



# ASSISTED DESISTANCE: PERCEPTIONS OF JUDICIARIZED YOUNG ADULTS

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Isabelle F.-Dufour; Marie-Pierre Villeneuve, Julie Marcotte, et  
Natacha Brunelle

June 16th: DESISTANCE FROM CRIME (UK-South Korea)

# LET'S START AT THE END

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- I will present the results of 3 different studies today;
- It represent the last nine years of our work studying assisted desistance with youth and young adults;
- I want to thank all students who collaborated on these projects but also my colleagues **Julie Marcotte, Natacha Brunelle and Marie-Pierre Villeneuve** who conducted these studies with me and could not be here today (it is the middle of the night in Canada...)

# WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT YOUNG OFFENDERS ?

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First, we know that a very small proportion of adolescents (5 to 10% according to studies) are responsible for the majority of violent offenses committed by adolescents (50 to 62% according to studies) -Snyder and Sickmund, 1999 ;

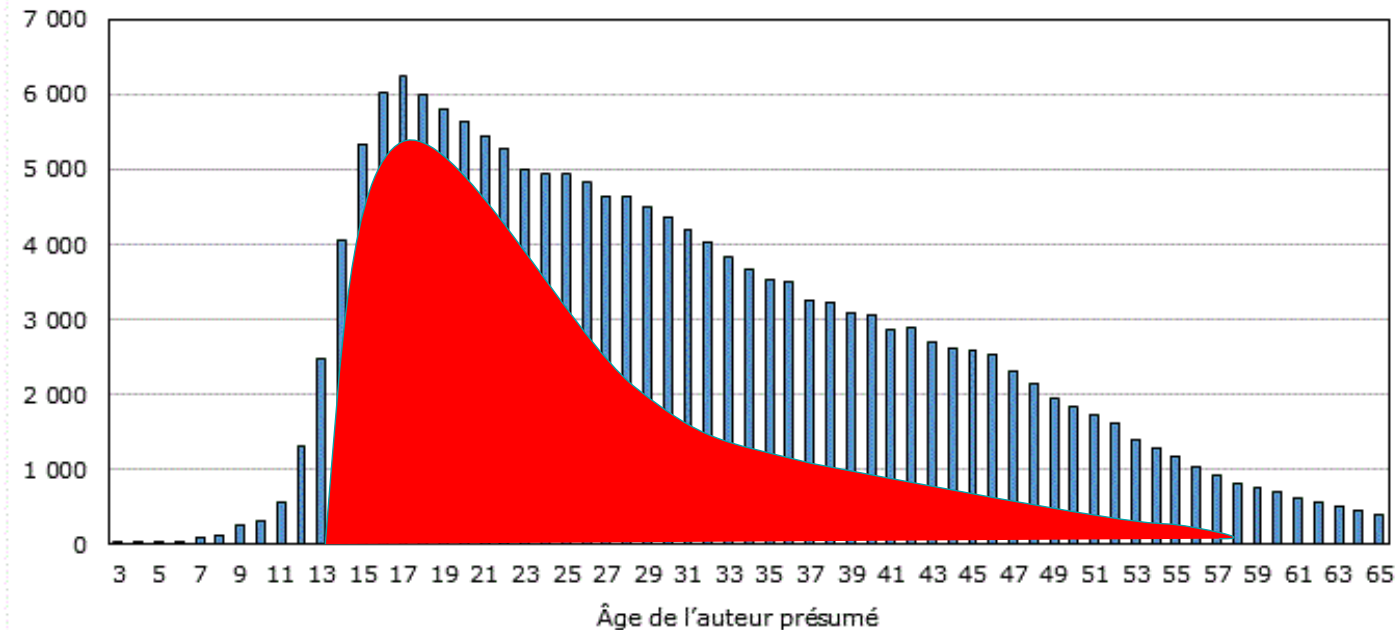
We also know that the majority of adolescents who commit crimes will desist from crime (stop committing crimes and no longer consider themselves a delinquent) during the first years of the transition to adulthood; It is therefore a small proportion of individuals who will continue their "criminal career" after reaching their thirties;

While this may sound encouraging (why not just wait for them to mature?), it should be noted that each individual that persists in crime costs approximately \$1.3 to \$1.5 million in damage per decade -Snyder and Sickmund, 1999.

