them; certainly children cannot. Papers are drawn and charges expressed in legal jargon. Events follow one another in a manner that appears arbitrary and confusing to the uninstructed. Decisions, unexplained, appear too official to challenge. But with lawyers come records of proceedings; records make

possible appeals which, even if they do not occur, impart by their possibility a healthy atmosphere of accountability.

107. See also Gideon v. Wainwright, 372 U.S. 335, 83 S. Ct. 804, 9 L. Ed. 2d 924 (1963) (holding that the Fourteenth Amendment gives indigent criminal defendants the right to state-appointed counsel); Paretta v. California, 422 U.S. 806 (1975) (rejecting counsel being forced upon defendant who voluntarily and intelligently elects to represent himself); Walter v. Scheuer, Federalism and State Criminal Procedure, 70 Harv. L. Rev. 1, 8 (1956) (‘‘Of all the rights that an accused person has, the right to be represented by counsel is probably the most pervasive, for it affects his ability to assert any other rights he may have.’’).
108. Whether it is a facial challenge to the validity of the charging document, disputing the validity of a Miranda waiver, or electing the witnesses who will testify, the expertise of a lawyer is central to the fair administration of justice.
109. ‘‘The juvenile needs the assistance of counsel to cope with problems of law, to make skilled inquiry into the facts, to insist upon regularity of the proceedings, and to ascertain whether he has a defense and to prepare to submit it.’’ Gault, 387 U.S. at 58 (footnote omitted); see also Mary Beth Tinker, The Fiction of Juvenile Right to Counsel: Warren in the Juvenile Courts, 54 N.Y.L. Rev. 577, 587 (2002).
110. Ted Kaczynski asserted his right to represent himself on several occasions despite the urging of the trial judge to allow his highly competent and respected attorneys to represent him. Adam Liptak, Legal Analysis: Rights, and Wrongs, N.Y. Times, Oct. 21, 2008, at A24. He is currently serving a life sentence. Id. Colin Ferguson refused assistance of counsel and represented himself against murder charges in a 1986 Long Island railroad shooting. Id. He was convicted. Id. John Muhammad, the Washington Sniper," represented himself in one of his state murder prosecutions. Ron Marech, Advancing the Issue: Self-Representation, Daily Press (Newport News, Va.), May 9, 2006, at A3. He is currently on death row. Id.
versus juvenile delinquency proceedings, since both contexts involve the potential loss of liberty. The Court opined that defense counsel serves an unparalleled role in an adjudicatory hearing. Anyone other than defense counsel, such as the prosecutor, probation officer, and judge, either has interests adverse to the juvenile or must remain impartial in the proceedings. It is solely the responsibility of defense counsel to identify and prepare possible defenses, interpret statutes, gather relevant factual information, and insist upon regularity in the proceedings.

Perhaps to a large degree, the intent of Gault would be realized if in fact granting children the right to counsel actually resulted in children being represented by counsel. An astonishing number of children charged with crimes to this day appear in delinquency proceedings unrepresented. In 1993, as part of the federal government’s attempt to improve access to due process for children in the juvenile justice system, the American Bar Association Juvenile Justice Center, in partnership with the Youth Law Center and Juvenile Law Center, conducted a national assessment to examine the problems and issues relating to access to counsel and quality of representation for juveniles. The results were published in A Call for Justice: An Assessment of Access to Counsel and Quality of Representation in Delinquency Proceedings. A Call for Justice found that one-third of the public defender offices surveyed reported that, as early as the detention hearing, some “youth in the juvenile courts in which they work waive their right to counsel.”114 Court-appointed counsel for juveniles reported similar findings. The study also found that youth in rural areas waive their right to counsel more frequently. In early 2005, the Florida Supreme Court reported that seventy-five percent of youth in Florida’s twelfth

circuit117 waive their right to counsel, and over fifty percent of youth in Florida’s sixth circuit118 do so as well.119

The 1996 study confirmed that children are often induced to waive the right to counsel by the suggestion “that lawyers are not needed because no serious dispositional consequences are anticipated,” or “[because of] parental concern[ ] that they will have to pay for” legal services that are provided.120 In a 2006 National Juvenile Defender Center-sponsored assessment of the adequacy of Florida’s juvenile justice system, it was determined that in many Florida counties half or more of the youth who appeared in delinquency court waive the right to counsel.121 Assessment observers in Florida found that it was commonplace for judges to “engage in a subjective analysis of whether each youth ‘needs’ a lawyer.”122 "This informal analysis then determined whether and when the court informed the youth of his right to counsel.”123 “In one large county, judges routinely failed to apprise youth of their right to counsel and many times the word ‘lawyer’ or ‘attorney’ was not even uttered.”124 In Florida, “probation officers frequently advise youth on whether they need an attorney or not.”125 The Florida assessment showed that a youth’s ability to access counsel often depended “upon what various actors within the system perceived his need for counsel to be.”126

120. A CALL FOR JUSTICE, supra note 113, at 7-8.
121. Purtz & Crawford, supra note 119, at 28.
122. Id.
123. Id.
124. Id. at 29.
125. Id.
126. One court observer in the Virginia assessment heard a bailiff tell a father, who was found by the court not to be indigent, that the court would not be further inconvenienced with his son’s case and would proceed the next time he came to court even if his child did not have a lawyer. See VIRGINIA ASSESSMENT, supra note 119 at 23, 24.
Reasons for waiver are wide ranging, but almost all are imprudent when one considers the importance of this constitutionally based right. Appointment practices vary across jurisdictions; whether counsel appears at the arraignment or is appointed postarraignment has a distinct effect on the frequency with which juveniles waive counsel. As evidenced in Florida, waiver of counsel is often a response to external pressures, most often by parents and court personnel. The Florida study "concluded that judges and parents in Florida courts engage in practices and procedures that pressure youth, directly or indirectly, to waive the right to counsel."128 [In] most of the counties visited for this assessment, youth were not afforded an opportunity to consult with a lawyer prior to [making the] waiver [decision]. In some counties and courtrooms, youth were not informed of the right to an attorney or asked whether they wanted an attorney until after the court had asked whether the youth [would] plead guilty, no contest, or not guilty.129

The study reported that it was not uncommon for "the judge to question the youth about the offense before mentioning the right to counsel."130

Parental perceptions are another reason why a substantial proportion of children waive counsel. First, misconceptions as to the lack of seriousness of the legal matter cause some parents to feel that an attorney is not necessary.131 Second, some states require indigent defendants to reimburse the state for all or a portion of attorney's fees.132 The potential of incurring financial cost in conjunction with the belief that the situation is not severe causes parents to waive counsel.133 Where a conflict of interest exists between parent and child over the need for counsel, the child will typically defer to the parent.134

