Valdas Rimkus

Bridging the Islands of Society:

Modeling Delinquency Prevention through Optimization of Social Support

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University of Lapland
Faculty of Social Sciences

Abstract

The purpose of the meta-analysis is to present a theoretical model of social work interventions within the process of juvenile delinquency prevention. The study approaches delinquency prevention as the process of increasing the amount of social support measures applied by parents and other members of adolescent social network. The main research question of the meta-analysis is: how can optimization of social support enhance the process of delinquency prevention?

The meta-analysis draws on two surveys of opportunity samples of delinquent juveniles from Klaipėda and surrounding districts of Lithuania. The first quantitative survey included 73 delinquent juveniles (plus 95 non-delinquents as a control group). The second survey was qualitative and included a sample of 10 delinquents. The results of the research emphasize that reasonable number of today's families fail to provide children with support necessary for successful socialization, formation of behaviour models and value systems. Delinquent children tend to live in less cohesive, structurally unfavourable families, where the balance of support and control is disturbed. Their parents utilize more direct means of control (homework checking, direct intervention, punishments, scolding), while supportive relations are underutilized. Rather formal delinquents' relationships with their parents, which bear an obligatory nature and low level of perceived support from siblings also add to the overall unfavourable support situation in the family.

Resting on research results frameworks for early and direct prevention including measures to increase supportiveness are presented. The framework of early prevention is based on stages of more general model of social development and list of circumstances unfavourable for social support, while direct prevention rest on system characteristics favourable for social support and control.

Three aspects of social support's effect on delinquency prevention are distinguished. Firstly, social support requires involvement of natural network (or community, in other words) into the process of delinquency prevention. Secondly, social support, as concept indistinguishable from social network, enhances the systemic (holistic) perspective in juvenile delinquency. And thirdly, systemic nature of social support coherently supplements the practice of social work and provides clear outlines for its activities.

Key words: social support, social control, social network, juvenile delinquency, delinquency prevention, social work.

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Introduction

Practical and theoretical relevance of the topic

There's a widespread saying that no man is an island. Every human needs another human beside him, because only then existence is imbued with meaning. Socialization process is also based on constant mutual ties between a child and surrounding people. A child takes from the society what's the most important for him, learns how to become a member of it, but, at the same time, shares with the people his experiences, feelings and emotions. However, people becoming islands, separated from others by waters of condemnation and alienation, is not a rare phenomenon. It's even worse, when these "islands" are children – still forming and self-creating personalities. Unfortunately, most often the ones alienated and misunderstood by the community are delinquent or problem children, "lost" in the process of socialization, who, in the eyes of the surrounding people, have themselves to blame for their fate. Not without reason, Gilligan (2002) argued that one of the main risk factors for violence and aggression are feelings of shame and humiliation. Being "an island" in a society inevitably evokes those feelings and doesn't add to a successful desistance from crime. Successful process of socialization is impossible without one of its components – social environment. We cannot teach children to obey and follow societal norms by pushing them out of the society. Whatever the child, he should feel that others need him and will provide help and support when necessary. Only such attitudes will enable to build bridges between society and its remote "islands". And one of the most important parts in the bridge building process belongs to social workers who from the outset of the profession were determined to approach and help society's outcasts, "to alleviate poverty and to liberate vulnerable and oppressed people in order to promote social inclusion" (Definition of social work on www.ifsw.org).

Juvenile delinquency and crime is a social phenomenon characteristic to every society. It rouses a big concern for state, legal and community institutions as juveniles represent their future. Spread of delinquent attitudes, negative media influence, languishing of value and moral norms may have a yet undefined influence on young generation's morals, principles and attitudes towards human independence, life and property.

Lithuania in this case is not an exception. Juvenile delinquency in independent Lithuania has undergone different stages of development: from the rapid growth in 1990–1996 (number of investigated criminal offences committed by juveniles or with their participation in 1990 rated 2506 and it reached 5348 in 1996), through quite uneven period of 1997–2004 (offence rates went as high as 5519 in 2000 and as low as 4058 in 2003), to a slow decrease since then (5021 offences in 2004 reduced to 4051 in 2007) (All the statistical data here and further on is taken from the internet page of Centre of Crime Prevention in Lithuania). Despite quantitative changes having stabilized in the latter years, Lithuania still experiences increase in qualitative aspects of juvenile delinquency. Juveniles (children up to the age of 18) constitute about 6% of Lithuanian population but among persons charged with criminal offences they make about 15%. Increasingly more juveniles commit serious violent crimes (for example: 2 premeditated murders in 1990 and 20 murders in 2004) and increasingly more underaged (14–15 years of age and younger) and therefore criminally irresponsible juveniles commit offences. More so, from 1990 to 2001 the number of repeat offenders among juveniles leaped fourfold (from 176 to 745 respectively) (Babachinaitė & Justickaja, 2008, 136). This shows that Lithuanian society has not yet found the right mechanisms to influence and reduce problems of juvenile delinquency and crime.

After restoring its independence Lithuania accomplished a reform of juvenile criminal justice which helped to integrate national laws into the international legal system. However, as Drakšas (2005, 7) argues, Lithuania still doesn't pay enough attention to alternative means of prevention emphasized in the international documents, such as institute of reconciliation or positive case solution in pre-trial institutions. Such approach involuntarily shifts the focus of delinquency and crime prevention mainly on the aspect of control. The direct enforcers of juvenile justice – police officers – also see the solution of criminal situation in penitentiary, but not in preventive activities (Juodaitytė & Taroza, 2001, 124). Even the term "prevention" in "The dictionary of terms of social work" (Andrašiūnienė, 2007, 96) is described as "control, surveillance, various methods of upbringing which seek to forestall the events not compatible with morals and legal norms". Such definition indirectly emphasizes namely – control and surveillance. Recently a law

of prohibition of physical punishments against children was rejected by Lithuanian parliament stating that physical discipline helps to raise a mannerly child. Further down towards the micro-level the situation doesn't change: parents of both offenders and non-offenders tend to punish their children physically or by limiting pleasures and scolding (Ivanauskienė, 2002, Litvinienė, 2001), children lack trust, support and approval in their families (Gudžinskienė & Laucevičienė, 2001, 43–44), children declare that parents make child-concerning decisions without their assent, mistrust them and rarely are tender towards them (Gaigalienė & Subačius, 2001), at school children lack valuable emotional ties, experience unsafety and double standards applied to them and teachers (Jonynienė & Dromantienė, 2002, 31). Thus, it can be stated that in Lithuania control and punishment are preferred over education and integration as responses to juvenile delinquency and crime in both macro and micro, levels of society.

Since its formation civilized society started searching for the ways to treat disobedient and criminally behaving persons. One of the early established attitudes was that these persons poise a threat to the rest of society and need to be removed from it as well as punished. In literature these attitudes are entitled as the paradigm of punishment and isolation (Ruškus & Merkys, 2002, 21) or the perspective of morals and law (Gilligan, 2002, 7). This perspective or, speaking more generally, this way of thinking is closely linked with the ideas of control theories. Social control usually is defined as social processes which regulate individual and group behaviour and ensure conformity to norms (Marshall, 1998). The ability to exert social control is closely linked with power, especially in the repressive forms of control, which are characteristic to police and military (Marshall, 1998, 610). Berger (1995) states that almost every person lives in the environment where power and repressions can be used legally and officially. In practice this paradigm reveals itself by the attitudes of "the more serious crime – the more severe punishment" and the widespread prison system which is based on principles of isolation, control and obedience. Despite the cardinal changes in society's worldviews, values and way of living, the paradigm of punishment and isolation up to this day remains an important component of justice systems around the world. More so, as Christie (1999) emphasizes, the ever enlarged and

enhanced prison system turns crime control into industry needing more and more "clients", i.e. inmates. In primary groups social control usually acquires forms of mockery, sneer, slander or shaming (Berger, 1995).

On the other side there is the paradigm of education and integration (Ruškus & Merkys, 2002, 25) or, as Gilligan (2002, 12) puts it, perspective of health care and prophylactic medicine. Attitudes constituting this paradigm emerged significantly later, together with the intensified humanistic and anti-oppressive ideas of the new modern society and science. These attitudes emphasize pedagogical optimism, integration, belief in human strengths being the core of any correctional program. More so, they affirm that punishments and shaming stimulate violence. In this case, way of thinking leads towards ideas of humanistic pedagogy and social support. Social support is defined as network efforts to offer encouragement, care and empathy (Barker, 2003, 407) as well as positive attitudes and beliefs in one's efforts to overcome problems and difficulties (Jovaiša, 2007, 271). Increasingly more research evidence support the effectiveness of the education and integration paradigm. Howell (2003) leaning on extensive research data clearly states that zero-tolerance policies, punishments, long term confinements, out-of-home placements etc., do not work with juvenile offenders. On the other hand he emphasizes that what works are: early intervention, social learning and cognitive skills programs that match with the learning styles of the offender.

Since 1999 I have a part-time occupation as a senior specialist in Child rights protection department of Klaipėda district municipality. The main functions of our department are administration of social work with social risk families and risk group children, organization of foster care and adoption and representation of child rights in courts. In addition, the department participates in different preventive and leisure time activity projects. Work in this department provides me with good possibilities to get closely acquainted with the everyday situation of children living in unfavourable conditions as well as neglected, abused and delinquent children. Some of my own experiences I used as case examples in the first article, the fact that delinquent children had known me from earlier contacts helped me a lot in finding respondents and having them to share their thoughts for the research in the third and fourth articles.

The insights and observations I've got from my practice in Child rights protection department shaped my basic ideas about the ways of helping delinquent children and the shortcomings of the existing system thus forming a ground for this meta-analysis as a whole.

1. Design and Composition of Meta-Analysis

This meta-analysis basically is located at the intersection of the earlier mentioned isolation and integration paradigms and corresponding discussions. Yet, instead on focusing on both paradigms, it rather tries to ground the importance of social support component within the delinquency prevention framework. Although, as it was concluded above, Lithuanian society tends to prefer the paradigm of punishment, many programs and institutions try to combine both paradigms with varying success. The same processes occur in many countries across the world, and, as different studies show, this is one of the effective solutions. Sipila (1980) indicates that disproportioning of support and control may lead to negative outcomes, Pinkerton (2000, 212) argues that efficient social care should include the sum of helping and controlling, Bazemore and Erbe (2003) state that combining punishment and formal social control with skill development and community's social support is the fundamental prevention principle of restorative justice, Wright and colleagues (Wright et al., 2000) find that social control is much more effective if applied together with social support, Merkys (2002, 46) emphasizes that reasonable combination of punishment and education paradigms may lead to positive prevention results. The component of control is fairly represented in the works of Lithuanian researchers, while the component of support received scant attention in Lithuanian scientific literature. Even the Lithuanian equivalent of the concept of "social support" has yet to be scientifically established. Therefore this research contributes, first of all, to Lithuanian studies of social support both as a phenomenon, and as a preventive method.

To grasp the most important and in-depth aspects of the problem, this research is concentrated around the micro- and meso-levels of juvenile social environment in the center of which stands family. Family is one of the most significant socialization milieus for adolescents, as well as indispensable support provider. According to del Valle, Bravo & Lopez (2010, 24), in the mid-adolescence emotional support from parents significantly decreases coinciding with sharp increase of emotional support from peers, while instrumental support from parents and peers remains approximately on level terms. Therefore, parents face a serious

task to retain the confidence and trust of their adolescent children to not distance from them and to be able to provide instrumental support. Lithuania, as today's society in general, experiences changes in family life style and values, which manifest in increasing parent – child conflict level, neglect, juvenile delinquency and violence (Fedulova, 2004, 129), decreasing child importance in family life, contradictory family roles (Stankūnienė et al., 2003). However, regardless of the understanding of changes, social support remains the prerogative of women, although their possibilities to provide support have diminished (Litvinienė, 2001: Crow & Allan, 2000; Stankūnienė et al., 2003). The increased workload of parents and isolation of families might result in lessened amount of social support received by parents themselves, which might lead to less emotional warmth and more harsh discipline towards children (Pinderhughes, 2001). Thus, family's possibilities to provide social support are restricted, and this may predetermine the utilization of formal control and punishments as the main methods of child behaviour correction in a family.

The purpose of the meta-analysis is to present a theoretical model of social work interventions within the process of juvenile delinquency prevention. The study approaches delinquency prevention as the process of increasing the amount of social support measures applied by parents and other members of adolescent social network. This is done in order to ground the necessity to create different model of delinquency prevention. Resting on the notion that existing system of delinquency prevention emphasizes measures of control thus overlooking the potential of social support, the main research question of the meta-analysis is: ***How can optimization of social support enhance the process of delinquency prevention?***

The meta-analysis draws on two surveys of opportunity samples of delinquent juveniles from Klaipėda and surrounding districts. Adolescents included in the police lists and/or sent to a correctional institution were selected as a sample. The first survey included 73 delinquent juveniles (plus 95 non-delinquents as a control group) who were asked to fill a questionnaire investigating general variables of social support. The second survey was qualitative and included a sample of 10 delinquents. This time more in-depth analysis of social support situation was carried out. Due to limited volume of journal articles the validity of interviews

was not reflected in the 3rd and 4th articles. I didn't have a possibility to use a social support measuring instrument which had been tested for validity. However both questionnaires used for the research were based on social support variables acknowledged in scientific literature while the validity was pursued by ensuring that all the questions were conceptually linked to the aim of research.

The general outline of meta-analysis can be illustrated as follows:

Table 1. Research design

THEORETICAL ANALYSIS	SURVEY NO.1	SURVEY NO.2
Case examples of emotional support problems within a family Theoretical analysis of a need to interlink social control and support in delinquency prevention	Quantitative research into aspects of social support in families of delinquent and non-delinquent children	Qualitative research into peculiarities of delinquent social networks and social support
Articles 1 and 2	Article 3	Article 4

This thesis consists of four published articles and the present meta-analysis. The published articles were written and are presented in the same order as in Table 1, so the reader can follow the author's thinking and research process.

The 1st article "Problems of emotional support in today's family" presents the concept of social support and the discussions about the concept establishment in Lithuanian scientific literature. Emotional support is emphasized as the pervading component of the social support system. The problems and specifics of family emotional support ties and their links with adolescent behaviour problems are analyzed in the context of today's societal changes. In the article I present several case examples from my work in the Children rights protection department. Each example depicts different circumstances which led to the weakening of emotional support ties in the family and had children involved in delinquent behaviour. The article emphasizes that reasonable number of today's families fail to provide children with support necessary for successful socialization, formation of behaviour models and value systems. Interpersonal relations in the family often are reduced to what

Weber called associative ties – the ties, which are based on rationally motivated regulation of interests but lack in spiritual elements (Nisbet, 2000). It can't be excluded that in such environment a growing child will accumulate negative human and social capital, which may later become a stimulus for a problem or delinquent behaviour. Therefore social workers have to meet the growing challenge of enhancing social networks to provide sufficient emotional support.

The 2nd article "Interlinking of social control and support as a pre-condition for the crime prevention in the family" by highlighting the characteristic features of effective social control and support theoretically discusses the necessity to interlink these processes in a family seeking for successful delinquency prevention. Institutional control model presented by Triplett and colleagues' (2003) and family environment scale used in the works of Timko and Moos's (1996) are used in the article to illustrate that basic variables of control and support are analogous.

In Triplett's institutional strength model four characteristics that define the effectiveness of community institutions in exerting social control are distinguished: stability; resources; clarity of roles and interconnectedness.

Timko and Moos (1996), as distinct from Triplett, define characteristics favourable to the social climate of the family and use Family environment scale for that. The dimensions of that scale are conceptually related to the concept of social support. Authors distinguish three family environment dimensions – relationship, personal growth and system maintenance.

The article argues that the most important characteristics, which ensure the effectiveness of a family as a prevention institution, are stability and clarity of roles; resources and relationships; and interconnectedness and personal growth. Further in the article is presented the evaluation of how changes in family and society have affected these family features. However, the presence of these dynamic and flexible characteristics is necessary both for social control and social support and provides a pre-requisite for creating a construct of the content of these processes, which would become a basis for delinquency prevention model.

