

# Chapter 31

## Mitigation of Juvenile Delinquency Risk Through a Person–Centered Approach: The Intervention of Juvenile Probation Services

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This article contends that juvenile delinquency may be viewed from a developmental perspective and as such be connected to its penal treatment, of which the purpose is mainly educational. The emergence of antisocial and/or delinquent behavior of minors is characterized as a form of rebellion and resistance to power. The mitigation of juvenile delinquency risk can be achieved through a humanitarian approach. Minor offenders need to be approached in a special manner and treated in a way tailored to suit their needs according to age. The present article outlines the profile of the minor offender and his/her family background, as well as the institutional role of Juvenile Probation Officers as practitioners in the Greek penal system. Counseling of minors and parents and advocacy to minors are described as two distinct inter-related practices that help children reintegrate into society and achieve their social education.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Adolescence has always been a developmental stage between childhood and adulthood where children are at risk due to their tendencies for independence, autonomy, ideological differentiation from adult society and compliance with peer groups. Most adolescents who get themselves in trouble with the law

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6315-4.ch031

are children in need of attention from their social background and in need to find a way to be heard. Some of these children will form their identity through delinquency, court trials and an eventual sanction. For some this painful process is the only form of fulfillment they will ever accomplish (Pitsela, 2006).

The principle of enforcing measures of treatment rather than punishment has inspired globally most juvenile criminal laws (Alexiadis, 2005). The outbreak of juvenile delinquency in some Member States of the European Union has led or will lead to the reform of the bill of rights of minors. At this stage, the solutions adopted vary, to a greater or lesser extent, appearing in the form of penal-type measures and / or solutions related to the Social Care Services systems of the different Member States. In any case, their aim ought to be education, edification of minors and their integration into the social sphere, as well as the restitution of any mental deficits, whereas any misleading false dilemmas concerning an alleged choice between repressive-punitive measures and educational-pedagogical measures must be rejected (Kourakis 2006: 100).

The “treatment” of a minor who has been stigmatized as “a perpetrator of the law” should aim to reconstruct the person’s identity through the formation of a young person’s confidence in himself/ herself and the strengthening of his/ her psychosocial bond with conventional social standards. The philosophy of this treatment is based on the social reintegration of the juvenile offender and not on the process of liberating society from him (Beze, 1987: 31). Delinquent minors or minors at risk of committing punishable acts cooperate with Juvenile Probation Officers who try to help them (re)integrate and get them back on their social education track. This study aims to profile the minor with delinquent behaviours and his family background with a view of defining any risk factors related to delinquency. Both risk and protective factors are taken into account when counseling and probation are put into effect. The question always lies in achieving the best practice application.

Very few studies have been done concerning risk and mitigation analysis of children in development stages since the literature in this field are almost entirely devoted to the business and management field. Risk can also be studied from a social sciences perspective using many of the same underlying principles, theories, models and techniques as used in the business and management discipline. In this study, the basic casual factors of juvenile delinquency risk are reviewed and best-practices are proposed to mitigate these risks from a sociological perspective.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Juvenile Delinquency**

#### **The Concept of Deviant / Delinquent Behavior**

Maladaptation, deviation and delinquency of young people are symptoms of a deeper social crisis affecting all citizens. Signs of maladaptation occur when the individual has difficulty meeting the value requirements of their social environment and when this environment does not appropriately respond to a person’s needs (Magganas, 2004). The term deviation generally refers to behaviors that are not socially acceptable but do not necessarily constitute a violation of a legal rule, such as the use of addictive substances, absence from school or running away from home (Nova-Kaltsouni, 2001). Young people’s deviant behavior involves the adoption of deviant norms and values, especially of those displayed within

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