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## JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AND YOUNG OFFENDER: BIBLIOGRAPHICAL AND BIBLIOMETRIC REVIEW OF TWO PERSPECTIVES OF STUDY

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### Abstract

Nowadays, interest in dissocial and criminal behavior among young people keeps high. However, this interest dates back to over 60 years before the inclusion of *Juvenile Delinquency (JD)* in *American Psychological Association's* Thesaurus. The present review recovers journal articles included in the database PsycINFO and provides a descriptive analysis of the production over a century. An analysis of contents was developed using three different criteria: reviewing articles written by the most prolific authors; using the major descriptors assigned by PsycINFO to these publications; and classifying *ad hoc* articles by several judges. Comparing the periods 1947-57 and 1997-2007 we confirmed the progression from theoretical approaches to empirical studies as well as the change in focus from social class to contexts of intervention (school, family and community). However, those outcomes showed clearly the need to develop new initiatives which allow the classification of the enormous amount of information related to JD issued each year. We discuss the suitability of the term JD in the Spanish social and legal context, proposing as a possible substitute *Menor Infractor (Young Offender)*.

**Keywords:** juvenile delinquency; young offender; bibliographical and bibliometric review, juvenile justice.

### Resumen

El interés por la conducta disocial y criminal en los jóvenes es actual, si bien puede constatarse que tiene su inicio en fechas anteriores - más de 60 años antes de su inclusión dentro del Tesoro de la *American Psychological Association* (como *Juvenile Delinquency*)-. La actual revisión recupera datos sobre artículos de revista recogidos en la base de datos PsycINFO y ofrece análisis descriptivos de la productividad de un periodo cercano a un siglo. Se realizó un análisis de contenido según tres criterios: revisión de los artículos escritos por los autores más prolíficos de las etapas descritas, uso de los descriptores asignados por PsycINFO (*major descriptors*) para estas publicaciones, y clasificación *ad hoc* por parte de varios jueces de los artículos. Comparando los periodos 1947-57 y 1997-2007, se constató la progresión desde planteamientos teóricos hacia trabajos empíricos, además de cambiar el ámbito de estudio desde la clase social hacia contextos de intervención (escuela, familia y comunidad). Sin embargo, los resultados obtenidos justifican la necesidad de desarrollar nuevas iniciativas que permitan clasificar la ingente cantidad de información que año tras año aparece en torno al término *Juvenile Delinquency*. Se discute la adecuación del término *Juvenile Delinquency* al contexto social y jurídico español, proponiendo como posible sustituto *Menor Infractor (Young Offender)*.

**Palabras clave:** delincuencia juvenil; menor infractor; revisión bibliográfica y bibliométrica, justicia juvenil.

## Introduction

Violent behavior is a notorious factor in our lives and in our personal interrelationships (school, partners, etc.), despite theoretical and practical efforts to combat it. Several conceptualizations have been proposed to explain this violence. In the first place we can highlight the *Classical School*, which conceives Man as a free and rational being, capable of making decisions according to the advantages and disadvantages associated with a given action. In contrast to this is the *Positive School*, which has developed psychobiological theories and proposed methods rooted in natural sciences to explain delinquency. In the twentieth century, sociological theories were introduced, considering crime as a social phenomenon and pointing out social conditions as the genesis of deviant behavior (understood as a set of “infractions” which are committed in a given time and place). These ideas have led to the rising of psychosocial positioning, where explanations are centered on a “constellation” of circumstances (risk and protection factors) and the reaction individuals who may perceive them as aggressive have (something determined by the own life story) (Rodríguez & Paíno, 1994).

The magnitude of *Juvenile Delinquency* (henceforth, JD) as a social phenomenon has led us to understand it as a consequence of years of segregation (individual, social, territorial or ethnic) within a concrete reality, which in our context is identified with the concepts of progress and the welfare society. Dealing with this reality, on one hand, and the treatment given by the media on the other, are distinct but inseparable challenges. From this multiplicity of theoretical perspectives and different possible levels of analysis, several scientific approaches have arisen to address the issue (biological, sociological, psychological...). The interest in violence among the youth stems from both popular beliefs and scientific research, as juvenile delinquency is identified as a powerful precursor to adult delinquency.

The choice of JD as object of study, instead of other terms related to youths who commit crimes such as *Predelinquent Youth* and *Juvenile Justice*, has been made on the basis of its capacity to encompass different perspectives - social (the youth as a person who commits an act which is prejudicial for himself, his peers or the moral and material interests of society) and legal (actions or acts of neglect which are against the law) – as well as it is the term with the longest tradition in the study of young offenders (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Comparison for terms in PsycINFO's databases.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Juvenile Delinquency</b>	<b>Juvenile Justice</b>	<b>Predelinquent Youth</b>
Year of Incorporation in Thesaurus	1967	2004	1978
Definition	Antisocial behavior of children and teenagers, dangerous or penal, for which the minor submitted - to legal action - changeable age for countries and contexts, between 15 and 18 years generally-	It groups the legal dispositions, legal services and programs, as well as the legal institutions that deal with the inobservant minors and / or the children and exploited teenagers.	It groups the children's works in risk of developing the criminal conduct, both for his sociocultural and familiar environment and for the standards of behavior parallel to those that the juvenile delinquents develop
Relation with other terms	Antisocial behavior Behaviour disorders Criminal behaviour Female delinquency Male delinquency Antisocial Personality Disorder Crime Prevention Criminals Juvenile gangs Juvenile Justice Predelinquent youth	Criminal Justice Adjudication Child welfare Juvenile Delinquency Juvenile gangs Predelinquent youth	Juvenile Delinquency Juvenile Justice
General references (JD as Descriptor)	24.540	1.872	151
Specific references (JD as keyword)	1.743	748	9

