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UNIVERSITY

The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

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Volume 45  
Issue 4 December

Article 14

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2018

## Review of *The War on Kids: How American Juvenile Justice Lost Its Way*. by Cara H. Drinan

Rong Bai  
*Case Western Reserve University*

Robert Fischer  
*Case Western Reserve University*

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### Recommended Citation

Bai, Rong and Fischer, Robert (2018) "Review of *The War on Kids: How American Juvenile Justice Lost Its Way*. by Cara H. Drinan," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 45 : Iss. 4 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol45/iss4/14>

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filmgoers, filmmakers, policy makers and journalists. At the very least, the reader will gain a much more thorough understanding of the role we all play in the cycles of poverty.

Melanie Lynn Carlson  
Michigan State University

Cara H. Drinan, *The War on Kids: How American Juvenile Justice Lost Its Way*. Oxford University Press (2018), 215 pages, \$27.95 (hardcover).

The evolution of the treatment of young people by the U.S. criminal justice system is the focus of Cara Drinan's new book, *The War on Kids*. Despite the fact that the overall rates of youth involved in the juvenile justice system have declined over recent years, there are still more than one million youth arrested every year, about a quarter of whom are charged with a crime and processed by adult criminal courts. In adult courts, these youth can be sentenced without consideration of their young ages (e.g., death penalty without parole), and can even be held in solitary confinement in adult correctional facilities, where they experience the highest rates of physical and sexual assaults and suicide among all inmates.

Drinan claims that the American juvenile justice system has gradually degraded: once trailblazing, it now faces international scorn and criticism for its treatment of youth. Drinan draws upon both theoretical failings of the system and personal experiences of some of the juveniles who have paid with their lives for their early mistakes. At the beginning of the book, Drinan illustrates the harsh sentencing practices applied to juvenile criminal defendants, explaining their rapid and dramatic increasing severity over the last hundred years. Using both individual stories as case studies and the field studies of social science research, she further explains that some children in the United States are especially vulnerable to participation in crime and the justice system that follows. According to Drinan, race, poverty, parental incarceration, and exposure to violence are common risk factors that significantly increase the odds of these children becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. In addition, the mechanisms of certain policies and laws

increase the odds of youth being exposed to the criminal justice system and its harsh, life-altering consequences, specifically the "...school-to-prison pipeline, transfer laws, ineffective assistance of counsel, and mandatory minimums applied to juveniles" (p. 10).

Having described the path of youth involvement with the criminal justice system, Drinan illuminates the frightening reality of juvenile incarceration. Youth incarcerated in juvenile detention facilities have minimal opportunities for rehabilitation, and those youth incarcerated with adult inmates are particularly vulnerable and face irreversible and substantial abuse within the system.

The latter portion of the book presents the prospects for juvenile justice going forward. Drinan first examines recent juvenile sentencing decisions by the Supreme Court and relevant state-level responses, demonstrating how these rulings are paving the way for radical reforms down the road. Additionally, she uses three individual cases to illustrate the bumpy road of implementing these new laws. Finally, Drinan concludes that while recent decisions by the Supreme Court and legislature are hopeful, there is still significant work to be done for juvenile justice advocates. This includes "...the implementation of the Miller trilogy (the elimination of juvenile life without parole sentences); keeping kids in juvenile court; age-appropriate sentencing; shifting away from traditional youth incarceration; and periodic sentencing reviews for juveniles who are incarcerated" (p. 153). The book ends with a clear call to action, inspiring readers to pursue the juvenile justice reform so critically needed.

This book has two great strengths. It is written in a very clear and well-organized way, which makes this complex topic accessible. For each chapter, Drinan provides a brief overview of chapter content at the beginning, followed by a summary at the chapter's end and a preview of the next chapter, helping the reader to follow the content. Additionally, by drawing upon social science and neuroscience research, as well as real individual cases, Drinan effectively underlines the point for a general audience that nobody was born for crime. Factors such as poverty, parental incarceration, immaturity, and the impetuous nature of children and adolescents all contribute to the making of criminal conduct. Furthermore, with appropriate interventions, kids are more amenable to rehabilitation than adults.

One criticism we do have is that, as Drinan asserts, poverty, race, family history of incarceration, and exposure to violence increase a child's likelihood of criminal justice system involvement. In this regard, Drinan mentions possible policy reform for juvenile justice, but falls short of pointing out that society as a whole also has a responsibility to address these large social issues, which could significantly decrease the chances of children's involvement with the criminal justice system. Nonetheless, this book is highly recommended for readers who are interested in an accessible yet comprehensive book about the juvenile justice system in the U.S.

*Rong Bai and Robert Fischer*  
*Case Western Reserve University*

Kenneth R. Miller, *The Human Instinct: How We Evolved to Have Reason, Consciousness and Free Will*. Simon and Schuster (2018). 294 pages. \$26.00 (hardcover).

Kenneth R. Miller, longtime professor of biology at Brown University, is probably best known to readers of this journal for his role as expert witness in high profile court cases that took place in the 1990s concerning the teaching of Intelligent Design theory as a balance to the teaching of evolutionary theory in the public schools. One of the main tactics of the proponents of Intelligent Design (most effective in jury trials) was to repeat the claim that evolution is "only a theory," drawing on common language use of that word to mean something like a highly speculative idea.

Miller's testimony was aimed at educating judges and jurors on the professional meaning of the word *theory* when used by scientists and other specialists. Though in such trials, Miller's expertise was employed against the teaching of Intelligent Design (ID), Miller came away from the experience with some sense of respect for certain aspects of what he saw in the supporters of ID. The point of respect was not for their central claims, for which Miller does not see a place in the teaching of science. The point of respect, rather, was for what Miller came to understand as their sincerity in asserting that human life