The New Russian Roulette:  

Brady Revisited

Jannice E. Joseph*

I. Introduction

Delma Banks served over twenty-three years on Texas’s death row after being convicted of killing a white teenager in 1981.1 Banks’s reprieve from death came when, just hours before his scheduled execution, the United States Supreme Court granted a stay.2 The Court subsequently granted certiorari and ruled that the prosecution violated Brady v. Maryland3 by failing to disclose to the defense that one of two key witnesses was a paid informant.4 Additionally, the Court held that the lower court erred in denying a certificate of appealability on whether Banks had adequately raised a second Brady claim that another witness was extensively coached prior to his testimony.5 At trial, the defense relied upon the State’s promise that no formal Brady request was necessary because the prosecution would turn over all evidence to which the defendant was entitled.6 The State did not turn over this evidence until nineteen years after the trial concluded and Banks had been sentenced to death.7 In reaching its decision, the Court implicitly expanded the reach of Brady and reinforced the Kyles v. Whitley8 line of cases that impute to the prosecution knowledge of exculpatory or impeaching evidence in the possession of the police or other branches of law enforcement.9

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* J.D. Candidate, May 2005, Washington and Lee University School of Law; B.S. University of Maryland University College. Thanks to Khione for being the best and brightest daughter a parent could ever hope for. Thanks to Dessa, Catherine, and Lori for all their love and support. Thanks to Ida-Gaye for her friendship and unfailing support, and to Professor Groot for allowing me to pick his brain so many times. Thanks to the members of the Virginia Capital Case Clearinghouse, especially the editors, for their time and efforts. Finally, thanks to God for the many opportunities he has placed in my path and for granting me the wisdom to see my path in life.

5. Banks, 124 S. Ct. at 1263.
6. Id. at 1263–64.
7. Id. at 1268–69.
9. See Kyles v. Whitley, 514 U.S. 419, 437 (1995) (finding that the prosecution has a duty to learn of exculpatory evidence known to others acting on behalf of the government); Banks, 124
Prosecutorial suppression of exculpatory material in the criminal justice system undermines the fair administration of justice and the reliability of the results produced by criminal trials. The prosecution and defense must honestly and reliably fulfill their duties for the criminal justice system to function in a trustworthy manner. The prosecution’s nondisclosure of material exculpatory evidence during and after trial challenges the precept that only the guilty will be prosecuted, convicted, and punished. The prosecution represents the public, and the public wins not only when the guilty are convicted but also when criminal trials are fair. When the prosecution maintains a win-at-all-costs mentality and either suppresses exculpatory evidence or tailors witness statements to suit its needs, it violates the public trust.

This article will discuss the current status of Brady in capital cases and ways that defense counsel can ensure that their clients reap the full benefit of Brady at all phases of trial. Part II of this article surveys problematic aspects of the Brady doctrine. Part III focuses on the witness preparation aspect of Banks and discusses Banks’s implication that material generated in the course of victim and witness interviews may be treated as Brady material. Part IV focuses on witness proffers and argues for a standard that would require all proffers to be memorialized for Brady purposes. Part V examines the emerging issue of whether victim-witness advocates’ files should be subject to potential Brady disclosure. Part VI discusses ways defense counsel might take advantage of the current modest expansion of the Brady doctrine as evidenced by cases such as Banks.

S. Ct. at 1278–79 (stating that witness Farr’s relationship as an informant should have been disclosed as impeachment evidence); United States v. Brooks, 966 F.2d 1500, 1501 (D.C. Cir. 1992) (remanding for failure by the prosecutor to search the files of other agencies for exculpatory evidence).

10. The ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct mandate that:

   The prosecutor in a criminal case shall . . . (d) make timely disclosure to the defense of all evidence or information known to the prosecutor that tends to negate the guilt of the accused or mitigates the offense, and, in connection with sentencing, disclose to the defense and to the tribunal all unprivileged mitigating information known to the prosecutor, except when the prosecutor is relieved of this responsibility by a protective order of the tribunal.


11. See Elliott v. Commonwealth, 1 S.E.2d 273, 275 (Va. 1939) (quoting Wilson v. Commonwealth, 162 S.E. 15, 17 (Va. 1932)) (“An accused should not, by wilful act, be placed in such an attitude before the jury by the representative of the commonwealth whose duty to prosecute one accused of crime is coexistent with his duty to see that the accused is accorded a fair and impartial trial.”).


13. See id. at 644 (quoting Brady, 373 U.S. at 87) (noting that Brady was thought to represent not only that a defendant must have access to exculpatory material, but the prosecution would also pursue justice and not simply victory in the court).

14. See Brady, 373 U.S. at 83–84 (noting society’s interest in fair criminal trials).
II. Defendant’s Right to Exculpatory Material

*Brady* established a defendant’s right to exculpatory material. The Court held that the prosecution must turn over any exculpatory information or evidence to the defense that is material to guilt or punishment. While the United States Supreme Court’s central holding in *Brady* was favorable to defendants, subsequent cases demonstrated that the contours of *Brady* were not clear. This is because the prosecution’s failure to turn over exculpatory material may not constitute a *Brady* violation. United States v. *Bagley*, followed by *Strickler v. Greene*, established that to prove a *Brady* violation, the defense must show both that the evidence at issue is favorable to the accused, either because it is exculpatory or because it weakens some aspect of the prosecution’s case, and that the defendant has sustained a relatively high level of prejudice as a result of the suppression.

Cases since *Brady* have expanded the doctrine in some areas but constricted it in others. These decisions expanded *Brady* to include exculpatory material without a specific request by the defense and evidence in the control of actors other than the prosecutor but under government control. *Brady* has also been expanded to include defense proffers to the prosecution. In addition, *Brady* now applies to the suppression of transcripts of prosecution rehearsal meetings.

15. *Id.* at 87.
16. See *id.* (finding that a State denies a defendant due process when it fails to disclose to the defendant before trial evidence favorable to the defendant that is material either to guilt or to punishment).
17. See, e.g., United States v. Powell, 886 F.2d 81, 84 (4th Cir. 1989) (holding that although the Government has a duty to make a good faith effort to discover and disclose *Brady* material, a failure to fulfill this duty will be harmless error unless the defendant is able to show the information sought was material).
18. See, e.g., Morrow v. Dreke, 367 F.3d 309, 322 (5th Cir. 2004) (stating that failure to disclose various FBI reports which would have a cumulative effect did not violate *Brady*).
21. See United States v. Bagley, 473 U.S. 667, 678–83 (1985) (clarifying the standard of review when exculpatory material is suppressed); *Strickler v. Greene*, 527 U.S. 263, 281 (1999) (stating that no *Brady* violation exists unless there is reasonable probability the verdict would have been different).
23. See United States v. Agurs, 427 U.S. 97, 107 (1976) (stating that the prosecution has a duty to disclose exculpatory evidence even in cases when no request has been made by defense).
24. See *Kyles*, 514 U.S. at 437 (stating that the knowledge of government agents is imputed to the prosecution).
25. See Spicer v. Roxbury Corr. Inst., 194 F.3d 547, 555–57 (4th Cir. 1999) (finding that defense proffers of a cooperation witness’s proposed testimony are subject to *Brady*).
with witnesses. On the other hand, the United States Supreme Court has also constricted the meaning of materiality under Brady.

A problematic aspect of Brady is that it is mainly enforced post-trial. Defense attorneys are usually unable to discover exculpatory material unless the prosecution follows its ethical duties and legal discovery obligations. When the prosecution suppresses material exculpatory evidence, the defense must proceed to trial without such evidence. This puts the prosecution at an unfair advantage during trial. Every trial is a story-telling enterprise in which the prosecution and defense each attempt to convince the audience that its particular version of the story is correct. Exculpatory evidence is part of the story-telling lawyers engage in, and how each particular story ends depends upon the extent of the details available to each party. When facts critical to the narrative are omitted, the triers of fact must insert opinions and suppositions into those missing moments.

The Bagley Court placed a heavy post-trial burden upon the defense by requiring the defense, on appeal, to demonstrate that it has suffered such prejudice from the prosecution’s withholding of exculpatory evidence and that the withheld evidence is reasonably likely to have changed the trial’s outcome. Given the difficulty of such a retrospective approach, some reform proponents focus on the pretrial rather than the appellate stage of the proceeding. For example, the Illinois Commission on Capital Punishment recently recommended to the Supreme Court of Illinois that it consider requiring a final case management conference in capital cases to insure compliance with the discovery rules and that each case is fully prepared for trial.

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26. See Banks, 124 S. Ct. at 1280 n.19 (discussing the rehearsal transcripts suppressed by the prosecution).

27. See Strickler, 527 U.S. at 281–82 (noting that the only true Brady violations are suppressions of evidence reasonably likely to alter the outcome of a trial); Bagley, 473 U.S. at 682 (finding undisclosed evidence “material only if there is a reasonable probability that, had the evidence been disclosed to the defense, the result of the proceeding would have been different”).


