Evaluation Summary of the Programme de suivi intensif de Montréal – Gangs de rue [Montreal Intensive Supervision Program – Street Gangs]

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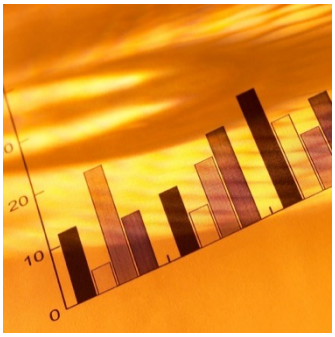

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Abstract

This document concerns the evaluation of the Programme de suivi intensif de Montréal – Gangs de rue (PSI-MTL/GDR) [Montreal Intensive Supervision Program – Street Gangs], which was implemented in Montreal from 2009 to 2014, with 142 offenders aged 15 to 25 who were involved in criminal street gang activity and at a high risk of recidivism, or who were at risk of experiencing crimes associated with street gangs. The impact of the program on offending behaviour, criminogenic risks, social integration, and involvement in street gangs was assessed. The research design was quasi-experimental, with a matched control group and repeated measures. Data was collected from 33 participants and 45 offenders from the control group, and the files of 127 participants and 166 young offenders from the control group were analyzed. There were no significant differences in the nature and severity of offences leading to reconvictions. The rates of recidivism in the experimental group and the control group are comparable after controlling for risk, criminal history, and level of police surveillance. The rate of failure to comply with the conditions of supervision in the experimental group is thus slightly higher, which could be explained by differences in the reporting mechanisms: [translation] "while offences are generally based on complaints from citizens, victims, or proactive (or reactive) police actions, failures to comply with the conditions of supervision may be evidence of reactivity by stakeholders who support or monitor offenders." The total cost of the PSI-MTL/GDR over 5 years is $14,820,543, or $31,163.34 per youth.

Author's Note

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Product Information

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Introduction

Program Description

Treatment Model and Program Characteristics

The Programme de suivi intensif de Montréal – Gangs de rue (PSI-MTL/GDR) [Montreal Intensive Supervision Program – Street Gangs][1] was implemented in Montreal from 2009 to 2014, with 142 offenders aged 15 to 25[2] who were involved in criminal street gang activity and at a high risk of recidivism, or who were at risk of experiencing crimes associated with street gangs. The program, which was inspired by the Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression (Spergel et al., 1994), was intended to progressively align treatment principles between different partners and to circulate information among stakeholders 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Treatment areas for the PSI-MTL/GDR included monitoring, supervision, assistance, and referrals for young people. The first area includes the establishment of a contingency framework based on the legal conditions for the sentence, monitoring the offender's compliance with the conditions of the order according to the terms provided by law, and including provisions to adjust treatment when the conditions are breached. Clinical supervision was based on a differential assessment of the participants, including a criminological and psychosocial analysis of their situation. Youth supervision took into account their criminogenic needs and the conditions of the order, in order to empower them in their social integration. Youths participated in pro-social skills development workshops, while being able to access pro-social re-educational, occupational, sport, employability and employment, recreation, and community volunteering activities. Family activities and activities associated with specific interventions were also offered; in addition, the risk of compromising siblings, including joining a gang, was assessed by the stakeholders. Lastly, the final treatment area involved referring youths, and eventually their siblings, to assistance and reference organizations. The main outputs of these activities included a specific treatment environment for each candidate; 3 to 4 organized follow-up meetings per week; ten organized group workshops (75 to 100 hours of direct treatment in 3 phases lasting approximately 16 to 18 weeks); organized pro-social, educational, or client employability activities (20 to 40 hours per week); and organized learning consolidation sessions delivered up to 3 months after the activities ended.

[1] The PSI-MTL/GDR was developed by the Montreal Youth Centre – University Institute (MYC-UI) and implemented in collaboration with the Batshaw Youth and Family Centres (BYFC) and Quebec Correctional Services (QCS). The treatment also involved the *Service de police de la Ville de Montréal* (SPVM), the *Direction des poursuites criminelles et pénales* (DPCP), the City of Montreal, attorneys, as well as the *PACT de rue* and Boys & Girls Club of LaSalle community organizations.