127. Id. See also VIRGINIA ASSESSMENT, supra note 119, at 24.
128. PURITZ & CRAWFORD, supra note 119, at 28.
129. Id. at 31.
130. PURITZ & CRAWFORD, supra note 119, at 29.
131. See A CALL FOR JUSTICE, supra note 118, at 45.
132. Many states have statutes requiring parents or guardians to reimburse the state for the cost of the minor's appointed attorney's fees. See, e.g., N.H. REV. STAT. ANN. 169-B:40 (2003) (reimbursement statute for cost of defense attorney for juvenile in a delinquency proceeding).
133. See A CALL FOR JUSTICE, supra note 118, at 45.
134. See infra Part VI; see also Hillary B. Farber, The Role of the Parent/Guardian in Juvenile Custodial Interrogations: Friend or Foe?, 41 AM. CRIM. L. REV. 1277, 1281-84 (2004) (identifying various conflicts of interest parents or guardians may face, which interfere with decisions about whether invoking right to counsel in an interrogation setting is in the child's best legal interest).

In light of the direct correlation between the number of children who waive their right to counsel and the lack of meaningful access to and exercise of due process rights in juvenile courts, the President's Crime Commission adopted the position that all children accused of a crime should automatically have counsel appointed for them:

The Commission believes that no single action holds more potential for achieving procedural justice for the child in the juvenile court than provision of counsel. The presence of an independent legal representative of the child, or of his parent, is the keystone of the whole structure of guarantees that a minimum system of procedural justice requires. The rights to confront one's accusers, to cross-examine witnesses, to present evidence and testimony of one's own, to be unaffected by prejudicial and unreliable evidence, to participate meaningfully in the dispositional decision, to take an appeal have substantial meaning for the overwhelming majority of persons brought before the juvenile court only if they are provided with competent lawyers who can invoke these rights effectively.135

If adopted, this mechanism would significantly reduce, if not eliminate, waiver of counsel by the child and parent.

The findings from research studies and state assessments of juvenile delinquency proceedings evidence a failure on the part of Gault to instill norms and standards readily accessible to the affected population. The degree to which kids waive their right to counsel and protection against self-incrimination indicates a disconnection between kids and their ability to recognize the value in, and to exercise, these rights. Roper v. Simmons is a potential turning point in this due process quagmire.

IV. ROPER V. SIMMONS: A NEW PARADIGM?

In Roper v. Simmons, the Supreme Court held that the imposition of the death penalty on juveniles under the age of eighteen constitutes a violation of the Eighth Amendment's prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment.136 The Court evaluated the death penalty for juveniles in light of evolving standards of decency, and looked to state statutes, jury practices, and international views and practices as guides to contemporary notions.

135. PRESIDENT'S COMM'N ON CRIM., supra note 105, at 86-87.
136. 543 U.S. 551 (2005). The facts of Roper are particularly heinous. They involve the execution of a chilling plan instigated by Christopher Simmons, then seventeen, who, with two friends ages fifteen and sixteen, broke into the home of an elderly woman at two o'clock in the morning to commit burglary and murder. Id. at 566-77. They found the victim asleep in her bedroom, tied her up with duct tape and electrical wire, then drove her to a state park, where they threw her from a bridge into a river below, where she drowned. Id.
of morality. In addition to finding capital punishment incompatible with contemporary standards of decency, the Court was persuaded by empirical research in the natural and behavioral sciences—where significant advances in understanding adolescent development have been made in the last two decades—showing that adolescents lag behind adults in cognitive and psychosocial maturity. Based in part on this empirical evidence, the Court concluded that juveniles under eighteen lack sufficient culpability to be subject to capital punishment.

In adopting this view, the Court made three specific findings. First, "[t]echniques of juvenile delinquency are found in youth more often than in adults and are more understandable among the young. These qualities often result in ineptuous and ill-considered actions and decisions." Second, "juveniles are more vulnerable or susceptible to negative influences and outside pressures, including peer pressure. This is explained in part by the prevailing circumstance that juveniles have less control, or less, experience with control, over their own environment." Third, "the character of a juvenile is not as well formed as that of an adult. The personality traits of juveniles are more transitory, less fixed." The Court reasoned that, by virtue of these characteristics, juvenile offenders—even those who commit heinous acts of murder—are significantly less culpable than adults. The Court felt so strongly about this conclusion that, when pressed to reject a per se rule in favor of a case-by-case assessment of an individual defendant's psychological and social maturity, it responded that "[t]he differences between juvenile and adult offenders are too marked and well understood to risk allowing a youthful person to receive the death penalty despite insufficient culpability."

This Article contends that the qualities that distinguish juveniles from adults have legal import well beyond the issue that was presented in Roper. These qualities do not disappear when we shift from Eighth Amendment questions to Fifth and Sixth Amendment ones. Roper demonstrates the Court's acceptance of significant biologically and experientially based cognitive and psychosocial differences between juveniles and adults that could and should provide the basis for a new legal paradigm, one that is applicable to juveniles in delinquency proceedings no less than in criminal ones. We argue that the same qualities that render youth less culpable than adults, such that they cannot be put to death, also render them less capable of meaningfully exercising rights granted to them under the Fifth and Sixth Amendments. We maintain that youthfulness supports a per se rule prohibiting juveniles from waiving either the Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination in the interrogation room or the Sixth Amendment right to counsel in delinquency proceedings. In both contexts, the assistance of an attorney should be mandatory. Otherwise, the Fifth and Sixth Amendment rights granted in Gault may be reduced to a mere form of words on account of youths' deficient capacities to exercise them.

In the section that follows, we discuss research on adolescent decision making, then consider its implications for juveniles' capacities to understand and then to invoke or waive constitutional rights.

V. ADOLESCENT DECISION MAKING: EVIDENCE FROM PSYCHOLOGY AND NEUROSCIENCE

In the past twenty years, significant advances have been made in our understanding of adolescence. Especially relevant is the body of research on teen development and what it tells us about change in qualities of decision making and judgment as youth make their way from early adolescence to the early adult years. Breakthroughs have been made in our understanding of cognitive differences (differences in reasoning and understanding) between adolescents and adults, and psychosocial differences (differences in social and emotional functioning) that affect the exercise of cognitive capacities in the process of making judgments. Although, to be sure, there is wide variation among individuals, adolescents as a class tend to process information differently than adults, and their judgments reflect preferences and orientations that tend to be characteristic of this developmental period.

