

---

**Selected Participants' Papers on the Profiles and Effective  
Treatment of Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders of Japan**

---

**ON APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENTS  
OF SERIOUS JUVENILE OFFENDERS IN THE FAMILY COURT**

*Kazumi Watanabe\**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

In Japan, many people are concerned about recent serious crimes committed by juveniles. They are, in particular, shocked that juveniles under the age of 14 years old commit serious offences. Furthermore, some juveniles do not exhibit any signs of criminal intent until just before the crime is committed. Anxiety and embarrassment slowly spread through society because the public is unable to understand why juveniles commit such serious offences.

In the Family Court, we have conducted detailed investigations from various viewpoints to find out what has caused the crimes, and to make suitable judgments for juveniles. However, there is a lot we do not yet understand about these juveniles' psychological conditions, backgrounds, etc. In the Family Court, appropriately assessing serious juvenile offenders has become an urgent problem.

**II. THE ORGANIZATION AND THE FUNCTION OF THE FAMILY COURT**

Before discussing the main subject, let us review the system of the Family Court in Japan.

The Family Court was established in 1949 with the concept of maintaining the welfare of families and seeking the sound upbringing of juveniles. It is a court specialized in dealing comprehensively with domestic relations cases and juvenile delinquency cases, and it is a court of first instance. There are 50 head offices throughout Japan with at least one in each prefecture. The Family Courts have 203 branches in total. In addition, there are 77 local offices of the Family Court in towns throughout Japan.

It goes without saying that the Family Court has a judicial function. In addition, the Family Court has the following characteristics. First, it looks at juveniles through the lens of human science to solve their problems. Next, it can do casework when it is necessary. Finally, it has the function of providing welfare and education in the procedure of the Family Court. The Family Court probation officer is a professional unique to the Family Court to enforce these purposes.

As previously stated, the Family Court deals with domestic relations cases and juvenile cases. Typical examples of domestic relations cases are: guardianship of adults, permission to adopt a minor, requesting maintenance for bringing up a child, designation of parental authority and alteration thereof, partition of estate, marital relationship disputes, and divorce. Typical examples of juvenile delinquency cases are listed as follows: theft, extortion, bodily injury, violation of Road Traffic Laws, etc.

Family Court probation officers conduct investigations into the facts of these cases and co-ordinate human relationships for the proper disposition of cases of domestic relations, personal affairs, and juvenile delinquency, and submit reports to the judge.

Family Court probation officers are specialists in the field of human sciences such as psychology, sociology, pedagogy, and social work, and are engaged in the scientific function of the Family Court by utilizing their technical knowledge and skills. However, the acquisition of such knowledge and skills is not easy. They do this by taking a two-year training course at the Research and Training Institute for court officers. The course also strengthens their practical capabilities. After the course, Family Court probation

---

\* Family Court Probation Officer, Tokyo Family Court.

officers will be able to handle cases by themselves.

### III. THE SYSTEM OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY CASES IN JAPAN

Figure 1 shows the procedure of juvenile delinquency cases in Japan. The Family Court usually receives juvenile delinquency cases by referral from police officers, public prosecutors, or the chiefs of a child guidance centre.

These cases may involve juveniles who are arrested, or those who are still at large. The arrested juvenile delinquent is placed in a juvenile classification home and receives a mental and physical evaluation. The standard maximum detention period is four weeks. Almost all juvenile offenders who commit serious crimes will enter a juvenile classification home.

When the Family Court receives a juvenile delinquency case, a judge orders the Family Court probation officers to investigate. This investigation is generally called a “social inquiry”.

The objective of the juvenile procedure is to uncover the facts of delinquency cases as well as to determine the necessity for educative measures. The necessity for educative measures is directly related to the possibility of recidivism. The main purpose of the investigation is to clarify the existence and degree of risk of recidivism.

Family Court probation officers investigate juveniles or any other people involved. They evaluate the risk of recidivism by utilizing their knowledge of related fields of human science. In addition, the Family Court has psychiatrists on its staff and can receive advice from the technical standpoint if necessary.

Family Court probation officers conduct the investigation by summoning juveniles, parents, school teachers, or any other persons concerned to come to the Family Court. It also interviews the juvenile and may use methods of psychological testing. Also, they may visit the juvenile’s home to observe his or her environmental situation, or make inquiries to the juvenile’s school regarding their school life. They may also investigate the situation of the victims.

Family Court probation officers examine the juvenile’s personality, habitual behaviour, personal history, environment, etc. By these investigations, they assess the risk of recidivism from a medical, psychological, and social viewpoint. In other words, they evaluate current developmental problems and developmental stages of the juvenile. At the same time, they consider how strong an influence the environmental factor has on juveniles. They then determine how it is related to the act of delinquency and evaluate the risk of recidivism. Finally, they submit reports regarding what kind of treatment the juvenile needs to the presiding judge or judges.

