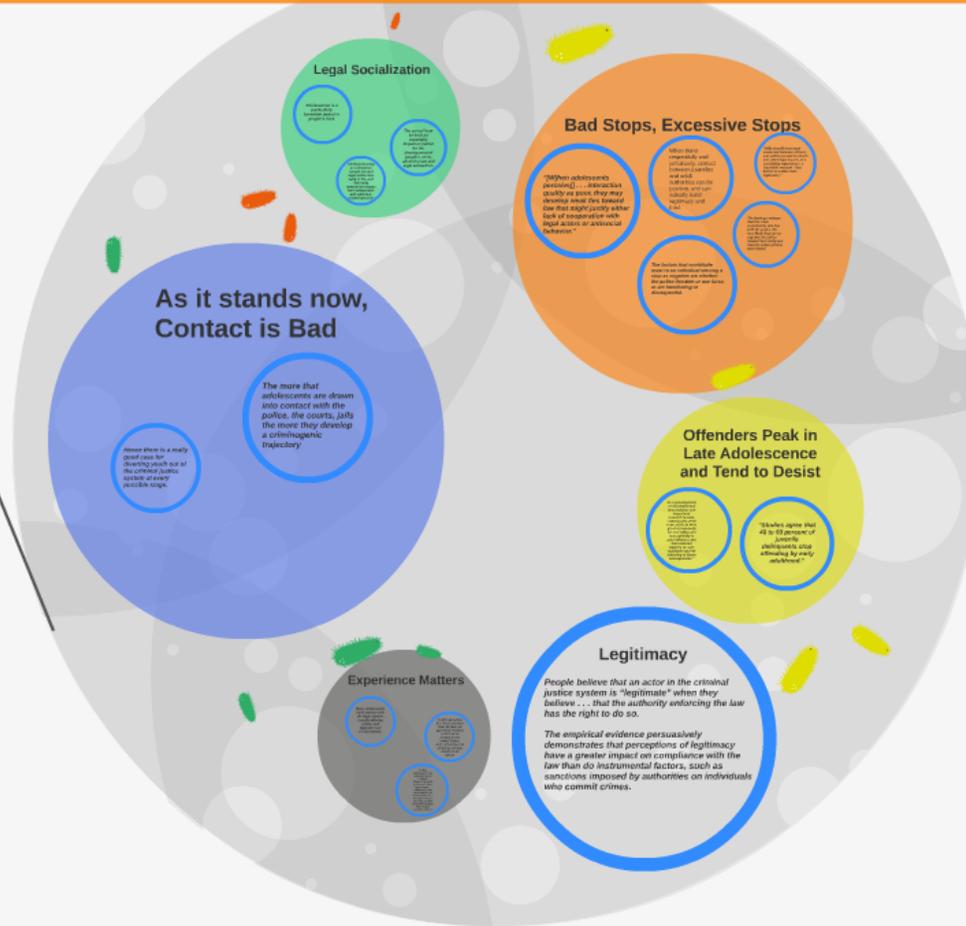




# Legitimacy of Criminal Justice Actors Among Juveniles

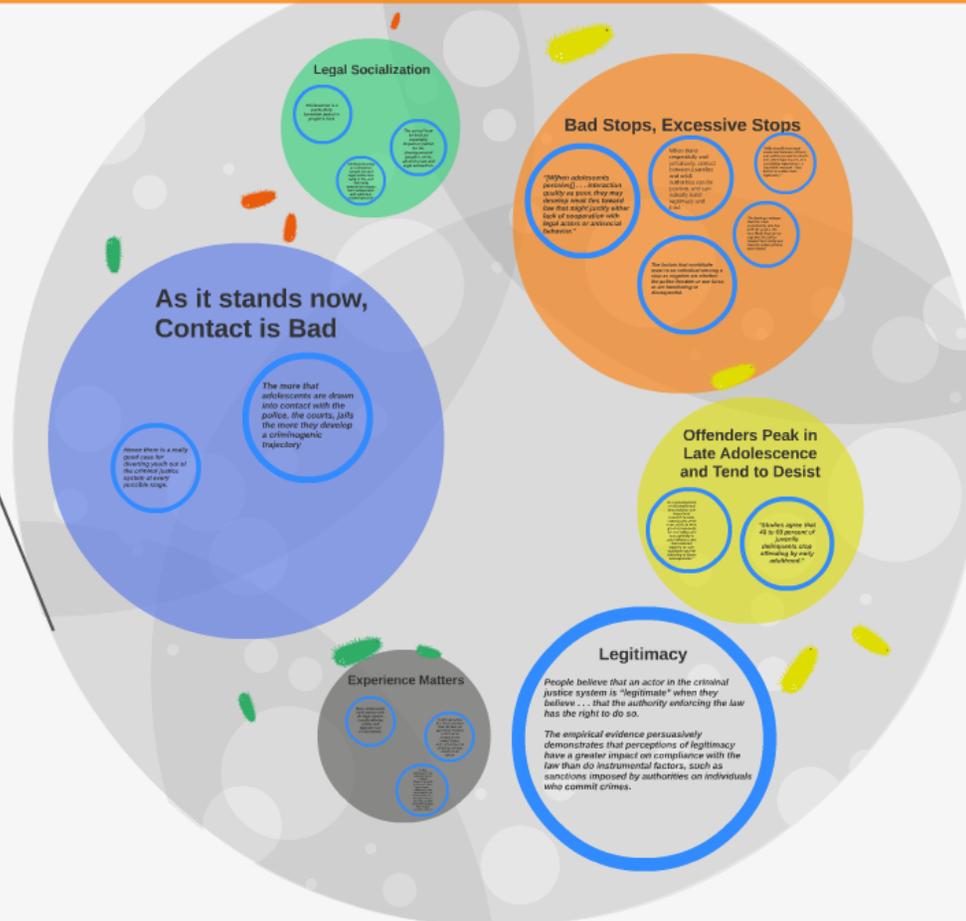
Megan Quattlebaum,  
Director  
The Justice Collaboratory at YLS





