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# Rapport pour spécialistes

Les enfants et les jeunes en danger  
Bibliographie de travail  
N° 1991-09

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*This working paper is also available in English.*

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## Vue d'ensemble de la littérature sur la "jeunesse à risque"

Nous avons analysé la littérature dans le domaine de la justice pénale pour réaliser une évaluation globale de la question de la "jeunesse à risque". Cette analyse comportait l'examen des types de "risques" auxquels les jeunes sont exposés lorsqu'ils ou elles sont victimes mais aussi lorsqu'ils s'adonnent à des activités risquées ou dangereuses. Nous avons également dépouillé les ouvrages et articles de justice pénale qui portent sur la nature et sur l'efficacité de différentes interventions faites auprès de ces jeunes en difficulté.

Cette bibliographie de travail comporte deux grands volets. Le premier est une vue d'ensemble de la question du "risque". Il est subdivisé en plusieurs sections qui portent sur certains risques que les jeunes peuvent courir, par exemple les mauvais traitements, les risques associés à la fugue et les risques que comporte la vie "dans la rue". Le deuxième volet décrit divers types d'interventions faites par la police, le système de justice pénale et la société auprès des "jeunes à risque". Les réactions à certains problèmes précis, comme le phénomène des bandes et la violence chez les jeunes, y sont également abordées.

Plusieurs problèmes traités dans la littérature mettent en évidence les événements ou les situations qui exposent les jeunes à des risques. On peut en citer quelques-uns : sévices infligés aux enfants et violence familiale; difficultés à l'école; difficultés sur le plan de l'emploi; démêlés avec la justice; fugues ou hébergement ailleurs que dans le milieu familial, par exemple dans un foyer de groupe; consommation de drogues ou d'alcool; risques découlant de la vie dans la rue, comme la prostitution ou la contraction d'une maladie transmissible sexuellement. On a constaté que ces risques sont souvent reliés entre eux : un jeune qui vit dans la rue et qui se prostitue consomme souvent aussi des drogues ou de l'alcool. Il peut aussi avoir éprouvé des difficultés à l'école ou avoir eu du mal à se trouver un emploi. Beaucoup de jeunes de la rue sont aussi victimes de sévices physiques, psychologiques ou sexuels. Enfin, ces jeunes s'adonnent parfois à diverses activités criminelles pour survivre. Voici une vue d'ensemble des ouvrages et articles qui décrivent les divers "risques" auxquels les jeunes sont exposés dans notre société.

## 1.0 Les facteurs associés à la criminalité des jeunes

La littérature qui traite des variables corrélées avec la criminalité et la délinquance des jeunes est extrêmement abondante. Elle englobe la plupart des études sur la justice et les jeunes contrevenants, de même que les recherches relevant des domaines de l'éducation, des services sociaux et de la santé mentale et portant sur certains aspects de la criminalité des jeunes. A cet égard, certaines questions, notamment les rapports entre la criminalité des jeunes et des facteurs comme le rendement scolaire ou le chômage, revêtent un intérêt primordial. Beaucoup de chercheurs se sont efforcés de tracer le profil des jeunes qui risquent le plus de devenir des délinquants ou des criminels chroniques. Pour y arriver, ils ont souvent entrepris des études rétrospectives dans lesquelles ils ont tenté de cerner, a posteriori, les facteurs liés au crime, d'après les expériences vécues par des personnes qui avaient déjà été condamnées. D'autres chercheurs se sont fondés sur les données recueillies auprès des jeunes eux-mêmes, combinées aux statistiques criminelles officielles. Cependant, certaines des études les plus connues dans ces domaines se fondent sur des études de cohortes, dans le cadre desquelles des groupes de jeunes sont suivis pendant plusieurs années. On a tenté de prédire quels jeunes deviendraient des multirécidivistes, en se fondant sur différents modèles théoriques.