Taking into account the multiple approaches, related terms and definitions of the problem, there is an obvious need to make an effort to organize the literature on JD, parallel to the direct study of the phenomenon. In previous reviews on the theme (e.g., Borum, 2000; Connor et al., 2006; Garrido, Anyela, & Sánchez-Meca, 2006; Kathleen & Jeffrey, 2007; Pellegrini, 2008; Polman, Orobio de Castro, Koops, Van Boxtel, & Merk., 2007; Richetin & Richardson, 2008; Schwalbe, 2007; Van der Merwe & Dawes,

2007; Webb, 2007), authors have centered their efforts on gathering or compiling contributions rather than analyzing their contents. Our study attempts to analyze the results obtained in the bibliographical search carried out for the term *Juvenile Delinquency*.

As such, we will carry out an analysis in function of descriptive criteria (year of publication, periods of maximum output or productivity, country of publication, language, journals and most prolific authors) and content (through an analysis of the most prolific authors, in function of the descriptors proposed by PsycINFO and with an *ad hoc* categorization of the issues of interest). Finally, evolution of the contents studied under the term JD will be discussed, leading us to contemplate the possibility of substituting it with others more focused on retribution rather than vindication, such as *Young Offender*.

## Method

### Instruments

Our objectives lead us to execute a bibliographical search in the computerized databases of PsycINFO (carried out up to the end of 2008, with no restrictions on the time period), available by remote access through the website of the University of Oviedo and provided by the company EBSCOHost. This database gathers information on the most important publications in the scientific fields of psychology and psychiatry, on a worldwide level, and is maintained by the APA.

Reference Manager (version 11) was used to create a database with all the publications. A specific filter was constructed in order to extract the data necessary for the study.

### Procedure

To begin the search through the internet, the terms *Juvenile* and *Delinquency* were used in the field *Key Concepts* (KC). English was chosen due to PsycINFO always gathers the main fields (title, abstract, keywords...) in this language, even when keeps info in a second one. The field KC was preferred over other descriptors (*MeSH*, *Subject Headings*, *Major Descriptors*...) as those classifications are imposed by the database

and do not respect the terminology proposed by the authors of the texts compiled. In addition, we have checked that the term *Juvenile Delinquency* was first included in the Thesaurus of PsycINFO in 1967.

The lists generated were imported into a database stored in the physical memory of the computer. When duplications were eliminated, 1,729 results contained KC which combined both search terms; of these, 302 were book chapters and 169 were abstracts in conference proceedings. The final sample was composed solely of journal articles (1,258, or 72.76% of the total) up to the end of 2008, and it should be borne in mind that some articles may have been excluded as the definitive PsycINFO catalogue takes several months to be updated (the search date was December 2008).

With regard to the *ad hoc* classification of the content of the articles, three judges independently carried out an initial exploration of the abstracts of all the publications included in the periods 1947-1957 and 1997-2007. Then, the three systems of categories were brought together and discussed in order to make a single set of categories: *study approach* (theoretical, model induction, empirical and psychometric), the *research area* (individual, family, peer groups, school, community-neighborhood, others), *study subjects* (psychological processes and individual differences, psychopathological processes, social processes, others), and *types of prevention* (primary, social processes, legal/judicial, clinical, others).

