

# WHEN YOUTH COMBINE DRUGS AND VIOLENCE: AN EXPLOSIVE COCKTAIL\*

Serge Brochu, Ph.D.\*\*

## Résumé

Les jeunes qui se retrouvent en centre de réadaptation pour jeunes contrevenants constituent un groupe qui mérite une attention particulière lorsqu'il s'agit de faire le point sur les relations qui se nouent entre alcool/drogues et violence. Cet article a pour but de décrire les liens qui se tissent entre substances psychoactives (entendre alcool et drogues illégales) et violence chez les jeunes contrevenants. Plus spécifiquement, il s'agit d'exposer le rôle: a) des intoxications; b) du besoin d'argent pour se procurer des drogues; et c) du système de distribution illicite des drogues dans la manifestation de comportements violents chez les jeunes contrevenants canadiens. Les données traitées dans cet article sont issues d'un questionnaire adressé aux jeunes contrevenants de sexe masculin admis dans les centres de réadaptation du Québec (n=239) et de l'Ontario (n=162) quel que soit le délit à l'origine de leur prise en charge institutionnelle. Parmi les trois types de relation étudiés, c'est l'intoxication qui se révèle le facteur le plus important menant à la violence. Notons par ailleurs qu'une bonne partie des crimes associés aux substances psychoactives le sont à plus d'un titre. Des pistes d'interprétation sont suggérées.

**Mots-clés:** jeunes contrevenants, substances psychoactives, violence, liens

---

\* This text was initially published in the journal *Drogue, santé et société*, 9 (2), under the title "Quand drogues et violence se rencontrent chez les jeunes: un cocktail explosif?" We would like to thank the journal's managing editor for the permission to publish this English version of the text.

\*\* Full Professor, School of Criminology, Université de Montréal  
Marie-Marthe Cousineau, Ph.D.

Full Professor, School of Criminology, Université de Montréal  
Chloé Provost, B.Sc.

M.Sc. Candidate, School of Criminology, Université de Montréal

Patricia Erickson, Ph.D.

Researcher, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Sun Fu, Ph.D.

Research Officer, International Centre for Comparative Criminology, Université de Montréal

Correspondence

Serge Brochu

Email: serge.brochu@umontreal.ca

**ABSTRACT**

*Young offenders held in youth rehabilitation centres constitute an at risk population for substance abuse and violence. This study will describe the relations between psychoactive substances (alcohol and illicit drugs) and violence among this population. More specifically, we will look at the roles played by: a) intoxication periods; b) the need for money to buy drugs; and c) the illicit drug distribution system in the manifestation of violent behaviour among young Canadian offenders. The data referred to in this article is based on a questionnaire administered to 239 young male offenders in rehabilitation centres in Quebec and 162 young male offenders in similar facilities in Ontario, irrespective of the offence for which they were being held. Of the three types of relations studied, intoxication seems to be the most important factor leading to violence. It should be noted that a significant portion of crimes associated to psychoactive substances are related to more than one substance. Possible interpretations are suggested.*

**Keywords:** *Young offenders, psychoactive substances, violence, links*

\*\*\*

**Acknowledgments**

*The Drugs, Alcohol and Violence International (DAVI) Team gratefully acknowledges financial support provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the National Institute on Drug Abuse. The authors also express their gratitude to the Ontario Ministry of Health for its support to the Ontario Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.*

**Psychoactive substance use and violence among youth**

Prevalence studies often hypothesize a link between the consumption of psychoactive substances and the perpetration of acts of violence, particularly among young people. Many studies conducted with juvenile populations already known to have committed violent acts (whether subject to judicial process or not) have noted high consumption rates of drugs and alcohol among these youths (Braithwaite, Cornely, Robillard, Stephens and Woodring, 2003; Hammersly, Marsland and Reid, 2003; Rainon, Schmeidler, Frank and Smith, 2006). The findings on this subject indicate beyond doubt that illicit drug use is much higher among adolescents who get into trouble with the law than among student populations exhibiting no particular problems (Boys, Marsden and Strang, 2001; Comité permanent de lutte à la toxicomanie, 2003; D'Amico, Edelen, Miles and Morral, 2007; Hammersly, Marsland and Reid, 2003; Vitaro, Carbonneau, Gosselin, Tremblay and Zoccolillo, 2000). They also show that illicit drug use constitutes a predictive factor for recidivism (Stoolmiller and Blechman, 2005; Weiner, Sussman, Sun and Dent, 2005). Young people who use illicit drugs appear to be twice as likely to be involved in a violent act compared to young people of the same age who do not report such consumption (SAMSHA, 2006).

Laventure, Déry and Pauzé (2008) examined the consumption of psychoactive substances among young people held in youth centres in Quebec. According to their results, which are based on the IGT-ado addiction severity index (Bergeron, Landry, Brochu and Guyon, 1998), 25% of these young people exhibit problematic consumption and 48%, at risk consumption.

Youths in rehabilitation centres for young offenders therefore constitute a group that warrants special attention when it comes to studying the relations

between alcohol/drugs and violence. The observation of a high prevalence of psychoactive illicit drug use among the youths in these centres, many of whom are also prone to violent behaviour, is, nonetheless, insufficient to explain such relations. More in-depth study is required to develop a better understanding of drugs-violence links at adolescence.

Goldstein (1985) is the first author to have presented a series of explanations to account for the drugs-violence nexus among adults. Aware that these relations prove too complex to be summed up in a single explanation, Goldstein offered a tripartite conceptual framework comprised of three complementary models. The first, psychopharmacological, is based on offender intoxication. The effect produced by the absorption of a substance is thus believed to be at the origin of criminal behaviour, which would not otherwise have arisen (Weiner, Sussman, Sun and Dent, 2005). Numerous authors agree that certain drugs have the property of acting on specific centres of the nervous system where the centres of aggressiveness, impulsiveness and inhibition are thought to reside (on this subject, see Ben Amar, 2007).