The teen years are a period of rapid and pervasive change in children's cognitive, emotional, and social capacities. Although in most states youth between the ages of ten and seventeen fall within

137. See id.
138. See id. at 569-74.
139. Id. at 571-74. See also Thompson v. Oklahoma, 487 U.S. 815, 833-38 (1988) (noting the importance of these characteristics with respect to youth under sixteen).
141. Id. (citation omitted). See also Eddings v. Oklahoma, 455 U.S. 104, 115 (1982) ("Youth is more than a chronological fact. It is a time and condition of life when a person may be most susceptible to influence. . . .").
142. Roper, 543 U.S. at 570.
143. Id. at 571-72.
144. Id. at 572-73.
146. Scott & Grisso, supra note 19, at 160-64.
the purview of the juvenile law, are subject to the same rules, and are presumed to have the same capacities, research indicates a broad spectrum of competencies within this age range.\(^{147}\) There is "good reason to believe that individuals at the point of entry into adolescence are very different than are individuals who are making the transition out of adolescence."\(^{148}\)

A. Cognitive Development

There are significant differences in the cognitive capacities of preteens and early teens, compared to older teens and adults.\(^{149}\) Developmental theory and research indicate that the capacity to utilize logical reasoning skills in decision making—that is, to envision alternative behavioral choices, identify the consequences associated with each, assess the likelihood of these consequences, and weigh the alternatives and their consequences in terms of one's values and preferences—emerges in early adolescence.\(^{150}\) Although there is much individual variability in the age at which these abilities emerge, there is general agreement that few acquire them before age twelve, while most have them by age fourteen or fifteen.\(^{151}\)

A considerable amount of experimental research conducted in laboratory settings indicates that, by mid-adolescence, most youths have capacities for reasoning and understanding that are roughly equivalent to those of adults.\(^{152}\) So one might be tempted to conclude that, by age fifteen, teens are capable of understanding and invoking their Fifth and Sixth Amendment rights, or, alternatively, of making an intelligent (that is, understanding the right) and knowing (understanding the consequences) waiver. But the laboratory setting is artificial. In the laboratory, cognitive capacities are typically assessed by presenting subjects with hypothetical scenarios to which they are asked to respond by making and explaining decisions. All

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147. See id. at 160.


149. Scott & Grissos, supra note 19, at 160.


151. Id. at 18. See also Shawn L. Ward & Willis F. Overton, Semantic Familiarity, Relevance, and the Development of Deductive Reasoning, 30 DevelopmenTAL PSYCHO L. 488, 488 (1990) (stating that experiments demonstrate a lack of deductive competence prior to the eighth grade).


156. This perspective was initially presented in Elizabeth S. Scott, N. Dickson Reppucci & Jennifer L. Woolard, Evaluating Adolescent Decision Making in Legal Contexts, 19 L. & Hum. Behav. 221, 222-23 (1995). See also Scott & Grissos, supra note 19. The "judgment" factors were modified somewhat by Laurence Steinberg and Elizabeth Cauffman. See Laurence Steinberg & Elizabeth Cauffman, Maturity of Judgment in Adolescence: Psychosocial Factors in Adolescent Decision Making, 20 L. & Hum. Behav. 249 (1999); Cauffman & Steinberg, supra note 146, at 325; Marge
to things like risk perceptions, self-perceptions, emotions, motivations, time perspective, and responsiveness to others, which influence our preferences and, ultimately, the judgments that we make. Researchers have identified multiple psychosocial factors that are especially salient during the teen years, and which contribute to the adolescent characteristics of immaturity, impetuousness, and vulnerability noted by the Court in \textit{Roper}.\footnote{157} Psychosocial development lags behind cognitive development—it continues to develop throughout adolescence and into the early adult years—and it appears to have a biological base.\footnote{158} Before turning to a discussion of those psychosocial factors believed to be most important to the adolescent years, we take a brief excursion into the biological roots of psychosocial development.

\subsection*{B. Neuropsychological Research}

Advances in neuroscience have produced a new body of knowledge showing that fundamental differences in the psychosocial maturity of adolescents and adults are rooted in biochemical changes in the structures and processes of the brain. Research has focused especially on two areas of the brain. The first involves the limbic and paralimbic regions. These are sensation- and reward-seeking areas of the brain, which are activated by external stimuli, including social and emotional stimuli.\footnote{159} They are responsible for the almost spontaneous gut reactions and impulses that we have when we are exposed to things provocative.\footnote{160} The other region of the brain that is especially important to judgment and decision making involves the prefrontal and parietal cortices.\footnote{161} The region where these are located is often described as the "executive" or "cognitive control" center, because this is the thinking portion of the brain responsible for foresight, planning, strategic thinking, and self-regulation.\footnote{162} Importantly, the frontal regions regulate the expression of impulses emanating from the limbic region.\footnote{163}

The executive center of the brain develops gradually, and its development is generally not complete until people reach their early twenties.\footnote{164} Therefore, although they may have developed adult-like capacities for understanding and reasoning by mid-adolescence, youth do not acquire adult-like capacities for behavioral self-regulation until much later.

For reasons that are not entirely clear, with the onset of puberty the limbic regions become more sensitive (i.e., more easily aroused) and more active.\footnote{165} Both the intensity and liability of mood that we associate with adolescence are presumably manifestations of this change in the functioning of the limbic system.\footnote{166} While the limbic system of adolescents is often bursting with emotions and impulses, the frontal lobes do not keep pace, but continue to develop at a much slower rate.\footnote{167} Consequently, during the period between the onset of puberty and the maturation of the frontal cortices some eight to ten years later, individuals may have considerable difficulty modulating their emotions. When a teen is emotionally aroused (e.g., in the


\footnote{157} See Scott et al., supra note 156, at 229-32.


\footnote{159} Shannon Brownlee, Inside the Teen Brain, U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, Aug. 9, 1999, at 45.

\footnote{160} Id.


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\footnote{162} See, e.g., id. at 434; see also ELEKONOHOL GOLDBERG, THE EXECUTIVE BRAIN: FRONTAL LOBES AND THE CIVILIZED MIND (2001); M. Marcel Mesulam, Behavioral Neuroanatomy: Large-Scale Networks, Association Cortex, Frontal Syndromes, the Limbic System, and Hemispheric Specializations, in PRINCIPLES OF BEHAVIORAL AND COGNITIVE NEUROLOGY 1, 42-48 (M. Marcel Mesulam ed., 2d ed. 2000).

\footnote{163} Id.

\footnote{164} Id.

\footnote{165} Id.

\footnote{166} Id.

\footnote{167} Id.

\footnote{168} Id.

\footnote{169} Id.

\footnote{170} Id.