# The lengthening of the adolescence period also seems to be a problem

**Graphique 3**  
**Taux d'auteurs présumés de crimes, selon l'âge de l'auteur présumé, 2014**

taux pour  
100 000 personnes



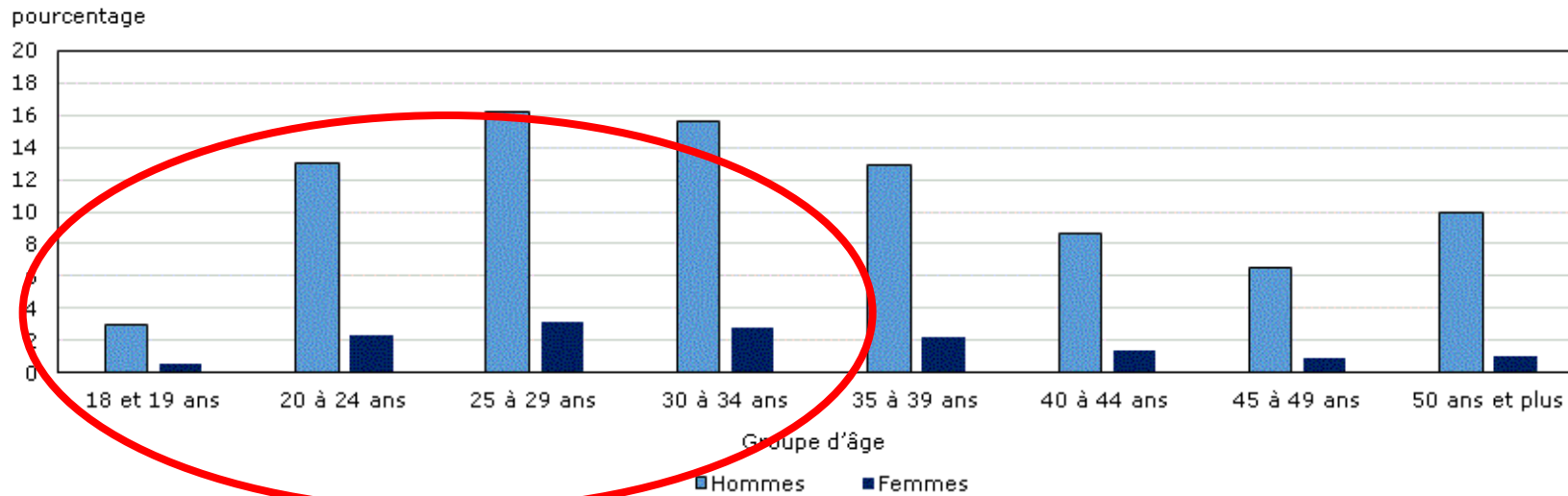
**Note :** Les taux représentent toutes les infractions au *Code criminel* (sauf les délits de la route). Les taux sont calculés pour 100 000 personnes à chaque âge. Les chiffres de population sont fondés sur des estimations au 1<sup>er</sup> juillet fournies par la Division de la démographie de Statistique Canada. Les auteurs présumés âgés de moins de 12 ans ne peuvent être inculpés d'une infraction en vertu du *Code criminel*.

**Source :** Statistique Canada, Centre canadien de la statistique juridique, Programme de déclaration uniforme de la criminalité fondé sur l'affaire, 2014.

Even if we acknowledge that the transition to adulthood now occurs later in life, the legal age has not changed...

Approximately 50% of incarcerated people in Canada are young adults

**Graphique 2**  
**Admissions d'adultes à la détention dans un établissement provincial ou territorial, selon le groupe d'âge et le sexe, 2018-2019**



**Note :** Des données supplémentaires sont offertes dans les tableaux 35-10-0015 et 35-10-0017 de Statistique Canada. L'âge représente l'âge de la personne au moment de l'admission. Les admissions aux fins des enquêtes du Centre canadien de la statistique juridique et de la sécurité des collectivités sont comptées chaque fois qu'une personne commence une période de surveillance quelconque dans un établissement correctionnel ou dans la collectivité. Ces données décrivent et mesurent le cheminement des personnes dans les services correctionnels au fil du temps. La même personne peut figurer plusieurs fois dans les comptes d'admissions. Cela se produit lorsqu'elle change de statut correctionnel (p. ex. de la détention provisoire à la détention après condamnation) ou lorsqu'elle réintègre le système plus tard au cours de la même année. Exclut les admissions d'adultes dont le sexe ou l'âge était inconnu.

**Source :** Statistique Canada, Centre canadien de la statistique juridique et de la sécurité des collectivités, Enquête sur les services correctionnels pour adultes, Enquête intégrée sur les services correctionnels et Enquête sur les services correctionnels canadiens.



# AND OUR YOUNG ADULTS...

Variables sociodémographiques	Nombre de dossiers retenus	Nouveau contact avec les SCQ (avec ou sans condamnation) <sup>12</sup>	Taux de récidive/reprise		
			Nouvelle condamnation	Nouvelle incarcération	Condamnation à une peine d'incarcération de 2 ans et plus
Ensemble des libérés	100 % (8 960)	60 % (5 415)	54 % (4 808)	42 % (3 755)	2 % (202)
Sexe					
Femmes	10 % (872)	59 % (518)	53 % (465)	39 % (338)	1 % (5)
Hommes	90 % (8 088)	61 % (4 897)	54 % (4 343)	42 % (3 417)	2 % (197)
Âge à l'admission					
18-24	19 % (1 720)	73 % (1 267)	65 % (1 125)	50 % (857)	3 % (51)
25-34	27 % (2 439)	64 % (1 561)	56 % (1 368)	44 % (1 071)	2 % (51)
35-44	26 % (2 358)	61 % (1 447)	55 % (1 278)	43 % (1 009)	2 % (46)
45 et +	27 % (2 443)	47 % (1 146)	42 % (1 025)	33 % (818)	2 % (54)
Origine					
Allochtone	94 % (8 436)	60 % (5 036)	53 % (4 455)	41 % (3 487)	2 % (192)
Autochtone <sup>13</sup>	6 % (524)	72 % (379)	67 % (353)	51 % (268)	2 % (10)

Have the higher  
recidivism-  
reincarceration  
rate in the year  
following their  
reentry

- Lalande, P., P. Dolmaire et R. Lévesque (2018). La récidive/reprise de la clientèle confiée aux Services correctionnels du Québec, cohortes 2010-2011. Québec : Direction générale adjointe aux programmes, au conseil et à l'administration, Direction générale des services correctionnels, ministère de la Sécurité publique du Québec, 112 p.



We must therefore quickly  
concern ourselves with what will  
happen if we let our adolescent  
offenders slip...



The background is a blurred image of a library with tall wooden bookshelves filled with books. In the foreground, a stack of several books is on a wooden table. The top book is open, showing its pages. Floating above the open book are various white-outlined mathematical symbols and icons, including plus signs, minus signs, multiplication signs, division signs, percent signs, question marks, infinity symbols, and some more complex symbols like  $\Sigma$  and  $\gamma$ . There are also some icons of a hand holding a pen and a magnifying glass. The overall scene suggests a focus on mathematics or academic study.