The second model, economic-compulsive, is underpinned by studies highlighting strong criminal involvement among regular users of costly drugs (see Permanen, Cousineau, Brochu, and Sun, 2002). This explanation contrasts sharply with the first, since it has to do with dependence on costly drugs, especially heroin and cocaine. The nature of the drugs/alcohol-violence relation is thus no longer to be found in the pharmacological properties of the substance creating the state of intoxication, but rather in the urgency of finding sufficient financial means to meet an imperative need for consumption (Brochu, 2006). The third model, systemic, relates to an analysis of the drug supply and distribution system. Because of the illicit character of this trade, other ways of obtaining justice in case of wronging—or of protecting a highly lucrative “market”—are thus thought to frequently reside in solutions of force. These solutions are then used as strategies for social control in a milieu deprived of legal recourse owing to ambient police repression (Desjardins and Hotton, 2004; Ezeonu, 2010; Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003; Warley, 2009).

It is important to note that the models described above were developed to account for the nexus between drugs and violence as encountered in adult populations. Qualitative studies on the deviant trajectories of youths provide a slightly different portrait (Brunelle, Brochu and Cousineau, 2000). Youths appear to be more inclined to use intoxication from psychotropic products than adults, among other things to gain the courage to commit delinquent acts. Moreover, the limited financial means of most youths are believed to lead them more quickly to commit profitable crimes to acquire the products needed for their consumption, even when these are relatively inexpensive.

A review of the literature on alcohol/drug-violence relations among youth conducted in the 2000s and complemented by a series of group interviews with individuals from the legal, police, health and social services, and school and community milieus (Cousineau, Brochu and Schneeberger, 2000) confirmed a glaring lack of research, Canadian in particular, dealing with the intersection between alcohol/drugs and violence among youth. Paradoxically, the individuals interviewed over the course of this same study expressed an urgent need for knowledge on the topic (Blais and Cousineau, 1999). The study, which inspired the present article, sought to meet this need by generating descriptive and Canadian data on the issue.

### **Global objective and specific objectives**

The global objective of this study was to describe the links forged between psychoactive substances (read alcohol and illegal drugs) and violence among young offenders. More specifically, it aimed to clarify the role of a) intoxications; b) the need for money with which to acquire drugs; and c) the illicit drug distribution system in the manifestation of violent behaviours among young offenders.

### **Methodology**

The data treated in this article is drawn from structured individual interviews conducted using a questionnaire specifically designed for the purposes of the study and composed of 160 closed questions and 5 open questions.<sup>1</sup> The questionnaire, which was administered in a face-to-face session, focused on the socio-demographic profile of the youths and their parents, on their relationship with school, on their sports and cultural activities, on their neighbourhoods of residence, and on the profiles of their friends. The youths were also asked about their physical and mental health, their profiles as consumers of psychoactive substances (substances consumed, frequency, perception of dependence) and their history of delinquency, especially concerning the illegal trafficking of drugs. More generally, they were also questioned about the manifestation of behaviour problems that are not, strictly speaking, subject to judicial process (school absenteeism, running away, etc.), with an emphasis on engagement in violent behaviours as perpetrators or victims.

The interviews were on average 60 minutes long (varying between 45 and 90 minutes). They were conducted with a total of 401 young male offenders in Greater Montreal (n=239) and Toronto (n=162), irrespective of the offence that led to their placement in institutional care. The youths, Francophones and Anglophones from 14 to 18 years old held in rehabilitation centres pursuant to the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA),<sup>2</sup> were met in various contexts: closed settings, open settings (regular or punctual), and alternative settings. The only criteria for eligibility were a) being accused of an offense, and b) not suffering from a mental health problem precluding an interview. All eligible youths had

---

<sup>1</sup> The questions were inspired by various existing instruments or were designed specifically to meet the objectives of the study. The aims of the study were mainly comprehension-driven. Because, to our knowledge, this is one of the first times that the question of drug/alcohol-violence links was explicitly addressed regarding youths, the study in no way aimed to provide a definitive diagnosis. Hence the elaboration of an instrument deemed useful to meeting the study's objectives and drawing on various sources. No pretension is therefore made of using a validated instrument or set of instruments. This may be a promising avenue to investigate as a follow-up to the present study, which already yields enough interesting results to recommend further study.

<sup>2</sup> In Toronto, 10 rehabilitation centres in the metropolitan region were involved and accepted to take part in the study. In Quebec, recruiting was done in the youth centres of Montréal-Institut universitaire, Laval, Lanaudière, and Montérégie. The youths were first approached by unit heads using an approach protocol designed by the researchers and aiming to explain the particulars of the study. Once they agreed to participate in the study, the youths were referred to the research assistants, who had them sign a consent form before proceeding to the interview. In Toronto, a sum of \$15 went to the youth's canteen account for each interview. In Montreal, no remuneration was provided. Nevertheless, the participation rate, in both contexts, is estimated at over 80%.

to be approached, whether or not they had consumed psychoactive drugs or exhibited violent behaviour in the past. The sample was then established on a volunteer basis; as such, it should be considered a convenience sample. The youths interested in participating were provided a consent form summarizing the interests, objectives and ethical rules relating to the research project. They were then encouraged to ask questions to ensure that they were informed about the particulars of the study, and that their agreement to participate indeed resulted from free and informed consent. The interview, which was led by research assistants trained for this purpose, could then begin. The youths were free to withdraw at any time or to refuse to answer any question.