L'une des conclusions les plus intéressantes des études sur les facteurs associés à la criminalité des jeunes est l'identification du jeune contrevenant chronique. Plusieurs études ont révélé que, dans n'importe quelle cohorte, un petit nombre de jeunes sont responsables de la majorité des crimes graves commis par leur cohorte. On cherche donc à neutraliser les multirécidivistes connus et à identifier les jeunes qui risquent d'en devenir, dès le début de leur carrière criminelle, avant qu'ils aient pu commettre des crimes graves. Dans ce but, les chercheurs ont étudié les jeunes eux-mêmes, leurs familles et les collectivités dont ils étaient issus. Les profils qu'ils ont obtenus sont remarquablement semblables et présentent une série de constantes, notamment un milieu familial dysfonctionnel ou violent, de piètres antécédents scolaires ou professionnels, un statut socio-économique bas, l'appartenance à un groupe ethnique ou racial minoritaire et le fait d'avoir un parent, un frère ou une soeur ayant un casier judiciaire. À l'aide de ces facteurs, on élabore des stratégies qui visent à neutraliser les multirécidivistes déjà en activité ou à faire de la prévention auprès des jeunes qui risquent le plus de devenir des délinquants chroniques.

Comme on l'a déjà mentionné, une grande partie de la littérature qui porte sur l'implication de jeunes dans des activités criminelles vise à permettre une meilleure compréhension de ce phénomène afin de faciliter l'élaboration d'interventions auprès des jeunes contrevenants. On se préoccupe énormément des délinquants persistants qui commettent des délits graves. Beaucoup d'études signalent que de nombreux jeunes s'adonnent à une forme quelconque d'activité illégale à un moment ou l'autre de leur adolescence. Beaucoup de chercheurs y voient simplement une réalité de l'adolescence et un élément de la transition et de l'adaptation à la vie adulte. Cependant, certains jeunes s'adonnent à des activités criminelles graves et persistantes. Divers facteurs réapparaissent constamment dans la littérature comme étant fortement associés à des activités criminelles répétées: une faible estime de soi et une image dévalorisée de soi; une famille monoparentale; des conflits intrafamiliaux; des sévices psychologiques, physiques ou sexuels; l'alcoolisme; un faible statut socio-économique; un piètre rendement scolaire et la fréquentation de pairs délinquants.



## 1.1 Variables corrélées avec le criminalité des jeunes

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## 2.0 La scolarisation et l'emploi

La littérature sur la scolarisation et l'emploi explore les rapports entre le risque de délinquance et certaines variables d'ordre scolaire ou professionnel dont l'échec scolaire, des conflits sociaux à l'école, l'absentéisme et l'abandon scolaire, et le chômage. Les auteurs des études ou articles analysent également les rapports entre, d'une part, les difficultés scolaires et professionnelles et, d'autre part, les caractéristiques sociales et économiques des milieux dont sont issus les jeunes qui risquent le plus d'éprouver ces difficultés.

Un certain consensus se dégage de la littérature : dans bon nombre des cas, les jeunes qui réussissent mal à l'école et dans le monde du travail diffèrent sensiblement de ceux qui réussissent bien dans l'un ou l'autre de ces milieux, ou dans les deux. Les différences ressortent clairement lorsqu'on examine certaines variables définies dans ces recherches. Cependant, on s'interroge encore sur la relation de cause à effet des rapports constatés. Par exemple, l'activité criminelle a-t-elle des répercussions défavorables sur le rendement scolaire et professionnel ou, au contraire, un mauvais rendement à l'école et au travail pousse-t-il le jeune vers le crime? Beaucoup de théoriciens souscrivent à la seconde hypothèse, tout en reconnaissant un certain mérite à l'argument inverse.