The 3rd article "Aspects of social support in families of delinquent and non-delinquent children" argues that informal networks of family and neighbourhood are growing more problematic and are defined by contradictory nature of social care. Such situation undoubtedly influences child's psychosocial development and might become a risk

factor for delinquency. This article utilizes slightly expanded set of social support variables, reviewed in the 2nd article, for construction of a questionnaire. In total 168 adolescents participated in the research. 73 of them constituted the delinquent group and 95 – non-delinquent group. As the data shows, delinquent children tend to live in less cohesive, structurally unfavourable families, where the balance of support and control is disturbed. Their parents utilize more direct means of control (homework checking, direct intervention, punishments, scolding), while supportive relations are underutilized. Moreover, delinquent boys less frequently seek for any support from others, they live in more conflicting families and more frequently feel lonely in their class, which not only show poorer support resources but are also predictors of delinquency. Lack of both supportive relations and control is particularly evident in families of boys, involved in serious delinquency.

The research data provides the guidelines for preventive social work. Organizing family life the way it involves a child into everyday family routines, close communication among family members and balances obligations and supports serves as a main delinquency prevention method. Social workers, besides individual work with delinquent children, should plan multi-systemic prevention activities. The main aim of these activities should emphasize optimizing social control and support resources inside and outside delinquent families.

The 4th article "Social support characteristics of delinquents' social network" is an attempt to look deeper into the structure of delinquents' social network and identify which persons provide the biggest amount of help and support for these children. Based on the data of the previous article the 4th one aims at revealing the peculiarities of delinquent social network and support. The research is based on two methods. The first one – Seed's method of network analysis (Seed, 1990) and the second – Tracy's (1990) social network map. The participants of the research were 10 adolescents of Klaipėda and Kretinga districts, who had been enrolled in the lists of adolescents of higher concern for the police or had obligations imposed by court. This means that each of the participants had committed offences for which they were imposed educative means of punishment and were controlled by probation officers. The research data show that while structural qualities of delinquents' social networks

are quite usual, their functional qualities and social support which they provide has some shortcomings. The reason for that lies in rather formal delinquents' relationships with their parents, which bear an obligatory nature and low level of perceived support from siblings which add to the overall unfavourable support situation in the family. More so, none network domain or institution (except friends) is mentioned among those to protect from humiliation. This is where a big potential for successful preventive measures lies. Reducing situations of shame and humiliation means a turn from repressive and controlling values of penal or probation systems towards compassionate, humanitarian and non-discriminatory values which lie in the core of social work. Therefore social workers role in preventive activities becomes very important. Seeking for effective delinquency prevention and efficient social networks, social workers should focus their attention on both inclusion of new network members, and correction of already existing networks.

The four reviewed articles represent the complete picture of social support phenomenon within the most immediate environment of juvenile delinquents. Starting with some personal insights on practical relevance of social support problems in the 1st article, I carried on with theoretical grounding of interconnectedness of social support and control phenomena in the 2nd, and followed them with quantitative and qualitative research of social support situation and network characteristics of delinquent children in the 3rd and 4th articles at the same time providing some guidelines for social work interventions.

Adaptive approach described by D. Layder (1998) was used as method for knowledge production in the meta-analysis. Adaptive theory incorporates both the subjectiveness of social interaction and objectiveness of wider social settings or systems thus being the most pertinent to research, which attends system elements and interpersonal encounters (Layder, 1998, 140, 144). Social support and delinquency prevention both are phenomena integrating interpersonal and systemic characteristics, therefore perfectly fitting for analysis utilizing adaptive theory. The fundamental basis of adaptive approach lies in the employment of extant theoretical materials and emergent data from ongoing research (Layder, 1988, 166). Graphically it can be visualized a follows:
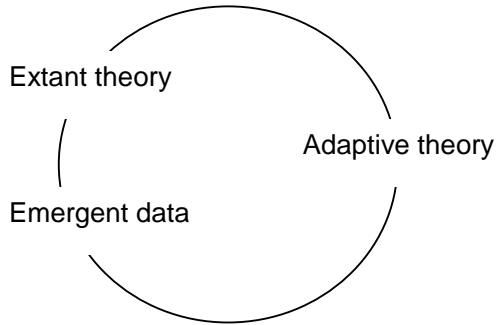
Picture 1. The relations between extant theory, emergent data and adaptive theory

Practical realization of this approach determined certain aspects of text composition of the meta-analysis. Each of the following theoretical chapters has paragraphs named "Links to research results". These paragraphs are meant to reveal the practical relevance of discussed theoretical material. The research results from the above mentioned articles helped me to enrich and ground my theoretical ideas and vice versa thus forming a closed circle of mutual influence between theory and practice. Doing this allowed me to come up with adapted material for shaping the model of delinquency prevention. Although the word "modeling" is used rather widely in the meta-analysis, first of all it means the aim and process of creating a model but not necessary a methodology behind it. The method of knowledge production here is adaptive approach. The gathered research data and theoretical assumptions of the articles together with extended theoretical material of the meta-analysis form a sufficient ground for answering the research question.

2. Social Support as Social Phenomenon

Support from the surrounding people, communication which meets personal needs, warm emotional atmosphere have long been established as one of the main factors in human development research. It's generally accepted that both a child and an adult need attention, appreciation, esteem stimulation and other positive interaction. In other words, both for a growing child and for a mature adult positive and helping ties with surrounding people, which often are called social support, are of big importance. However, the very concept "social support", which unifies and systemically approaches many of personality supporting factors, appeared in scientific literature rather recently, approximately half a century ago. Since analysis of family interpersonal relations prompted the appearance of concept of social support, not surprisingly, that the first research of social support were family-oriented: family mutual supports, parent – child support, support from extended family. Eventually the definition "social support" itself acquired some shape. However, in the works of different authors it varies up to this day. The variety of opinions allows almost every case of social interaction to be viewed as social support. Nevertheless, despite differences in opinions, scientific literature has crystallized a frame of social support concept, which in different works is supplemented with details reflecting author's personal view.

Social support generally is described as potentially beneficial efforts, which are carried out in one's favour by relatives, social network members, community, and which have a positive impact on person's health, emotional well-being or behaviour (Gottlieb, 1983; Pierce at al., 1996; Cohen et al., 2000; Lemme, 2003; Barker, 2003).

These efforts usually are of several types: information, advice, help, sympathy, appreciation. Social support is not necessarily an active effort, quite often the biggest help comes from simply having a close person close by. Supportive relations stimulate belief that other people are caring, accepting and will provide help if necessary.

Depending on circumstances and provider – receiver relationships, support may be positive or negative. Positive support is best reflected by the very definition of social support concept. It is potentially beneficial activity, which have a positive impact on person's health, emotional well-

being or behaviour. Positive social support has a direct effect when a person feels support despite experiencing stress or not, and suppressive effect, which diminishes the outcomes of negative stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985, cited in Suslavičius & Valickas, 1999, 179).

Actions which don't meet receiver's needs and are not accepted by receiver or stimulate negative or antisocial behaviour may be regarded as negative social support (Buysse, 1997). Cutrona's (2000) research data could be addressed when seeking for support to match receiver's needs. She argues that in situations which may be controlled (illness of a family member, financial problems etc.) the first priority should be given to material support (providing information, giving a ride, lending money). In situations which are difficult to control (loss, relationship crisis etc.) support providers should start with emotional support (sympathy, hearing-out, encouragement). Organized this way support would best fit the receiver's situation and be the most effective. This is an important notion for social work practice. Assessing the situation correctly and choosing the right type of support stands as a primary task for social worker. Buysse (1997), summarizing research data, distinguishes another type of negative support: contradictory ties, i.e. ties, which in one situation may be supportive, while in other – conflicting. Such may be ties between parents and children. Support from contradictory ties may have a negative influence on personal adaptation.

Social support may come from formal or informal sources. Informal support providers include people from the immediate personal environment – family members, relatives, friends, neighbours. Formal providers are self-help groups, non-governmental organizations, teachers, social workers and other professionals. Informal support usually is driven by good-will, voluntariness and empathy, and thus, is accepted with bigger fondness and brings better results. Despite the big importance of its efforts and devotion, formal support is slower to reach receivers' hearts, because it's guided by professional obligations, which are easily felt by clients.

A couple of flaws in understanding social support are quite frequent and thus need to be mentioned. Walker, Wasserman & Wellman (1994, 54) emphasize that social support should not be mistakenly identified only with mere transactions between two individuals. Instead it should

be approached as a complex flow of resources among a wide range of actors in a network seen as a complex and unique entity. Pierce and his colleagues (1996, 8) argue that an individual in any everyday relationship is both a source and a recipient of social support, only in scientific studies these roles should be viewed separately. The same may be said about seeing provision of social support as a "cost" and reception of it as a "benefit". In reality, providing social support also is a "benefit" as it contributes to self-esteem and healthy functioning, more so, people need to give as well as receive social support to experience higher levels of satisfaction in their relationships (Pierce et al., 1996, 8).

Structure of social support

Depending on the circumstances of the need for support, scientific literature distinguishes two aspects of social support. The first one is situational, when social support is linked with a certain stressful event. In this case, support helps an individual to overcome stress and return to a normal situation. The way an individual responds to stress and accepts support from others is often determined by psychic processes and the most accessible behaviour models prompted by subconsciousness. Thus it may be argued that situational aspect of social support is conditionally closer linked with psychodynamic, cognitive and stress-buffering theories.

The second aspect, usually utilized by authors investigating family relations, is developmental. It describes the influence of supportive environment on personal development, because perceiving other people as supportive helps to perceive the whole social world as safe, supportive and friendly. When approaching social support from developmental perspective, attention is directed not only towards responses determined by psychic processes, but also towards the wider context of social environment and the set of relations and attitudes operating in it. These factors may be analyzed from the perspective of humanistic – existential, social constructivist and system theories. These theoretical approaches will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Both situational and developmental approaches to social support share the same position that social support is a multiplex phenomenon. However, complex presentations of structural components of social

support are rather scarce in the literature. Psychological aspects or certain personality traits (cognitions, emotions, self-esteem, personal control, modes of defense) tend to be distinguished as one of the most important components (Gottlieb, 1983; Lin, 1986; Cohen, Gottlieb & Underwood, 2000), followed by classification of types of support or supportive transactions (emotional support, information support, appraisal support, tangible aid) (Gottlieb, 1983; Cobb & Jones, 1984; Lin, 1986; Suslavičius, 2000) and integration or relationships (Lin, 1986; Gilligan, 2000; Cohen, Gottlieb & Underwood, 2000). Probably the most coherent and systemic description of social support structure is presented by Pierce and colleagues and I am going to confine to it in this chapter. The authors view social support as consisting of at least three structural components: support schemata, supportive relationships and supportive transactions (Pierce et al., 1996, p. 5). All these components are closely interconnected, for example, supportive transactions among family members serve as a precondition for positive support schemata, while the latter stimulates skills to form supportive relationships. Support schemata are linked with processes of perception occurring in person's mind. In this case a concept of perceived support may be distinguished. Supportive transactions – concrete supportive actions and provided help, which may be generalized as received (enacted) support. According to their content supportive transactions generally are divided into emotional support and material/instrumental support. Supportive relationships represent nature of ties with specific persons. Peculiarities of their support may be determined by tie's strength, proximity, kinship etc. The graphic view of social support structure is shown in picture 2.
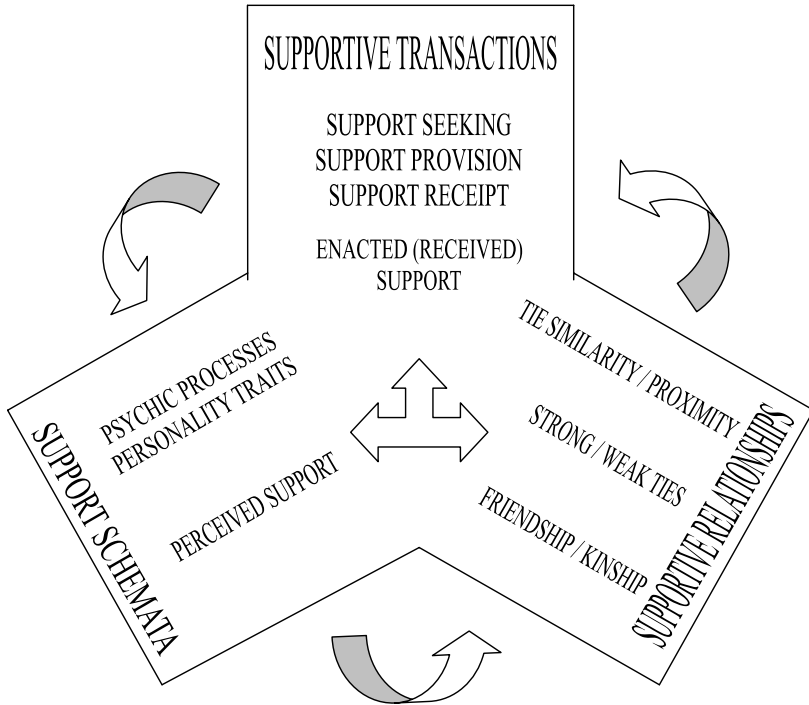
Picture 2.   Structure of social support

Support schemata

Perceived support is a subjective assessment of the support receiver. It may include satisfaction with the received help, conviction that surrounding people will offer help if necessary, or just feelings toward members of social network. Perceived support reflects person's belief in supportive ties and satisfaction with received assistance. According to Pierce and his colleagues (Pierce et al., 1996), perceived support is one of the strongest indicators of successful adaptation to a social environment, allowing presumptions that personality characteristics themselves are important for perceived support. In this case support schemata may be described as attitudes which are based on information about others' good-willingness

and readiness to help in time of need. Thus, perceived support depends on psychic processes which codify information about earlier communication experiences and formed relationships, and produce an answer towards actions and support from a certain person. Personality variables serve functions by shaping people's interpretations of threatening aspects of stressful events and conditioning their responses to stressors (Gottlieb, 1983, 33). In other words, the more personality tends to notice good-willingness of others, the more interactions with them will be regarded as supportive and vice versa. This puts relations between social worker and client (or in the context of this meta-analysis – between social worker and delinquent) into the position of great significance. Only sincere, emphatic and honest behaviour of social worker could induce positive psychic processes of a client and create support schemata, which regards social help as supportive act.

Links to research results
The delinquent respondents (4th article) didn't include schoolmates, teachers or representatives of community institutions among the most important members of their networks. This may point to a rather low level of their adaptation in these domains and/or negative experiences connected with them. Pearson (1990, 36, 40, 78) points out some certain attitudinal bases which may act as barriers for social support: low self-esteem, suspicion of others, insensivity or ambivalence, stigmatized status. These bases, or personality traits, usually are characteristic to delinquent children. Noxious behaviour at school inflicts peer and teacher refusal thus causing decrease of self-esteem and increase of suspicion. Deficits in social skills or empathy manifest in ambivalent behaviour towards others, stigma of being delinquent results in corresponding attitudes and further fall of self-esteem. More so, the major part of delinquent group of research participants either live in social risk families or are to a certain extent educationally or disciplinary neglected by their parents. Such situation inevitably creates a negative bias towards these children in the community and school. Not without a purpose, delinquent respondents indicated that they received few appraisals from teachers and that street friends were the only network domain among whom they did not feel humiliated. Such circumstances have a potential to shape personality

traits and attitudes mainly unfavourable for social support. Thus, support schemata of delinquent children may in itself lack a potential necessary to form supportive relationships and transactions.

Supportive transactions

Supportive transactions – help-providing ties among at least two persons, each of whom may act as a provider or a receiver. In a broader sense the amount of supportive transactions may be called enacted (received) support.

Received (enacted) support means concrete supportive actions and provided help. As Suslavičius and Valickas (1999, 177) put it, even though perceived and received support might seem closely interconnected, empirically they are quite different phenomena. Received support depends on members of person's social network, whose actions determine the amount and nature of assistance, while perceived support is subjective assessments and attitudes of a receiver. Probably because of this dichotomy the majority of social support research concentrate on perceived support, as namely the efforts considered the most supportive by receiver but not by provider brings the best results.

