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The “True” Juvenile Offender:
Age Effects and Juvenile Court Sanctioning

ABSTRACT

Age constitutes the single factor used to demarcate the boundary between juvenile and adult justice. However, little research has examined how age guides the juvenile court in determining which youth within the juvenile justice system merit particular dispositions, especially those that reflect the court’s emphasis on rehabilitation. Drawing on scholarship on the court’s origins, attribution theory, and cognitive heuristics, we hypothesize that the court focuses on youth in the middle of the range of the court’s age of jurisdiction—characterized here as “true” juveniles—who may be viewed as meriting more specialized intervention. We use data from Florida for court referrals in 2008 (N=71,388) to examine the decision to proceed formally or informally and, in turn, to examine formally processed youth dispositions (dismissal, diversion, probation, commitment, and transfer) and informally processed youth dispositions (dismissal, diversion, and probation). The analyses provide partial support for the hypothesis. The very young were more likely to be informally processed; however, among the informally processed youth, the youngest, not “true” juveniles, were most likely to be diverted or placed on probation. By contrast, among formally processed youth, “true” juveniles were most likely to receive traditional juvenile court responses, such as diversion or probation.

Key words: juvenile court age sanctioning

Introduction

The origins of the juvenile court derive from a conceptualization of juveniles as different than adults. To the court founders, for example, youth were viewed as less culpable than adults and more responsive to rehabilitation (Bernard and Kurlychek 2010; Feld 1999). They also were viewed as being more deserving of society's benign intervention. The guiding philosophy of the juvenile court, captured in the philosophy of "parens patriae," emphasized the notion that the juvenile court should act much as a caring parent would, intervening where appropriate with a firm hand (Mears 2012). Punishment featured prominently in this vision, but accountability and rehabilitation were, if anything, more central (Butts and Mitchell 2000; Fox 1996; Mack 1909). In addition, the court's founders, and the "child-saving" Progressive movement that contributed to the development of juvenile justice, expressed concern about the harms that occurred to children in the adult justice system (Tanenhaus 2004; Zimring 2005; cf. Platt 2007).

In the more than 100 years since the establishment of the first juvenile court, a large and robust literature has emerged that examines processing decisions and their effects (Greenwood and Turner 2012; MacKenzie and Freeland 2012; Scott and Steinberg 2008). In the 1960s and 1970s, attention focused broadly on diversion, deinstitutionalization, and informal versus formal processing of youth (Klein 1979; Mears 2012). The "get tough" reforms that began in the 1980s and escalated in the 1990s prompted greater attention to understanding the factors that influence sanctioning (see, generally, Feld and Bishop 2012). Particular emphasis was given to identifying why some youth are incarcerated and which youth are transferred to adult court (see, e.g., Fagan and Zimring 2000; Kupchik 2006; Mulvey and Schubert 2012; Rodriguez 2013).

However, remarkably little is known about the extent to which age itself influences court decisionmaking in determining which youth referred to the court merit the specialized interventions, including diversion and probation, envisioned by the court's founders. The situation is striking because age is used to demarcate the legal boundaries of juvenile court jurisdiction. As of 2011, the latest year for which national data exist, thirty-seven states use age

17 as the upper age of original jurisdiction, eleven states use age 16, and two states, New York and North Carolina, use age 15 (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention 2012).

The theory, or philosophy, underlying the juvenile court suggests that its involvement should attend primarily to youth who clearly constitute the image of a “true” juvenile, such as those who are most culpable and most likely to reform if given a chance. Age was used as a dividing line between the juvenile and adult justice systems, and for that reason serves as a potential basis on which distinctions about the youth who most merit court intervention may be made. This possibility accords not only with the theory underlying the court’s philosophy but also with attribution theory and scholarship that highlights the importance of conceptual “heuristics” to make decisions about which youth warrant specific sanctions (Albonetti 1991; Bridges and Steen 1998; Dannefer and Schutt 1982; Mears and Bacon 2009; Rodriguez 2013).

The goal of this paper is to argue that a juvenile court may be recreated within the juvenile court, that is, that age itself serves as a central basis on which to determine how to proceed with cases and, for either informal processing or formal processing, whether and what type of court intervention is warranted. Drawing on scholarship on the juvenile court’s origins, attribution theory, and cognitive heuristics, we argue that the court focuses on youth in the middle of the age spectrum of jurisdiction to serve as a focal group that represents the idea of a “true” juvenile. Accordingly, they can be anticipated to be more likely to be formally processed and, regardless of the mode of processing, to receive juvenile court intervention.

Background

Origins of the Juvenile Court

The juvenile court emerged out of concern that youth constituted a vulnerable population that was harmed by sanctioning them alongside of adults (Tanenhaus 2004). They were viewed as more likely to be abused and victimized and to be susceptible to criminogenic influences of

older offenders. In addition, court founders felt that, on moral grounds, young people merited special treatment. One of the early juvenile court proponents, Judge Mack (1909) argued that juvenile offenders should be treated as neglected children and that reform should be the priority. The spirit underlying this philosophical shift—one derived from the Progressive Movement, the “child savers” (Platt 1977), and an evolving view of youth as children in the process of developing physically, mentally, and morally (Tanenhaus 2004)—was captured by the legal doctrine of *parens patriae*, or “the state as parent” (Feld and Bishop 2012).

It was captured, too, by creating a separate civil, not criminal, court system for young offenders. Accordingly, delinquency cases would be civil proceedings, with different emphases and standards of evidence from criminal proceedings (Feld 1999). The focus centered on making decisions that would be in the “best interests” of youth. Much as a parent might do, the court considered both rehabilitation and punishment to help change behavior. From this perspective, intervention should occur even for minor acts of delinquency (Emerson 1969). Doing so allows the court to assist youth, through some combination of services, treatment, and punishment, to become law-abiding citizens (Guarino-Ghezzi and Loughran 2004; Krisberg 2005; Mears 2012). For youth who commit especially violent crimes, transfer to criminal court historically has been viewed as providing a safety valve for preserving the ability of the juvenile court to focus attention on youth who more likely could be “saved” (Fagan and Zimring 2000).

Over the last 50 years, significant changes occurred in juvenile justice. A series of Supreme Court cases in the 1960s led to the requirement that youth be afforded constitutional rights similar to those enjoyed by adults, including the right to legal counsel and to receive notice of charges (Bernard and Kurlychek 2010). These changes led to what some scholars have referred to as the “criminalization” of the juvenile court (Feld 1999). The informal nature of court proceedings became more formal; instead of deliberations among court practitioners about the best interests of youth, decisions now resulted from adversarial proceedings. In the 1970s, the federal government and states emphasized deinstitutionalization and diversion of young offenders (Mears 2012). Then, in the 1980s, as juvenile violent crime increased, an era of “get

tough” reforms emerged, one that introduced an expanded array of sentencing options, including greater opportunities to transfer youth to adult court (Kupchik 2006; Sanford 1996). In several ways, then, the juvenile court in contemporary America became more similar to criminal court—there was more procedural due process, a greater focus on more serious cases, an emphasis on offense-based processing, and, due in part to the increase in violent youth crime, recourse to laws that allowed for tougher penalties, including transfer to adult court (Feld and Bishop 2012; McCord, Widom, and Crowell 2001; Sanborn and Salerno 2005).

Even so, the core emphasis of the juvenile court remained fully articulated in state juvenile justice mission statements, in federal and state juvenile justice agency accounts, and in scholarly accounts (e.g., Bernard and Kurlychek 2010; Butts and Mears 2001). The U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, for example, widely promulgated what it termed a “Comprehensive Strategy” for addressing juvenile delinquency. The strategy systematically incorporated progressively more intensive or serious rehabilitation and punishment with repeat offenders or otherwise at-risk youth, including those with a high level of risk for future offending or with marked mental health, family, or other needs (Howell 2009).