First study: youth under DCS0



# FIRST STUDY: YOUTH UNDER DSCO ALSO CALLED « THE LAST CHANCE »

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- 411 files of adolescent offenders followed for at least 6 months (a majority of them are followed for 2 years and 6 months);
- The files come from all regional division for the province of Québec (some are rural and others are big cities like Montréal);
- To give an idea of the extent of the data, 55 files = 1854 pages;
- So we have more than 10,000 tracking pages!
- I have read and coded them three times since 2013 (depending on the topics as 'street gangs youth', young who committed a sex crime, etc.)

# WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

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Young people who are sentenced to a DCSO can be separated into two groups:

- those who commit offenses of a sexual nature (only) present more often internalized behavioral problems (depression, anxiety) and come from more supportive families. In general, the prognosis is very good;
- the others (theft, drugs, violence) more often have externalized behavioral problems (conduct disorder, oppositional disorder) and come from families with weak social support (few ties between members, deceased or incarcerated parents, foster care placement at an early age, multiple foster families).

With exceptions

- young people who have committed sexual offenses will take advantage of the help received to "seize this last chance";
- for others, it seems the quality of the supervision by youth delegates is a very important factor of success

Here is Albert's case. He has been under supervision (DCSO + probation) for 2 years

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*"I remind him of the consequences he faces by continuing to use cannabis despite his condition prohibiting him and **let him know that we will request a test**;*

*"He **must** have made an appointment with youth help center to write his CV, take the steps to receive his health insurance card and meet a doctor and take responsibility for his obligations with the Municipal Court [before the next meeting]";*

*« I reflect that he has to be transparent with me, because if I get information from third parties to the effect that he has breached his conditions, the consequences are likely to be worse than if he is honest and admits it on his own";*

*"I reflect his lack of motivation to take charge and his lack of resourcefulness. Indeed, he always refers to his parents or other people when I ask him about the steps to take to achieve his goals";*

*"He **fears that people who have not been arrested will seek revenge. I reflect to him that it is through his conflicts and his behavior that he has put the whole family in danger**";*

*"End of the follow-up. I wish him good luck".*



# JOHN'S CASE

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"We notice that John adopts a nonchalant and borderline arrogant attitude." "The father is very supportive and appropriate attitude towards his son. He systematically corrects him as soon as the latter tries to make himself arrogant. *The father states, in the presence of his son, that if the situation becomes untenable, he will ask him to leave his home and will not take him back*"

"John ends up collaborating minimally in the intervention plan when I reflect that the sooner the process is completed, the sooner the appointments will end."

"The police officer informs us that the *police intervened at the father's house following an argument with John where the father ended up in a physical altercation*;

*"Father is requesting that we revoke his liberty and put him in custody for 48 hours."*

"The police were unable to intercept him. John is a runaway" "Notify me that the arrest warrant has been executed and John is at the youth center".

*"He says we're 'wasting his life.' When we reflect to him that he is solely responsible for his choices, he responds by saying that we are screwing him over";*

*"At the Center, John will learn to live in society, to conform to rules, to manage his frustrations".*

*"John is unable to identify concrete means that he will put in place upon his release so as not to find himself in detention again."*

*"Let's file a report since the parents don't want to take their son back"*

"Informs us that John has run away." "John is being held in Montreal. The police officers ask if the warrant is still in effect. We confirm that he is under a YCJA arrest warrant."



WE COULD PRESENT  
300 SIMILAR CASES

# WHAT WE SEE THE MOST IN THE FILES...

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- We note that some youth workers consider that adolescents have 'chosen' their criminal career;
- They are therefore deemed responsible for this choice AS WELL AS for the means to be taken to get out of this career;
- Many youth workers see themselves as 'probation officers' for young offenders and frequently remind youths of this role ("It's not up to me to chase after him, I'm not his SW");
- Emphasis is placed on control, management of breaches, reading of conditions;
- A large part of the psychosocial support is transferred outside the context of the relationship (e.g. the teenager is forced to go to therapy for substance use or anger management, to get services to prepare them for employment, workshops, etc.);
- In this type of intervention model, the youth worker rarely leaves his office: he goes to court, to the police station or to the youth center if necessary



# NOT SURPRISINGLY, THESE YOUTHS GET TO THE DEEPER END OF THE SYSTEM"

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Not surprisingly, because :

- 1- It is much more difficult to reduce the risk of recidivism in an open environment (average reduction of 10%) than in a closed environment (30%) (Pappas and Dent, 2021) since obviously, we cannot have the same dosage-intensity;
- 2- Because all **controlling approaches** INCREASE adolescents' risk of recidivism. Short period of incarceration – of 48 hours for example – increase the risk of recidivism by 5% compared to a control group (Pappas and Dent, 2021).

In sum: teenagers who ARE NOT monitored by "controllers" have lower recidivism rates than those who are monitored very closely (Aos et al., 2001; Kim et al., 2013; Pappas and Dent , 2021)