Supportive transactions also vary in their content. Gottlieb (1983, 55, 56), for example, distinguished emotionally sustaining and problem-solving behaviours, as well as indirect personal influence and environmental action. Although, opinions about the classification of support types differ, generally two components – socio-emotional and practical – material – are distinguished. This differentiation will be followed in this summary article.

Emotional support is probably the broadest and most inclusive type of social support. To support somebody emotionally means to verbally and non-verbally demonstrate one's care and love, show sympathy and comfort, hear out, commend and encourage, raise self-esteem and self-worth. In literature the terms of appraisal support, esteem support or companionship support also may be found. However, the content of those terms doesn't exceed boundaries of emotional support, and therefore should be considered as its components. Emotional support, kind of, soaks through other types of support. Barely will somebody give

advice or offer material aid to the person towards whom he or she doesn't feel sympathy or other positive emotions.

Material support is a concrete aid or assistance, which has a certain physical form. Watering neighbour's flowers while he's away, advising a colleague how to deal with a problem or giving him a ride to the office, lending a book or money – all these are examples of material support. As with emotional support, types of material support also vary. Informational support, physical (practical) assistance and guidance in certain works are seen as separate types of support. On the other hand, in their nature they are different manifestations of analogous efforts, thus may be considered as components of material support.

In addition to emotionally and materially supportive actions, other aspects of supportive transactions should be mentioned. These are: support seeking, support provision and support receipt (Pierce et al., 1996). These three aspects may significantly influence the quality of social support. People who are not shy to seek for support themselves or ask for help have better possibilities to get it. Support seeking may have a form of direct requests or be indirect, when only one's needs are communicated without actually asking for help. Equally important are supporting skills of a provider. Support provision is inseparable from skills of empathy, problem perception and understanding, relations and attitudes towards receiver, and finally, from provider's resources and willingness to help. The last of the three aspects – support receipt – is none the less conscious action as support provision. It includes recognition of supportive action, ability to use help, and, after all, ability to thank.

Links to research results
The case examples provided in the 1st article depicted the emotional support deficiencies present in today's families. Divorces, labour migration (particularly actual in Lithuania today), long working hours and other circumstances separate children from their parents physically and emotionally thus reducing levels of emotional support. A substantial part of long-working parents (because of the lack of time) on one hand, and parents of social risk families (because of neglectful attitudes) on the other, reduce their support to material component leaving aside the most of emotional communication. Delinquent children, among others,

are also experiencing shortages of emotional or material support in their families. The research data of the 3ʳᵈ article shows that delinquents hear words of love and caring less often and spend less leisure time with parents if compared with non-delinquent children. Friends were indicated as the "most supportive" in general by the respondents in the 4ᵗʰ article. The data of the 4ᵗʰ article, nevertheless, has revealed the importance of parents as important providers of certain types of support. Delinquent respondents receive the highest levels of emotional support from both parents, while material support is significantly more substantial from fathers. It has to be emphasized that siblings were indicated as providing one of the lowest levels of support. Aggressive, verbally abusive or annoying behaviour, which is quite frequent among delinquents, often prevents others from offering support, according to Pearson (1990, 88). Thus, transactions of support seeking and provision between delinquents and other children may also become problematic. Supportive transactions in the families of delinquents, although rather conventional for adolescence, display certain peculiarities which don't allow adequate circulation of support.

Supportive relationships

Social support is received from different network members but nature of a tie with a certain person may shape the support characteristics. While support schemata includes expectations how others, in general, will respond to person's needs, supportive relationships concern responses of specific others and are more important in the context of close relationships (Pierce et al., 1996, 8). In this case one of the most important aspects is tie strength. Walker, Wasserman and Wellman (1994, 57) conclude, that strong ties exhibit three characteristics: a) a sense that the relationship is intimate and special, with a voluntary investment and a desire for companionship; b) an interest in frequent interactions in multiple contexts; c) a sense of mutuality of the relationship, with the partner's needs known. This confirms Pierce's notions (Pierce et al., 1996) that supportive relationships usually are mutual, where the same person is a provider and a receiver, and where support provision is both a "cost" and a "benefit". Walker and his colleagues (1994, 57) further add that instrumental actions require diverse social resources and therefore may

be accomplished through one's weak ties, while expressive actions seek to maintain personal resources and require close or strong relationships.

Another aspect of supportive relationships concerns ties of kinship and friendship. It is argued that friends are the most active members and comprise almost half of supportive ties, while kin have dense relationships useful for mobilizing resources in emergencies (Walker, Wasserman & Wellman, 1994, 58). On the other hand, people are more apt to be dissatisfied with unsupportive friends than unsupportive kin, and kinship ties withstand long distances better than friendship ties (Ibid, 1994, 59, 60)

The third aspect of supportive relationships is tie proximity and similarity. Despite modern means of transportation and weakening tradition to live in the area of birth, tie proximity still has an important role in support networks. First of all, proximity means more frequent in-person contacts with network members, as telephone contacts are not likely to provide support. However, tie proximity is more important for material support (goods and services), as emotional support may be provided over large distances. Similarity of a tie correlates with support provision on a more contradictory basis. Individual similarity and shared interests are predictors of emphatic understanding and mutual support, while material support is more easily accessed through exchanges between different social positions (Walker, Wasserman & Wellman, 1994, 60).

Supportive transactions and relationships between social worker and client are emphasized and fostered in social work practice. Saleebey's (1992) client strengths perspective suggests that for social worker involving into supportive transactions and creating supportive relationships with delinquent children means being for adolescent not a travel agent but a travel companion who shares the joys of a trip and holds a hand in times of trouble. As if to prove that, social worker of one of socialization centers for delinquent adolescents in Lithuania said that help is the most effective if it's provided 24 hours 7 days a week, which basically means living, celebrating, working, playing together with an adolescent, i.e. being a "travel companion". If social worker does only formal 8 to 5 job, i.e. acts as "travel agent", the results are rather poor.

However, phenomenon of social support covers not only social worker – client relationships, but also relationships within individual's natural

network. More so, relationships among primary group members are of primary importance as individual's social resources. In this case, the role of social workers, according to Gottlieb (1983, 25, 28), would be reinforcing and fostering existing human attachments, initiating new relationships within natural helping systems and intensifying supportive processes.

Links to research results

The data of the 4th article clearly indicates that social networks of delinquent children mainly consist of family members, other kin and friends. Although ties of kinship and friendship represent the majority of delinquents' interpersonal ties, tie strength is quite contradictory. Analysis of relationship qualities of ties with parents (4th article) exposes neither the specificity of a tie nor the complete mutuality. Delinquents had problems indicating certain characteristics and behaviour patterns which make their ties with parents supportive, simply taking them for granted. Nevertheless, ties with friends were explained in much greater detail, showing clarity of perception and pattern identification. The low dynamics and sufficient meeting frequency of delinquent social networks serves as the indicator of rather proximal relationships, while the majority of family members and street friends among the network members determine the tie similarity. Such situation sort of clusters delinquent relationships into a rather closed circle, which may put the pressure on them to conform and to further distance from community and school, blocking formation of alternative supportive relationships.

Thus, it's obvious that social support is multi-faceted and difficult phenomenon. It's not that easy to start and, in particular, analyze socially supportive ties. However, when help comes as expected and comes in time, it enhances receiver's self-worth as well as both sides' satisfaction with the relationship. This way social support becomes beneficial for both the provider and the receiver, and qualitatively improves their mutual relationship.

3. Theoretical Approaches of Social Support

As it was mentioned above, social support is a multiplex phenomenon, which covers activities of person's psychic structures, peculiarities of interpersonal relations, links with surrounding social systems to name but a few. Therefore, in explaining this phenomenon various theoretical presumptions may be serviceable. To define theoretical backgrounds of social support, a sequence of theories presented by Antoniou (cited in Pundziene, 2003, 100) is utilized. Slightly modified to correspond with the characteristics of social support this sequence is presented in table 2.

Table 2. Theoretical approaches of social support

Internal world					External world
Psychodynamic theories	Cognitive theories	Humanistic theories	Existential theories	Social constructivism theories	Systemic theories
Behaviour is determined by emotional responses to external stimuli and possibilities to control them	Behaviour is determined by thoughts and perceptions	Behaviour is determined by responsibility, and willingness to reveal human potencies	Behaviour is determined by situational factors	Behaviour is determined by striving for active and creative construction of own environment	Behaviour is determined by links between individuals and systems
"There and then"					"Here and now"

Composed according to Pundziene, 2003.

These theoretical approaches provide a systematic framework for bridging the levels of analysis of social support. Although shaped as a sequence, they might be perceived as a spiral, connecting aforementioned situational (microsystemic) and developmental (macrosystemic) aspects of social support into one mutually influential process.

Psychodynamic and cognitive perspectives of social support

Psychodynamic (or emotional) perspective in social support research is important from the point that it helps to understand and assist individuals experiencing anxiety or grief, who lack skills to express their emotions and tend to block them in their memory, and who are inclined

for defensive responses which are not helpful in overcoming problems or asking for assistance.

Cognitive perspective emphasizes that individual responses to the environment are not only driven by emotions but also by active thinking and information processing. In this case social support depends not only on assessment of offered assistance but also on its relevance to a possible problem solution.

Traits of personality, peculiarities of its psychic processes have a great importance for social support. Namely, the personality differences between support provider and receiver may decide that analogous actions in one case perceived as supportive, in other, performed by different person, are underestimated and misunderstood. Just so, support provider and receiver may differently perceive the same situation. These differences in majority of cases are determined by psychic mechanisms of information perception and processing. Previously formed models of communication, mutual sympathies and antipathies, positive emotional experience are very important for individual perception and utilization of social support. Thus social support is inseparable from formation of safe attachment in family and from the nature of relationships. Clients much more eagerly accept support from social workers with whom they forge relationships based on trust and sincerity. If a professional represents threat and danger in one context, and offers support in another, thus forming ambiguous relationship history, a client will hardly respond to such offers positively.

When information about available support is received and interpreted in memory structures, an individual accepts assistance, which may enhance his coping performance or allow to appraise situation as less stressful. The graphic representation of these processes is presented in Picture 3.

In this case both received and perceived support have to be taken into account. Support provides resources to cope with stressful events or soften their consequences, especially if assistance matches the nature of a stressor (Lakey & Cohen, 2000, 31) and/or stressor is anticipated and controlled at its onset (Gottlieb, 1983, 34). Stress and coping aspect as depicted in Picture 3 does not fully fit the frame of psychodynamic/cognitive theories, because it includes concrete support of network members, yet

perception of support and its influence on coping or appraisal processes remains the most important factor. If an individual perceives situation as hopeless, even concrete assistance from network members might not help to overcome stress, therefore, despite some reservations, this aspect of social support is included in the context of theories representing person's internal world.
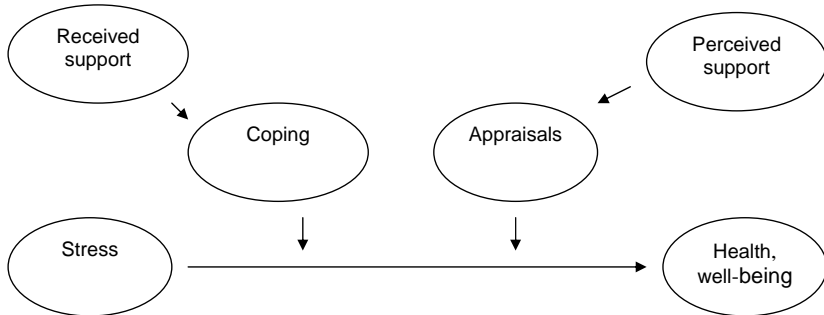
Source: Lakey & Cohen, 2000, 31, 32.

Picture 3.   Stress buffering model

Perceived social support helps an individual to positively appraise the situation and thus buffers negative stress outcomes. According to Lazarus and colleagues (Lazarus & Launier, 1978, cited in Gottlieb, 1983, 33; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, cited in Lackey & Cohen, 2000, 34) there are two types of appraisals: primary and secondary. Primary appraisal includes decisions about the threatfullness of a situation, possible losses and challenges. Secondary appraisal is devoted to reviewing one's personal and social resources. The higher the level of individual's perceived support, the stronger his belief that help will come, and the more positive his appraisals about the stressful situation. Thus, belief in good-willingness of relatives and friends along with their concrete assistance and positive previous emotional experience in overcoming challenges may significantly reduce negative stress influence on person's health and well-being.

Links to research results
As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, the majority of delinquent respondents come from social risk milieu, which is perceived rather

negatively by the rest of the community, furthermore, delinquents experience negative attitudes towards themselves, as well. Looking from psychodynamic perspective such external stimuli paint a picture of hostile environment. Not surprisingly, delinquents less often seek for support in that environment, and about 20% of delinquent boys questioned in the 3rd article tend to rely on themselves.

Thoughts and perceptions determine behaviour according to cognitive perspective. As the data show (3rd and 4th articles) delinquents comparatively less often engage into family activities, spend less time with parents and hear fewer words of love and caring than non-delinquents, thus they have restricted possibilities to form meaningful representations of social support in their memories. Having few significant network members coming from school or other community institutions furthermore encloses delinquents within street environment, which shapes their perceptual processes and attitudes. When stressful situations rise, it's most likely, that delinquents will turn for support to this environment, viewing support from school and the rest of the community as not reliable and risky. The biggest problem in this case is that support might often bear a negative character, either strengthening delinquent behaviour or further distancing adolescents from alternative support sources, because, according to Bo (1996, 126), influences between network and behaviour are reciprocal. For example, the research data of Cauce and her colleagues (Cauce et al., 1996, 143) indicated that lack of support from teachers and support from peers who did not valued school reported the lowest levels of school competence.

Humanistic – existential perspective of social support

Humanistic perspective seeks to reveal conditions that are the most favourable for successful human development. As one of the most important factors of such environment are considered attention, esteem and positiveness. The essential conditions of being which determine human behaviour as put by existentialists are rather similar: care, being together, hope. All these factors are closely linked with social support which emanates from ability to create intimate, friendly, non-conflicting

relationships and value the personality of the other. The importance of interpersonal relations for social support is depicted in Picture 4.

The given perspective approaches social support as a part of relationship processes. Aspects of mutual relations depicted in Picture 4 do not directly represent either concrete help or beliefs in the availability of it. However, as Lakey and Cohen (2000, 42) put it, presence of these relationship features shows that an individual is not rejected by others and is considered to be a part of a group which leads to higher self-esteem, confidence and available resources in times of need. In this case, ability to see humanness in surrounding people, value them as personalities and reveal their possibilities and potencies becomes very important. Positive relations enable individuals to actively participate in determining changes of their environment and controlling their situation, which is essential as our society doesn't tend to help the ones not trying to create their own welfare. According to Suslavičius and Valickas (1999), assistance is more often provided for the handicapped than for alcohol abusers or prostitutes. More so, these authors continue that individuals themselves may consider seeking and asking for help as defeat or violation of their esteem. In this case the most successful support is the one that doesn't threaten individual's self-esteem and raises it instead.
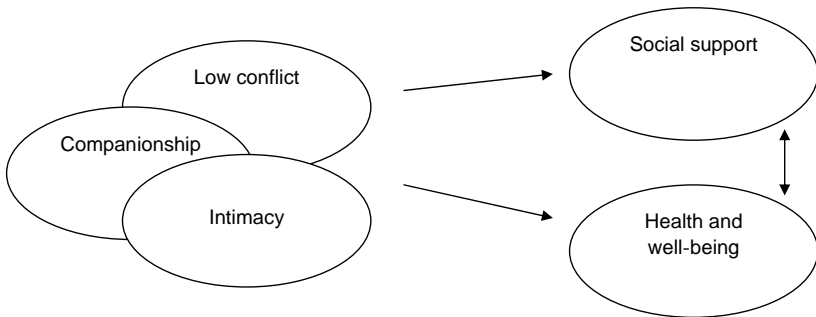
Source: Lakey & Cohen, 2000, 44.