Age as the Conceptual Foundation for Identifying “True” Juveniles

Historically and in contemporary times, the juvenile court has emphasized rehabilitation and punishment to give youth a “second chance” in life (Tanenhaus 2004). Youth are seen as less cognitively, emotionally, or socially mature, as more susceptible to change through rehabilitation, and as deserving an opportunity to fulfill their potential. Public opinion tends to agree with this view of youth and how they should be sanctioned (see, generally, Cullen, Fisher, and Applegate 2000; Nagin et al. 2006; Roberts 2004).

What remains striking, however, is that age has gone largely unexamined in efforts to understand sanctioning. The use of ages 15, 16, and 17, respectively, for dividing juvenile court and adult court jurisdiction in various states is striking in this regard. States have created

arbitrary thresholds—when viewed through a developmental perspective (Scott and Steinberg 2008)—for determining when individuals should be conceptualized or viewed as “juveniles” or as “adults” (Mears et al. 2007). For example, although developmental milestones can be identified, no scientific thresholds exist to indicate that 16-year-olds differ greatly from 15-year-olds in their social, psychological, cognitive, or moral development sufficient to warrant adult court processing (Grisso 2004; Loeber and Farrington 2012; Scott and Steinberg 2008).

Regardless, the fact that age has been used to distinguish between juvenile and adult justice systems suggests that age itself stands as an indicator of the target population for the juvenile court even though age does not necessarily equate with “development.” Youth who fall within the age range of the court’s jurisdiction, then, are not only legally but also conceptually “juveniles,” and thus warrant intervention in accordance with the precepts of juvenile justice. The court, according to its founding principles, actively seeks to intervene even in cases involving minor, or less, serious acts of delinquency because of the opportunity to alter what otherwise might become a criminal career. Only in the most trivial cases are youth to be dismissed. In more serious cases, probation and the parallel emphasis on treatment and services should be employed. Commitment to a residential facility constitutes a more serious intervention, but one that, in juvenile justice typically involves relatively short stays of incarceration and a greater emphasis on rehabilitation (Mears 2012; Sanborn and Salerno 2005). For the youth who commit the most serious crimes and appear to be intractable, transfer to adult court typically constitutes the option of last resort (Bortner 1986; Howell 2009).

Logically, the question arises: To what extent within the juvenile court does age serve to further identify those youth—who might be characterized as “true” juveniles—that the court deems to most warrant attention? On the face of it, age should be irrelevant (Cauffman et al. 2007). Age alone does not guarantee a particular level of development. In addition, by law and based on the mission of juvenile justice, all youth within the court’s purview, regardless of age, warrant attention. Accordingly, whether a juvenile is on the lower or upper end of the range of court jurisdiction, the court is supposed act in their “best interests” unless the offense is so

serious as to require transfer (Fagan and Zimring 2000; Feld and Bishop 2012). However, several factors—including the theory, or logic, that guides the juvenile court, the use of age as a line of demarcation for identifying “juveniles” versus “adults,” and the processing pressures that require rapid case assessments—suggest the potential salience of age to court dispositions. We develop this idea further below but first discuss prior research on juvenile court dispositions.

Research on Juvenile Court Dispositions

A large literature on juvenile court “dispositions”—the equivalent of “sentences” in criminal court—and the factors that influence them exists. Many studies examine the decision to proceed formally, rather than informally, with cases (see, generally, Mears 2012). Few, however, focus on the range of sanctions meted out in juvenile court (Kupchik 2003, 2006; Leiber and Mack 2003; Rodriguez 2007, 2010, 2013; Sampson 1986; Sampson and Laub 1993). Notably, the relative inattention to categories of sanctioning extends to assessments of disposition effectiveness (see, e.g., Boyd, Huss, and Myers 2008; Greenwood and Turner 2012; Lipsey 2009; Mears et al. 2011; Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino, and Guckenberger 2010; Rodriguez 2008). In both cases, research has centered primarily on predicting formal processing versus informal processing or on the use or effects of custodial dispositions.

Justification for this approach lies in part in the notion that formal processing can result in more severe sanctioning and that custodial sanctions constitute the most severe type of sanction that can be administered in juvenile court, short of transferring a youth to adult court. Even so, informal processing, in which no delinquency petition is filed with the court—akin to proceeding in adult court without an indictment (Feld 2009:361)—constitutes a typical mode of handling young offenders (Knoll and Sickmund 2012). Youth still may receive sanctions, such as probation, yet have no record of formal adjudication. This approach reflects the court’s mission of emphasizing intervention, even in minor cases, that might propel youth away from crime and toward prosocial behavior (Fox 1996; Tanenhaus 2004).

Although formal processing signals that a youth may receive a more severe disposition, it says nothing about the actual disposition that will result. And, in fact, youth may receive court dispositions regardless of how their cases are processed. Indeed, critiques of informal processing emphasize the potential for it to result in sanctions, such as probation, that may be more severe than what otherwise would occur through formal processing (Mears 2012). In general, informal processing can result in three categories of non-custodial sanctions: dismissal; diversion, which can include referral for services or treatment and fines or other punishments; and probation. By contrast, formal processing can include these possibilities as well as commitment or transfer to adult court. Transfer is not technically a disposition. However, as Feld and Bishop (2012:801) have emphasized, “transfer of jurisdiction constitutes a type of sentencing decision,” one that historically has been justified when youth are viewed as adult-like, have committed serious crimes, or appear unlikely to benefit from juvenile court intervention (Fagan and Zimring 2000).

One consequence of prior studies not using the full set of juvenile court disposition categories is uncertainty about their generalizability, a situation that is further complicated by inconsistent specification of models. Consider age—some studies do not include it in disposition analyses (e.g., Cohen and Kluegel 1978; McCarthy and Smith 1986), and when they do include it, the focus typically is not on the full range of disposition possibilities but rather on formal versus informal processing or on incarcerative versus non-incarcerative sanctions. Even then, the reasoning for including age is not always clear. The supposition appears to be that older youth may be perceived as more adult-like and so warrant more adult-like sanctioning. Regardless, this body of work tends to find that age is positively associated with formal processing and custodial sanctioning. For example, in a study focused on race and sentencing, Bishop and Frazier (1988) found that older youth were more likely to be formally processed. Similarly, in a study of concentrated disadvantage and sanctioning, Rodriguez (2013) found that older youth were more likely to be placed in residential facilities.

Other studies generally echo these findings—older youth are found to be more likely to be formally processed and to receive custodial placements rather than some type of non-custodial

sanction such as diversion or probation (see, e.g., Brown and Sorensen 2013; Cauffman et al. 2007). Even so, many studies find no relationship between age and processing decisions or find that the relationship is reversed (see, e.g., Caudhill et al. 2013; Johnson and Secret 1990; Kueneman, Linden, and Kosmick 1992; Rodriguez 2010). Cauffman et al. (2007) have observed that evidence suggests, in the latter instance, that the negative effects of age on disposition disappear once controls for legal variables are introduced. However, prior studies typically have not examined specific types of sanctions and, concomitantly, whether the relationship between age and specific dispositions is curvilinear.

Age and Juvenile Court Dispositions

Based on the theory and logic of the juvenile court and on several lines of scholarship, several grounds exist for anticipating a relationship between age and type of disposition. This work also provides grounds for anticipating a curvilinear relationship between age and both processing decisions and type of disposition.

First, the logic underlying the juvenile court centers on the notion that adolescents differ from adults. From the court's perspective, the status of being a legal "juvenile" serves as a marker of an individual who, when compared to a "adult," can be and is more worthy of being "saved." From its perspective, too, juveniles merit benevolent treatment because they are assumed to have lower levels of cognitive, emotional, and social maturity. States have institutionalized this logic by using a specific age threshold to demarcate the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. In reality, given existing research on adolescent development, which suggests that psychosocial development unfolds until individuals are in their early 20s and that considerable variability in the timing of development exists (Loeber and Farrington 2012; Scott and Steinberg 2008), an age-based dividing line is somewhat arbitrary but nonetheless serves to determine which system holds jurisdiction over youth.