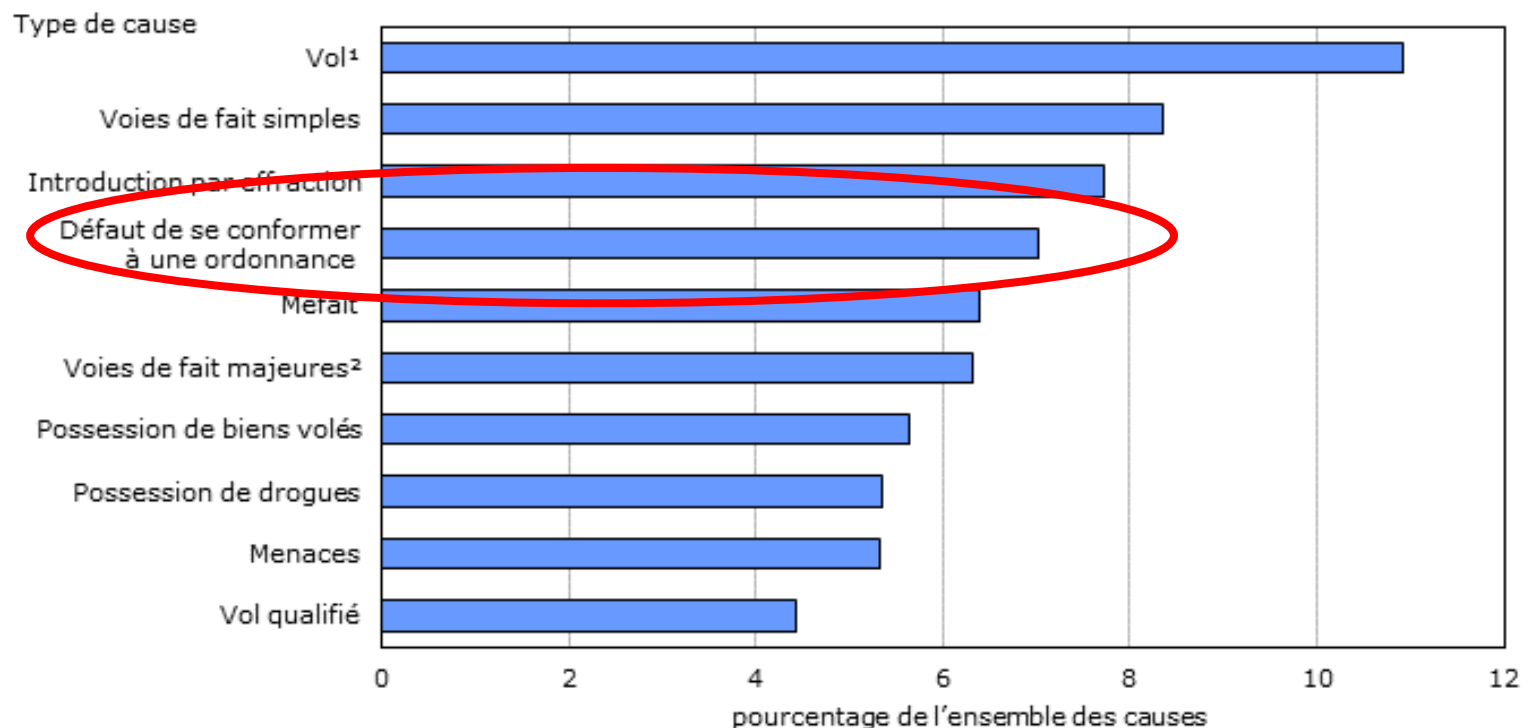
AND WHAT HAPPENS IF THEY DO  
NOT COMPLY WITH THEIR  
CONDITIONS?

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# A BACK-DOOR SENTENCING EFFECT (TRAVIS ET FISHER, 2005)

**Graphique 2**

**Dix infractions fréquentes dans les causes réglées par les tribunaux de la jeunesse, Canada, 2014-2015**



1. Comprend notamment le vol de plus de 5 000 \$, le vol de 5 000 \$ ou moins, et le vol de véhicules à moteur.

2. Comprend notamment les voies de fait armées (niveau 2) et les voies de fait graves (niveau 3).

**Note :** Une cause comprend une ou plusieurs accusations portées contre une personne ou une société qui ont été traitées par les tribunaux en même temps et qui ont fait l'objet d'une décision finale. Les causes qui comptent plus d'une accusation sont représentées par l'infraction la plus grave.

**Source :** Statistique Canada, Centre canadien de la statistique juridique, Enquête intégrée sur les tribunaux de juridiction criminelle.



Second study:



SAISIR ET SOUTENIR LES PROCESSUS  
DE (RÉ)INTÉGRATION SOCIOCOMMUNAUTAIRE  
CHEZ LES JEUNES JUDICIARISÉS DE 16 À 35 ANS

# A LARGE-SCALE RESEARCH PROJECT

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146 young people aged 16 to 35 met for the first round of interviews;

Almost half participated in a second interview 18 months later;

An interview guide that focuses on their perceptions of the services received: on what was helpful and what was less so;

Several have been (or are being) followed by workers from the youth justice system;

Here are their experiences.



WHAT DO THEY THINK ABOUT  
YOUTH PROBATION?

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# WHAT IS A YOUTH PROBATION OFFICER?

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Jean-Luc: He's basically a reintegration worker. He checks your conditions to see if you respect them, you say yes then... You are giving them a general tour of your life for the past 2 or 3 weeks.

Interviewer: It is always the same officer since you were 13? Jean-Luc: "It's whoever they will send, I'll tell you frankly

Interviewer: it changes often?; Jean-Luc "pretty much, yes"

Interviewer: And what is your social reintegration problem?; Jean-Luc: Well, I'll tell you, I have no more problems with social reintegration. I'll tell you, I'm not doing stupid things anymore. I work pretty hard all the time. I have a stable girlfriend and a stable job

Interviewer: What do you think of social reintegration workers?; Jean-Luc « it is always a new person who don't know my file, most of the time.. They're like, "How do you feel when you commit crimes? I tell them "I don't know". You answer them with simple and silly answers and that's it...





WHAT DO THEY THINK ABOUT  
PROGRAMS INSIDE YOUTH CENTERS?

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# PROGRAMS

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Yannick: "I got program [name 1], I got program [name2]. What was there too? The.. I got the program [name 3], then another that I don't remember the name.

Interviewer: And how do these programs affect you, your well-being, but also your delinquency?

Yannick: "We did some role-playing...situations to deal with you outside." Basically that's it. But I have not seen any effect on my delinquency?

