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Comprehensive Gang Model Evaluation: Integrating Research Into Practice, Massachusetts, 2014-2018

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User Guide



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Comprehensive Gang Model Evaluation: Integrating Research Into Practice

User's Guide

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Study Design

A quasi-experimental design with four cities in a northeast state was employed in this study: two sites received relational coordination (RC) interventions and two sites served as comparisons. All cities utilize the Comprehensive Gang Model to address gang and youth violence. An 18-month RC intervention from March 2016 through August 2017 utilizing the RC tools was introduced to boost organizational change to support communication and collaboration through an action research approach by study authors. Change in communication and coordination was examined over time through RC surveys, site meeting minutes, and coaching calls with site coordinators. Changes in crime were examined through NIBRS data, gang data, and shots fired data. Monthly National Incident-Based Reporting System data from two years and two months pre-intervention (January 2014 through February 2016); eighteen months of intervention (March 2016 through August 2017); and sixteen months of post-intervention (September, 2017 through December, 2018) are included. Monthly data on confirmed shots fired and number of gang arrests for violent and non-violent crime also were collected over the same time period (January, 2014 through December, 2018) from each study site's police department. Gang calls for service was originally intended to also be collected, but only one study site's police department collected this information. Discussions with the officer in charge of the crime analysis unit and crime analysis staff revealed that the statistics were not reliably kept, so the measure was eliminated from data collection.

The two RC intervention sites were purposefully chosen as they represented cities of different sizes, had data capacities to assess change, and agreed to participate in the project.¹ Two comparison sites were matched with intervention sites on the demographic characteristics of

¹ Funding constraints limited the number of study sites. Researchers sought out cities in which they had no previous working relationship in order to guard against any potential biases from pre-existing projects.

population, families in poverty, ethnicity, and income. Generally, sites were well-matched. U.S. Census (2010) data show that the Intervention Site A and Comparison Site A are medium-sized cities of approximately 180,000 and 110,000 residents, respectively. There is a significant difference in city size ($p < .05$). In both cities approximately 53% are white, with 17% and 19% of families below the poverty line. Both Intervention Site B and Comparison Site B are small cities of approximately 89,000 and 95,000 residents, respectively, with approximately 19% below the poverty line in both cities. There is a significant difference in ethnicity with 83% white in Intervention Site B and 70% white in Comparison Site B. All sites were deemed to have a gang violence problem in order to receive state funding.

All study sites received the same state funding and structure mandates imposed that required adoption of the CGM and implementation of the five CGM strategies. Sites were required to have a steering committee to oversee the initiative, a lead agency to coordinate the work, and a local research partner to assist in employing best practices and providing analysis support. Three separate sources of data are discussed below: (a) relational coordination survey; (b) observational notes; and (c) crime data.

Relational Coordination Survey

Using the Tailored Design Method (Dillman, et al., 2014), the validated RC survey (Gittell, 2000) was administered four times over the course of the study— at inception, six months into the intervention, at 18-months when intervention ceased, and one year post-intervention. The survey assessed the strength of communication and coordination on seven dimensions: frequent communication, timely communication, accurate communication, problem-solving communication, shared goals, shared knowledge, and mutual respect. See associated RC questionnaire. Note that seven follow up questions related to the use of the Comprehensive Gang

Model and data in each site were asked of participants. Those questions were not used in RC Survey analyses and reports.

The survey was administered through the web-based software Qualtrics to individuals in each city who were in key work groups deemed to be essential to implementation of the CGM (National Gang Center, 2010). These work groups included law enforcement, prosecution, probation, outreach, social services, faith-based services, education, research, and each site's CGM coordinators. The role, not the individual, is significant to RC as RC emphasizes coordination and communication among organizational roles to reflect institutional and sustainable collaboration. Those in the role most connected to gang and youth violence reduction in organizations within these work groups were selected to answer the survey. Prior to each survey, researchers rechecked contacts for each role with site coordinators to ensure accuracy of contact information. No personally identifying information was collected in the Qualtrics file to preserve confidentiality of respondents and to encourage honest responses.