If the logic that justifies this divide holds within the juvenile court itself, we can

anticipate that age serves to provide a further point of demarcation for who warrants court intervention. The argument, in essence, is that the court views youth in the middle of the age spectrum of court jurisdiction as “true” juveniles and thus as most warranting intervention. As we discuss below, the court needs a clear, easy-to-understand basis on which to determine which youth should be prioritized, much as states need an age boundary for determining juvenile court jurisdiction. To the extent that the court attends primarily to “true” juveniles—a group that is deemed perhaps to most likely benefit from intervention—it should be more likely to treat the youngest juveniles as “children” and the oldest juveniles as the equivalent of “young adults.”

Second, the need for making judgments about youth derives in part from the need of court actors to make causal assessments about why youth engage in delinquency and, in particular, to assess culpability as well as suitability for intervention. Different strategies exist for making such assessments. One prominent line of scholarship on courtroom decisionmaking, attribution theory, points to the salience of attributions for how youth are sanctioned. The theory emphasizes the importance of shorthand rules for interpreting behavior and has been used in studies of juvenile and adult court sentencing (e.g., Albonetti 1991; Bridges and Steen 1998; Dannefer and Schutt 1982; Rodriguez 2013; Sanborn 1996; Sealock and Simpson 1998). Age serves as a potential, if crude, marker or attribution of reduced culpability.

It appears likely that because age is used to determine which system, juvenile or adult, should have jurisdiction, it also may be used in a similar manner *within* the juvenile court—that is, to determine culpability and rehabilitation-worthiness. Youth lying between the extreme ends of the age spectrum of juvenile court jurisdiction would be viewed as “true” juveniles. They would be viewed as sufficiently culpable to warrant formal processing and traditional court interventions, such as diversion or probation and perhaps commitment but not sufficiently culpable to warrant dismissal or transfer. By extension, the youngest juveniles should be more likely to be viewed as too young. They essentially are “children” and thus less culpable and less appropriate for intervention.¹ Similarly, the oldest youth may be viewed as more adult-like and therefore more culpable. Accordingly, they may be more likely to be viewed as best suited for

formal processing and custodial confinement or transfer. The use of transfer with older youth might be easier to justify because such youth may appear, by dint of their age, to be more adult-like and less deserving of a “second chance” (Bortner 1986).

The need to make attributions rests not just with the substantive focus of courtroom decisionmaking but also from the organizational constraints that govern court actor decisions. Sentencing studies highlight the salience of caseloads for court dispositions and sentences (see, e.g., Caudhill et al. 2013; Dixon 1995; Johnson, Ulmer, and Kramer 2008; Nardulli 1979). In any organizational context, caseload pressures typically create a reliance on rules or practices, whether formally or informally stated, for facilitating rapid case processing. Scholarship over the last several decades increasingly has highlighted the use of cognitive heuristics, or shortcuts, for interpreting situations and deciding how to proceed (Kahneman 2011). Medical studies, for example, have found that physicians rely on heuristics to facilitate rapid diagnosis of patients (Groopman 2007). These shortcuts can be problematic when they generate incorrect diagnoses, but they can be essential to avoiding caseload backlogs. Parallels between criminal justice decisionmaking and medical decisionmaking have been highlighted by Mears and Bacon (2009), who identified the need in both settings to handle increasingly large caseloads and to process relatively little information rapidly when determining how cases should be managed.

This literature on cognitive heuristics and biases serves here to underscore the logic of attribution theory. In addition, it further reinforces the notion that court personnel must rely on a delimited set of factors to decide cases. Indeed, some studies indicate that personnel themselves distinguish between factors that ideally would be considered when deciding cases and that, because of organizational constraints, *in practice* do so (see, e.g., Bortner 1986; Sanborn 1996). Both lines of scholarship indicate that organizations rely on select factors to identify quickly appropriate interventions. In sentencing studies, scholars have focused on different potential types of attributions (see, e.g., Bridges and Steen 1998; Rodriguez 2013). Here, we focus on age because of its role in defining the scope of the juvenile justice system.

Hypotheses

Drawing on the above observations, we hypothesize, at the most general level, that the relationship between both age and mode of processing and age and juvenile court dispositions—including dismissal, diversion, probation, commitment, and transfer—will be curvilinear. More specifically, we anticipate that youth in the middle of the age spectrum of court jurisdiction will be most likely to be formally processed and to receive traditional juvenile court interventions regardless of mode of processing. This hypothesized relationship represents what we have termed the “true” juvenile effect. Consistent with this hypothesis, we anticipate that the youngest juveniles will be more likely to be informally processed. They constitute a group that the court may more likely view as not meriting much if any intervention. By contrast, the oldest juveniles may be viewed as more adult-like and thus not likely to benefit from the seemingly more benign interventions available through informal processing.

When examining formally processed youth, we anticipate that “true” juveniles will be the most likely to receive traditional court interventions, including diversion and probation, and, to a lesser degree, commitment, regardless of factors such as crime type and prior system involvement. From the perspective of attribution theory and the literature on cognitive heuristics, they constitute a group who presumptively may be viewed by court actors as logically the best fit for traditional juvenile court interventions. Consistent with this idea, we can anticipate that, among the informally processed youth, the youngest and oldest will be the most likely to be dismissed and that the oldest will be the most likely to be transferred. Dismissal is the most obvious avenue through which to remove young children from the court, while dismissal and transfer are the most avenues through which to remove the oldest youth referred to juvenile court. Here, again, this expectation derives from the logic of the juvenile court and attribution theory. For example, the oldest youth may be viewed as not sufficiently “juvenile” to warrant intervention or to be viewed as likely to benefit from it. Empirical research suggests that such an age-based curvilinear pattern may exist. For example, in Sanborn’s (1996) survey of

juvenile court practitioners, respondents were asked about factors that influence dispositions. They emphasized “that the very young (i.e., 10 to 12 years old) or very old (i.e., 17 or 18 years old) delinquent could be statutorily or practically (i.e., resources would not be wasted on older youths) prevented from being placed” (p. 103). As Sanborn (1996:103) emphasized, age thus may “influence dispositions in opposite directions.”

Data and Methods

Overview

Data for this study come from the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice and include all unique youth referred to juvenile court in Florida in 2008 (N=71,388). The data consist of 27,035 formally processed youth and 44,353 informally processed youth. For each youth, measures were created to capture both legal and extra-legal characteristics. Complete referral histories were available for each youth, which enabled the creation of a measure of prior record. Critical to the focus of this study was the availability of data that permitted the creation of a measure that captured each of five types of dispositions. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the measures, described below, in the study.

Insert table 1 about here

Measures

The dependent variables consist, first, of a measure of formal processing versus informal processing, and, second, of dispositions specific to each mode of processing. With informal processing, dismissal, diversion, and probation constitute possible dispositions; commitments and transfer are not possible, as reflected in table 1. Formal processing—termed “judicial

processing” in Florida—involves filing a delinquency petition with the juvenile court and allows for commitment and transfer as potential sanctions. Inspection of table 1 shows that the two groups differ considerably. Almost half (48 percent) of formally processed youth received probation and 26 percent were committed or transferred.² Among informally processed youth, 41 percent were dismissed, 53 percent were diverted, and 6 percent received probation.

For informally processed youth, then, the dependent variable consists of a three-category disposition measure that includes dismissal, diversion, and probation. For formally processed youth, it consists of a five-category measure that includes dismissal, diversion, probation, commitment, and transfer to adult court. Prior work typically has focused on predicting custodial versus non-custodial sanctions, or transfer, and in so doing has combined the other categories (see, however, Rodriguez 2008). That results in dismissal, diversion, and probation being treated collectively as non-custodial categories even though they may be used in varying degrees for different groups. They also differ from one another. Diversion, for example, can involve a fine, referral for treatment or services, and/or participation in teen court or similar alternatives to juvenile court processing; probation typically involves some form of extended supervision. Although diversion can be viewed as a benevolent intervention, it can be and sometimes is viewed as more punitive than probation. It is of interest on its own, separate from probation, because, as a form of intervention designed more to promote the “best interests” of youth than to punish them, it constitutes a central way in which juvenile court sanctioning differs from criminal court sanctioning (Mears 2012).

