

Exploring the Community Court Model in Vancouver: Participant Profiles and Patterns of Offending

**by
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Abstract

Community courts are an alternative sentencing model targeting the underlying causes of criminal behaviour for low-level chronic offenders, aiming to improve the quality of life in the community and reduce recidivism (Porter et al., 2010). Vancouver's Downtown Community Court (DCC) is the first community court in Canada and addresses offenses that occur in a distinct catchment area in downtown Vancouver. The current study extends prior research on the DCC by exploring profiles of court participants and examining the longitudinal implications of DCC involvement on recidivism. A subsample (n = 1003) of youth from the Incarcerated Serious and Violent Young Offender Study (ISVYOS) will be used to address two research questions: 1) Are there differences in the types of individuals who access the court and those who do not? 2) Does the court produce longitudinal changes in recidivism after DCC involvement? Logistic regression analyses revealed differences among DCC and non-DCC participants. In addition, fixed-effects models observed within-individual increases in the expected rate of convictions in the year participants entered the court, however no significant changes were observed longitudinally. These findings represent the utility of individual-level criminogenic risk factors in understanding future court involvement and the importance of examining longitudinal patterns of offending to assess the impact of court involvement on recidivism.

Keywords: Problem-solving courts; Downtown community court; Recidivism; Profiles

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Table of Contents

Declaration of Committee	ii
Ethics Statement.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	ix
List of Acronyms	x
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
Chapter 2. Literature Review	4
2.1. Problem-Solving Courts.....	4
2.2. Community Courts	9
2.3. Profiles of Community Court Participants	13
2.4. Long-term Outcomes	15
2.5. The Downtown Community Court (DCC).....	16
2.5.1. Existing Literature on the DCC.....	19
2.6. Current Study.....	21
Chapter 3. Method	23
3.1. Data	23
3.2. Sample.....	23
3.3. Procedure	24
3.4. Measures	25
3.4.1. Research Question 1	25
3.4.2. Research Question 2	29
3.5. Analytic Strategy.....	31
3.5.1. Research Question 1	31
3.5.2. Research Question 2	32
Chapter 4. Results	34
4.1. Research Question 1: Profiles of DCC Involvement.....	34
4.1.1. Bivariate Associations	34
4.1.2. Logistic Regressions Predicting DCC Involvement.....	36
4.2. Research Question 2: Longitudinal Outcomes of DCC Involvement.....	38
Chapter 5. Discussion	44
5.1. Profiles of DCC participants.....	44
5.2. Recidivism and Days in Custody Outcomes.....	48
5.3. Limitations and Future Directions	51
Chapter 6. Conclusion.....	54

References 55

List of Tables

Table 3.1.	Descriptive Statistics Research Question 1 (N = 1003).....	28
Table 3.2.	Coding Scheme for Research Question 2.....	30
Table 3.3.	Descriptive Statistics for Research Question 2 (N = 168).....	31
Table 4.1.	Bivariate Associations.....	35
Table 4.2.	Logistic Regressions Predicting DCC Involvement.....	37
Table 4.3.	Negative Binomial Fixed Effects Regression for Total Convictions	40
Table 4.4.	Negative Binomial Fixed Effects Model for Three Year Convictions by Type	41
Table 4.5.	Negative Binomial Fixed Effects Model for Five Year Convictions by Type	42
Table 4.6.	Fixed Effects Regression Model for Days in Custody.....	43

List of Figures

Figure 4.1. Average Number of Convictions per year	39
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List of Acronyms

CMT	Case Management Tea
CORNET	Corrections Network
DCC	Downtown Community Court
DTES	Downtown Eastside
DTCV	Drug Treatment Court of Vancouver
ISVYOS	Incarcerated Serious and Violent Young Offender Study
MCFD	Ministry of Children and Family Development
PSC	Problem Solving Court
SCWG	Street Crime Working Group
SDH	Social Determinants of Health
US	United States of America
VPC	Vancouver Provincial Court
YCJA	Youth Criminal Justice Act
YOA	Young Offenders Act

Chapter 1.

Introduction

Limited success in reducing recidivism observed in traditional justice system processing may be due to the lack of prioritizing the complex social, psychological, and health issues faced by many individuals involved in crime (Garcia et al., 2019). The revolving door of the justice system has contributed to frustrations among professionals and the public regarding the effectiveness of traditional court processes (Berman & Feinblatt, 2001). This had led to a call to more adequately address the underlying causes of the behaviour. Problem-Solving Court (PSC) models emerged as one response to this call for action. These alternative sentencing models aim to address underlying needs and risk factors that lead to criminal behaviour (Casey & Rottman, 2005; Garcia et al., 2019; Somers et al., 2014), in contrast to the retributive approach often found in traditional court systems (Butts, 2001). PSCs have recently gained international popularity as an alternative approach to traditional sentencing schemes. These models encompass a wide range of target populations and social problems, including mental-health courts, domestic violence courts, community courts, and most commonly, drug courts.

In the few decades PSCs have operated, limited empirical evidence has primarily focused on drug courts and shown mixed results for their overall effectiveness. Recent research on drug courts in the United States (US) has demonstrated that this form of PSC helps to reduce recidivism and arrest-to-arraignment time, increase compliance for community service sentences and treatment, and improve procedural justice and access to services (Berman & Feinblatt, 2001; Casey & Rottman, 2005; Gottfredson et al., 2006). Still, critics argue that PSCs have generally been implemented without adequate evaluations of their effectiveness (Garcia et al., 2019; La Prairie et al., 2002). The divide in the literature reflects the need to conduct additional empirical research and explore versions of PSCs other than drug courts.

Community courts operate slightly differently from the more frequently evaluated drug-court models. Community courts are implemented within a distinct catchment area known to have high levels of street crime, and use community members, businesses,

and social services as stakeholders in court processes (Slinger & Roesch, 2010; Somers et al., 2014). Compared to other PSC models, community courts have been argued to be better suited to address a variety of offenders with complex needs due to the community-level focus (Slinger & Roesch, 2010). However, this further limits the generalizability of community court evaluations as they are designed based on the unique needs and context of local communities.

Vancouver's Downtown Community Court (DCC) was established in 2008 as Canada's first community court. A subset of individuals in downtown Vancouver experience a wide range of social and structural problems, including poverty, homelessness, mental health issues, and addiction (Garcia et al., 2019; Somers et al., 2014). The DCC's catchment area includes not only the Downtown Eastside (DTES), an area characterized by the social and structural problems mentioned above, but other more affluent neighbourhoods within Vancouver's downtown core that have been affected by elevated street crime (Street Crime Working Group [SCWG], 2005). The DCC was implemented to improve community safety within downtown Vancouver and to address the complex needs of many individuals offending in this community (Somers et al., 2014). The court uses an intersectoral team comprised of partnerships between the Canadian justice system and 14 Vancouver-based health and social agencies (Garcia et al., 2019). Its main goals include increasing court efficiency, providing integrated services to its participants, increasing offender accountability to reduce re-offending, and improving the public's confidence in the criminal justice system (DCC Executive Board, 2013). While these goals provide insight into outcomes that may be observed after participation, there is a need for further evaluation of the effectiveness of this court.

Specifically, greater attention must be placed on understanding whether community courts 'achieve' the intended goal of capturing individuals involved in crime that reflect the conditions in the community it sets out to support. A growing body of literature indicates that understanding the characteristics of court participants can be useful for predicting success in the court. While most PSC models identify and focus on specific groups of offenders (i.e., drug offenders) (Casey & Rottman, 2005; Somers et al., 2014), community courts do not focus on offender type and instead aim to address quality-of-life crimes committed within a specific catchment area (Thompson, 2002). In doing so, community models broaden the types of individuals eligible for the court while simultaneously narrowing the jurisdiction to a distinct community. Additionally, due to the

non-random nature of criminal justice system processing, the success of community courts may be conditioned by individual-level characteristics that impact proclivity towards successful outcomes (i.e., criminal history). It is therefore essential to consider whether the jurisdictional differences associated with community courts impact the type of individuals who access these courts.

Second, very few studies on PSCs measure longitudinal offending outcomes. Past research on the DCC shows that the court has been effective in reducing recidivism for high-risk participants assigned a Case Management Team (CMT) after a one-year follow-up period (Somers et al., 2014). This length of follow-up period is common practice in the PSC literature. Few evaluations of PSCs examining recidivism measure outcomes past 12 months, and even fewer include follow-up periods exceeding 36 months (Gottfredson et al., 2006; Saum & Hiller, 2008). The current study aims to extend the evaluation of benefits attached to this intervention by exploring the longitudinal implications of involvement in the DCC on recidivism. If sustained benefits are observed, this will provide further evidence of the potential utility of this PSC model.

To address these research objectives, the current study will utilize a unique sample of offenders from The Incarcerated Serious and Violent Young Offender Study (ISVYOS). The ISVYOS is a longitudinal study involving incarcerated youth who were recruited based on engaging in serious and violent crime where they were convicted and sentenced to custody. Participants are considered serious and violent offenders who have a history of offending that continues into adulthood (Corrado & McCuish, 2018). As mentioned previously, PSCs were created as a solution to revolving door justice. Therefore, utilizing a sample of chronic offenders whose criminal careers span years allows for the study of individuals most likely to be subject to revolving door justice. Further, most PSCs limit involvement to non-violent offenders. Therefore, utilizing this sample offers an opportunity to consider the effectiveness of this type of court in addressing the underlying causes of criminal behaviour for individuals with serious criminal pasts who happen to engage in crime in a specific catchment area. Ultimately, the current study intends to explore the profiles of participants involved in the DCC and the longitudinal impacts of involvement in the DCC on recidivism. In doing so, it will answer the following questions: 1) Are there differences in the types of individuals who access the DCC and those who do not? and, 2) Does the court produce longitudinal changes in recidivism after DCC involvement?

Chapter 2.

Literature Review

2.1. Problem-Solving Courts

The problem-solving court (PSC) movement began in the United States (US) as a response to overwhelming rates of incarceration in the 1980s and 1990s (Berman & Feinblatt, 2001; Kaplan et al., 2018; Nolan, 2012). Traditional court processes primarily relied on principles of deterrence theory. Deterrence theory postulates policies can be implemented to increase the costs of crime, thereby deterring offenders from engaging in crime (Stafford & Warr, 1993). There are typically two forms of deterrence, general or specific. General deterrence applies to the threat of perceived punishment on potential offenders, whereas specific deterrence applies to those engaging in crime. More precisely, specific deterrence hypothesizes that subsequent criminal behaviour will be reduced due to experiencing harsh and unpleasant consequences after offending, such as incarceration (Petrich et al., 2021). However, this effect is only assumed deter criminal behaviour when punishment is certain and severe. This principle relies on the justice system's ability to deliver sanctions shortly after a crime is committed and is based on the assumption that all offenders perceive incarceration as a severe sanction. Moore et al. (2008) conducted research to assess offenders' perceptions of the severity of custodial and non-custodial sentences. It was found that offenders do not perceive incarceration as the most severe punishment and are more likely to choose a 12-month custodial sentence than alternative sanctions, such as community service (Moore et al., 2008). A recent meta-analysis (Petrich et al., 2021) has shown that incarceration does not have a deterrent effect on subsequent offending post-release and, in some cases, has resulted in increased offending compared to alternative sentences.

Before the creation of PSCs, it was observed that many individuals were circulating in and out of the justice system without addressing the underlying causes of their offending behaviour. As a result of breakdowns in the social and community institutions that generally governed such issues, a different approach to justice was needed (Berman & Feinblatt, 2001; Wiener et al., 2010). Further, it was noted that individuals entering the justice system often dealt with multiple overlapping social,

human, and legal issues that resulted in repeated contact with law enforcement (Berman & Feinblatt, 2001; Kaiser & Rhodes, 2019). Therapeutic interventions used to treat the types of social, mental, and physical problems observed to contribute to offending were increasing in both quality and availability (Berman & Feinblatt, 2001). The changing tides of judicial philosophy and availability of treatment ultimately led to the creation of a PSC that attempted to more adequately address these underlying causes of behaviour (Berman & Feinblatt, 2001; Casey & Rottman, 2005).

PSC models are rooted in the theoretical perspective of therapeutic jurisprudence. Therapeutic jurisprudence incorporates principles from various disciplines such as psychology, criminology, and social work to study how the law can be used as a therapeutic agent (Wexler, 2001). "The goal of therapeutic jurisprudence is to increase the therapeutic and decrease the antitherapeutic effects of the law, without violating the due process rights of offenders and victims" (Kaiser & Rhodes, 2019, p. 280). The principles of this theoretical perspective emphasize the role of judges and court staff in court outcomes (Kaiser & Holtfreter, 2016). Subsequently, the theory approaches law as a means to facilitate improvements in psychological and emotional functioning to aid in the rehabilitative process of individuals (Kaiser & Holtfreter, 2016). In line with the goals of therapeutic jurisprudence, PSCs employ a non-adversarial approach, modifying the traditional roles of court officials, including judges and lawyers (Berman & Feinblatt, 2001; Wiener et al., 2010). Judges are given a managerial role in the court process and are responsible for convening team meetings, developing individualized case management plans, monitoring client progress, and brokering connections with social services and the community (Berman & Feinblatt, 2001; SCWG, 2005). These specialized courts adhere to principles of therapeutic jurisprudence and put them into practice by involving a cross-section of community and legal groups to more effectively target the underlying causes of criminal behaviour (Kaiser & Holtfreter, 2016).