# PROGRAMS

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Interviewer: Do you participate in the programs yourself?

Edmond: "I don't need it, but they force me to come to these workshops! It's the first thing when you come to rehab, but like why would I do the drug workshop if I'm not using?"

Interviewer: Which one do you consider to be needed and not needed?

Edmond: Nothing. They tell me that I have a behavior problem but... My behavior there, outside there, I'm nice there. It is this place that drives me crazy! They spend their time removing me to my room. It's crazy.

# PROGRAMS

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Francis: "It is because the workshops that are imposed are not necessarily workshops that the young person needs. I remember a workshop on drug addiction, it just makes you want to use! Other than that, I don't see what it does? They list us all the drugs: ecstasy, PCP, Ketamine, everything. They start with the effects. Ok. Well godamn, the effects don't seem to be bad "Euphoria, what is euphoria?" "Euphoria is when you laugh and feel good." Ok, well that's exactly what they do! (...) But hey, I mean, doesn't the youngster need to know that? He's 17, doesn't he need to know all about that?"



# PROGRAMS

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Interviewer: Did you do any workshops yourself? Yves: yes a lot! Interviewer: Yeah? Yves: "Yes, to deal with violence. Except I was told, « Yves, shut up!" Like, they tell you... Imagine you're a tree, what tree are you? "There I am a maple!" A maple! ":Yves shut up, listen to the others! " (laugh). You know?

I did the violence course, the breathing course, the course on how to introspect... oh yes! I had really, really many. It is in these classes that we learn to say what they want to hear so that they will patiently cuddle us there. You understand? I told them what they wanted to hear... and I shut my mouth! (laughs)" (...)

"Because of all these programs. I did 8 months of therapy at the Youth Center. Then the goal is to dig into people, to find how to destroy a person to better rebuild her. How to go play psychologically, yeah yeah. Because of all these programs, I can size a person like that in 5 minutes. it really opened a lot of doors for me that I am not able to close. I would like sometimes to be innocent as I have already been you know?. Then move forward innocently in life without all these concerns..."



WHAT DO THEY THINK OF WORKERS  
IN YOUTH CENTERS?

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# YOUTH WORKERS

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Charles: "They ask you a lot of questions bang, bang, bang, one after another: "Did you change that? Why didn't you change it? "That doesn't help me. Looks like it does not help me. I become grumpy. I get angry and everything goes wrong";

Axel: "Well, they weren't asking questions about why I was acting like that. It was, "You're going to do this. You are going to do that. You don't have the right to do that. You don't tell me... you do not tell me not to do that, or I go like "Ah yes? Look at me, I'll go and do it! »;

Marcel: "They lack confidence. Yes, we were delinquents. Yes I was engaged in crime and all that. But that doesn't give you the right to control everything. They are controlling us all the time, every minute of our life here, they are controlling us. I do... most of the time... I still behave quite well. But it looks like they don't count enough good behavior. I was arrogant one day with you and all the rest of the week I did well, but they just take the negative things into consideration. After that, they come and tell me that it's not good to think negatively? It's a contradiction..."

# YOUTH WORKERS

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Albert: "Well because them in their mind, it doesn't matter how old you are, you have committed a crime. You are a criminal. To them, that's what you're worth. But they should see that we are still young and that all people make mistakes. And they too must have made mistakes. Then I'm sure their parents were there for them and blablabla. But we don't have parents. If someone destroys us again the same way, telling us that they will never be freed, well that digs a hole for us. You get out, you fall into drugs, you go back again and they never wonder why they go back. BECAUSE YOU ARE NOT THERE FOR US."



# YOUTH WORKERS

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Albert: "They don't care. They have their family, they have a dog, they have a house. So, they are good. But you, you are young. They do not give a damn about you. It makes me angry. You work with young people, you are supposed to like young people? You are the youth worker so this young person is YOUR responsibility right now. You know? Me I have no parents. Then, it's THEM who have to take care of me, and that's not what they do. You are a young person you know what I mean? I wouldn't say a 35-year-old guy who goes to prison... but it is not the case! It is a 17-year-old child who is already locked up..."

# SO, IT'S THE YOUTH WORKER FAULT AGAIN? NOT REALLY...

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The primary mission of youth workers is to protect society. They are therefore trained to do 'risk management' with the RNR model.

This intervention model, which has proven itself for many years with adults, is based on the idea that intervention should be based on:

Level of risk (the first R): young people who are at high risk of recidivism should have the most sustained interventions (dosage, intensity) and those who are at very low risk, should have no intervention (to avoid iatrogenic effects like the drug program that makes you want to take it);

Needs (N): the factors identified as being directly associated with recidivism (antisocial attitude and antisocial behaviors, antisocial peers, substance use disorders, family or educational difficulties–employability; (un)productive hobbies)

Responsivity (the last R), which is how the young person is willing to be treated and how they learn during treatment.

## THIS APPROACH DEVELOPED FOR ADULTS, DOES NOT SEEM AS EFFECTIVE WITH ADOLESCENTS

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A first "meta-review" based on 58 meta-analyses (3000 different studies) showed that adolescents who are treated with a cognitive behavioral approach have higher recidivism rates than adolescents in the control group (Kim, Merlo and Benekos, 2013: p 182);

A second "meta-review" based on 56 meta-analyses showed that the approach can reduce recidivism by 20.32% in treated young people compared to the control group who received no intervention (Pappas and Dent, 2021, in press);

In short, even if youth workers really put their heart into it... the young people treated with this approach will hardly do better than the young people in the control group who receive no intervention

## BUT WHY DON'T WE QUESTION THE APPROACH? BECAUSE WE ATTRIBUTE ITS "FAILURES" TO:

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- Weak motivation to change, a lack of collaboration (on the part of the adolescent), the presence of anger or impulsiveness (Garrett, 1985; Mulvey, Arthur and Repucci, 1993);
- Poor evaluation of the "receptivity" of the adolescent (Koehler, Losel, Akoensi and Humpreys, 2013);
- Misuse of risk measurement tools (Luong and Wormith, 2011);
- Poor fit between risk measurement and intervention targets (Bonta, Rugge, Scott, Bourgon and Yessine, 2008; Flores, Travis and Latessa, 2004; Manchak and Cullen, 2015);
- Inadequate training of workers in the model (Thompson and McGrath, 2012; Manchak and Cullen, 2015);
- Inadequate implementation of the approach (Gendreau, Goggin and Smith, 1999; Manchak and Cullen, 2015; Andrews and Bonta, 2010).