## Results

### Analysis of productivity

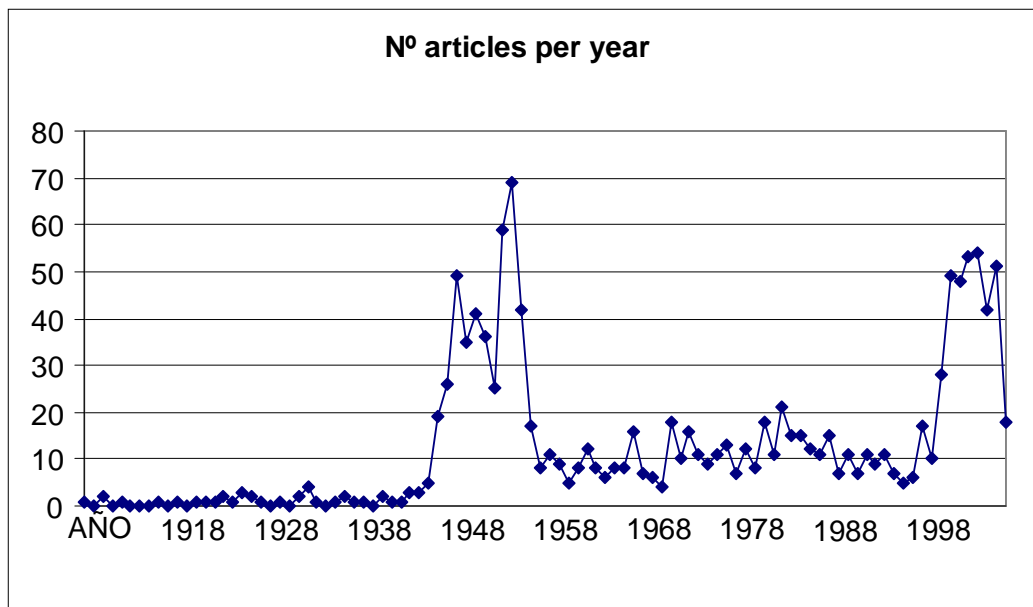
#### *Annual productivity*

The first article which PsycINFO provides on the subject of JD dates back to 1909, almost a century ago, and long before the inclusion of the term *Juvenile Delinquency* in the Thesaurus. From then up to 2008 the average number of articles per year was 12.52, although there has been a large degree of variability. Four periods stood out: 1909-1946, accounting for 1.21% of total output; 1947-1957, which accounts for 41.80% of published articles; 1958-1997, four decades during which there was an abrupt fall in the number of yearly articles and which accounts for only 10.56% of the total; and 1997-2007, which has seen a new increase and which accounts for the



remaining 36.30% of articles. This illustrates that there were two periods of high productivity where barely two decades account for 77.10% of total output: 418 articles in the first and 363 in the second, compared with almost 80 years which account for only 22.90% (458 publications). The evolution can be observed in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Annual productivity regarding the term *Juvenile Delinquency*.



**Table 2.** Productivity by languages.

1947-57	Total	%	1997-2007	Total	%
English	335	80.14	English	307	84.57
Non- English	83	19.86	French	13	3.58
			Japanese	9	2.48
			Portuguese	8	2.20
			Serbo-Croat	7	1.93
			Spanish	6	1.65
			Others (8)	13	3.58
Total	418			363	

#### *Productivity by language*

English dominates the international panorama. In the decade 1947-57, PsycINFO only provides the distinction between *English* and *Non-English*, whereas in the most recent period (1997-2007) appear up to 14 different languages. In the late

period, Spanish appears with 6 entries and in sixth place in terms of frequency. This information is detailed in Table 2.

**Table 3.** Productivity by countries.

<b>1947-57</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>1997-2007</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
EEUU	144	34.45	EEUU	181	49.86
United Kingdom	29	6.94	United Kingdom	45	12.40
Germany	24	5.74	Netherland	35	9.64
France	10	2.39	Germany	30	8.26
Others (9)		4.78	Others (22)	72	19.83
Unknown	191	45.69			
<b>Total</b>	<b>418</b>			<b>363</b>	

*Productivity by country of publication*

The USA appears in first place in both decades, followed by the UK, Germany, France (in the first interval) and the Netherlands (in the most recent interval). Spain has only a single entry in the first period and five in the second. The numerical data appear in Table 3.

**Table 4.** Most productive journals and number of contributions for each period.

<b>1947-1957</b>	<b>Nº</b>	<b>1997-2007</b>	<b>Nº</b>
Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology	19	Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice	17
British Journal of Delinquency	17	Adolescence	6
Annals of the American Academy of Political & Social Science	15	International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology	6
Praxis der Kinderpsychologie und Kinderpsychiatrie	14	Journal of Aggression	6
Journal of Genetic Psychology	11	Journal of Criminal Justice	6
Nervous Child	11	Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency	6

*Productivity by journal*

The 418 entries in the first decade were provided by 174 periodicals, whereas the 363 articles in the years 1997-2007 were spread among 210 journals. The lower

contribution per journal is clear when reviewing the journals which provided the most articles in each period (see Table 4).

#### *Productivity by author*

It was observed that most authors took part in only one article. Of a total amount of 1,847 authors, 1,696 appeared in only one; 112 in two; 30 in three; and 9 in more than three. This finding is consistent with the so-called Lotka's Law (Lotka, 1926), according to which only a few authors publish regularly whereas the majority do so in a sporadic manner. The list of the most prolific authors for each period appears in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Main authors in each period.

<b>1947-1957</b>		<b>1997-2008</b>	
<b>Author</b>	<b>Nº</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Nº</b>
Wattenberg, William W.	14	Loeber, Rolf	5
Weber, George H.	5	Tremblay, Richard E.	5
Witmer, Helen L.	5	Cauffman, E	3
Beck, Bertram M.	4	Cullen, Francis T.	3
Glueck, Eleanor T.	4	Özbay, Özden	3
Coltharp, Ralph W.*	3	Petrosino, Anthony	3
Johnson, Adelaide M.	3	Turpin-Petrosino, C.*	3
Zakolski, F.C.	3	Reynolds, Arthur J.	3
		Stouthamer-Loeber, M.*	3
		Van der Laan, Peter H.	3

*Note.* An asterisk (\*) indicates that the author has been analyzed together with a collaborator.

## **Content Analysis**

#### *Contents by authors*

We carried out a quantitative analysis of contents for the main authors in order to identify subject of interest in each period. We also calculated the Collaboration Index (CI) and checked for collaborations among those authors.