RC Survey File Format and Variables

The RC Survey is in a rectangular file format in which each record contains information on one respondent (CaseID). There are four survey rounds as noted above. Questions asked in each survey round are denoted by .# (survey round number) at the end of each variable name. Averages for each round are denoted by .ave (RC survey average). One set of variables were recoded to account for reverse question coding on the dimension of Frequency of Communication. For each of the Frequency of Communication questions, data were recoded in the following way: Not Nearly Enough=1 Not Enough=3 Just the Right Amount=5 Too Often=4 Much Too Often=2. Averages on each dimension for each respondent over each round were calculated and included in the data file. Averages were calculated on each dimension by adding

each respondent's score on items in each dimension (e.g. Accuracy of Communication) and dividing by the total number of items in that dimension. Weighting procedures were not used because of the small sample size and the variability in response rate of individuals and those within workgroups. No variable transformations were used.

Survey Data Strengths and Challenges

The RC Survey data file contains responses from every person from the sampling frame who responded in at least one survey round. Not every potential participant responded, and response rates varied across rounds (see Methods Report). Challenges with this data are that they are unbalanced panel data with few potential respondents in each city overall. The strengths are that relational coordination can be examined over a two year period within and between sites. The seven dimensions of relational coordination can be analyzed across time and within each survey round. Because relational coordination is focused on roles, not individuals, relational coordination can be examined by role (workgroup) for a more detailed picture of communication and coordination in each round or over time.

Site Meeting Minutes, Coaching Calls & Appreciative Inquiry Interviews

Site Meeting Minutes

During the 18-month intervention period, researchers took observational notes at face-to-face meetings with site partners in intervention sites (Intervention City A=12; Intervention City B=11). Meetings were facilitated mainly by CGM coordinators and occasionally by the research team and took place at locations designated as convenient to community partners. As part of the intervention, researchers attended meetings, serving as participant observers, and worked with GCM coordinators to create meeting agenda that supported enhanced communication and

coordination in pursuit of change. For each meeting, at least two members of the Research Team took notes and then compiled a single file based on those collective notes. Meeting observation notes were meant to capture the nature of the discussion relative to inter-agency collaboration, as well as document the length, concentration, and frequency of use of relational coordination tools in intervention sites. A grounded approach was taken to identify themes that arose from the notes beyond relational coordination tools.

To maintain confidentiality, all meeting minute data that required de-identification (i.e. names, job titles, organizations, geographic locations) were replaced with generalized codes, and general rather than specific dates (e.g. meeting dates). Secondary identifiers were removed and replaced with generalized categories. For example, if a public official's name was used, it was deleted and (public official) was noted in parentheses. Meeting notes identifiers for CGM study participants, programs, and locations of have been replaced using the following system:

Location	Intervention City A	Intervention City B
	Organization 1 (O1), 2 (O2), 3 (O3), etc	Organization 1 (O1), 2 (O2), 3 (O3), etc
	Etc	
Key Participant	A1, A2, A3, etc.	B1, B2, B3, etc.
Meeting Participant or Person Referenced	PP1, PP2, PP3, etc	PP1, PP2, PP3, etc
Program Reference	Pgm 1, Pgm2, Pgm 3, etc.	Pgm 1, Pgm2, Pgm 3, etc.
Date	Site (A), Month (M) = AM1, 2, 3, etc	Site (B), Month (M) – BM 1,2,3,etc
Researcher	R1, R2, R3	R1, R2, R3

Coaching Calls

A total of 17 coaching calls were conducted between researchers and intervention site coordinators and supporters. Eleven calls were held in Intervention City A, and six in Intervention City B. Hand written notes were taken by a member of the Research Team to track the call agenda, discussion points and decisions. Handwritten notes were then

contemporaneously typed into a Word document. Secondary identifiers were removed and replaced with generalized categories as noted under “meeting minutes”. To ensure confidentiality of call participants, partner names and programs, and location, primary identifiers have been replaced using the following system:

Intervention City A	Intervention City B
Call Participant 1 = ACP1 (site A, Call Participant, #)	Call Participant 1 = BCP1 (site B, Call Participant, #)
Call Participant 2 = ACP2 (site A, Call Participant, #)	Call Participant 2 = BCP2 (site B, Call Participant, #)
Etc	
Meeting Participant or Person Referenced (A1, A2, A3, etc)	Meeting Participant or Person Referenced (B1, B2, B3, etc)
Date = AM1 (Site A, Month 1)	Date = BM1 (Site B, Month 1)
Date = AM2 (Site A, Month 2)	Date = BM2 (Site B, Month 2)
Program Reference = Pgm 1	Program Reference = Pgm 1
Organization Referenced (O1, O2, O3, etc)	Organization 1 (O1, O2, O3, etc)
Program Reference (Pgm 1, Pgm 2, etc)	Program Reference (Pgm 1, Pgm 2, etc)
Researchers (R1, R2)	Researchers (R1, R2)

Appreciative Inquiry Interviews

Researchers conducted 13 appreciative inquiry interviews from August 2017 through November 2017 with key informants in Intervention City A (n= 6) and Intervention City B (n = 7). Appreciative inquiry interviews were designed to qualitatively assess positive changes that occurred, or could occur, as a result of the organizational change intervention. Key informants in each community were identified through conversations with site coordinators. Semi-structured interviews allowed researchers to capture the unique characteristics of each community that would support positive change.

Ten of the interviewees agreed to be audiotaped. These interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Three interviewees did not agree to audiotaping, but did agree to allow interviewers to take contemporaneous notes by hand. Immediately following the call,

handwritten notes were typed into a Word document. To ensure confidentiality, secondary identifiers were removed and replaced with generalized categories as noted under “meeting minutes”. Primary identifiers in interview data have been replaced with the following system:

Intervention City A (n = 6 Interviewees)	Intervention City B (n = 7 Interviewees)
City A Interviewee 1 = A1	City B Interviewee 1 = B
City A Interviewee 2 = A2	City B Interviewee 2 = B2
City A Interviewee 3 = A3	City B Interviewee 3 = B3
City A Interviewee 4 = A4	City B Interviewee 4 = B4
City A Interviewee 5 = A5	City B Interviewee 5 = B5
City A Interviewee 6 = A6	City B Interviewee 6 = B6
	City B Interviewee 7= B7

Qualitative Data File Format

Qualitative data consisting of meeting minutes, coaching calls, and appreciative inquiry interviews are in Word document formatted, where primary and secondary identifiers have been de-identified.

Strengths and Challenges of Qualitative Data

The qualitative data from the meetings, coaching calls and interviews are rich in text and provide an account of the nature of agenda items, discussion points and decisions and/or action taken by intervention site participants during meetings, calls and interviews. The strengths of the data are in the contextualized nuances of dialogue captured in each intervention site that provides insight into the implementation of the CGM in a specific context. The data can provide insights into the challenges and facilitators of implementation that can inform how these communities and others adopt and implement the CGM in other communities. Challenges are that meeting notes capture in-meeting conversations and not what occurs outside of the meeting in advance, or following a meeting that might be relevant to CGM implementation. However, meeting notes

provide a rich data source to identify themes in conversations centered on communication, coordination and organizational change in support of reduced youth and gang violence.

Crime Data File Format and Variables

The Crime Data File is in a rectangular file format. Variables are the NIBRS Category A crimes, which include arrests for murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, simple assault, larceny, motor vehicle left, stolen property, vandalism, drug violations, and weapons violations. The file also includes the city – identified as an intervention city or a comparison city — monthly counts of violent and nonviolent gang arrests and shots fired as well as the month and year (January, 2014 through December, 2018). There also is a variable that identifies the intervention that denotes whether or not the month was in pre or during/post-intervention period. This “Time” variable is centered on the intervention. The first month of the intervention is coded “0”. Results from crime data analyses are located in the associated methods report.

Crime Data Strengths and Challenges

There are no missing variables in the crime data file. Because these cities vary in size, using methods that account for count data is highly recommended. It is not recommended that users try to compare both intervention cities to comparison cities as the implementation of the intervention varied in important ways between the intervention cities that may have impacted shots fired and criminal arrests (see Methods Report). Users can examine overall trends across the five year time period and compare intervention and comparison cities A and intervention and comparison cities B on these crime data points.

Associated Files

RC Survey Associated Files

RC Data File

RC Questionnaire

RC Codebook

Qualitative Data Associated Files

Appreciative Interview Questionnaire

Appreciative Interview Transcripts and Notes

Meeting Notes

Coaching Call Notes

Crime Data Associated Files

Crime Data File

Crime Data Codebook