29. Id. at 651.

30. See Old Chief v. United States, 519 U.S. 172, 189 (1997) (noting that “[a] convincing tale may be told with economy, but when economy becomes a break in the natural sequence of narrative evidence, an assurance that the missing link is really there is never more than second best”).

31. Id.

32. Id.

33. See Bagley, 473 U.S. at 683 (noting that the reviewing court should examine the totality of the circumstances as to how the outcome of the trial would have changed in light of the nondisclosure); Strickler, 527 U.S. at 294 (noting that although the prosecution failed to disclose exculpatory materials in police files that cast doubt on portions of an eyewitness testimony, there was no prejudice because of evidence in the record pointing to the defendant’s guilt).

34. See The Governor’s Comm’n on Capital Punishment, Report of the Governor’s Comm’n on Capital Punishment 117 (April 2002) at
“[t]he trial judge is the person responsible for managing the conduct of both the prosecution and the defense before the jury, and supervising the overall conduct of the trial to insure that a fair and just result is obtained.”\textsuperscript{35} By conducting case management conferences, both the defense and prosecution will be more adequately prepared, and the flow of information will result in a more efficient process.\textsuperscript{36} During the conferences, examination of what is considered exculpatory evidence by both the defense and the prosecution will benefit from the impartial scrutiny of the judge.\textsuperscript{37} The conferences will facilitate the efficient flow of information between the parties and ensure that all discovery requests have been complied with.\textsuperscript{38} For example, when the prosecution has complied with a \textit{Brady} motion but the defense is aware of additional information in the prosecution’s possession material to its case, the case management conference provides the defense an opportunity to alert the judge to why the information is material and should be disclosed. The defense, of course, will bear the burden of proving that the evidence sought is exculpatory and material.\textsuperscript{39} However, the case management conference gives the defense the opportunity to inform the judge about the evidence without revealing its entire case strategy.\textsuperscript{40}

Such conferences will potentially place more information in the record for examination at the appellate level.\textsuperscript{41} The appellate court will conduct a more efficient review of the record when the discovery that was sifted through a case management conference is readily available.\textsuperscript{42} Additionally, the materiality of withheld evidence should be more readily apparent to the appellate court in cases where the defense has had the opportunity to apprise the trial judge of its reasons for seeking disclosure.\textsuperscript{43} This in turn means that the post-trial burden of the defendant to demonstrate prejudice from suppression of exculpatory evidence will become less onerous.\textsuperscript{44} A uniform adoption of the rule proposed by the Illinois Commission might, therefore, result in more adherence to \textit{Brady}.

While a prosecutor has an ethical duty to disclose any and all exculpatory evidence before and during trial as it is received or revealed, this duty is often
ignored until discovered at the appellate level.\textsuperscript{45} Additionally, even when a defense attorney requests that the trial judge examine the evidence in camera for exculpatory purposes, the judge may frequently defer to the prosecution’s assertion that it has no exculpatory material.\textsuperscript{46} Suppression of evidence, false testimony, and undisclosed witness coaching during trial threaten the justice system and lead to untrustworthy and unreliable outcomes.\textsuperscript{47} The adversarial system must be transparent, which means the prosecution should disclose to the defense all information not otherwise exempt.\textsuperscript{48} The adversarial system must at times yield to transparency in the proceedings to ensure that justice is fair and impartial.\textsuperscript{49} “A fair trial under fair procedure is a basic element in our Government. Zealous partisans filled with bias and prejudice have no place among those whom government selects to play important parts in trials designed to lead to fair determinations of guilt or innocence.”\textsuperscript{50}

Numerous cases of \textit{Brady} violations nationwide suggest that \textit{Bagley} has set too high a standard for the determination of materiality.\textsuperscript{51} According to \textit{Bagley},

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{45} See Hudson v. Whitley, 979 F.2d 1058, 1061 (5th Cir. 1992) (describing how the prosecution had suppressed evidence that the only eyewitness had previously identified someone other than the defendant and that the other person had been arrested); Walter v. Lockhart, 763 F.2d 942, 948 (8th Cir. 1985) (finding that the prosecution withheld a transcript for over twenty years that supported defendant’s claim that the officer shot him first); Chaney v. Brown, 730 F.2d 1334, 1347 (10th Cir. 1984) (finding that the prosecution withheld evidence which contradicted the prosecution’s theory of murder and placed the defendant 110 miles from the scene of crime); see also Ken Armstrong & Maurice Posley, \textit{The Verdict: Dishonor Series: Trial & Error. How Prosecutors Sacrifice Justice to Win}, CHI. TRIB., Jan. 10, 1999, available at 1999 WL 2833492 (discussing the impact of \textit{Brady} violations nationwide).
\item \textsuperscript{46} See Sundby, supra note 12, at 660 (citing \textit{Strickler}, 527 U.S. at 291) (noting that in \textit{Strickler} the district court, while recognizing a \textit{Brady} violation based on “potentially devastating impeachment material,” denied relief because the evidence did not establish “reasonable probability in a different result”).
\item \textsuperscript{47} See Lux v. Commonwealth, 484 S.E.2d 145, 149 (Va. Ct. App. 1997) (citing Commonwealth v. Kilgore, 426 S.E.2d 837, 842 (Va. Ct. App. 1993)) (“A Commonwealth’s attorney’s duties include the impartial prosecution of those accused of crime and the duty to see that an accused is accorded a fair trial.”); see also Kilgore, 426 S.E.2d at 842 (quoting Compton v. Commonwealth, 55 S.E.2d 446, 450 (Va. 1949)) (“Both the court and counsel should not forget that the object sought is a fair trial . . . in keeping with our high traditions of justice. All that endangers that result should be avoided.” (alteration in original)); Taylor v. Commonwealth, 23 S.E.2d 139, 142 (Va. 1942) (“The attorney for the Commonwealth is not only under the duty to prosecute one accused of crime, but it is also his duty to see that an accused is accorded a fair trial.”).
\item \textsuperscript{48} See Matter of Doe, 801 F. Supp. 478, 488 (D.N.M. 1992) (“[T]he successful functioning of the adversary system depends upon the coordination of the roles of the prosecutor, the defender and the trier. Without the proper balancing of these roles, the structure fails.”).
\item \textsuperscript{49} See Beck v. Washington, 369 U.S. 541, 569–70 (1962) (Black, J., dissenting) (stating reasons why the defendant was denied equal protection).
\item \textsuperscript{50} Id.
\end{enumerate}
“[E]vidence is material only if there is a reasonable probability that, had the evidence been disclosed to the defense, the result of the proceeding would have been different.”\textsuperscript{52} Therefore, a prosecutor can suppress evidence which is undeniably favorable to the defense so long as the evidence does not grievously weaken the State’s case. Moreover, because prosecutors presumably do not prosecute those they consider innocent, the \textit{Bagley} standard means that logically \textit{Brady} should almost never apply. If the prosecution truly viewed the suppressed evidence as material—that is, as reasonably likely to create a reasonable doubt—then presumably he or she would not bring the case to trial in the first place.

However, blatant \textit{Brady} violations by the prosecution often come to light at the appellate level.\textsuperscript{53} A less demanding standard of materiality is required in order to truly resolve the tension the prosecution faces between being an advocate and an adversary.

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  \item [[A] government prosecutor [stands] in a unique position in the criminal justice system. He [is] an advocate in an adversary system, but unlike the private advocate . . . [a] prosecutor [is] required to insure that the outcome [is] a just one. While the [private advocate] may want to keep information materially supporting his adversary’s case from his opponent, the . . . prosecutor cannot.\textsuperscript{54}
\end{itemize}

A less stringent standard of materiality will ensure that the prosecution cannot determine the outcome of a trial by withholding favorable evidence from the defense by virtue of its position.\textsuperscript{55} While still being required to act as an advocate and gather evidence for his case, the prosecutor will not be faced with the

\textsuperscript{52} Bagley, 473 U.S. at 682.

\textsuperscript{53} See In re Sealed Case No. 99-3096, 185 F.3d 887, 898 (D.C. Cir. 1999) (remanding and instructing the district court to order the U.S. Attorney’s office to review records in possession of its prosecution team for evidence indicating an informant who provided information leading to defendant’s arrest had a deal with the prosecution); Guerra v. Johnson, 90 F.3d 1075, 1077–78, 1080 (5th Cir. 1996) (stating that the prosecution suppressed evidence showing that the police and the prosecution intimidated witnesses and failed to disclose evidence regarding who was observed carrying the murder weapon shortly after crime); United States v. Hanna, 55 F.3d 1456, 1462 (9th Cir. 1995) (remanding for evidentiary hearing on defendant’s claim that the Government failed to disclose \textit{Brady} material in light of inconsistencies between officer’s trial testimony and his police report); United States v. Perdomo, 929 F.2d 967, 973–74 (3d Cir. 1991) (finding that even though the jury evaluated credibility through other impeaching evidence, \textit{Brady} required disclosure of the criminal record of a key prosecution witness); Cornell v. Nix, 921 F.2d 769, 770–71 (8th Cir. 1990) (holding that an evidentiary hearing was required on habeas claim when the State did not disclose that a prosecution witness recanted testimony regarding defendant’s confession); Bowman v. Commonwealth, 445 S.E.2d 110, 112–13 (Va. 1994) (noting that the prosecution’s failure to disclose an exculpatory report violated the defendant’s due process rights); Burrows v. Commonwealth, 438 S.E.2d 300, 303 (Va. Ct. App. 1993) (noting that the prosecution must provide the criminal record of one of its witnesses and failure to do so violated the defendant’s due process rights).