Picture 4. Graphic model of relationships and social support

Links to research results

The research data (Articles 3 and 4) clearly point out differences between delinquent and non-delinquent respondents in the variables which determine social support from relationship perspective. The frequency of conflicts appeared to be significantly higher in the families of delinquent boys, delinquent respondents reported spending significantly less leisure time and doing chores with parents as well as communicating less often with relatives. Delinquent boys significantly more often feel like having no close friend in the class and they didn't include schoolmates among the most significant network members, they are significantly less satisfied with their relationships with parents and receive lees approval from teachers. Relationships between delinquents and parents appeared to be somewhat too distant and too formal for such an emotionally close environment. Thus, variables of low conflict, companionship and intimacy are not reaching their full potential in the families of delinquents, therefore affecting the overall state of social support.

Social constructionist perspective of social support

Picture 5 presents a graphic model of social constructionist perspective of social support and well-being. The concept "social constructionism" signifies belief in human ability to create, construct own reality which includes both inner self and social support. This perspective sees supportive relations as rather subjective, without clear consensus about their constitution. Lakey and Cohen (2000, 36) mark out two theoretical approaches, which, in their view, represent today's social contructionism: social cognition and symbolic interactionism. Authors argue that these two are linked by common roots in pragmatic philosophy and essential presumptions.

Perceived support

Self-esteem

Health and well-being

Social-cognitive approach

Roles / support

Identity

Health and well-being

Symbolic-interactionist approach
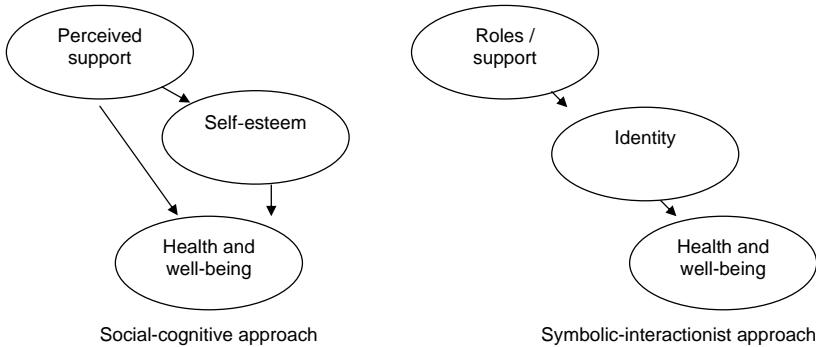
Source: Lakey & Cohen, 2000, 37, 40.

Picture 5. Graphic model of social-constructionist perspective.

Social – cognitive perspective links creation of own reality with person's activity and thinking in choosing stimuli, creating meanings and seeking the purpose of life. Great attention is paid to social causes of behaviour and its situational nature. Symbolic interactionism understands human being as permanently manipulating with different symbols, creating culture with their help and thus giving meaning to oneself and the surrounding world. Social environment in this case becomes a network of interpersonal interactions, where personality perceives itself and others through social roles.

Social cognitive thought implicates that if a person acquires a stable belief in good-willingness of others and their determination to provide support, then this belief becomes prevalent in his consciousness and more important than real support. Confidence in others, positive experience of previously received support, lack of doubts in future support enhance person's self-esteem and self-worth (Lakey & Cohen, 2000, 37). Thus, from this point of view perceived support may influence human well-being both directly and through enhancing self-esteem and positive emotions.

Symbolic interactionism takes coordination of social interaction rather than social support itself as a basis of human health and well-being. Social environment provides a human being with possibilities to find the purpose of life and strengthen one's identity. Both these processes in

big part stem from taken social roles and related expectations. Gilligan (2000, 20) even argues that the key principle of family support is to enhance the number of identities available to parents with constrained opportunities. Therefore, value and harmony of social roles determine the quality of social support as well as quality of self-worth and sense of health and well-being in general.

In summary it can be said that according to social constructionist perspective, personality characteristics, belief in good-willingness of others, level of self-esteem, harmony of social roles are among the strongest predictors of the social environment picture to be "constructed" in the consciousness of a human being and the level of well-being it will provide. For social workers, who are working with offenders, it is important to avoid methods of help which may threaten their already low self-esteem. Involvement of offenders into activities where they would have possibilities to contribute and create new pro-social identities should be seen as the first priority.

Links to research results
Cauce and her colleagues (Cauce et al., 1996, 131) point out that uncertainty, unhappiness and conduct disorders typical for the adolescence may be avoided or overcome by strong sense of involvement in a stable set of relationships that form a net of support, love and caring. Lack of approval, supportive relationships and involvement as reported by delinquent adolescents in the articles 3 and 4 may serve as conditions for lower level of their self-esteem, especially in school settings. Therefore it's not surprising that they seek for situations which would improve their sense of esteem and find them mostly in the street. The risks of such support were mentioned earlier in this chapter. Bo (1996, 124) resting on various literature states that networks, representing heterogenous roles, ages, occupations, lifestyles stimulate identity and nourish development. Article 4 revealed monotony and shallowness of delinquents' social networks and the roles it provides. The possible identities which delinquents might acquire in such environment are restricted in their nature and range. Thus, the probability of acquisition of negative identities and receiving negative support among delinquent adolescents is rather high.

System perspective of social support

Analysis of social support inevitably leads to the concept of social network. These two phenomena are closely linked and sometimes even identified. For example, social support, in some instances, is identified with the net of supportive members, in others, it is thought to be an indicator of social network functioning. However, these phenomena ought to be separated, as not every tie inside the network is supportive and ignoring non-supportive ties may distort the image of the whole network (Buysse, 1997, 8). Social network is described as circle or system of interpersonal ties surrounding an individual, usually comprised of emotionally close persons and providing a certain benefit (Suslavičius, 2000; Milardo, 1988; Lemme, 2003). Social support comes, namely, from the persons with whom we communicate and liaise on a regular basis, i.e. from the members of social network. According to Milardo (1988), structure of a personal social network plays an important role for availability, nature and amount of support. Suslavičius (2000, 76) argues that social network acts as a "pillow" – mitigates the negative influence of environment, because network members sort of share the negative strain between themselves. Gvaldaitė and Švedaitė (2005, 130) highlight two categories of social network: primary and secondary. Primary, or informal, network consists of ties which have formed naturally throughout individual's life flow and originate from relationships of love, unselfishness and empathy. It includes family, relatives, neighbours, friends etc. Secondary, or formal, network most often is formed artificially and connects individuals bonded, first of all, by common goals, not intimate feelings. This network includes state and non-governmental institutions and organizations.

People communicate with vast amount of different persons, the number of which may exceed one hundred or more, therefore it is difficult and not practical to try to identify every network member every time social networks are investigated. Milardo (1988, 22) distinguishes three network types, each of which determines a certain part of social ties. Thus a possibility to choose and investigate a narrower circle of persons according to the demands of a situation appears. Milardo divides social networks into 1) networks of close associates; 2) exchange networks and 3) interactive networks.

The name itself properly describes the network of close associates. It includes people who are linked by emotionally intimate ties and are important for a focal person. As the practice shows network of close associates is not always identical to the circle of persons with whom focal person communicates on a daily basis. Thus, according to Milardo (1988, 23) network of close associates consists of both active ties, which provide support and assistance everyday, and passive ties, which fall short of support expectations.

The exchange network is comprised of the ties providing the most support and assistance. The word "exchange" indicates that members of such networks mutually share different types of support: information, intimacy, services etc. Milardo (1988, 27) emphasizes that in this case the decision about who is important and who provides the most support is researcher's or other professional's prerogative (for example: social worker's), therefore it's important to purposefully and thoroughly analyze and assess individual's ties.

Interactive networks are made of individuals who communicate more or less regularly. The size of such networks usually depends on individual's social activity. In this case every interaction during a certain period of time should be recorded. Undoubtedly, interactive networks consist of rather different ties according to their quality, level of support or intimacy. These networks, however, help to identify the set of ties of everyday social activity, which reveals a lot of significant information.

Links to research results
By identifying the most important network members, respondents (Article 4) have basically distinguished their network level of close associates as named by Milardo. Parents, friends and other family members were generally ascribed to this group. However, as the data analysis revealed, the support level varied among close associates, the highest coming from friends, slightly lower from parents, with siblings and other relatives named as the least supportive. This backs up Milardo's (1988, 23) statement that network of close associates not necessarily means high levels of support and consists of active and passive ties.

The exchange network of delinquents, i.e. the one providing the most support and assistance, includes mainly friends and parents. However,

the level of mutuality, which, according to Milardo, lies in the core of the "exchange" concept, is higher in the ties with friends than with parents, which is not unusual for adolescence.

Although interactive network of delinquents includes a considerably wider scope of people (classmates, extended family, neighbours), it fails to provide significant levels of support. Such situation might be regarded as revealing general attitudes towards delinquents as well as indicating potential areas for preventive activities.

It is clear that social support is difficult to explain within the framework of one theoretical approach. This phenomenon covers individual's psychic, cognitive processes, relationships with other people, attitudes towards them and surrounding system of social ties. More so, in the postmodern background of today's world where universal criteria have diminished, every single phenomenon requires exclusive and multifaceted approach to bring up the most fitting and adequate theoretical explanations. The scope of meta-analysis, however, is too narrow to involve detailed analysis of several theoretical frameworks, therefore in this paper I will concentrate on systemic approach as it allows to combine biological and structural characteristics of delinquency prevention and is most relevant with the articles' material.

4. The Context of Supportive Systems

In the introduction of this meta-analysis I referred to delinquent children as being "islands" in their social environment, alienated and rejected by the major part of the community. Such image was chosen more or less intentionally as it inevitably points to certain groups of people within a community linked (or not linked) by interpersonal ties, belonging to (or excluded from) certain networks. In other words, image of "an island" opens a systemic perspective for us. A wide response in scientific literature is acquired by arguments that unsuccessful crime prevention might be determined by poor ecosystem interrelations. If microsystem (parent – child relations), mezosystem (family ties with school and other institutions), exosystem (ties with wider society) and macrosystem (value orientations, culture, expectations) are not interlinked, it's unlikely that preventive measures will reach their goals. Therefore more and more often the ineffectiveness of individual preventive means and the necessity to change them to systemic ones is stressed, which would enable to understand and precisely evaluate individual's environment and ecosystem relations and involve both juveniles and their family members. Method of multisistemic therapy covers the whole immediate environment of a family by utilizing individual and group conversations with parents and children, teacher and school staff consultations, ecological analysis of a community (Martens, 2004; Hinton et al., 2003; Sheidow & Woodford, 2003; Smith et al., 1999). More so, the process of social support is conceptualized as a complex flow of resources among a wide range of actors in a network seen as a complex and unique entity (Walker, Waserman & Wellman, 1994, 54). Therefore, having presented several theoretical approaches in the previous chapter, henceforth I am going to concentrate more or less on systemic approach as the most suitable for explaining supportive networks and shaping a delinquency prevention model.

Systemic approach means a strive to understand complex interactions between juvenile and other social systems and consider new strategies for old problems (Compton, Galaway & Cournoyer, 2005), it allows to adopt a holistic perspective to various (biological, psychological, social) factors determining human behaviour (Sutton, 1999), and might be

used as a tool for generalizing links and relations among rather different entities: individuals, family, community, social institutions (Johnson, 2001). In my second article, resting on standpoints of Hinton et al. (2003), Smith et al. (1999), Martens (2004), Sheidow & Woodford (2003), I argued that successful crime prevention is determined by improvement of ecosystem relations and moving from individual to systemic means of prevention with multisystemic therapy, applied to the whole immediate environment of a family, being as one of possible examples. The idea of social support is inseparable from social network, which on its own is a systemic concept embodying the complex flow of resources among different systems. The research in the third and fourth articles was designed to reveal functional and structural characteristics of delinquents' network and social support it provided. All this grounds my idea that model for delinquency prevention should be developed within a systemic framework and namely within an ecosystem framework as ecosystem approach includes individual and environmental interactions. Delinquency prevention, on its own right, also includes means for individual and environmental change. Therefore it's necessary to present a more detailed description of systemic perspective of social support.

Eco-systemic approach

Concepts of social support and social network are rather suitable to be discussed in the context of Bronfenbrenner's ecosystems. This model analyzes ties and interactions among individuals in a four-levelled social environment. For example, Lin (1986, 18) argues that supportive relationships among people first of all are connected with "social" component of "social support". He distinguishes three levels of individual linkage with environment: community, social network and intimate and confiding relationships. Supportive relationships in each of the levels, although interconnected, have some distinct features. As Lin's classification is rooted in ecosystem model, they will be discussed on parallel terms. Joint model of Bronfenbrenner's ecosystems and Lin's supportive relationships is presented in Picture 6.

The narrowest social system – microsystem – represents activities, roles and ties with other people in the smallest social group with the

focal person directly participating. The next level of environment – mesosystem – represents links among individual's different microsystems (Lemme, 2003, 66; Berns, 2009, 32, 34). The more quality links exist among microsystems, the bigger is their influence on individual's life. Participants of micro- and meso-systems, basically, comprise individual's primary social network. The most intimate ties – Lin's level of intimate and confiding relationships – spreads over the main microsystems, but not necessarily covers the whole mesosystem. On this level Lin (1986, 19) calls the relationships *binding*, because mutual exchanges are expected and responsibility for one another's well-being is understood. Social support here is mostly informal, determined by good-willingness, voluntarism and empathy, thus, accepted more willingly and bringing better outcomes.

Levels of supportive relationships

Human ecosystems
(1 – micro, 2 – meso, 3 – exo, 4 - macro)
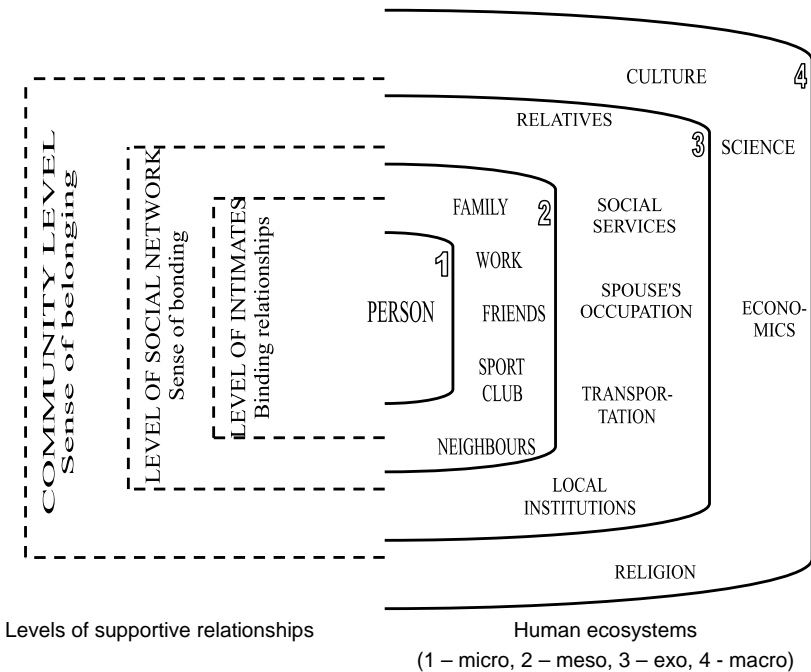
According to: Lemme, 2003, Lin, 1986

Picture 6.   Joint model of human ecosystems and supportive relationships

The structural microsystem factors, influencing the process of child social support are: the family or school size, the amount of time parents spend with children, development of friendships/relationships in the neighbourhood. The size of a microsystem determines the number or different roles and variety of social ties as well as possibilities to participate directly in activities and develop skills of integration and individuation. The time parents spend with their children indicates the intensity of a tie and provides possibilities to learn how to maintain and strengthen it. Neighbourhoods serve as settings for enhancing competencies through formal and informal activities. Social worker's role at the microsystem level includes individual and group work in providing the best possible services. Analogous mesosytem factors include: links between family and school, ties to extended family and community. The strength of those links determines the influence of microsystems. For example, regular and strong ties with school reinforce the significance of a teacher in the eyes of a child but also show parents as competent in settings beyond the home. Relatives may be really helpful when child care or attendance to an ill family member is needed. Neighbourhood with low crime rate, helpful people and similar values may be a strong factor for a young mother to look for employment and ensure her child's material welfare (Garbarino, 1981; Tietjen, 1989; Berns, 2009).

