

straints. However, gaining an adolescent's trust and conducting a successful treatment is demonstrably less expensive if treatment forestalls involvement in hospitals, juvenile court, foster care or substance abuse care and the collateral damage; the human and material losses so common for families struggling with a troubled youth.

So is this long held perspective of mine challenged by the spate of new research into normal brain development during adolescent? Not really. We know that the process of myelination of neurons in the brain continues to age 25, or so. It occurs back to front, adding efficiency and speed to nerve transmission. This is last accomplished in the frontal lobes thus associating incomplete myelination with poorer judgment in youth perhaps to age 25. We also know that there are synaptic modifications with the growth of some new capacities as adolescence continues and this process can be shown to never really stop. None of these neurodevelopmental processes accounts for large individual variation. The timing of these changes seems to not conform with more common practices of setting the age of consent at 16 or 18. In fact the processes of neurodevelopment defying clear age definitions can be interpreted as confirming the brain's plasticity throughout life. After age 12 or 13 (puberty) all stages seem to involve good enough brain capacity, so that there is little more reason to abrogate the rights of a 14 year old than there is of an 84 year old, for the purposes of making reasoned judgments about their own health care.

We know from clinical research that youth under stress do not think as clearly. They are more vulnerable to errors of judgment and to reacting erratically when faced with overwhelming emotions. It is common knowledge that youth are vulnerable to making horrific errors in judgment when they are under great pressure, are swept up in mob action, or are in a bitter conflict. This knowledge should modify how we respond to youth who have committed crimes. It should caution against remanding many youth to adult courts and provides reasons for more measured and "guidance oriented" legal dispositions for youthful crimes. It is

good policy to offer youth a second chance as most continue to grow by learning from experience. This current research clearly makes the death penalty for teens' capital crimes an abomination. While many argue that social retribution is intrinsic, the fact that youth have some level of diminished capacity based on brain immaturity makes it cruel and unusual punishment.

The difference between exercising options regarding health care and committing a horrific crime while acting in the heat of passion, should be very clear.

These are not equivalent. Making judgments about healthcare options may be influenced by emotions or cognitive processing problems that are related to immaturity. Furthermore, having to exercise judgment regarding health care options is growth promoting as it places a teen in a position to take responsibility and to learn from the experience. Constraining harmful, acts in the heat of the moment should be an expectation of teenagers as well.

These two cases, the age of consent and juvenile death penalty, are very different. Available research should be applied to both in a way that appreciates the differences. signaled their intent. So, we wait.

Charles Huffine

Gilfoil, Con't from Page 3

the Galleria called Joyce's Seafood and Steaks with some good wines and terrific dishes like crabmeat-stuffed jalapenos or blackened catfish enchiladas.

Some newer restaurants are getting a lot of buzz. Among these are Julia's Bistro for Nuevo Latino cuisine and Hugo's for Mexican. In fact, restaurant critic John Mariani says Hugo's "advances Mexican cooking by leaps and bounds." Another outstanding newcomer worth a look is T'afia—sort of a Chez Panisse comes to Houston. The chef, Monica Pope, is obsessed with freshness and helped found

Houston's wildly popular farmers' market. Despite her obsessionality, she's a very good chef with some very interesting and unusual dishes including a smoky venison with sweet-potato puree and buttermilk grits. I'm sold. Also think about Rouge where you're liable to see the Texas thing more French influenced than anywhere else in the city.

Downtown Houston which used to be a wasteland at night, like LA's downtown, is now where it's happening. You have to go just for the scene. While you're at it tour the Hotel Icon, but avoid Jean-Georges Vongerichten's latest outpost in the hotel—Bank. Beautiful, yes. Worth it, no. I refer you to Alan Richman's thoughtful hit-job on Jean-Georges in the December GQ for some very good insights into the problems of celebrity chefdom. 17, in the newly refurbished Sam Houston Hotel, is getting rave reviews. It's been called the sleekest room in town. This would be my pick for a downtown meal. What can I tell you, I'm into sleek.

Another must for me is Shade. I used to love the Daily Review Café—a casual, funky place in Montrose. It's still there and still going strong, but the original chef, Claire Smith, disappeared for three years. Now she's back with Shade in an even funkier area called the Heights. The layoff seems to have done her some good for her "new Texas" cuisine has more zip than ever.

Houston is renowned for its very casual eateries and barbeque joints. Be truthful, now, that's really why you're going—so you can eat all the beef you want without being ashamed or embarrassed in front of your friends in PETA. After all, barbeque is beef down here and there's no better place to sample it than at Goode Company Texas BBQ in the West U section. Stand in line, order the brisket sliced, not chopped—trust me I've gone through this--be sure and get some jalapeno cheese (corn)bread and pinto beans and you'll think you've died and gone to heaven. When you finish, walk into the Hall of Flame next door and you'll probably buy yourself a \$5000 smoker to use outside your apartment in Manhattan. If you want to taste the best sausage you've ever eaten, go to Luling City Market for barbeque. The first time I went I got the chopped brisket, novice that I was. I was eating it thinking this is OK, but definitely no big deal. Then I looked around and noticed that everyone else was eating sausage. Ooh, is it good—smoky, garlicky and spicy. You're in for a treat. For the best fajitas you've ever eaten—go to Lupe's Tortillas in West U. You must order beef—these are unlike any fajitas

Gilfoil, Con't on Page 9