### **Portrait of the youths under study**

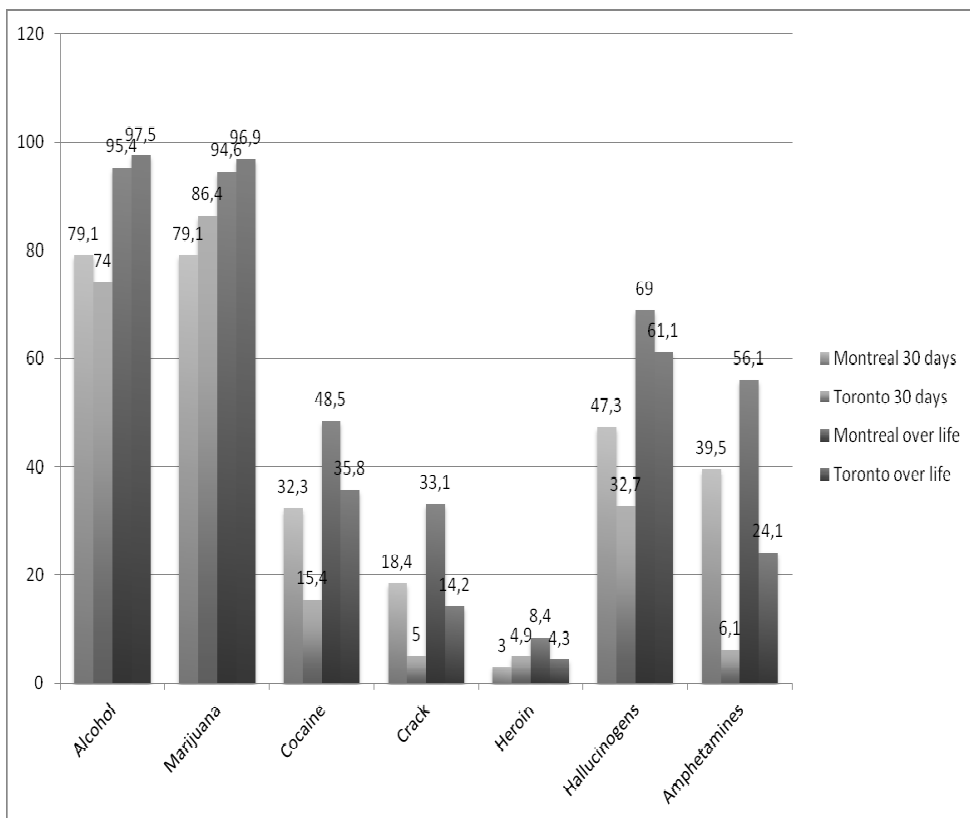
All of the young Montrealers and Torontonians participating in the study were 14 to 18 years old. Half of the Montreal youths (51.5%) and one third of the Toronto youths were 17 to 18 years old. The Montreal youths were mostly (69.8%) of French-Canadian origin while a comparable proportion (66.7%) of the Toronto youths were English-Canadian. Only a small minority of the youths were single children (6% of the Montreal youths and 5% of the Toronto youths). The others (respectively half of the Montreal youths and one third of the Toronto youths) had one or two brothers and sisters or more (46% for the Montreal youths and 61% for the Toronto youths), but according to the interviewees, only half of their siblings lived with them. A minority of the youths, in fact one young Montrealer out of five (20.5%) and one young Torontonian out of four (24.7%), lived with both their original parents.

### **Results**

The presentation of results is divided into four sections. The first three correspond to the specific objectives described above and describe alcohol/drug-violence links from the standpoint of the youth's intoxication, the need for money to ensure consumption of psychoactive substances, and the drug distribution system. The final section will examine the possible intersections of these relations for one same youth.

#### **The perpetration of violent acts linked with intoxication**

Before turning to the consumption of psychoactive substances influencing the manifestation of violent behaviours among young offenders in the sample, it appears relevant to examine the use of alcohol and illicit substances among these young Montrealers and Torontonians in greater depth. Figure 1 provides details on the youths' consumption by illustrating the proportion of consumers for each type of drug such as alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, crack, heroin, hallucinogens and amphetamines. Consumption is tracked over two window periods, namely the past 30 days and the year preceding completion of the questionnaire.



**Figure 1:**

***Proportion of young offenders in Montreal and Toronto having consumed psychoactive substances, over the course of their lives and over the course of the past month, by drug type***

In terms of the types of narcotics consumed at least once in the youth's life, Figure 1 shows that more than nine offenders out of ten had consumed alcohol and cannabis at least once. In addition, 69% of the young offenders in Montreal and 61% of the young offenders in Toronto reported that they had taken hallucinogens; respectively 56% and 24% related that they had taken amphetamines. Half (48.5%) of the young offenders in Montreal and one third (35.8%) of the young offenders in Toronto reported that they had consumed cocaine, respectively 33% and 14% crack, and 8% and 4% heroin. The consumption of psychotropic substances other than alcohol and cannabis thus appears to be more common among the Montreal youths than the Toronto youths.

As for substances consumed by the youths in the 30 days prior to the questionnaire, the distribution is similar to that over the youth's life, but with lower prevalence rates. Thus, eight Montreal offenders out of ten related that they had consumed alcohol (79.1%) or cannabis (79.1%) compared to

respectively 74% and 86% for Toronto offenders over the same period. Hallucinogens also seem to be very popular, with nearly half of the youths in Montreal and one third of the youth in Toronto claiming they had consumed them over the 30 days prior to the interview. Almost one young Montrealer out of three (32.3%) reported having consumed cocaine and 18% crack, while in the case of the young Torontonians, 15% reported consuming cocaine and 5% crack over the same period. Finally, a small percentage of the Montrealers and Torontonians, respectively 3% and 4%, admitted to having taken heroin over the course of this same month preceding the study.