[2] The program was implemented in the boroughs of Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension and LaSalle with 138 male offenders and 4 female offenders over 57 months, from August 2009 to June 2014, during which the closing process began.

Implementation Fidelity

In order to evaluate implementation fidelity, researchers used the data entered in the institutional computer files of 76 youths, or data that were recorded manually by stakeholders.[3] The treatment plans (TPs) for these participants included an average of 2.6 objectives, which were predominantly associated with employment and education (47% of TPs). Objectives for productive free time were included in 33% of TPs, compared to 24% for objectives associated with acquiring social skills, and 22% for objectives related to compliance with penal measures and/or conditions set by the court. Lastly, 20% of TPs included objectives associated with social networks, adult life projects, and independence. The TP objectives of 65 youths from the MYC-UI were matched with the results obtained on the CRNI. The correspondence between the need areas identified in the CRNI and the objectives defined in the TP was analyzed for five need areas. A third (33%) of high-risk areas identified with the CRNI corresponded to a specific objective included in the TP. Furthermore, 17% of youths had in their TP an objective associated with a treatment area even though they did not have high needs in this area according to the CRNI. This low correspondence could be due to the difficulty of translating the risk and needs assessment into an individualized support strategy. It may also be associated with the distinctive characteristics of the CRNI, which assesses the risk level without proposing specific treatment methods. Using the needs assessment, the evaluators concluded that, for the program to be effective, intake should target drug addiction, recreation, education, employment, associating with delinquent peers, as well as pro-criminal attitudes and orientations.

The perception of implementation fidelity was also determined using a questionnaire administered to 22 stakeholders involved in the program.[4] The majority of respondents understood the program well, and the general objective of the program had been clearly presented to them. However, stakeholders were hesitant to use the specific treatment methods in the program (instructions, procedures, and attitudes), and several of them had difficulty grasping the implications of the approach for attitudes, strategies, and TPs. The activities were more or less based on the guiding principles of the program and, for the most part, were carried out within the prescribed deadlines, but it was difficult to obtain the expected level of effort from the offenders. Average scores[5] for implementation fidelity were established for the specificity of the program (7.7), the basics of the program (7.6), success in reaching the targeted number of people (7.4), the respondent's responsivity to the new program (7.4), treatment intensity and expected participation (7.0), as well as the treatment methods (6.9). The grid also determined the respondent's perception of the assistance provided by the workplace (7.5), the theoretical support and support from the program manual (7.5), as well as the support received through training and supervision (5.1).

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[3] TPs for 66 offenders from the MYC-UI and 10 from the BYFC. Data was taken from the PSI-MTL/GDR's Electronic Chronological Data Entry System, from the *Projet Intégration jeunesse* (PIJ)'s computer environment at youth centres, and the QCS *Dossier administratif correctionnel* (DACOR) system.

[4] Researchers adapted the self-assessment grid of implementation fidelity from Joly and Thibaudeau (2009) in order to measure implementation fidelity in 2012, with 22 respondents (stakeholders, people in management roles, participants in the project's Steering Committee, and liaison officers).

[5] The scores vary from 4.3 to 8.9/10. Results above 7.5/10 are considered the strengths in implementation fidelity, while those below 6/10 indicate weaknesses.

Evaluation Objectives

The research was intended to measure the impact of the PSI-MTL/GDR on offending behaviours and criminogenic risks, social integration, and the level of engagement in street gangs among young offenders aged 15 to 25. A descriptive cost analysis and a cost-effectiveness analysis[6] were also to be carried out.