\footnote{171} Id.
company of friends, out on dates, in situations of stress or excitement or danger), the executive center of his or her brain is not able to effectively rein in inclinations emanating from the limbic regions. 166 This may account for teens' greater tendency to drive after drinking, engage in unprotected sex, ride motorcycles without a helmet, jump out of airplanes, and engage in other risky behaviors. Teens may understand the risks; 169 however, as neuroscientist Deborah Yergulon-Todd explains, "[g]ood judgment is learned, ... [and] you can't learn it if you don't have the necessary hardware." 170 Adolescent brains are not equipped to respond to emotional situations in the same ways as adult brains. 171 "At-risk" adolescents see fewer options, their time perspective is shortened, and their ability to foresee more distal consequences is constrained. 172 At other times, when they are not in a state of emotional arousal or stress—conditions more akin to the experimental laboratory setting—the reasoning and planning capacities of the brain can work more effectively. 173 It is only in the early twenties, when the frontal lobe matures, that individuals reach psychological adulthood and are better able to check emotions and impulses. It is at this time that individuals become less likely to act without thinking or to engage in risky and thrill-seeking behaviors, and more capable of exercising foresight (delaying gratification), resisting external pressures (developing autonomy), and channeling negative emotions in constructive ways. 174

C. Psychosocial Factors Affecting Adolescent Judgment

Several psychosocial factors have been identified as essential to an understanding of the distinctive character of adolescent decision making. Although different scholars assign somewhat different labels, the following four categories capture the factors fairly well: (1) susceptibility to external influence; (2) orientation toward risk; (3) temporal orientation; and (4) capacity for self-regulation. 175 Below, we briefly discuss these factors and the research that supports each of them.

166. Id.
170. Brownies, supra note 158, at 48 (evaluating the effects that brain development has on teenage behavior).
171. See id. at 48-49.
173. See Steinberg, supra note 158, at 56.
174. See id. at 56-57.
175. See, e.g., Scott & Steinberg, supra note 153, at 918.

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1. Susceptibility to External Influence

Scientific research confirms popular wisdom that adolescents are very much influenced by their peers, and less capable than adults of making autonomous decisions. 176 Adolescence is a life period in which youth become increasingly less dependent on parents and increasingly more oriented toward peers. Most spend a great deal of time in the company of peers, and much of their behavior is group behavior. 177 Adolescence is also a time of identity formation, and peer groups often provide the context in which teens experiment with new identities outside of their families: "In the process of loosening emotional ties to the family of origin, the adolescent is vulnerable, since he does not yet have a sufficiently developed identity or autonomy of his own. To fill the void, a new dependency frequently emerges, a dependency on his peer group." 178 The attitudes and behaviors of adolescents' friends become influential in a number of ways. Teens frequently compare themselves to their peers and model their behavior (e.g., speech, clothing, hairstyles, and demeanor) after them, both as a sign of belonging or "fitting in" and to gain acceptance and approval. 179 Peers also influence one another more directly, often pressing each other to engage in risky behaviors. In the company of peers, the probability of engaging in risky behaviors is amplified; adolescents' desire for peer approval and fear of ridicule...
and rejection cause them to engage in acts that they would not otherwise commit.\footnote{180}

The presence of peers greatly increases the probability of risk taking among teens. Most juvenile crime—but not most adult crime—is committed in groups;\footnote{181} in the context of the peer group, dares and challenges often precipitate the commission of illegal acts.\footnote{182} Participation in group behaviors that may even be at odds with one’s personal values can carry important social benefits and avoid painful social costs.\footnote{183} It demonstrates loyalty to the group, solidifies friendships, and serves as a means of acquiring status.\footnote{184} Failure to participate, on the other hand, brings the prospect of ridicule and fear of rejection by the group on whom one has come to depend, or to which one hopes to belong.\footnote{185} The desire to avoid ridicule is a powerful motivator.\footnote{186} In a recent laboratory study involving a video driving game ("Chicken"), which adolescent participants played alone and with friends, Margo Gardner and Laurence Steinberg found that the presence of peers more than doubled the risks that teenagers took.\footnote{187} Peers had a lesser effect on college students, and no effect on slightly older adults.\footnote{188} Consistent with what we have observed about the changing capacity of the brain’s executive center to regulate impulses emanating from the limbic region, a number of studies show that vulnerability to peer pressure increases from the preteen to mid-adolescent years, and declines thereafter.\footnote{189}

While mid-adolescents are more responsive than either younger children or adults to behavioral cues from peers, there is some suggestion that younger juveniles—children and preteens—may be especially vulnerable to behavioral cues from adult authority figures, including police and judges.\footnote{190} We all know how easily children can be enticed—even after good parental training about the dangers involved—to speak to strangers and to respond to the ruses of child molesters. When placed in situations, especially stressful ones that are new to them, young people look to adults—as they look to their parents—to help them to navigate unfamiliar terrain. Children are dependent on adults and look to them for assistance and approval. Yet, they overestimate adults’ power, and therefore may be especially deferential and compliant with requests, commands, and suggestions from teachers, clergy, police, judges, and other authority figures.\footnote{191} It has been reported that children and younger teens, especially, often feel that they must respond truthfully to questions posed by adults and to comply with adult requests.\footnote{192} This has obvious implications for waiver of constitutional rights, a matter to which we will turn shortly.\footnote{193}

2. Orientation Toward Risk

Perhaps in part because of the hyperactivity of their limbic systems,\footnote{194} adolescents are more likely than adults to engage in risky behaviors (e.g., criminal behavior, unprotected sex, smoking, drinking),\footnote{195} and, as we have seen, the probability of engaging in risky behaviors is magnified when young people are in the company of peers.\footnote{196} Lita Furby and Ruth Beyer-Marom suggest that, compared with adults, youths may be more likely to engage in risky behaviors because they fail to give sufficient consideration to the consequences, because they value the consequences differently, or because they have perceptions of invulnerability (the "personal fable")—it may happen to others, but it won’t happen to me.\footnote{197} Steinberg suggests that "when presented with risky situations that have both potential rewards and potential costs, adolescents may be

192. See, e.g., Steinberg, supra note 158.
193. See infra Part VI.
194. See Brownlee, supra note 159, at 47-48.
196. See, e.g., Gardner & Steinberg, supra note 158.
more sensitive than adults to variation in rewards but comparatively sensitive (or perhaps even less sensitive) to variation in costs." A considerable body of research supports the view that, when considering the consequences of their actions, adolescents more than adults differentially attend and give greater weight to anticipated benefits or gains and less to potential losses or risks. For example, Thomas Grisso's research with delinquents is consistent with this view and, in addition, he suggests that selective focus on rewards is especially likely to occur when costs are delayed. He reports that when delinquents are asked to consider the consequences of waiving their Miranda rights, the most frequently mentioned consequence was that if they talked, they could go home.