\textsuperscript{55} Id. at 20.
56.  Id.

57.  Bagley, 473 U.S. at 675 (stating that the prosecution is not required to deliver its entire file to the defense but must only disclose favorable evidence that if suppressed would result in an unfair trial).

58.  Kyles, 514 U.S. at 455 (Stevens, J., concurring).

59.  ILLINOIS COMMISSION ON CAPITAL PUNISHMENT, supra note 34, at 119.

60.  Id.

61.  Id.

tension between disclosing favorable evidence that would weaken his case, or withholding such evidence and strengthening the odds of a conviction. A less demanding materiality standard arguably will require a diversion of prosecution resources if prosecutors are forced to devote more attention and effort to scrutinizing prosecution files on behalf of the defendant. Additionally, there is no guarantee that such changes will result in a substantial increase in error-correction involving Brady violations. The prosecution, however, would have no greater burden in examining its files under a more lenient materiality standard. Essentially, the prosecution would be disclosing information it previously considered as “merely favorable” but not “material” to the defendant. Disclosing all evidence favorable to the defendant will resolve the contradiction between the prosecution’s viewing the evidence through the lens of materiality and the defense search for “merely favorable” material. The disclosure of all evidence favorable to the defense will curb good faith Brady violations and most importantly, on a case by case basis, will provide appellate courts with a clearer view of wilful Brady violations where sanctions should be imposed.

Pretrial examination of “debatable” evidence by the trial judge is one way of attempting to enforce such a new materiality standard. As Justice Stevens observed in his concurring opinion in Kyles, “our duty to administer justice occasionally requires busy judges to engage in a detailed review of the particular facts of a case, even though our labors may not provide posterity with a newly minted rule of law.” The Illinois Commission on Capital Punishment recently recommended that the Supreme Court of Illinois adopt a rule redefining exculpatory evidence in order to provide guidance to prosecutors in making appropriate disclosure. The Commission defined exculpatory evidence as:

[Information that is material and favorable to the defendant because it tends to: (1) Cast doubt on defendant’s guilt as to any essential element in any count in the indictment or information; (2) Cast doubt on the admissibility of evidence that the state anticipates offering in its case-in-chief that might be subject to a motion to suppress or exclude; (3) Cast doubt on the credibility or accuracy of any evidence that the state anticipates offering in its case-in-chief; or (4) Diminish the degree of the defendant’s culpability or mitigate the defendant’s potential sentence.]

This definition of exculpatory evidence is broader than Brady in that it requires “uncertain” evidence to be disclosed to the defendant. This definition
will arguably require that evidence, which appears trivial, must be disclosed to the defendant and therefore create an undue burden on the prosecution to scour its entire file for any and all evidence seemingly favorable to the defendant.\(^{62}\) However, what may appear a trivial piece of evidence to the prosecution may in fact be material to the defense strategy.\(^{63}\) As Justice Marshall noted in his dissent in *Bagley*, “[E]xistence of any small piece of evidence favorable to the defense may, in a particular case, create just the doubt that prevents the jury from returning a verdict of guilty.”\(^{64}\) Moreover, any failure by the prosecution to disclose what it considers trivial or cumulative evidence would also fall under the harmless error rule because truly minor or cumulative evidence would not warrant relief in any event.\(^{65}\) Defining exculpatory evidence to include all evidence favorable to the defense would be consistent with the idea that disclosure of all favorable evidence would:

\[\text{[B]egin to assure that a possibly dispositive piece of information is not withheld from the trier of fact by a prosecutor who is torn between the two roles he must play. A clear rule of this kind, coupled with a presumption in favor of disclosure, also would . . . remov[e] a substantial amount of unguided [prosecutorial] discretion.}\]

In effect, the *Bagley* materiality standard requires prosecutors to examine evidence with a flashlight when a spotlight is required.\(^{67}\) The *Bagley* standard encourages limiting *Brady*'s reach to evidence which directly indicates whether the defendant is innocent or guilty.\(^{68}\) For example, inconsistent statements by a witness as to the initial identity of the perpetrator of a crime can be chalked up to the nervousness of the witness, and such information may be deemed immaterial to the defendant’s guilt or innocence.\(^{69}\) This results in evidence being

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62. *Bagley*, 473 U.S. at 675 (noting that the prosecution does not have to turn over its entire file to the defense).
63. *Id.* at 693 (Marshall, J., dissenting).
64. *Id.*
65. *Id.* at 678 (noting that suppression of favorable evidence only rises to a constitutional violation if it deprives the defendant of the right to a fair trial).
66. *Id.* at 698 (Marshall, J., dissenting).
68. *See Bagley*, 473 U.S. at 682 (“The evidence is material only if there is a reasonable probability that, had the evidence been disclosed to the defense, the result of the proceeding would have been different.” (emphasis added)).
69. *But see* Waller v. Commonwealth, 467 S.E.2d 844, 847 (Va. Ct. App. 1996) (citing Hall v. Commonwealth, 355 S.E.2d 591, 594 (Va. 1987)) (“It is fundamental to the right of cross-examination that a witness who is not a party to the case on trial may be impeached by prior statements made by the witness which are inconsistent with his present testimony . . . .”).
overlooked because it does not directly negate guilt.\footnote{70}{See Burrows, 438 S.E.2d at 302 (noting that the evidence sought was of impeachment value in stating the witness’s motivation for testifying).} Furthermore, \textit{Brady} and \textit{Bagley} impinge upon the fairness of the trial because they allow prosecutors to examine the evidence as if their decision were being reviewed post-trial at the appellate level.\footnote{71}{See Villasana v. Wilhoit, 368 F.3d 976, 979 (8th Cir. 2004) (stating that “the prosecutor’s absolute duty to disclose under \textit{Brady} is limited to evidence a reasonable prosecutor would perceive at the time as being material and favorable to the defense”).} This circular process means the prosecution gets to determine from a post-trial vantage point what should be considered material to the defense’s case at the pretrial stage. Thus, the prosecution may retain evidence favorable to the defense if the evidence is simply favorable but not material and thereby undermine the operation of the adversarial system.\footnote{72}{See United States v. King, 928 F. Supp. 1059, 1062 (D. Kan. 1996) (citing United States v. Comosona, 848 F.2d 1110, 1115 (10th Cir. 1988)) (“If a statement does not contain any expressly exculpatory material, the Government need not produce that statement to the defense.”). In Taylor v. Illinois, 484 U.S. 400 (1988), the Supreme Court emphasized the importance of full disclosure in criminal trials: “The need to develop all relevant facts in the adversary system is both fundamental and comprehensive. The ends of criminal justice would be defeated if judgments were to be founded on a partial or speculative presentation of the facts. The very integrity of the judicial system and public confidence in the system depend on full disclosure of all the facts, within the framework of the rules of evidence. To ensure that justice is done, it is imperative to the function of courts that compulsory process be available for the production of evidence needed either by the prosecution or by the defense.” Taylor, 484 U.S. at 408–09 (quoting United States v. Nixon, 418 U.S. 683, 709 (1974)).} However, as Justice Marshall noted in his \textit{Bagley} dissent, “[I]t is the job of the defense, not the prosecution, to decide whether and in what way to use arguably favorable evidence.”\footnote{73}{United States v. Comosona, 848 F.2d 1110, 1115 (10th Cir. 1988) ("If a statement does not contain any expressly exculpatory material, the Government need not produce that statement to the defense."). In Taylor v. Illinois, 484 U.S. 400 (1988), the Supreme Court emphasized the importance of full disclosure in criminal trials: “The need to develop all relevant facts in the adversary system is both fundamental and comprehensive. The ends of criminal justice would be defeated if judgments were to be founded on a partial or speculative presentation of the facts. The very integrity of the judicial system and public confidence in the system depend on full disclosure of all the facts, within the framework of the rules of evidence. To ensure that justice is done, it is imperative to the function of courts that compulsory process be available for the production of evidence needed either by the prosecution or by the defense.” Taylor, 484 U.S. at 408–09 (quoting United States v. Nixon, 418 U.S. 683, 709 (1974)).}