La littérature met en lumière une forte association entre des méthodes parentales déficientes, une discipline irrégulière, des familles violentes, des familles dysfonctionnelles et des échecs tant scolaires que professionnels. Cette association s'expliquerait du fait que des milieux familiaux pauvres, déficients et souvent dangereux n'aident pas l'enfant à développer le répertoire d'aptitudes nécessaires pour bien fonctionner à l'école ou au travail, et souvent, ils lui nuisent. Incapable de réussir, le jeune se dévalorise et a l'impression de ne pas "être à sa place". Ce sentiment d'échec peut, à son tour, l'amener à chercher d'autres façons de "trouver sa place", notamment en se livrant à des activités criminelles ou dangereuses, en s'enfuyant de chez lui et en vivant dans la rue.

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### 3.0 L'enfance et la jeunesse à risque

La littérature sur l'enfance maltraitée a fait un bond spectaculaire au cours des dix dernières années. Bien que les estimations varient, les statistiques révèlent que des millions d'enfants sont maltraités ou négligés chaque année. Les mauvais traitements qui leur sont infligés peuvent être d'ordre physique, sexuel ou émotionnel. Même le fait d'être témoin d'un épisode de brutalité ou de violence, par exemple d'un homme qui bat sa femme, aurait des répercussions importantes sur l'enfant. Vers la fin des années 1970, des cas d'abus sexuel perpétrés contre des enfants ont commencé à être révélés; depuis, il existe un intérêt soutenu pour ce problème, dont les chercheurs s'efforcent de définir la nature et l'ampleur. Des études portant sur la victime, la famille et l'agresseur ont été réalisées; leurs auteurs tentaient de comprendre le comportement violent et de concevoir une intervention appropriée ainsi que des stratégies de prévention.

Les facteurs sociaux, comportementaux et économiques qui peuvent être liés à la probabilité de mauvais traitements envers les enfants ont fait l'objet de plus d'une étude. Bien que certaines constantes claires s'en dégagent, la conclusion la plus fréquente est qu'il s'agit souvent d'un problème très complexe. Beaucoup de facteurs contribueraient à la violence faite aux enfants. D'après les études, les mauvais traitements sont souvent infligés au domicile familial, par une ou des personnes que la victime connaît. Les antécédents sociaux des enfants maltraités diffèrent sensiblement de ceux des autres enfants. Parmi les principales caractéristiques qui les en différencient figurent la déficience des relations parentales et maritales, des antécédents de mauvais traitements et l'alcoolisme ou la toxicomanie.

Les auteurs de recherches récentes sur les enfants maltraités et la violence familiale ont cherché à comprendre les effets des mauvais traitements sur la victime. D'après les études empiriques sur le sujet, il existerait un certain nombre de réactions fréquentes: la peur, l'anxiété, la dépression, la colère, l'hostilité, l'agression et un comportement sexuel inapproprié. Il existerait aussi des effets à long terme, dont les suivants sont souvent signalés : dépression et comportement autodestructeur, anxiété, sentiment d'isolement et de honte, dévalorisation de soi, difficulté à faire confiance, tendance à être de nouveau maltraité(e), toxicomanie et mésadaptation.

### 3.1 Mauvais traitements

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#### 4.0 Les enfants disparus, les fugueurs et les enfants de la rue.

Ces dernières années, plusieurs cas dramatiques d'enfants disparus ont retenu l'attention de la population et des autorités publiques. Le terme "enfants disparus" recouvre trois populations très différentes de jeunes "à risque". La première de ces populations, et la moins nombreuse, est composée d'enfants ou de jeunes qui ont été enlevés par un étranger. La deuxième englobe les enfants qui ont été enlevés par le parent qui n'en n'avait pas la garde. Enfin, la troisième population et la plus importante sur le plan du risque, à cause de son ampleur et des nombreux problèmes qu'elle pose, est celle des fugueurs.