IN SHORT... IT IS NEVER THE  
"FAULT" OF THE APPROACH

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# THIRD STUDY : TRANSCENDANCE

# THE NARRATIVE STORYLINE OF YOUNG ADULTS

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Young adults who have experienced the judicial system (8 women (average age 28) and 20 men (average age 24) recounted their life as if it was a book, indicating what was the most difficult and the most positive, the turning points in their life, their vision of the future and, if applicable, the moments when they experienced an epiphany (McAdams, 1993);

Their stories allow us to understand why some cannot or do not want to desist from crime, how some manage to do so, but above all – how the transition between delinquency and desistance from crime is experienced.

# THOSE WHO CAN'T DESIST

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3 young women and 4 young men have life stories tinged with violence suffered within their family and, then, in their romantic relationships;

Their life stories are incoherent, strewn with anachronisms and contradictions. It is as if several lives were lived in parallel. They are struggling with mental disorders that prevent them from seeing how they could live otherwise:

G41: "I'm afraid to be aggressive, even if I don't want to. It's like I have bubbles popping in my brain. I have a lot of that. I have a lot of prescribed pills. I started to hear voices in my head. It's weird. They give me medicine, and that's it...";

F36: "I am rendered aggressive, impulsive, extreme personality disorder. I don't know who I am. I don't even know what it is to take care of myself. Even the psychologists don't call me back, because I'm too aggressive."

# THOSE WHO DO NOT WISH TO DESIST AT THE MOMENT

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For 5 young men, crime has become an escape, a form of recognition, a social role, an income;  
Their identity as an offender is fully assumed and they don't understand the social reaction towards them:

G36: "My little guy, the mother is trying to take away my access rights. But it won't work, because I've never abused a woman, I've never beaten a child. She says, "He commits crimes." Yes! I do commit crimes, but I come home at night! »;

For them, even the experience of incarceration is redefined in a positive way: "I am used to the other side, in the cage. Yesterday morning I was thinking how well I am in the cage. Silence, peace, not everyone talking";

In such a logic, it is unlikely that the sanctions will lead them to desist from crime



# THOSE WHO DID IT

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For 3 women and 3 men: crime is far behind;

For many, it is the fear of dying (overdose, suicide, homicide) that leads them to change their lives. For them, it is going back to school that becomes the lifeline to a better future (many turn to the helping relationship);

For others, it is really the experiences with other inmates through art therapy or even through the vocational training offered during incarceration that they will find meaning in their lives:

G43: "I looked for all the prerequisites to do my trade course. I also did therapy. It also brought me closer to my mother who came to see me every week (in prison). My girlfriend followed me here (name of another city). We have an apartment not far from here. I abandoned my circle of friends. I'm going to make another one..."

# THOSE IN BETWEEN

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2 women and 8 men were in between when sharing their life stories;

For them, it is very difficult to use the help resources available to them:

G42: "It is difficult, because it means trusting the government again, like social services and all that. You know, I have a hard time with authority. So I have to start trusting authority again. They're not the bad guys. It was I who decided to become a bandit";

In addition to a fear of "others", during this critical stage, young people must manage to shed their identity as an offender:

G38: "When I was in my cage, I realized that all my life , I told myself that I was not going to be like my father. But in fact, I'm the same as him, even worse. That really hurt me, because I saw my father as a scum bag all my life ".

# THOSE IN BETWEEN

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Aspiring desisters, however, realize that they have to let go of their negative identity in order to continue their desistance process: "I'm starting to bend to the values of society, and I have to forget...";

But the way to get there eludes them:

G42: "I'm trying to set a new goal, to make a good future for myself later. So that's my goal: to build a future for myself!

F47: "I want a stable life, and then normalcy with my boyfriend, and then normal friends!" A life that makes sense, but what is it to be normal? I like the plan to return to society, but I still have trouble with it";

However, being in between is intolerable for most of them:

G34: "If I hadn't had that in my life, I would have had, I probably would have finished high school. I would have a great job. There... nothing at all!

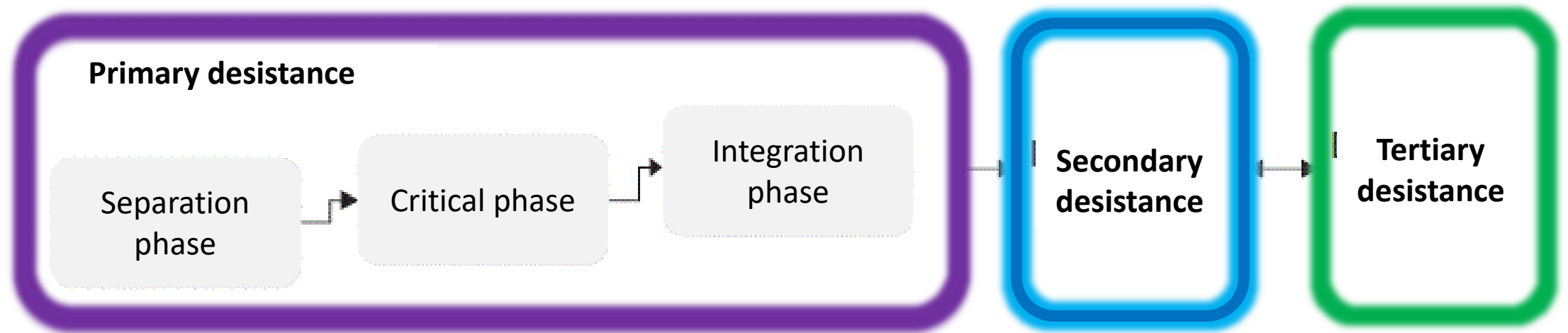
I want to prove that I'm not an asshole, that I can do things. I haven't always been a bad guy. But it's hard ".