Based on the investigation results, judges decide whether or not to hold hearings for the juveniles. The final dispositions are as follows: 1) dismissal without hearing; 2) dismissal after hearing; 3) protective measures; 4) referral to the chief of a child guidance centre; or 5) sending a case to a public prosecutor. Protective measures are as follows: probationary supervision, commitment to a juvenile training school, commitment to a home for juvenile training, or to a home for dependent children.

Regarding serious juvenile offenders, the Juvenile Law was revised in 2000. According to the current law, when a juvenile intentionally takes the life of a victim, a judge should send the case to the public prosecutor. The revised law takes into consideration the viewpoint of the victim and the protection of the public.

The Juvenile Law Article 20-2 says;

*The Family Court should send the case of the juvenile, who takes a life of victim by an intentional act of crime, and who is over 16 years of age at the time of the offense, to the public prosecutor. However, the Family Court can determine other measures if it recognizes that disposition except sending the case to the prosecutor is suitable, by considering the motivation of the juvenile delinquency, the situation after the crime, the character, age, behavior, environment and others, as a result of investigation.*

In short, the Family Court aims for the realization of the ideal of “sound upbringing of juveniles” by measuring suitable dispositions for juveniles. Family Court probation officers play an important role in this procedure. Of course, by the Juvenile Law, a serious juvenile offender who lets a victim die intentionally should be subject to the same justice process as that applied to adult penal trials from the viewpoint of victims and those seeking social protection. However, even in serious cases, the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders should not be made light of. Therefore the Family Court can determine protective measures if they are required. We can be certain that the appropriate disposition of the case is the most important object of hearings in Japan.

#### IV. STATISTICS

##### A. Recent Trends of Serious Juvenile Offences

Graph 1 shows the change in the number of serious juvenile cases and of juvenile theft cases in Japan over the last 20 years. (In judicial statistics in Japan, serious offences mean the four offences of “murder, robbery, rape and arson”.)

The number of serious juvenile offenders has remained steady over the past 20 or so years. The annual percentage has also been steady at around 1% of the total number of juvenile penal cases since 1985. In 2006, 0.8% of cases were classified as serious. Even in 1997, when it is said that serious juvenile offences increased rapidly in Japan, only 1.3% of cases fell into this category.

Graph 2 shows the rate of four serious offences committed by juveniles out of 1000 children between 10 and 20 years of age. Murder and arson cases remain steady at less than 0.05%. Likewise, the number of rape cases does not vary. The only change is in robbery cases. However, this is due to the increase in “robbery on the road,” dating from 1997. Most road robbery are incidents of constructive robbery, where a victim is hurt in a mugging by an assailant on a bicycle or a scooter. This number increases and decreases according to the policy of arrest and prosecution. Therefore, by this graph alone, it does not follow that Japanese juvenile delinquency has become more serious.

However, it is true that serious juvenile delinquency which has caused public concern has occurred frequently in recent years. As a result, the Juvenile Act was revised in 2000. Therefore, we wonder if juvenile delinquency has really become more serious. It seems in part that the media has formed that image. But it is a fact that there have been several cases which a child who has previously been regarded as “obedient and good” at home and school suddenly displays cruel and brutal behaviour. These cases were not seen in the past, so why are they happening now? Later, I shall try to give an account of the characteristics of recent serious juvenile offenders.

##### B. Judgments on Serious Juvenile Delinquent Offenders

Next, let us now look at judgments in serious juvenile delinquency cases in Japan. Graph 3 shows the percentages of judgments reached on serious juvenile delinquents in 2006, 1996, and 1986. For comparison, Graph 4 shows the percentages of judgments rendered in theft juvenile cases. The results are as follows:

- Judgments in theft cases haven't changed over the last 20 years.
- In contrast, for serious juvenile cases, the percentage of cases resulting in custodial treatment has risen.

Note: The reason for this is that, in regard to robbery, cases sent to a public prosecutor have greatly increased. (It seems that the increase has resulted from the revision of the Juvenile Law in 2000.)

#### V. CHARACTERISTICS OF SERIOUS JUVENILE OFFENDERS

Recently, several adequate practical and pragmatic research studies have been made by the Family Court to deepen understanding of these cases. We're concerned with the characteristics identified by the research.

##### A. Characteristics of Personality and Behaviour

###### 1. High Impulsivity

Serious juvenile offenders tend to grasp situations at a level of pleasure or pain and cannot express their

feelings using appropriate vocabulary. As a result, juveniles are compelled by their immediate emotions and act impulsively. Juveniles only feel irritated without knowing the reason why. Therefore, they are apt to commit offences impulsively. The main reason for this problem is the lack of a process of development by which other children with a healthy parental relationship develop skills to express their feelings appropriately.