Therapeutic jurisprudence has been hypothesized to be connected to perceptions of procedural justice (Kaiser & Holtfreter, 2016; Wiener et al., 2010). Procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of court processes. It is characterized by treating defendants with respect, allowing them to share their story, and being honest about decision-making throughout the court process (Dollar et al., 2018; Wiener et al., 2010). High levels of procedural justice have been connected to increased compliance and successful court completion in PSC participants (Lee et al., 2013; Ray & Dollar,

2019). Therefore, while therapeutic jurisprudence relates to the theory behind the organization of PSCs, procedural justice may operate as one of the mechanisms explaining success (Ray & Dollar, 2019).

In the problem-solving model, courts acknowledge that individuals need to be accountable for the harm caused by their behaviour while simultaneously working to prevent future harm (Butts, 2001). To accomplish this, emphasis is placed on seriously addressing complex intersectional problems that affect many individuals involved in the justice system (Butts, 2001). PSCs focus on outcomes observed after case disposition and apply a supportive and continuous form of sentencing rather than a traditional static sentence, such as jail time (Porter et al., 2010). The problem-solving model addresses crime through a collaborative multidisciplinary approach, where the criminal justice system works closely with service providers in the community (Casey & Rottman, 2005). This collaborative relationship allows the courts to connect individuals to services more quickly and easily. Over the last few decades, many different types of PSC models have been developed. Generally, they fall into two categories: serving specific populations of individuals (i.e., veterans) or working to target a specific social issue (i.e., homelessness) (Miller et al., 2020).

The first PSC was designed in response to the overwhelming number of individuals incarcerated during the War on Drugs (Miller et al., 2020). This court model combined therapeutic interventions and drug treatment with court supervision to address criminal behaviour associated with drug use (Kaiser & Rhodes, 2019). In 1989 the Dade County Drug Court in Florida was established as the first problem-solving program offering a therapeutic response to non-violent drug-related crimes (Wilson et al., 2018). The initial evaluation of the Dade County Drug Court (Goldkamp, 1994) used a quasi-experimental design, comparing rates of re-offending for drug court participants to three other samples: 1) non-drug felony defendants, 2) non-participating felony drug defendants, and 3) felony drug defendants processed prior to drug court implementation. After an 18-month follow-up period, it was found that participants in the drug court had lower rates of re-arrest when compared to all three control samples (Goldkamp, 1994). After the observed success of this alternative court model, drug courts were implemented in various jurisdictions across the country.

Recent research on drug court models has shown continued success in other jurisdictions. Meta-analyses reviewing drug courts (Mitchell et al., 2012; Shaffer, 2011; Wilson et al., 2006) have found significant reductions in recidivism for court participants compared to non-participants. One of the few randomized experiments of a PSC is the evaluation of the Baltimore Drug Court which examined recidivism at one year (Gottfredson & Exum, 2002), two year (Gottfredson et al., 2003), and three-year follow-up periods (Gottfredson et al., 2006). In all three follow-up evaluations, randomly assigned drug court participants were less likely to be arrested for a new offense than the comparison group.

Following the successes of the drug court model, adaptations were developed to fit other populations and social issues, such as mental health courts, youth courts, and community courts. Other models, such as mental health courts, have shown similar results with regard to recidivism. Meta-analytic studies of mental health courts (see Honegger, 2015; Lowder et al., 2018; Sarteschi et al., 2011) found that these models have a modest impact on recidivism for court participants, concluding that mental health courts can be a valuable treatment to reduce recidivism for those struggling with mental health issues. These novel specialized courts favoured a more therapeutic response to justice and eschewed the traditional deterrence perspective. The dramatic growth of PSCs outpaced process and outcome evaluations and were often not empirically rigorous in their methods, with only a few using a true experimental design to examine court outcomes (Slinger & Roesch, 2010). While PSC models are founded in theoretically sound principles, these alternative models still require extensive examination and evaluation to determine their effectiveness over traditional responses to crime.

Despite sharing a variety of common principles, there are many challenges to generalizing findings from outcome evaluations of PSCs. Court models differ based on a variety of factors, including target population and eligibility criterion, program implementation, and jurisdiction. The wide variability in how each court operates and who they are tailored for limits the generalizability of court evaluations (Belenko et al., 2011; Gottfredson et al., 2005; Sarteschi et al., 2011). In addition, the results of outcome evaluations may differ due to methodological differences, including variations in the measurement of recidivism and follow-up period length (Gottfredson & Exum, 2002).

Consequently, there is a need for increased research on individual PSC models, as the effectiveness and implementation of specific courts vary substantially.

In addition to problems of generalizability, there are also limitations to the common methods used to evaluate PSCs. Although there may be methodological value in conducting randomized controlled trials, the nature of criminal justice processing makes it difficult to employ true experimental designs with many arguing it is unethical to withhold treatment opportunities to a control group (Slinger & Roesch, 2010). Most of the literature on PSC outcome evaluations employ quasi-experimental methods to examine between-individual changes using a matched comparison group. Due to the ethical controversy in random assignment for treatment, quasi-experimental methods may seem like a logical alternative to court evaluation. However, by design, these methods are limited in their ability to establish causal effects of treatment on an outcome due to the difficulty of controlling for all possible confounding variables (Reiffel, 2020). There may be alternative methods of exploring the effects of PSC models while controlling for plausible rival hypotheses. Specifically, the use of fixed-effects modelling to consider within-individual changes that may occur following PSC involvement may offer important insight into the impact of PSCs. Quasi-experimental methods tend to rely on between-individual analysis of changes; however, Farrington et al. (2002) argue that “drawing conclusions about causes, or in other words about the effect of changes within individuals, on the basis of variations between individuals, involves a conceptual leap that may not be justifiable” (p. 54). Based on this notion, a growing body of literature has highlighted a need to utilize within-individual analyses to assess the impact of therapeutic interventions and treatment on behaviour (Farrington, 2007; Kroner & Yessine, 2013).

Beyond methodological decisions to evaluate PSCs generally, less specific attention has been placed on the community court model and most of the research has been generated in the US. Canada and the US differ markedly in their legal and justice systems, social welfare systems, healthcare, and treatment systems (La Prairie et al., 2002), all of which may contribute to the problem-solving context and collaborative approach implemented by community courts. These differences highlight the need for more research on problem-solving models to understand their efficacy within the Canadian context.

2.2. Community Courts

The community court model is based upon the same principles as other problem-solving models; however, instead of serving a specific target population, they serve the needs of a specific community (Grommon et al., 2017). These models use community members as stakeholders in court processes (Slinger & Roesch, 2010; Somers et al., 2014). In doing so, they aim to address the underlying causes of offending while simultaneously improving public safety and procedural justice (Grommon et al., 2017). These models provide solutions at individual and community levels (Ross, 2015), offering an alternative to traditional courts that were ineffective at addressing quality-of-life offenses (Thompson, 2022).

The theory underlying community courts is that individuals repeatedly committing low-level offenses are impacted by various social and health problems contributing to their offending. It is postulated that addressing problems at an individual level will decrease overall disordered behaviour in a community and subsequently improve public safety (Grommon et al., 2017). Karafin (2008) found that among 25 community courts, the four most common goals include: targeting clients' underlying problems, reducing recidivism, addressing community needs, and improving procedural justice. Common practices in community models include collaboration between criminal justice and the community; a focus on minor offenses; extensive assessments of client history and court monitoring of sentences; and community service and individualized case plans in place of standard sanctions (Casey & Rottman, 2005). While sharing these common principles, community courts may differ as a result of how the court defines its community, the types of cases and offenders they target, and how the court is organized (Casey & Rottman, 2005). A discussion of these common principles and how they are implemented differently across courts is useful to outline the challenges in researching these models in general and emphasizes the need for specific research on the DCC.

Community courts have been argued to be the least standardized of PSCs because the political, social, and economic landscape of a community will shape the organization and implementation of the court itself (Lee & Center for Court Innovation, 2000). A key tenet in any community court is to maintain a balance between addressing the social and legal needs of the community (Fagan & Malkin, 2002). In order to create this balance, a common practice in community models is to organize multi-agency

planning committees comprised of criminal justice personnel, social service agencies, police departments, and community residents (Brown et al., 2007; Lee & Center for Court Innovation, 2000). This ensures a community-level focus during the planning stages to allow for collaboration between the justice system and the community from the outset of court development. Additionally, including residents and businesses in the planning process provides a deeper understanding of the community's needs by giving key stakeholders a voice during the implementation of justice in their neighbourhood (Thompson, 2002).

Another component of community courts that varies by jurisdiction is the target population. Historically, community courts were designed to focus on low-level offenses, such as vandalism and shoplifting, that directly impact the quality of life within a specific catchment area (Grommon et al., 2017; Porter et al., 2010; Somers et al., 2014). Therefore, unlike other PSC models that target specific types of offenders (i.e., drug courts focusing on individuals with drug dependency), community courts do not limit the types of individuals accepted into the court. In most jurisdictions, individuals engaging in quality-of-life offenses tend to be chronic offenders whose criminal behaviour may be resistant to traditional deterrence-based sanctions (Nugent-Borakove, 2009). Additionally, through traditional court processes, low-level criminal behaviour is generally not severe enough to connect individuals to the social services needed to address the underlying causes of offending (Sviridoff et al., 2002). Communities that have implemented a community model have frequently found that individuals fitting these criteria are subject to a variety of complex health and social issues and require increased access to services (Fagan & Malkin, 2002; Nugent-Borakove, 2009; Sviridoff et al., 2002). Therefore, community courts have been developed to provide a setting where individuals involved in the justice system have access to a wide range of services addressing criminogenic needs to reduce future offending (Karafin, 2008).

One of the factors leading to the development of community courts was the rise in quality of life crimes which started to increase at a similar time to the spike in drug-related crime in the 1980s and 1990s (Henry & Kralstein, 2011). As mentioned previously, traditional responses to this type of crime were relatively ineffective at reducing recidivism, and individuals were repeatedly cycling through the justice system. This resulted in an increased fear of crime in these communities and a loss of confidence in the justice system (Thompson, 2002). Concomitantly, the popularity of the

broken windows perspective was increasing, which heavily influenced the development of this alternative sentencing model. Broken windows theory posits that visible signs of disorder results in the breakdown of social controls within a community leading to further increases in disorder (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). Many jurisdictions in the US adopted this perspective of criminal behaviour. Accordingly, cities implemented a community policing approach demonstrating the significance of community-level justice practices (Casey & Rottman, 2005). A specialized court focused on addressing low-level crime in high disorder neighbourhoods was a logical next step in the community justice movement (Casey & Rottman, 2005).

The first community court was the Midtown Community Court in New York City in 1993. At this time, New York City pioneered broken windows policing initiatives, leading to aggressive and targeted policing of quality-of-life crimes, particularly in the Times Square community (Thompson, 2002). Subsequently, more individuals were entering the justice system without addressing the underlying causes of offending (Thompson, 2002), resulting in the practice of revolving door justice. Crime in the Times Square neighbourhood was impacting local businesses, serving as a driving force behind a new response to the crime problem (Thompson, 2002). The Midtown Community Court was created out of frustrations from criminal justice professionals and the public who noticed this cycle of offending, highlighting the need for a change in how the court responded to these offenses (Sviridoff et al., 2002). Sviridoff et al. (2002) conducted an outcome evaluation using a pre-post design. Recidivism was examined for participants who completed the case management program in the first three years of court operation. Over a one-year follow-up period, participants' annual arrest rates dropped by 50% (Sviridoff et al., 2002). Additionally, the court demonstrated success in community-level outcomes with increased perceptions of justice and quality of life within the neighbourhood (Sviridoff et al., 2002). The observed success of the Midtown Community Court in reducing recidivism and improving community engagement contributed to the proliferation of community courts across the US (Somers et al., 2014). More recently, community courts have been implemented in other countries such as South Africa, Australia, England, and Canada. Similar to other PSC models, the rate of expansion of community courts globally has far surpassed the rate of research evaluating them (Grommon et al., 2017).

The current literature on community courts yields mixed results on their effectiveness. Evaluations of PSCs generally identify two levels in which they can produce meaningful change: the community or court level and the individual level. Much of the research supporting community courts is concentrated at the community or court level. Recent evaluations of community models have documented improvements in the timeliness of court processes (Hakuta et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2013; Sviridoff et al., 2002), increased use of alternative sanctions (Frazer, 2006; Hakuta et al., 2008; Katz, 2009), and overall cost savings for local governments (Lee et al., 2013; Nugent-Borakove, 2009; Sviridoff et al., 2002). Other community-level outcomes that have been observed include increased confidence in the justice system (Fanning, 2018; Frazer, 2006), reduced signs of disorder in the community (Sviridoff et al., 2002), and increased perceptions of safety (Eckberg, 2001).