The rest of the mesosystem, considering Lin's approach, belongs to the level of social network. At this level ties of kinship, common activities, friendship are important. The most important emotion here is the *sense of bonding*, which is more substantial than the sense of belonging and represents actual ties with others (Lin, 1986, 19).

The third level, according to Bronfenbrenner, is exosystem. It is the environment where individual is not an active participant or does not participate at all, but which influences his microsystems (Lemme, 2003, 66; Berns, 2009, 35). Most people usually don't participate in the work of local institutions, or in transportation scheduling, yet these areas are very important for their daily living. It wouldn't be highly misleading to say that exosystem partly reflects the secondary social network. Social support in this case is dependant on a certain context, not on direct social ties. The level of support may be determined by a spouse's situation at work, decisions of social service institutions or possibilities of relatives to pay a visit. The determinant exosystem factors for the social support of

children are: parents' employment patterns, their professional satisfaction and social networks. Parent's long working hours on one hand may result in children more communicating with other relatives, but on the other in reduced opportunities to acquire social skills and support. Parents who have supportive networks also tend to be more supportive and caring in relationships with their children. Local businesses may be a strong factor in supporting youth programs, extra-curricular acivities and offering professional education (Tietjen, 1989; Berns, 2009).

Exosystem (and partly macrosystem) may be paralleled with Lin's (1986, 19) community level of supportive relationships. Community level, according to the author, is the most general level of relationships. Although relationships in this level are rather impersonal, feeling of belonging to a community or one of its groups is very important for perception of support. Thus, *sense of belonging* is the dominant emotion in the community level of relationships. Social work in the meso- and exo-levels first of all means ensuring the successful cooperation between institutions and community groups.

The widest level of environment – macrosystem – covers general societal conditions, activities, relations and acts as a model or instructional set for exo-, meso- and microsystems. (Lemme, 2003, 67; Berns, 2009, 36). The macrosystem's influence on an individual is not always direct; still it determines the nature of beliefs, social interactions or way of living. Macrosystem influences for children social support embrace patterns of predominant traditions, political attitudes, cultural and other broad factors. Distribution of resources, understanding of appropriate social roles, cultural values, type of political system – all come into play as macrosystem factors shaping the actions of institutions and individuals at lower levels (Tietjen, 1989; Berns, 2009). Social support may differ across cultural or religious communities; its availability may be restricted /enhanced by economic conditions, society's solidarity, religious beliefs or cultural peculiarities. Each culture provides an individual with distinctive identity, shapes his beliefs, expectations and behaviour, thus influencing his decisions also in support-related situations. Different cultures convey different attitudes towards expressing a need for support, ways and circumstances for providing and accepting support, cultural context also affects the influence of social class, gender, age on social support situations. Macrosystemic social work concerns influencing political

decisions, shaping the public opinion and providing information about social problems.

Links to research results

In the 1st and 2nd articles leaning on theoretical assumptions and case examples I argued that family and society in general experienced certain demographic and structural changes. These changes include decrease of births, increase of divorces and single-parent families, assimilation of family roles, spread of child upbringing functions across several micro-systems. Inevitably these changes influence the character of child microsystem, and socially vulnerable families (which majority of delinquents are from) are affected the worst.

Another aspect of change, distinguished in the 1st article, concerns emotional ties and value orientations. Stemming from macro environment tendencies of individualization and managerialism, shift from morality towards legality, change of value orientations leave their mark on the relations in micro- and meso-systems.

Ecological analysis of delinquents' networks distinguishes lack of certain microsystems and lack of ties inside a mesosystem. Friends and family were indicated by the respondents as the most important places of activity, while school was left off. Nevertheless, only ties with friends could be called "binding", according to Lin's (1986, 19) description. In other words, mutual exchanges and responsibilities are sensed the most in relationships with friends while relationships with parents and siblings fall closer to more formal ties representing the sense of "bonding". Lin's third level of relationships – community level – in the context of delinquent networks also shows some shortcomings. The dominant emotion here is a sense of belonging; however delinquent respondents didn't report high levels of belonging to school, community institutions or extended family with the exception of already mentioned family and friends domains.

Culture as a macro-system

Despite existing obvious cultural differences some universal aspects of social support and behavioural patterns have to be mentioned first. Those universalities are in many cultures accepted and considered as social

support. For example, if a child stumbles and hurts himself, it's common to lift, comfort, soothe him and treat a wound if needed. Such supportive behaviour is universal in the most distant cultures, and, most probably, rooted in the ability of human race to see those in need and assist them. Weisner (1989) notices that in literature these characteristics of social support are distinguished as universal: material aid, appraisal, esteem support and sense of belonging. This shows that the majority of cultures tend to care for the weak and helpless. In the course of the evolution some common as well as some different models of support to solve the same problems have established in different cultures.

The most generalized distinction of cultural peculiarities of social support may be drawn between individualistic and communal societies. One Armenian-born student, who later emigrated and is still living in Lithuania, after a lecture expressed his surprise about the big amount of fostered children and foster institutions in Lithuania. According to his words, there are no foster homes for children in Armenia because orphaned children are taken care of by extended families or good-hearted people. This example perfectly represents the different approaches towards troubled society members in different macrosystems. E. Hall explains cultural differences by discrepancies in perceptions, beliefs and behaviours among the macrosystems. He distinguishes between low-context and wide-context macrosystems (Hall, 1964, 1966, 1976, 1983, cit. in R. Berns, 2009, 37, 38). Low-context macrosystems are characterized by fragmented, situational social relations with emphasized independency and personal achievements. Wide-context macrosystems, however, tend to stick to traditional roles and seek harmony among all members of social network, thus ensuring strong supportive ties which protect from alienation.

Rather articulate support differences appear among racial communities. Dilworth-Anderson and Marshall (1996), reviewing social support differences among cultural communities in the USA, emphasize a strong sense of family social support in afro-american communities, which is rooted in their fight for survival in times of slavery. Life in discriminating society resulted in still persisting strong sense of family and religious group support among afro-americans, which classifies them as a wide-context macrosystem. Adamec and Pierce (1991) further confirm that up to the beginning of the 20th century coloured orphans in America

had not received any social help, because, contrarily to the white communities, they were cared of by relatives and other community members. In white communities, which are more individualistic in nature and thus more akin to low-context macrosystems, ties between spouses and friends acquire greater importance, thus social support for children is conditionally reduced (Lemme, 2003, 233). Hobfoll with colleagues (Hobfoll, et al., 1996), discussing socialization peculiarities of American and Japanese children emphasize that socialization process in Japan is oriented towards learning social roles, cooperation and personal individuality's subordination to group interests, while American children learn to value independence and individuality.

There are not many social support researches in Lithuania, but the existing data show that the nature of social support in the country is closer to the one of Western, individualized society. As the data of Stankūnienė and her colleagues (2003) reveal, the Lithuanian way of living tends to be influenced by a low-context model of interpersonal relations, which is manifested by intensified sense of personal responsibility and freedom for independent decisions. Respectively, the circle of supportive ties, even in the closest environment, is rather narrow and family oriented. The mentioned research shows that 22% of adults in Lithuania don't have anybody outside their household to turn for help to in case of trouble, and only 4% would turn for help to their neighbours. About 40% of adults visit their parents only once a month or even more rarely, moreover, one fifth of the respondents visit parents only because of the sense of duty (Stankūnienė et al., 2003).

One more aspect of ecosystem analysis lies within time perspective. Thus, one more system – chronosystem – has to be reviewed. Chronosystem includes ecosystem or individual's inner changes over a period of time which create new conditions for development (Berns, 2009, 39). Important social processes, which shaped children social networks during the last centuries, may serve as an example of chronosystem.

Social network of any person in any given period of life may be considered as the reflection of his social world, revealing the peculiarities of surrounding people and activities. Within certain limits, the process of socialization parallels with the process of learning to become a member of social network. Children social networks and the support they provide

have significantly changed during the last couple of centuries. One of the most important changes was the decrease of the family size. Extended family of pre-industrial society with many siblings of different age gradually gave way to a modern nuclear family with two children on average. In a large extended family younger children often grew under the surveillance of older siblings, not the hard-working parents, thus receiving from them a big part of social support and role examples. Other members of extended family – uncles, aunts, grandparents, servants or tenants – also constituted a significant part of child's social network (Hareven, 1989). So, child's social network and sources of social support of that period were substantially more diverse both in aspect of age and of kinship.

The rising to dominance of modern nuclear family was marked by separation of home and work place, male and female spheres of activity. Moreover, the establishment of school system, growing significance of childhood, decrease in family size and mother becoming the most important child carer eventually separated children from adult society and transformed the shape of their social networks and social support. The processes of the second half of the 20th century: ever-increasing female participation in a labour market, weakening ties with an extended family, increase in numbers of single-parent and re-married families, expansion of information technologies have brought even more disorder into the structure of children social networks. They, in one instance, became narrower, in other – widened, but the diversity not always has the dimension of quality (Hareven, 1989; Elkind, 2002).

Whatever the historical period, the main task of social support system is to provide a child with means necessary to acquire competencies for adaptation in cultural and social environment in acceptable ways (Tietjen, 1989, 37). Therefore, any changes in social support or social network may result in child not acquiring or acquiring other competencies than those needed for successful adaptation. Tietjen (1989, 41, 42) points out distinct dimensions of social support system, which determine successful competency cultivation. They are as follows:

1) number of different roles represented in child's support system (different roles provide different kinds of support and exposure to different models of interaction and activities);

2) number of different people in each role (indicates child's exposure to different people or lack of exposure to certain roles);

3) frequency and extent of contact with network members (indicates whether the child learns intensive or superficial modes of relationships);

4) longevity of child's relationships (indicates whether the child experiences changes in relationships and whether he tends to engage in short-term or long-term relationships);

5) interconnectedness of child's support system (indicates the degree of social control and consistency in demands and opportunities for individual development).

Links to research results

Considering the dimensions of social support for competency cultivation, as put by Tietjen (1989), delinquent's system of social support has several shortcomings. Although, the amount, frequency and longetivity of delinquents' contacts within their networks correspond to the average data found in literature (network size – 11.8 members per network, 67% of network members are contacted on everyday basis, 79.7% of contacts last more than 5 years), other network characteristics reveal certain negative aspects. Delinquent networks consist mainly of family and street friends, thus limiting the exposure to different interactions and roles. School friends, teachers, other community institutions are not mentioned among the important network members. Street friends, as Cauce (1986, cited in Buysse, 1997, 9, 40) suggested, may put a greater pressure on adolescents to conform, thus discouraging strong attachments between young persons and their teachers and shaping poorer attitudes towards school. Thus, delinquent social support networks, although adequate in quantitative aspect, may be insufficient qualitatively by providing negative role examples and limiting pro-social contacts.

Research results show that delinquent children more often feel like having no close friends in class, do fewer chores and have fewer obligations at home, parents of delinquents less often attend parental meetings at school. This data together with the mentioned in previous paragraph indicate that delinquents' micro- and mesosystems lack some features, necessary for efficient social support.

5. Social Support Optimization within the Practice of Family Social Work

Every society has developed measures to help individuals who experience difficulties: systems of social welfare, social services, health care and social benefits are designed for that purpose. Methods of social support distinguish from mentioned measures in their orientation towards mobilizing and optimizing resources of individual's natural social environment so they would meet his psychosocial needs. And the main emphasis here is on the word "natural", as different from formal or institutional. Social work practice has repeatedly proven that inclusion of family members, relatives and other network members into helping process may bring significant results.

Process of optimization of social support within the social work practice has certain stages which have to be followed. To define these stages I will use slightly streamlined model of using social support-oriented concepts and procedures in counseling practice as presented by Pearson (1990, 22). In general these stages correspond with the ones of social work process itself and include defining the problem, determining the main characteristics and planning interventions (see Picture 7).
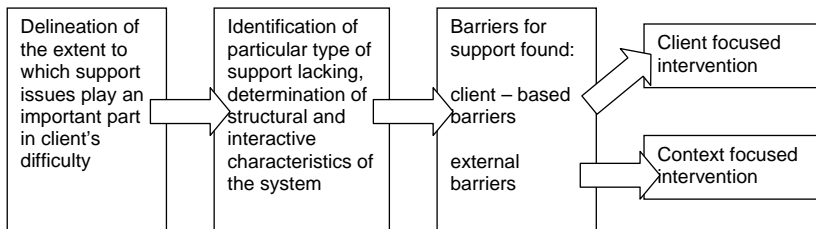
According to Pearson, 1990, 22.

Picture 7. Process of social support optimization within social work practice

Real family situation can not always be perceived from the outside because of the relationship intimacy and specificity. Thus, shortcomings of social support may also be overlooked by social workers or other outsiders, if

not revealed by the family members themselves. Therefore it is necessary to point out certain situation where social support barriers are bound to occur. As Pearson (1990) argues, there exist certain circumstances, under which the risk of appearance of social support problems increases:

- life transitions (moving, divorce, job shift);
- changes in situation, responsiveness or status of a supporter (death of a spouse or parent, relocation of a confidant, arguments within a family);
- attitudes, behaviour or other characteristics of a support receiver (anger, counterdependance, lack of social skills, deviance) (Pearson, 1990, 26).

These factors need to be taken into consideration by social workers; therefore will be discussed in greater detail.

Life transitions involve family members into situations which are less familiar and where former knowledge and skills might not be applicable. This includes patterns of forming and functioning of new supportive relationships, as well as discontinuation or weakening of former ones. According to Pearson (1990, 28), social support resources grow smaller in the very moment when they are needed most of all. In some cases, successful coping with the stresses of transitional periods depends on gender differences. The well-being of men is less dependant on family support, they value support from friends and co-workers more than women (Acitelli, 1996). Hobfoll and colleagues (1996) even argue that men cope with stresses more easily because they transfer a big part of emotional burden and family functions to their spouses. Another possible result of transitional periods is disorders of family routines and role distributions. Routine, in this case, should be understood as regularly repeated activities, involving all family members: doing chores, ways of disciplining children, common meals, celebrations etc. Families which in the periods of crises are able to maintain usual routines are more resilient to stresses, provide children with stronger family identity, create atmosphere of safety and stability (Timko, Moos, 1996).

Crow and Allan (2000, 50), reviewing findings of different authors, conclude that the societies in which system of social support concentrated around women were slower in changes of traditional culture. Compared with men, women lay more efforts to ensure that family relations remain stable, family members constitute a larger part of their networks, their

have a stronger sense of sociality (Lemme, 2003; Hobfoll et al., 1996), therefore, the more energy woman wastes in a labour market, the less of it she can devote to social support within a family. Nevertheless, changes of male and female roles in the labour market are obvious, and this, according to Crow and Allan (2000), might affect family social support networks in the societies where men are not encouraged to participate in family matters and child care.

The influence of *changes in situation, responsiveness or status of a supporter* on supportive relationships varies according to the amount of support the tie provides and proximity and intimacy of it. For example, death of a parent who was the main supporter may disorder the network much more than loss of a kin whose support constituted only a marginal part. As family ties usually bear a mutual character, Pearson (1990, 31) indicates one more important aspect to be taken into account: namely, towards who love, affection, companionship and other emotions meant for the departed should be channeled afterwards. Failure to find a proper solution increases the possibility to lose the sense of life meaning and significance. Loss, however, is a rather extreme example. Families experiencing alcohol abuse, depression or other psyhological problems are prone to suddent changes of responsiveness, parenting styles and conflict level. The data show that children from conflicting, multi-problem or emotionally neglectful families more often than others experience psychological, psycho-somatic problems, have lower level of self-esteem, show behaviour disorders and are more prone to alcohol abuse (Buysse, 1997; Timko & Moos, 1996; Barrera & Li, 1996). Parent – child relationship, according to Timko and Moos (1996, 299), should include proper methods of discipline, parental satisfaction with their children, emotionally close and emphatic communication and mutual help. Such relationship features ensure high levels of social support and become a factor for successful socialization.