One way to ensure a measure of transparency is to require prosecutors to provide open-file discovery to defendants in cases where death is a possible punishment.\footnote{74}{See Bagley, 473 U.S. at 698 (Marshall, J., dissenting).} As the United States Supreme Court has stressed, the death penalty is a different type of punishment both in terms of severity and finality.\footnote{75}{See United States v. King, 928 F. Supp. 1059, 1062 (D. Kan. 1996) (citing United States v. Comosona, 848 F.2d 1110, 1115 (10th Cir. 1988)) (“If a statement does not contain any expressly exculpatory material, the Government need not produce that statement to the defense.”). In Taylor v. Illinois, 484 U.S. 400 (1988), the Supreme Court emphasized the importance of full disclosure in criminal trials: “The need to develop all relevant facts in the adversary system is both fundamental and comprehensive. The ends of criminal justice would be defeated if judgments were to be founded on a partial or speculative presentation of the facts. The very integrity of the judicial system and public confidence in the system depend on full disclosure of all the facts, within the framework of the rules of evidence. To ensure that justice is done, it is imperative to the function of courts that compulsory process be available for the production of evidence needed either by the prosecution or by the defense.” Taylor, 484 U.S. at 408–09 (quoting United States v. Nixon, 418 U.S. 683, 709 (1974)). The Constitution Project’s Death Penalty Initiative submitted eighteen recommended reforms to the death penalty system.\footnote{76}{See Gardner v. Florida, 430 U.S. 349, 357–58 (1977) (holding that the defendant was denied due process of law when his death conviction was imposed).} Section 7

\textit{The Constitution Project, Mandatory Justice: Eighteen Reforms to the Death Penalty at 47–50 (2001).}

\textit{Id.} at 358.

\textit{The Constitution Project, supra} note 74, at ix. The commission was organized by the Constitution Project and its members comprised of supporters and opponents of the death penalty.\footnote{77}{See Gardner v. Florida, 430 U.S. 349, 357–58 (1977) (holding that the defendant was denied due process of law when his death conviction was imposed).} \textit{Id.} These members included former judges, prosecutors, victim advocates, defense lawyers, journalists, and scholars and others concerned with the death penalty. \textit{Id.}
Eight, which governs the role of prosecutors, recommends that “because of the paramount interest in avoiding the execution of an innocent person, special discovery provisions should be established to govern death penalty cases. These provisions should provide for discovery from the prosecution that is as full and complete as possible, consistent with the requirements of public safety.” The committee expanded on its recommendation by stating that “full open-file” discovery should be required in capital cases. On the other hand, open-file discovery of the prosecutor’s files means nothing if the relevant information is not contained in those files. For example, relevant information has languished in the files of law enforcement departments for years until ultimately discovered. In order to curtail suppression of this type, especially in capital cases, the prosecution must ensure that all information has been requested from all its agencies, and the defense must remind the prosecution to do so. In fact, recommendation 48 by the Illinois Commission on Capital Punishment noted that:

> [W]hile the prior [Illinois] Supreme Court rules required the prosecution to ensure that flow of information was maintained between the various investigatory personnel and the prosecution so that information could be evaluated for disclosure to the defense, [a] new rule . . . goes one step further and will likely encourage increased vigilance by the prosecution to insure that all investigatory materials have been obtained.

The Commission went on to recommend that a certificate be filed by the State and indicate that conferences had been held with all those connected to the case and all material required to be disclosed had been disclosed.

Undoubtedly, suppression of evidence will continue to plague the justice system if prosecutors remain the sole judges of what constitutes exculpatory material evidence. Advances in science have exonerated many defendants and brought to light instances of illegally suppressed evidence. The practice of

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78. Id. at 47.
79. Id.
80. Id.
81. See Taus v. Senkowski, 293 F. Supp. 2d 238, 246 (E.D.N.Y. 2003) (noting that an exculpatory FBI report was not turned over to the prosecution until almost ten years after trial).
82. ILLINOIS COMMISSION ON CAPITAL PUNISHMENT, supra note 34, at 119.
83. Id.
84. Id. at 118.
85. See Weatherford v. Bursey, 429 U.S. 545, 559 (1977) (stating that although the perspective of an advocate is helpful to the defendant in ferreting out information, settled practice has been that the prosecution determines what is material information and its decision on what to disclose is often final).
allowing prosecutors to be the sole judges of exculpatory evidence, therefore, warrants closer examination. 87 If prosecutors remain the sole judges of what evidence is exculpatory, they will be the judges, effectively, of defendants’ guilt or innocence. 88

Prosecutors may argue that Barry violations are rare, and while the system is imperfect, Barry is actually working quite efficiently. 89 However, even rare violations of Barry, especially in capital cases, are unacceptable. A series of articles by the Chicago Tribune examined over 380 cases nationwide, including capital cases, where Barry violations occurred. 90 The articles presented instances of willful Barry violations in which prosecutors concealed evidence that discredited key prosecution witnesses, pointed to other suspects, or supported defendants’ claims of self-defense. 91 Such violations of Barry, while perhaps “rare,” adversely impact the lives of defendants and cumulatively impair the functioning of the judicial system. The rarity of Barry violations does not take away the adverse impact they have on the system as a whole because “[p]rosecutors, who are the criminal justice system’s gatekeepers, hold powers and responsibilities unique in American society.” 92

The Professional Rules of Conduct of each state may impose sanctions upon a prosecutor for a Barry violation, but, in and of itself, a violation of Barry imposes no other liability. 93 In fact, in many cases, the only sanction a prosecutor receives is in the form of a critical judicial opinion concerning prosecutorial misconduct. 94 The remedy a defendant usually obtains is a new trial and admission of the suppressed evidence. 95 When a prosecutor fails to disclose exculpatory evidence, the result is a trial that is skewed in favor of the prosecution. 96 Additionally, the fact that the United States Supreme Court has
granted prosecutors absolute immunity from civil liability for Brady violations demonstrates one possible reason why wilful abuse of the doctrine continues today.\footnote{97}{See Imbler, 424 U.S. at 420 (stating that prosecutors enjoy absolute immunity from §1983 suits relating to acts performed within the scope of their duties).}

To ensure compliance with Brady, meaningful sanctions should be imposed on the prosecution for wilful violations.\footnote{98}{See Gregoire v. Biddle, 177 F.2d 579, 581 (2d Cir. 1949) (noting that “it has been thought in the end better to leave unredressed the wrongs done by dishonest officers than to subject those who try to do their duty to the constant dread of retaliation”).} The rationale for such sanctions was extensively discussed by Justice White in his concurrence in Imbler v. Pachtman.\footnote{99}{Id. at 433.} Justice White disagreed with the implication that “absolute immunity for prosecutors extends to suits based on claims of unconstitutional suppression of evidence because I believe such a rule would threaten to injure the juridical process and to interfere with Congress’ purpose.”\footnote{100}{Id. at 427.} The Imbler majority concluded that granting prosecutors absolute immunity to civil liability was proper because the “ultimate fairness of the operation of the system . . . could be weakened by subjecting prosecutors to [civil] liability.”\footnote{101}{Id. at 436 (White, J., concurring).} However, the concurrence noted that the adverse consequences of imposing civil liability for Brady violations mentioned by the Imbler majority were already “present with respect to suit against policemen, school teachers, and other executives, and have never before been thought sufficient to immunize an official absolutely no matter how outrageous his conduct.”\footnote{102}{Id. at 443.} In fact, a prosecutor who wants to protect against liability for wrongful failure to disclose evidence may choose to disclose more than is necessary.\footnote{103}{Id.} This type of disclosure will only help, not harm, the judicial process.\footnote{104}{Id.}

Imposing such liability will arguably discourage dedicated prosecutors from remaining in public service.\footnote{105}{Id. at 441–45 (White, J., concurring).} But even under a more aggressive use of sanctions for Brady violations, good-faith violations of Brady would continue to enjoy immunity.\footnote{106}{Id. at 437–38 (White, J., concurring) (noting that there should not be a rule granting absolute immunity from suits for committing wilful violations of pre-existing constitutional disclosure requirements if done in bad faith).} Prosecutors who have dedicated their careers to public service should benefit from stricter sanctions imposed for wilful violations of Brady because such changes will weed out those willing to win at all costs while preserving the integrity of the judicial system.
III. Witness Preparation Must be Memorialized for Brady Purposes

Delma Banks was arrested, charged, and convicted of killing sixteen-year-old Richard Whitehead.107 During the guilt phase of the trial, Charles Cook testified for the prosecution that Banks had confessed to killing the victim.108 The prosecution suppressed a seventy-three page transcript of a pretrial meeting between the prosecutor, law enforcement officers, and Cook.109 On cross-examination, Cook represented three times that he had not discussed his testimony with anyone.110 The prosecution allowed Cook’s statement to stand uncorrected and in fact told the jury that Cook had given them “[t]he absolute truth.”111 Subsequently, it was discovered that Cook had at least three practice sessions with the prosecution and was “intensively coached” for his appearance at trial.112 The pretrial transcript showed that Cook had been unable to keep his account of the story straight.113 The transcript also revealed that the prosecutor repeatedly coached Cook.114 But when Cook stated in open court before the jury that his testimony had not been coached, the prosecution failed to correct that assertion.115 Thus, the prosecution clearly presented false testimony concerning the circumstances surrounding Cook’s pretrial preparation.116 Banks may prove to have a significant impact by implicitly expanding Brady to requiring disclosure of pretrial preparation sessions between prosecutors and their witnesses.117 It further raises the question of whether these sessions should now be memorialized for Brady purposes.118

