

# Projections for the future of adolescent crack users: A phenomenological

Projeções de futuro de adolescentes usuários de crack: Uma abordagem fenomenológica

Proyecciones para el futuro de los consumidores adolescentes de crack: Un enfoque fenomenológico

## RESUMO

Objetivo: Conhecer as projeções de futuro de adolescentes usuários de crack atendidos no Centro de Atenção Psicossocial. Método: Pesquisa qualitativa realizada com 13 adolescentes atendidos em um Centro de Atenção Psicossocial para usuários de álcool e outras drogas, de um município do sul do Brasil, durante o segundo semestre de 2016. Realizou-se entrevista e Análise Compreensiva dos dados a partir do referencial da Fenomenologia Social de Schütz. Resultados: Como as projeções de futuro referiram: resistir à influência da droga e se manter em tratamento; resgatar a si e (re)construir as relações familiares e sociais; retomar os estudos e (re)inserir-se no trabalho; viver um pouco mais. Conclusão: Os "motivos para" os comportamentos sociais, de adolescentes usuários de crack em tratamento, revelam uma adolescência fragilizada, mas com potencial de projetar a transformação de seu "mundo da vida". Compreendendo as individualidades dos adolescentes, a equipe multiprofissional pode construir um projeto terapêutico singular.

**DESCRIPTORES:** Adolescente; Usuários de drogas; Transtornos relacionados com substâncias; Crack; Enfermagem.

## ABSTRACT

Objective: To know the future projections of adolescent crack users assisted at the Psychosocial Care Center. Method: Qualitative research carried out with 13 adolescents assisted at a Psychosocial Care Center for users of alcohol and other drugs, in a city in southern Brazil, during the second semester of 2016. An interview and Comprehensive Analysis of the data was carried out from the framework of Schütz's Social Phenomenology. Results: As the future projections reported: resisting the influence of the drug and staying in treatment; rescue oneself and (re)build family and social relationships; resuming studies and (re)entering work; live a little longer. Conclusion: The "reasons for" the social behaviors of teenage crack users undergoing treatment reveal a fragile adolescence, but with the potential to project the transformation of their "lifeworld". By understanding the adolescents' individualities, the multidisciplinary team can build a unique therapeutic project.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Adolescent; Drug users; Substance related disorders; Crack; Nursing.

## RESUMEN

Objetivo: Conocer las proyecciones de futuro de los adolescentes consumidores de crack atendidos en el Centro de Atención Psicossocial. Método: Investigación cualitativa realizada con 13 adolescentes atendidos en un Centro de Atención Psicossocial para usuarios de alcohol y otras drogas, en una ciudad del sur de Brasil, durante el segundo semestre de 2016. Se realizó una entrevista y un análisis exhaustivo de los datos basados en el marco de la Fenomenología Social de Schütz. Resultados: Como informaron las proyecciones futuras: resistir la influencia de la droga y permanecer en tratamiento; rescatarse y (re) construir relaciones familiares y sociales; reanudar estudios y (re) ingresar al trabajo; vivir un poco más. Conclusión: Los "motivos" de los comportamientos sociales de los adolescentes consumidores de crack en tratamiento revelan una adolescencia frágil, pero con potencial para proyectar la transformación de su "mundo de vida". Al comprender las individualidades de los adolescentes, el equipo multidisciplinario puede construir un proyecto terapéutico único.

**DESCRIPTORES:** Adolescente; Drogadictos; Trastornos relacionados con sustancias; Grieta; Enfermería.

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## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is chronologically comprised between the ages of 10 and 20, which represents a phase of physical, psychological and social maturation in the life cycle.<sup>1</sup> Marked by a complex process of biopsychosocial growth and development, multiple transformations and renewals, this phase brings complexity and fragility that can lead to drug use and abuse. A serious public health problem that can be related to both socio-environmental factors, as well as peer prejudice and racial discrimination.<sup>2,3</sup>

Other authors consider that the main risk factors for drug use are related to individual, environmental and family issues. Among the individuals, low self-esteem and self-confidence, impulsivity, rebelliousness, psychiatric disorders, a history of sexual abuse and early consumption of alcohol and/or tobacco stand out. Environmental risk factors are linked to the availability of drugs and norms favorable to their use, family conflicts, difficulties in imposing limits and the use of drugs by parents, among others.<sup>4</sup>

A study carried out in 2015, with adolescent students and their teachers on the use of crack in a public elementary school, points out as a justification for crack consumption the need for self-affirmation related to this stage of development. Its con-

sumption happens in a social way, aiming at acceptance in peer groups, adolescents still portray consumption as something natural, pointing out during the study the well-being and the pleasant sensation of using crack.<sup>5</sup>

Also in 2015, a study on the main indicators of substance use and mental health in the United States found that 27.1 million people aged 12 years and over, were users of illicit drugs, and approximately 2.2 million adolescents aged 12 to 17 years were recent users of illicit drugs, which represented 8.8% of adolescents. Of these, 53,000 adolescents sought Health Services, whether specialized or not, for drug use such as cocaine/crack.<sup>6</sup>