Plus de 200 000 jeunes s'enfuiraient du domicile familial ou d'un autre lieu d'hébergement chaque année, au Canada. Après leur fugue, ils vivent dans la rue. La plupart d'entre eux se sont enfuis plus d'une fois, et certains font trente ou quarante fugues par année. On ne peut évaluer avec précision le nombre d'enfants en fuite au Canada, les divers types de fugues et le nombre de fugueurs "à répétition" rendant difficile l'établissement de statistiques. À Toronto par exemple, 25 enfants étaient à l'origine de plus de 400 fugues signalées en 1984.

La majorité des fugueurs sont âgés de treize à quinze ans et sont de sexe féminin. C'est au mois de mai, quand l'année scolaire tire à sa fin, que le plus de fugues sont signalées. D'après les études, la plupart des jeunes fugueurs sont retournés chez eux dans les vingt-quatre heures.

La plupart des jeunes de la rue, au Canada, sont des fugueurs. Ces jeunes sont généralement issus de familles dysfonctionnelles ou conflictuelles. Un nombre disproportionné d'entre eux viennent aussi de familles d'accueil, de foyers nourriciers, de foyers de groupe ou d'établissements d'hébergement d'un autre genre. Les motifs des fugues se classent généralement en trois catégories : 1° la fugue est une réaction à une situation familiale, professionnelle ou scolaire malsaine; 2° la fugue est une expression d'indépendance; 3° la fugue est une réaction à une désillusion de plus en plus grande face aux valeurs ayant cours dans la société. Une grande partie de la littérature sur les enfants disparus et les enfants de la rue porte essentiellement sur le premier de ces motifs. Le facteur le plus souvent associé à la fugue est une mauvaise relation parent-enfant. Ce facteur comprend également le fait d'être issu d'une famille monoparentale. Dans beaucoup de cas, de mauvaises expériences à l'école précipitent les fugues. Le rendement scolaire est, à son tour, associé à la situation familiale de l'enfant. Des sévices physiques ou sexuels sont souvent à l'origine des fugues. Certains jeunes commencent à se livrer à des activités illégales avant de s'enfuir de chez eux. La fugue ne règle cependant pas leurs problèmes et, d'après les études sur le sujet, les jeunes qui s'enfuient pour vivre dans la rue sont exposés à une multitude de risques.

Plusieurs études mettent en relief le lien entre les fugueurs, la prostitution et la pornographie exploitant des enfants et des jeunes de la rue. De onze à vingt-trois pour cent des fugueurs s'adonneraient à la prostitution. Ces jeunes sont également vulnérables à d'autres types d'exploitation sexuelle, notamment le viol et la pornographie. La prostitution entraîne des risques additionnels, dont celui de contracter des maladies transmissibles sexuellement, la menace du sida (contracté par contact sexuel ou par la consommation de drogues prises par voie intraveineuse), l'alcoolisme et la toxicomanie, la violence physique et le suicide.

Cette partie de l'analyse de la littérature se divise en plusieurs sous-sections qui portent sur les enfants disparus, les fugueurs et les enfants de la rue; la prostitution des jeunes; la toxicomanie et l'alcoolisme; les problèmes de santé mentale et physique.



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## 5.0 Les bandes criminelles et les jeunes violents

Le phénomène des bandes de jeunes retient de plus en plus l'attention depuis quelques années. Présenté avec sensationnalisme dans plusieurs films de Hollywood, le problème n'est que trop réel dans toute l'Amérique du Nord. D'après une analyse de la littérature dans le domaine de la justice pénale, la plupart des études sur ce phénomène, si on exclut les reportages de médias populaires, sont américaines. Aux États-unis, le phénomène des bandes de jeunes semble associé à des activités criminelles organisées entourant le trafic de la drogue. Ces bandes sont d'abord apparues dans quelques localités de la région de Los Angeles, mais semblent s'être répandues à beaucoup de grandes régions urbaines des États-unis, leurs membres s'étant rendu compte des profits énormes qu'ils pouvaient réaliser en vendant de la drogue dans d'autres villes. Elles sont organisées, armées jusqu'aux dents et prêtes à user de violence. Certains chercheurs américains ont étudié les facteurs liés à l'existence de ces bandes et leurs modes de recrutement, pour trouver des solutions aux problèmes que posent les bandes actuelles et pour tenter d'identifier les jeunes les plus susceptibles d'y adhérer, afin de les empêcher de le faire.