## 2. Cognitive Distortion

Serious juvenile offenders tend to avoid, repress and deny events which are unpleasant for them. Since juveniles cannot objectively grasp the relationship between themselves and those around them, they tend to cling to their own beliefs and have excessive feelings of being unnecessarily persecuted. This distorted view leads to inappropriate reactions which contribute to them committing an offence. Moreover, this trend is stronger in groups than in individuals.

## 3. Bad Self-image

Many serious juvenile offenders have a bad self-image. Because they believe that those around them may attack them, they become defensive. Their self-esteem is strongly affected by minor triggers. As a result, they become emotionally confused and commit offences.

One of the reasons for this problem is that many juveniles grow up without interacting well with others. Here is a typical example: a juvenile was physically abused, neglected and rarely praised. For the juvenile, his or her home was not a secure base psychologically or physically. In such terrible circumstances a juvenile cannot learn to rely on him or herself.

Juveniles who committed offences in a group display this tendency strongly. Because juveniles strengthen ties with friends of similar circumstances and become dependent on each other, they cannot stop themselves from escalating the offences they commit for fear that they will be excluded from the group.

Some juveniles immerse themselves in fantasies such as TV games to avoid hurting their self-esteem. Because these juveniles have fewer relationships with those around them, there are big gaps between their self-images and societal reality. Subsequently, the juveniles are sensitive, and their sensitive self-esteem is easily affected by small things.

## 4. Insufficient Interpersonal Skills

It is extremely difficult to form and to keep good relationships for both juveniles who commit offences alone, and for those who commit offences with a group. Therefore, their circle of acquaintances is very limited. Since they are extremely cautious and cannot believe others, they avoid forming new relationships, and their feelings of isolation deepen.

In contrast, some juveniles seem to be adjusted to society and live their lives peacefully. For such juveniles, the evaluations from people around them are good. However, in reality, they superficially make themselves agreeable to everybody in order that they are not excluded by their friends. It is, as it were, an over-adjustment. These relationships with friends are not mentally stable. Consequently, when the juveniles can no longer endure these painful situations, their emotions burst, resulting in the committing of offences.

Since both types of juveniles are strained by human relationships, they do not develop their interpersonal skills.

## 5. Social Restriction by Developmental Disorders and Mild Mental Retardation

Many juveniles who commit serious offences alone have some developmental disorders such as Pervasive Developmental Disorders, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorders or mild mental retardations. The backgrounds of juveniles who commit offences are as follows:

- The juveniles have extreme cognitive distortion, and thus they cannot deal in appropriate ways with events which occur in daily life.
- The juveniles have fixations with specific things. Therefore they cultivate odd behaviours.
- Since the juveniles cannot form healthy relationships, they cannot adjust to group environments.

Because of these characteristics, such juveniles are susceptible to causing trouble at school and at home. However, most of them do not receive appropriate support, and thus they are in a vicious spiral; the more trouble they cause, the worse their adjustments to society. Of course, the existence of these disorders does not directly connect with offences. But, if these juveniles are adversely affected by their social environment, in addition to disorders, they more easily become unstable and commit offences.

## **B. Characteristics of Circumstances Surrounding Serious Juvenile Offenders**

### **1. Characteristics of Family Relationships**

Almost all juvenile offenders' families are dysfunctional. These families can be described as follows.

#### *(i) Families in which Problems are Evident*

##### *(a) Families with a violent daily life*

This type of parent uses violence to discipline children, and such violence also exists between the parents. Furthermore, these juveniles may also experience multiple changes of environment, such as their parents' divorce, or moving house because of neighbourhood troubles, etc. Such changes have serious effects. Their home is not a secure base for them.

##### *(b) Families in which the parents neglect the children*

Some parents do not have the mental or economic resources to take care of their children. In this type of family, the parents are not conscious of the juveniles' problems, or they ignore them though they are conscious of them. The parents repeat temporary solutions, such as scolding or corporal punishment. This cycle only aggravates the juveniles' problems.

##### *(c) Families in which parents cannot raise children because of their own mental disorders*

This type of family is one where the parents have some mental disorder such as depression, personality disorder or alcoholism. The parents' mental states affect the juveniles, and thus the juveniles are susceptible to instability. In addition, the parents are dependent on their children in many cases.

#### *(ii) Families in which Problems are not Evident*

##### *(a) Families with less emotional interaction*

This type of family ostensibly looks like a usual family. Though both parents are in the home and there is plenty of money, the family lacks warm communications. The reason is that parents do not express their feelings enough, or that there is underlying family animosity, and so on. As a result, the juveniles in these families cannot express their real intentions and feelings, increasing their discontent.

##### *(b) Families in which parents have excessive expectations of their children*

In this type of family, parents overestimate the juveniles, demand of them to be "an ideal child" and intend to look at only the good side of them. The juveniles continue to pretend to be "a good child" for as long as possible without showing their true nature to their parents. But this burden is too heavy to be borne for long. The juveniles cannot live up to their parents' expectations, which causes them to commit offences.