Generally, attorneys prepare their witnesses for trial to relay a particular story to the jury in the most sympathetic and clear manner.119 But while

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107. Banks, 124 S. Ct. at 1263.
108. Id. at 1264.
109. Id. at 1269.
110. Id. at 1264.
111. Id.
112. Id.
114. Banks, 124 S. Ct. at 1264.
115. Id.
116. Id. at 1280 n.19. The Supreme Court noted that Banks’s defense attorney demonstrated Cook had been coached by calling “attention to discrepancies between portions of the September 1980 transcripts and Cooks trial testimony.” Id. The defense attorney also “emphasized the prosecution’s duty to disclose the September 1980 transcript once Cook, while on the stand, stated that he had not been coached.” Id.
117. Id. at 1264.
118. Id. at 1263.
119. See Model Rules of Professional Conduct 3.4(b) (stating that a lawyer shall not “counsel or assist a witness to testify falsely”). While a lawyer has the right to prepare his client for trial, he must not cross the ethical barrier by knowingly allowing his client to commit perjury. Id.

The adversary system requires that the attorney present his cases as clearly and concisely as possible,
however, he may not use false and tailored testimony. *Id.*

120. *See infra* Part III and accompanying notes (discussing disclosure of prior inconsistent statements and memorialization of prosecution–witness rehearsal sessions).

121. *See Alec Rothrock, Trial Talk: Coaching the Witness ¶ 3, at* http://www.burnsfigawill.com/articles/Rothrock/trialtalk/trialtalkcoachingthewitness.htm#TopofPageCoachingthewitness (February/March 2000) (“[W]itness preparation is permitted, expected, required, important, and beneficial. The ethical lawyer tries to prepare a witness without influencing the substance of the witness’s testimony.”).

122. *Id.; see Banks, 124 S. Ct. at 1268* (noting that the transcripts revealed that Cook’s testimony was rehearsed after Banks’s September 1980 arrest, that the testimony was “closely rehearsed” by State representatives, and that this presented compelling evidence that Cook’s testimony was tutored by the prosecution).

123. *See Model Rules of Professional Conduct 3.4(b)* (providing that a lawyer may not “falsify evidence, counsel or assist a witness to testify falsely, or offer an inducement to a witness that is prohibited by law”).

124. *See Banks, 124 S. Ct. at 1263* (noting that the witness had been coached); United States v. Beasley, 576 F.2d 626, 632–33 (5th Cir. 1978) (criticizing the failure of the Government to produce in a timely manner the statement of a prosecution witness when the statement’s content was different from the witness’s at trial testimony).

This aspect of Banks strengthens the argument that if contact between the prosecution or its agents and witnesses or victims results in material exculpatory evidence, such evidence must be memorialized. Without memorialization of witness preparation sessions, the defense will be unable to impeach witnesses with exculpatory evidence solely within the prosecution’s knowledge and possession. This argument finds support in Kyles, in which the prosecution’s case rested heavily on eyewitness testimony. One such witness, Isaac Smallwood, was deemed questionable by the Court. The prosecutor’s notes showed that “important elements” of Smallwood’s story had changed over time. However, despite the various inconsistencies and variations in the witness’s story, neither the prosecutor’s notes nor any of the other notes and transcripts were given to the defense. The Court noted that the inconsistencies in Smallwood’s testimony between the first and second trial “would have fueled a withering cross-examination, destroying confidence in Smallwood’s story and raising a substantial implication that the prosecutor had coached him to give it.” The Court observed that “[t]he implication of coaching would have been complemented by the fact that Smallwood’s testimony at the second trial was much more precise and incriminating than his testimony at the first.”

Together, Kyles and Banks present a compelling argument for the memorialization of witness rehearsal sessions. Both cases show that during witness preparation sessions, a line must be drawn between attorney work-product and information subject to Brady. When the prosecutor interviews the witness and records his own mental impressions, that is undoubtedly work-product. However, the witness’s storytelling in response to the interview is information subject to Brady. The focus on witness preparation in Banks and the discussion of the key witnesses’s inconsistent statements in Kyles lead to the

126. Banks, 124 S. Ct. at 1275. The Court, while discussing Strickler, mentioned that in light of the State’s open file policy it was “especially unlikely that defense counsel would have suspected that additional impeaching evidence was being withheld.” Id. at 1274–75 (quoting Strickler, 527 U.S. at 285). The defense does not have to “scavenge for hints of undisclosed Brady material when the prosecution represents that all such evidence has been disclosed.” Id. at 1275. The Court noted that a rule declaring that a “prosecutor may hide, defendant must seek,” is not tenable in a system constitutionally bound to accord defendant’s due process.” Id.

127. Id.
128. Kyles, 514 U.S. at 429.
129. Id. at 443.
130. Id. at 429.
131. Id.
132. Id. at 443.
133. Id. at 443 n.14.
134. See Banks, 124 S. Ct. at 1264 (recounting the fact that witness Cook had been coached by the prosecution); Kyles, 514 U.S. at 443–44 (noting the impeachment potential of discrepancies between witness’s statements at various phases of trial preparation).
conclusion that prosecutors should memorialize their interviews with witnesses. The risk that exculpatory material will be left on the cutting room floor is especially great during witness preparation. In Banks, the Court noted that the long-suppressed transcripts revealed that Cook’s testimony had been extensively rehearsed and shaped by the prosecution.

While prosecutors may argue that requiring memorialization of witness interviews will create an undue burden and will conflict with their roles as adversaries, in fact, the criminal justice system as a whole will benefit from memorialization of witness meetings. As the Court stated in Bagley, the prosecutor’s role “transcends that of an adversary: [the prosecutor] ‘is the representative not of an ordinary party to a controversy, but of a sovereignty . . . whose interest . . . in a criminal prosecution is not that it shall win a case, but that justice shall be done.’” Therefore, while the prosecution will initially bear some additional burden, the most important aspect of any criminal case should be to see justice is done. At the very least, Banks and Kyles, when read together, establish that transcripts, notes, and unrecorded recollections of witness-preparation sessions will be deemed Brady material if the sessions include information that is material to guilt or mitigation.

When jurors observe a witness in court, they are frequently witnessing the final product of numerous meetings between prosecutors and witnesses, and the jury has no way of knowing that the testimony of the witness has been fine-tuned. In Kyles, the Court observed that the “jury would reasonably have been troubled by the adjustments to Smallwood’s original story by the time of the second trial.” Furthermore, if as in Banks, the defense attorney questions a coached witness as to whether or not his testimony has been coached and the witness answers in the negative, both the defense and the jury will have to accept the response of the witness unless the prosecution corrects the assertion. 

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136. See Orndorff v. Lockhart, 707 F. Supp. 1062, 1068 (E.D. Ark. 1988) (finding that the prosecutor failed to disclose that the witness’s memory was hypnotically refreshed during pretrial investigation).

137. Banks, 124 S. Ct. at 1263.

138. Id. at 1268.

139. See Bagley, 473 U.S. at 675 (stating that the purpose of the Brady rule was “to ensure that a miscarriage of justice did not occur”).

140. Id. at 675 n.6 (quoting Berger v. United States, 295 U.S. 78, 88 (1935)).

141. Id.


143. See Rothrock, supra note 121, at ¶ 2 (emphasizing the difficulty of detecting influenced witness testimony).

144. Kyles, 514 U.S. at 443.

145. See Fed. R. Evid. 611(b) (“Cross-examination should be limited to the subject matter of the direct examination and matters affecting the credibility of the witness.”). Without the impeaching evidence showing inconsistent statements or coaching, the defense attorney will have to accept the witness’s false and prejudicial response. Id.
memorialized copy of rehearsal sessions between the prosecution and the witness provides the defense with the tools for an effective cross-examination and informs the jury of potentially impeaching evidence concerning how coaching may have changed the witness’s testimony.146

_Banks also_ raises the question of the relationship between the attorney work-product doctrine and _Brady_. The work-product doctrine was firmly established in _Hickman v. Taylor_.147 In _Hickman_, the Court decided whether and to what extent a party to an action could inquire into the oral and written statements of witnesses or other information that counsel had gathered in preparation for possible litigation.148 The Court noted that in performing his duties, a lawyer must be able to perform his work with a degree of privacy and freedom from intrusion by opposing counsel into his statements, interviews, mental impressions, and person beliefs.149 To protect this right, the Court held that:

[Without purported necessity or justification, to secure written statements, private memoranda and personal recollections prepared or formed by an adverse party’s counsel in the course of his legal duties... falls outside the arena of discovery and contravenes the public policy underlying the orderly prosecution and defense of legal claims. Not even the most liberal of discovery theories can justify unwarranted inquiries into the files and the mental impressions of an attorney.150]

The Supreme Court has not yet decided whether _Brady_ requires the prosecution to turn over work-product.151 It is arguable that transcripts and notes of a prosecutor constitute work-product and thus are not discoverable under _Brady_.152 However, while opinion work-product is privileged absent extraordinary circumstances, the underlying facts and non-privileged information obtained or prepared by the prosecution during preparation of its case for trial are not necessarily immune from discovery.153 The facts of _Banks_ serve as an example of when _Brady_ must reach the work-product of prosecutors.154 Unlike

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146. _See_ U.S. CONST. amend. VI (requiring that the defendant be afforded a reasonable opportunity for effective cross-examination of the witnesses against him); _Marlboro_, 365 F.3d at 704 (“Effective cross-examination is of paramount importance when... the government’s case depends heavily (or entirely) upon the testimony of informants or accomplices.”).