L'expérience du Canada diffère beaucoup de celle des États-unis sur ce plan. D'après les données existantes, au Canada les bandes de jeunes seraient beaucoup moins violentes et beaucoup moins centrées sur des activités criminelles que leurs pendants américains. Bien qu'il ait toujours existé au Canada des bandes de jeunes issus de milieux ouvriers, le comportement de deux types de bandes semble particulièrement inquiétant à l'heure actuelle. Il s'agit des bandes de jeunes asiatiques (et de jeunes d'autres minorités ethniques) et des bandes de jeunes dans les banlieues. Les bandes de jeunes d'origine asiatique ou autre semblent composées de jeunes marginaux, dans différentes villes, qui ne trouvent pas véritablement leur place dans la société canadienne. Ils s'adonneraient au proxénétisme et à des activités de prostitution impliquant des jeunes Canadiennes "blanches", de même qu'à d'autres activités illégales comme le trafic de stupéfiants. Les plus organisées de ces bandes auraient, semble-t-il, des liens avec des groupements criminels adultes de leur pays d'origine. La vague d'incidents violents dans lesquels ces bandes ont été impliquées ces dernières années découlerait de "guerres de territoires" liées au trafic de la drogue.

Les bandes de jeunes établies en banlieue posent un problème différent mais apparenté. Le phénomène des bandes de banlieue est lié à un nombre croissant d'incidents violents. En particulier, la multiplication des incidents violents survenus dans les écoles secondaires du Canada suscite beaucoup d'inquiétude. L'implication de membres de ces bandes dans des actes de violence gratuite et non provoquée distingue ces groupes de ceux qui s'organisent autour d'activités illégales motivées par l'appât du gain. Certains indices laissent croire que ce phénomène serait le reflet de problèmes plus graves et plus profonds dans nos collectivités.

Deux autres sujets qui traduisent également certains éléments de la culture des jeunes sont abordés dans cette section. Il s'agit de la violence, d'une part, et du satanisme et des sciences occultes, d'autre part. Les autorités responsables des services sociaux et de la justice pénale s'inquiètent de ce que certains jeunes deviennent de plus en plus violents. Comme dans le cas du phénomène des bandes de jeunes, il se peut que la montée de la violence chez les jeunes dénote un problème social plus vaste. De plus en plus d'intervenants estiment que les jeunes ne font qu'imiter des comportements violents visibles dans l'ensemble de la culture. Dans les villes du Canada, on a constaté une hausse des agressions collectives et des actes de sauvagerie (*wilding*). Il s'agit d'actes qui comportent l'utilisation du pouvoir et le recours à la force sans discernement et d'une façon amoral. La menace que pose la violence des jeunes semble particulièrement inquiétante puisqu'elle est de plus en plus le fait de jeunes de la classe moyenne.

Le deuxième sujet traité dans cette section est celui du rapport entre, d'une part, le satanisme et les sciences occultes et, d'autre part, la criminalité et la délinquance des jeunes. Plusieurs thèmes reviennent dans l'ensemble des études réalisées sur ce sujet. L'un d'eux est que les jeunes sont exposés aux sciences occultes quand ils s'intéressent aux mystères du satanisme. Par exemple, la culture des jeunes est pleine de métaphores satanistes qui apparaissent notamment dans la musique *heavy metal* de Ozzy Osborne, Black Sabbath, et dans des jeux de fantaisie comme Donjons et Dragons. Certains jeunes s'adonnent au satanisme pour se rebeller ou pour choquer les adultes de leur entourage. Il existerait, de plus, d'après certaines études, un fort lien entre le satanisme et la consommation de drogues.