### **2. Characteristics of School and Friends**

#### *(i) Changes of School Atmosphere and Relationships with Teachers*

Though juveniles' families may have serious problems, school (especially an elementary school) can sometimes become a strong social resource. While teachers can support these juveniles in appropriate ways, juveniles do not cause excessive problems. However, juveniles lose support when teachers are transferred, and the juveniles can become mentally unstable. Upon entering a junior high school in particular, the professional distance between juveniles and teachers changes greatly and study quickly becomes more difficult. Although these changes press juveniles to adapt, many of the troubled ones cannot cope with the changes.

#### *(ii) Bullying*

Many juveniles have experienced bullying which greatly damaged their self-esteem. There are two types of juvenile offenders who commit offences alone: the first type is a juvenile who directly attacks the person who bullies them; the second type is a juvenile who vents his or her aggression on his or her family and on the weak instead of directing an attack at the perpetrator of the bullying.

*(iii) Association with Delinquent Peers*

Juveniles who are not comfortable in their homes strengthen ties with friends under similar circumstances and form associations with delinquent peers. In the groups, ranking is born by physical strength, build, intelligence and so on. These juveniles tend to attack the weaker members of the group. Furthermore, group dynamics often work as follows:

- As the juveniles deny their own inferior feeling, they try to satisfy their need to dominate with violence.
- The juveniles who are influenced by their peers and want to prove their fearlessness tend to act in concert with groups.

As a result, the juveniles cannot stop themselves from escalating their offences.

3. Social Changes

- (a) Compared with the past, neighbours are indifferent to each other, and there are fewer stable communities. Therefore juveniles and their families who need some support tend to remain unaided. The function of oral traditions regarding childcare or culture has shifted from the family and community to some institutions.
- (b) It has become much easier for juveniles to acquire things without their parents' knowledge, at convenience stores or volume sales stores. In addition, most people have a wide variety of goods, and people tend to consume more in order to differentiate themselves slightly from those around them.
- (c) Juveniles are greatly influenced by the media, which has not yet been proved to have direct causality with crime. To take an example, many juveniles who have committed murder learn something about their offences from TV programmes or DVDs. Almost all juveniles play video games and watch DVDs daily. Some of them have interest in horror movies and video games with violent or disturbing contents, and they cannot distinguish fantasy from reality. The juveniles are exposed to a great deal of distorted information which is beyond the imagination of most adults.

In this chapter, we considered the characteristics of serious juvenile offenders from both aspects; individual factors such as personality and behaviour, and environmental factors such as family, school and society. The important point to note is that there is not only one factor directly connected with serious juvenile delinquency, but that various interacting factors drive juveniles to commit serious offences.

**VI. PROGRESSION TO SERIOUS JUVENILE DELINQUENCY**

Let us now consider how the characteristics mentioned above influence juvenile delinquency. Figure 2 shows the typical progression to serious juvenile delinquency. This schematic diagram appeared in practical and pragmatic research, based on case studies concerning serious juvenile offenders under 14 years old in the Family Court. However, this idea can be applied to juveniles over 14 years old.

First, let us start with the family. Juvenile offenders interact inappropriately with other family members, for example, some face domestic violence, neglect, little emotional interaction and their parents' own problems. These juveniles' emotions have not developed sufficiently by the time they reach puberty. The juveniles cannot deal with negative feelings on their own. Therefore they tend to have poor emotional control, act impulsively, and also deny their own feelings. As the juveniles grow up, their problems get worse. If the juveniles have developmental disorders or mental retardation, their personality and behaviour become more distorted than their peers who do not have these problems. Their personality and behaviour are also greatly influenced by the atmosphere of the community to which they belong, or by the amount of support they receive from public institutions.

Puberty is a critical phase when juveniles change physically and psychologically. Rapid bodily developments shake their self-image. These changes press parents to deal with juveniles' problems and to reconstruct family relations. Juveniles experience a conflict between independence and dependence at this developmental stage. The conflict between dependence and independence becomes very strong between

parents and juveniles, and thus parent-child relationships become unstable. In addition, juveniles need to adjust to new environments in this stage.

Therefore juveniles and the environments surrounding them are susceptible to instability. Juveniles are worried and stressed, they cannot solve their problems without consulting anyone, and thus they feel depressed. Some of them cause many small problems frequently but do not ask for assistance. If the people around them do not deal with the problems, the juveniles' depressive emotions intensify, and they are consumed by stress and discontent. At that time, juveniles tend to feel that minor issues which they have experienced previously have increased and become very unpleasant. These stimulations become a trigger. This trigger rapidly increases their accumulated discontent, anxiety and pent-up feelings. Moreover juveniles believe that this trigger is the cause of their discontent and stress. As a result, juveniles violently attack the target, and crimes occur. To use an analogy, a balloon which has been over-inflated is grazed by a needle.

