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0521629209 - Recriminalizing Delinquency: Violent Juvenile Crime and Juvenile Justice Reform

Simon I. Singer

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Recriminalizing Delinquency provides a detailed account of one state's attempt to control violent juvenile crime by redefining previous acts of delinquency as crimes, and delinquents as juvenile offenders. It begins with the brutal violence of a 15-year-old chronic delinquent, and the subsequent passage of waiver legislation, which abruptly lowered the age of criminal responsibility for juveniles charged with violent offenses. But the reasons for bringing juveniles into criminal court, Singer argues, go beyond sensational acts of violence and the immediate concerns of elected officials to do something about violent juvenile crime. Instead, recriminalization is seen as a product of earlier juvenile justice reforms and modern-day political and organizational interests in classifying juveniles with a diverse set of legal categories. Singer shows that waiver legislation has not eliminated the need for juvenile justice nor has it reduced the incidence of violent juvenile crime.

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VIOLENT JUVENILE CRIME AND
JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM

Simon I. Singer

State University of New York at Buffalo



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*In memory of my wife
Adele Bardach Singer
(1950–1995)
for the courage, love, and family
that helped make it all possible*

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Poor girl! . . . She will come to herself and weep, and then her mother will find out. She will give her a beating, a horrible, shameful beating and then maybe turn her out of doors. Then there will be the hospital directly . . . and then . . . again the hospital . . . drink . . . the taverns . . . and more hospital, in two or three years – a wreck, and her life over at eighteen or nineteen. Have not I seen cases like that? And how have they been brought to it? . . . But what does it matter? That's as it should be, they tell us. A certain percentage, they tell us, must every year go . . . that way . . . to the devil, I suppose, so that the rest may remain chaste, and not be interfered with. A percentage! What splendid words they have; they are so scientific, so consolatory. Once you've said "percentage," there's nothing more to worry about. If we had any other word . . . maybe we might feel more uneasy.

Raskolnikov speaking in Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*

Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for the home-born; for I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 24:2