THESE COMMENTS CONFIRM THAT DESISTANCE IS NOT EASY, ESPECIALLY WHEN THE PROCESS OF IDENTITY CHANGE IS NOT COMPLETED.

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**FIGURE 1**

**Desistance from crime**



Adapted by Villeneuve, F-Dufour et Turcotte (2020)



# AND THAT IS WHY FOR SOME YOUNG PEOPLE THE RNR APPROACH DOES NOT WORK

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- To support desistance, the person must be helped to change their identity;
- Whenever we prescribe a program for "anger management"; the youth is reminded that he is angry. They come to integrate this aspect to their identity;
- In addition, many adolescents will only be exposed to the negative reinforcements of this approach;
- They will become more and more aggressive;
- They are going to be controlled even more;
- And be even more aggressive...
- IN SHORT: WE RISK CREATING A DOWNWARD SPIRAL IN WHICH YOUNG PEOPLE GET CAUGHT ("you're the one getting me into trouble")

# EVEN MORE...

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- Most adolescents who commit crimes come from highly vulnerable families;
- Despite their difficulties, families (original, extended or foster) generally remain committed to the adolescent;
- However, there is a tendency for youth worker to transform adults into "collaborator-supervisors", rather than strengthening the ties between them;
- The child therefore has the impression (perhaps with good reason) that from now on: everyone is against him.
- He withdraws. He becomes angry. He uses drugs and refuses any form of help.
- He fails in his obligations (community work, probationary follow-up, DCSO);
- He gets even further into the system.
- He is even angrier;
- Then one day he said to himself: F\*CK IT (Halsey, Armstrong, & Wright, 2017): as long as I'm treated like a criminal: I'm going to be a good criminal...

# AND SOME GOOD NEWS (AT LAST)

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WE HAVE LISTED AT LEAST 100 CASES THAT 'WORKED' IN STUDY 1

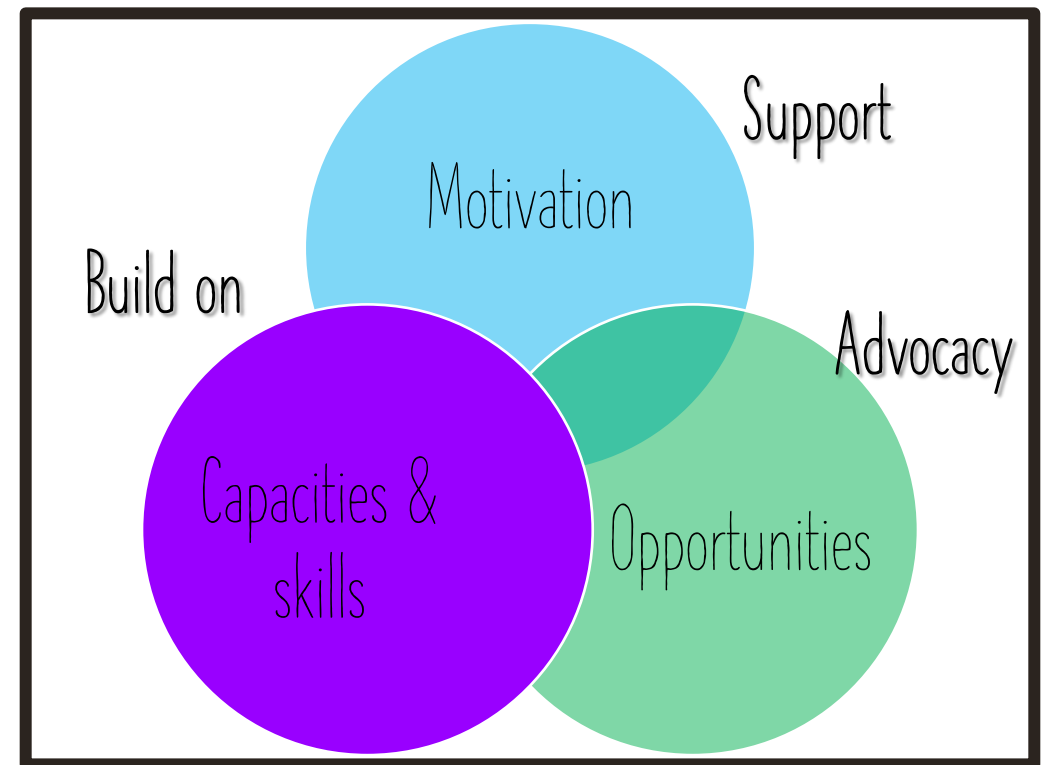
WE HEARD VERY POSITIVE COMMENTS ABOUT SOME YOUTH WORKERS IN  
STUDY 2

WE WERE ABLE TO SEE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF PROGRAMS IN SOME STORIES  
OF YOUNG ADULTS WHO MANAGED TO DESIST FROM CRIME IN STUDY 3

# WHAT WE FOUND IS THAT SOME YOUTH WORKERS HAVE A PRACTICE THAT IS COMPATIBLE WITH A DESISTANCE APPROACH

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They emphasize the therapeutic alliance;  
They individualize interventions and involve the family;  
They focus on the strengths of the adolescent;  
And are genuinely involved in finding artistic, sporting, recreational or occupational opportunities in the community that serve as change levers for change;  
They place themselves on the "side" of the teenager and, if necessary, defend them.