What is less clear is the impact of this court model on individual-level outcomes such as recidivism. For example, the Red Hook Community Justice Centre (RHCJC) employed a quasi-experimental method, using propensity score matching to compare defendants processed at the RHCJC and those processed through the downtown court (Lee et al., 2013). After a 12-month follow-up period, there were no significant differences between the two groups in their level of recidivism. However, after a 24-month follow-up period, those processed through the RHCJC were less likely to be re-arrested compared to defendants processed through the downtown court (Lee et al., 2013). A similar result was observed at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC) in Yarra, where the NJC treatment group had fewer re-offences over 24 months compared to a matched control group in the traditional court (Ross, 2015). In Nugent-Borakove's (2009) evaluation of the Seattle Community Court, a pre-post design was used and compared those who opted-in to the Seattle Community Court and those who did not. The community court group showed a significantly lower frequency of offending over 18 months compared to the control group. However, the community court was no more effective at eliminating offending behaviours, with 80% of participants in both groups committing a new offense within the 18-month follow-up period (Nugent-Borakove, 2009). A more recent study by Grommon et al. (2017) used a sample of 574 defendants referred to the Indianapolis community court to evaluate recidivism outcomes. Those who agreed to participate in the community court were assigned to the treatment group and those who did not were placed in the control group. Short-term differences in

recidivism were observed between the two groups, with the treatment group showing slightly lower levels of recidivism while still under court supervision. However, differences in recidivism were not sustained over the 12-month and 36-month follow-up periods (Grommon et al., 2017). The variability in effectiveness may result from the same methodological limitations mentioned in the PSC literature and issues regarding the variability in target population.

Research undertaken on community courts is sparse and yields inconsistent results on their effectiveness on recidivism. While some courts have had positive effects on crime reduction in the short term, 12 and 18 months, the indications on long-term reductions in recidivism are less clear. Furthermore, research on the characteristics of those selected or agreeing to participate in community courts is unclear and may impact specific court goals. Thus, two topics in the current literature that require more attention are 1) assessing characteristics of court participants and 2) extending follow-up periods to understand the long-term outcomes of these court models on recidivism.

2.3. Profiles of Community Court Participants

It is not well understood why PSCs are successful and who these courts are successful for. Understanding how successful outcomes are related to participant characteristics is an increasingly popular method for accessing the 'black box' of problem-solving models. Scholars in the drug court literature have examined a number of individual-level factors that are predictive of court outcomes (Cooper, 2003; Gallagher et al., 2015; Hickert et al., 2009). The most common factors include demographic characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, as well as prior criminal history and substance use severity (Hickert et al., 2009). However, research has yielded mixed results when evaluating characteristics most conducive to court success, especially regarding reductions in recidivism. For instance, Wolfe et al. (2002) found that females were less likely to be re-arrested in a two-year follow-up period. However, other studies have not observed a relationship between gender and recidivism or program completion (Hickert et al., 2009).

Recent research has shown that individuals who are older, have less extensive criminal histories, and are more educated are less likely to recidivate (Hickert et al., 2009; Newton-Taylor et al., 2009) and more likely graduate (DeVall & Lanier, 2012;

Krebs et al., 2007). Other personal characteristics, including social relationships, marital status, employment, and mental health status may also play a role in observed court outcomes (Gallagher et al., 2015; Krebs et al., 2007), however more research is needed to produce substantial conclusions. This area of inquiry can provide important advances in how the profiles of court participants can be used to evaluate courts in general and ascertain with greater accuracy who is most likely to benefit from participation.

While this area of study continues to grow in the drug court literature, there is very little research on profiles in community court evaluations. Other PSC models identify a target population based on health conditions, social context, or developmental stage (Somers et al., 2014), and may be in operation for an entire city. Comparatively, community courts narrow their jurisdiction to a specific geographic catchment area (Somers et al., 2014; Thompson, 2002) and serve populations defined by offense type. Most community courts are implemented in neighbourhoods with high rates of quality-of-life offenses complicated by increasingly complex social issues (Somers et al., 2014). However, each community faces its own set of social and legal issues. The identification of the catchment area for a community court is generally done in response to rising levels of crime that flourish as a result of the conditions of the community (Slinger & Roesch, 2010). These crimes may be indicative of certain neighbourhood processes such as social disorganization or low collective efficacy that may help to explain why individuals who access these courts present with different risk profiles than those in the traditional court. The catchment area and subsequent target population will be uniquely configured towards the needs identified in that specific community (Fagan & Malkin, 2002). Consequently, “there are qualitatively different offenses and offenders that are referred to and participate in community courts relative to other problem-solving courts” (Grommon et al., 2017, p. 232).

Furthermore, the process of selection into the court is not random. Acceptance into a PSC often involves reviewing criminal history, interviewing referred individuals, and gathering background information to make an informed decision about eligibility for the court (Grommon et al., 2017; Katz, 2009). In addition, most PSC models are voluntary. Thus, an individual can choose to proceed in the community court or in a traditional court. As a result, the population served by community courts is likely to look different from those entering the traditional court system. Examining the characteristics of individuals entering a community court is crucial to understanding whether the court is

capturing individuals engaging in crime that reflects the conditions of the community and the problems it sets out to solve.

2.4. Long-term Outcomes

One of the markers of success for many community courts is a reduction in recidivism. Labelling theory processes argue that offending is perpetuated as a result of internalizing a deviant label after stigmatizing and negative social reactions to their offending (Petrich et al., 2021). PSCs use principles of therapeutic jurisprudence to create a more procedurally just and less stigmatizing court experience for participants. Alternative models, such as community courts, would therefore anticipate reductions in offending as a result of a court system that adheres to these less stigmatizing protocols where individuals may be less likely to experience mechanisms connected to labelling theory. While some courts have created favourable changes in the short-term, long-term changes are more indicative of the court achieving its individual-level goal of targeting the underlying needs of court participants. If a PSC successfully addresses these needs and risks, there should be an observable long-term reduction in recidivism. If changes are not sustained, the court may only be addressing the immediate situational factors that lead to court involvement rather than fundamentally altering the underlying causes. Without longitudinal data, it is difficult to assess the long-term impact of problem-solving models on one of their key goals: reducing re-offending (Campbell et al., 2016).

Several scholars in the PSC literature have emphasized the absence of longitudinal follow-up periods for recidivism in evaluation research (Belenko et al., 2011; La Prairie et al., 2002; Nolan, 2012; Schaefer & Beriman, 2019; Thompson, 2002). Most evaluations of community courts use a 12-month (Booth et al., 2012; Hamilton et al., 2019; Jolliffe & Farrington, 2009; Somers et al., 2014) or 24-month (Lee et al., 2013; Ross, 2015) follow-up period with only one study to date using a 36-month follow-up period (Grommon et al., 2017). Other problem-solving models follow a similar method, with follow-up periods rarely lasting past the 36-month mark. As Saum and Hiller (2008) noted, recidivism outcomes observed in many drug court evaluations tend to become weaker as the length of the post-discharge period increases, indicating long-term changes may not be sustained. DeVall et al. (2017) extended the recidivism analyses for 249 drug court participants using a five-year follow-up period. It was found that non-recidivism rates for all participants consistently weakened over the five-year follow-up.

Therefore, while the program succeeded in keeping participants crime-free in the first 12 months, benefits may not be sustained when examining recidivism with a longer follow-up period.

Further, many of these studies used a control group to compare between-individual outcomes over a specified follow-up period. While using comparison groups is a valuable method for court evaluation, Farrington (2007) argues that when assessing treatment outcomes and desistance, within-individual analyses of change need to be incorporated. To assess whether an intervention acts as a mechanism of change or has a causal effect on behaviour, it is beneficial to examine within-individual changes rather than aggregate trends observed between two groups (Farrington, 2007). The current study follows the philosophy outlined by Farrington (2007) to assess whether an individual's pattern of conviction prior to court involvement looks systematically different after court involvement. Specifically, the data used in the current study allows for a longitudinal analysis of criminal history for multiple years prior to and after court involvement. Thus, it is able to extend the follow-up period past a standard 12-month time frame used by many scholars in the community court literature.

2.5. The Downtown Community Court (DCC)

As mentioned, the Downtown Community Court (DCC) was created in response to rising levels of crime in a specific area of Vancouver complicated by various factors, including drug addiction, mental illness, and poverty (SCWG, 2005). The community-focused approach of the DCC was designed to include intersections of multiple agencies to more effectively target the underlying causes of criminal behaviour within the community. The court acknowledges the challenges faced by many individuals within the catchment area. It aims to address these using a variety of resources within the community to reduce recidivism for court clients and improve public safety (Somers et al., 2014). Collaboration among 14 health and social agencies and the criminal justice system forms the intersectoral partnerships that guide treatment (Garcia et al., 2019). The court outlines four community and individual level goals: “1) to create a more efficient court by reducing the time from charge to disposition, 2) to provide an integrated model that includes the services required to address the needs of offenders, 3) to increase offender accountability to reduce recidivism, and 4) to increase public confidence in the justice system.” (DCC Executive Board, 2013, p. 5). These goals

emphasize a problem-solving approach consistent with many other community court models.

Prior to the introduction of the DCC, the City of Vancouver established its first PSC, The Drug Treatment Court of Vancouver (DTCV). The drug court was established to target chronic offenders whose substance use served as motivation for their criminal behaviour (Somers et al., 2012). While many individuals living on Vancouver's DTES suffer from substance use issues, they are often interrelated with other health and social problems that influence offending behaviour (Garcia et al., 2019). At the time of its creation, the DTCV only accepted individuals with a drug charge. This criterion limited the number and types of individuals accessing this type of alternative sentencing. The creation of a community court was a specific recommendation of the Street Crime Working Group (2005), hereafter referred to as the SCWG. The SCWG is an intersectional team consisting of judges, law professionals, staff in the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), health services, corrections, and a member of the Vancouver Police Department. To identify notable challenges in downtown Vancouver and generate solutions, the team interviewed key community members, reviewed the crime problem in Vancouver, and conducted a literature review on risk and needs of individuals engaging in crime. Subsequently, a community court was recommended due to increasing fears for public safety and high levels of disorder across Vancouver (SCWG, 2005). While the DTCV addressed the drug-related crime problem, a community court would target a more diverse range of offences and offenders within downtown Vancouver to improve conditions in the community.

Past literature on community courts has highlighted that businesses are often part of the driving force in establishing a community court (Ammann, 2000; Thompson, 2002). Specifically, business owners in downtown Vancouver reported financial losses due to criminal behaviour in the area (SCWG, 2005). Historically, crime and disorder were concentrated in the DTES, one of the country's poorest neighbourhoods where many residents experience complex health and social issues (Linden et al., 2013). However, over time, visible signs of disorder and criminal behaviour spread across downtown Vancouver (SCWG, 2005), impacting perceptions of safety in the area. Interviews with residents identified a consistent theme that much of the crime in the community could be better addressed by the targeted use of social services, as opposed to traditional court sanctions (SCWG, 2005). In addition, the crime problem in downtown

Vancouver was impacting both low-income and high-income neighbourhoods within the downtown core. Therefore, upon the creation of the DCC, it was decided that the catchment would include not only the DTES but other more affluent neighbourhoods surrounding it affected by increasing signs of criminal behaviour.

Many individuals who appeared at the Vancouver Provincial Court (VPC) had a long history of offending, and over half had a mental health disorder, addiction, or both (DCC Executive Board, 2013). Furthermore, criminal justice personnel interviewed by the SCWG stated that many chronic offenders in downtown Vancouver were engaging in property crime (SCWG, 2005). Thus, the DCC was set up to focus on street crime, defined by the SCWG (2005) as “the type of crime that affects the quality of life of the members of the Vancouver community” (p. 90). While the court appears to have a loosely defined target population (i.e., chronic offenders with chronic social or health problems), the DCC Executive Board (2013) has stated they do not specify an offender type. Instead, the court receives all cases within the catchment that fit the following criteria: provincial offenses, all criminal code offenses in the absolute jurisdiction of the provincial court, summary conviction offenses, hybrid offenses where the Crown proceeds summarily, and drug possession (Jackson et al., 2012). Once an offense is determined to be eligible for the court, potential participants are put through a triage process and their charges are reviewed. After the charges have been approved, accused individuals can either enter a guilty plea at the DCC or proceed to trial in the VPC (Jackson et al., 2012). Each morning at the DCC, a member of crown counsel, defense counsel, and a triage probation officer meet to discuss DCC participants. During this meeting, the triage team gathers client history from all relevant sources including justice, health, and social agencies. This meeting allows for an integrated assessment of a client’s history to understand their underlying needs and risks. Subsequently, the information is then used to create a case plan for the defendant and inform a pre-sentence report made by the Crown and the Defense (BC Ministry of Justice, 2013).

It is expected that certain populations of offenders are overrepresented in the justice system due to experiencing early personal risk factors at a higher rate than the general population (SCWG, 2005). The SCWG (2005) conducted a literature review through which they identified a number of personal factors that have been shown to influence future offending, including: “inadequate housing, inadequate parental guidance, social and cognitive deficits, violence in the family and within their culture,

school exclusion and limited vocational opportunities” (p. 97). The SCWG (2005) emphasized the value of examining personal histories to understand contributing factors of individuals’ involvement in crime. Garcia et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study on how the Social Determinants of Health (SDH) are used in DCC processes. In the sample of 86 sentencing hearings, almost all referenced health and SDH needs (e.g., intergenerational trauma) to provide context for offences (Garcia et al., 2019). In addition, participants current circumstances and prior health and SDH needs were used to create case plans and determine appropriate sentencing options (Garcia et al., 2019). Gathering extensive information on clients is a key principle of community courts (Karafin, 2008), and the DCC recognizes that effective assessment is an essential part of streaming individuals once accepted into the court.