Evaluation Methodology

The study is based on a quasi-experimental design with matching and repeated measures. The measures provided in the initial design could not be achieved in every analysis due to missing data or participants' refusal to respond. The major methodological challenge was to attain maximal statistical power by adapting to the reality of the difficulties associated with recruitment into the program and into the evaluation. Data was collected[7] from 33 participants in the PSI-MTL/GDR[8] through a second evaluation component based on using administrative files and data produced by the justice system for 127 offenders.[9] The control group in the first component was composed of 45 clients from MYC-UI, BYFC, and the Laval and Montérégie youth centres; most of those clients participated in the regular probation program (n=8) and the differential intensive monitoring program (n=28), and the others were offenders in the adult correctional system with probation or conditional sentences (n=9). The matching criteria for these two groups were age, neighbourhood, ethno-cultural background, and risk level. Membership in a street gang was based on self-reporting and SPVM data. The control group in the second component of the evaluation included 166 offenders who received services under the YCJA from youth centres or the QCS in the administrative regions of Montreal, Laval, and Montérégie. The matching criteria were age, administrative region of residence, and number of previous offences.

The first component of the evaluation research determined the initial comparability of the subjects in both groups, and identified the variables to control for during subsequent analyses. Under the second component, the file contents of ten cases considered to be representative were coded, and a manual and coding grid were tested, adjusted, and verified. Twenty files chosen at random were blind-coded by research assistants.[10] All of the files were then analyzed. A series of

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[6] The feasibility study of a cost-effectiveness analysis showed that it was not feasible.

[7] The main tools used during the pre-test were a questionnaire on demographic characteristics; the Gang Involvement Scale (GIS) and the MAC Gang (MAC[g]) to measure membership in street gangs; the Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI) used by QCS, and the Criminogenic Risks and Needs Inventory (CRNI) used by the youth centres (an adaptation of the LS/CMI) to determine the risk of recidivism; the Structured Assessment of Protective Factors (SAPROF) to evaluate protective factors; the Multidimensional Inventory of Development, Sex, and Aggression (MIDSA) to trace developmental history and history of violence; and lastly a computer questionnaire on self-reported offences, which was adapted from the Self-Report of Offending-Revised (SRO-R) scale.

[8] Ten of which were placed under the responsibility of QCS, and twenty-three of which fell under the responsibility of the MYC-UI.

[9] The data sources and collection tools used in this component include the CRNI and the *Projet intégration jeunesse* (PIJ) for youth centres; the LS/CMI and *Dossiers administratifs correctionnels* (DACOR) for QCS; official criminal files obtained from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)'s Canadian Criminal Records Information Services, the Finger Print System (FPS), the *Module d'informations policières* (MIP); and official recidivism data from the court register of the Ministry of Justice.

[10] With Cohen's Kappa inter-rater agreement coefficients and intraclass correlation coefficients.

analyses were carried out to determine the initial comparability of the two groups, and to compare them after the follow-up period. The analysis pertained to the evolution of the experimental group's risks and needs in phase 1 and phase 2. The nature and severity of new convictions (first-time recidivists) for participants in the PSI-MTL/GDR were compared to those of the control group. The length of time that passed before the offender committed a new crime was studied, as well as police surveillance for these two youth groups.

Results

Initial Comparability of the Experimental and Control Groups

First Evaluation Component

The first research component shows that the participants in the PSI-MTL/GDR are comparable with the control group in terms of socio-demographics, but they are more likely to have a native language other than French (63.6% versus 40%, $p<0.05$). The duration of the court order or the sentence was longer for the experimental group ($t=2.53$, $p<0.02$), at 14.7 months compared to 9.3 months. Few youths (n=78) explicitly consider their peer group to be a street gang, and more than a third of respondents consider themselves or previously considered themselves to be members of a street gang.[11] Although there were not any significant differences in street gang membership between the two groups, the youths in the control group reported being victimized by street gangs to a greater degree (57.8% versus 34.46%) than offenders in the program group (phi=0.23, $p<0.05$). However, the level of adherence to gang culture differed ($t=2.67$, $p<0.01$, Cohen's D = 0.64), as indicated by the total score of 73.9 for the program group (n=30) and 89.9 for the control group (n=43).[12] The control group adhered more strongly to gang rules and rituals ($t=2.37$, $p<0.05$) and to gang norms and values ($t=2.04$, $p<0.05$).[13] However, there were no significant differences in terms of adherence to gang recognition signs and symbols. The risk of recidivism measured with the CRNI was lower than anticipated, with an average of 20.7 for the experimental group (n=16) and 23.6 for the control group (n=24). An analysis of the score distribution indicates that only 33.3% of participants in the control group are considered to be at a high or very high risk, compared to 18.8% for program participants.[14] However, the differences between the two groups were not significant. Furthermore, the SAPROF indicates that youths from the PSI-MTL/GDR (n=17) and the control group (n=27) exhibited a comparable number of protective factors. Compared to the control group (n=44), offenders from the experimental group (n=32) tended to self-report a total number of crimes committed over the past twelve months that is relatively comparable (766.8 for the experimental group versus 540.5, $t=-092$, $p>0.05$), and fewer types of offences (7.1 versus 11.5, $t=3.75$, $p<0.001$).[15] The control group self-reported