In the following terms, we asked the participants to relate and describe the most serious and dangerous situation with which they had been confronted over the course of their lives:

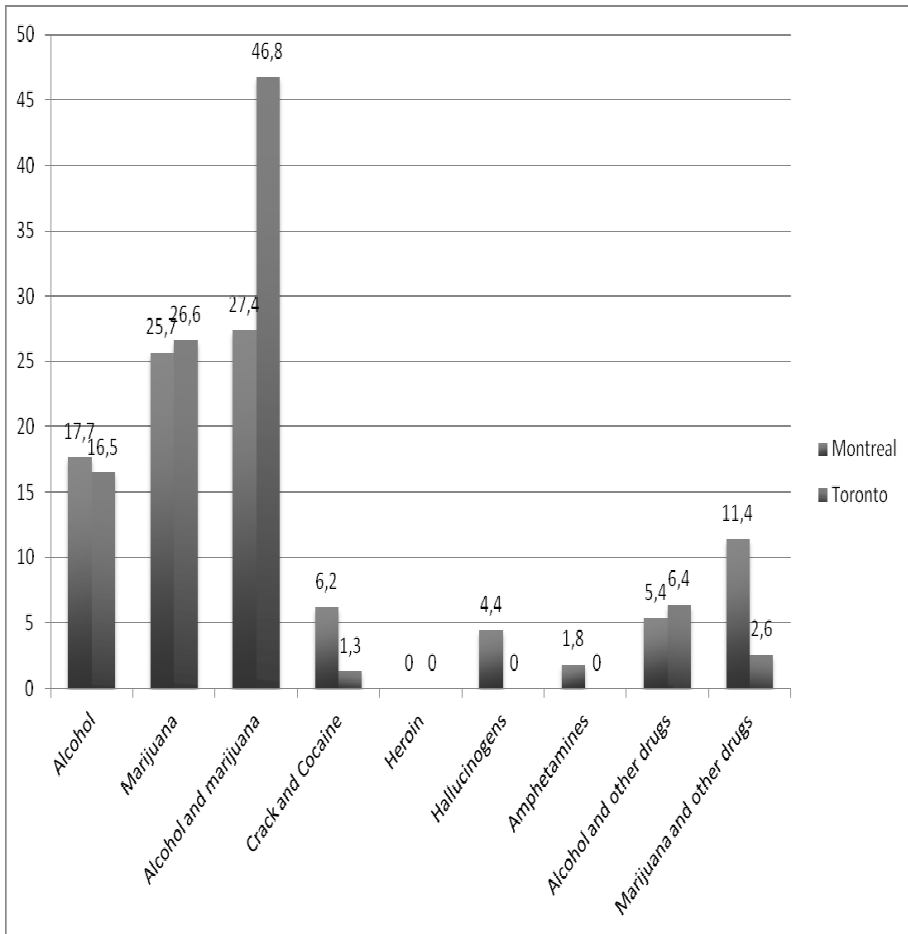
*“Remember that violence is defined as any act aimed at a person and seeking to cause physical suffering or injury. This also includes threats when violence may result from such threats. I would like for you to think back to the MOST SERIOUS violent event you have been involved in over the past 12 months and to answer the following questions. I do not want you to identify specific places or the names of other people involved. First, could you briefly describe what happened...”*

To determine the nature of their participation in the violent event related, the respondents were asked to clarify the role that they consider they played in the situation. In this respect, 23 Montreal offenders (12.3%) presented themselves as victims only, nearly half (48.3%) as perpetrators only, and one third as both perpetrators and victims. The distribution is similar for Toronto with 12% victims only, 44% perpetrators only, and 41% claiming to be both perpetrators and victims. The total proportion of perpetrators is therefore 85% for the global sample.

As for the consumption of psychoactive substances the day of the most serious violent event in the lives of the young offenders, we can see that two of the young Montrealers out of three (67.1%) and a proportion almost as high (60.9%) of the young Torontonians reported that they were under the influence of one or more drugs at the time. More specifically, almost half of the young offenders interviewed admitted to having been “stoned” owing to the consumption of psychoactive substances when they perpetrated the most violent acts they reported.

The youths were then asked to indicate whether, in their view, the consumption of psychoactive substances made them vulnerable or inclined to getting into trouble on this occasion. In this respect, almost four of the youths out of ten identified intoxication resulting from the consumption of psychoactive substances as being responsible for the occurrence of the most violent acts of which they were perpetrators or victims.

The results presented in Figure 2 specify the type of substance consumed the day of the most serious event in which the youths were involved, as reported by the young offenders from Montreal and Toronto who participated in the study.



**Figure 2:**

***Proportion of young offenders in Montreal and Toronto having consumed psychoactive substances at the time of the most serious event that marked their lives, according to drug type***