Un deuxième thème qui revient dans la littérature sur ce sujet est la controverse au sujet de l'ampleur du phénomène du satanisme dans la société. Des allégations de comportements horribles ou bizarres associés à des rituels d'exploitation (surtout d'enfants) ont suscité beaucoup d'inquiétude au sujet du satanisme et des cultes sataniques. Cependant, il y a peu de preuves pour corroborer l'existence d'activités criminelles très répandues et très graves liées au satanisme. Les documents qui existent décrivent généralement les modalités que les policiers doivent suivre lorsqu'ils font enquête sur des incidents supposément associés au satanisme et aux sciences occultes. D'autres études dans ce domaine décrivent les aspects religieux de ces croyances sataniques. L'un des problèmes sérieux auxquels les autorités policières doivent faire face lorsqu'elles font enquête sur de présumées affaires de satanisme est le risque de violer la liberté de culte des personnes qui s'adonnent au satanisme, puisque celui-ci, en soi, n'est pas un crime.



Le sensationnalisme qui entoure le satanisme masque peut-être l'expression de problèmes sous-jacents graves chez les jeunes. Quand le satanisme est associé à l'exploitation sexuelle d'enfants, l'accent mis sur le satanisme semble minimiser l'ampleur réelle du problème des enfants maltraités dans notre société, en le réduisant à la manifestation d'actes bizarres commis par des individus diaboliques. Ainsi, le satanisme peut servir de bouc émissaire commode et d'écran de fumée, puisqu'il détourne l'attention de problèmes sociaux graves comme la pauvreté, le racisme et la violence contre les enfants.

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## 6.0 Interventions auprès des jeunes à risque

Un certain nombre de thèmes ressortent de notre examen de la littérature portant sur les différentes interventions faites auprès des jeunes en difficulté. Ces thèmes correspondent aux facteurs dont la police et les autres fournisseurs de services ont tenu compte au moment de concevoir et de mettre en oeuvre des stratégies adaptées aux problèmes que vivent les jeunes. L'analyse de ces facteurs se trouve cependant compliquée par le fait que les jeunes peuvent être considérés tant comme les victimes que comme les auteurs de délits; la perspective adoptée par les intervenants est donc cruciale dans la détermination du type d'intervention préconisée. Une certaine évolution se produit cependant à cet égard, bien que lentement, de plus en plus de gens reconnaissant que les victimes et les agresseurs sont souvent les mêmes individus, traités à des moments différents et par des organismes différents. Ainsi, un jeune qui fait sans cesse l'école buissonnière et qui crée des difficultés aux administrateurs scolaires sera signalé à l'attention des autorités de l'éducation ou même de la police. Ce même jeune aura peut-être déjà été en contact avec des agents de police et des travailleurs de la protection de l'enfance, après avoir été maltraité dans sa famille. Enfin, ce même individu aboutira peut-être dans un établissement correctionnel pour adultes si il ou elle développe l'habitude de se livrer à des activités criminelles.

Ce scénario sous-tend bon nombre des articles et ouvrages dont les auteurs reconnaissent qu'une approche multidisciplinaire et coordonnée s'impose pour régler certains des problèmes difficiles et complexes auxquels font face les "jeunes à risque". Ils s'agit d'un des leitmotiv de cette littérature. Les problèmes doivent être abordés dans un contexte élargi puisqu'ils prennent racine dans la collectivité et exigent un effort concerté de la part des organismes qui s'occupent des jeunes.