*Wattenberg, William W.* He appears with two signatures (the second with initials only) and was the most prolific author of the period 1947-57, with 14 articles and a CI of 1.2. We have confirmed that he did not publish any article out of this decade. He

carried out his studies in Detroit (USA) in collaboration with the police and the *Crime Prevention Bureau*, with samples over 5,000 people, both youth men and women (Wattenberg and Saunders, 1954). One of the most-studied topics was the relation between socio-demographic variables and delinquency: contact with community religious services (1950a) and an extensive school calendar (1948) were described as protection factors, whereas a tense family situation (with divorces or separations, 1950b) appeared as a risk factor. With regard to ethnic groups, he highlighted the relation between non-white youths and the type of neighborhood they lived in, generally poor (1954a). The second issue that could be identified was the study of repeated criminal acts: he found that the type of delinquent act held no statistical relation with the criminal record, being able to explain them by personality disorders instead: he found that gangs membership, poor school marks and a reputation for delinquency favored repeat offending (1954b). He also found that young people that played with their parents had a lower rate of repetition (1953a). To carry out these studies, he used follow-up research. Finally, he developed several studies on the profile of juvenile delinquents (1951), differentiating between those that acted in gangs, who came from deprived neighborhoods, those who acted in solitary, who had a greater probability of living in deprived homes (1950c), and car thieves, who had higher socioeconomic levels (1952, 1955).

*Weber, George H.* He published 5 articles, with a CI of 1.2. He studied young car thieves personality, using the Weschler-Bellevue Test, the Rorschach Test and Murray's Thematic Aperception Test (Weber, 1950). The remaining four studies were dedicated to testing therapies for young people: two with students from an industrial school, which nowadays would be considered similar to social guarantee programs (Coltharp & Weber, 1950; Weber & Coltharp, 1950); one in a boarding school for juvenile delinquents (Coltharp & Weber, 1952); and the last one, on the discipline of boy-scouts with therapeutic objectives (1955). It should be pointed that three of these studies were co-authored with R. W. Coltharp.

*Witmer, Helen L.* She appears with a second signature (Leland instead of L.) and contributed 5 articles during this period (in addition to one in 1936, which was excluded from the analysis). Her CI was 0.8. She wrote two articles to review the treatment effectiveness in juvenile delinquents, finding a lack of conclusive results (using counseling in 1949 and a review of several projects in Witmer and Tufts, 1954). She also contributed with two texts which compile the main conclusions of task groups

formed by professionals (1954a and 1954b), and a review of the contributions of sociology and psychiatry to the study of JD (Witmer & Kotinsky, 1956).

*Beck, Bertram M.* He contributed with four publications, all as sole author (CI = 0). The first of these (1952) dealt with early detection with prepubescent children. His next two contributions dealt with treatment, proposing specific solutions according to the types of juvenile delinquency (social, asocial or neurotic, 1954a), and the moment intervention is implemented (prevention, first arrest, children's court... up to a total of twelve contexts, 1954b). In the final study he discusses the effects of affective deprivation, domestic problems, ethnic discrimination and war, all of which encourage a manner of interpreting life as a series of threats and reprisals (1955).

*Glueck, Eleanor T.* She signed four articles during the first period, plus one in 1966 (excluded from analysis). Her CI was 0.5. She published a follow-up study (10 years) with two groups (delinquents and non-delinquents) with similar socioeconomic characteristics, comprising 500 youths each (Glueck & Glueck, 1951). She created four forecast tables, in function of the results of the Rorschach test and personality and social background of the youths, as a tool for social workers (1952). Effectiveness of these tables was tested and published in a later study (1956a). In the fourth study, she discussed the utility of these tables in evaluating interactions between mental health (neurosis) and delinquency (1956b) in young people.

*Johnson, Adelaide M.* She contributed three articles (CI = 1.3). Three texts compiled info about ethology of juvenile delinquency and psychopathic behavior (considered a continuation of the former) since 1942. She studied juvenile delinquents with good socioeconomic backgrounds, and provided a psychodynamic-based explanation of this behavior as a function of parental permissiveness, who may unwittingly stimulate their children and receive vicarious reinforcement (Johnson, 1955; Johnson & Szureck, 1952; Johnson & Burke, 1955).

*Zakolski, F. C.* He published three articles on his own in a single journal (*Journal of Genetic Psychology*). He carried out a comparative study between groups of 50 students, with an average age of 15.5, coming from an industrial and an ordinary school. The first article showed the maladjustment of juvenile delinquents to family, community, healthy behavior and social norms, as well as a lower intelligence (1949a). The second article (1949b) provided an analysis of the capacity of a battery of tests used to discriminate between low and high levels of delinquency, which proved satisfactory.

Finally, he presented a standardized battery of tests for detecting juvenile delinquency in community samples (1953).