The youth in this study ranged in age from 10 years old to 17 years old. The focus of this study lies with determining whether the association between age and processing or sanctioning decisions is nonlinear. When predicting formal processing and the dispositions of informally processed youth, we introduce age dummy variables to more precisely capture potential curvilinearity in the relationship between age and sanctioning. For the formally processed youth models, we introduce a quadratic specification; too few cases below age 13 were committed or transferred to permit use of the age dummies.

A central question is whether any observed association between age and processing and sanctioning is due to other factors. Perhaps, for example, any observed relationship between age and sanctioning results not from age per se but rather from the likelihood that younger individuals engage in less serious offending, have less extensive prior records, or may consist primarily of groups, such as males or minorities, who may be more likely to be formally processed or to receive custodial placements or transfer. Accordingly, we include as controls demographic and offense-related measures that prior work indicates may influence juvenile court dispositions (see, generally, Cauffman et al. 2007; Caudhill et al. 2013; Feld and Bishop 2012; McCarthy and Smith 1986). Demographic measures include sex (1=male, 0=female) and race and ethnicity (non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic blacks, Hispanics, and other).

Offense-related, or legal, measures include prior adjudications, the severity of the offense, the type of offense, and pre-adjudication detention. Prior adjudications are important to include because they measure the extent to which youth have a history of delinquency and sanctions. Youth with more extensive records may be more likely to be sanctioned severely, in accordance with the juvenile court's emphasis on progressive, or graduated, sanctions. In part, the reasoning is that the court may feel that a youth has squandered prior opportunities to be rehabilitated. A focus on adjudications rather than referrals might risk overlooking the potential for prior contacts with the juvenile justice system to have resulted in sanctions involving no formal record of adjudication. That was not a problem in these data. For example, in analyses of formal processing dispositions, inclusion of prior referrals did not appreciably change the estimated age effects. The relatively high correlation between prior adjudications and prior referrals ($r=.70$) in part accounts for that finding; at the same time, it created collinearity problems. Accordingly, the models include only the measure of prior adjudications.

The offense severity measure augments this measure. It is useful, and unique relative to most studies of juvenile court dispositions, because it relies on a more refined, detailed assessment of severity than is typical in prior sentencing studies. The measure ranges from 1 (least serious) to 40 (most serious).³ The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice used a

consensus panel approach to develop the ranking of offenses; this coding is used by the National Center for Juvenile Justice (2007:15) when analyzing Florida data. Analyses using an alternative coding scheme—violent, property, drug, and other—were explored but, although the estimated effects of age were unchanged, multicollinearity emerged as a problem. Accordingly, and because the offense severity measure is both more refined and accords with Florida Department of Juvenile Justice coding practices, the original coding of the measure was used.

Pre-adjudication detention, too, is a known and strong correlate of more severe sanctioning (see, e.g., Rodriguez 2013). It occurs when the court has a reasonable belief that the juvenile is a risk to self or others, has special needs, may be at risk of failing to appear at hearings, or has committed a serious crime. It is an especially useful measure in juvenile court studies because, in the absence of case-file information, it provides an indication about the court's assessment, based on review of family and school information and how a youth self-presents, of the delinquent character of a given youth, his or her needs, or the risk that a youth poses. It does not substitute for these and other factors, such as socioeconomic status, that might influence dispositions. Rather, it provides an indirect measure of them. Here, we follow the lead of prior research studies. Even so, any estimated effects of age ultimately may be found to differ if a larger set of factors were included in the processing and disposition models.

Analytic Approach

To test the study's hypotheses, we use logistic regression analyses to examine the effect of age—net of potential confounding variables—on formal versus informal processing and multinomial logistic regression to examine the effect of age on dispositions. For the latter analyses, we examine formally processed cases and informally processed cases separately. In each instance, we provide predicted probabilities estimated from each model to highlight the effects of age. The unit of analysis consists of unique individual youth. The youth were distributed across the state's 67 counties; accordingly, we employ cluster-robust standard error

estimation, using county as the clustering variable.

FINDINGS

We investigate the relationship between age and sanctioning—and whether evidence for what we have termed a “child” effect and a “true juvenile” effect emerges—by beginning first with a focus on the relationship between age and formal versus informal processing. We then turn to analyses of formally processed youth and, in turn, informally processed youth. The two groups are examined separately because of scholarship indicating that two sets of youth have different characteristics and because, among informally processed youth, commitment and transfer are not possible outcomes (Feld and Bishop 2012; Mears 2012).

Formal versus Informal Processing

Formal processing can subject youth to potentially more severe sanctions, and, in particular, commitment to a custodial facility or transfer to adult court. Table 2 investigates whether age is related to this decision. Logistic regression analysis of the formal processing decision on age and control variables is presented. As inspection of the table reveals, a statistically significant effect of age, net of the control variables, exists. In the model, age 17 serves as the reference category. We can see that five of the seven age dummies are negatively associated with formal processing, with evidence of a leveling-off effect. To illustrate this pattern, figure 1 provides the predicted probabilities of formal versus informal processing for each of the age groups, using the coefficients from table 2 and setting the covariates at their mean values. The pattern is straightforward. Among the youngest age groups, formal processing is less likely to occur, net of such factors as sex, race, and prior record. The probability of formal processing increases among each older age group until approximately age 14. At that point, the probability of formal processing is 38 percent and remains roughly the

same thereafter. The relationship is curvilinear, suggesting that it is primarily the status of being very young (e.g., younger than age 14) that serves to “mark” a youth as appropriate for informal processing. How, though, is age related to the dispositions that youth receive?

Insert table 2 about here

Insert figure 1 about here

Formally Processed Juveniles

Table 3 presents results from a multinomial logistic regression analysis of the five-category sanction measure on age and age-squared, along with controls for demographic characteristics of individuals and legal variables, the omission of which might bias the estimated age effects. “Dismissal” serves as the outcome reference category. Accordingly, each of the four sets of coefficients—for diversion, probation, commitment, and transfer, respectively—estimate effects of age for a given outcome relative to dismissal. As inspection of the table reveals, there is a statistically significant association between age and each sanction (except for diversion), net of the effects of such variables as sex, race, ethnicity, offense severity, and pre-adjudication detention. For these sanctions, the age coefficient is positive and statistically significant and the quadratic term is negative and statistically significant, suggesting that as age increases initially, juveniles are more likely to receive a given disposition relative to the likelihood of dismissal. This effect eventually tapers off or changes direction. The measure of model fit, the pseudo R-squared, is 15.6 percent; without the age variables, the pseudo R-squared was 12.1 percent.

Insert table 3 about here

The specification of a main effect and quadratic terms for age, as well as the use of five categories for the sanction outcome, complicates interpretation of the regression results. We therefore present in figure 2 predicted probabilities for the five respective types of sanctions for each of the eight age groups (ages 10 through 17). The predicted probabilities are based on the regression age coefficients from table 3; all covariates were set to their mean values.

Insert figure 2 about here

Briefly, we find modest evidence of the hypothesized “true juvenile” effect among formally processed youth. Specifically, youth in approximately the middle of the age spectrum of juvenile court jurisdiction—in particular, the 12- through 14-year-olds—are most likely to receive the perhaps quintessential juvenile court sanction, probation. Indeed, among these youth, the probability of placement on probation is 60 percent or more. By contrast, the probabilities among 10-year-olds and 17-year-olds of receiving probation are 50 percent and 48 percent, respectively. Older youth, especially 14- through 16-year-olds, are the most likely to be committed. The probability of commitment among any age group is low relative to other sanctions, consistent with national processing patterns (Snyder and Sickmund 2006).