Trois types d'intervention ressortent, à l'examen de la littérature. La première approche est réactive et vise la répression du crime ainsi que l'arrestation et la neutralisation des criminels. La deuxième est proactive et met l'accent sur la prévention des comportements nocifs. La troisième intervention est apparentée à la deuxième en ce qu'elle vise aussi à prévenir les comportements nuisibles, mais va beaucoup plus loin dans la recherche de solutions permettant de remédier aux causes du problème. Cette troisième approche suppose une intervention fondée sur l'analyse de données épidémiologiques, psychologiques et sociologiques dont se dégage le profil des "jeunes à risque". Des éléments de ces trois approches figurent dans chacune des sections décrivant des interventions faites auprès des "jeunes à risque".

Les directives et le matériel didactique à l'intention des intervenants professionnels (notamment les policiers et les travailleurs sociaux) appelés à s'occuper de "jeunes à risque" dans le cadre de leur travail constituent une autre partie de la littérature sur les interventions auprès de jeunes en difficulté. Ces documents contiennent, de façons plus précises, un exposé détaillé des protocoles d'enquête à suivre et des renseignements d'ordre technique sur les mesures législatives qui s'appliquent à la jeunesse.

Certains problèmes particuliers auxquels sont confrontés les "jeunes à risque" ont fait l'objet d'un nombre considérable d'études. Plusieurs de ces problèmes ont été mentionnés dans cette section. Il s'agit notamment des mauvais traitements infligés aux enfants et de la violence familiale; du suicide chez les jeunes; des bandes de jeunes et des jeunes violents. Ces trois thèmes recouvrent un vaste éventail de risques auxquels les jeunes sont exposés, à la fois en tant que victimes et en tant qu'auteurs de délits. Ces risques nécessitent eux aussi différentes interventions de la part de la famille et de la collectivité, notamment par l'entremise des services sociaux, des responsables de l'éducation et du système de justice pénale. Il convient de souligner encore une fois la nature complexe de ces risques et le besoin d'y réagir d'une façon concertée et globale.

Le problème des enfants maltraités a reçu beaucoup d'attention au cours de la dernière décennie. En particulier, la parution du rapport de la Commission Badgley, en 1984, et le rapport Rix Rogers en 1990 ont contribué à maintenir les problèmes des mauvais traitements infligés aux enfants et de la violence familiale au premier plan du programme du Canada en matière de politique sociale. La grande quantité d'ouvrages et d'articles publiés sur ce sujet témoigne des efforts déployés, aussi bien par des universitaires que par des intervenants, pour s'attaquer à ces problèmes. Dans beaucoup de cas, les auteurs préconisent l'adoption d'une stratégie d'intervention globale et coordonnée pour lutter contre la violence envers les enfants et la violence familiale. Beaucoup d'organismes communautaires participent à des initiatives de formation multidisciplinaire et aux interventions. Cette approche est particulièrement capitale pour que l'intervention policière soit coordonnée. La police doit comprendre le rôle des autres personnes ou organismes qui interviennent auprès des victimes, de leurs familles et des agresseurs. La mise au point de protocoles appropriés est indispensable pour garantir que l'on répond aux besoins de la victime, que l'on traite avec les familles d'une façon intelligente et que les agresseurs reçoivent le traitement nécessaire.

Les auteurs des études et articles font ressortir l'importance de sensibiliser la société. Cela leur semble particulièrement crucial pour que la collectivité réagisse dans son ensemble au problème de la violence envers les enfants. Les auteurs décrivent des stratégies de prévention primaires faisant partie d'une approche globale dans laquelle les jeunes qui risquent le plus d'être maltraités ou d'agresser quelqu'un d'autre sont identifiés et traités en conséquence. Le traitement obligatoire des délinquants et l'application de méthodes de dépistage permettant d'identifier les agresseurs éventuels sont considérés comme des moyens à prendre. Les interventions auprès des enfants maltraités sont également considérées comme une façon de les empêcher de devenir des agresseurs à leur tour, dans l'avenir. Encore une fois, ces interventions s'inscrivent dans le cadre d'une réaction globale, multidisciplinaire, communautaire et collective (différents organismes y participant) au problème complexe de l'enfance maltraitée.