Quite often certain *attitudes or behaviour patterns of a receiver* are enough to raise conflicts, quarrels or emotional separation in a family. Such situations might lead to a misbalance of social support within a family. Even short-lived conflicts disorganize supportive relationships. Moreover, lack of partner's support or inattentiveness simply become more visible with a presence of negative family atmosphere and conflicting relationships, which may disturb family functioning (Beach et al., 1996).

Afterwards, when sides have returned to good terms, more subtle and emotionally sensitive ties remain under the negative influence of previous conflict noticeably longer, thus not realizing their effectiveness (Pearson, 1990, 32). On the other hand, positive family relationships create an atmosphere that allows forgetting, justifying or simply taking no notice of disloyal or unsupportive behaviour. This, however, might disguise a danger of supportive behaviour becoming taken for granted and losing its motivational impact (Beach et al., 1996). According to Acitelli (1996), up to one third of spouse's supportive actions are not recognized as such by the other. In this case men appear to be especially "unobservant". For example, if wife entertains children and keeps them off while her husband takes a rest, the majority of men remember having a peaceful evening, but don't connect it with wife's efforts (Acitelli, 1996, 87).

Links to research results

The research data corroborated several of the above mentioned factors. First of all, families of delinquents are more likely to experience situations of transition, namely, divorce or changes in family structure. Half of the delinquent respondents (49.5%; 3rd article) lived either in single-parent families or with grandparents. For comparison, all of the non-delinquent respondents lived with their parents and only 22.1% in single-parent families. Changes in situation and responsiveness of the supporter are also more characteristic to families of delinquents. Delinquent children reported being less satisfied with their relations with parents, less often hearing words of love and caring from parents, less communicating with relatives and experiencing more conflicts within family (3rd article); they also perceive their siblings as rather unsupportive and relations with parents as rather formal (4th article). On the other hand, their delinquent and problem behaviour also stands as negative factor for social support. Thus, each of the circumstances, mentioned by Pearson (1990), which increase the risk of appearance of social support problems tend to appear rather predominantly in families of delinquents. More so, as the data from the 4th article revealed, families of delinquents rarely maintained any family routines, which, according to Timko and Moos (1996), increased the risk of social support problems.

Analysis of circumstances in which families function at a given moment allows social worker to define the extent to which social support

might influence the arising problems. If social support is found to be an important factor, further interviews and observations should reveal what type of support (described in 2nd chapter) exactly is the most lacking and which network members are the most (or the least) helpful. Thus, the necessity to identify individual's social network arises.

According to Sanicola (cited in Gvaldaitė & Švedaitė, 2003, 132), "competent" social network is not the one created by social worker, but the one formed of ties from subject's history. A substantial part of people living in unfavourable conditions have rather narrow and one-sided social networks. Such networks fail to provide sufficient social support to meet individual's psycho-social needs, therefore professional help to correct and optimize them is required. To change any situation one needs to know it first. The same applies to social networks. In literature two stages of network interventions are usually distinguished: network assessment (or analysis) and its correction (Gottlieb, 2000; Sanicola, 1995, cited in Gvaldaitė & Švedaitė, 2003). As a rule, intervention starts with a network assessment which is carried out by observation, communication with an individual and information gathering. The final result of network assessment may result in drawing genograms, sociograms or social network maps.

Having assessed the structure of social network, social worker proceeds with the following steps – distinction of internal and/or external barriers for social support and planning of individual based and/or network based interventions.

Internal (individual based) barriers may be: withdrawal from others, social ineptness and alienation or moving against others (Pearson, 1990, 78). Withdrawal from others is linked to low self-esteem, fear of criticism and manifests by quietness, avoiding others or not asking for help; social ineptness is linked with oddness and displays in lack of verbal skill or appearance and personal hygiene while moving against others (or alienation) driven by insensivity to others, self-centeredness or helplessness manifests in noreciprocation, punishing others, exploitiveness or aggressiveness. In this case, measures of individual help should be taken. Enhancement of positive changes in individual's personality or attitudes lies at the core of many methods of family and psycho therapy. Counselling and skill training may be named as examples. The same methods are suitable for social support skill training as well and in certain

instances social worker may be the one to provide such help. More over, individual help may be provided by a member of natural social network after he has been instructed by professionals.

Pearson (1990, 124) also singles out three context based barriers (or external barriers) as determinants of possible social support problems: physical separation, limited resources and dysfunctional attitudes and behaviour. Physical separation means individual's limited contacts with network members; limited resources represent the amount of network's material and emotional resources for assistance. The 3rd barrier – dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours - characterizes certain attitudinal and behavioural dimensions of support providers which limit the reception of support. Alienation, manipulation, insensivity of network members may block both their ability and willingness to provide support and act as an obstacle for connections among systems.

External barriers require network based interventions. They may be exercised by changing the structure of a network or changing communication within the existing network. Gottlieb (2000, 198) distinguishes concrete conditions which determine the intervention methods to be taken. He argues that changing the structure of a network and involvement of new members is more relevant if:

1) existing network is impoverished, ineffective or conflictual;
2) existing network reinforces undesirable behaviours or identities;
3) existing network lacks experiential knowledge;
4) specialized knowledge or expert opinion is necessary.

Correction of a natural network without inclusion of new members is more relevant if:

1) achievement of goals depends on behaviour of one or more network members;
2) existing network needs strengthening to meet long-term support needs;
3) presenting problem or outside intervention is highly stigmatizing;
4) there is a cultural gap between support recipient and external providers.

After appropriate assessment and optimization social network becomes potentially more effective and provides purposeful and situation-specific support.

Looking from a wider environmental perspective certain aspects of exo-system and even macro-system support enhancement may be distinguished. As an example for that aspects of family support distinguished by Gilligan (2000, 15) may serve:

    a) *developmental support* aims at enhancement of social support and resilience in a present social environment. Organization of support groups, youth recreational projects, parental education are examples of developmental support. This measure of support is not directed towards a certain problem; it may involve anyone encountering difficulties of family life organization.

    b) *compensatory support* aims at compensating the consequences of existing problems or stressful events. Programs for child care of low income families, education of problem behaviour adolescents, reducing social exclusion are examples of this kind of support

    c) *protective support* seeks to strengthen the resilience of children and other family members to risk factors in a specific family situation. Examples: day care center for children of drug addicted parents, support groups for abused women, education programs for parents of problem behaviour children. Protective support emphasizes the importance of communication, family rituals for strengthening the organizational structure of a family.

Both internal and external (individual based and network based) interventions supplement each other and should be viewed as integrate parts of social support enhancement system. Optimization of social support through these interventions may become an important part of social work activity and supply it with new, qualitatively valuable component which provides new meaning for social worker – client communication. In this chapter general process of social work was presented, yet the same principles apply to delinquency prevention. Social worker taking part in delinquency prevention activities should follow the same steps of difficulty delineation, situation analysis and barrier identification to plan social support interventions, only with the focus shifted towards circumstances of delinquent behaviour and their links with deficiencies in social support. However, before moving to modelling preventive social support interventions, it is necessary to present a wider look at delinquency prevention system and its main principles.

6. Social Support in the Context of Delinquency Prevention

Delinquency prevention in Lithuania

Delinquency is a concept used to describe an undesirable behavior of adolescents and it's not transferred to adult behavior. Delinquents are children and adolescents of increased risk for offending (Dapšys, 1994), and delinquency is understood as minor offences, violations of moral norms, which are not considered as dangerous and don't cause serious harm (i.e., undisciplined, conflicting behaviour, episodic substance abuse, school skipping) (Justickis, 1993), or as a psychological leaning or tendency to violate existing behavioural norms. Delinquents usually don't commit serious crimes (Valickas, 1997). More serious offenses are entitled crimes – a specific form of human behaviour which violates the functioning of social system, illegal actions, against which society takes preventive measures. In this meta-analysis I focus on both aspects of offenses because delinquent behaviour, if not prevented, tends to become criminal.

Since the restoration of independence in 1990, the government of the Republic of Lithuania ratified and passed a set of laws, regulating legal and social issues of juvenile responsibilities, legal treatment, behaviour control and correction: UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (ratified in 1995), Law on Fundamentals of Child Rights Protection (approved in 1996), Conceptual Framework of the State Policy on Child Welfare (approved in 2003). These documents ground the fundamental principles of juvenile justice and aim that the promotion of the well-being of juveniles is conducted in their best interests not allowing any different considerations in respect of status or label of a juvenile (for example, offender). Legislation directly concerning delinquency prevention includes the following documents:

- Child and adolescent crime prevention program (approved in 1997);
- National program for crime prevention and control (approved in 2003);
- Juvenile justice program for 2004–2008 (approved in 2004);
- Children and youth socialization program (approved in 2004);

- Law on minimum and medium juvenile supervision (approved in 2007).

The core ideas of the mentioned documents correspond with the legislation concerning juvenile justice in European Union and the principles of the best child interests. National prevention programs and laws are based on systemic principles and include various state and societal institutions. They emphasize a vast range of prevention means – from social and medical to educational and legal. For example, "Child and adolescent crime prevention program" pays attention to inclusion into the process of education, strengthening of ties between school, family and community, organization of leisure time and control of behaviour. "Children and youth socialization program" speaks about enhancement of family educational abilities, improvement of social education in schools, creation of safe environment, ensurement of social, pedagogical and psychological assistance to children. "Law of minimum and medium juvenile supervision" introduces regulations for the local prevention work groups in assigning and carrying out the means of behaviour control on the municipality level. These documents clearly indicate that in the process of delinquency prevention means may be carried out by institutions of the following levels: state (national) level; regional (municipality) level and institutional (non-governmental) level. The sphere of activity of these institutions covers all the essential areas of child socialization as put by Babachinaitė and her colleagues (Babachinaitė et al., 1984): family environment, educational environment and leisure-time environment.

Lithuanian system of delinquency prevention operates within three institutional levels of supervision: minimum, medium and maximum. Means of minimum supervision are imposed by prevention work group in the municipality after report about problem or delinquent behaviour has been received. Schools, police department, child rights protection department may submit such reports, but only if all the other means at school or local township have been taken. Means of minimum supervision usually include certain obligations: to attend school, to take psychological consultations, to attend extra-curricular activities, to return home at appropriate time etc. Failure to fulfil minimum means of supervision may result in imposing of medium supervision, i.e. sending to a socialization center. In Lithuania as of this writing there are six such

correctional institutions meant for serious delinquents who are sent there by court's decision. Socialization centers are closed facilities which provide educational, psychological and social programs for offenders. The highest level of supervision – maximum – means imprisonment. In Lithuania there is one specialized prison for juvenile boys. Juvenile girls are held in the same prison as adult women. Thus, minimum, medium and maximum levels of supervision basically represent the level of direct prevention, while early prevention is carried out by schools, township social workers and other social institutions. If early prevention fails to bring desired results, a report for minimum supervision usually is submitted.

However, when it comes to practical implementation of prevention ideas, several shortcomings come into view. First, there is the lack of professionals in law enforcement system educated to work with juveniles. Despite discussions on the highest level and inclusion of Juvenile justice reform into agenda, Lithuania hasn't introduced a system of family (or juvenile) courts. The decision taken instead was to specialize and educate police officers, prosecutors and judges who investigate juvenile cases. Specialization is rather evident in courts and prosecutor's offices where there is a reasonable amount of professionals working with juvenile cases. According to the webpage of National Court Administration (www.teismai.lt) in the beginning of 2010 there were 226 judges specialized to work with juvenile and family cases in 43 district and regional courts. Yet, local police departments, institutions responsible for the initial stages of offense investigation generally have only few officers specialized to work with juveniles. More so, these officers work in Juvenile affairs units, and are not directly connected with crime investigation. One more institution, belonging to state prevention system, is Correctional Inspectorate. It is responsible for monitoring of enforcement of court decisions not related to imprisonment and integration of a convicted into society. There is no distinct specialization within this institution as the same officers work with juveniles and adults.

Second, as it was already mentioned in the introduction of this summary article, in Lithuanian law enforcement system penitentiary but not preventive approach to the solution of juvenile delinquency still dominates. An institute of reconciliation or options for positive case

solution in pre-trial institutions have yet to be established; although Correctional Inspectorates are supposed to provide social assistance, they haven't yet got a position of social worker and thus focus mainly on monitoring, control and punishment; prevention work groups in the municipalities don't have permanent, paid positions and also are restricted to only monitoring and formal punishment of offenders. Even the attitudes towards juvenile delinquents within the society are more alienating and excluding than supportive and helping.

Links to research results

Delinquent adolescents, who were questioned and interviewed for the research of the 3rd and 4th articles, have all been enrolled in the lists of higher concern for the police or sent to socialization center. These means might be opaque for those not acquainted with the system of juvenile justice in Lithuania, and therefore will be explained in greater detail. Police stations of each municipality in Lithuania have lists of adolescents of higher concern for the police. The juveniles who commit minor offenses and are released on probation are enrolled in these lists as well as those who are under-aged (under 14) to be criminally responsible; who are imposed educational means of punishment; who commit two and more administrative offenses; who run away from home, skip school, use psycho-active materials. Juveniles stay on the list for one year unless they offend repeatedly. Juveniles, who commit more serious offenses or persist with delinquent behaviour, might be sent to socialization center where they might spend up to one year or even more. The decision to send a juvenile to socialization center is made by court. Thus, all delinquent respondents by the time of interviews have entered the stage of direct prevention. The means of minimum supervision were imposed not on all of them, but all of them have been under some level of surveillance and control by police or probation officers.

Connections between social support and social control paradigms

A substantial part of social support research consists of search for correlations between support and physical/psychological health. This area of research has some time ago reported that when personal efforts or

resources are depleted the "first aid" is provided by the most immediate persons. In this case social support becomes an important component of primary prevention. Social support as effective means of primary prevention not only in health care but also in other areas, including delinquency prevention, receives increasingly more backing in recent years. Delinquency usually is closely linked with unfavourable social, psychological conditions and stressful situations. Pearson (1990, 17) resting on House's (1981) assumptions, states, that preventive potential of social support lies in the following:

   a) as supportiveness increases, the presence of noxious influences is eliminated or reduced;

   b) a supportive environment serves to increase the general health of individuals, thus increasing their ability to withstand the negative effects of noxious physical and social factors;

   c) social support serves individuals by buffering them from the negative impact of environmental stressors.

Unfortunately, despite these assumptions, a big part of prevention methods of recent decades is, first of all, built on social control, not social support ideas. Family-based risk factors are also often analysed through the lens of control theories: be it parent – child ties creating an indirect "relationship" control, or child monitoring and punishment of undesirable behaviour, or development of inner control. The biggest flaw of such attitude is that preventive methods resting on it tend to be limited to punishments, isolation and individual means of influence. Utilization of these methods doesn't open up enough opportunities to acquire knowledge and social skills nedcessary for successful adaptation in today's environment.

   Ruškus and Merkys in the book "Nepilnamečių resocializacija" (2002) distinguish two theoretical paradigms behind preventive measures taken in correctional institutions: punishment and isolation paradigm and education and integration paradigm. Punishments and isolation are meant to control and suppress the causes of negative behaviour. Offenders are considered to be the threat to society; therefore their isolation from society is encouraged. The philosophical sources of these measures may be traced in social control theories. On the other

hand, education and integration emphasize pedagogical optimism and strive to create conditions favourable for psychosocial development, utilize methods adequate for needs and abilities of resocialization and stimulate cooperation between professionals and community. Here the basis lies in social support theory which highlights help, belief in human potential and emotional assistance as the agents for personal change. The mentioned authors point out that only while responsibly combining both paradigms one can hope for successful results of preventive and correctional measures. The importance of combining social support and social control is stressed also by Sipila (1980). He explains possible outcomes of control and support misbalance in the following table.