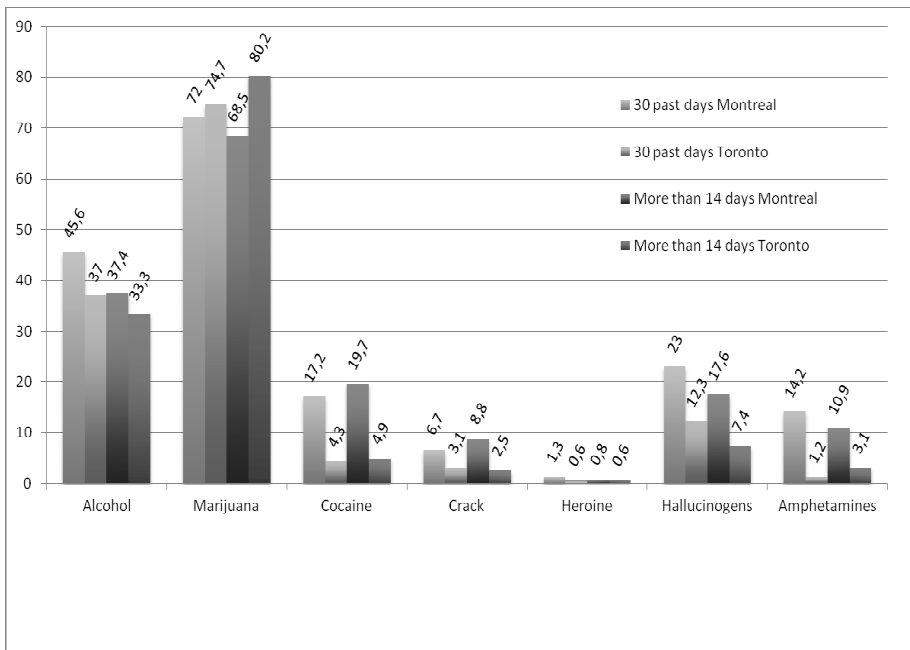
Without question, marijuana and alcohol (Figure 2) were, according to the youths, the substances most commonly consumed by the perpetrators on this day in which the most serious event took place. The respondents reported that they had engaged in the concurrent consumption of marijuana and alcohol (27.4% of the young Montrealers and 46.8% of the young Torontonians); of alcohol and other substances (5.4% for the young Montrealers and 6.4% for the young Torontonians); and of cannabis and other substances (11.4% for the young Montrealers 2.6% for the young Torontonians). A small proportion of the youths in both samples indicated that they had consumed other drugs on this occasion, including crack and cocaine for 6% of the offenders in Montreal and 1% of those in Toronto. None reported having been under the influence of heroin and, while in Toronto no participants admitted to having consumed



hallucinogens and amphetamines, in Montreal, 4% of them said that they had consumed hallucinogens and 2%, amphetamines.

**The perpetration of violent acts linked with the need for money to buy drugs**

This section aims to shed light on the consumption habits, and in particular the substance dependences, linked with the most serious behaviours manifested by the young offenders interviewed. Figure 3 presents the proportion of these youths who had had or still had daily consumption habits at the time of the interview, i.e. they had consumed at least once per day over more than 14 consecutive days at least once in their lives, or almost daily, i.e., three or four times per week over the 30 days preceding the interview.



**Figure 3:**  
***Proportion of young offenders in Montreal and Toronto exhibiting quasi-daily consumption of psychotropic substances over the 30 days prior to the interview, or daily consumption for a period of 14 days or more at least once in their lives***

Whether in terms of daily or quasi-daily consumption, it appears that the proportion for each of the types of drugs considered, excepting marijuana, is significantly higher among the Montreal offenders than the Toronto offenders. Regarding cannabis, 80% of the Toronto youths admitted to having consumed this drug over the course of their lives on a daily or quasi-daily basis, while this is the case for only 69% of the Montreal youths. Figure 3 also shows that,

globally, a higher number of young offenders exhibit quasi-daily consumption than daily consumption of psychoactive substances.

The sums spent on obtaining illicit substances were totalled for each of the participants over a 30-day window period. The young Montrealers thus declared that they spent on average \$886.81 on drugs while the young Torontonians claimed that they spent on average \$1, 107.71. Table 1 presents the distribution of sums according to the categories of their expenditure.

**Table 1: Sums spent by Montreal and Toronto youths on the purchase of illicit substances over the past month**

	Montreal (%)	Toronto (%)
0 \$	27, 9	21, 2
1 à 200 \$	33, 0	29, 4
201 à 400 \$	6, 9	11, 2
401 à 700 \$	7, 9	11, 9
701 à 1000 \$	8, 6	9, 4
1001 \$ et plus	15, 9	16, 9

Although most of the youths must spend money to obtain their drugs, 28% of the Montreal offenders and 21% of the Toronto offenders reported that they had no drug-related expenses, either because they did not consume any drugs or because they acquired their drugs using alternative means, for instance working for a third party or producing or stealing drugs. An equivalent percentage of the youths (33.0% of the Montrealers and 29.4% of the Torontonians) related that they spent \$200 or less on drug purchases. Finally, more than 15% of the young participants reported that they spent more than \$1, 000 on their use of illicit drugs over a representative one-month period.

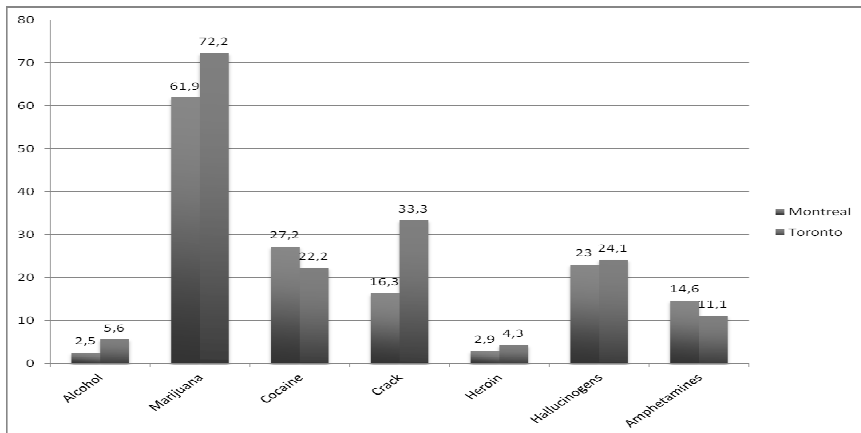
When asked to indicate whether they considered that over the past 12 months they felt dependent on one or another psychoactive drug included in the study, 63% of the young Montrealers and 43% of the young Torontonians answered affirmatively for at least one substance. In most cases, respondents said they were dependent, either on alcohol only (36.8% of the young Montrealers and 53.1% of the young Torontonians), or on alcohol and cannabis (22.2% of the young Montrealers and 21.0% of the young Torontonians), the two most consumed substances. Only 7.1% of Montreal consumers and 4.1% of Toronto consumers indicated that they viewed themselves as dependent on marijuana only. The perception of being dependent on other substances such as opiates, hallucinogens and amphetamines was expressed by 31% of young offenders in Montreal and 11% of those in Toronto. It is thus scarcely surprising that one youth out of ten stated that the main reason for the occurrence of the most serious act they committed in their lives was associated with the need to obtain alcohol or illicit substances.