3. Temporal Orientation

Faced with a situation in which a decision regarding some behavioral alternative must be made, adolescents tend to give more consideration to short-term consequences, and less to long-term ones. Compared with adults, they have limited time perspective. Furthermore, in the analysis of costs and benefits, they tend to discount whatever long-term consequences they do see. As a result, they tend, more than adults, to opt for immediate gratification—postponing their homework to hang out with friends, or spending their money now on things that they will forget about in a week instead of saving for something they really want. As most every parent who has weathered the teen years knows, adolescents tend to need things "this minute" and with urgency—"I've simply got to have it."

The foreshortened time perspective of youth, compared to adults, also relates to their involvement in crime. Before committing crime, delinquent youths seldom consider the prospect of being caught and incarcerated, or the length of time they might be incarcerated. When they are sentenced to a term of years, it is difficult for them to project what incarceration will mean in terms of life opportunities and life experiences forgone. The perceived difference between a sentence of five years and ten years is a lot less meaningful to a teen than to an adult. Temporal perspective, then, may have important implications for juvenile decision making with respect to the exercise of trial rights and their participation in plea negotiations.

The teen's inability to project consequences into the distant future and to accord them much weight is also linked to social class. Poor urban children and adolescents tend to be more present-oriented than their middle-class suburban counterparts. This may be a function of high rates of violence in poor inner-city neighborhoods: when people are dying at an early age, one doesn't think about life far into the future.

4. Capacity for Self-Regulation

Compared to adults, young people have lesser ability to restrain their impulses—what psychologists call "response inhibition." For reasons undoubtedly related in part to limbic system arousal, they experience emotional urges more intensely, and the underdevelopment of the frontal lobes means that they have lesser capacity to hold these urges in check, or channel them into more appropriate outlets. There are additional psychosocial reasons for youths' impetuousness. They lack experience that would help them to think before acting, they are subject to pressures to act from peers, and their identities are still forming and are fragile. Consider, for example, that for young boys, adolescence is the stage when there is a major focus on masculine identity. It should not be surprising that challenges to that identity—insecurities, slurs on a boy's reputation for toughness—are often the triggers for episodes of impulsive violence. When situations are stressful and emotions are high ("hot cognitions"), adolescent judgment is severely impaired relative to the situation of "cold cognitions," where emotions are calmed and consequences are more readily apparent and considered. In situations of "hot cognitions," adolescents are less sensitive to contextual cues that might temper their decisions. Compared to adults, they have lesser capacity for self-regulation of both impulses and emotions.


205. See Steinberg, supra note 158, at 56.
These observations are borne out by a recent national study that compared nearly 1000 adolescents and several hundred adults. It was found that sixteen-year-old adolescents were less responsible, had less perspective (ability to consider different viewpoints and broader contexts of decisions), and were less temperate (able to limit impulses and evaluate situations before acting) than the average adult. It was not until age nineteen that improvements in "judgment" reached adult levels.206

VI. IMPLICATIONS OF ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT FOR THE EXERCISE OF FIFTH AND SIXTH AMENDMENT RIGHTS

Several studies have been conducted with the aim of determining whether juveniles are able to comprehend the right to remain silent and the right to counsel that are prerequisite to police custodial interrogation, and whether juveniles have the capacities to meet the legal standards for waiver—which include not only comprehension of the right, but also understanding of the consequences of relinquishing the right.207 The third prong of the criteria for a valid waiver—that waiver be made voluntarily—cannot be reliably assessed in laboratory settings; rather, it requires evaluation of actual police interrogation sessions with an eye toward their impact on juvenile arrestees. To date, only one such assessment has been carried out, and it is only modestly helpful because it involves analysis of police-generated audiotapes of interrogation sessions.208 Much information of potential relevance to assessments of voluntariness is not captured in the spoken word—e.g., gestures and facial expressions of officers conducting the interrogation, number of officers in the room, or physical proximity of officers to the juvenile suspect.

Assessments of youth's understanding of the Fifth Amendment privilege as it relates to guilty pleas, and the right to counsel in the Sixth Amendment context, have also been conducted. Most often, these assessments have been conducted in studies carried out for the broader purpose of evaluating juveniles' competence to stand trial. Our discussion in this section is restricted to research on understanding of rights, and knowing and understanding waiver of rights. Given space constraints, we do not include a discussion of the broader competency literature. The questions we address here involve juveniles' capacities to understand, to invoke, and to relinquish legal rights, as well as factors (such as IQ and prior record) that are relevant to "totality of the circumstance" analysis and may impinge on these capacities.

A number of studies of youths' understanding of the Miranda warnings have been conducted, and most have produced findings that challenge the assumption that adolescents—especially preteens and early- to mid-adolescents—are capable of meaningful comprehension of their rights. In an early study, Bruce Ferguson and Alan Charles Douglas found that an astonishing ninety-four percent of a sample group of juveniles questioned by police after waiving their Miranda rights did not understand the rights they had waived.209 A later study conducted with a group of juveniles who had just been adjudicated delinquent found that most had only a partial and limited understanding of the Miranda warnings.210 Nearly ninety percent had difficulty with the meaning of a "right," eighty percent had only a marginal understanding of what it meant to consult an attorney for legal advice, and ninety percent had a fair or poor understanding of what an attorney was or does.211

Thomas Grisco, the leading researcher in this area, has developed, refined, and validated instruments for assessing youths' understanding of the Miranda warnings and youths' competence to stand trial.212 The test most often utilized to assess comprehension of Miranda warnings approaches the matter in three different ways: (1) youth are asked to paraphrase the four statements contained in the warnings; (2) define six keywords contained in the warnings ("right," "interrogation," "entitled," "attorney," "consult," and "appoint"); and (3) to recognize sentences that have the same meanings as those in the warnings.213 Grisco and others have compared performance on these measures for different age groups of delinquent and nondelinquent adolescents, criminal and noncriminal adults, and groups with various mental handicaps that limit their understanding

207. See, e.g., sources cited infra notes 209-247.
208. Barry C. Feld, Juveniles' Competence to Exercise Miranda Rights: An Empirical Study of Policy and Practice, 91 MICH. L. REV. 26 (2003). The study is also of limited usefulness because the sample does not include subjects under sixteen years of age. Id. at 62-63.
211. Id. at 52-53.
213. Id. at 9-11.
(e.g., the mentally retarded, those with low IQ, or those suffering from major mental illness). Findings from Grisso’s 1980 research are fairly typical. He reported that only 20.9% of juveniles, compared to 42.3% of adults, demonstrated adequate understanding of all four statements contained in the Miranda warnings. More than half of the juveniles, but less than a quarter of the adults, demonstrated “inadequate . . . understanding of at least one of the warnings.” Grisso also reported that “understanding . . . was significantly poorer among juveniles who were fourteen years of age or younger than among 15 or 16 year-old juveniles or adult offenders . . . .” The vast majority of those aged fourteen and under misunderstood at least one of the warnings. Impairments in understanding were especially pronounced in the lowest age group: youths age ten to twelve performed only at the level of mentally retarded adults. Impairments in understanding were also pronounced among juveniles with low IQs, including those who were fifteen and sixteen years of age. This finding is especially important when it is recognized that most official delinquents score approximately ten IQ points lower than the norm for youths in the general population. Youths sixteen and over without IQ learning, or mental health deficits generally show an understanding of the Miranda warnings at the same level as the average adult. It is worth noting, however, that because this type of study is almost always undertaken in a research setting without the emotional stresses and situational constraints associated with being arrested and interrogated by the police, these studies almost certainly underestimate the proportions of youth who understand the Miranda warnings and meet the criteria for waiver.