*Loeber, Rolf.* Focusing now on the period 1997-2007, this author is one of the two with five contributions to scientific journals, and his CI in this decade was 3.4. His five articles explored the process of criminal behavior appearance in young people, using North American samples with longitudinal studies. Three of these were co-authored with *Magda Stouthamer-Loeber*, other of the most prolific authors of this period (three articles, CI of 3.7). In his first article, he proposed three prototypical forms in which this behavior appears: *authority conflict pathway*, which begins before the age of twelve and takes the form of stubbornness, defiance and rebelliousness towards norms; *covert pathway*, which begins with small controversial actions which give way to minor property damage and end with medium or high profile delinquency; and *overt pathway*, which evolves from minor acts of aggression to fights and general physical violence (Loeber, Keenan, & Zhang, 1997). The distinction between covert and overt types was supported in a posterior article (Loeber Wei, Stouthamer-Loeber, Huizanga, & Thornberry 1999). Regarding the origins of delinquency, he draws a relation between child abuse and the posterior expression of this behavioral pattern, albeit tempered by socio-demographic factors (Stouthamer-Loeber, Wei, Homish, & Loeber, 2002). He wrote an article which placed a special emphasis on early attention in order to avoid the establishment of criminal conduct. In this article he carried out follow-up studies and described how two-thirds of people tried in juvenile courts had engaged in criminal behavior five years previously, that half of repeat offenders had carried out some serious act before the age of 12, and that a third of the sample had been diagnosed with behavioral disorders before the age of 13. However, less than half of them had received any kind of professional help (Stouthamer-Loeber & Loeber, 2002). The last article published in this period provided data on the influence of the neighborhood on the appearance of juvenile delinquency among women. In deprived neighborhoods there is a greater incidence of such behavior, as with males, although the authors found that different risk factors had different effects on each sex (Kroneman, Loeber, & Hipwell, 2004).

*Tremblay, Richard E.* He contributed five articles in this period, with a CI of 4.4 (influenced by an article signed by 10 authors). Three of those were about the study of juvenile delinquency possible causes: obstetric complications at birth predicted a greater probability of criminal behavior in families which lived in adverse social conditions

(Arseneault, Tremblay, Boulerice, & Saucier, 2002); the degree of *civiness* in social environment when growing up was negatively correlated with crime ratios in the community, including both crimes against people and property (Gatti, Tremblay, & Larocque, 2003); finally, he participated in an article which pointed a positive relation between the level of testosterone and self reports of delinquency and both proactive and reactive aggressiveness (Van Bokhoven et al., 2006). Another article studied the probability of being brought to court as a function of personal characteristics, showing that those statistical influences were higher than the type of crime committed (Leung, Woolley, Tremblay, & Vitaro, 2005). Finally, an article dealt with the evolution of different forms of juvenile delinquency: controlling for the variables *resistance*, *physical aggression* and *hyperactivity* (understood as disruptiveness in class), it was found that trajectories marked by resistance had a greater probability of committing thieving during adolescence, whereas a history of physical aggressions was a precursor to serious crimes (Nagin & Tremblay, 1999).

*Cauffman, Elizabeth.* She has three contributions, with a CI of 5 (the highest of all the authors analyzed). Her first article consisted of a bibliographical review of psychopathology and juvenile delinquency, an area considered to have been relatively unexplored (Steiner & Cauffman, 1998). In 2006 she used an exploratory factorial analysis in a study headed to test the structures proposed by Neuman, Forth, Kosson, & Hare (2006): the solutions with two and three factors did not fit correctly, whereas the tetrafactorial solution and the replication of Cooke & Michie (2001) were statistically significant for different ethnic groups and for both males and females. The final article in the list is a study of the maturity of juvenile delinquents compared with adults. Acquiescence levels found were similar between youngsters and other non-imputable collectives (such as persons with certain mental illnesses), and the need of development evaluation methods of determining when a minor has the capacity to face a judgment was discussed (Grisso et al., 2003).

*Cullen, Francis T.* He participates in three journal articles, with a CI of 2.7. In two of them he explores variables that might be related to the appearance of juvenile delinquency. Ven and Cullen (2004) test the relation between the mother's labor situation and serious delinquency among her children, concluding that there is only a negative effect in cases where mothers work under coercion (in low-skilled jobs and with fear of being fired), independently of the total number of hours spent outside the

home. The second article tests the utility of Colvin's *Differential Coercion Theory*, according to which the degree of coercion accumulated in the contexts of the family, school, peers, neighborhood... leads to the appearance of psychosocial deficits which facilitate to join in criminal behavior (Colvin, 2000). Using a sample of almost 2,500 youths, a significant relation was found between coercion and participation in serious criminal acts. In a third article, he explored the specific predictors of juvenile delinquency according to sex. For males, the equation obtained through regression analysis showed that socioeconomic class (*Strain Theory*) and social commitment stood out (with positive and negative signs, respectively). The only significant variable for females, on the other hand, was the degree of school attachment, negatively related.

*Özden, Özbay.* He published three articles about juvenile delinquency in Turkey, with a CI of 1.3. His three contributions were replications for oriental populations of classic research issues from the occidental world. Two articles tested the utility of Strain Theory for Turkish males (briefly, this theory holds that males from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, being further from their ideal life than the middle-class are, have a greater tendency to commit crimes). He found results which were inconsistent with the theory in the first article (Özden, 2006) and opposite in the second (Özden & Özcan, 2006a). The third article shows the outcomes of a test of *Hirschi's Social Bond* theory in Turkish population. This bond plays a significant role in development of delinquency (Özden & Özcan, 2006b).