A study that described the characteristics of adolescents who used the psychiatric emergency service due to substance use disorders showed that most were between 12 and 17 years of age, diagnosed with poly-drug use. Mental and behavioral disorders due to cocaine use was the fourth most prevalent diagnosis. Crack was cited as the most used drug due to its low value and easy combination with other drugs such as marijuana and tobacco.<sup>7</sup>

The crack user is one of the most prone to aggressive attitudes against himself, family and society.<sup>8,9</sup> Craving for drugs contributes to aggressiveness by pushing the teenager, leading him to commit illegal and violent acts. It is noteworthy that crack

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users seek health services less compared to other drugs.<sup>10</sup> Thus, in the search for the psychosocial rehabilitation of these adolescents, we seek to strengthen the Psychosocial Care Network (PCN).

Schütz states that phenomena are constructed from lived experiences and interactions with the world. From this perspective, there are two types of “reasons for” social behavior: those involving action and purpose, called “reasons for”, and those that assume the actors’ scenario, the environment, the psychic disposition, called “reasons why”.<sup>10</sup> The “reasons for” can only be interpreted by subjectivity, and only the individual himself can define his action project, the future goals he wants to achieve.<sup>11</sup> Strengthening the “reasons for” is to empower the adolescent of the possibility of change in the biographical situation, in the present and in his/her “lifeworld”.

The relevance of the study is confirmed, as the way in which the adolescent undergoing treatment for crack use projects his future, directly influences behavior and choices, consequently, in living with the family and community, requiring new knowledge that prioritizes these aspects, subsidizing the work of nurses and other professionals who accompany them. In this context, the question that guided the study was: what do adolescent crack users undergoing treatment at the Psychosocial Care Center project for their future? From this question, the objective was to know the future projections of adolescent crack users treated at the Psychosocial Care Center.

## METHOD

Exploratory and descriptive study, with a qualitative approach, developed in a Psychosocial Care Center for users of alcohol and other drugs (CAPSad - Centro de Atenção Psicossocial para usuários de álcool e outras drogas) in a municipality in southern Brazil, the collection period was the second half of 2016. Thus, 13 adolescents participated who met the inclusion criteria: being an adolescent crack user, being attended periodically at CAPSad. Adolescents who had no history of crack use were exclu-

ded from the research.

Adolescents were approached during attendance at CAPSad, the interviews were scheduled, recorded and transcribed for analysis. The collections were carried out by the researchers, through a semi-structured interview, whose guiding question was “How was your childhood life until now and your relationship with crack?”, individually with each interviewee, within the service itself and with an average duration of 50 minutes. Being questioned about their life, from childhood to the present moment, about their relationship with crack and their expectations for the future.

All adolescents signed the consent form agreeing to participate in the study. Adolescents under the age of 18 had the approval of their guardians by signing the Free and Informed Consent Form.

Data were analyzed using Comprehensive Analysis, an analytical method that is based on the practice of understanding the researcher as a free being.<sup>8</sup> Initially, each interview was carefully read in an attempt to understand the global meaning of the lived experience. Then, an in-depth re-reading was carried out to identify the units of meaning. Finally, the phenomenological reduction was carried out, in which the units of meaning were grouped by the convergence of the relevant aspects to compose the analytical categories, that is, to reveal the essence of the phenomenon.<sup>12</sup>

The study followed the ethical principles of research involving human beings, according to Resolution 466/12. It was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Rio Grande, obtaining a favorable opinion under number 93/2016, CAAE 57536116400005324.

## RESULTS

Thirteen adolescents participated in the study, of which two were female and 11 were male. The mean age was 16 years, ranging from 14 to 19 years. Twelve were single and one teenager had a stable relationship for two years. Twelve lived with their family and one was in a shelter. Two had children, one of whom did not live

with the child.

Only two continued their studies. Eleven had incomplete elementary school, two had completed elementary school. Eight reported not working or studying at the moment. Two worked as day laborers in the general services of a fish industry, one was a kitchen assistant in a snack shop. One of the study participants referred to being a “aviãozinho (by definition, it is the person who intermediates the purchase and sale of drugs between the dealer and the user)”, and at one point he also mentioned being a dealer.

As for consumption, the average onset was 13 years old, ranging from seven to 15 years old. The time of crack use had an average of seven years, ranging from two to eleven years. Regarding the type of drug used in association with crack, one used alcohol periodically, one xilo, three ecstasy, four tobacco, four solvents and glue, eight cocaine and thirteen marijuana.

All adolescents participating in the study find themselves in a biographical situation that determines their “lifeworld”: the treatment of crack consumption and other drugs. Thus, they were able to project their future, establishing different “reasons for” in their lives.<sup>11</sup>

### Resistance: fighting the influence of the drug and staying in treatment

Crack can lead adolescents to the uncontrollable desire to use the drug at all times and, consequently, to chemical dependence. That’s why they looked to CAPSad for help to maintain their self-control and transform their current biographical situation. Faced with this reality, some adolescents reported that their “reasons for” consisted of resisting the influence of the drug and remaining in treatment until they remained abstemious from the drug.