2.5.1. Existing Literature on the DCC

Notably, there have been two formal evaluations of the DCC. Somers et al. (2014) used propensity score matching to compare DCC participants to a control group matched on a number of criminogenic risk factors associated with recidivism. DCC participants assigned a CMT¹ were compared to a control group of individuals processed through the VPC. Demographic characteristics and administrative data were used to account for differences between CMT participants and the control group. Bivariate analyses revealed that CMT participants were older and more likely to be female, Indigenous, and have a lower education. In addition, they were more likely to have increased contact with various health and social services in the year prior to court involvement. They had also committed significantly more offenses, thus fitting the description of the ‘chronic offender’ that the DCC aims to remove from the VPC (Jackson et al., 2012). The administrative data utilized by Somers et al. (2014) accounts for participants’ formal contacts with the justice system and other social services. However, it does not account for other personal, social, and health-related factors that might influence who is engaging in crime within the catchment area. In addition, it only considers the most extreme participants of the DCC who were assigned a CMT. The current study aims to explore differences in the types of individuals who engage in crime

¹ A CMT is assigned when individuals show an elevated criminogenic risk and have more complex needs than others appearing in the DCC (Somers et al., 2014).

within the catchment area by utilizing an independent data source that captures a unique sample of youth involved in early violent offending.

Jackson et al. (2012) conducted two DCC participant surveys inquiring about background characteristics that might be relevant when assessing the nature of the sample. Both surveys included questions on demographic characteristics, life circumstances, and participant perceptions of additional challenges that may relate to their involvement in the court (Jackson et al., 2012). The first survey interviewed 196 participants and found that most participants identified as male (86.1%) and Caucasian (54.9%). While the majority of this sample identified as Caucasian, 22% of the sample identified as Indigenous, demonstrating the overrepresentation of Indigenous individuals in the justice system. In addition, 47% of the sample did not graduate high school. Despite housing instability being a large issue within the community, 58% reported living at a fixed address within the 12 months prior to their involvement in the DCC. Three themes emerged in reference to additional individual challenges, including addictions, mental and physical health problems, and financial and social challenges. In the second survey, 44 CMT participants were interviewed. Similar to the first survey, around two thirds of CMT participants reported living at a fixed address in the year prior to DCC entry. However, there were a few noticeable differences in the composition of the two samples. Of the CMT participants, there was a lower proportion of male (73%) and Caucasian individuals (43%), and a higher proportion of individuals who had never graduated high school (70.5%). In addition, CMT participants faced additional ongoing life challenges including poor family relationships, poor role models, limited education, and diminished life skills (Jackson et al., 2012). The complex challenges and diversity of issues and backgrounds of survey participants highlights the necessity of examining early risks and needs when identifying characteristics that may relate to DCC involvement. The qualitative results of these surveys are useful to understanding the nature of DCC clients, however quantitative analyses are necessary to contextualize the relationship between criminogenic risk factors and DCC involvement.

The aim of the research by Somers et al. (2014) was to examine recidivism outcomes of DCC participants over a one-year follow-up period. It was found that those assigned a CMT had significantly lower re-offence rates compared to the group of matched offenders processed through the VPC (Somers et al., 2014). While promising, this study only examined recidivism 12 months after involvement. Therefore, it would be

beneficial to observe whether these effects were sustained over time. Similar results were observed in the DCC participant survey conducted by Jackson et al. (2012). When asked about their offending behaviour and substance use, participants reported reduced frequency of offending and use of substances, and improved quality of life due to their involvement in the DCC (Jackson et al., 2012). However, these results should be interpreted with caution as two-thirds of participants did not respond when questioned about their offending behaviour.

2.6. Current Study

To better understand the effectiveness of the court, it is important to explore the characteristics of individuals who have access to the court as a result of engaging in crime within the catchment area. As seen in the drug court literature, understanding participant profiles have important implications for predicting success. Additionally, community courts aim to target individuals who reflect the problematic conditions within the community. Assessing characteristics that may lead to an increased likelihood of court involvement will inform key stakeholders if the selection process effectively targets the individuals it is intended to help. The current study aims to further understand whether participants exhibit different characteristics or have different life experiences than those who are processed through the VPC by asking the question:

Research Question 1: Are there differences in the types of individuals who access the DCC and those who do not?

Previous research on the characteristics of DCC participants (see Jackson et al., 2012; Somers et al., 2014) gathers data from one year prior to DCC involvement. The current study will add to this literature by utilizing an independent data source that will allow for the study of early cumulative processes that may be contributing to subsequent involvement in the court.

Secondly, the current study will address the need for longitudinal assessment of the outcomes of the DCC. Most problem-solving evaluations use 12-36-month follow-up periods. Therefore, there is very little knowledge of any sustained outcomes of these models. Data gathered on recidivism for a 12-month follow-up of CMT participants has observed short-term reductions in recidivism for participants in the DCC compared to

those in the traditional court (Somers et al., 2014). However, there is currently no evaluation of long-term recidivism outcomes for the DCC. It is important to note that although existing evidence of traditional deterrence-based court systems demonstrates limited success (Petrich et al., 2021), we should not assume that all alternative programs will exhibit positive outcomes. The DCC aims to address underlying causes of crime, which arguably is a significant challenge for any intervention. The current study aims to address these gaps in the literature by answering the question:

Research Question 2: Does the court produce longitudinal changes in recidivism after DCC involvement?

To answer this question, the current study will examine within-individual changes in recidivism and days in custody at three years after involvement, consistent with some past literature, and a five-year follow-up period. The extension to five years should indicate if recidivism rates and days in custody change over time compared with one and three-year follow-ups. In addition, the use of a within-individual analysis of change allows for the control of time-invariant confounding variables that may influence the effect of DCC involvement.

Additionally, the current study will contribute to a small but growing body of literature on the inclusion of violent offenders in PSC models. Historically PSCs have excluded violent offenders from being referred (Gottfredson et al., 2005; Mitchell et al., 2012; Sviridoff et al., 2002), with many programs tailored towards non-violent offenders. However, more recently, research has found that alternative court models can be effective for those with violent criminal histories (Saum & Hiller, 2008). A study by Saum and Hiller (2008) found that participation in a drug court resulted in similar recidivism rates for violent and non-violent offenders. Their results provide evidence that PSCs can be just as effective for a violent offender population, and thus excluding these individuals from rehabilitative court models might not be beneficial (Saum & Hiller, 2008).

Chapter 3.

Method

3.1. Data

Data for the current study were obtained from the ISVYOS, an ongoing longitudinal study conducted in British Columbia that aims to identify risk factors in youth informative of the likelihood of offending into adulthood. A total of 1719 youth were interviewed between 1998 and 2011. The ISVYOS consists of two cohorts: the first cohort ($n = 596$) was interviewed between 1998-2002 under the Young Offenders Act (YOA), and the second cohort ($n = 1123$) was interviewed between 2005-2011 after the YOA had been replaced by the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA). Under the YOA, Canada relied heavily on the use custody and courts, resulting in one of the highest levels of youth custody rates globally (Bala et al., 2009). The YCJA was created after recognizing the harm of custodial experiences on youth. Following the implementation of the YCJA, the use of custodial sentences was restricted for only those youth engaging in a serious offense or youth with lengthy criminal histories whose offending appears resistant to community-based alternatives (Bala et al., 2009). Thus, the ISVYOS represents a unique sample of young offenders who had engaged in serious or violent offending at least once during adolescence, where they were convicted and sentenced to custody. Participants were interviewed between the ages of 12-19 ($mean = 16.10$, $SD = 1.29$) and included 1339 (78.3%) male and 372 (21.7%) female youth. White youth represent the 54.6% of the sample, Indigenous youth represent 19.6%, and the remaining 15.6% of youth identify as a non-Indigenous minority.

3.2. Sample

For Research Question 1, a subsample ($n = 1003$) of youth were examined to identify differences between those in the sample who had been processed through the DCC at some point during their involvement in the longitudinal study and those who had not. Participants in the study were recruited from custody centers all across British Columbia. Thus, in order to identify a comparison group that had the greatest probability of involvement with the DCC catchment area, the control group ($n = 835$) was limited to

youth interviewed in custody centers in the Greater Vancouver Area (Vancouver, Burnaby, North Vancouver, Surrey, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, and Port Moody). The treatment group ($n = 168$) was limited to those who went into the DCC before age 30. For Research Question 2, an examination of within-individual effects of DCC involvement was limited to only the treatment group ($n = 168$). The age was restricted in the analyses for a few reasons. First, data on factors related to the profiles of individuals in the sample were obtained during an initial baseline interview upon recruitment into the study as an adolescent. Thus, to minimize the amount of time between an assessment of individual profiles and entry into the DCC a cut off on the age of entry into the DCC was necessary. This enables a more specific consideration of how DCC involvement impacts recidivism during emerging and young adulthood. Additionally, the second research question requires five years of conviction data after DCC involvement. At the most recent criminal history coding, the maximum age of participants in cohort 2 is 34 years of age. Thus, 30 is an appropriate cut off to maximize the number of participants for a five-year follow-up period.

3.3. Procedure

Ethics approval for the ISVYOS was obtained from the MCFD, which is the governing body responsible for the care of all incarcerated youth in British Columbia, and the Simon Fraser University research ethics board. Following this, the research team had permission to approach all youth in custody in British Columbia to participate. In order to be eligible, youth had to meet three criteria: “(a) were English-speaking, (b) they demonstrated an understanding of interview questions (e.g., had no noticeably severe deficits in IQ), and (c) were willing to provide accurate information” (McCuish & Corrado, 2018, p. 1252). For those who agreed to participate² and met the inclusion criteria, Research Assistants (RA) read aloud information on the purpose of the study, data collection procedures, and the level of confidentiality. To obtain assent, participants signed a form indicating that they understood the purpose of the study and could withdraw at any point. One-on-one interviews were conducted between the youth and an RA in a private room to maintain confidentiality. Data collected from the interviews include measures of school experiences, family dynamics and history, substance use,

² Refusal rates were measured half-way through the study and of those approached, five percent had refused to participate.

and offending, to name a few. The second source of data is from officially reported file-based information. Official data on offending is collected through British Columbia's Corrections Network (CORNET). CORNET is an electronic database that allows the research team to access criminal history as each individual ages, representing the longitudinal component of the study. Specific to the current study, information on DCC involvement, the date of involvement, and the age when individuals entered the court was collected through CORNET for all participants. In total, 209 individuals in the ISVYOS were processed through the DCC between 2008 and 2021.

3.4. Measures

3.4.1. Research Question 1

A variety of theoretically relevant criminogenic risk factors were examined to consider whether adolescent risk factors were informative of future involvement in the DCC. A combination of self-report and officially reported data collected from CORNET were used; however, selection of included variables was limited by the level of missing data across key variables. A limitation of using the ISVYOS is that not all items were asked of all participants across both cohorts at the baseline interview. This contributes to varying levels of missing data across each factor ranging from 0% missing data (i.e., gender) to 50.5% missing data (i.e., sum of six types of victimization). While there were other important factors collected during the participants baseline interview, the study only retained variables for which less than 25% of the sample had missing data. Although there is no clear standard threshold for analytic decisions related to missing data (Dong & Peng, 2013; Madley-Dowd et al., 2019), a 25% threshold was chosen to maintain the inclusion of theoretically relevant variables and maximize the analytic sample used in the logistic regression models.

Independent Variables

Demographic Characteristics. Gender and ethnicity were included in the analyses as control variables. Participants were asked to self-report their gender, coded as 1 = Male and 2 = Female. Participants' self-reported ethnicity originally included six categories: White, Indigenous, Asiatic, Black, East Indian/South Asian, and Other. The last four categories included very few participants and were collapsed into one category

labelled 'Non-Indigenous Minority'. The current study used a recoded ethnicity variable which includes three categories: 1 = White, 2 = Indigenous, and 3 = Non-Indigenous Minority.

School Performance and Attainment. An individual's behaviour and performance at school have been shown to have an impact on future offending (Moffitt, 1993; Tanner-Smith et al., 2013). Three variables were included in the analysis to assess attainment and disruption in school including: the level of importance placed on receiving good grades, a sum of all behaviour problems at school, and whether individuals had to change schools due to expulsion. To assess commitment to school, participants were asked to rate how important it was to get good grades based on a four-point rating scale (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = not very important, 4 = totally unimportant). As a result of the low proportion of cases in the lowest and highest categories, this variable was dichotomized such that the two categories representing importance were combined and the two categories representing non-importance were combined. The variable was recoded as 1 = important and 2 = not important, to distinguish those who reported grades are important (43.3%, $n = 434$) and those who reported grades are not important (37.8%, $n = 379$). Two variables measured disruption in school. First, a scale of school behaviour problems was created by taking the sum of 21 dichotomized items that related to behaviour at school (e.g., have you been in trouble for physically fighting). Higher scores on the scale represent more behaviour problems ($mean = 9.2$, $SD = 4.21$). The second school disruption measure was a dichotomous variable asking participants to report if they had ever changed schools because they were expelled. Approximately 59.6% ($n = 598$) of participants reported they had to change schools as a result of their expulsion.