If we turn our attention from these interventions and to the “flip side of the coin”—that is, youth who are removed the court’s jurisdiction—we see an inverse pattern. Specifically, the youngest are removed through dismissal while the oldest are removed through dismissal or transfer. This pattern can be seen in the U-shape associated with age-based probabilities of dismissal and contrasts markedly with the inverted U-shape of the age-graded probabilities of being placed on probation or of being committed. Notably, we see little evidence of a substantively large age-graded use of diversion; among all formally processed youth, the probability of diversion is generally less than 3 percent.

The use of two mechanisms—dismissal and transfer—for removing older youth from juvenile court stands out. Technically, young juveniles can be transferred to adult court for any

of a range of serious offenses. In practice, though, the court, typically through prosecutorial direct file, transfers only older juveniles and, in particular, is most likely to transfer 17-year-olds. For all intents and purposes, transfer simply is not used for youth who are age 14 or younger, even though they may commit offenses that make them eligible for judicial transfer.

Informally Processed Juveniles

Next, we examine informally processed youth. Table 4 presents results from a multinomial logistic regression analysis of a three-category sanction measure—consisting of dismissal, diversion, and probation—on age dummies, with age 17 serving as the reference category, along with controls for demographic characteristics of individuals and legal variables. In contrast to the approach taken in the formal processing model discussed above, we omit adjudication as a delinquent because, and in contrast to what sometimes is found in other states (Snyder and Sickmund 2006), none of the informally processed youth were adjudicated delinquent. The pseudo R-squared measure of model fit is 10.8 percent, an improvement of less than 1 percent as compared to a model without the age variables included. Here, then, the overall improvement with age was not as notable as with the formal processing analyses. The age patterning of sanctions remains, however, for theoretical reasons, of interest.

Insert table 4 about here

Once, again, we see evidence of a curvilinear association between age and type of sanction after controlling for demographic and legal variables. For example, the coefficients for the age dummies, all of which are statistically significant, become increasingly large among the younger age groups. In the diversion model, for example, a statistically significant age effect—relative to 17-year-olds—surfaces for youth who are 16 years old ($b=.158$), an effect that becomes increasingly larger among those who are younger, such as those who are age 12

($b=.572$) or age 11 ($b=.676$). A similar but more muted pattern emerges for probation. To facilitate discussion of the results, we again present predicted probabilities, by age, for each of the outcomes; these are presented in figure 3.

Insert figure 3 about here

Inspection of the figure reveals only modest evidence of a “true juvenile” effect. First, we can see that older youth, especially 17-year-olds are most likely to be dismissed. The likelihood of dismissal is relatively constant among youth ages 10 through 13, but then rises steadily. From age 13 through age 17, the probability of dismissal increases 14 percentage points, from 39 percent to 53 percent, respectively.

Second, intervention from the court, whether in the form of diversion or probation, is more likely among the younger juveniles as a group. That is, we see a greater likelihood of intervention not just for “true” juveniles but for younger juveniles in general. For example, approximately 55 percent of youth ages 10 through 13 are diverted, compared with 46 percent of 16-year-olds and 43 percent of 17-year-olds.

Third, and unexpectedly, the pattern for probation mirrors that for diversion, but is more muted. Among 10-year-olds, approximately 9 percent are estimated to be placed on probation, net of demographic and legal variables; by contrast, approximately 4 percent of 17-year-olds are placed on probation. This pattern runs counter to what had been anticipated for informally processed youth—namely, that older youth would be most likely to be placed on probation.

Conclusion

The juvenile court is an age-based institution that emerged in part as a response to concerns about the appropriateness of criminal justice processing for younger offenders. Using age as a dividing line between two justice systems underscores its potential salience as a marker

of those individuals who most merit the juvenile court's intervention. Yet, research to date has not carefully examined how exactly age is related to formal versus informal processing decisions and to court sanctioning decisions. Drawing on scholarship about the juvenile court's origins and justification, attribution theory, and cognitive "heuristics," this study hypothesized that there would be a "true juvenile" effect. At the most general level, age was anticipated to be associated with court decisionmaking in a curvilinear manner. More specifically, youth in the middle of the age spectrum of juvenile court jurisdiction were anticipated to be most likely to be formally processed and, regardless of mode of processing, to receive traditional court interventions, including diversion, probation, and commitment.

The analyses indicated partial support for these predictions. First, we found that not only "true" juveniles but also older youth were more likely to be formally processed. Second, among formally processed youth "true" juveniles were substantially more likely than the youngest or oldest youth to be placed on probation or to be committed. Conversely, the youngest and oldest youth were most likely to be dismissed and the oldest youth were most likely to be transferred. The use of diversion, rare among formally processed youth, varied little across the different age groups. Third, among informally processed youth, the clear sanction, or intervention, of choice was diversion, but it was younger juveniles in general, not just "true" juveniles, who were more likely to receive it.

Additional analyses of formal processing and informal processing dispositions, respectively, indicated that the association between age and disposition remained largely unaffected by inclusion of the prior adjudications measure or a prior referrals measure. Accordingly, the age effect identified here does not appear to stem from the fact that older youth typically will have accumulated more contacts with the juvenile justice system and so, following the juvenile court's historical emphasis on progressively more intensive sanctions in cases of continued delinquency, should be more likely to be formally processed and to receive more serious dispositions whether formally or informally processed.⁴

Several insights emerge from the results and point to the importance of understanding

better how juvenile court actors determine which youth merit specific sanctions and interventions. First, there appear, in essence, to be two juvenile courts that exist. One is for formally processed youth, which serves primarily “true” juveniles and necessarily includes some younger and older youth who the court deems more appropriate for dismissal or transfer. The other is for informally processed youth. That insight has its origins in prior scholarship (e.g., Klein 1979; Feld 1999; Platt 1977; Sanborn and Salerno 2005), which has highlighted differences between the two modes of processing and, for example, the use of informal processing to intervene in the lives of youth, even in cases involving minor delinquency. Interestingly, probation, described as the “workhorse” of the juvenile justice system (see, e.g., Torbet 1996), in fact constitutes the primary sanction *only* among formally processed youth. Among youth who are informally processed—the mode of processing for approximately 40-50 percent of all court referrals nationally in any given year (Mears 2012)—diversion, itself a type of sanction, constitutes the primary mode of sanctioning.

Second, and more directly relevant to the focus of this study, the two systems appear to prioritize intervention based on age. Among formally processed youth, court intervention centers primarily around “true” juveniles, that is, adolescents in approximately the 13- to 15-year-old age range. Among informally processed youth, the focus centers primarily on younger juveniles in general. The evidence here thus points to the existence of a formal justice system for adolescents and an informal justice system for younger juveniles in general. By contrast, the oldest youth typically are dismissed or transferred; they also are the least likely to be informally processed or to be diverted, placed on probation, or committed.

This difference sanctioning extends not only to the types of sanctions employed but also to the nature of the sanctions. For example, additional analyses indicated that among informally processed probationers, supervision terms were shorter and more likely to involve services and treatment as compared to what was the case among their formally processed counterparts on probation. The data did not allow for investigating dismissals in a more in-depth manner, but it may be, too, that dismissals themselves differ in their use among these two groups of youth. For

example, among informally processed cases, dismissals may occur because court actors view the cases as too trivial in nature to warrant attention. Among formally processed cases, dismissals may be more likely to result from evidentiary limitations.

These findings suggest the need for studies that carefully examine formally processed youth and informally processed youth separately and the different types of sanctions available through each mode of processing (Mears et al. 2011; Rodriguez 2008). The bulk of studies to date aim to predict custodial versus non-custodial sanctioning. In so doing, they elide differences that may exist in the sanctioning of informally processed youth and formally processed youth and in the sanctioning of youth who either receive non-custodial sanctions or are transferred to adult court. In this study, for example, the age-graded patterns of dismissal, diversion, probation, and transfer among formally processed youth all vary from one another. Dismissal and probation alone vary greatly and yet constitute the overwhelming majority of disposed cases. A central recommendation from this study, then, is the need to disaggregate sanction categories and to do so separately for formally versus informally processed youth.