[11] Official identification of gang members was measured using the data available in clinical and legal files. Self-reporting of gang membership was measured using an adapted version of the GIS.
[12] The total score measured with MAC[g] may vary from 43 to 215.
[13] The scores for the tool's sub-scales vary from 1 to 5.
[14] According to the CRNI standards, the threshold is 27.
[15] According to the French version of the Self-report of Offending-Revised (SRO-R) scale.

more thefts (phi=0.33, p<0.01), fraud (phi=0.35, p<0.01), and violent offences (phi=0.24, p<0.05). Lastly, there were no important significant differences between the program group (n=15) and the control group (n=41) in terms of developmental history and history of violence,[16] except for a slight difference in terms of being able to put oneself in other people's shoes (t=2.45, p<0.10).

Second Evaluation Component

According to the file analysis carried out during the second research component, only 31% of individuals were arrested for the first time after the age of 18, and the participants in the PSI-MTL/GDR were significantly (t=2.86 and p<0.005) slightly older (17.1 years) when they were first arrested compared to the control group (16.3 years). MIP arrest data indicates that 17% of the experimental group had been criminally active for only 6 months prior to joining the program, compared to 7% for the control group when they were integrated into the evaluation. The average number of arrests (6.9) for the experimental group (n=107) was lower (t=2.74, p<0.007) than the average number (9.1) for the control group (n=149), while the annual frequency of offences does not show any significant difference. The nature of the participants' criminal history is generally comparable; aside from arrests due to failure to comply with supervision conditions, the participants were most often arrested for threats or violence, assault, theft under $5,000, or breaking and entering. Significant differences were measured for certain types of offences.[17] According to the FPS, the experimental group (n=17) is represented in a smaller proportion than the control group (n=166) in most offence categories, especially breaking and entering, fraud, and sexual assault.[18] Overall, both groups committed offences with comparable average and maximum severity.[19] However, offenders in the experimental group (n=107) accounted on average (t=3.73, p<0.001) for fewer offence categories (3.5) than the control group (n=149; 4.4). An analysis of risk profiles and criminogenic needs shows a moderate overall risk of recidivism,[20] and a high risk for past offending, drug addiction, and recreation activities. The risk levels in the experimental (n=56) and control (n=31) groups of QCS clients are higher and similar. The experimental group has a higher risk of associating with delinquent peers (t=4.58, p<0.001) and of pro-criminal attitudes and orientations (t=2.15, p<0.023).

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[16] Based on the MIDSA.

[17] For arrests for theft under $5,000 with $X^2(1, n=256)=12.1$, p<0.001; breaking and entering with $X^2(1, n=256)=6.6$, p<0.007; mischief with $X^2(1, n=256)=5.6$, p<0.013; fraud with $X^2(1, n=256)=8.6$, p<0.002; traffic violations with $X^2(1, n=256)=6.6$, p<0.007; and offensive weapon offences with $X^2(1, n=256)=6.4$, p<0.01).

[18] With respective results of: $X^2(1, n=293)=5.3$, p<0.015; $X^2(1, n=293)=5.5$, p<0.017; $X^2(1, n=293)=7.1$, p<0.005.

[19] Based on Statistics Canada's Crime Severity Index.