As we have now seen, there is certainly a process by which juveniles accumulate stress or discontent through the interaction of various factors until serious cases of juvenile delinquency occur. We need to follow carefully the progression of juvenile delinquency, and we need to understand why juveniles commit offences.

## VII. CASE STUDY

The following is a case which I have handled in the past. I introduce it to you hoping to make more specific the characteristics and process mentioned above.

### A. Outline of the Facts

The public prosecutor sent this case to the Family Court as a bodily injury case, but it was actually an attempted murder case. This juvenile was a 14-year-old boy, in the third year of junior high school. He lived in very small two room apartment with his mother. He felt a strong pressure to pretend to be an "honest and serious type of man", which was for a long time considered to be his true character by his classmates and teachers at both his school and cram school. One day he had a trifling misunderstanding with his only friend. It made him feel sick and tired of his whole life and everything in it. He thought that he did not have any way to be free except by killing his mother. In the night he prepared a long fluorescent light and a kitchen knife. He hit his sleeping mother with the fluorescent light, and stabbed her with the knife, but she struggled and he could not kill her. Later he said: "if I could kill my mother, I would dismember her body and throw the pieces into the river near my apartment, like some scene that I saw in a TV drama before."

### B. This Juvenile's Personality and Behaviour

This juvenile had no criminal record. His IQ was 87(WISC-III). According to the physical and psychological examination, he was diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder, not otherwise specified. He has a deep attachment to the "Romance of Three Kingdoms (*Sangoku-shi*)" which is one of the most famous Chinese classics, and reads very many related books. He remembers all the details of the characters, especially those from a video game based on the "Romance of Three Kingdoms (*Sangoku-shi*)".

This juvenile's ideation is self-centered and lacked objectivity. He is too sensitive to anything that others say and do against him. He tends to regard every trifling stimulus from those around him as persecution. He becomes increasingly discontented without conveying his feeling to others. Since he believes that he is very poor at human relations, he retracts into his own shell and indulges in a kind of childish delusion that he is almighty. Therefore he is alienated from those around him, but he actually wants to be accepted by others. At the time of his interview, he pleaded with me to understand his pain.

### C. The Family

His family consisted of him and his mother. He did not have his own private room in the apartment. His parents divorced when he was in the second year of elementary school. The main reason for the divorce was that his father was unfaithful to his mother and that he frequently changed his job. According to his mother, during some periods his father had stayed indoors at home for whole days at a time. This means that there might be some possibility that his father had some kind of mental disorder. The juvenile sometimes met his father at his father's request, but reluctantly. When he was in elementary school, he and his mother had

a very close relationship. During elementary school, he was always with his mother at home after school. However, he kept away from his mother after he entered junior high school and she began to tell him to study hard. In addition, since the juvenile entered the second grade of junior high school, his mother had been associating with a man who already had a wife and children.

#### **D. School and Friends**

The juvenile did not speak at all at school. He was bullied at elementary school by some classmates. At junior high school, he spoke only to a male classmate who had the same unsocial tendencies. He mixed up this friend with a famous sexy female TV star and projected her onto him sometimes. He even had a kind of loving feeling for this friend. He hated studying and was doing poorly at school, but he did not refuse to attend.

#### **E. Educative Measures**

The judgment was to send this juvenile to a juvenile training school for one and a half years. He was sent to a training school which specializes in treating juvenile offenders who have developmental and emotional disorders.

#### **F. Additional Considerations**

Because this juvenile had a developmental disorder, it was very difficult for him to react appropriately in daily life. He often did unexpected and startling things at school, so his classmates bullied him. Therefore he did not speak at school. He had tried to form fewer human relationships, in order to avoid hurting his self-esteem. He was withdrawn into himself and never opened his mind to anybody. He did not have any chance to develop the skills to express his emotions with suitable words and behaviour, nor did he have any chance to correct his cognitive distortion. However, the parent-child relationship was very close and his home was a secure base for him in his elementary school years.

As mentioned above, however, after he entered junior high school, his environment suddenly changed. His schoolwork rapidly became more difficult and his mother told him to study hard. In addition, his mother began to associate with a man. He wondered if she would choose this new man over him. His anxiety about being deserted increased and his home was not a secure base for him any longer. However, he was not aware of his anxiety and discontent and did not know how to express his feelings appropriately. He felt increasingly isolated and frustrated. Developmentally, he was approaching puberty, thus he was liable to be unstable. Under such circumstances, he had a trifling misunderstanding with his only friend, and this issue was the trigger. He was cornered mentally and selected his mother as his target because she was the only the person to whom he could express his emotional dependence.

### **VIII. CONCLUSION**

The objective of the Family Court is the accurate assessment of serious juvenile offenders, appropriate judgment suitable for each juvenile, and classification of the treatment programme. In order to realize the objectives, it is necessary for the Family Court to tackle the following points.