147. _Hickman_, 329 U.S. at 511.

148. _Id._ at 497.

149. _Id._ at 511.

150. _Id._ at 510.

151. _See_ Williamson v. Moore, 221 F.3d 1177, 1182 (11th Cir. 2000) (quoting Mincey v. Head, 206 F.3d 1106, 1133 n.63 (11th Cir. 2000)) (“Neither the Supreme Court nor this court has decided whether _Brady_ requires a prosecutor to turn over his work product.”).

152. _Id._

153. _Id_; _Hickman_, 329 U.S. at 511.

154. _Banks_, 124 S. Ct. at 1263–64.
cases in which the prosecution would be turning over non-verbatim and non-adopted witness statements, the prosecution in Banks had in its possession a verbatim transcript of the rehearsal session with Cook.\textsuperscript{155} The Eleventh Circuit has noted that “for prejudice to exist, we must find that the evidence—although itself inadmissible—would have led the defense to some admissible evidence.”\textsuperscript{156} It is unquestionable that the record of the prosecutorial rehearsal session with Cook in Banks could foreseeably have led to the discovery of admissible impeachment evidence.\textsuperscript{157} As noted earlier in this section, the information flowing from a witness to the prosecutor during a rehearsal session is properly subject to Brady.\textsuperscript{158} The witness relays unprivileged facts about what he knows or observed concerning a crime, and his statements are not work-product of the prosecutor.\textsuperscript{159} If a witness testifies consistently throughout all sessions with the prosecutor and at trial as to the content of his statements, then there is no Brady obligation. However, if as in Kyles and Banks, the witness testifies inconsistently between the pretrial preparations and trial, or his testimony becomes more precise and incriminating as the proceedings progress, such information is undoubtedly subject to Brady.

IV. Plea-Bargaining Proffers Should Be Memorialized For Purposes of Brady

In Spicer v. Roxbury Correctional Institute,\textsuperscript{160} Larry Brown had been arrested on three counts of distribution of cocaine and stated to his counsel that he had information about an unrelated assault at a restaurant named Armadillos for which defendant Spicer stood accused.\textsuperscript{161} Brown specifically communicated to his own counsel that he had not seen the defendant on the date of the crime.\textsuperscript{162} His counsel contacted the prosecutor and informed him that Brown could testify to knowing a man named “Spicy” who had asked questions about Armadillo’s, that he suspected “Spicy” may have been planning a robbery, but he had not observed Spicer on the date of the crime.\textsuperscript{163} When the prosecutor interviewed Brown without his own counsel present, however, Brown stated for the first time stated that he had actually observed Spicer running from the scene of the

\textsuperscript{155} Id. at 1263; see also Williamson, 221 F.3d at 1183 (noting that non-verbatim, non-adopted witness statements were not admissible at trial due to the risk of inaccuracy and untrustworthiness).

\textsuperscript{156} Williamson, 221 F.3d at 1183 (citing Bradley v. Nagle, 212 F.3d 559, 567 (11th Cir. 2000)).

\textsuperscript{157} See Banks, 124 S. Ct. at 1263–64 (describing the State’s intensive coaching of witness Cook and indicating that it may have discredited Cook if disclosed).

\textsuperscript{158} Hickman, 329 U.S. at 511.

\textsuperscript{159} Id.

\textsuperscript{160} 194 F.3d 547 (4th Cir.1999).

\textsuperscript{161} Spicer, 194 F.3d at 551.

\textsuperscript{162} Id.

\textsuperscript{163} Id.
crime. While recognizing the inconsistency between what Brown’s counsel originally told him and Brown’s subsequent testimony, the prosecutor relied on what Brown told him directly rather than the original proffered information.

Brown testified at trial that he had seen the defendant “run past” from the scene of the crime. He also testified that this was the same account of the events he had told his own counsel prior to the plea bargain agreement. After the defendant was found guilty, Brown’s defense counsel learned of the discrepancies between Brown’s original proffer and his eventual testimony and contacted Spicer’s attorney. On federal habeas review, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit held that Brown’s statements to his counsel that he had not seen the defendant on the day of the crime qualified as Brady material. The court noted that the fact that Brown told two different versions of his story demonstrated that the information, “if disclosed to the defense, could have been used to impeach Brown.” The court noted that “the impeaching nature of [a] statement does not depend on whether the state was a direct or indirect audience. For purposes of determining whether evidence is ‘favorable’ to the defendant, it is the content of the statements, not their mode of communication to the state, that is important.” Therefore, regardless of the manner in which the proffers were initiated or obtained, they must be disclosed by the prosecution when they contain exculpatory evidence.

The Spicer court clarified that although it was applying Brady to a defense proffer, it did not hold the prosecution liable for exculpatory material that flowed only between a witness and his attorney. Nor are prosecutors required to disclose potentially exculpatory material from the hypothesizing that typically occurs during plea negotiations. However, a prosecutor is responsible for information he or she receives, which an objectively reasonable prosecutor should recognize as exculpatory or of impeachment value, and has a duty to disclose such information to the defendant if it is material. Consequently, when a prosecutor possesses specific factual information obtained during a plea bargain discussion with an attorney and additional information from the witness is directly inconsistent with his prior statements, a reasonable and prudent

164. Id.
165. Id.
166. Id. at 552.
167. Spicer, 194 F.3d at 552.
168. Id. at 553.
169. Id. at 556.
170. Id. at 557.
171. Id. at 556.
172. Id. at 557–58.
173. Spicer, 194 F.3d at 557–58.
174. Id.
175. Id.
prosecutor should be alert for possible exculpatory Brady material and immediately disclose such information to the defense.\footnote{176}{Id. at 558–60.}

While plea negotiations are usually informal during the preliminary phases, both prosecutors and defense attorneys should be alert to potential Brady material.\footnote{177}{Id. Spicer indicates the importance of ensuring that reliable information is transmitted between the defense and the prosecutor during plea negotiations. Id.} As noted by the dissent in Spicer, “[P]roffers by counsel attempting to negotiate a plea . . . are, by their very nature, unreliable for ascertaining specific facts.”\footnote{178}{Id. at 565 (King, J., dissenting).} Nevertheless, Spicer indicates that defense proffers are not wholly immune from Brady disclosure.\footnote{179}{Spicer, 194 F.3d at 556.} The process of negotiating deals between a defendant and the prosecution may be a lengthy process.\footnote{180}{Spicer, 194 F.3d at 557.} What the witness ultimately testifies to and what was proffered initially will likely differ.\footnote{181}{See United States v. Sudikoff, 36 F. Supp. 2d 1196, 1202 (C.D. Cal. 1999) (citing United States v. Van Brandy, 726 F.2d 548, 552 (9th Cir. 1984)) (stating that if the differences between the testimony of a witness and his proffers were reasonably “innocuous,” but the usefulness of the evidence was doubtful, the doubt should be resolved in favor of disclosure).} Moreover, as in Spicer, a witness or informant may state that he has information about the crime when in fact he has little or no knowledge.\footnote{182}{Spicer, 194 F.3d at 557.} Plea bargains can actually exacerbate this problem because deals are often contingent on the witness’s favorable testimony in court.\footnote{183}{See Bagley, 473 U.S. at 683 (stating that the fact that the deal “was expressly contingent on the Government’s satisfaction with the end result, served only to strengthen any incentive to testify falsely in order to secure a conviction”); Ouijette v. Moran, 942 F.2d 1, 9–10 (1st Cir. 1991) (noting the State’s failure to disclose information about the long criminal record of the State’s witness and the existence of a deal the State struck with the witness); Jones v. Jago, 575 F.2d 1164, 1167 (6th Cir. 1978) (noting that the prosecutor failed to disclose a statement from the co-indictee, who prior to trial had been declared a material witness for the prosecution and against whom all charges were dropped).} Any previous deals between a prosecutorial agent and an informant must be discoverable and admissible to show potential bias in their testimony.\footnote{184}{See Reutter v. Solem, 888 F.2d 578, 581–82 (8th Cir. 1989) (holding that the State withheld impeachment evidence that its primary witness had applied for commutation and had been scheduled to appear before the parole board a few days after his testimony).}

The defense will not be able to discern the motives a witness has in agreeing to testify in a case unless the prosecution reveals the information about the negotiation leading up to the agreement.\footnote{185}{See Sudikoff, 36 F. Supp. 2d at 1203 (“[I]nformation that reveals the process by which a . . . witness and the government reach a leniency agreement is relevant to the witness’s credibility because it reveals the witness’s motive to testify against the defendant. Therefore, such information is discoverable under Brady and Giglio.”).} The importance of the inconsistent statements in Spicer is a compelling example of why proffers must be
Without memorialization, the results may be similar to *Banks* and *Kyles*, and material impeachment evidence will remain undisclosed.