[20] Using the CRNI in youth centres, and the LS/CMI in QCS.

Pre-post Comparisons

Evolution of youth risks and needs in the PSI-MTL/GDR

Youth risks and needs were evaluated using the CRNI (n=30) or the LS/CMI (n=15)[21] before participation in the program and an average of 560 days (18 months) afterwards. The total CRNI score did not vary, but needs related to previous or current offences increased significantly ($p<0.01$), as did needs in terms of support for peer relationships ($p<0.05$). However, education and employment support needs decreased ($p<0.05$). The overall LS/CMI score, offence history, and criminogenic needs did not change. Simultaneously taking into account the results associated with these two tools, the proportion of subjects at a high or very high risk of recidivism increased from 31% to 49%, particularly because of the youths who were initially at a moderate risk. But the increase in this risk score could be due to the fact that the stakeholder knew the offender better.

Youth reconvictions in the experimental and control groups

New convictions[22] for participants in the PSI-MTL/GDR (n=105) recorded in FPS files were compared to convictions for the control group (n=167). Fifty-two youths, or 17% of the sample, were convicted for another offence (excluding failures to comply). There are significant differences between the two groups, as the conviction rate for the experimental group was higher for offences in general (25.7% versus 15%, Phi=0.13, $p<0.05$) and for failure to comply with supervision conditions (13.3% versus 1.8%, Phi=0.23, $p<0.001$). However, the differences between the two groups of youths in terms of a new conviction for a violent or non-violent offence are not significant. There are no significant differences in the nature of the offences committed during the first period of recidivism,[23] and the average, maximum, and total severity of offences is comparable for both groups.[24]

Survival analysis techniques determined the proportion of offenders who were likely to be reconvicted, and the amount of time that passed before the occurrence of this event.[25] The evaluators plotted cumulative survival curves for new convictions using Kaplan-Meier analyses and the Mantel-Cox Log-Rank test. The median duration of observation for participants in the PSI-MTL/GDR (47 months) was longer than for the control group (37 months), as they entered

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[21] In some cases, the first evaluation was carried out after the offender entered the program. The evaluation concluded at the latest possible date during the program was used for the second phase.

[22] Convictions for failure to comply with a condition or order were recorded separately because they are not criminal offences per se. Convictions for offences result from offences against persons or non-violent offences (property, prostitution, drug offences, offensive weapons, traffic offences or public order offences, etc.).

[23] Based on the offence category and Statistics Canada's Crime Severity Index.

[24] The maximum severity is the severity of the most serious offence (highest severity), while the total severity is the sum of the severity of all offences, taking into account the number of charges. Convictions for failure to comply were excluded from the analysis.

[25] The observation start date (or the start date for the risk of recidivism), which corresponds with the participant's entry into the PSI-MTL/GDR, varies for each subject. In the case of the control group, it corresponds to the date of integration into the evaluation. The observation end date is the date that data was extracted from the FPS (September 17, 2015). The date of death of two youths who unfortunately died during the evaluation represents their observation end date.

the program before the control group was formed. Furthermore, the survival analysis method overcomes the biases that these unequal observation durations might cause. Comparing the curves with the Breslow coefficient reveals differences in the amount of time that passed before a new conviction for failure to comply (Chi^2=14.47, p<0.001), as the differences for an offence in general were marginally significant (Chi^2=2.88, p=0.051).

The slightly higher conviction rate for participants in the PSI-MTL/GDR may be due to differences in the initial risk of recidivism. As such, the initial risk level and criminal history were controlled for in a subsequent comparison of recidivism rates and the length of time before the new conviction using cumulative survival curves and Cox semi-parametric regression models for proportional risks. Despite controlling for these variables, the experimental group still had a higher rate of recidivism, with almost three times (exp b=2.85) the risk of being convicted of any offence or of a violent offence (exp b=2.79). These differences are thirteen times stronger in terms of convictions for failure to comply with supervision conditions (exp b=13.74), which may be due to the fact that it was an intensive monitoring program.