*Petrosino, Anthony.* He contributed three articles, all in collaboration with *Carolyn Turpin-Petrosino*. Both authors have a CI of 3. The common theme of these contributions was the review of studies about the *Scared Straight* youth awareness programs, which consisted of bringing youths at risk to visit jails in order to dissuade them. The main conclusion, obtained through an analysis of previous studies, is that the result of these programs was paradoxical, with an increase in delinquency in the communities in which they were implemented (Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino, & Buehler, 2003, 2005; Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino, & Finckenauer, 2000).

*Reynolds, Arthur J.* He published three articles (CI=2.7), with data obtained from a design of repeated measures (*Chicago Longitudinal Study*) with samples of over 1,000 subjects (mainly Afro-Americans). He found that early intervention with children of pre-school age led to a lower index of juvenile delinquency in teenage years (Mann & Reynolds, 2006; Reynolds, Chang & Temple, 1998). In the third article he tested five explanatory hypotheses to why early intervention resulted effective in reducing juvenile



delinquency in the community: early development of the cognitive level of minors; the encouragement of parental implication in child-raising; the greater instrumental support that the school receives; the extra motivation of students; and the empowerment of greater social and normative adjustment. The LISREL analysis showed that the first three of these had long-term effects in reducing the rate of juvenile delinquency (Reynolds, Ou, & Topitzes, 2004).

*Van der Laan, Peter H.* He contributed three articles, with a CI of 3.3., all of which were studies in the Netherlands. The first was a review of data on juvenile delinquency and the effects of changes in local legislation in the 1990s (Van der Laan & Smit, 2000). He studied the relation between nine types of disruptive behavior in schools and twelve types of criminal behavior in other contexts, using a repeated measures design. He found the expected relation, though it was weaker than that found in previous studies (Weerman, Harland, & Van der Laan, 2007). The third article studied the effectiveness of Multi-System Therapy on young delinquents, concluding that their experience provided support for this kind of intervention (Asscher, Dekovic, Van der Laan, Prins, & Van Arum, 2007).

#### *Contents according to Major Descriptors*

We checked major descriptors PsycINFO used to codify those articles in order to build a classification according to areas of study. In the period 1947-57 there were only 50 descriptors for the set of 418 articles catalogued (an average of 0.12 descriptors per article), whereas for the period 1997-2007 the average number of descriptors per article was 4.26. This disparity led us to reject a comparative analysis.

*Categorization of contents.* This analysis, centered on the contents of the most prolific authors of the two decades identified, confirms the predominant *approach* to be the empirical (more than 50% of references), though a clear difference has been found between the periods: theoretical approaches and models account for more than 40% in the first period, a similar figure to that of empirical studies, whereas in the second period 61.76% of studies were empirical.

These differences reappear in the analysis of the *area of study*, with interest centered more on the differences between groups in the first period (almost 44% of publications) compared with a greater presence family, school and community in the second period (around 50% of total).

Moreover, the *type of research* was centered mainly on individual differences and psychopathological processes in the first period (45% of the articles), while in the second period psychopathology has disappeared, as well as 30% of articles dealt with individual psychological processes.

**Table 6.** Results of the categorization.

		1947-1957 (N = 41)		1997-2007 (N = 34)		Total (N = 75)	
		fr	%	fr	%	fr	%
<b>Exposition</b>	Theoretical	11	26.83	4	11.76	15	20.00
	Model Induction	6	14.63	2	5.88	8	10.67
	Empirical	19	46.34	21	61.76	40	53.33
	Psychometric	1	2.44	1	2.94	2	2.67
	Missing	4	9.76	6	17.65	10	13.33
<b>Area of research</b>	Individual	2	4.88	3	8.82	5	6.67
	Family	5	12.20	3	8.82	8	10.67
	Peer group	18	43.90	4	11.76	22	29.33
	School	3	7.32	6	17.65	9	12.00
	Community - neighborhood	0	0.00	5	14.71	5	6.67
	Others	6	14.63	4	11.76	10	13.33
	Missing	7	17.07	9	26.47	16	21.33
	Psychological processes / individual differences	13	31.71	10	29.41	23	30.67
	Psychopathological processes	6	14.63	1	2.94	7	9.33
	Social processes	1	2.44	1	2.94	2	2.67
<b>Intervention</b>	Others	2	4.88	1	2.94	3	4.00
	Missing	19	46.34	21	61.76	40	53.33
	Primary	4	9.76	3	8.82	7	9.33
	Social processes	3	7.32	5	14.71	8	10.67
	Legal/judicial	0	0.00	1	2.94	1	1.33
	Clinical	1	2.44	0	0.00	1	1.33
	Others	3	7.32	0	0.00	3	4.00
Missing	30	73.17	25	73.53	55	73.33	

The analysis led to confirm the relative lack of interest shown up to now in *intervention*, as more than 70% of the consulted studies made no reference to this theme. Moreover, there was a lack of studies in the clinical area, represented by only a single article. In the articles which referred to intervention, this was directed towards preventive orientation and/or that referred to social processes.

Finally, it was confirmed that the percentage of missing data, summing both periods, was between 13.33% and 73.33% depending on the category. All the information commented on is summarized in Table 6.

