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Claire Lefort

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**CRISIS OF COVID-19: BREAKDOWNS AND TRANSFORMATIONS OF HUMANS'
TRAJECTORIES IN UNCERTAIN TIMES**

Petra Pelletier^{1,2*}, Cécile McLaughlin², Carine Duteil-Mougél², Magali Boespflug³, Claire Lefort⁴

*¹University of Paris, Laboratory of Social Psychology, Paris, France

²University of Limoges, Research Center for Semiotics, Limoges, France

³University of Poitiers, Research Center for Management, Poitiers, France

⁴University of Limoges, CNRS UMR 7252, Xlim Research Institute, Limoges, France

*ORCID ID: 0000-0003-3057-4614

Email: petra.pelletier@gmail.com; petra.pelletier@parisdescartes.fr; petra.pelletier@unilim.fr

University of Paris (formerly Paris Descartes University – Sorbonne Paris Cité)

Institute of Psychology

Laboratory of Social Psychology (EA 4471)

71, avenue Edouard Vaillant

92774 Boulogne-Billancourt, France

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Abstract

Large-scale societal threats, such as the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic, are leading to the rupture of continuity between humans' usual expectations and the reality that became suddenly unpredictable and uncertain. The SARS-CoV-2 virus causing the Coronavirus disease remains invisible to laymen and these extraordinary circumstances tend to elicit a range of adaptative responses that allow laymen's adjustment to the collective upheaval. The methodology of the current research has been adapted from qualitative field studies conducted in irradiated areas of Chernobyl in Ukraine where Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant reactor exploded on April 26, 1986. An analogy between invisible radioactive contaminations with caesium-137 and invisible biological contaminations with SARS-CoV-2 virus highlights laymen's need to construct the meaning of an unprecedented situation, cope with uncertainty and negative emotions, and project themselves towards a promising future. The participants ($N = 784$) were asked to write an online essay about their ideas and feelings on the topic "Me: yesterday, today and tomorrow" describing their daily trajectories during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in 2020. The main results demonstrated that laymen express primarily a need for positive change in their lives when the COVID-19 pandemic will end. These results that are tainted by laymen's hope in promising future in uncertain times during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown highlight the complementarity of global emotional orientations of fear and hope that transcend our societies

Keywords: COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2, sanitary crisis, uncertainty, invisibility, humans' trajectories, existentialism

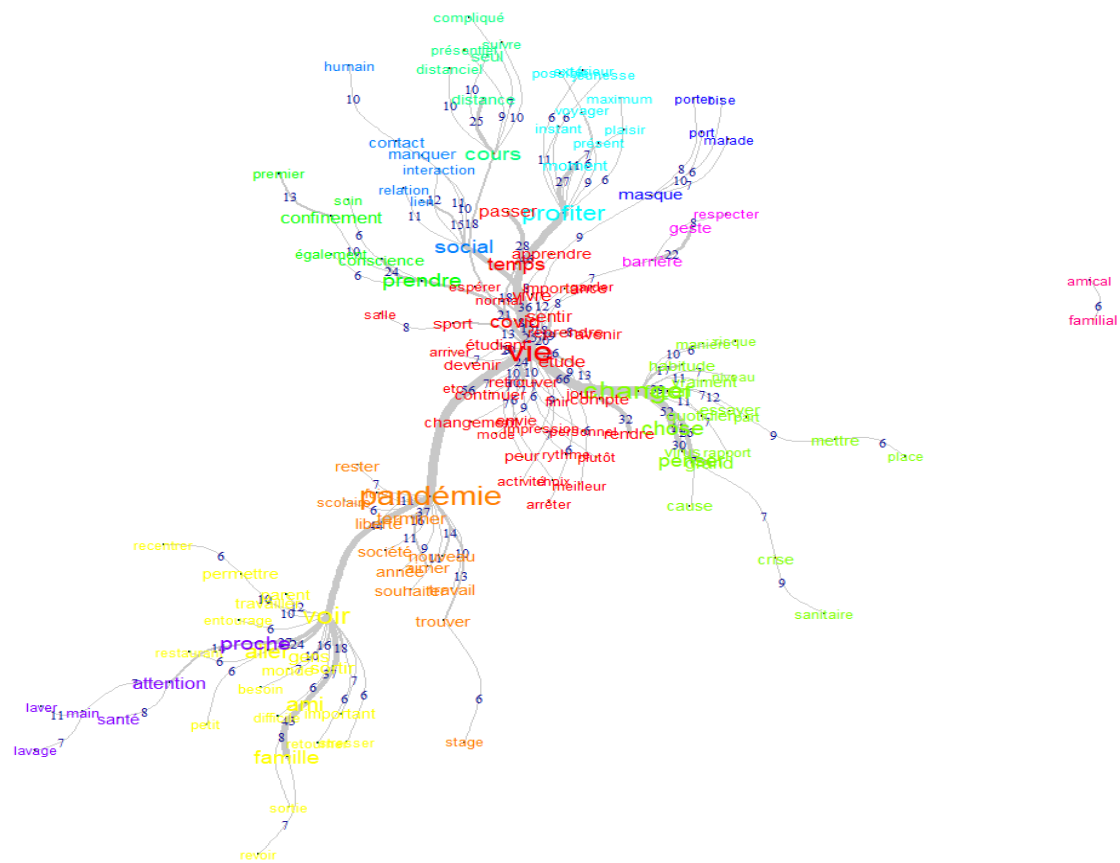
Large-scale societal threats, such as the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic, are leading to the rupture of continuity between humans' usual expectations and the reality that became suddenly unpredictable and uncertain (Pelletier & Drozda-Senkowska, 2019). The SARS-CoV-2 virus causing the Coronavirus disease remains invisible to laymen and these extraordinary circumstances tend to elicit a range of adaptative responses that allow laymen's adjustment to the collective upheaval. In line with the existentialists' assumptions (Yalom, 1980) humans are innate meaning makers, therefore constructing the situational meaning allows them to overcome the overwhelming circumstances of the sanitary COVID-19 crisis. Indeed, meaning-making remains central to humans' recovery from individual and collective traumas (Park, 2016) wherein people tend to expand effort to reconstruct the current reality, live with uncertainty and project themselves towards a promising future.