Future research ideally will replicate the findings here to ensure that they are not unique to this sample and investigate why exactly sanctioning in juvenile court appears to be age-graded. In accordance with attribution theory, does age, for example, serve as a cognitive shortcut for identifying youth who seem least culpable and most deserving of a “second chance”? Age itself only demarcates the passing of time, not necessarily psychosocial development; even so, the court may use it as a crude proxy measure of such development. Similarly, how influential, as a heuristic, is age relative to other factors, such as family dysfunction, gang involvement, or drug use? Existing scholarship to date has focused primarily on the salience of race (see, e.g., Bishop and Frazier 1988; Bridges and Steen 1998; Steffensmeier et al. 1998; Rodriguez 2013), but it is conceivable that age or other dimensions, such as educational performance, family context and resources, and child welfare system involvement, may serve as equally or more prominent markers that guide court decisionmaking. It also is possible that age may serve as an indicator of risk factors or of perceived amenability to treatment or

rehabilitation. These measures are not directly observable with the data in this study yet might be associated with processing and sanctioning decisions.

Future studies should also consider examining in more detail the heterogeneity within juvenile dispositions, and whether the incorporation of more detailed sanction measures can be used to detect further age differences in juvenile sanctioning. For example, we found here that, contrary to what was hypothesized, the youngest informally processed youth were highly likely to receive diversion. Diversion itself constitutes a heterogeneous sanction category. It may be that the youngest diverted youth are sent to programs or interventions that differ substantially from what older youth experience. It is conceivable, too, that the intensity and quality of interventions with younger court referrals is greater than for older youth. If so, it might be justified within the context of the juvenile court by the idea that these youth may progress to more delinquency if not intervened with at a young age. Not least, it may simply be the case that some interventions are more readily available for some age groups or may be viewed as more appropriate some groups rather than others. For example, courts may be unwilling to place the youngest youth in residential facilities even in cases involving relatively serious crimes. At the same time, the courts may view use of such facilities as ineffective or inefficient in cases involving youth on the cusp of adulthood (Sanborn 1996).

Additional lines of study merit pursuit as well. How exactly do various factors serve as heuristics that influence decisions about which individuals or groups merit a given type of sanction, and how do such heuristics operate within the workgroup culture in particular courts or court settings (e.g., Cicourel 1968; Dixon 1995; Emerson 1969; Johnson, Ulmer, and Kramer 2008; Nardulli 1979)? For example, some groups may be viewed as especially likely to benefit from diversion. That could be the case for informally processed young juveniles in this study. However, some groups may be viewed as more likely to deserve a given sanction even if perhaps they are not viewed as more likely to benefit from it. In this study, for example, males were more likely to be committed or transferred, net of legally relevant variables. Use of such dispositions more so for males may reflect views that they most benefit from these interventions,

but it also may reflect the view that they warrant more control-oriented types of interventions. The same logic may hold for youth who have recidivated after being given chances to rehabilitate through diversion or less severe sanctioning. Assumptions, then, about relative culpability, benefits, and deservingness among different youth populations may influence sanctioning decisions.

In a related line of research, how are cognitive shortcuts or heuristics—to the extent that they influence court dispositions—affected by case processing pressures? Under the best of circumstances, juvenile courts typically see large volumes of cases daily, and the need to quickly make decisions, as in the case of medical decisionmaking (Groopman 2007), likely amplifies the salience of a given heuristic. In jurisdictions with larger caseloads, for example, age or other characteristics, or assumptions about culpability, deservingness, or effectiveness, may overshadow the type of case-by-case individualized processing envisioned by the juvenile court's founders (Bortner 1982). Alternatively, large caseloads may lead to a greater reliance on formal screening and assessment processes that potentially circumscribe the influence of cognitive shortcuts on decisionmaking (Mears 2012). In such a context, it is possible that probation officer views about youth and their psychosocial development may play a prominent role in processing and disposition decisionmaking (see, e.g., Bridges and Steen 1998).

The juvenile court's mandate suggests that there should be no age-graded response to delinquency. There is, for example, no clear research foundation to indicate that diversion, probation, or commitment are more effective or less effective for different age groups (Loeber and Farrington 2012). Yet, the evidence here suggests that an age-graded response exists. Any such differential raises questions about the proper jurisdiction of the court and appropriate modes of intervention. At the very least, the fact of age differences—as with race, gender, or other group differences—suggests that courts ideally would document an empirical basis for them. The risk otherwise is that some groups may be prioritized over others for intervention.

Of course, one argument is that early intervention with the youngest youth may be indicated because antisocial behavior at young ages is associated with further and sustained

involvement in crime (Farrington 2012). It remains unclear, however, whether early intervention for, say, 12-year-olds, is more effective than early intervention for 15-year-olds just beginning to embark on a potential path toward becoming a “career criminal.” Should such evidence emerge, it might provide one foundation on which to use age to inform processing and sanctioning decisions. Even then, the arguably more appropriate strategy involves not a recourse to age but rather to individualized assessments of risk and need (Mears 2012). This issue likely will remain central to policy discussions in coming years as states continue to grapple with where to set the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction (Griffin 2012) and as scientific knowledge on psychosocial development changes (Woolard 2012).

Endnotes

¹ Any such effect would be “on average.” As one reviewer emphasized, in some cases, a very young juvenile who commits an especially serious crime may be viewed as more dangerous and less likely to be rehabilitated because there is somehow something intrinsically “wrong” with the youth. Such cases are rare but highlight the need for more nuanced understanding of how the court views specific youth and determines which ones merit specific types of interventions.

² In Florida, as in other states, numerous options for transfer exist, one of which is “mandatory” waiver to adult court. As Sanborn (1994:264) has emphasized, the term is misleading because “transfer becomes mandatory if, and only if, the prosecutor charges the necessary offense.”

Prosecutors have considerable discretion in how they charge offenses. Accordingly, even with “mandatory” transfer, court decisionmaking, through prosecutorial practices, is involved.

Notwithstanding the different transfer mechanisms that exist, over 95 percent of transfers result from prosecutorial direct file, according to Florida Department of Juvenile Justice staff.

³ When a referral involved multiple charges and dispositions, we coded offense severity based on the most serious, adjudicated offense. When no adjudication occurred or was withheld, we used the most serious non-adjudicated charge. When there were multiple sanctions, we coded disposition as the most serious sanction associated with the referral.

⁴ We thank the Editor and reviewers for suggesting this particular line of investigation.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Formally Processed (N=27,035)		Informally Processed (N=44,353)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Dependent Variable (Sanctioning)				
Dismissal	.22	.42	.41	.49
Diversion	.04	.20	.53	.50
Probation	.48	.50	.06	.24
Commitment	.16	.36	—	—
Transfer	.10	.30	—	—
Covariates				
Age	15.46	1.50	15.26	1.67
Age 10	.00	.06	.01	.10
Age 11	.01	.10	.02	.14
Age 12	.03	.17	.04	.20
Age 13	.07	.25	.08	.28
Age 14	.13	.33	.13	.34
Age 15	.20	.40	.18	.38
Age 16	.25	.43	.24	.42
Age 17	.31	.46	.29	.46
Sex				
Male	.77	.42	.62	.48
Race and Ethnicity				
White	.39	.49	.46	.50
Black	.43	.50	.36	.48
Hispanic	.17	.37	.18	.39
Other	.01	.08	.01	.08
Legal Variables				
Prior Adjudications	.49	1.14	.15	.63
Offense Severity (Range=1-40)	21.72	10.56	18.88	7.18
Pre-adjudication Detention	.15	.36	.05	.23

