



# LISBON ADDICTIONS 2019

## SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION, ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOURS AND TIME PERSPECTIVES

Personal experiences of young adults involved in a low-threshold  
employment program in Montreal – PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

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# CONFLICT OF INTEREST?

Nothing to declare

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS?

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# A (SMALL) BACKGROUND

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# Homelessness among youth

- A **concerning situation**
  - In Montreal, 19% of homeless people are under 30 (Latimer et al., 2019)



- A **vulnerable population**, with high prevalence of various health and social problems (Barczyk et al., 2014)

- **Poor service utilization and frequent service interruption** remain a major challenge (Kirby & Keon, 2006)

# Professional integration: fuel for change?

- Employment is associated with **significant positive changes** in substance use and homelessness trajectories (Richardson, 2016; Barbieri et al., 2016)
- **Low-threshold employment-based programs** (i.e., minimal requirements regarding access and retention of participants) appear as relevant options for homeless populations (Richardson, 2012; Gouvernement du Québec, 2016; Gouvernement français, 2018)



- TAPAJ (« Travail Alternatif Payé A la Journée »), a **low-threshold employment-based program**, in Montreal, for street youth between 16 and 30
- Offers **work opportunities** paid each day (step 1) then longer employment contracts (step 2)
- TAPAJ steps have a **time-related focus**

# Time perspective?



- Refers to the relatively stable manner in which people **consider and position themselves regarding their past, present and future** (Sword et al., 2014)
- Subjective resource involved in the **orientation of human behaviours** (Henson et al., 2006)
- Associated with **risky behaviours** (especially psychoactive substance use, unprotected sexual activities) and socioprofessional situation (Henry et al., 2017; Beenstock et al., 2011; Zimbardo et al., 1999)

# Research questions



- Using the very own perspective of young adults involved in the TAPAJ program, main objectives of the current research are:
  - To gain a better understanding of their **subjective time experience**
  - To explore whether TAPAJ **influences** the individual time perspectives, and whether these time perspectives will **act in return** on their experience in TAPAJ, on their social and professional integration, and on their substance use.

# METHODS, IN SHORT

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# Participants and general context of the study

- 15 young adults, so far (13 men; 2 women)
  - Aged between 16 and 31 years old ( $M = 24,27$ ;  $SD = 3,97$ )
  - **Recently involved** in the 'TAPAJ' program in Montreal (three TAPAJ work activities during the last three months)
  - A **history of substance use** (all substance categories considered)
- **On-site** recruitment, or through stakeholders references
- Current study: **qualitative and descriptive design / research interviews + complementary questions / thematic analysis**
- Current research is part of a greater participatory research project
  - **Ongoing recruitment** (since May 2019)
  - Ethical agreement from the Ethics Committee of the University Hospital of Sherbrooke

# PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

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# General observations on time perspective profiles

- A present time...
  - **Dedicated to survival** (search for money, food, housing, substances...)
  - *Yes, but I didn't have the choice but to steal food. We were taking what we needed at that time [...]. I always stole stuff in my life, you know, when I needed it. Right now, with 40\$ for food, for two, you can't eat. Then, we do not have a choice. (Participant 1, Woman, 19)*
  - Where precariousness leads to **seize every opportunities**
  - *Sometimes, I'm just looking to the ground, and I find a credit card, just there. Just standing there you know. Then I'm saying to myself: I should bring it back to a bank counter, or something. But, at the same time ... I'm living in the streets, I need money. I don't need to use substances, but it is still a small need for me (Participant 9, Man, 25)*

# General observations on time perspective profiles

- While **being fully focused on the present**, they will use strategies to avoid thinking about precariousness (and related issues), for instance:
  - Substances
    - *As I was saying, each day you see that it's going worse. I was drinking a lot to ... to sleep. I'm so stressed, very anxious. I can't sleep in the street, I don't like that. I heard stories where people were getting beaten, robbed. So, sometimes, I was drinking to sleep. Otherwise, I didn't sleep at all. (Participant 11, Man, 29)*
  - ...or work
    - *When I'm working, I'm in my world... It is also a way to forget myself, just like with substances or when I'm shopping [...]. Sometimes, I get a little 400-500\$, and then, I will buy some clothes. Being in a mall, in the middle of the crowd, with my music, I'm in my thoughts, it is great (Participant 9, Man, 25)*