Le suicide et les tentatives de suicide chez les jeunes font également l'objet d'un grand nombre d'articles et d'études, depuis dix ans. On semble s'inquiéter de plus en plus du suicide chez les jeunes, même si le nombre de jeunes faisant partie de la cohorte la plus à risque décroît. Plusieurs facteurs ont été associés au phénomène du suicide des jeunes, dont la dépression, la perte d'un personnage clé, des expressions de colère tournées vers l'extérieur, des événements stressants, des échecs scolaires et des perturbations familiales. D'après certaines données, il y aurait un lien entre le comportement suicidaire et la perpétration de crimes graves par des jeunes, ce qui permet de penser que ces deux phénomènes sont peut-être reliés à des facteurs semblables. Les variables corrélées avec la criminalité des jeunes, qui sont décrites plus haut, confirment le bien-fondé de ce point de vue.

Le mode d'intervention auprès de jeunes qui manifestent des tendances suicidaires ressemble à celui qu'on a décrit dans le cas de l'enfance maltraitée et de la violence familiale; il s'agit dans ce cas-ci également d'un problème complexe qui exige une réaction globale, coordonnée et multidisciplinaire. Les membres de la famille, les autorités scolaires, les travailleurs sociaux, les professionnels de la santé et les policiers doivent être mis au courant des symptômes à surveiller et de la gravité des comportements en question. D'après les auteurs d'articles et d'ouvrages sur le sujet, ces intervenants devraient recevoir une formation spécialisée et être munis de protocoles appropriés leur permettant de prévenir le suicide chez les jeunes.

L'inquiétude publique face à l'émergence de bandes de jeunes dans différentes villes du Canada s'est nettement intensifiée au cours des dernières années. Des organisations policières et des organismes communautaires ont élaboré certaines stratégies pour faire face au problème des bandes de jeunes. L'une de ces stratégies fait appel à la collectivité: on veut sensibiliser la population au problème, lui en expliquer la nature et mobiliser les ressources communautaires pour y réagir efficacement. Deux interventions interdépendantes découlent de cette approche communautaire. La première est l'embauche de travailleurs de services d'approche "dans la rue" et de conseillers auprès des jeunes, chargés d'entrer en contact avec des jeunes faisant partie de bandes ou susceptibles d'y adhérer. Ces travailleurs de la rue fourniraient des services directement aux intéressés, y compris des services de formation et de soutien pour les jeunes qui souhaitent quitter une bande. Le travail de ces intervenants viserait à prévenir ou à réduire l'influence des bandes de jeunes dans une localité donnée.

Une autre stratégie proactive conçue pour prévenir la croissance des bandes de jeunes consiste à offrir des perspectives intéressantes aux jeunes qui risquent le plus d'adhérer à une bande. Cette tactique suppose la compréhension des modes de recrutement des bandes et l'identification des éventuelles recrues. En leur offrant des possibilités alléchantes, on espère persuader les jeunes susceptibles d'adhérer à une bande des avantages qu'il y a à adopter une ligne de conduite socialement approuvée plutôt que le comportement préconisé par la bande.

Parmi les interventions de nature plus réactive figure la suppression des activités de la bande de jeunes. Ces interventions consistent essentiellement en stratégies policières visant à réprimer le comportement criminel des membres de bandes. Il peut s'agir notamment de changements organisationnels ou institutionnels permettant d'élaborer des politiques et des programmes de nature à réduire les dangers que posent les bandes. La mise en place, dans les services de police, d'unités spéciales chargées des bandes de jeunes est une intervention de ce genre, tout comme l'établissement d'un réseau d'information complet permettant de surveiller les bandes qui exercent certaines activités criminelles comme le trafic de la drogue ou la prostitution. L'information recueillie peut alors être transmise aux autorités compétentes, ce qui permet l'adoption de pratiques policières plus efficaces.

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