#### **A. Accumulation and Sharing of Case Studies**

Research regarding serious juvenile offenders has just started. At present, Family Court probation officers depend heavily on their past experience in their work. If the Family Court cannot provide continuous accurate assessments, it cannot make appropriate judgments. The Family Court needs to gain experience in dealing with serious juvenile cases, to advance practical and pragmatic research on both risk factors and protective factors, and to share the knowledge gained in doing so.

#### **B. Improvement of Interview Skills and Enrichment of Training**

We often encounter difficulty in interviewing serious juvenile offenders, because they are poor at expressing their feelings verbally and have developmental disorders or mental retardation. It is important for each Family Court probation officer to improve his or her interview skills in order to carry out accurate assessments. In addition, the Family Court should have a more integrated training system.

#### **C. Co-operation with Institutions Concerned**

I think that one of the Family Court's important roles is to smoothly connect juveniles and the



institutions which can help them. In order to fulfill that role, co-operation with those institutions is indispensable.

In order to indicate the point of the treatment programme, Family Court probation officers must be very knowledgeable about what treatments are available at each institution. In addition, it is very useful for the Family Court to know not only the contents of treatments, but the effect of the treatments.

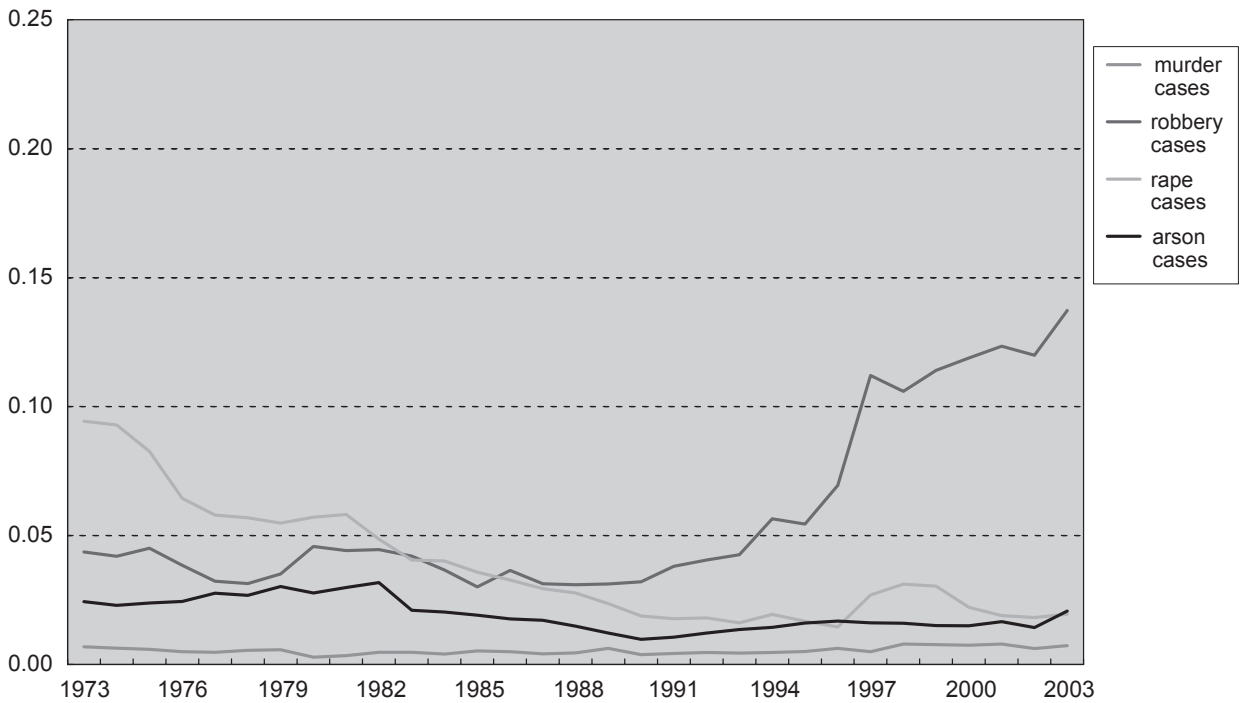
Furthermore, the Family Court needs to co-operate not only with institutions for correctional education, but also with other institutions such as hospitals or educational counselling centres, etc. Juveniles who have obvious problems (e.g. developmental disorders, mental retardation) are sometimes sent to the Family Court for minor delinquency before committing serious offences, but most of these juveniles and their families do not receive appropriate support. From the viewpoint of the prevention of offences, we need to connect these juveniles with the institutions suitable for them.