**V. Victim-Witness Advocate Files and Brady**

Prosecutors’ offices and police departments around the country increasingly utilize victim-witness advocates. A victim-witness advocate primarily acts as liaison between the victim or witness and the prosecution and law enforcement. The victim-witness advocate facilitates her clients’ involvement with the criminal justice system and may frequently become a counselor to a victim or witness, and thus, is privy to information that defense counsel is unable to obtain. Because advocates are usually employees of the prosecution, their work should be subject to the same rules of the discovery process as the work from the rest of the prosecution’s team.

When an advocate interviews a witness or victim, such meetings, as with prosecutorial witness preparation sessions, should be memorialized for *Brady* purposes. The defense will not be afforded the opportunity to cross-examine, as guaranteed by the Sixth Amendment, if victim or witness statements are not memorialized. In many cases, the prosecution’s case hinges on the testimony of the victim or witness. The credibility of such witnesses often makes the difference between a guilty or not guilty verdict. In fact, in *Murphy v. Superior Court* 689 P.2d 532, 537 (Ariz. 1984) (stating that victim assistance caseworkers may be potential impeachment witnesses). But see State v. Wilcox, 758 A.2d 824, 832–36 (Conn. 2000) (stating that no violation of *Brady* existed for failure to turn over impeaching but non-material victim-witness advocate notes).

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186. *Spicer*, 194 F.3d at 551.
187. *See Banks*, 124 S. Ct. at 1263 (noting that the prosecution continued to hold secret the key witness’s link to the police and false statements); *Kyles*, 514 U.S. at 429 (noting that the prosecutor failed to turn over notes or other transcripts with various witness inconsistencies).
188. *See* VA. CODE ANN. § 19.2-11.01 (Michie 2004) (setting out crime victim and witness rights and stating that “[u]nless otherwise stated . . . it shall be the responsibility of a locality’s crime victim and witness assistance program to provide information and assistance required”).
189. VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY, VICTIM-WITNESS PROGRAM, at http://www.vcu.edu/police/victwitn.html (last updated August 15, 2003) (setting forth the victim or witness rights and entitlements, which include protection, financial assistance, social services, confidentiality information, and the right to remain in the courtroom during criminal proceedings).
190. *See* Jaffe v. Redmond, 518 U.S. 1, 18 (1996) (establishing that the relationship between a therapist and her client is confidential). If a victim-witness advocate is also a certified social worker, clinical social worker or psychologist, then the privileges allowed in *Jaffe* will attach to communications between the victim or witness and the advocate. *Id.* These privileges are in addition to the work-product privilege imputed by virtue of being an agent of the prosecution. *Id.*
191. *See* Murphy v. Superior Court, 689 P.2d 532, 537 (Ariz. 1984) (stating that victim assistance caseworkers may be potential impeachment witnesses). *But see* State v. Wilcox, 758 A.2d 824, 832–36 (Conn. 2000) (stating that no violation of *Brady* existed for failure to turn over impeaching but non-material victim-witness advocate notes).
192. *See supra* Part III (discussing the need for memorialization of prosecution-witness rehearsal sessions).
193. *Id.*
194. *See* Dubose v. Lefevre, 619 F.2d 973, 977 (2d Cir. 1980) (noting that the prosecution had discussed with the witness the consideration she would receive for her proposed testimony).
195. *Id.*
Court, the court noted that it was “entirely possible that a victim assistance caseworker, who is frequently in close contact with a distraught victim only moments after an incident, will learn details of the incident which would make the caseworker a proper subject for discovery as a potential impeachment witness.” The defendant in Murphy attempted to compel the depositions of the victim and her victim-witness assistant after his indictment for attempted sexual assault. In such cases, in which the advocate has exculpatory evidence, if the advocate’s notes are not subject to the same rules of discovery as the prosecutor’s notes, the prosecution may be able to circumvent its discovery obligations. Therefore, for victim-witness advocate programs that are controlled by the prosecution, the courts should require disclosure of advocates notes when they contain material information.

In Commonwealth v. Liang the defendant sought discovery of the notes of a victim-witness advocate who had spoken with the complaining witness. The Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts held that the notes of a victim-witness advocate are protected by the same rules that are applicable to a prosecutor’s notes. The court also found that “advocates themselves have a duty to relay to the prosecutor any information they believe is exculpatory.” The Liang decision reinforced United States v. Agurs, which held that the prosecution has a duty to disclose exculpatory material within its possession or control, even without a request from the defendant. “Prosecutors are subject to a duty to disclose exculpatory evidence that advocates obtain from conversations with victims or witnesses, as advocates are agents of the prosecution.” Liang comports with the holding in Kyles that the prosecution is charged with

197. Murphy, 689 P.2d at 537.
198. Id. at 532.
199. See Roviaro v. United States, 353 U.S. 53, 62 (1957) (stating that with respect to disclosure, the problem is “one that calls for balancing the public interest in protecting the flow of information against the individual’s right to prepare his defense”).
202. Id. The Liang court noted that:

The result here secures the defendant’s right to obtain essential material for his defense (e.g., exculpatory evidence and witness statements) while protecting the work product of attorneys and their legal staff. We conclude that, unless advocates’ notes contain exculpatory evidence or “statements” of witnesses, their notes are protected as work product.

Id. at 119.
203. Id. at 117.
204. 427 U.S. 96 (1976).
206. Liang, 747 N.E.2d at 117.
knowledge of information contained in the files of those under its control.\textsuperscript{207} The Massachusetts decision forces the prosecution to closely examine its advocates’ files in order to determine whether they contain exculpatory evidence.\textsuperscript{208} It also means that the prosecution must diligently ensure that all material, exculpatory evidence is turned over to it from third parties within its control.\textsuperscript{209}

To be sure, there is a conflict between the victim-witness advocate’s role as an employee of the prosecution and its role as a counselor to victims and witnesses. Due to this conflict, prosecutors should choose between maintaining the advocate as a subordinate program within their control or allowing it to become a separate and independent entity.\textsuperscript{210} In most instances, the advocate acts as a liaison between the victim or witness and the prosecutors.\textsuperscript{211} However, a special problem arises when licensed social workers, clinical psychologists, or therapists work as victim-witness advocates and the advocates are also agents of the prosecution.\textsuperscript{212} Their conversations with victims or witnesses may fall under the category of privileged communications protected from forced disclosure.\textsuperscript{213} These privileged communications include: psychologist-patient privilege, psychiatrist-patient privilege, social worker-client privilege, licensed professional counselor-client privilege, and domestic violence and sexual assault counselor-client privilege.\textsuperscript{214} If the victim-witness advocate program is a separate entity from the prosecution, a statutory privilege may apply; but there will be no colorable claim from the prosecution that the work-product privilege applies.\textsuperscript{215}

The idea that communications between victim-witness advocates and

\textsuperscript{207} Id. at 116; Kyles, 514 U.S. at 438.
\textsuperscript{208} Liang, 747 N.E.2d at 116–17.
\textsuperscript{209} Id.
\textsuperscript{212} Liang, 747 N.E.2d at 114.
\textsuperscript{213} See People v. Stanaway, 521 N.W.2d 557, 573 (Mich. 1994) (holding that the trial judge must conduct an in-camera inspection of privileged records "on a showing that the defendant has a good-faith belief, grounded on some demonstrable fact, that there is a reasonable probability that the records are likely to contain material information necessary to the defense," and balancing the need to preserve confidentiality in therapeutic settings with a defendant’s right to discover exculpatory evidence).
\textsuperscript{215} See Liang, 747 N.E.2d at 119 (holding that an advocate’s notes are subject to the work-product privilege but exculpatory evidence must be disclosed).
victims or witnesses can fairly be kept confidential draws support from the United States Supreme Court’s decision in *Jaffee v. Redmond*.

In *Jaffee*, the survivors of a victim shot and killed by a police officer sought discovery of the notes of a licensed clinical social worker who was counseling the officer.