Housing Instability. A measure of where individuals would live once they were released from custody at the time of their baseline interview for the ISVYOS study was included to capture an individual's level of housing stability. This variable initially included 12 categories³, however, to simplify interpretation I recoded the variable into three categories: biological parent(s) (42.2%, $n = 423$), non-biological parent(s) or relatives (20.6%, $n = 207$), and other (25.9%, $n = 260$). The 'other' category represents

³ The 12 categories in the original coding of the variable include: both natural parents, natural mother, natural father, adopted parents, stepparent(s), foster parent(s), alone, relative, friend/boyfriend/girlfriend, group home, on the street/no fixed address, shelter/transitions house.

any of the categories in the original coding of the variable that did not include living with a parental figure (e.g., group home).

Adolescent Substance Use. Substance use versatility was measured by summing nine dichotomous items asking participants about their use of substances. Each item asked participants about their use of a different substance, including alcohol, marijuana, hallucinogens, ecstasy, heroin, cocaine, crack cocaine, crystal meth, and illegal use of prescription pills. The nine dichotomous variables were summed to create a score of substance use versatility. Higher scores on the scale represent an increased variety of substances used ($mean = 5.28, SD = 2.81$).

Family History. Family dysfunction and antisocial behaviours in the family have been found to increase the risk of offending (Tanner-Smith et al., 2013). Thus, two variables were included to assess a participant's home life. First, a self-report scale of participants' trouble at home was included in the analysis. The scale was created by taking the sum of 19 dichotomous variables asking participants about their behaviour at home (e.g., have you ever gotten into trouble at home for not obeying house rules). Higher scores on the scale represent an increased variety in the amount of problem behaviour in the home ($mean = 10.45, SD = 5.77$). Second, a scale measuring family dysfunction was included to assess a participant's family history. The scale is comprised of six dichotomous items asking participants whether anyone in their family has problems with alcohol or drugs, has been a victim of physical or sexual abuse, has a criminal record, or has a mental illness. Higher scores on the scale represent higher levels of family dysfunction ($mean = 3.19, SD = 1.86$).

Perceptions of Identity. The current study uses a measure of identity perception. Identity was measured using Schneider's (1990) Good Citizen's Scale, which aims to assess one's perception of identity as either a "good citizen" or "law-breaker". This self-report scale presents participants with 15 sets of paired words where they are then asked to rate themselves on a scale from 1-7 based on which word they felt best described them. All items were summed to create a scale, with higher scores representing a more positive self-identity ($mean = 69.74, SD = 10.18$).

Self-Reported Offending Versatility. A measure of self-reported offending was included in the analysis. The scale was created by taking the sum of 17 dichotomous

variables asking about an individual's participation in a variety of offences (e.g. Have you ever committed a B&E). These 17 items were then summed to create a scale measuring versatility of criminal behaviour (*mean* = 6.87, *SD* = 3.26). A measure of offending versatility is beneficial as it gives an indication of the severity of offending, which may be more useful in understanding desistance (Loeber & Le Blanc, 1990). In addition, measuring versatility avoids labelling an individual engaging in a high frequency of low-level offenses as a severe offender. Higher scores of offending versatility indicate an increased severity of offending.

Table 3.1. Descriptive Statistics Research Question 1 (N = 1003)

	DCC (n = 168)	Non-DCC (n = 835)
	% (n) / mean (SD)	% (n) / mean (SD)
Demographic Characteristics		
Ethnicity		
White	39.9% (67)	53.4% (446)
Indigenous	45.2% (76)	29.7% (248)
Other	14.9% (25)	16.6% (139)
Gender		
Male	80.4% (135)	80.6% (673)
Female	19.6% (33)	19.4% (162)
Criminogenic Risk Variables		
Housing After Custody		
Biological parents	29.8% (50)	44.7% (373)
Non-biological parents	26.8% (45)	19.4% (162)
Other	28.6% (48)	25.4% (212)
Grades importance		
Important	42.9% (72)	43.4% (362)
Not important	33.3% (56)	38.7% (323)
Expelled		
No	23.2% (42)	25.5% (213)
Yes	57.7% (85)	60.0% (501)
School behaviour problems	9.33 (4.41)	9.20 (4.17)
Trouble at home scale	11.24 (6.00)	10.30 (5.71)
Family Dysfunction Scale	3.19 (1.86)	3.01 (1.71)
Substance use versatility	5.54 (2.18)	5.24 (2.18)
Self-reported offending	7.15 (3.05)	6.82 (3.29)
Self-identity	69.77 (10.62)	69.74 (10.10)

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in the first research question is DCC involvement. CORNET data was used to identify whether an individual had been processed in the DCC between 2008 and 2021. Participation in the DCC was coded as 0 = No, 1 = Yes. In the full sample, 16.7% ($n = 168$) of participants had been processed in the DCC and 83.3% ($n = 835$) had not.

3.4.2. Research Question 2

Demographic Variables

Age. Age was used a time-varying control variable in all models. The age variable included in the analysis was created based on the earliest criminal history coding available, age 12, up until the cut-off, age 35. Additionally, an age squared term was included in the model to account for the non-linear relationship between age and offending.

Independent Variables

To analyze the effect of DCC involvement on recidivism, several outcome variables were assessed. Similar to Pyrooz et al. (2017), the analyses distinguish between the immediate and delayed effect of DCC involvement by creating a DCC shock and DCC lag variable based on the age participants entered the court. This allows for an analysis of the unique impact of DCC involvement on recidivism during the same year of entry into the court and on the years after DCC involvement. Age at entry was initially calculated as the difference between the date of entry into the DCC and participant date of birth. It was then recoded so that each age was a discrete category, rather than a continuous measure of age. Convictions data in the ISVYOS are coded based on discrete age categories (e.g., 18, 19, 20), and therefore there was concern that convictions in a given year may be inclusive of convictions prior to DCC entry. Thus, participants who entered the DCC in the three months prior to their birthdate were coded as being the next age older (e.g., someone who went into the DCC age 20.75 was coded as age 21 for DCC entry) to mitigate the temporal ordering of entry into the DCC and convictions in a given year. On average, participants were 23.64 ($SD = 3.30$) upon entering the court.

Table 3.2. Coding Scheme for Research Question 2

Participant ID	Age	DCC Shock	DCC Lag	
			Three Year Outcomes	Five Year Outcomes
#9999	18	0	0	0
#9999	19	0	0	0
#9999	20	0	0	0
#9999	21	0	0	0
#9999	22	0	0	0
#9999	23	1	0	0
#9999	24	0	1	1
#9999	25	0	1	1
#9999	26	0	1	1
#9999	27	0	0	1
#9999	28	0	0	1

Notes. Example coding scheme if participant entered the court at age 23.

To isolate the immediate and delayed effects of DCC involvement, age at DCC entry was used as a reference point. The immediate or shock effect of DCC involvement was coded as 1 at the age participants went into the court, and 0 at all other ages. The delayed or lagged effect of DCC involvement was assessed by coding 1 for all ages after the age at DCC entry, and 0 at all other ages. Table 3.2 provides an example of how this coding structure was generated for a hypothetical individual who entered the DCC at age 23.

Outcome Variables

Convictions. The ISVYOS codes officially reported offending data for each year, producing a total number of convictions per year for seven conviction types: violent, property, violation, weapon, miscellaneous, drug, and sexual. In the current study, a measure of the total number of convictions was created by summing the seven types of conviction at each age. This provides a measure of the number of convictions from ages 12-35. DCC participants engage in an average of 1.94 ($SD = 1.33$) convictions per year. In addition to total convictions, separate totals for drug, property, and violent convictions were calculated. The DCC aims to alleviate street crime that impacts the enduring signs of disorder in the community, including drug and property crimes (SCWG, 2005). Additionally, violent convictions, which may be more relevant to the nature of the sample were considered. DCC participants engage in an average of 0.54 ($SD = 0.51$) property

convictions, 0.04 (*SD* = 0.07) drug convictions, and 0.28 (*SD* = 0.28) violent convictions per year.

Days in Custody. Total days in custody was calculated by summing the number of days spent in custody at each age from age 12-35. On average, DCC participants spend 69.61 (*SD* = 60.75) days in custody.

Table 3.3. Descriptive Statistics for Research Question 2 (N = 168)

	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Age at DCC entry	23.64 (3.30)	18	30
Outcome Variables			
Total Convictions	1.94 (1.33)	0	7.50
Property Convictions	0.54 (0.51)	0	2.73
Drug Convictions	0.04 (0.07)	0	0.33
Violent Convictions	0.28 (0.28)	0	1.88
Days in Custody	69.61 (60.75)	0	251.07

Notes. Outcome variables represent the average per year.

3.5. Analytic Strategy

3.5.1. Research Question 1

First, bivariate analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between all independent variables in the analysis and the dependent variable, DCC involvement. Chi-Square, Pearson correlation and Point-Biserial correlation analyses were examined based on the nature of each set of variables. All bivariate analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS 26.

A series of binary logistic regressions were used to evaluate predictors of DCC involvement. First, I considered demographic characteristics, followed by individual-level criminogenic risk factors, and then concluded with a combined model of demographic characteristics and criminogenic risk factors. Binary logistic regression assumes two categories of an outcome to predict the odds of an event occurring or not occurring and can handle all levels of measurement of independent variables (Garson, 2016). It can also be useful to determine the importance of predictor variables on the dichotomous outcome. The current study uses dichotomous, categorical, and interval level independent variables to predict involvement in the DCC. Therefore, a logistic regression

is most suitable for this analysis. All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS 26. All pre-analysis assumptions were met, and all post-analysis assumptions were checked before running the final models. To test for multicollinearity, all variables in the model were entered into a linear regression to check for VIF values above the absolute value of 2.5 (Allison, 2012). The predictor variables did not exceed the absolute value of 2.5, indicating variables included in the model are not highly correlated with one another. Thus, it was decided to retain all variables in the final analyses. A Box-Tidwell transformation test was performed to assess linearity between all interval level independent variables and the log odds of the dependent variable; linearity was not violated. In addition, the Receiver Operating Characteristics (ROC) curve was calculated to assess the Area Under Curve (AUC) for all logistic regressions. The AUC value provides a measure of model accuracy based on the sensitivity and specificity of the model (Garson, 2016). A high AUC value suggests the model is accurate at distinguishing between the two groups of the dependent variable, DCC involvement and no DCC involvement. In all three models the AUC value is significant ($p < 0.001$). According to Rice and Harris (2005), the AUC in Model 1 ($AUC = 0.64$) is classified as a moderate effect size, and the AUC values in Model 2 ($AUC = 0.77$) and Model 3 ($AUC = 0.82$) are classified as large effect sizes.

3.5.2. Research Question 2

To test the second research question, the data were transformed into a long-file format where time is nested within individuals. As such, the data are organized by age resulting in each individual having an observation for each age between 12 and 35 years old. This allowed for the examination of the impact of DCC involvement on within-individual changes in recidivism and days in custody through the use of fixed-effects modelling. Fixed-effects modelling aims to reduce omitted variable bias by using each participant as their own control, accounting for unobservable factors that are time-invariant. For instance, it will account for stable individual characteristics such as gender, race, and criminal propensity, which may be related to offending (Bennett et al., 2005; Loeber et al., 2015; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Therefore, it is one of the strongest methodological ways to mitigate the impacts of stable between-person variation in explaining the outcome that is observed. An assumption of this method is that there is change in the dependent variable. Therefore, individuals whose number of convictions or

days in custody do not change from year to year are excluded. The outcome variables measuring convictions are all count variables that display overdispersion. Therefore, a negative binomial fixed effects regression will be used to analyze within-individual change in convictions. Additionally, for this analysis I accounted for the amount of time that individuals were able to participate in crime each year. Given that some individuals spend time in custody, there is not equal opportunity to engage in crime in any given year. Therefore, to account for these differences, I controlled for exposure time in all models examining recidivism. Lastly, days in custody is a continuous variable and is analyzed using a fixed effects regression. All fixed effects analyses were conducted in Stata/BE 17.0.

Chapter 4.

Results

4.1. Research Question 1: Profiles of DCC Involvement

4.1.1. Bivariate Associations

Correlation analyses and chi-square tests were used to assess associations among all predictor variables and the dependent variable, DCC involvement (see Table 4.1). At the bivariate level, two variables were associated with DCC involvement. First, significant differences were observed between DCC involvement and ethnicity. There is a significant association between being White and DCC involvement. In the sample, there is a lower proportion of White participants involved in the DCC compared to the proportion of white participants who have never been involved in the DCC. There is also a significant association between being Indigenous and DCC involvement. It is observed that the proportion of Indigenous participants involved in the DCC is higher than the proportion of Indigenous participants who have never been involved in the DCC. Second, housing stability is associated with DCC involvement at the bivariate level. Specifically, there is a significant association between living with a biological parent(s) after custody and DCC involvement. The proportion of participants who would return to live with a biological parent(s) after they are released from custody is smaller in the DCC group compared to the non-DCC group. In addition, there is also a significant association between returning to live with non-biological parent(s) or relatives after custody and DCC involvement. The proportion of participants who would return to live with non-biological parent(s) or relatives is larger in the DCC group compared to the non-DCC group.