To determine the biases associated with police surveillance, the level of surveillance for each youth[26] was established through an index based on police data, and differences in the average were calculated before and after the start of the PSI-MTL/GDR. The results indicate that there was increased surveillance of youths in the experimental group before they entered the program compared to the control group (t=2.74, p=0.007). The significant difference between the two groups increased even further after the youths were included in the program (t=8.26, p<0.001), with an average number of surveillance events per participant of 3.8 compared to 0.71 for the control group. The increase was significant (t=7.62, p<0.001). Therefore, other analyses were carried out concerning the cumulative survival times before the participants received new convictions.[27] The groups then became relatively comparable in terms of convictions for new offences, new violent offences, and new non-violent offences. The differences observed above were therefore probably due to increased surveillance of the youths in the PSI-MTL/GDR. However, controlling for this differential surveillance cannot explain the differences associated with new convictions for failure to comply with supervision conditions (b=2.68, p=0.013). Participants in the experimental group were more quickly convicted of these kinds of new offences.

Descriptive Cost Analysis

The total cost of the PSI-MTL/GDR is $14,820,543, and the cost per participant is $67,055.04[28] ($46,640.25 for the treatment and $20,414.80 for administration). These amounts include the direct program costs and the regular cost of services provided by organizations. Subtracting the latter fees in order to estimate the level of effort required to implement this type of program

[26] In this index, four monitoring codes were merged into one amount: Person arrested; Person observed; Reported a suspicious person; and Vehicle observed.
[27] Including control for risk (evaluated with the LS/CMI or the CRNI), the number of previous convictions, and the level of police surveillance.
[28] Information was not available for the last five months of the program, during which time the program was being closed by the implementation team.

within existing services, the revised cost per participant is $31,163.34 ($19,143.26) for the treatment and $12,020.08 for administration).

Discussion

A comparison of the youths in the experimental group and the control group before they entered the program or the evaluation shows that overall, they were similar, despite some significant differences that led to statistical control of certain variables during later analyses. However, there are no important significant differences in terms of the history of violence self-reported by the youths and the criminal trajectories described in their files. Furthermore, the average and maximum severity of the offences is comparable. In addition, the experimental group had a lower number of arrests and fewer offence categories than the control group before entering the program. However, the experimental group had a higher risk of associating with delinquent peers and of pro-criminal attitudes and orientations.

Overall, youth risks and needs did not vary significantly after participation in the PSI-MTL/GDR. However, there were increased needs associated with offences as well as increased support needs for relationships with peers, contrary to the decreased need for support for education and employment. Treatment plans predominantly included objectives associated with work and school. In addition, the analysis of implementation fidelity indicated the possible difficulty of translating the risk and needs assessment into an individualized support strategy. For the program to be effective, intake should target drug addiction, recreation, education, employment, associating with delinquent peers, as well as pro-criminal attitudes and orientations.

An examination of recidivism shows a higher rate of reconvictions for the experimental group (25.7%) compared to the control group (15%). However, there were no significant differences concerning the nature or severity of the offences. Calculating separate rates indicates that there were no significant differences for violent offences (crimes against persons) and non-violent offences, but shows that there were differences in terms of new convictions for failure to comply with supervision conditions (13.3% compared to 1.8%). The initial risk level and criminal history were controlled for in a subsequent analysis of recidivism rates and of the length of time before the new conviction. Thus, the experimental group was almost three times more likely to be convicted of any offence or of a violent offence, and up to thirteen times more at risk of a new conviction for failure to comply with supervision conditions. These differences may very likely stem from reactivity and increased surveillance by the justice system, and not from more offensive behaviours. For this reason, risk, criminal history, and level of police surveillance were then controlled for in the calculation of the recidivism rate for both groups, which could then be compared. However, the rate of failure to comply with supervision conditions in the experimental group remained slightly higher, which could partially be explained by differences in the "reporting" mechanisms. In fact, [translation] "while offences are generally based on complaints from citizens, victims, or proactive (or reactive) police actions, failures to comply with supervision conditions may be evidence of reactivity by stakeholders who support or monitor offenders" (Lafortune et al., 2016:131).

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