The methodology of the current research has been adapted from qualitative field studies conducted in irradiated areas of Chernobyl in Ukraine where Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant reactor exploded on April 26, 1986 (Abbott, Wallace, & Beck, 2006). In Chernobyl area, the radioactivity levels of invisible contamination with caesium-137 were dozen times higher than average which made the irradiated areas uninhabitable for next hundreds of years. The injured population has been obliged to live with uncertainty related to the current and future consequences for their health, deal with anxiety and reconstruct the meaning of the unprecedented nuclear accident. As the original study, the current research conducted within French context aimed to seize the specificities of breakdowns and transformations of humans' trajectories in uncertain times, during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown due to the invisible virus SARS-CoV-2. The participants ($N = 784$), aged from 18 to 30 years, were asked to write an online essay about their ideas and feelings on the topic "Me: yesterday, today and tomorrow" describing their daily trajectories during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in 2020.

The automatized data analyses were conducted with software IRaMuTeQ version 0.7 alpha 2, and completed with semiotic analysis. The main results represented in Figure 1. demonstrated that the initial 2519 text forms are structured in 11 discourse clusters, wherein the main cluster is centered around the noun “Life” (*vie*). The multivariate technique of factorial correspondence analysis demonstrated 4 main discourse categories: Life change when the pandemic will end (28.84%), *change*, $\chi^2 (164, N = 102) = 108.93, p < .001$; Confidence in information and public policies (25.93%), *information*, $\chi^2 (18, N = 17) = 44.91, p < .001$; Enjoy time with family and friends (24.92%), *enjoyment*, $\chi^2 (82, N = 50) = 62.77, p < .001$; Stress related to remote work and courses (20.31%), *distance*, $\chi^2 (35, N = 27) = 69.31, p < .001$.

Figure 1

Graph of similarity analysis with the size of verbatims proportional to their frequency and the size of vertices proportional to the co-occurrence of verbatims



The main results demonstrated that laymen express primarily a need for positive change in their lives when the COVID-19 pandemic will end. These results that are tainted by laymen's hope in promising future in uncertain times during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown highlight the complementarity of global emotional orientations of fear and hope that transcend our societies (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006). A thorough analysis of these changes with dynamic model allows to make an evolving diagnosis of different stages (Bareil, 1999) laymen are crossing nowadays, face-to-face with an invisible virus. Furthermore, hard sciences researchers are striving towards protocols that allow imaging the SARS-CoV-2 virion of 120 nm in diameter. These efforts that are crucial for identifying the precise biological representation of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and its infectious process might contribute to alleviate laymen's distress due to the currently invisible enemy.

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