Finally, society's views of serious juvenile offenders have gradually hardened over the years. Every time serious juvenile delinquency is reported in the media, there is a public appeal for more severe punishment of juveniles. Considering this issue from the viewpoint of the victim, that opinion may stand to reason. However, it is obvious that the more serious a juvenile delinquent case is, the bigger and deeper the problems the juvenile has. I think that it is the duty of society to re-educate them before they reach adulthood. But I do feel it is a serious problem for the Family Court to keep a balance between both sides, namely, the rehabilitation of delinquent juveniles and victims, in making judgments, and thus I have not reached any solid conclusion myself.

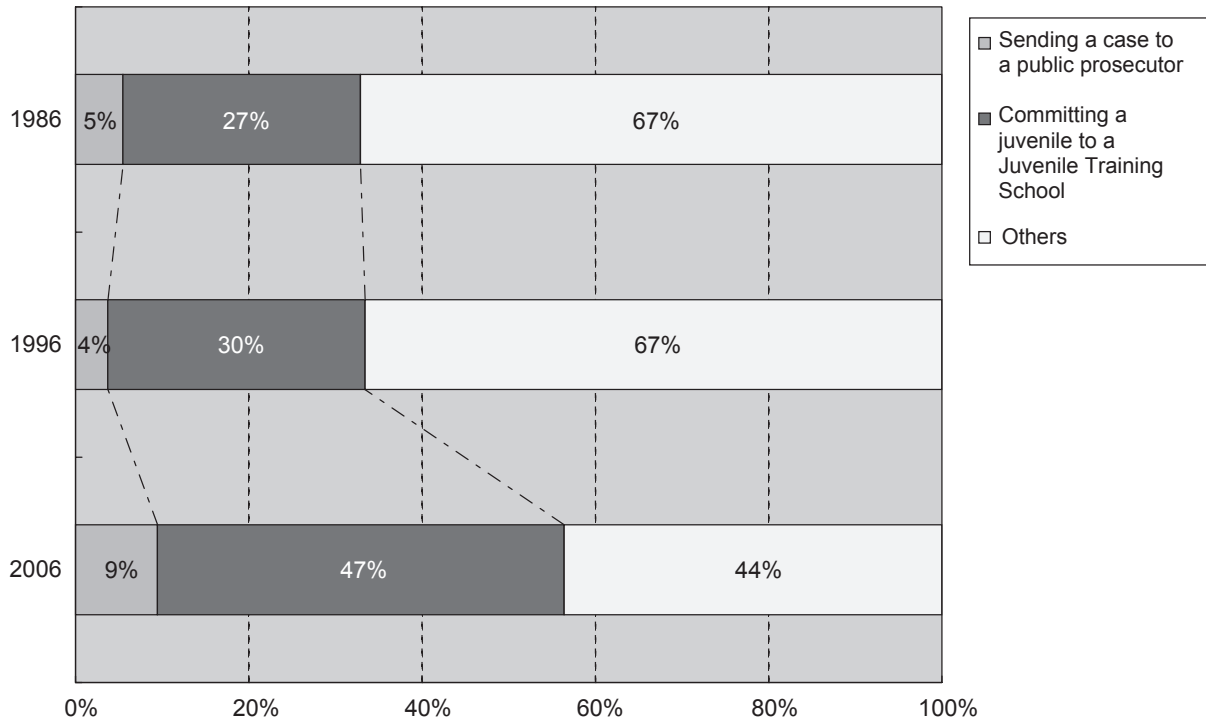
**Graph 1: Comparison of the number of juvenile theft cases and serious cases**