Table 4.1. Bivariate Associations

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.
1. White	-															
2. Indigenous	-0.71 ^{a***}	-														
3. Non-Indigenous Minority	-.45 ^{a***}	-.31 ^{a***}	-													
4. Gender	-.02 ^a	.14 ^{a***}	-.15 ^{a***}	-												
5. Biological Parent(s)	.03 ^a	-.17 ^{a***}	.17 ^{a***}	-.12 ^{a**}	.-											
6. Non-Biological Parent(s)	-.12 ^{a***}	.24 ^{a***}	-.14 ^{a***}	.05 ^a	-.52 ^{a***}	-										
7. Other	.08 ^{a*}	-.04 ^a	-.06 ^a	.09 ^{a*}	-.61 ^{a***}	-.35 ^{a***}	-									
8. Education Importance	.13 ^{a***}	-.07 ^a	-.10 ^{a**}	-.09 ^{a*}	.06 ^a	-.001 ^a	.07 ^a	-								
9. Expelled	.04 ^a	-.01 ^a	-.04 ^a	-.04 ^a	-.06 ^a	-.01 ^a	.08 ^{a*}	.08 ^{a*}	-							
10. Trouble at school	0.05	.05 ^c	-.13 ^{c**}	-.15 ^{c**}	-.10 ^{c**}	.06 ^c	.0c ^b	.21 ^{c**}	.28 ^{c**}	-						
11. Trouble at home	.01 ^a	.05 ^c	-.08 ^{c*}	-.07 ^{c*}	.02 ^c	.02 ^c	-.04 ^c	.11 ^{c**}	.14 ^{c**}	.56 ^{b**}	-					
12. Family Dysfunction	.01 ^c	.21 ^{c**}	-.28 ^{c**}	.22 ^{c**}	-.22 ^{c**}	.10 ^{c**}	.15 ^{c**}	0.02 ^c	.09 ^{c*}	.19 ^{b**}	0.04 ^{b**}	-				
13. Substance Use	.12 ^{c**}	.08 ^{c*}	-.27 ^{c**}	.21 ^{c**}	-.14 ^{c**}	.02 ^c	.13 ^{c**}	.16 ^{c**}	.18 ^{c**}	.31 ^{b**}	.18 ^{b**}	.25 ^{b**}	-			
14. Self-Reported Offending	.03 ^c	.08 ^{c*}	-.15 ^{c**}	-.09 ^{c*}	-.11 ^{c**}	.05 ^c	.08 ^{c*}	.13 ^{c**}	.24 ^{c**}	.67 ^{b**}	.50 ^{b**}	.24 ^{b**}	.34 ^{b**}	-		
15. Positive Self-Identity	-.40 ^c	-.04 ^c	.10 ^{c**}	-.09 ^{c*}	.11 ^{c**}	-.08 ^{c*}	-.05 ^c	-.18 ^{c**}	-.14 ^{c**}	-.30 ^{b**}	-.23 ^{b**}	-.16 ^{b**}	-.18 ^{b**}	-.24 ^{b**}	-	
16. DCC	-.10 ^{a**}	.12 ^{a***}	-.02 ^a	.002 ^a	-.11 ^{a**}	.09 ^{a*}	.04 ^a	-.03 ^a	.01 ^a	.01 ^c	.06 ^c	.04 ^c	.05 ^c	.04 ^c	0.00 ^c	-

Notes. ^a Chi-square ^b Pearson Correlation ^c Point-Biserial Correlation

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

4.1.2. Logistic Regressions Predicting DCC Involvement

A series of logistic regression models were used to determine the relative importance of criminogenic risk factors on DCC involvement (see Table 4.2). The final analysis included three models: 1) demographic characteristics only, 2) individual-level criminogenic risk factors only, and 3) a combined model⁴. The first model retained only the demographic covariates, including gender and ethnicity. In Model 1, after assessing the Omnibus test of model coefficients, the overall model is significant ($\chi^2(3) = 29.88$; $p < 0.001$). The Hosmer-Lemeshow test is non-significant ($\chi^2(3) = 0.22$; $p = 0.97$), indicating that the model with only demographic characteristics is properly specified. There were significant differences in ethnicity ($p < 0.001$), as Indigenous participants are 2.99 times more likely to ever be involved in the DCC compared to White participants.

Model 2 included only the individual-level criminogenic risk factors. The Omnibus test of model coefficients indicates that the overall model is significant ($\chi^2(10) = 53.02$; $p < 0.001$). The Hosmer-Lemeshow test in Model 2 is non-significant ($\chi^2(8) = 9.79$; $p = 0.28$), indicating that the model with only the individual-level criminogenic risk factors is properly specified. Four variables in the model emerged as significant predictors of DCC involvement. Housing stability is significant and participants who reported they would reside with non-biological parent(s) or relatives after custody are 4.01 times more likely to ever be involved in the DCC compared to participants who reported they would reside with biological parent(s) after custody ($p < 0.001$). In addition, participants who reported they would reside in alternative housing after custody, such as alone or in a group home, were 2.91 times more likely to ever be involved in the DCC compared to participants who reported they would reside with biological parent(s) after custody ($p = 0.002$). The importance of grades in school is also significant ($p = 0.01$). Participants who do find grades important are 2.27 times more likely to ever be involved in the DCC compared to participants who do not find grades important. Substance use versatility is significant ($p = 0.04$). A one-unit increase in substance use versatility is associated with an increase in the odds of ever being involved in the DCC by 17%. Lastly, having trouble in the home is

⁴ An outlier analysis was conducted by examining studentized residuals in the combined model (Model 3) for values that exceeded 2.0. There were 29 values above 2.0 and after removing them from the model, the overall model and significance of predictor variables improved. Therefore, it was decided to remove outliers from all logistic regression models.

a significant predictor of DCC involvement ($p < 0.001$). A one-unit increase in the trouble at home scale is associated with an increase in the odds of ever being involved in the DCC by 15%.

Table 4.2. Logistic Regressions Predicting DCC Involvement

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	DCC (n = 139)	DCC (n = 66)	DCC (n = 65)
	Non-DCC (n = 833)	Non-DCC (n = 511)	Non-DCC (n = 506)
	OR (95% C.I.)	OR (95% C.I.)	(95% C.I.)
Demographic Characteristics			
Ethnicity			
Indigenous ^a	2.99 (2.00-4.48)***		3.86 (2.00-7.46)***
Non-Indigenous Minority ^a	1.40 (0.80-2.46)		3.31 (1.35-8.12)**
Gender	1.16 (0.72-1.85)		2.37 (1.01-5.57)
Criminogenic Risk Factors			
Housing After Custody			
Non-biological parent(s) or relatives ^b		4.01 (2.02-7.95)***	3.47 (1.68-7.15)**
Other ^b		2.91 (1.46-5.82)**	3.13 (1.54-6.34)**
Grades importance		0.44 (0.25-0.77)**	0.47 (0.26-0.85)*
Expelled		1.33 (0.66-2.67)	1.46 (0.71-3.00)
School Behaviour		0.97 (0.88-1.06)	0.95 (0.86-1.04)
Trouble at Home		1.15 (1.08-1.24)***	1.17 (1.09-1.26)***
Family Dysfunction		0.97 (0.82-1.15)	0.98 (0.82-1.18)
Substance Use Versatility		1.17 (1.01-1.36)*	1.28 (1.09-1.51)**
Self-Reported Offending		0.92 (0.81-1.04)	0.91 (0.80-1.03)
Positive Self-Identity		1.00 (0.97-1.03)	1.00 (0.97-1.03)
Model Fit (χ^2(df))	29.88 (3)***	53.02 (10)***	74.87 (13)***

Notes. ^a White is the reference category. ^b Biological parent(s) is the reference category.

The dependent variable is DCC involvement and 'yes' is the category of interest.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Model 3 retained the demographic characteristics, gender and ethnicity, and included all the individual-level criminogenic risk factors. After assessing the Omnibus test of model coefficients, it shows the overall model is significant ($\chi^2(13) = 74.87; p < 0.001$). The Hosmer-Lemeshow test is also significant ($\chi^2(8) = 17.66; p = 0.02$), indicating that the inclusion of all independent variables influences the specificity of the model. In Model 3 Indigenous participants are 3.86 times more likely to be involved in the DCC compared to White participants ($p < 0.001$). Additionally, non-Indigenous minority participants are 3.31 times more likely to ever be involved in the DCC compared to White participants ($p = 0.009$). Housing stability remains significant in Model 3. Participants who reported they would return to live with non-biological parent(s) or relatives after custody are 3.47 times more likely to ever be involved in the DCC compared to participants who would return to live with their biological parent(s) after custody ($p = 0.001$). In addition, participants who would live in alternative housing arrangements after custody are 3.13 times more likely to ever be involved in the DCC compared to participants who would return to live with their biological parent(s) after custody ($p = 0.002$). The importance of grades in school is significant ($p = 0.01$). Participants who do find grades important are 2.13 times more likely to ever be involved in the DCC compared to participants who do not find grades important. Trouble at home remains significant in Model 3 ($p < 0.001$). A one-unit increase on the trouble at home scale is associated with an increase in the odds of ever being involved in the DCC by 17%. Substance use versatility also remains significant ($p = 0.003$). A one-unit increase in substance use versatility is associated with an increase in the odds of ever being in the DCC by 28%.

4.2. Research Question 2: Longitudinal Outcomes of DCC Involvement

First, to provide descriptive context, Figure 4.1 graphs the average number convictions by age for DCC and non-DCC participants. Based on the figure, DCC participants engage in more convictions on average per year than non-DCC participants. The conviction pattern for non-DCC participants follows the age crime curve. However, for DCC participants, the decline in offending does not occur in a linear fashion. Instead, there are plateaus with a few small peaks during emerging adulthood (18-25) and declines into young adulthood with another peak at around age 29.

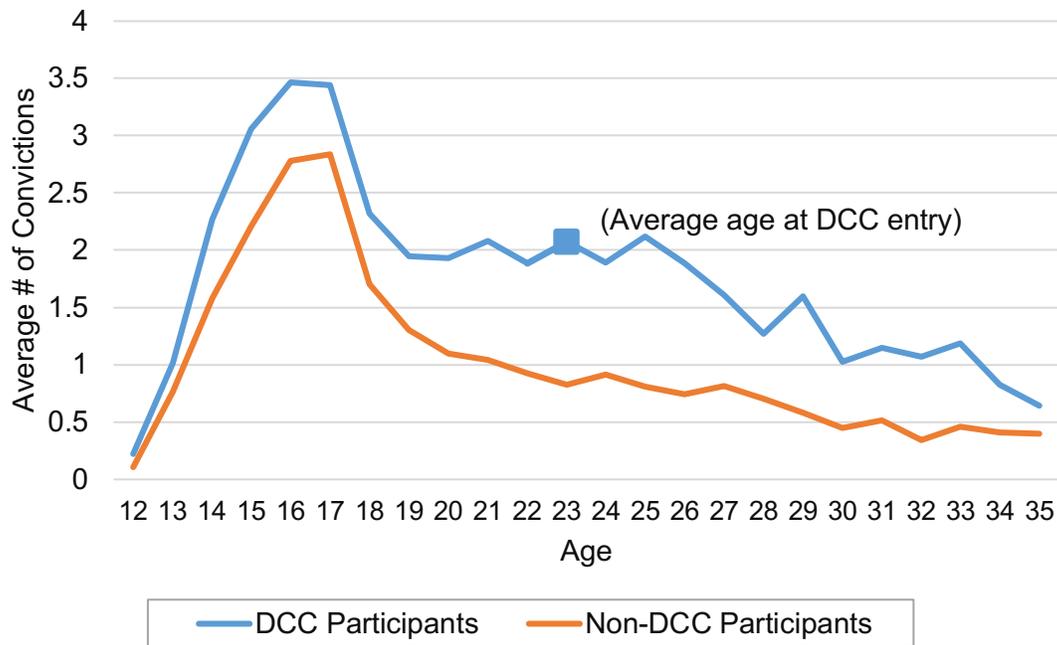


Figure 4.1. Average Number of Convictions per year

All models measure the immediate shock and delayed lag effects of court involvement. Immediate (i.e., shock) effects refer to within-individual changes in convictions in the year participants entered the court, while the delayed (i.e., lag) effects refer to within-individual changes in offending in the three years and five years after court entry. In Model 1 the outcome of interest is total convictions (see Table 4.3). Model 1a examines the shock and lag effect of DCC involvement on recidivism three-years after involvement. Results show that in the same year as DCC entry, participants experience a 73% within-person increase in the expected rate of total convictions ($p < 0001$) relative to the three years prior to DCC entry. This effect does not continue after the year of entry, as the lag effect of DCC involvement in the three years after court entry is not significant. In addition, there is a negative linear effect of age in Model 1a. For a one-unit increase in age there is going to be a 22% within-person decrease in the expected rate of total convictions ($p = 0.04$) relative to the three years prior to DCC entry. However, the rate of that linear decline is not significant, as identified by the non-significant quadratic effect of age.