Table 3. Aspects of combining social support and social control

		Social control	
		+	-
Social support	+	integration, resilience	risk of delinquency
	-	punishments (risk of psychological problems)	disintegration

Source: Sipila, 1980

It is evident that balance between social support and social control, according to Sipila, prompts child's successful integration and resilience to negative environmental influence. Dominance of social control with absence of support may end up in prevalence of punishments and harsh discipline, which, on its own hand, may lead to psychological problems and possible behaviour disorders. Orientation solely on social support increases the possibility of appearance of delinquent behaviour and sense of unpunishability, or, in the case when support comes from delinquent group, strengthens undesirable identifications. Finally, absence of both support and control increases the chances of disintegration, which may lead to a child utilizing improper means to achieve goals or, simply, distancing from the most important socialization institutions.

From the practical point of view social support could be the missing link which, combined with social control, would allow to expand the spectre and effectiveness of preventive measures. The research data found in various literature report correlations between lack of family social

support and child misbehaviours: delinquency, offending, violation of school rules, substance abuse. Several authors (Gilligan, 2002; Cullen et al., 1999; Triplett, 2003; Wright et al., 2000; Gabhainn & Walsh, 2000) see social support as one of possible solutions for improvement of delinquency prevention. Social support theory emphasizes expansion of individual's social network, strengthening of emotional ties and mustering up of all kinds of aid. All these means may become a powerful tool in the prevention process of both delinquency and substance abuse.

In Howell's (2003) opinion, only the delinquency prevention methods that focus on personality development, positive communication with others and highlighting of adolescent strengths may be considered effective. The author emphasizes, that the most successful prevention programs ensure the presence of psychological and physical safety of an adolescent, supportive relations, sense of belonging and integration into school and community. Herewith, he points out that those programs which stand upon strict formal control, punishments and out-of-home placements are less effective. Smith argues that the most successful prevention programs are the ones which provide children with supportive network, and, especially, increase support from family (Smith et al, 1999). Wright with the colleagues (Wright et al., 2000) distinguishes three reasons why social support may reduce juvenile delinquency:

- *firstly*, social support, especially in early childhood, acts as the basis for healthy moral, psychological and social development;
- *secondly*, social control becomes significantly more effective if applied together with social support. Families which maintain close and warm relations less frequently utilize harsh discipline;
- *thirdly*, social support increases resilience to negative environment, provides social and psychological capital and decreases the influence of criminogenic factors on a child.

Neither pharmacological reviews of chemical composition and effects on human body nor pastoral stories about sad consequences of abuse utilized in alcohol and drug prevention have delivered the desired results. This prompted increasing use of another preventive tactics – development of social and decision making skills. The latter methods are closely connected with social support from the surrounding people,

family members and peers. Reviewing several effectiveness researches on such methods Gabhainn and Walsh (2000) conclude that development of specific skills, analysis of social norms, concerning substance abuse, and community's social influence, involvement of peers and pedagogues are the attributes of successful drug abuse prevention programs. Authors argue, that the most resilient to negative influence are the children who have positive temperament and supportive network, which shapes positive value systems (ibid, 157).

Thus social support shows through as an important component of prevention process and it is important to find the proper place for support within the framework of delinquency prevention.

7. Modeling Delinquency Prevention through Optimization of Social Support

This chapter is intended for describing the principles behind delinquency prevention framework and presentation of the framework itself. In other words, it epitomizes the final stage of Layder's adaptive approach – emergence of some new material based on extant theories and research data.

Prevention is described as actions designed "to reduce the actual level of crime and/or the perceived fear of crime" (Lab, 2007, 24) or "to minimize and eliminate social, psychological or other conditions known to cause or contribute to physical and emotional illness and sometimes socioeconomic problems" (Barker, 2003, 337). I will utilize the ideas of Lab (2007) and Gilligan (2002) who distinguish stages of prevention according to widely recognized medical model of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention, and Leliūgienė (2003) who utilizes arguments of several authors to divide prevention process into early and direct means.

According to Gilligan (2002), the aim of primary prevention is to stop shaming people, provide them with tools for self-respect, and reduce all kinds of inequality. Secondary prevention should aim to intervene before people become violent, provide extra-curricular programs for children, treatment and not punishment of addicts and ensure community safety. Finally, tertiary prevention means reforming deterrence institutions, and establishing anti-prisons. Gilligan states: "The easiest way to turn a quiet person into aggressive one is to put him into prison" (2002, 118). As I do not plan to strictly follow the steps of prevention process and intend to depict more general framework, I will take Leliūgienė's model as a basis which is more suitable in this case. She distinguishes between early prevention which begins when the first signs of conditions unfavourable for child's psychosocial development are detected, and direct prevention which begins after the offense is committed and is aimed to avoid the possible repeated offenses and influence the changes in offender's personality (Leliūgienė, 2003, 183). Basically, early prevention represents primary and secondary stages of Gilligan's medical model, while direct means – tertiary prevention. Early prevention is recognized as the most cost-effective and powerful tool in reducing delinquency (Howell,

2003, Gilligan, 2002). Gilligan even notices that a drop of primary and secondary prevention equals a megaton of medicine (ibid, 22). Direct prevention starts when means of early prevention have failed.

Social support is important in each of the prevention levels – in both early and direct prevention. Unfortunately, due to different reasons the component of social support has to plough its way into system of prevention. One of possible reasons can be found in the book by Ruškus and Merkys (2002). Authors emphasize that despite made efforts, it is very difficult to combine paradigm of punishment and isolation with the one of education and integration. These paradigms emphasize different means to influence offenders. When at the same time juveniles are required to obey and subordinate on one hand, and show responsibility and initiative on the other, they have to choose as human brain is not used to simultaneously absorb two pieces of conflicting information. The majority of delinquents experience substantial amounts of harsh discipline and orders in their home environment, thus by force of habit they conform to the similar treatment ignoring offers of support much easier. However, society hasn't found better mechanisms to prevent delinquency and crime and thus it is necessary to continue combining punishment and education while looking for best possible balance.

Another reason is presented by Bazemore and Erbe (2003), who state that prevention process has to include members of community. In their opinion, there are three indispensable parts of prevention process: offender, professional and community. Today it's common in Lithuania that delinquency prevention includes only two of these parts – a child and a professional. In this case social support is available mainly from a formal source, i.e. professional. Social support from formal providers might be accepted cautiously with the underthoughts such as: "If not their professional duty, they wouldn't care about me". This makes the effectiveness of social support rather dubious. More so, as Gottlieb (1983, 25) argues, professional helpers should be sensitive to fundamental differences between social support and professional help and should rather stick to identifying and initiating natural relationships than to education and treatment. Even involved non-professionals should not respond as professionals, thus becoming more distant from the community they come from but should remember that support from

natural relationships differs from professional help in being: naturally accessible; congruent with local norms of support expression; rooted in peer relationships and freed from financial and psychological costs (Gottlieb, 1983, 27). With the involvement of community members as providers of informal support prevention process might gain a substantial momentum. However, people from the neighbourhood tend to avoid delinquents, distance themselves from them not speaking about help. It's an enormous task to teach a child to live in the community when the community itself rejects him and doesn't provide any support. On the other hand, there's also a lack of political decisions that would establish mechanisms and ways for community to get involved in the process of prevention.

Considering the stated above, the frameworking of delinquency prevention should first define the agents (or domains) of the process. As Lab (2007, 23) states, crime is a societal problem, not just a problem of criminal justice system. Prevention, as well, for a long time has been a matter of citizens themselves and only since the end of 19th century has become a matter of science and justice system (ibid, 21–22). Since then, citizens (or community) have moved increasingly further away from prevention processes, yet the justice system alone has been unable to stop crime (ibid, 24). Therefore, including citizens back into prevention system, especially when the underlying subject is as dependant on informal relations as social support, seems to be inevitable. Of course, the main domain is offender and his most immediate environment, i.e. family. Resting on the research results, the most significant actors here include an offender, his parents and siblings. Another domain is comprised of professionals participating in the prevention process. Usually the first professionals to be involved are school personnel (teachers and social pedagogues), followed by (according to the situation) law enforcement officers (police and probation officers) and representatives of municipality institutions (specialists from Children rights protection department, eldership or health care center). And the third domain, which, as it has been argued above, usually is left aside and not involved in prevention process is community. I use the name "community" rather loosely not sticking to the formal conceptualizations of the word and subsume under it, first of all, informal network and neighbourhood.
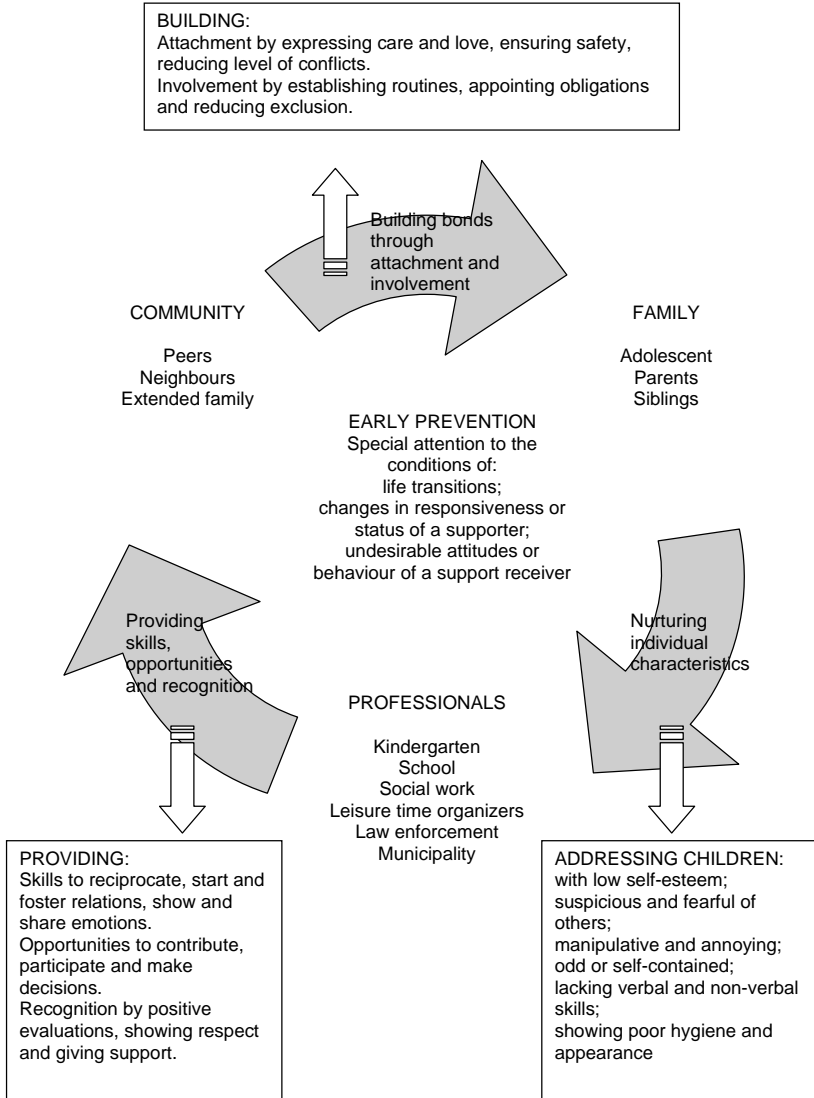
Early prevention

Early prevention aims at identifying conditions of the environment that provide opportunities for crime (Lab, 2007, 25), starts when first signs of unfavourable conditions for child development appear (Leliūgienė, 2003, 183) and should include measures to stop shaming and humiliating people, provide them with tools for self-respect and reduce societal hierarchy (Gilligan, 2002). Early prevention is targeted at wider groups of adolescents, not just delinquents, therefore I have utilized the model of social development strategy (Hawkins, 1999, cited in Howell, 2003, 111, 112) to visualize the prevention framework. Social development strategy organizes risk and protective factors into a sequential chain and therefore is a suitable tool to build a prevention model upon. This strategy puts nurturing of individual characteristics to the beginning of the causal chain of measures and follows them with providing children with opportunities to contribute, acquire skills and get recognition for their efforts. These elements, on their own behalf, help to build bonds of attachment and commitment with network domains and sustained by clear standards and healthy beliefs lead to healthy behaviours. The stages of social development strategy infer general processes of child socialization and thus are substantially wider than process of social support discussed in the meta-analysis. Therefore I will use this strategy mainly as a conceptual frame and fill it with social support related content.

Since primary prevention is aimed at identifying unfavourable conditions, I will use a list of circumstances unfavourable for social support as another variable of the framework. To define circumstances blocking social support I will rest on Pearson's classification, presented in the earlier chapter. He distinguishes life transitions, changes in situation, responsiveness or status of a supporter and attitudes, behaviour or other characteristics of a support receiver as the main sources of support deficiencies (Pearson, 1990, 26).

Thus, seeking to optimize social support within the target population of early prevention, the conditions presented in the center of the above picture should be approached with close attention as they represent the greatest risk for possible social support problems. The research data have confirmed that families of delinquent children experience these conditions on a rather regular basis. Furthermore, optimizing

social support to increase the effectiveness of early prevention includes nurturing individual characteristics, providing skills, opportunities and recognition and building bonds.

Individual characteristics of adolescents presented in Picture 8 are compiled according to Pearson's (1990, 78) client-based barriers to social support and the research data. Pearson describes these characteristics as the most unfavourable for receiving social support. Thus, early prevention programs should focus on to children demonstrating these characteristics, as they may lack in supportive relations. The research data revealed that delinquent children either possess such features or are perceived as such by others and therefore may not receive enough support when necessary. More so, oddness, lack of certain skills or poor hygiene are potential risk factors for bullying, shaming and rejection, especially in school context, which, according to Gilligan (2000), increases the possibility of violent behaviour.

BUILDING:
Attachment by expressing care and love, ensuring safety,
reducing level of conflicts.
Involvement by establishing routines, appointing obligations
and reducing exclusion.

Building bonds
through
attachment and
involvement

COMMUNITY

Peers
Neighbours
Extended family

FAMILY

Adolescent
Parents
Siblings

EARLY PREVENTION
Special attention to the
conditions of:
life transitions;
changes in responsiveness or
status of a supporter;
undesirable attitudes or
behaviour of a support receiver

Providing
skills,
opportunities
and recognition

Nurturing
individual
characteristics

PROFESSIONALS

Kindergarten
School
Social work
Leisure time organizers
Law enforcement
Municipality

PROVIDING:
Skills to reciprocate, start and
foster relations, show and
share emotions.
Opportunities to contribute,
participate and make
decisions.
Recognition by positive
evaluations, showing respect
and giving support.

ADDRESSING CHILDREN:
with low self-esteem;
suspicious and fearful of
others;
manipulative and annoying;
odd or self-contained;
lacking verbal and non-verbal
skills;
showing poor hygiene and
appearance

Picture 8.   Framework of early delinquency prevention through enhance-
ment of social support

The next component of early prevention involves providing skills, opportunities and recognition. All these mentioned measures are linked with increase of supportiveness among the participants. As argued in earlier chapters, supportive relationships are characterized by frequency, intimacy and mutuality of a tie, therefore skills to reciprocate, start and foster relations, share emotions within a relation are among the most important for enhancing supportiveness. Lack of support is often connected with low level of involvement, low self-esteem, alienation. Providing opportunities to participate and contribute serves as a tool for decreasing the extent of these processes and expanding the meso-system of adolescents by inclusion of new ties and positive behaviour models. And finally, providing recognition basically means providing social support for children, which allows raising their self-esteem and shaping their attitudes of environment towards more positive and support-friendly.

The third component, presented in Picture 8, concerns building bonds of attachment and involvement. It represents wider and more general processes which appear more as a result of previous two components. By nurturing individual characteristics and providing skills and opportunities for supportive behaviour we reach for safer, non-conflictual and non-excluding atmosphere. However, achieving this atmosphere is impossible without building bonds inside each of micro-systems: family, school or neighbourhood. Possibilities to express emotions and feelings, low level of conflict, established routines and obligations are among the positive factors for social support. The research data also showed that delinquency was related to higher conflicts, less obligations and lack of routines. Thus, early delinquency prevention should focus on both building a bond as a final result of the process and as an intermediate measure to achieve the desired goal.