### **The perpetration of violent acts linked with the illicit drug market**

Most of the young offenders in Montreal (68.5%) and Toronto (83.9%) in the sample revealed that, at some time or another in their lives, they were involved in the trafficking of psychoactive substances.

It appears that when the Montreal youths engaged in the trafficking of narcotics, they tended to work for a third party (33.7% of the young Montrealers versus 13.3% of the young Torontonians), while the Toronto youths seemed to favour working alone (58.6% versus 28.2% in Montreal). While an appreciable proportion of the Montrealers appear to have been involved in trafficking as part of a gang (23.3%) or as managers of employees (14.7%), this proportion proves much lower among the youths in Toronto (respectively 11.3% and 6.8%).

Figure 4 presents the types of psychoactive substances that characterize the youths' trafficking. We can see that marijuana is undoubtedly the most commonly sold substance. Next are cocaine and hallucinogens, which account for nearly one fourth of the market. The sale of crack appears to be more popular in Toronto, where one third of the traffickers said that they distributed drugs; this same proportion is 16% for the young Montrealers. Few of the youths appeared to be inclined to take part in the trafficking of amphetamines, heroin or alcohol.



**Figure 4:**

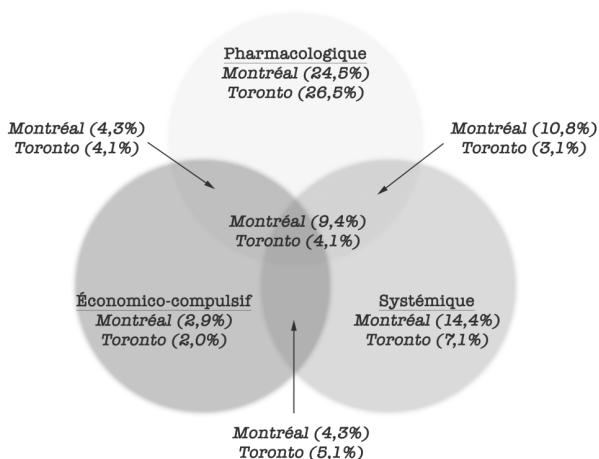
***Distribution of psychoactive substance types according to the proportion of young traffickers in Montreal and Toronto who sell them***

Respectively 31% of the young offenders in Montreal and 15% in Toronto reported that the above-mentioned serious acts in which they were involved were primarily associated with an illicit transaction of drugs. The violence related to the distribution system can, moreover, have different sources. In Montreal (n=64), territorial disputes seem common (40.6% of incidents) while in Toronto (n=24), only 8% of incidents appear to result from these. Retrieving debts from clients accounts for 27% of the systemic events in which the young Montrealers said they were involved and 33% for the young Torontonians. Finally, our results indicate that 20% of the young Montrealers and 13% of the young Torontonians intended, using violence, to punish a trafficker, get revenge for theft of their merchandise, or condemn a transaction of poor quality drugs.

### Multiple reasons explaining violence linked with drugs among the youths

The results presented in the previous sections reveal that there do not appear to be any major differences between Toronto and Montreal when it comes to the proportion of young offenders who, over the course of their lives, engaged in violent behaviour owing to the intoxicating properties of a consumed substance, or to the need to acquire the drug. Only violence in line with the illicit drug market shows clearly significant differences for the two large cities.

It is, nonetheless, important to bear in mind that one same youth can have more than one reason to commit a violent act. Thus, certain young offenders may have committed their violent acts when intoxicated and seeking to acquire money to satisfy their dependence, for example. Figure 5 illustrates the proportion of participants corresponding to each of the explanations while taking account of the dual or tripartite reasons that may be involved.



**Figure 5**

**Diagram representing the intersections of the models explaining links between psychoactive substances and the occurrence of the most serious event related by young offenders in Montreal and Toronto**

Figure 5 shows that the highest number of violent incidents related by the youths is linked to the intoxication of the perpetrator, followed by the illicit drug distribution system and the need for money to acquire drugs. Also notable is the fact that an appreciable proportion of the violent events appear to be linked with more than one explanation. Indeed, 4% of the young offenders reported an incident caused by both intoxication from a drug and the need to acquire a psychoactive substance. In addition, 11% of the young Montrealers and 3% of the young Torontonians explained their violent acts by both their intoxication and their participation in the illicit drug market, while almost 4% of the Montrealers and 5% of the Torontonians explained their violent acts by the need to acquire money to ensure both their consumption and their

participation in the illicit drug market. Finally, it is worth noting that in Montreal 9% of the young offenders admitted that the most serious event in which they were involved was caused at once by intoxication resulting from consumption, looking for money to acquire drugs, and the violent conditions inherent to narcotics trafficking. The same applies to 4% of the young Torontonians.