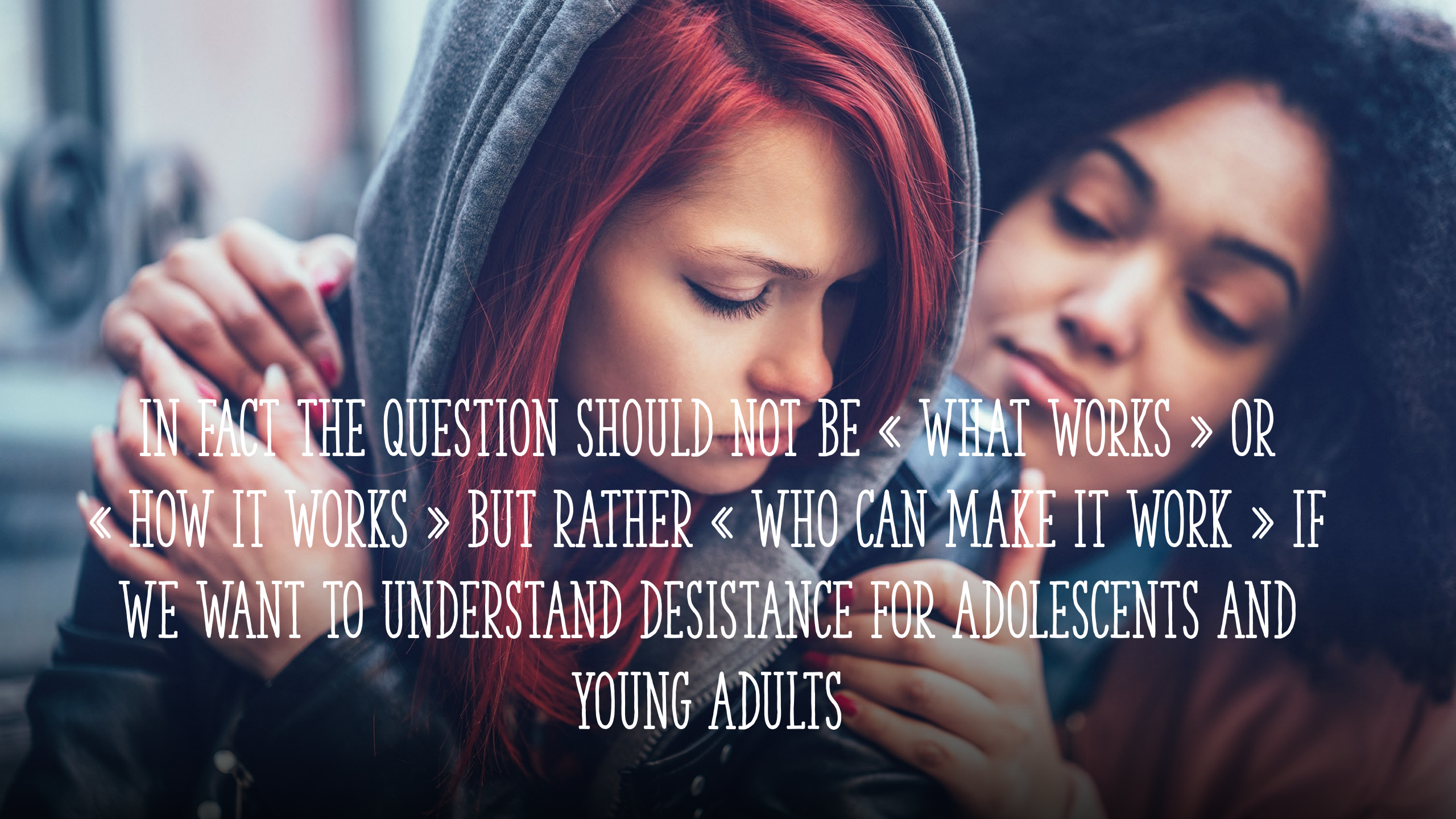
Based on McNeill et al. (2012)

## IN SHORT, YOUTH CRIMINAL JUSTICE WORKERS "ARE NOT SW", BUT THEY DON'T HAVE TO BE PROBATION OFFICERS EITHER.

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- The role that seems most often associated with youth desistance is that of a MENTOR;
- Someone who cares about the overall development of the teenager and his family (rather than seeing himself as the risk manager);
- Who helps them CONCRETELY to find "how society works"; Which allows them to see how to "build a goal" by showing the various opportunities in the community;
- Who do not place the burden of change on the "motivation" of adolescents, but who rely on the strength of the therapeutic alliance for the implementation of changes;
- Who place themselves on the side of the young person like a mother, a grandmother, a friend...



A close-up photograph of two young women. The woman in the foreground has long, vibrant red hair and is wearing a grey hooded sweatshirt. Her eyes are closed, and she has a pensive or sad expression. She is being embraced from behind by another woman with dark, curly hair. The second woman's face is partially visible in the background, also with her eyes closed. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting. The overall mood is one of emotional support and vulnerability.

IN FACT THE QUESTION SHOULD NOT BE « WHAT WORKS » OR  
« HOW IT WORKS » BUT RATHER « WHO CAN MAKE IT WORK » IF  
WE WANT TO UNDERSTAND DESISTANCE FOR ADOLESCENTS AND  
YOUNG ADULTS



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING.  
REFERENCES AVAILABLE:

ISABELLE.F-DUFOUR@FSE.ULAVAI.CA