The presented model spreads from microsystem through mesosytem and to exosystem of adolescents and includes characteristics favourable for enhancement of social support within each of the systems. It reflects systemic approach to delinquency prevention as it includes both personal characteristics and environmental factors and connects different domains into one framework.
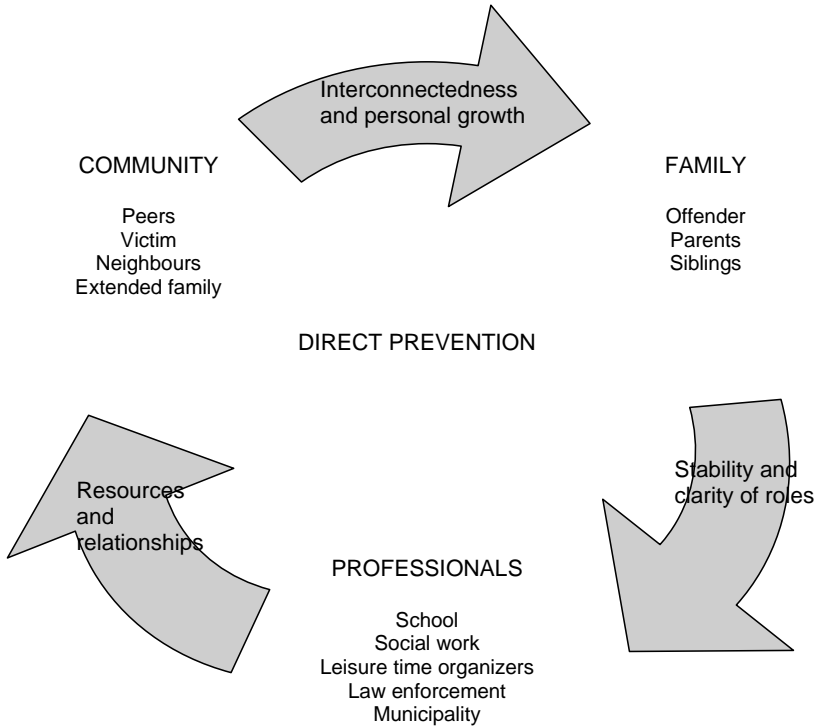
Direct prevention

If the measures of early prevention fail to reach the target, the next step that has to be taken is direct prevention. Direct (tertiary) prevention begins after the offense is committed and is aimed to avoid the possible repeated offenses and influence the changes in offender's personality (Leliūgienė, 2003, 183), deals with actual offenders and involves intervention (Brantingham & Faust, 1976, cited in Lab, 2007, 27). Gilligan (2002) proposes reforming deterrence institutions into anti-prisons as one of the main aims of direct prevention.

As direct prevention deals with already committed offenses, I used the word "offender" instead of "adolescent" in the family domain. I also included "victim" into community domain, because each offense brings certain harm (moral, emotional or material) to members of community, thus putting somebody into victim's position. I believe, that repairing the harm done by the offense is impossible without involvement of those who have suffered it. I removed "Kindergartens" from the professionals domain as the dominating majority of delinquent acts are committed by school-aged children, specifically adolescents.

Once the offense is committed, it means that adolescent's social development had bigger or smaller disorders and thus has to be restored. Thus designing the framework of direct prevention I've moved from rather general stages of social development to more specific characteristics of social support. My argument is that enhancement of social support has the potential to be one of the possible ways to prevent and heal disorders of social development. Offender's family, professionals and community have to be involved in certain supportive relationships during the process of direct prevention. For that purpose I will utilize characteristics for successful social support and control as defined in my 2nd article. These characteristics stem from Triplett's and her colleagues' (2003) definition of institutional strength in exerting social control and Timko and Moos' (1996) family environment scale which is conceptually related to social support. They include: 1) stability and clarity of roles; 2) resources and relationships; 3) interconnectedness and personal growth. Graphic visualization of functioning of direct prevention framework is presented in Picture 9.

The first variable in the framework of direct prevention refers to maintaining system stability and clear delineation of roles. As the research data show, the most stable of delinquents' microsystems are friends. Division of roles among friends is also quite clear and natural for adolescents, however, not always providing the desired role models or positive support. On the other hand, family roles are rather taken for granted than emotionally perceived, more so, delinquents' families are less stable concerning their structure and established routines. School, although demonstrating stable and clear roles, is almost completely excluded by delinquents from the circle of important network members together with teachers and other adults. The biggest concern here lies in the roles which delinquents take or are ascribed to. These roles usually are linked with negative evaluations, punishments and rejection. Similar processes may be traced in other community institutions or among neighbours. All this restricts delinquents to rather self-contained networks which limit the possibilities to access a wider scope of social support sources and involve into different social roles. Lack of organized leisure time and family routines, domination of idle "hanging out" with friends reveals a picture of unstructured socialization which is a risk factor for deviant behaviour.

Picture 9. Framework for direct delinquency prevention through enhancement of social support

The second variable includes providing resources and establishing relationships. Delinquents' relationships with their parents appeared to be rather formal and bear an obligatory nature. Social support out of relationships, considered as obligatory, has less effect on the receiver, because voluntary and goodwill-driven help is understood as the most altruistic and easier accepted. Usually family, as opposed to professionals, provide altruistic and non-obligatory support, but as this research shows, poor emotional climate and formal communication change the nature of supportive ties in delinquents families thus reducing the possibilities for effective support. The family relationships tend to recede from binding towards more formal ties of bonding. It's usual that amount of emotional support from parents tends to decrease in adolescence in favour to

increasing support from friends; therefore parents should pay a special attention to maintain adequate levels of it to prevent adolescent breaking away from family. Friends (namely street friends) comprise the circle of relationships and support. Social support coming from rather narrow and non-dynamic network may lack alternative and different assistance, more so, in deviant groups, as in this case, it may bare a controlling nature, discouraging meaningful contacts with outsiders.

The last variable of the framework refers to interconnectedness among microsystems and possibilities of personal growth. As it was mentioned, the environment of delinquents is rather monotonous and poor. The research data didn't reveal a high level of microsystem interconnectedness in delinquents' social life. Schoolmates usually are not included among their best friends, they spend less leisure time with parents than non-delinquents, their parents are not willing to attend school meetings, and delinquents don't have significant ties with other adults at school or community. Once again we come to a notion of unstructured socialization which doesn't provide enough possibilities for a purposeful personal growth. On the other hand, community institutions themselves sometimes lack in closer connections. Providing social assistance, planning services, designing prevention process would bring better results if done in constant communication, cooperation and with shared information.

In the following table some concrete measures of direct prevention aimed at strengthening social support in each of the domains are presented. These measures are the result of analysis of theoretical material, research data and practical experience and should be approached as guide lines for social workers or other professionals participating in the prevention process.

Table 4. Measures of direct prevention

	Family	Professionals	Community
Stability, clarity of roles	Ensuring contacts with a separately living parent; Establishing constant family routines; Imposing obligations for children; Utilizing consistent discipline; Setting clear family boundaries; Providing clarification.	Involving delinquents into class activities; Ensuring that role of school social pedagogue implies help not threat; Avoiding dismissals from class and expulsions from school; Providing opportunities to contribute through leisure time organizing.	Involving delinquents into neighbourhood activities; Increasing frequency of contacts with extended family; Providing opportunities to contribute; Strengthening neighbours' social control; Encouraging positive peer role models.
Resources and relationships	Spending more time with children; Improving delinquent – sibling relations; Increasing level of positive stimulation in family relations; Verbalizing emotional and intimate feelings towards children.	Increasing frequency of positive reinforcements for delinquents at school; Showing trust and confidence instead of incredulity in relations with delinquent; Increasing possibilities for positive identifications.	Organizing meetings with delinquents and their families; Increasing communication and support to delinquent and his family; Avoiding offender rejection and shaming; Encouraging adolescent initiatives.
Interconnectedness and personal growth	Increasing frequency of parent – teacher communication; Establishing of neighbourhood – police information network; Involving parents into prevention programs; Establishing a position of social worker within probation system; Involving offenders into process of designing preventive measures; Applying means of community integration.		

It should be noted, that both depicted frameworks of early and direct prevention are aimed at social support optimization as a tool for reducing delinquency. They do not present the whole picture of educational, social, psychological and legal means, utilized for preventing crime. Naturally, listed measures involve aspects of each of them, but only to the extent of corresponding with components of social support. It is also important to emphasize that social support is not a panacea; it has to be provided together with other services, but not instead of them. As Gilligan (2000, 19) argues, "social support cannot make up for inadequate income, inadequate housing, inadequate educational opportunities for children or adults…"

Summarizing Notes

In this meta-analysis by arguing that delinquent adolescents are generally rejected and made "islands" in the society I tried to ground the importance of utilizing social support within the delinquency prevention process. The research was located at the intersection of social control and social support paradigms, yet leaning towards the latter as having the underutilized preventive potential.

Social support was presented as social phenomenon consisting of three interlaying components – supportive schemata, supportive relationships and supportive transactions. In the following chapter theoretical background of social support was analyzed. The analysis revealed social support as a multifaceted phenomenon requiring different theoretical approaches. Psychodynamic-cognitive, humanistic-existential, social-constructionist and systemic theories were engaged to explain the processes of social support. Throughout the whole text of meta-analysis theoretical arguments are linked with research results to depict the social support situation within the context of delinquent social environment.

The systemic approach of explaining social support was taken as the basis for the following chapters. Measures to optimize social support within family social work in general and within the process of delinquency prevention were discussed. Certain conditions unfavourable for supportive relations were depicted requiring either correction of the existing network or inclusion of new network members. Optimization of social support within delinquency prevention was perceived as a process of strengthening support variable in a support – control framework.

Finally frameworks for early and direct prevention including measures to increase supportiveness were presented. Inclusion of three main agents – family, professionals and community – into the prevention process was highlighted. The framework of early prevention was based on stages of more general model of social development and list of circumstances unfavourable for social support, while direct prevention rested on system characteristics favourable for social support and control.

The model of delinquency prevention through optimization of social support does not include every variable or agent that have been tied to delinquent behaviour but it identifies the most important issues and

leaves space for additional mechanisms to be integrated into it. I hope that I was able to provide a model that is coherent enough and might attract other investigators or practitioners to use it or to create their own models.

Summing up the material of meta-analysis inevitably brings back to the research question "How can optimization of social support enhance the process of delinquency prevention?" To answer it I could distinguish three aspects of social support's effect on delinquency prevention.

First of all, social support requires involvement of natural network (or community, in other words) into the process of delinquency prevention. Crime prevention, as it was argued in chapter 7, is predominantly left to the system of justice and professionals. Yet, this hasn't brought the desired results as it is hardly possible to re-introduce an individual into society without society's participation. Social support, which basically means fostering and reinforcing natural relationships, perfectly suits for filling in this niche. Thus, social support brings back the missing (or strengthens where it's existing) angle of community in the prevention tri-angle: child – professional – community.

Secondly, social support, as concept indistinguishable from social network, enhances the systemic (holistic) perspective in juvenile delinquency. Quite often the major efforts of prevention professionals are oriented mainly towards a child in search of rather simplistic links between cause and consequence. Systemic approach by linking micro-systemic (personal) and meso-systemic (network) levels from several perspectives provides a rather multi-causal and complex picture of juvenile social environment. The structure of social support – schemata, transactions and relationships – in itself bears a systemic nature and includes personality traits, perceptions, interpersonal transactions and relationships. Analysis of social support takes into consideration both person-based and external barriers, interconnecting personal and social variables once again. Finally, search for supportive network integrates institutions from different levels of child environment into preventive framework which reflects dimensions favourable for child social support (as presented in chapter 4): number of roles, contact frequency, interconnectedness of supportive systems.

And thirdly, systemic nature of social support coherently supplements the practice of social work and provides clear outlines for its activities. Social work within the given prevention model is also perceived from systemic perspective as it involves both individual (microsystemic) interventions and efforts to integrate separate social groups (mesosystemic level). More so, the nature of social support requires that main attention of social worker should be focused not on himself being the main supporter or therapist but on identifying and encouraging supporters from natural environment. Inclusion of community members into prevention process should be emphasized as necessary and core element of social support optimization within the framework of delinquency prevention. This perspective highlights certain methods of social work to be applied: inclusion of new network members, and correction of already existing networks.

The necessity to include new network members is based on the research data, showing that respondents networks are rather static, mostly oriented towards family and basically devoid of members from other social institutions. This kind of networks lacks diverse experience and behaviour models, moreover, friends, who occupy the dominant position, may provide negative support, stimulate delinquent behaviour or negative identification. In this case, the first sight should be placed on school and schoolmates, trying to involve them in delinquents' networks and activities as much as possible. Victims of the offenses committed by delinquents should also be included into the prevention process as restoring broken relationships and excluding the fear of crime is impossible without reconciliation of offender and victim.

Inevitably, social networks that have already been existing also need to be optimized. As the data show, long-lasting and constant support comes mainly from friends and parents, while other network domains are left aside. Special attention should be paid to delinquents relationships with siblings, because the present situation leaves offenders in a marginal position both in family and in community.

This meta-analysis leaves several implications for further studies of preventive potential of social support. The first of these implications opens for more universal approach to be taken, revealing the position of social support within the wider context of preventive framework.

The models presented here didn't include measures of macro level, thus leaving a space for future research into delinquency prevention. Certain political measures of increasing supportiveness within the society in general and thus reducing level of crime may be studied in the future, thus expanding the prevention framework. For example, successful inclusion of community into the process of prevention needs political decisions whereas the research about the mechanisms to achieve this goal should be of great value.

The second implication concerns social support effects over time. Time-frame or chronosystem is frequently added to the ecosystem model and includes changes over time which create new conditions for developmental processes. Support processes and effects also change over time therefore it is important to investigate into supportive strategies at different stages of preventive process and/or following significant social events. Social support may also be perceived differently by an offender at the beginning of the prevention process and in the latter stages of it. Inclusion of chronosystem into the social support research would complete the prevention framework and allow perceiving the whole picture of supportive measures.

D. Saleebey in his book about human strengths (Saleebey, 1992) wrote that client doesn't need a travel agency in the face of social worker, he rather needs a travel companion to share impressions and emotions with. The same could be said about delinquent children and the process of delinquency prevention. If we approach delinquency prevention as a process of telling adolescents how to behave and what not to do which includes mainly professionals (police and probation officers, teachers, social workers), we will be acting as travel agents simply giving them a ticket. Unfortunately, just giving a ticket doesn't mean that adolescent will travel. Vey few people like to travel alone or guided by the officer, especially the ones who feel rejected and alienated, i.e. the "islands" of our society as it was put in the introduction. These children will find their travel companions in the street and, most likely, sell their ticket or choose undesired route.

Social support for these adolescents coming from their environment, inclusion of families, neighbours, relatives into their networks, would provide them with wider opportunities to choose a travel companion,

while positive attitudes and human respect may reduce the feeling of being an "island" and encourage to take the right journey. Supportive relationships have the potential to serve as material for building bridges between them and community. Once again social workers should stand in the forefront of the bridge-building process, finding (or themselves becoming) travel companions for the delinquents. The less islands are in our society, the greater the joy of travelling millähtogether in the same direction.

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Appendices

Published articles

Appendix 1:
Valdas Rimkus (2005) "Problems of emotional support in today's family" – *ATEE conference "Changing education in a changing society: Europe 15+10"* (book 2), Klaipėda, p. 171–175.

Appendix 2:
Valdas Rimkus 2007 "The interlinking of social control and support as a precondition for the crime prevention in the family" – *Tiltai (Bridges)*, No. 1 (38), p. 37–54.

Appendix 3:
Valdas Rimkus 2008 "Aspects of social support in families of delinquent and non-delinquent children" – *Tiltai (Bridges)*, No. 2 (43), p. 75–92.

Appendix 4:
Valdas Rimkus 2010 "Social support characteristics of delinquents' social network" – *Tiltai, Nr. 1* (50), p. 1–21.