Table 2. Logistic Regression of Formal Processing Decision on Age and Covariates

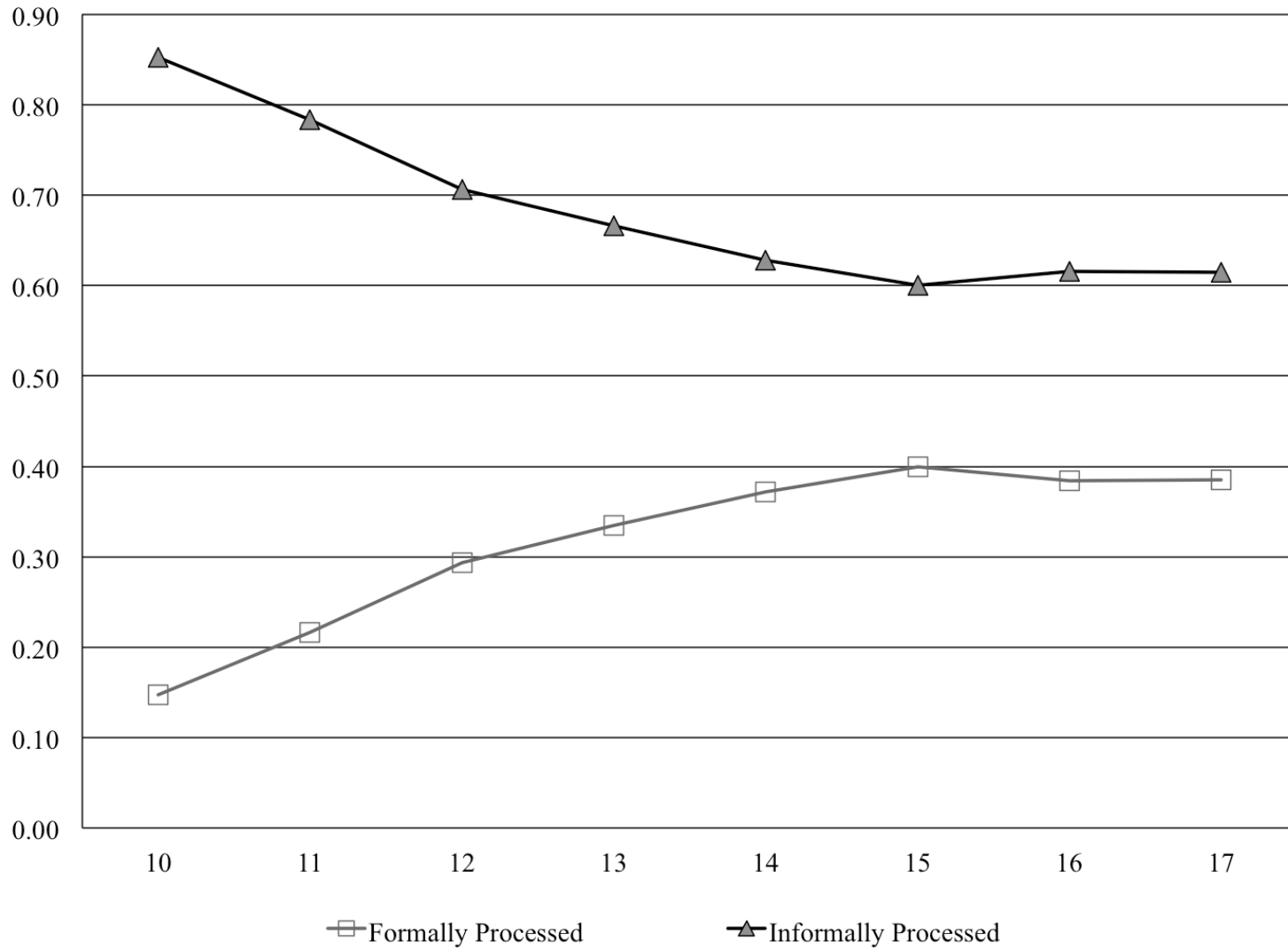
Variables	B	R.S.E.
Age 10	-1.290***	(.182)
Age 11	-.820***	(.116)
Age 12	-.412***	(.070)
Age 13	-.223***	(.049)
Age 14	-.056	(.038)
Age 15	.060*	(.031)
Age 16	-.003	(.025)
Male	.536***	(.038)
Black	.231**	(.083)
Hispanic	-.072	(.101)
Other	-.037	(.099)
Prior Adjudications	.502***	(.039)
Offense Severity	.025***	(.006)
Pre-adjudication Detention	1.037***	(.061)
Intercept	-1.643***	(.167)
Log Pseudolikelihood	-43,694.40	
Pseudo R-Squared	.077	

Notes: For the dependent variable, 1=formally processed and 0=informally processed. Age 17 serves as the omitted category for the age dummies.

Abbreviations: R.S.E.=robust standard errors.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Figure 1. Predicted Probabilities of Formal and Informal Processing, by Age



Note: Predicted probabilities based on table 2 regression coefficients.

Table 3. Multinomial Logistic Regression of Juvenile Court Sanctioning of Formally Processed Youth on Age and Covariates

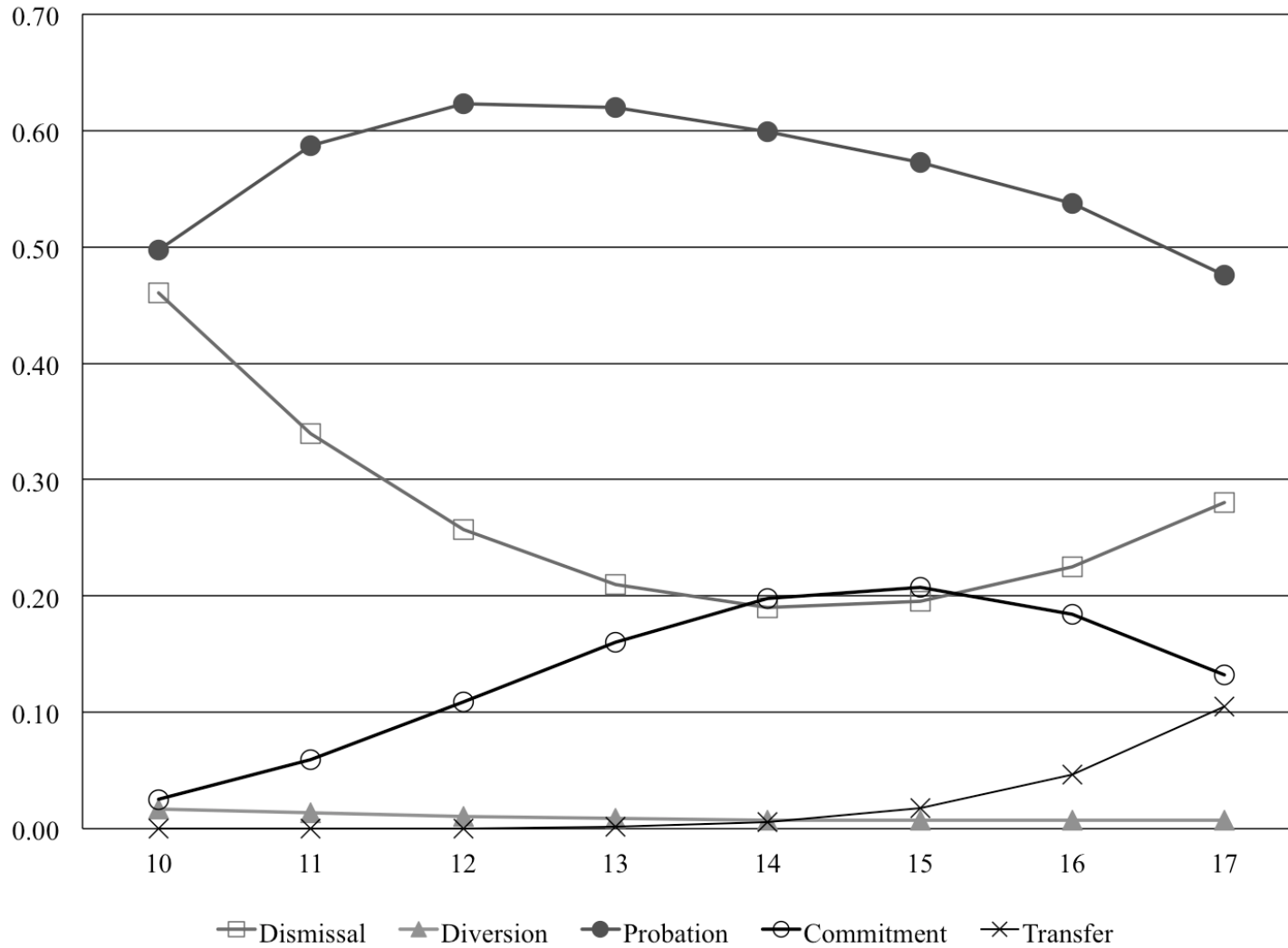
Variables	Diversion		Probation		Commitment		Transfer	
	B	R.S.E.	B	R.S.E.	B	R.S.E.	B	R.S.E.
Age	.498	(.663)	1.894***	(.208)	4.162***	(.283)	4.918***	(.674)
Age Squared	-.020	(.024)	-.068***	(.007)	-.143***	(.009)	-.131***	(.021)
Male	-.307***	(.081)	.058	(.045)	.577***	(.067)	1.208***	(.128)
Black	-.849**	(.264)	-.300***	(.077)	.046	(.088)	.277	(.151)
Hispanic	-.600*	(.307)	-.239***	(.059)	-.269*	(.107)	.130	(.140)
Other	-.730	(.971)	.035	(.252)	-.397	(.354)	.360	(.246)
Prior Adjudications	-4.332***	(0.821)	-.282***	(.079)	.494***	(.030)	.345***	(.042)
Offense Severity	.017	(.014)	.037***	(.007)	.056***	(.008)	.202***	(.011)
Pre-adjudication Detention	.772***	(.216)	1.147***	(.120)	.676***	(.185)	.252	(.221)
Intercept	-3.935	(4.690)	-12.810***	(1.532)	-32.218***	(2.161)	-52.348***	(5.379)
Log Pseudolikelihood	-30,578.31							
Pseudo R-Squared	.156							