### Discussion and Conclusions

The analysis of *productivity* in terms of JD as a key concept shows a reality which has changed over time, where it is possible to identify a *golden age* before the inclusion of the term in the PsycINFO Thesaurus (1967), and a renewal of interest in the issue during last decade. We consider that the evolution of publications justified comparing both ages.

The analysis and comparison of both periods allows us to draw some conclusions about research on *Juvenile Delinquency*. In both periods has been a notable dominance of English as main language and of the United States of America in terms of publications. This reflects the popularity of English in the world of research and in turn serves as an invitation to reflect on the future of science. Given that the most important databases (such as PsycINFO in our discipline) came from the US and that other languages and countries are systematically ignored in them, the conclusions drawn from these databases show trends which should be taken into account. In this sense, the authors consider it to be of primordial importance to compare the information on content reviewed in the present study with that from other sources.

Another aspect of productivity is who publishes and where. Given the large amount of data available through the internet, the selection of a fraction of the material (a sample, in other words) is unavoidable. The criterion chosen for this study was based on the number of publications made on our object of study, both by author as well as by journal. Again, there are notable differences between the two periods studied. For example, in the decade of the 1950s an author signed 14 publications (William W. Wattenberg) but in the past decade there were no such authors of reference: in fact, only ten authors published three or more times. Something similar applies to the journals: whereas specialized publications were more visible in the first period, productivity spreads among a large amount of periodicals nowadays. Precisely for this reason, the task of classification and analysis of the available material is crucial.

A relevant piece of information emerges with regard to collaboration among authors. Firstly, collaboration indexes were lower in the first decade than in the second, showing a change in the way researchers work. Nowadays few articles appear with a single author, something very frequent in the past. This allows the study of the so-called *hidden* or *implicit colleges*, namely groups of professionals which work together and which develop lines of research with several publications that keep consistent objectives and methods. It makes them especially important, as allow us to identify shared perspectives on particular issues. Among the most prolific authors, we have identified two professional tandems: formed by R. Loeber and M. Stouthamer-Loeber; and A. Petrosino and C. Turpin-Petrosino.

The first criterion used to explore the content of publications was to select the most productive authors in each of the intervals considered. The total number of articles was 41 for the period 1947-57 (out of a total of 418) and 34 for the period 1997-2007 (out of a total of 363). These represented just fewer than 10% of the total number of articles for each period. However, and as mentioned before, the amount of material available on the internet obliges us to establish some system of sampling, and choosing the most productive authors allows us to select full researching lines, instead of the mixed perspective data provided by a simple random search.

Even after reducing the set of articles to less than 10% of the original number, it proved impossible to extract intuitively a set of descriptors which could usefully label the articles. This leads to the need to use some categorization system which would facilitate their classification.

The descriptors provided by PsycINFO for the articles included in the database had a very low frequency, almost anecdotal, in the first period analyzed. Apart from making it impossible to compare the contents with those of the present day, this points to a risk which should be taken into account when designing the method of any theoretical review. The use of the *Major Descriptors* as a search criterion implies a series of biases. First, the resulting classifications are determined by the owners of the databases, and may be incompatible with the conceptions of the authors themselves: for example, the first studies aimed at criticize the use of the term *juvenile delinquent* and which advocated the use of alternative terms have, ironically, a high probability of being identified with *Juvenile Delinquency* as a *Major Descriptor*. Secondly, these classifications are carried out when the article is included in the database but are not revised subsequently. Given that the term JD was included in the thesaurus in 1967, we

would have lost almost 60 years of output if we had guided ourselves by that criterion. The use of *Key Concepts*, while not without limitations, avoids these obstacles and has proved effective in previous studies (Rodríguez-Franco, López-Cepero, & Rodríguez, 2009).

Given the deficiencies in the labeling provided by PsycINFO, we have decided to elaborate a system of categories which permits a response to some of the classic questions regarding the evolution of our object of study, such as whether the publications are empirical or theoretical, who the main protagonists are, whether intra or extrapsychic issues are being studied, and whether intervention has been proposed.

Our data show a change in the first two categories. Thus, the percentage of empirical studies has increased from 46% to 62% of the articles classified, in detriment to the theoretical literature. Induction from explanatory models of the origins of juvenile delinquency remains in third place but with lower numbers today. We consider that this information indicates a progressively increasing interest for field work which has become generalized in the field of legal and social sciences.

Regarding the *research area*, the interpretation of the differences between both periods fits with the ideas presented in the introductory section: in the 1940s and 1950s, *social class* appeared as the essential cause in any explanation of deviant behavior, with the lower classes being fertile ground for delinquency. Several studies from the 1970s to the 1990s have shown this relation to be weak or inexistent (Hernández de Frutos, 2006), and this has given rise to new approaches more focused on individual variables (attitudes, resistance, impulsiveness...) and their relation with psychopathological variables, as well as in the identification of behavioral prototypes closely related to the neighborhood and the degree of civicness present in different socialization contexts (above all, family and school). In this way, the centre of attention has moved from classist prejudices (delinquency as inherent to certain social strata) towards the role that different social agents play in facilitating or protecting against criminal behavior, thereby providing a better perspective for intervention.

