



# Lost Causes: Blended Sentencing, Second Chances, and the Texas Youth Commission

*Chad R. Trulson, Darin R. Haerle, Jonathan W. Caudill, Matt DeLisi*

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What should be done with minors who kill, maim, defile, and destroy the lives of others? The state of Texas deals with some of its most serious and violent youthful offenders through "determinate sentencing," a unique sentencing structure that blends parts of the juvenile and adult justice systems. Once adjudicated via determinate sentencing, offenders are first incarcerated in the Texas Youth Commission (TYC). As they approach age eighteen, they are either transferred to the Texas prison system to serve the remainder of their original determinate sentence or released from TYC into Texas's communities.

The first long-term study of determinate sentencing in Texas, *Lost Causes* examines the social and delinquent histories, institutionalization experiences, and release and recidivism outcomes of more than 3,000 serious and violent juvenile offenders who received such sentences between 1987 and 2011. The authors seek to understand the process, outcomes, and consequences of determinate sentencing, which gave serious and violent juvenile offenders one more chance to redeem themselves or to solidify their place as the next generation of adult prisoners in Texas. The book's findings—that about 70 percent of offenders are released to the community during their most crime-prone years instead of being transferred to the Texas prison system and that about half of those released continue to reoffend for serious crimes—make *Lost Causes* crucial reading for all students and practitioners of juvenile and criminal justice.

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