**Graph 2: Comparison of four types of serious juvenile cases**



**Graph 3: Percentage of various judgments in serious juvenile cases in Japan**



**Graph 4: Percentage of various judgments in theft cases in Japan**

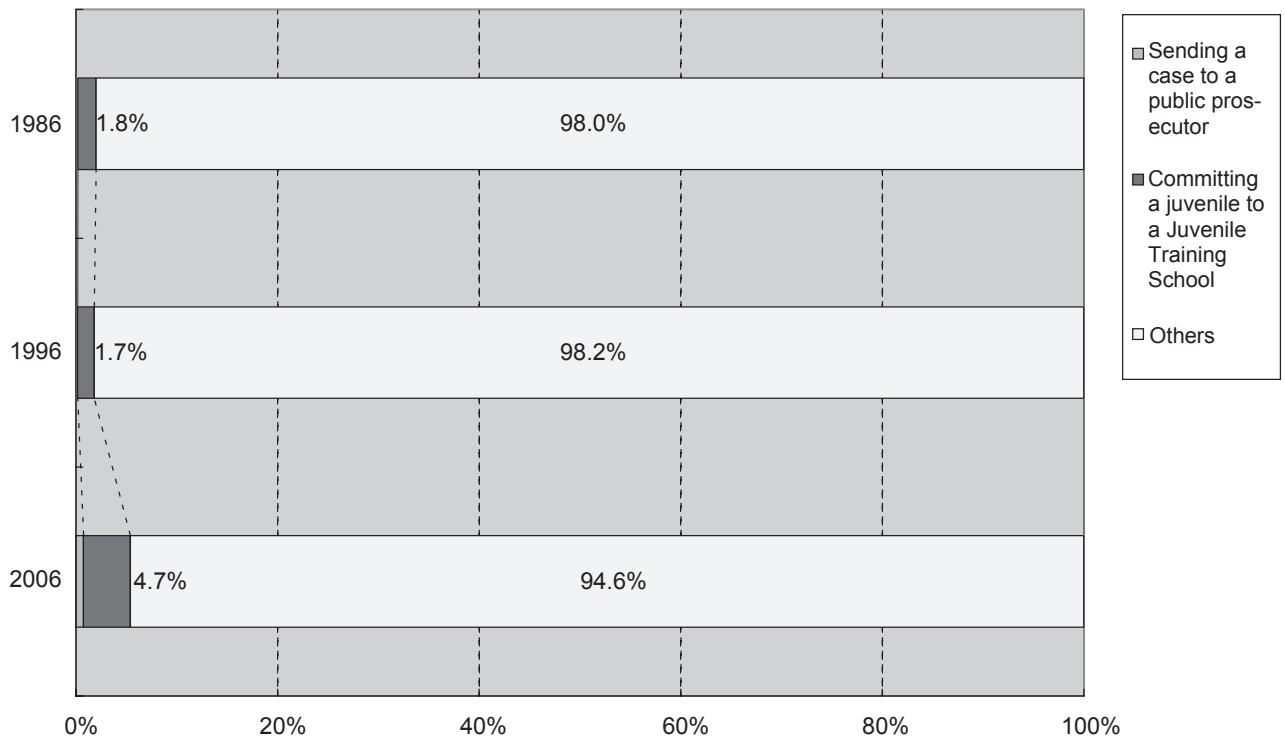


Figure 1: Procedure of Juvenile Proceeding

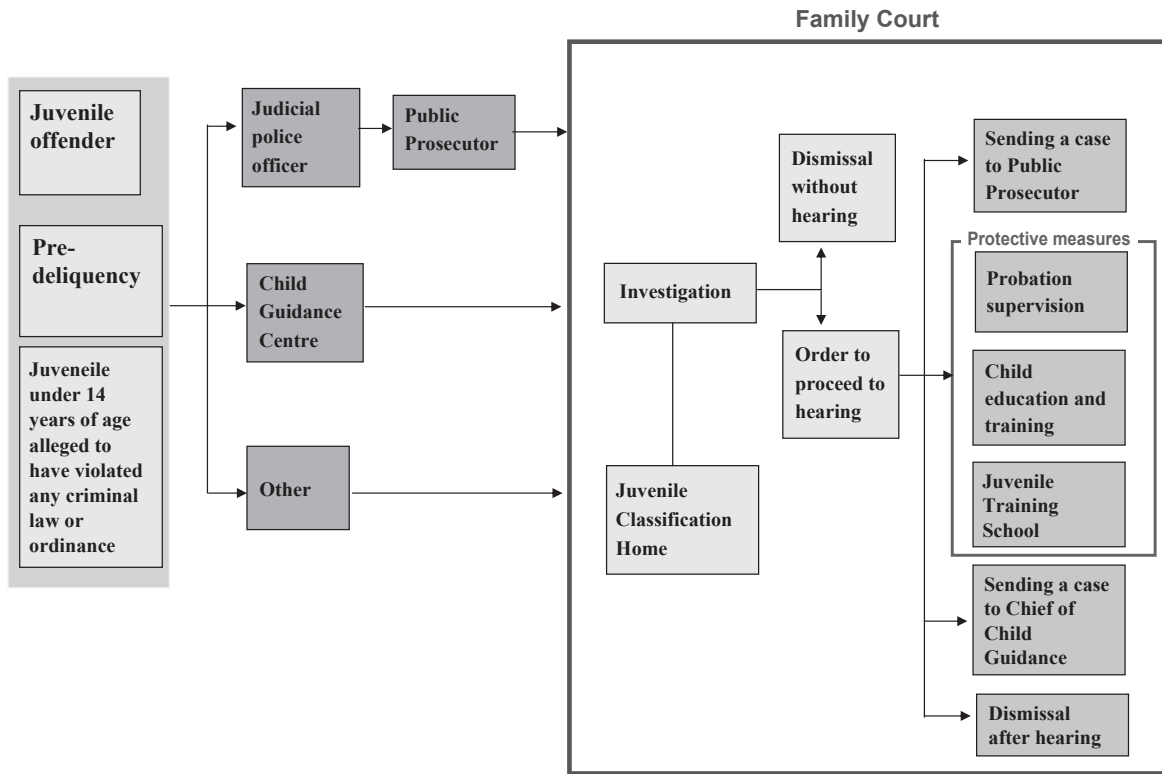


Figure 2: Typical progression to serious juvenile delinquency