Notes: Dismissal serves as the reference category sanction.

Abbreviations: R.S.E.=robust standard errors.

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Figure 2. Predicted Probabilities of Court Sanctions among Formally Processed Youth, by Age



Notes: Predicted probabilities based on table 3 regression coefficients.

Table 4. Multinomial Logistic Regression of Juvenile Court Sanctioning of Informally Processed Youth on Age and Covariates

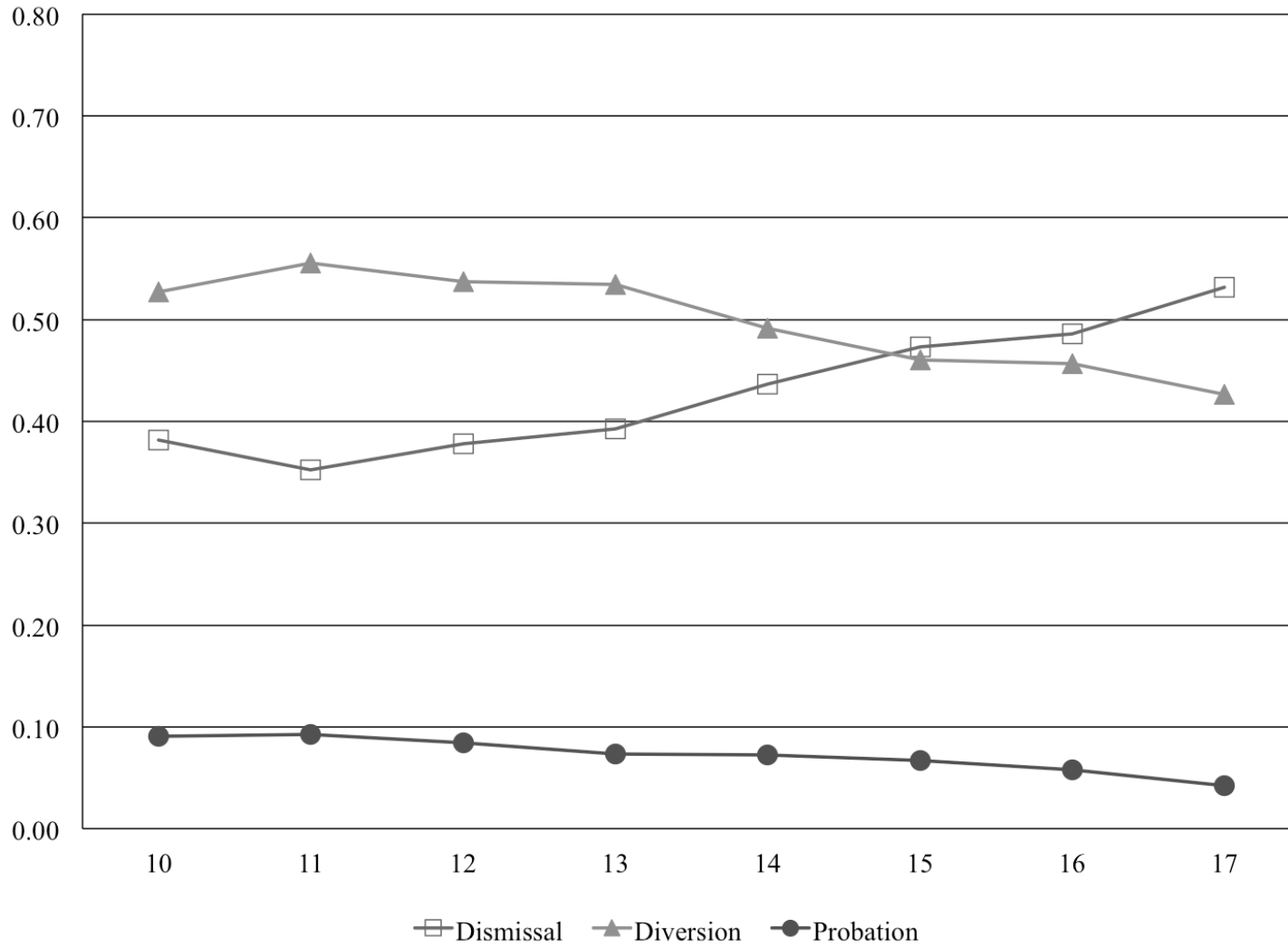
Variables	Diversion		Probation	
	B	R.S.E.	B	R.S.E.
Age 10	.544***	(.170)	1.104***	(.209)
Age 11	.676***	(.175)	1.197***	(.209)
Age 12	.572***	(.115)	1.039***	(.134)
Age 13	.528***	(.072)	0.858***	(.116)
Age 14	.341***	(.055)	0.734***	(.127)
Age 15	.193***	(.048)	0.582***	(.109)
Age 16	.158***	(.034)	0.405***	(.059)
Male	-.556***	(.056)	-.313***	(.091)
Black	-.419***	(.088)	-.164	(.098)
Hispanic	-.075	(.105)	.297*	(.131)
Other	.251*	(.119)	-.309	(.279)
Prior Adjudications	-3.237***	(.300)	-2.309***	(.260)
Offense Severity	-.045***	(.008)	.023**	(.009)
Pre-adjudication Detention	.103	(.159)	.535*	(.254)
Intercept	1.610***	(.211)	-2.465***	(.206)
Log Pseudolikelihood	-34,779.05			
Pseudo R-Squared	.108			

Notes: Age 17 serves as the omitted category for the age dummies. Dismissal serves as the reference category sanction.

Abbreviations: R.S.E.=robust standard errors.

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Figure 3. Predicted Probabilities of Court Sanctions among Informally Processed Youth, by Age



Notes: Predicted probabilities based on table 4 regression coefficients.