### Identity and intersubjectivity: the rescue of the self and the (re)construction of family and social relationships

The negative influence of crack on adolescents is a transforming factor in their “lifeworld”, leading to the mischaracterization of themselves and the disruption

of their interpersonal relationships, which is one of the reasons listed to rescue themselves and (re)construct family and social relationships. Some said they did not have high expectations, because there is no point in dreaming high and “falling” right there, that is, fear of the frustration of failure.

### **Better living conditions: resuming studies and (re)insertion into work**

Education and work can be transforming elements both in the current situation of adolescents and in their future, presenting themselves as perspectives for the normalization of their lives. As beings from a social world that values work and study, some adolescents expressed as “reasons for” resuming studies and (re)insertion into work, achieving a social position that allows them to live with comfort and dignity. Even with their experience with crack, teenagers still have similar dreams and goals to teenagers who do not use drugs, such as being a police officer or a famous football player, professions that have given them fame, power and happiness. However, they feel anxious about their history with drug users.

### **Ephemeral life: designing to live a little longer**

In the “lifeworld”, drugs such as crack insert the teenager into a socio-environmental context of violence, sadness and hopelessness. In such a way, some adolescents lose the perspectives of growth and development of themselves, the dreams, the aspirations and desires. His coexistence with violence makes his project for the future, in some cases, to stay alive longer, reaching the age of 18, because most of his friends who had similar life experiences failed to do so.

They said that several friends were killed by the police for being gang members, but that they hope to live a little longer, not die anytime soon. They mentioned that to get the drug they did anything without fearing anything, but today, they are afraid of dying, either due to confrontations with the police or drug dealers.

## **DISCUSSION**

In every moment of our existence, as an actor in the “lifeworld”, we find ourselves in a situation characterized by a subjective perspective. The adolescents participating in this study have in common the use and treatment against crack, but the biographical situation they experience in the “lifeworld” is unique and singular, due to the different collection of knowledge and social interactions.<sup>13</sup>

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In this sense, when the user seeks treatment, the interdisciplinary team needs to act quickly, supporting, strengthening and protecting the adolescent. Harm reduction is a possible approach that prioritizes a progressive reduction in drug use, reducing the social, economic and health consequences of drug consumption, in addition to mitigating social judgments of absolute non-abstinence.<sup>14</sup>

The reconstruction of their identity,

their social and family relationships are part of this “lifeworld” projection, the family has a potential for the recovery of adolescent crack users. In the lived context, she feels overwhelmed by living with the crack addict, comparing this pain with that of the death of a child.

A study that analyzed the influence of the family environment on the consumption of crack in habitual or dependent users found that the family may have elements that are unfavorable to recovery, and may even facilitate consumption.<sup>15</sup> Despite this, several authors continue to defend the family environment as a protective factor for drug use, but the drug issue should be worked with the family, strengthening social networks and addressing prevention.

Adolescents also projected the resumption of studies and (re)insertion into work, formal education and work activity can have repercussions, fostering in the adolescent undergoing treatment against crack, the feeling of worth and rescue of their life. Thus, studying and working with the experience of these adolescents can be understood as positive typified actions that can be rescued, in addition to enabling their financial independence. Faced with this reality, professionals need to help adolescents to return, whether to work or studies, highlighting the importance of continuing treatment to remain stable and able to perform the activity.<sup>16</sup>

In the “lifeworld” there are elements that are imposed on us, while others are modifiable. Thus, elements such as trafficking in the community, violence, stigma, poverty and inequality are imposed on the “lifeworld” of these adolescents. In some cases, difficult family relationships contribute to the adolescent’s involvement with drugs such as crack.<sup>16</sup> The lack of prospects for the future can distance them from healthy development and growth, from the dreams and aspirations of adolescence, and the “reasons for” of some adolescents reside in a basic human right: life.

In this case, projecting can help in the conduct to be taken of rational actions, it is worth noting that the projection consists of an anticipation of future conduct from a



fantasy. The practical feasibility of carrying out the projected action within the realm of the real circumscribed by the “lifeworld” is an essential feature of the project.<sup>11</sup> However, every rehearsed future action is marked by gaps that can only be filled by the actual performance of the act. Only in retrospect will the actor be able to see whether his project succeeded or failed.<sup>11</sup> Thus,

it is up to the professionals who assist them to help them carry out their projects for the future through care actions committed to their success based mainly on the potential, stimulating the hope of a new way of living.<sup>14</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The study has limitations as it was carried out in a single scenario, having a limitation in terms of the number of respondents. However, there was a convergence in the discourses, with saturation of information enabling the analysis and identification of well-structured units of meaning, requiring other similar studies in order to understand the phenomenon.

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