However, recall that only 30% of the articles consulted made any sort of reference to a hypothetical intervention. This low number has prevented us from being able to make comparisons between periods though it is possible to highlight two pillars of primary prevention: the creation of incentives for commitment to social norms, and the improvement in aptitude for solving problems (see Rodríguez, 2009, for further

discussion). On the other hand, the so-called Multi-System Therapy appears as the main therapeutic approach in the last decade, during which many studies which demonstrate its effectiveness have appeared (Asscher et al., 2007; and in Spain, Fariña & Arce, 2003; Fernández-Ríos & Rodríguez, 2007).

Of course, it is necessary to highlight the percentage of data lost as a result of the proposed categorization. Authors consider that the construction of a more exhaustive system of categories is a necessary task, but that due to its magnitude it couldn't be addressed in the present work. It remains as a future challenge.

To summarize, we have observed how the objectives, hypotheses, evaluation methods, focus, and with all these the very definition of *Juvenile Delinquency*, have undergone great changes over the last century. At present, and after three decades of clear decreasing, productivity related to this issue has increased to the point where it is now, over thirty journal articles per year by mean. Researching efforts around this social phenomenon, especially those headed to provide empirical basis to check the utility of different types of intervention, will serve to guide the development of future improvements. However, authors of this text consider that should address certain weaknesses with regard to the validity of the concept. This is an objective which obliges us to continue developing categorization systems which might allow exhaustive and relevant description of contents.

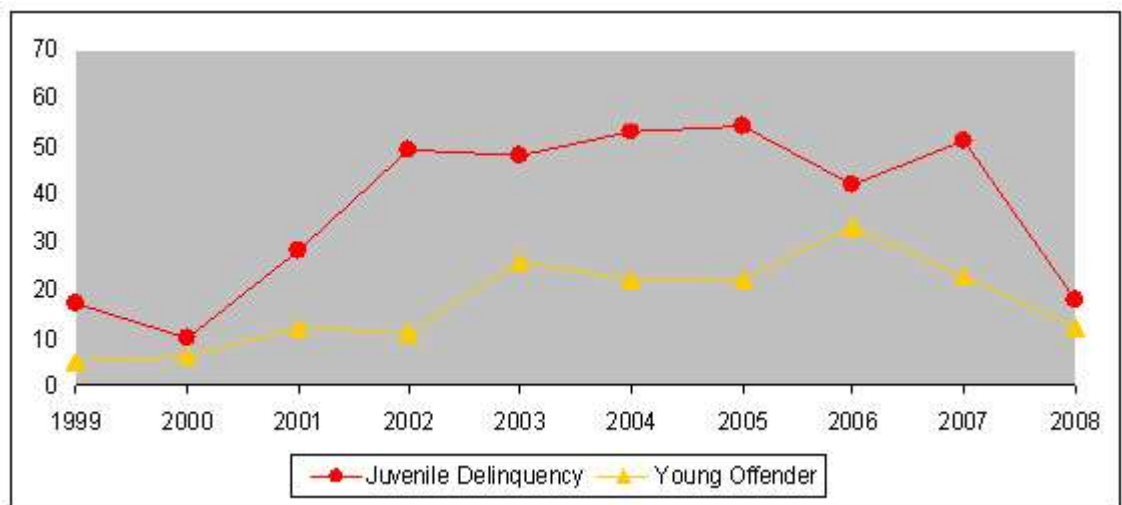
Nobody is unaware that in 98 years of history the changes with regard to “the” concept of *juvenile delinquency* make it difficult to define in a univocal way. This also occurs with many other objects of study (for example, *domestic violence*; see Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2009), and the appearance of new terms should serve to establish comparative analysis and make a decision on the validity of the term.

We began this section by commenting on the biases arising from the use of foreign and English-language sources of information, and we reiterate the danger of extrapolating findings from one culture to another. The term *Delinquency* denotes a deviation from social norms (descriptive aspect), but also has deeper connotations which concern the *undesirability* of the person who commits acts of delinquency, and it involves a second judgment. In Spain, the legal system protects children and teenagers from this stigmatization, raising to 18 the minimum legal age at which one can be charged. In the United States, however, a person can be charged at 16, while still in adolescence. In light of this, how can we import conclusions from one country to another if their legal systems have such a divergence of criteria? Is it likely that the

same intervention program will be equally effective in different contexts if its design has a punitive rather than retributive overtone?

In our opinion, *Juvenile Delinquency* is a term with important historical weight and validity, but its applicability to the Spanish national context is rather low. Spain's legal and cultural framework requires taking account of certain guidelines that this term does guarantee, thereby introducing doubts as to whether the body of knowledge constructed around this term can be generalized.

**Figure 2.** Articles published last decade under both terms.



On the contrary, it would be recommendable the adoption of the term *Young Offender*. This term, though less frequently used, has proved to have had a certain tradition in international research (Figure 2), even without appearing in APA Thesaurus. Anyway, its similarity to the legal and protection of minors present perspectives in Spain and European Union, leads us to consider that its adoption might serve to guide future efforts in researching and intervention.

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Title page (include the authors' name, affiliations, full contact details).

Full paper text (double spaced with numbered pages and anonymised).

References (APA style).

Tables and figures placed at the end of the paper or attached separately.

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