The Seventh Circuit, reversing the lower court’s decision, concluded that Rule 501 of the Federal Rules of Evidence “compelled recognition of a psychotherapist-patient privilege.” Ultimately, the Court agreed with the Seventh Circuit that the confidential communications between a licensed psychotherapist and her patients in the course of diagnosis or treatment are protected from compelled disclosure. This presents a strong policy reason why the victim-witness advocate program should be independent from the prosecution. Privileges preventing disclosure of relevant information are not favored and may often give way to a strong public interest. In jurisdictions that consider the victim-witness advocate programs an arm of the prosecution or law enforcement agency, the advocate’s notes should be subject to the work-product privilege and not a confidential communication privilege. However, if the prosecution asserts either privilege “when a statutory privilege interferes with a defendant’s constitutional right to cross-examine, then, upon a sufficient showing by the defendant, the witness’ statutory privilege must, in the interest of the truth-seeking process, bow to the defendant’s constitutional rights.”

Trained victim advocates may be social workers and have extensive legal knowledge, due in part to their close relationship with the prosecution. However, they are not formally legally trained and may be unaware of the extent to which *Brady* covers their conversations with their clients. If the advocate program is within the jurisdiction of the prosecution, the prosecution must question its advocates about conversations with victims and other witnesses. The prosecution must also routinely examine the advocate’s files to ensure that what the victim or witness is telling the prosecutor is consistent with his or her statements to the advocate.

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216. *See Jaffee*, 518 U.S. at 18 (recognizing a psychotherapist privilege of confidentiality).
217. *Id.* at 5.
218. *Id.* at 6.
219. *Id.* at 18.
221. *See Liang*, 747 N.E.2d at 114 (holding that the notes of a victim-witness advocate are protected by the same rules that are applicable to a prosecutor’s notes).
222. *Peart*, 65 P.3d at 128.
224. *Id.*
225. *Id.* at 117–18.
226. *See id.* (discussing that the prosecution must determine from advocates’ notes whether witness or victim statements are in advocates’ files and subject to a discovery order).
Subjecting victim-witness advocates’ notes to *Brady* will arguably constrain victim advocates in the performance of their duties. Victims or witnesses may be unwilling to fully disclose information if they have reason to believe their conversations will be turned over to the defendant and their privacy invaded. The answer to such a concern, however, is that the victim-witness advocate program should be independent of the prosecution.\(^\text{227}\) If it is, advocates can perform a truly therapeutic function for victims and witnesses while being able to assure them that their privacy will be protected. Additionally, the prosecution will not normally be aware of the information contained in the advocates’ files, and, therefore, information will not be imputed to them.\(^\text{228}\) In fact, the defense would bear the heavy burden of proving to the court that the rights of the defendant to discover the information contained in the victim advocate’s files overrides the statutory privilege afforded by *Jaffee* and by equivalent state statutory protections.

**VI. Taking Advantage of the Expansion of Brady**

Defense attorneys should utilize *Brady* to the fullest extent the criminal justice system allows. The courts have constricted the materiality element of *Brady* but expanded *Brady* in other ways beneficial to the defense.\(^\text{229}\) While the basic rules concerning *Brady* material have not changed, courts have expanded the content of *Brady* in cases such as *Banks*, *Spier*, and *Liang*.\(^\text{230}\) The prosecution must disclose exculpatory information to the defense whether the information is in the hands of the prosecution or not.\(^\text{231}\) This includes information known to the police or other prosecutorial agents, whatever their actual knowledge.\(^\text{232}\) Defense counsel should always make motions to examine police officers and investigators working with the prosecution under oath.\(^\text{233}\) The defense should not only focus on the immediate investigators working on the case, but also

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227. *See supra* Part V (arguing that prosecution entities should choose between the victim-witness program being a subordinate or a separate entity for *Brady* purposes).

228. *See Kyles*, 514 U.S. at 438–40 (imputing the knowledge of agents of the prosecution to the prosecution).

229. *See Sundby*, supra note 12, at 645 (noting that in the decades since *Brady*, the doctrine has been both expanded and contracted by subsequent Supreme Court decisions).

230. *See generally Banks*, 124 S.Ct. at 1263 (noting that transcripts of rehearsal meetings are impeachment evidence); *Spier*, 194 F.3d at 556–57 (finding that defense proffers are subject to *Brady*); *Liang*, 747 N.E.2d at 119 (holding that victim-witness advocates’ notes are subject to *Brady*).


232. *See Boone v. Paderick*, 541 F.2d 447, 451 (4th Cir. 1976) (citing Barbee v. Warden, 331 F.2d 842, 846 (4th Cir. 1964)) (stating that failure to disclose information in the hands of the police is equally harmful to the defendant as failure to disclose information in the hands of the prosecution); *Fitzgerald v. Bass*, 358 S.E.2d 576, 582 (Va. Ct. App. 1987) (concluding that a prosecutor’s lack of knowledge of false testimony does not excuse her failure to disclose the truth).

233. Please contact the Virginia Capital Case Clearing House at 540-458-8557 for a motion to examine investigators under oath.
234. *Ex parte Richardson*, 70 S.W.3d at 873 (reversing murder conviction because the prosecution failed to disclose the existence of diary kept by a police officer containing information that could impeach the State’s key witness).

235. *Id.* at 871. Police officer Tonya Goldston testified that she kept the diary to protect herself and other officers from false accusations by the witness. *Id.* In addition, five other officers testified at the writ hearing that the witness was not a truthful person. *Id.*

236. See *Kyles*, 514 U.S. at 437 (noting that the prosecution failed to turn over notes and transcripts of inconsistent witness statements); Washington v. Buraker, 322 F. Supp. 2d 692, 699–700 (W.D. Va. 2004) (noting that the defendant alleged police failed to disclose the identity of an eyewitnesses who had failed to identify him earlier to the prosecution); Moreno v. Commonwealth, 392 S.E.2d 836, 840 (Va. Ct. App. 1990) (stating that the police failed to turn over a written informant agreement for remuneration based on the number of drug busts successfully prosecuted).

237. See *Strickler*, 527 U.S. at 294 (following *Bagley* in establishing the prejudice standard of review for suppressed exculpatory material); *Kyles*, 514 U.S. at 437 (discussing that the prosecution has a duty to learn of exculpatory evidence known to others within its control); *Bagley*, 473 U.S. at 679 (clarifying the standard of review for when exculpatory material is suppressed).

238. See *Brown v. Chaney*, 469 U.S. 1090, 1090 (1984) (Burger, C. J., dissenting from denial of certiorari) (stating that Chief Justice Burger would grant the order to distinguish between specific and general requests for exculpatory information).

239. *Id.* at 1093 (noting that the district court refused to issue a writ because defense counsel only made a general request for exculpatory evidence).
evidence. When defense counsel knows or suspects that the prosecution has exculpatory information in its possession, he must specifically identify the evidence in his motion and explain its materiality to guilt or punishment.

“The defense must give the prosecution notice of what is desired, but notice alone—such as notice that the defense desires every document in the prosecution’s files—is not enough to overcome the prosecutor’s interest in avoiding premature or excessive discovery.” The defense should never forget that the materiality element also relates to the ability to prepare for trial. The Bagley Court expressed its concern with the suppression of evidence by stating that the reviewing court may consider directly “any adverse effect that the prosecutor’s failure to respond might have had on the preparation or presentation of the defendant’s case.” Therefore, each motion must serve the dual purpose of preservation of issues and discovery.

As most victim-witness advocates are likely to continue as agents and employees of the prosecution for the foreseeable future, it is important for defense counsel to seek disclosure of impeachment and exculpatory evidence uncovered by such advocates through their contact with witnesses. The defense can begin by requesting disclosure of all impeachment evidence within a witness’s formal statement. Second, the defense attorney should request all written statements, including prior versions of the final formal statement. Third, the defense should request any notes of oral conversations that occurred prior to memorialization of formal statements and that contain exculpatory material.

VII. Conclusion

Kyles, Strickler, Banks, and at the circuit court level, Spicer, demonstrate how the Brady doctrine has evolved to include witness preparation sessions and defense proffers on behalf of co-operating witnesses or informant-witnesses. Victim-witness advocates present a special problem and as such, the defense must ensure that the prosecution has requested, received, and disclosed all information contained in the advocates’ notes that contain material impeachment or exculpatory information.

240. Id. at 1094–95 (discussing the various distinctions between general and specific requests for exculpatory material held by various lower courts since Agurs was decided).

241. Id. at 1095 (describing the type of notice the defense must give the prosecution).

242. Id.


244. Id.

245. See Banks, 124 S. Ct. at 1263 (discussing the suppression of rehearsal transcripts); Kyles, 514 U.S. at 438 (imputing knowledge to the prosecution for information within the possession of its agents); Bagley, 473 U.S. at 676 (expanding Brady to impeachment evidence); Agurs, 427 U.S. at 107 (expanding the prosecution’s duty to disclose exculpatory evidence absent a request); Spicer, 194 F.3d at 556–57 (expanding Brady to include defense proffers).

246. See supra Part V (discussing the victim-witness advocate program and disclosure of exculpatory material).