In Model 1b, similar results are seen with respect to the immediate and delayed effects of DCC involvement in the five years post involvement. In the same year as DCC

entry, participants experience a 63% within-person increase in the expected rate of total convictions ($p < 0.001$) relative to the five years prior to DCC entry. This effect does not continue after the year of entry, as the lag effect of DCC involvement in the five years after court entry is not significant. Age is significant in Model 1b and for a one-unit increase in age there is going to be a 14% within-person increase in the expected rate of total convictions ($p = 0.04$) relative to the five years prior to DCC entry. Additionally, the quadratic age term is negative and statistically significant ($IRR = 1.00$, $se = 0.07$, $z = -2.42$), indicating that age has a curvilinear relationship with total convictions. The results from the shock effects in Model 1a and 1b indicates that for total convictions, DCC involvement is associated with significant increases in convictions contemporaneously; however, this trend does not continue past the year of entry. The delayed effect of DCC involvement on total convictions is not significant in the three and five years after court entry.

Table 4.3. Negative Binomial Fixed Effects Regression for Total Convictions

	Total Convictions					
	Model 1a: Three Year			Model 1b: Five Year		
	<i>IRR</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>IRR</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>z</i>
DCC Shock	1.73	0.18	5.37***	1.63	0.16	5.04***
DCC Lag	1.06	0.13	0.49	0.88	0.09	-1.22
Age	0.78	0.10	-2.05*	1.14	0.07	2.04*
Age ²	1.00	0.003	1.64	1.00	0.001	-2.42*
N		157			160	
n		1070			1643	

Notes. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

In the second set of models, conviction type is examined for three and five years post DCC involvement. Model 2a, 2b, and 2c examines property, drug, and violent three year conviction outcomes (see Table 4.4) and Model 2d, 2e, and 2f examines property, drug, and violent five year conviction outcomes (see Table 4.5). In Model 2a, there were significant immediate and delayed effects of DCC involvement. In the same year as DCC entry, participants experience a 142% within-person increase in the expected rate of property convictions ($p < 0.001$) relative to the three years prior to DCC entry. In the three years following DCC entry, participants experience a 55% within-person increase in the expected rate of property convictions ($p = 0.02$) relative to the three years prior to

DCC entry. Similarly, in Model 2c, DCC involvement has significant immediate and delayed effects on violent convictions. In the same year as DCC entry, participants experience a 69% within-person increase in the expected rate of violent convictions ($p = 0.02$) relative to the three years prior to DCC entry. In the three years following DCC entry, participants experience an 68% within-person increase in the expected rate of violent convictions ($p = 0.04$) relative to the three years prior to DCC entry.

Table 4.4. Negative Binomial Fixed Effects Model for Three Year Convictions by Type

	Three Year								
	Property Convictions			Drug Convictions			Violent Convictions		
	Model 2a			Model 2b			Model 2c		
	IRR	se	z	IRR	se	z	IRR	se	z
DCC Shock	2.42	0.35	6.01***	2.01	0.90	1.55	1.69	0.37	2.40*
DCC Lag	1.55	0.29	2.30*	1.64	0.98	0.83	1.68	0.43	2.05*
Age	0.86	0.16	-0.81	0.79	0.36	-0.50	0.88	0.21	-0.52
Age ²	1.00	0.004	0.48	1.00	0.01	0.01	1.00	0.01	-0.10
N		129			44			105	
n		883			305			719	

Notes. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Similar to the three-year conviction outcomes, the immediate effect of DCC involvement is also significant for property and violent five-year conviction outcomes (see Table 4.5). In Model 2d, participants experience a 137% within-person increase in the expected rate of property convictions ($p < 0.001$) in the year of entry relative to the five years prior to DCC entry. This effect does not continue after the year of entry, as the lag effect of DCC involvement in the five years after court entry is not significant. In addition, age and age² are significant in. For a one-unit increase in age there is going to be a 22% within-person increase in the expected rate of property convictions ($p = 0.04$) relative to the five years prior to DCC entry. In addition, the quadratic age term in Model 2d is negative and statistically significant ($IRR = 1.00$, $se = 0.002$, $z = -2.26$), indicating that age has a curvilinear relationship with property convictions five years after court entry.

In Model 2e, age and age² are significant and indicate a curvilinear relationship with drug convictions. While the linear age term is positive and statistically significant (*IRR* = 1.95, *se* = 0.59, *z* = 2.20), the quadratic age term is negative and statistically significant (*IRR* = -0.98, *se* = 0.001, *z* = -2.38). This is the only significant result observed in the models using drug convictions as an outcome measure. This may be due to the low number of cases in both drug conviction models (see Model 2b and 2e). DCC participants engaged in 0.04 drug convictions on average per year. Therefore, it is likely that many participants in the sample exhibited limited change in drug convictions from year to year. Results should be interpreted in light of the low number of cases included in the models.

In Model 2f, the immediate effect of DCC involvement is also significant. In the same year as DCC entry, participants experience a 58% within-person increase in the expected rate of violent convictions (*p* = 0.03) relative to the five years prior to DCC entry. Similar to Model 2d, this effect does not continue after the year of entry, as the lag effect of DCC involvement in the five years after court entry is not significant. In addition, the quadratic age term is negative and statistically significant (*IRR* = -1.00, *se* = 0.003, *z* = -2.92).

Table 4.5. Negative Binomial Fixed Effects Model for Five Year Convictions by Type

	Five Year								
	Property Convictions			Drug Convictions			Violent Convictions		
	Model 2d			Model 2e			Model 2f		
	IRR	se	z	IRR	se	z	IRR	se	z
DCC Shock	2.37	0.32	6.36***	1.55	0.62	1.09	1.58	0.32	2.24*
DCC Lag	1.33	0.22	1.74	0.79	0.40	-0.47	1.42	0.31	1.60
Age	1.22	0.11	2.03*	1.95	0.59	2.20*	1.29	0.16	1.99
Age ²	1.00	0.002	-2.26*	0.98	0.01	-2.38*	1.00	0.003	-2.92**
N	136			52			122		
n	1408			553			1270		

Notes. * *p* < 0.05, ** *p* < 0.01, *** *p* < 0.001.

Lastly, Model 3 examines the impact of DCC involvement on days in custody (see Table 4.6). Specifically, Model 3a considers a three-year time period and Model 3b

considers a five-year time period. There are no significant immediate or delayed effects of DCC involvement on days in custody for either the three year or five follow-up period. However, in Model 3b, age and age² are significant and indicate a curvilinear relationship with total days in custody. While the linear age term is positive and statistically significant ($b = 17.60$, $se = 5.04$, $z = 3.49$), the quadratic age term is negative and statistically significant ($b = -0.47$, $se = 0.10$, $z = -4.46$).

Table 4.6. Fixed Effects Regression Model for Days in Custody

	Days in Custody					
	Model 3a: Three Year			Model 3b: Five Year		
	b	se	z	b	se	z
DCC Shock	10.36	10	1.04	5.74	8.96	0.64
DCC Lag	24.54	14.13	1.74	13.69	10.42	1.31
Age	1.21	9.48	0.13	17.60	5.04	3.49***
Age ²	-0.18	0.19	-0.94	-0.47	0.10	-4.46***
N		168			168	
n		1133			1709	

Notes. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Chapter 5.

Discussion

The current study used a subsample of the ISVYOS to explore profiles of DCC participants and examine the impact of DCC involvement on recidivism and days in custody. PSCs are unique in their implementation and operation; thus, the results of outcome evaluations may vary substantially depending on the court and the community it serves. To date, there is only one empirical study evaluating the impact of the Vancouver, British Columbia-based DCC (Somers et al., 2014). Somers et al. (2014) used a matched comparison group to compare between-individual changes in recidivism one-year after court involvement. The current study adds to previous research on the DCC by exploring the profiles of participants and extending the follow-up period to examine changes three years and five years after court entry for DCC participants. In addition, within-individual changes in convictions and days in custody were examined, which have been argued to be a more valuable measure of change when examining interventions for criminal justice populations (Kroner & Yessine, 2013). Most evaluations in the community court literature use a matched comparison group to compare between-individual changes. However, it can be difficult to control for all theoretically relevant variables and thus, unobserved factors may influence results. Using within-individual analyses allowed the current study to control for unobserved time-invariant factors.

5.1. Profiles of DCC participants

The aim of the first research question was to examine the profiles of individuals who have been involved in the DCC. The DCC Executive Board (2013) has stated they do not serve a specific type of offender but seek to serve those involved in crime within the catchment area. Logistic regression results indicate that a few individual-level criminogenic risk factors are predictive of court involvement. First, ethnicity is significant in the demographic only model (Model 1) and the combined model (Model 3). In Model 1, identifying as Indigenous increased the odds of being involved in the DCC, and in Model 3, identifying as Indigenous or as a non-Indigenous minority significantly increased the odds of being involved in the DCC compared to white participants. Evidence from the bivariate analyses suggested that Indigenous youth have significant

associations with more individual-level risk factors relative to white youth. For instance, at the bivariate level, being Indigenous was correlated with a variety of risk factors such as residing with non-biological parent(s) or relatives after custody, family dysfunction, and criminal involvement. Thus, given the evidence to suggest that Indigenous youth are more likely to experience complex and serious risk factors (McCuish & Corrado, 2018), the lack of statistical significance of other individual level risk factors may be subsumed by the addition of including whether individuals were Indigenous. Still, the analyses examining models with only demographic variables and only individual risk factors suggest a more nuanced conclusion. If Indigeneity served as a proxy for criminogenic risk due to greater exposure to these types of factors, then it would be anticipated that in the individual risk factor only model (Model 2), more of these risk factors would emerge as statistically significant. Further, the inclusion of ethnicity in Model 3 does not dramatically shift the size or significance of the coefficients of the risk variables included in the combined model. Still, future work with additional data sources may seek to further understand why Indigenous and non-Indigenous minority individuals are significantly more likely to be involved in the DCC.

Some PSCs have incorporated program components that acknowledge the unique risks and needs of minority groups. As noted, Indigenous and non-Indigenous minority individuals are more likely to be in the DCC. At the least, this suggests that these groups who are already overrepresented in the justice system are not being denied access to these alternative sentencing models. The absence of a culturally sensitive approach is consistently cited as an explanation for less successful outcomes of non-white participants (Cooper, 2003; Gallagher, 2014; Hartley & Phillips, 2001). Critics point to a need for PSC models to ensure they incorporate culturally relevant program components and services to promote successful participation and completion of the court (DeVall & Lanier, 2012). The DCC made efforts during the planning stages to involve Indigenous community members in the development of the court. In addition, it has taken steps to provide Indigenous individuals with culturally sensitive programming options (DCC Executive Board, 2013; SCWG, 2005). This includes referrals to the Aboriginal Justice Society and involving Indigenous case workers in offender management. In 2012, the DCC recorded 47 referrals to the Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Services compared to 19 referrals made through the VPC (BC Ministry of Justice, 2013). Therefore, viewed solely from a programmatic vantage point,

the DCC appears to have made efforts to engage in culturally sensitive alternatives, specifically for Indigenous individuals. In theory, these courts that offer alternatives for Indigenous individuals may be a more successful option for reducing offending in this population. However, it is still not known how often these approaches are used and whether these alternative options are actually any more successful than the traditional system for minority groups. To be sure, efforts to address why Indigenous individuals are more likely to be involved in the justice system.

In contrast to ethnicity, the current study did not observe a significant effect of gender on DCC involvement. This differs from the research by Somers et al. (2014), where it was found that participants from the DCC were more likely to be female. However, their sample consisted of individuals who were part of a CMT. A CMT is assigned for individuals with particularly severe and complex needs and are given a variety of additional supports to assist them. It has been shown that compared to males, females in the justice system are more likely to experience complex and overlapping risks that contribute to their offending (Bloom et al., 2003). Therefore, the effect of gender found by Somers et al. (2014) may be reflective of the increased needs of CMT participants specifically. The current study was unable to distinguish between CMT and non-CMT participants. In addition, the ISVYOS represents a sample of serious and violent youth, and many present with a long history of needs and risk factors for offending. Thus, the differences between males and females may not be as large considering participants' high levels of criminogenic risk experienced at the time of their baseline interview.

Analyses also show that DCC participants have an elevated exposure to a few individual-level criminogenic risk factors compared to the control group. Specifically, variables related to a youth's home life, substance use, and academic values were predictive of DCC involvement in the final combined model. Youth who anticipated not returning to live with biological parent(s) (i.e., with non-biological parents(s) or relatives, or alternative housing) after the custodial experience for which they were recruited into the ISVYOS for had a higher likelihood of being processed in the DCC. These reflect perceived disruptions in care or the instability of housing arrangements, particularly with respect to youth in care. Recent research has found that youth in care experience difficulty transitioning into adulthood, and this is associated with a variety of adverse outcomes in adulthood, such as substance use (Braciszewski & Stout, 2012), chronic

offending (Yang et al., 2017), and homelessness (Berzin et al., 2011). In addition, the scale measuring a youth's level of problems in the home is also related to DCC involvement, representing another facet of exposure to disruptions in the home.

The variety of substances used by youth is also a significant predictor of court involvement. Adolescent substance use is a risk factor for offending and substance use in adulthood (Chassin et al., 2004; DeLisi et al., 2015). The DCC sets out to address the issues within the catchment area, and one of the most commonly cited issues relating to crime in the community is substance use (SCWG, 2005). The significance of substance use versatility may suggest that the DCC is capturing individuals that reflect risk factors experienced by the local community. However, this is only speculative as the current study does not provide evidence that participants were using substances at the time of their entry into the DCC. In addition, substance use in adolescence is related to several other risk factors that might influence court participation (Chassin et al., 2004).