In a more recent study that involved a sample of juvenile defendants held at a detention facility in the State of Washington, researchers calculated rates of impairment in comprehension of the Miranda warnings under two different standards. The first standard involved a “basic understanding” of the words and meaning of the warnings. Because simply understanding the words may not enable a person to exercise the rights effectively, the second standard also required an appreciation of the rights, including the possible consequences of failure to invoke them. On the “basic understanding” measure, juvenile defendants scored more poorly than those in Grisso’s earlier research. On the higher “understanding and appreciation” standard, seventy-eight percent of defendants aged eleven to thirteen, 62.7% of those fourteen to fifteen, and thirty-five percent of those sixteen to seventeen were found to be “significantly impaired.” Other studies of juveniles’ comprehension of Miranda warnings report very similar results.

The rates and levels of impairment that have been reported are all the more disturbing when it is recognized that the vast majority (eighty to ninety percent) of juvenile suspects brought in for questioning waive their Miranda rights, and that those who are

214. Id. See also Rona Abramovich, Michele Peteren-Bedard & Meg Rohan, Young People’s Understanding and Assertion of Their Rights to Silence and Legal Counsel, 35 CANADIAN J. CRIMINOLOGY 1 (1990); Naomi B. Sevin et al., Juvenile Offenders’ Miranda Rights Comprehension and Self-Reported Likelihood of Offering False Confessions, 10 ABSTRACTION 359 (2003); Allison D. Redlich, Melissa Silverman & Hans Steiner, Pre-Adjudicative and Adjudicative Competence in Juveniles and Young Adults, 21 BEHAV. SCI. & L. 393 (2003).


216. Id. at 1153-54.

217. JUVENILES’ WAIVERS, supra note 199, at 192. See also Grisso, supra note 150, at 12.

218. JUVENILES’ WAIVERS, supra note 199, at 192.

219. Id. at 192.

220. Id.

221. See, e.g., Travis Hirshi & Michael J. Hindelang, Intelligence and Delinquency: A Revisionist Review, 42 AM. SOC. REV. 671, 675-75 (1977) (discussing importance of IQ as a variable in delinquency); David A. Weed & Charles Tittle, IQ and Delinquency: A Test of Two Contrasting Theories, 34 WASH. & L. REV. 41 (1968) (noting delinquents score eight percentage points lower than nondelinquents on IQ tests).

222. See generally Grisso et al., supra note 201; Abramovich et al., supra note 214. See also Ferguson & Douglas, supra note 209; JUVENILES’ WAIVER, supra note 199.


224. Id. at 9.

225. Id.

226. Id. On the basic understanding measure, fifty-eight percent of defendants ages eleven to thirteen, thirty-three percent of defendants ages fourteen to fifteen, and eight percent of defendants ages sixteen to seventeen were impaired. Id. Although Viljeon and her colleagues hypothesized that today’s youth would have more legal awareness and understanding than those of twenty to thirty years ago, when Grisso’s early research was conducted, they found that this was not the case. Id. at 14.

227. Id. at 9.

228. See, e.g., Sevin, supra note 214.

229. See, e.g., Ferguson & Douglas, supra note 209, at 54 (reporting that ninety-six percent of subjects waived their Miranda rights); J. Thomas Grisso & Carolyn Ponickier, Interrogation of Juveniles: An Empirical Study of Procedures, Safeguards, and Rights of Waiver, 1 L. & HUM. BEHAV. 331, 334 (1977) (searching juvenile court records showed that ninety percent of juvenile defendants chose to talk, although it was not clear whether Miranda rights were waived); Jodi L. Viljeon, Jessica Elwee & Ronald Roesch, Legal Decisions of Preadolescent and Adolescent Defendants: Predictors of Confessions, Plea, Communication with Attorneys, and Appeals, 29 L. & HUM. BEHAV. 253, 261, 263 (2005) (reporting that eighty-seven percent of defendants eleven
least able to understand their rights are the ones most likely to waive them.\textsuperscript{230}

Several studies have found that prior experience with the legal system is unrelated to level of understanding of Fifth and Sixth Amendment rights.\textsuperscript{231} Juveniles who have been referred to court on multiple occasions do not demonstrate significantly better comprehension than those who are in court for the first time.\textsuperscript{232} This is an especially important finding in light of the fact that, in assessing the validity of a waiver in terms of the totality of the circumstances test, courts routinely consider youths' prior experience with the legal system as a factor, and typically assume that understanding is enhanced by prior experience in the system.\textsuperscript{233}

Several additional findings stand out from the laboratory research on youths' understanding of the Miranda warnings. First, juveniles frequently do not understand that a "right" is an unconditional legal entitlement.\textsuperscript{234} Consistent with what we know about juveniles' compliance with adult authority, youth tend to think a right is something that adults can grant, and then take away, to seventeen years of age in Washington juvenile detention facility had waived their right to remain silent, and that only 8.8\% requested an attorney.\textsuperscript{235} See Grasso, supra note 216, at 1160-161; Viljoen et al., supra note 220, at 16-17; Abramovitch et al., supra note 214, at 4.

231. See JUVENILES' WAIVER, supra note 199, at 59; Lawrence, supra note 210, at 49; Jodi Viljoen & Ronald Roshes, Competence to Waive Interrogation Rights and Adjudicative Competence in Adolescents: Defective Cognitive Development, Attorney Contact, and Psychological Symptoms, 29 L. & HUM. BEHAV. 725, 735 (2003); Grasso et al., supra note 201, at 347.