Numerous workers in rehabilitation centres for young offenders maintain that 80% of crimes committed by young offenders are linked with drugs. It is difficult, however, to track the source of this percentage and to determine the empirical foundations of such a claim. The study we conducted arrives at a lower estimate of 70% for Montreal and 52% for Toronto (see Figure 5).

### **Discussion and conclusion**

The data in this study helps to shed some light on the nature of the links between alcohol/drugs and violence among young offenders and, especially, on the relative importance of the three related models developed by Goldstein (1985). This study examined young offenders in rehabilitation centres located in the two largest urban agglomerations in Canada, namely Montreal and Toronto. The aim was not primarily to compare the results obtained in the two Canadian provinces in question; however, since the social contexts in the two cities differ substantially, caution precluded the grouping of both samples into one single sample. Thus, comparison was in a sense inevitable. Generally speaking, the main trends appear to be similar across the two samples. However, interesting differences do appear. We will begin by discussing the general similar trends that have emerged.

Among the young offenders interviewed, the most significant factor leading to violence seems to be intoxication. This result is hardly surprising considering the very high proportion of these youths who describe themselves as regular consumers or who view themselves as dependent. Indeed, a dependent person is, by definition, regularly intoxicated. Intoxication brings with it a series of cognitive disturbances that lead to a shrinking repertoire of responses. The remaining responses are primary, where aggressiveness and violence are situated. Further reflection on this subject is nevertheless necessary. Indeed, our informal discussions with the youths in the sample suggest that the relation between intoxication and a violent act can sometimes take on different meanings. For some individuals, intoxication constitutes a tool, much like a weapon, that makes it possible to commit an act that is otherwise difficult to commit when sober. The individual thus consumes a substance with the avowed goal of committing an act that he would not otherwise have had the courage to commit.

The situation of crimes relating to a need for money to acquire drugs is another interesting aspect. The general public often tends to explain criminality by perpetrators' dependence on drugs. It is known that illicit drugs are generally costly and that a dependent person must consume large quantities to obtain or maintain the desired effect. The tendency is thus to believe that the crimes of drug addicts are first and foremost economic-compulsive in nature. The results of our study present a different situation, as this type of relation comes last, after the respective relations to the illicit drug market and to intoxication.

The works that refer to Goldstein's conceptual framework (1985) are not very explicit about the possible overlap of his three suggested models. Our study is clear on this subject in that it indicates that a good portion of crimes

associated with psychoactive substances are associated with the models in more than way. For example, a dependent person, still under the effects of the drug but already experiencing the first symptoms of weaning, may commit theft with violence on a passerby in order to acquire his dose. If the individual had not been intoxicated, he may have been able to consider alternative solutions. Too often, attention is only paid to one aspect of this complex problem.

The results here presented do point to one major difference between the two samples analyzed. The young Torontonians report fewer crimes related to psychoactive drugs, irrespective of the type of relation: to intoxication, to acquiring money for drugs, or to the drug market. This state of affairs is especially remarkable in terms of crime related to the illicit drug market, which appears to be twice as low among the young offenders in Toronto. Though more of them report having engaged in drug trafficking, these offenders state that they are less engaged in violent activities linked with psychoactive substance trafficking (territorial protection, debt retrieval, revenge for poor quality merchandise, and the like) than the young Montrealers. The way they go about drug trafficking may shed light on this lower violent involvement. Indeed, most of the young Toronto dealers claim that they work alone. Contrastingly, a high proportion of the young Montrealers state that they work for a gang or manage employees who sell drugs for them. This way of engaging in drug trafficking certainly constitutes an indicator of substantial involvement that can lead to violence. The presence of a growing street gang phenomenon in Montreal and a nascent one in Toronto must undoubtedly be considered. Indeed, it is important to take the socio-political context into account when analyzing the links created between alcohol/drugs and violence.

The conceptual framework elaborated by Goldstein in the mid-1980s provides an interesting foundation for describing links between alcohol/drugs and violence. However, informal discussions with the young interviewees at the time of data collection were also very informative. Unfortunately, the elements of these discussions were not collected systematically. Among other things, they suggested that alcohol/drugs-violence links are much more dynamic than what emerges from a descriptive study. At this stage, this is only an impression based on unstructured accounts. Nonetheless, since these clues accord with those reported by Brunelle, Brochu and Cousineau (2005) on consumption and delinquency trajectories among young people, we are considering a follow-up to this study using qualitative interviews to better understand the roles and evolution of the symbolic meanings of drugs in the manifestation of delinquent behaviours.

Because of the very high prevalence of psychoactive substance consumption noted among the young offenders treated in youth centres pursuant to the Youth Criminal Justice Act, and especially because of the perception many of them share that they have developed a dependence, it is necessary for the establishments who care for these youths to be able to offer them the help they need in terms of secondary prevention and the treatment of dependences. At the time of writing, too few concrete efforts are being made to help these high-risk youth. Indeed, offering prevention programs and drug addiction treatments could prevent the perpetration of many delinquent acts.

It should also be noted that this study presents a partial view of alcohol/drugs-crime relations since it has only focused on violent crime. A study on lucrative crime would very likely reveal different results, particularly as regards economic-compulsive crime. Finally, this text was based only on self-report; it would be interesting to validate these *confessions* using external data.