A surprising finding was that individuals who reported grades were important to them had an increased likelihood of involvement in the DCC. Assigning importance to school achievement in adolescence may indicate an individual's value of traditional pro-social activities, such as doing well in school. After an individual's offense has been determined eligible for participation, they must agree to have their case resolved in the DCC. The sanctions in the DCC are designed to hold offenders accountable for their actions and create behaviour change long-term. However, research shows that offenders with a greater commitment to a criminal lifestyle may perceive traditional court sanctions, such as jail time, as more appealing than community-based alternatives (Petrich et al., 2021). Therefore, those who attach more importance to traditionally valued or pro-social activities may be more likely to participate in a court that arguably provides more opportunities to transition to a pro-social lifestyle.

More generally, results from the logistic regressions provide evidence of differential profiles of DCC and non-DCC participants. These findings are important to consider when evaluating the effectiveness of community courts and PSCs more broadly. Many evaluations of community courts do not have access to extensive client histories and typically use more readily accessible administrative data to control for differences in treatment and control groups. However, the current study has demonstrated that other historical, individual, and familial risk factors can impact the

likelihood of future court involvement. Therefore, using a quasi-experimental method without matching control and treatment groups on all risk factors influencing court participation may limit the interpretation of court outcomes. The results from the logistic regression models further support the use of a within-individual analysis of recidivism and custody days in the current study, as it accounts for time-invariant factors that have been shown to influence offending.

5.2. Recidivism and Days in Custody Outcomes

The second research question aimed to uncover if there are within-individual changes in offending patterns when examining convictions and custody days before DCC entry compared to after. This was accomplished by applying a three-year filter and five-year filter to the data and examining the immediate and delayed effects of DCC involvement on recidivism and custody. Results from the fixed effects models show that total convictions, property convictions, and violent convictions are all expected to increase in the year participants entered the court. This effect was observed at both the three and five-year outcome periods.

Although speculative, there may be a few explanations for the findings from the current study. The first has to do with the level of supervision and monitoring. A key component of most PSCs is increased judicial monitoring and supervision (Wiener et al., 2010). After an individual agrees to have their case resolved in the DCC, part of the case plan is that they are supervised to some extent in the community. Some scholars argue that increased supervision may result in an increased level of documented offending, simply because there is more opportunity for detection of illegal activities (Krebs et al., 2007). Therefore, it is possible that any criminal activity DCC participants engage in immediately after court involvement is more readily detected due to increased contact with justice system professionals. Labelling processes may additionally explain why increases in offending are observed in the year of court entry. Despite efforts to reduce stigmatizing individuals during sentencing, it is also possible that such processes still occur in community courts. These non-traditional systems are still court systems and may not eradicate labelling effects associated with continued criminal activity. While offering a number of alternative measures, the DCC still uses traditional sanctions such as incarceration. Thus, increases in criminal activity in the year of court entry may be reflective of the labelling that occurs during court involvement.

It is also possible that these findings reflect a methodological artifact of the current study. Identification of DCC participation in the current study was achieved through CORNET data that provided the timing of when an individual entered the DCC and not the year of conviction by the DCC. Age of entry was adjusted such that if individuals were entering the DCC within three months of their next birthday, the age of entry was increased to the next highest age. This was done in an attempt to ensure that convictions during the age of entry were reflective of convictions that occurred after court involvement. Still, the total convictions in that year might be inclusive of not only convictions after court entry but also any convictions before court entry at that age. Increases in offending at the age of DCC entry prior to the date entered could be explained through a few mechanisms. First, offending has shown to be temporally consistent, and these patterns tend to be stronger when less time has elapsed between offenses (van Sleeuwen et al., 2021). Therefore, by virtue of knowing individuals had entered the court in a specific year, offending may have been elevated during that time to the extent that it came to the attention of law enforcement. Second, the number of convictions in the year of DCC entry may be inclusive of the conviction associated with the individual's DCC involvement. Coding for DCC involvement was based on the identification that an individual had been processed in the DCC. Unfortunately, I was unable to identify when or if an individual was convicted in the DCC. Thus, the contemporaneous shock effects should be interpreted with caution.

At the three-year follow-up, there were significant delayed increases in property and violent convictions after DCC involvement. One explanation is that the court was not originally designed to focus on serious and violent young offenders. Reports on the DCC state that violent offences are not dealt with by the court, focusing instead on low-level crime (Jackson et al., 2012; SCWG, 2005). The literature on drug and mental health courts suggests that programs are more effective when their target population is clearly defined based on underlying issues (Grommon et al., 2017). However, eligibility for DCC participation is based on an individual's index offense. Thus, those with a history of violent offending are still eligible for court participation so as long the index offense is not a violent crime. This eligibility criterion may be problematic, considering recent research has found differences in the risk factors predicting violent and non-violent offending (Hart et al., 2007). Therefore, the resources and services available for individuals in the DCC may not be tailored toward the risks and needs of those with a serious and violent

criminal history. However, although not statistically significant, the conviction rates are trending in a negative direction when examining the lagged five-year effects of DCC involvement. Therefore, although DCC involvement may not be demonstrating significant reductions in offending, longer follow-up periods suggest that there are not significant within-individual increases in convictions.

Still, it is important to note that these findings conflict to a certain extent with Somers et al. (2014), who found significant reductions in recidivism one-year after exiting DCC programming. As mentioned, this sample was comprised of individuals assigned a CMT. A CMT participant is supported by an integrated team of professionals with a higher and more intensive level of services than those offered to other DCC participants. The measure of DCC involvement in the current study is crude as it only identifies whether an individual was involved with the court. Therefore, the absence of significant decreases in offending may in part be a function of the level of services received. A limitation of the current study is that the data does not provide information regarding the totality or dosage of services received.

The measurement of recidivism may have influenced the patterns of offending observed in the current study. Evaluations of recidivism in the PSC literature define recidivism in different ways, with the most common measures being charges, arrests, or convictions. Recidivism may also be measured as either a single occurrence or the frequency of recidivism after involvement. The choice of outcome and how it is measured depends on the goals of the specific court and the nature of the research (Campbell et al., 2016). The current study defined recidivism as a change in the expected rate of conviction, which is the most severe measure of the three recidivism outcomes mentioned above. Its reliability is influenced by additional factors such as plea-bargaining or the lack of evidence to convict and may result in an under-representation of criminal behaviour (Stewart et al., 2019). Different factors influence charges, arrests, and convictions, and thus, the patterns of offending observed in the current study may change when an alternative measure of recidivism is examined. However, considering conviction is a more severe outcome, reflecting an officially documented re-offense, the absence of an increase in convictions over time is a favourable result.

Lastly, custody days did not exhibit any immediate or delayed effects of court involvement in either the three-year or five-year models. Despite offering a variety of

alternative sentencing options, jail time is still available to be used as part of a case plan for DCC participants. In addition, depending on the nature of the case and an individual's index offense, participants may still be subject to a custodial stay before sentencing in the DCC or as part of a participant's case plan in addition to alternative measures. However, a goal of the DCC is to reduce the time from charge to disposition and this has been reported to be lower in the DCC compared to the VPC (Jackson et al., 2012). The lack of statistical significance may be observed as a result of the continued use of custody in individual case plans and before sentencing in the DCC, albeit lower than in traditional sentencing. It is somewhat surprising there are no increases in days in custody given the finding that there were delayed increases in violent and property convictions. This may suggest that there is within-individual variation among DCC participants in both their subsequent likelihood of conviction and days in custody that get blurred when only considering average level effects.

5.3. Limitations and Future Directions

While these findings have important implications for research on community courts, the current study presented several limitations that must be taken into consideration. First, the study relied on a sample of serious and violent young offenders. Therefore, results from the current study may not be generalizable to other PSC samples that generally exclude violent offenders. In addition, using convictions as an outcome measure does not necessarily demonstrate the full scope of offending after court involvement. Conviction data represents a more severe form of offending and may underrepresent the full spectrum of illegal activities. In contrast, studies using arrest records may be subject to overrepresentation of criminal activities due to false arrests (Bonta et al., 2003). Charges are hypothesized to be the most reliable method of measurement as they are not subject to the same overrepresentation and underrepresentation as arrest and conviction records (Campbell et al., 2016). The current study relied on conviction data, and thus the actual offending of court participants may have been underrepresented. However, the current study did not have access to arrest or charge records, and conviction data are still an important outcome measure for studies with longer follow-up periods (Campbell et al., 2016).

Other limitations relate to the generalizability of community court evaluations generally. The results are limited due to the unique context of the DCC. Community court

implementation and operation are tailored towards the unique needs of the community in which they are situated. Downtown Vancouver, specifically the DTES, presents a unique set of risk factors for crime. This neighbourhood is often considered the epicenter of Canada's opioid crisis and many residents face complex social, health, and economic needs (Linden et al., 2013). Therefore, these findings may not be generalizable to PSCs in other jurisdictions. Still, whether evaluations of community courts should be generalizable is a separate question. The very intent of community courts is to develop a tailored and community-engaged solution to local, social, and criminal problems. While similarities across jurisdictions may exist, the nature of community courts may require that findings are context specific.

Additionally, recidivism as an outcome measure of court success has been criticized, as community courts generally focus on community-level change. Only one of the four goals of the DCC directly mentions recidivism as an outcome of interest. The other three goals (increasing court efficiency, access to integrated wrap-around services, and public confidence in the justice system) are aimed at the community level. Despite this, the programming of the DCC is focused at the individual level. The use of individual-level measures of recidivism is consistent with DCC programming and is still an appropriate measure for at least one of the court goals. What this criticism may reflect is a larger limitation of community courts themselves. Thompson (2022) speaks to this limitation noting that focusing only on individual-level needs ignores the structural and systemic causes of many of the issues that community courts aim to address. Without a coupling of community level intervention and addressing individual level needs, these courts may be limited in their ability to create longitudinal changes in behaviour given that the community level issues needed to sustain changes in individual-level risks and needs. Unless these community level risks and needs are addressed there may be challenges to interventions that aim to resolve community level issues with only individual level programming. Future work on the DCC should additionally consider macro-level outcomes to assess court effectiveness and its impact on both community and individual level issues the court was originally designed to target.

Lastly, the risk factors used to assess involvement in the DCC were only measured at one time during adolescence. Some participants may have been interviewed over 15 years prior to entering the DCC. Therefore, there are likely other immediate situational factors at the time of court entry that are more relevant to

explaining court involvement. Future research should look for data sources that would allow for an examination of individual-level risk factors measured at the same time as court entry to consider their impact on success in the court.

Furthermore, the use of dynamic risk factors would be useful in understanding the 'black box' of the DCC. Findings from the five-year fixed-effects regression models revealed that offending is trending in a negative direction; however, it was beyond the scope of the current study to predict why these patterns were observed. Recent research suggests that examining within-individual changes in risk factors is a reliable method of establishing causal influence of treatment or intervention on changes in behavioural outcomes (Farrington et al., 2002). In the current study, the adolescent risk factors associated with court involvement are predictors of not only future criminality, but also other problematic adult outcomes. The DCC aims to target underlying needs and risk factors (e.g., housing or substance use) hypothesized to contribute to an individual's offending behaviour. Collecting follow-up data on risk factors would allow for an analysis of within-individual change to examine whether or not the court is addressing these risks. Consequently, the DCC would be able to understand more clearly the mechanisms creating change as a result of court participation to assess the effectiveness of programming.

Future DCC evaluation research may also consider including measures of procedural justice and the dosage of services. Including measures of procedural justice would aid in understanding why individuals may be compliant or non-compliant, as recent research shows that increased perceptions of procedural justice are related to compliance with court orders in PSCs (Frazer, 2006; Ray & Dollar, 2019). Similarly, data on the dosage or level of services received would be beneficial to understanding court outcomes. It has been hypothesized that if the dosage of services is low, a PSC may not necessarily offer a different experience than traditional court (Grommon et al., 2017). Collecting data on the dosage of services could inform which program components may be useful for creating changes in offending and other outcomes for DCC clients.

Chapter 6.

Conclusion

These findings add to the limited research on PSC models in the Canadian context. More specifically, they present two major contributions to the existing literature on the DCC. First, the current study provides evidence that the participants entering the DCC present with fundamentally different risk profiles than those who have not been through the court. More generally, this represents the utility of early adolescent factors in understanding future court involvement. Second, significant longitudinal changes in recidivism and custody days were not observed, although patterns of conviction and days in custody displayed a downward trend over the five-year follow-up period. Conviction patterns looked different at each observation period (year of entry, three years, and five years post entry), reinforcing the importance of assessing recidivism over time to observe how court involvement influences within-individual patterns of offending longitudinally. Future work should consider a within-individual design using individual-level criminogenic risk factors, such as those used in the current study, to examine more precisely how involvement in this type of court alters these factors. The social-structural factors connected to offending within the community remain an issue in downtown Vancouver and the surrounding neighbourhoods (Linden et al., 2013). Continued research on the DCC is vital to find solutions to the increasingly complex crime problem in the downtown core.

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