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*People believe that an actor in the criminal justice system is “legitimate” when they believe . . . that the authority enforcing the law has the right to do so.*

*The empirical evidence persuasively demonstrates that perceptions of legitimacy have a greater impact on compliance with the law than do instrumental factors, such as sanctions imposed by authorities on individuals who commit crimes.*

# Legal Socialization

*Adolescence is a particularly formative period in people's lives*

*The period from 12-18 is an especially important period for the development of people's views about the law and legal authorities.*

*Children develop an orientation toward law and legal authorities early in life, and this early orientation shapes both adolescent- and adult-law-related behavior*



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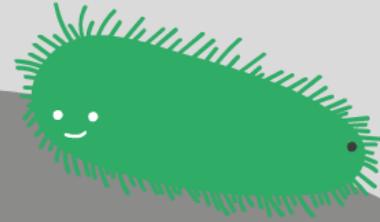
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# Experience Matters

*Many adolescents have contact with the legal system, usually with the police, and typically over trivial matters.*

*In 2011, juveniles (i.e. those younger than 18 years of age) were involved in 11% of all arrests in the United States. And, of course, not all police contact results in an arrest.*

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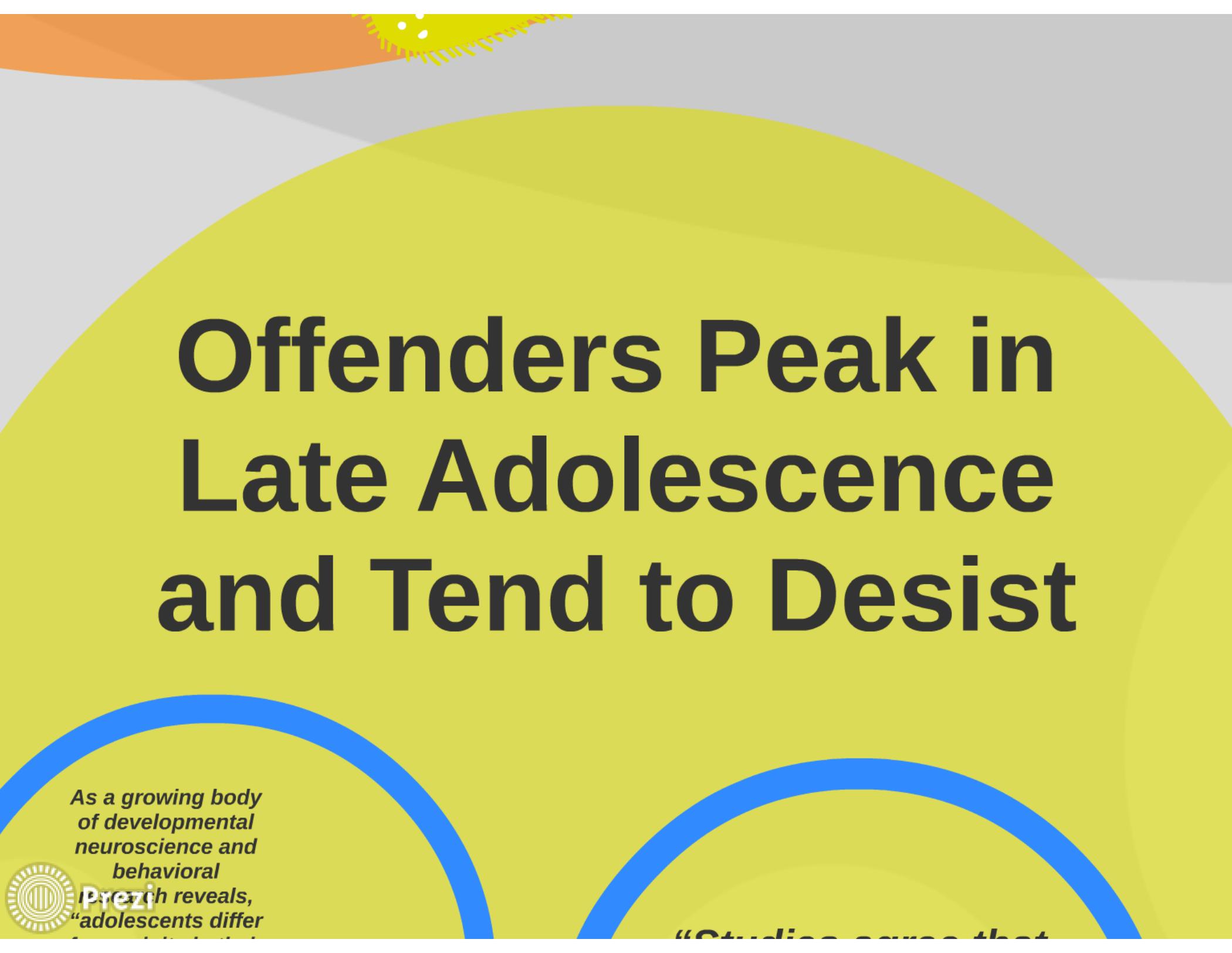
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# Offenders Peak in Late Adolescence and Tend to Desist

