Implications of Developmental Science on Legal Issues affecting Youth in the Justice System in the United States

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Research in United States, 1996-2006

- Competency to stand trial
- Culpability
- Pathways to Desistance
Roper v. Simmons (2005)

U.S. Supreme Court holding: Executing persons for crimes committed at age 16 or 17 is unconstitutional.

Court relied on MacArthur research:

- Lack of maturity/sensation seeking/reckless behavior
- Susceptibility to peer pressure
- Adolescent character not well formed/traits are transitory
International Replication of MacArthur Research

Studies in multiple countries, led by Dr. Laurence Steinberg, who led the MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice
Age Patterns in Sensation Seeking (LEFT) and Self-Regulation (RIGHT) Around the World

Aggregated:

By Country:
Age Patterns of Cognitive Capacity and Psychosocial Maturity

**Cognitive Capacity**

**Psychosocial Maturity**

Purple = Estimated Regression Values
Green = Estimated Marginal Means
Affected areas of U.S. Law

• Death penalty
  • Juvenile
  • Young adult
• Term of years sentences = life sentences
• Felony Murder
• Sex offenses
• Confessions