# General observations on time perspective profiles

- Past experiences, often **painful**, with **impacts on daily life**:
  - *Honestly, I'm going to say that I can't trust anyone right now. Each person I have ever trusted betrayed me. Then, I'm telling you the truth, I only trust my cat and my dog now... (Participant 12, Man, 19)*
- However, these experiences are also sources of...
  - **Self-development**
    - *Well, I know I lived a lot of hard stuff, rough events, but I always managed to stand up. It gave me a lot of experience, this past, with these dramatic events... You gain some sort of maturity facing this because you don't have a choice. You have to grow up fast to face these events. (Participant 14, Man, 19)*
  - **Understanding** (how the world and people work)
    - *I think I understood several things after that. Not because I didn't get beaten before [...], I learnt to trust some people, and not to trust others. And to give more of my time to people close to me, those who really count for me. (Participant 9, Man, 25)*

# General observations on time perspective profiles

- Finally, the future represents
  - An **uncertain and unpredictable event**
  - *No, I do not have any plans. In the past, I had some, but it was useless because it never worked as expected. I only trust what is in front of me, right now. And we will see if it is going to work with the baby. What if I am making a plan with my child, and then he is taken from me? (Participant 1, Woman, 19)*
  - Something **to avoid thinking about**
  - *Right now, it is helpful not to think about the future. It is so far from me, two years. Before that, many things will happen. Instead of saying « In two years, I want this or that », I am focusing the present. (Participant 8, Women, 27)*

# General observations on time perspective profiles

- The future is still **associated with hope and dreams**
  - Sometimes, it involves old dreams
  - *I'm still dreaming to get a wife, a child, a dog, my little house, to see them playing... I still hope to see that becoming true one day, being out of the street, with everything going for the best (Participant 9, Man, 25)*
  - It also involves more precise, motivating, targets, to aim for (work, family, substance use, personal identity, etc.)
  - *I always wanted to become a lawyer. I really really have found my career now. Even if sometimes I have hard time getting up, I'm still working to do what I love. It is important to do something we love. (Participant 8, Woman, 27)*

# TAPAJ impacts?

- On the present time perspective
  - Contributes to create **new routines**
  - *Yes, because Step 1, it is only shifts, only three-hour shifts. Step 2, it is 25 hours of work each week. Therefore, it makes a change because you start having a regular income coming in. Also, it creates a routine to work with, to get up each morning at the same hour. It brought a positive change in my life. (Participant 3, Man, 22)*
  - And progressively, an action on the individuals' **empowerment**
  - *Well, you know, at first, they help you a lot. But, after a while, yes, they helped you, but now you become able to fly along (Participant 8, Woman, 27)*

# TAPAJ impacts?

- Enables the **rereading of past events** and how these impacts...
  - How they see others
  - *TAPAJ, it helps a lot to get experience, to meet new people, to avoid being judgemental toward these persons, because they are also homeless or drug users. Before that, I had a much more closed mind. (Participant 13, Man, 26)*
  - How they consider work
  - *You know, I was thinking that every jobs were stressful, exhausting. But it makes me understand that you don't have to live these emotions when you are working. (Participant 14, Man, 19)*
  - How they see themselves
  - *I was telling myself that everything was my fault. I felt a lot of guilt about everything I lived. But TAPAJ helps you understand that you are not responsible of all that occurs in your life. Sometimes sad things happen, and you have to make the best out of it (Participant 4, Man, 22)*

# TAPAJ impacts?

- Finally, **widens** individual perspectives regarding their future
  - First, regarding work, with better definitions of their needs and objectives
  - *This is what I like a lot. It gave me an idea. I said to myself: Well, you should go work in construction because tasks to do will often change. TAPAJ highlighted this need for me. (Participant 7, Man, 24)*
  - Then, changes regarding work relationship will expand to other fields.
  - *They worked six months, one year, with TAPAJ. Now, they are paid 18\$ per hour for the same kind of job. They work, they have a new life, they work everyday. They gave up their previous life in the street, all their problems. (Participant 8, Woman, 27)*
  - *I find that TAPAJ gave me a true feeling of self-fulfillment, you know, while giving me the opportunity to work. They also helped me with my apartment, gave me some resources to be able to eat, they gave me a lot... (Participant 9, Man, 25)*

# CONCLUSION, FOR NOW...

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# Time perspective, on the intervention side?

- Profiles **consistent with precariousness issues** (Pluck et al., 2008; Van Doorn, 2010; Epel et al., 1999)
- Simultaneously, TAPAJ program seems to **impact** time perspectives
  - When their immediate needs are met, individuals may become more resourceful to reconsider how they see their past, therefore, their world, others, and themselves. Being more « at peace » with their past and their present, distant objectives may become progressively more and more reachable
- TAPAJ key features related to these changes in TP?
  - An immediate (financial) assistance to meet important needs
  - Flexibility and acceptance in interventions
  - Work-based intervention as a proxy for wider changes (empowerment and larger support)



# Thank you!

(Any 'well-timed' comments?)

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