232. See Grasso et al., supra note 201, at 356-67; see Lawrence, supra note 210, at 53.

233. See, e.g., Fare v. Michael C., 442 U.S. 707, 726 (1979); Matthews v. State, 961 S.W.2d 639, 643 (Ark. Ct. App. 1999) (noting that the fact that the child had one prior charge of "fleeing" supported finding that she understood the situation when interrogated on murder and attempted murder charges); State v. Gray, 100 S.W.3d 881, 887 (Mo. Ct. App. 2003) (noting that prior relevant experience consisted of school resource officers interfering when the child became disruptive in school on numerous occasions, although only two interventions resulted in his being placed in "custody" while he was taken to speak with his mother, and that the child had been interrogated on one prior occasion a little over a year earlier); State ex rel. Juvenile Dep't v. DeFord, 34 P.3d 673, 676, 686 (Or. Ct. App. 2003). Here, the court explained that some of the relevant "experience" that supported a finding that an eleven-year-old understood the consequences of the waiver was that he watched Cops on television and "kind of figured out [he] was going to get arrested. The cops don't read you your rights for no reasons to read me." Id. at 685. See also Reine v. Wyrick, 764 P.2d 582, 585 (Okl. Cir. 1988) (unusually bright and mature juvenile with vast legal experience with the law made valid waiver without parent present); State v. Jones, 628 P.2d 472, 478 (Wash. 1981) (holding a waiver valid where fifteen-year-old Canadian defendant had experience with police in Canada, and circumstances indicated a full understanding of rights).

234. See JUVENILES' WAIVER, supra note 199, at 111; Lawrence, supra note 210, at 49-51.

2007] ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENTAL CAPACITIES 165 especially if they do not say what they believe adults want them to say.\textsuperscript{235} Grasso reported that when adolescents were asked "what should happen" if a judge at a hearing learns that a youth "wouldn't talk to police," nearly two-thirds did not recognize that the defendant should not be punished.\textsuperscript{236} The research evidence also suggests that ethnic minorities, children from backgrounds of poverty, those with below-average IQ, and those with learning disabilities and attention deficits are more apt to believe that they will be punished if they exercise their rights.\textsuperscript{237}

Second, younger adolescents are especially likely to misinterpret the right to remain silent. They frequently think it means "that they should remain silent until they are told to talk.\textsuperscript{238}

Third, of the four statements in the Miranda warnings, juveniles most often misunderstand the right to counsel. Young people frequently have mistaken beliefs about who counsel is or what she does. They tend to believe that defense attorneys—especially public defenders—work for the court.\textsuperscript{239} They also frequently believe that the attorney's job is to defend only the innocent,\textsuperscript{240} and that the attorney should turn in a client if he learns that the client is guilty.\textsuperscript{241} This is consistent with the finding that, in response to hypothetical vignettes, younger adolescents were significantly less likely to assert the right to counsel when the story character was guilty than when the character was innocent.\textsuperscript{242} Among adults, the opposite was true: they were more likely to invoke the right to counsel when the character was guilty than when she was innocent.\textsuperscript{243} Of great interest, Ferguson and Douglas, who interviewed ninety delinquent subjects, reported that many explained that they had not retained counsel because they were guilty.\textsuperscript{244}

Another study reported that most younger adolescents, and a substantial proportion of fifteen-year olds, believed that attorneys are authorized to tell judges and police what was discussed in their

236. Id., supra note 199, at 129-30.
237. Id. See also Melton, supra note 235, at 186-87.
238. Grasso, supra note 212, at 11.
239. JUVENILES' WAIVER, supra note 199, at 115-130.
240. Rene Abramovitch & Meg Bohan, Young People's Understanding and Assertion of Their Rights to Silence and Legal Counsel, 37 CAM. J. CRIMINOLOGY 1, 5 (1996).
241. Id.
242. Id. at 11.
243. Id. at 13.
244. Ferguson & Douglas, supra note 209, at 53.
confidential conversations. In yet another study, juvenile offenders were asked why they must be truthful with their attorneys. Nearly one-third reported that it was so the lawyer could decide whether to advocate for them, report their guilt to the court, or decide whether to release them or send them up.

Three studies have addressed the question of whether juveniles’ understanding of Miranda warnings can be improved by providing the warnings in simplified words and phrases. None found a significant increase in understanding compared with the standard Miranda warnings.

Using vignettes, recent research has also inquired specifically about the connection between psychosocial characteristics and young people’s legal decision making. Grisso and his colleagues found, for example, that juveniles fifteen and under were significantly more compliant with authority (i.e., they confessed to police, provided full disclosure to counsel, and accepted a plea agreement) than youths aged sixteen to seventeen, or adults. Younger juveniles were much less able than older ones to recognize risks associated with waiving their rights or to think in terms of long-term consequences, and they significantly underestimated how unpleasant the negative consequences would be. Moreover, compared to adults, all subjects under eighteen significantly underestimated the likelihood of negative consequences flowing from their legal decisions. Finally, on measures of resistance to peer influence, young juveniles who said they would remain silent at interrogation were much more likely than older youths to change their minds and confess when they were told that a peer had recommended that they confess. Among those who initially confessed, however, younger juveniles were more likely to stick with that choice than older youths when told that a peer had


246. See JUVENILES’ WAIVER, supra note 199, at 119. In related research, it was reported that a majority of high school students believe that attorneys and the police are dishonest. See David M. Rafael & Ronald W. Serny, The Adolescent & the Law: A Survey, 21 CRIME & DELinquency 131, 133-34 (1975). Also, there is evidence that, like Michael C., juvenile offenders tend to trust their probation officers more than their attorneys. See W. VAUGHAN STAPLETON & LES E. TULLIBURG, IN DEFENSE OF YOUTH (1972).


248. See Grisso et al., supra note 201, at 353.

249. Id. at 353-54.

250. Id. at 354.

251. Id. at 355-56.

252. See id. at 350-56.

253. See id. at 350-57.

254. There is considerable research on juveniles’ capacities as trial defendants, especially with regard to psychosocial and neuropsychological factors that may impair an adolescent’s competence. See, e.g., Grisso et al., supra note 201. We have intentionally avoided discussion of competence to stand trial, not because it is irrelevant to the Roper decision, but because the breadth of the topic is beyond the scope of this Article. Much, if not all, of the discussion of adolescent development and its implications for youths’ exercise of Fifth and Sixth Amendment rights is applicable to juveniles’ trial competency as well.
We have seen that adolescents, especially younger ones, often have a partial and sometimes mistaken understanding of their legal rights. For some, abstract reasoning skills have not yet developed, and there is little that an attorney can do to facilitate their development. For older juveniles, the issue is more often a matter of misunderstanding that can be corrected with instruction. We have also seen that juvenile defendants have misconceptions regarding participation in the processes in the juvenile justice system. Especially problematic are misconceptions about defense attorneys; many juveniles believe that attorneys work for the state, that they only defend the innocent, and that they will share attorney-client communications with judges and law enforcement officials. As a result, it is imperative that attorneys anticipate a lack of understanding and confusion about these matters, and plan very carefully to educate their client in a manner that is developmentally appropriate.

