The impact of peer, family and school on delinquency
A study of at-risk Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong

Cindy Davis, Catherine Tang and Janet Ko

Theorists have long speculated about and studied the risk factors associated with juvenile delinquency in Western countries. Some of these risk factors include low social status, overcrowding or large family size, marital instability, deviant parental behavior, school failure, low self-esteem, lack of social support, an unhealthy community and negative peer influence (Garmezy and Masten, 1994; Jessor et al., 1995; Rutter, 1979). However, not all individuals with a shared vulnerability to those identified risk factors develop delinquent behavior. Researchers have also identified protective factors (e.g. positive family bonding, educational success, positive community environment, and social support) associated with the development of healthy young adults in Western countries (Erlenmeyer-Kimling et al., 1990; Garmezy and Masten, 1994; Rutter and Giller, 1983; Werner and Smith, 1982, 1992).

There are numerous theories and approaches to the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency in the fields of psychology, sociology, biology and criminology (Trojanowicz and Morash, 1992). Due to the abundance of theoretical explanations on the