[Translated by Joachim Lépine]

## References

- Ben Amar, M. (2007). « Les psychotropes criminogènes ». *Criminologie*. 40 (1), p. 11-30.
- Bergeron, J., Landry, M., Brochu, S. and Guyon, L. (1998). « Les études psychométriques autour de l'ASI/IGT ». [In L. Guyon, M. Landry, S. Brochu and J. Bergeron (ed.): *L'évaluation des clientèle alcooliques et toxicomanes: l'indice de gravité d'une toxicomanie (ASI/IGT)*] Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, p. 31-46.
- Blais, M.-F. and Cousineau, M.-M. (1999). *Violence entre jeunes à Laval: état de situation et pistes de solutions*. Montréal: Institut de recherche pour le développement social des jeunes, Consortium CAVAC.
- Boys, A., Marsden, J., and Strang, J. (2001). « Understanding reasons for drug use amongst young people: a functional perspective ». *Health Education Research*. 16 (4), p. 457-469.
- Braithwaite, R.L., Cornely, R.C., Robillard, A.G., Stephens, T.T. and Woodring, T. (2003). « Alcohol and other drug use among adolescent detainees ». *Journal of Substance Use and Misuse*. 8 (2), p. 126-131.
- Brochu, S. (2006). *Drogue et criminalité. Une relation complexe*. Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 237 p.
- Brochu, S. and Cousineau, M.M. (avec la collaboration de Sun, F. and Houde, V.) (2006). « Faits saillants du projet "Jeunes, drogues et violence: des liens à comprendre" ». *L'intervenant - revue sur l'alcoolisme et la toxicomanie*. 23 (1), p. 4-10.
- Brunelle, N., Brochu, S., Cousineau, M.M. (2000). « Drug-crime relations among drug-consuming juvenile delinquents: A tripartite model and more ». *Contemporary drug problems*. 27 (4), p. 835-866.
- Brunelle, N., Brochu, S., Cousineau, M.M. (2005). « Trajectoires déviantes de garçons et de filles. Points de convergence et de divergence ». [In N. Brunelle and M.-M. Cousineau (Eds.): *Trajectoires de déviance juvénile. Les éclairages de la recherche qualitative*] Montréal: Presses de l'Université du Québec, p. 9-30.
- Comité permanent de lutte à la toxicomanie (2003). *La consommation de psychotropes: portrait et tendances au Québec*. Montréal: Comité permanent de lutte à la toxicomanie, 51 p.
- Cousineau, M.-M., Brochu, S. and Schneeberger, P. (2000). *Consommation de substances psychoactives et violence chez les jeunes*. Montréal: Comité permanent de lutte à la toxicomanie.
- D'Amico, E.J., Edelen, M.O., Miles, J.N.V. and Morral, A.R. (2007). « The longitudinal association between substance use and delinquency among high-risk youth ». *Drug and alcohol dependence*. 93 (1-2), p. 85-92.
- Desjardins, N. and Hotton, T. (2004). « Tendances des infractions relatives aux drogues et rôle de l'alcool et des drogues dans la perpétration d'infractions ». *Juristat*. 24 (1), p. 1-24.
- Ellickson, P., Saner, H. and McGuignan, K.A. (1997). « Profiles of violent youth: Substance use and other concurrent problems ». *American Journal of Public Health*. 87 (6), p. 985-991.
- Ezeonu, I. (2010). « Gun violence in Toronto: Perspectives from the police ». *The Howard Journal*. 49 (2), p. 147-165.
- Goldstein, P. J. (1985). « The drug/Violence Nexus: A tripartite conceptual framework ». *Journal of Drug Issues*. 15 (4), p. 493-506.

Hammersley, R., Marsland, L. and Reid, M. (2003). *Substance use by young offenders: The impact of the normalisation of drug use in the early years of the 21st century*. London, G.-B.: Home Office Research Study, 104 p.

Kubrin, C. E. and Weitzer, R. (2003). "Retaliatory homicide: Concentrated disadvantage and neighborhood culture". *Social Problems*. 50 (2), p. 157-180.

Laventure, M., Déry, M. and Pauzé, R. (2008). "Profils de consommation d'adolescents, garçons et filles, desservis par des centres jeunesse". *Drogues, Santé et Société*. 7 (2), p. 9-45.

Pernanen, K., Cousineau, M.M., Brochu, S. and Sun, F. (2002). *Proportions des crimes associés à l'alcool et aux autres drogues au Canada*. Ottawa: Centre canadien de lutte contre l'alcoolisme et les toxicomanies, 153 p.

Rainon, G. A., Schmeidler, J. W., Frank, B. and Smith, R. B. (2006). "Violent behavior, substance use, and other delinquent behaviors among middle and high school students". *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*. 4 (3), p. 247-265.

SAMHSA (2006). *Youth Violence and Illicit Drug Use*. The NSDUH report.

<http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k6/youthViolence/youthViolence.htm>

Slaby, R.G., Barham, J.E., Eron, L.D. and Wilcox, B.L. (1994). "Policy recommendations: Prevention and treatment of youth violence". [In L.D. Eron, J.H. Gentry and P. Schlegel (dir.): *Reason to hope: A psychosocial perspective on violence and youth*] Washington: American Psychological Association, p. 447-456.

Stoolmiller, M. and Blechman, E. A. (2005). "Substance use is a robust predictor of adolescent recidivism". *Criminal justice and behavior*. 32 (3), p. 302-328.

Vitaro, F., Carbonneau, R., Gosselin, C., Tremblay, R.E. and Zoccolillo, M. (2000). "L'approche développementale et les problèmes de consommation chez les jeunes: prévalence, facteurs de prédiction, prévention et dépistage". [In P. Brisson (ed.): *L'usage des drogues et la toxicomanie*] Montréal: Éditions Gaëtan Morin, p. 369-378.

Warley, R. M. (2009). *Situational predictors of adolescent homicide: a secondary analysis*. Doctoral dissertation, Graduate Faculty in Social Welfare, The City University of New York.

Weiner, M.D., Sussman, S., Sun, P. and Dent, C. (2005). "Explaining the link between violence perpetration, victimization and drug use". *Addictive Behaviors*. 30 (6), p. 1261-1266.