We have also seen that adolescent judgment is frequently impaired. Even older teens tend to be impulse (especially when under stress). They are less able to envision all the possible choices that lie before them. When considering the consequences of their options, they tend to emphasize rewards more than costs, and they tend to focus on short-term consequences rather than long-term ones. Their narrow time perspective means that they may not be able fully to appreciate long-term consequences and effects, and clients' judgments are likely to be affected by external pressures, especially from peers. What can attorneys do to engage their clients, to build their trust, and to facilitate good decision making?

Professor Emily Buss observes that lawyers can influence their child clients in two ways—through instruction and through the development of a relationship—but she appropriately cautions about...
Perhaps the most appropriate model for the attorney representing a minor is the client-therapist relationship. The effective therapist is warm, interested, empathetic, and succeeds in creating an environment in which the client feels valued, safe, and understood. He does not encourage dependency, but aims to help the client to reflect on problems, consider alternative solutions, and make decisions consistent with the client’s values. Essential to building this sort of relationship are time, patience, and attentive listening.

Before turning to substantive matters of problem solving and legal strategy, it is important for the attorney to be aware of fears, anxieties, and other emotional stresses that the client may be experiencing. Initial meetings between lawyer and client are very important in setting the tone for relationship building, and they often take place under very stressful conditions (e.g., the client may have been arrested the night before, may have had little sleep, and may be in unfamiliar and frightening surroundings). The attorney’s thoughts are likely to be on information gathering and preparation for the impending hearing, but it is imperative that he also attend to the client’s emotional state. The executive center of the child’s brain—the part of the brain that the attorney wants to engage—is most effective when the social-emotional region is not competing for time.

Look for both verbal and nonverbal cues, as children and adolescents often communicate a great deal nonverbally. Encourage the client to discuss what is on her mind. Individuals under stress frequently have tunnel vision, and they may need to repeat their concerns several times before they feel understood. Paraphrasing what the client says is a very effective way of communicating caring and understanding. If the client sees that the attorney is available to her (open to listening), the attorney may succeed in setting the foundation for a relationship of trust in which the child’s voice, concerns, and interests take on paramount importance.

Legal information is highly technical and often difficult to translate into terms that even adults can understand. Discussing legal issues with a juvenile client poses an extra layer of difficulty. Juveniles also process and use language differently than adults: linguistic ambiguities, lengthy questions, and long narratives can be difficult for children to process. Legal advocates must be mindful to choose their words carefully and to consider ahead of time how to communicate information most effectively.

Some of the general and specific precepts with respect to communicating with children include being alert for possible inaccuracies and becoming familiar with a child’s use of language. When a child uses language with which the attorney is not familiar, the attorney should not hesitate to acknowledge his ignorance and to ask the client to explain. In conversations with the client, it is helpful to phrase language and concepts in the simplest way possible, and to avoid compound questions or statements. Repeating ideas and information in a conversation with a child, and presenting the same concepts phrased in slightly different ways, improves understanding. This is especially important with preteens and those with learning impairments, as they may be very literal in their interpretations. Comprehension is improved by explaining things in more than one way. Understanding is also improved by limiting the number of issues discussed in a single sitting to what the minor can absorb. Too much information and too many questions generate confusion and anxiety. It is important that attorneys be attuned to their clients’ capacities, and that they adjust their time and approaches to accommodate the wide variability in clients’ levels of developmental maturity.

Because juvenile clients tend to be more impulsive decision makers who underestimate long-term consequences for short-term benefits, legal advocates should be cautious when discussing plea offers and risk factors in terms of proceeding to trial. A lawyer is well advised to graphically present each potential choice, and to brainstorm the risks and benefits of each with the client. Use of charts, lists, and other visual aids can be useful in communicating information in a developmentally appropriate fashion. Multiple discussions spaced out over time, pertaining to the decisions the client must make, help to facilitate better decision making.

As noted earlier, children and preteens are especially dependent on adults and are inclined to defer to authority figures regarding decision making. Nevertheless, juveniles are endowed with the same autonomy as adult criminal defendants when it comes to
determining the objectives of their case, and lawyers have the same
ethical responsibilities to their juvenile clients as they do toward
their adult clients; to achieve the client's objectives through legal
strategy. Therefore, it is particularly important that lawyers be
aware of the potential for deference on the part of their juvenile
clients, and use caution not to unduly influence client decision
making. The goal of the attorney should be to help the child to
understand the nature of each decision that needs to be made, to
understand and weigh all her options, to articulate her choice, and
to work with the child enough to insure that he understands what
the child means to communicate, so that he can faithfully represent
her interests.

VIII. Conclusion

In its day, Gault was of great moment to the improvement of
juvenile justice. It catapulted juvenile delinquency proceedings from
an arbitrary and informal setting into a procedural system that
offered process and predictability. That was the positive part. What
followed after Gault was a proliferation of cases that shaped a new
paradigm, one that borrowed heavily from the adult rights of our
criminal justice system. As this Article discussed, what may have
been overlooked throughout the development of this burgeoning
procedural case law was the appreciation for the uniqueness of
adolescence. Roper is conclusive on the point that we cannot treat
children and adults alike in assigning criminal responsibility
because, by virtue of their immaturity, juvenile offenders are less
culpable than adults. Roper acknowledges that the “uniqueness” of
being an adolescent carries with it a separate set of responses and
explanations rooted in biopsychosocial development.

This Article broadens Roper’s application to due process
protections. Some of the most defining characteristics of
adolescence—impetuosity, susceptibility, and immaturity, which
Roper explains make children less culpable than adults—are
significant impediments to a juvenile’s ability to appreciate and
exercise his right to counsel and his right not to incriminate himself.
The broader application of Roper starts by transforming the meaning
of this Eighth Amendment case into a due process paradigm that
measures children’s abilities and limitations by a developmentally
appropriate yardstick. Where Gault, understood for its time and
place in our jurisprudence, inexorably linked adults and juveniles for
procedural purposes, Roper disaggregates children and adults based
upon their psychological and neurological differences. As the science
of brain development advances and we learn more about psychosocial
differences between children and adults, the impact of these
discoveries on attaining meaningful rights for children in our
juvenile justice system can be tremendous.

272. See MODEL RULES OF PROF. CONDUCT RR. 1.14, 1.3 (2006); A.A.A.A., JOINT
COMM. ON JUV. JUST. STANDARDS, JUVENILE JUSTICE STANDARDS: STANDARDS
RELATING TO COUNSEL FOR PRIVATE PARTIES 3.1 (1980).