*As a growing body of developmental neuroscience and behavioral research reveals, “adolescents differ from adults in their greater propensity for risk taking and susceptibility to peer influence and their reduced capacity for self-regulation and for attending to future consequences.”*

*“Studies agree that 40 to 60 percent of juvenile delinquents stop offending by early adulthood.”*



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# As it stands now, Contact is Bad

*The more that adolescents are drawn into contact with the police, the courts, jails the more they develop a criminogenic trajectory*

*Hence there is a really good case for diverting youth out of the criminal justice system at every possible stage.*



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# Bad Stops, Excessive Stops

*"[W]hen adolescents perceive . . . interaction quality as poor, they may develop weak ties toward law that might justify either lack of cooperation with legal actors or antisocial behavior."*

When done respectfully and judiciously, contact between juveniles and adult authorities can be positive, and can actually build legitimacy and trust.

*"[W]e should treat each encounter between citizens and police (as well as courts and other legal actors) as a socializing experience - a teachable moment - that builds or undermines legitimacy."*

*The findings indicate that the more experiences one has with the police, the less likely they are to say that the police treated them fairly and that the police actions were lawful.*

*The factors that contribute most to an individual viewing a stop as negative are whether the police threaten or use force, or are humiliating or disrespectful.*



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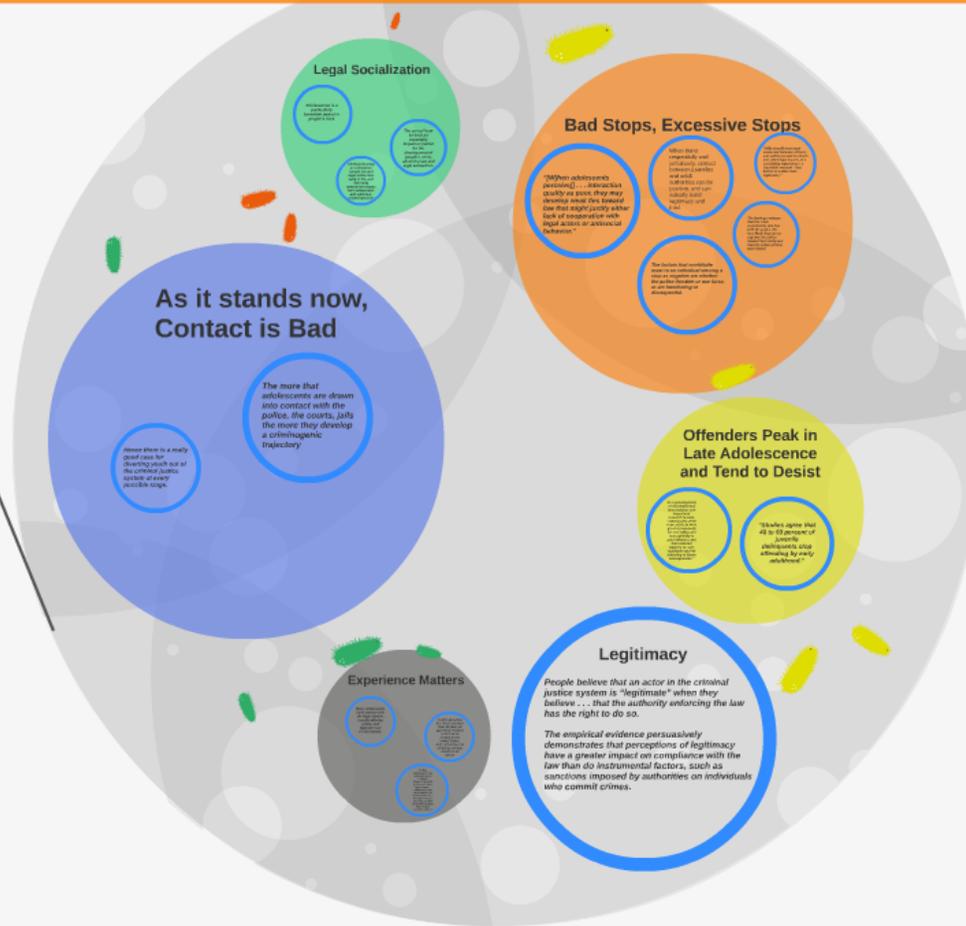
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