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BELIEFS ABOUT SUBSTANCE ABUSING PARENTS AMONG CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

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BELIEFS ABOUT SUBSTANCE ABUSING PARENTS AMONG
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY MASTER
OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Angela Rae Golden
June 2017

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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the beliefs about substance abusing parents from California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) MSW students. The biases that human service professionals hold toward substance abusers have the potential to negatively impact clients' health, well-being, and access to services. Understanding future social workers' biases towards substance abusing parents is key as these future professionals are likely to serve families impacted by substance abuse in their future roles. This quantitative study used a self-administered, online survey to assess the beliefs of foundation and advanced-year MSW students from CSUSB. In general, the findings suggested that students believed substance abusing parents had the abilities to effectively address their substance abuse issues and to parent their children. Foundation and advanced year students expressed considerable agreement with each other in this regard, with only a few exceptions. These findings are limited by a relatively small sample size and by unknown reliability and validity of the survey instrument. However, the findings suggest that MSW students, at least at this university, hold limited biases towards substance abusing parents. Further research should address whether and to what extent these biases change over time and with professional experiences after graduation.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research project to my daughter, Alexxandra. You have been through just as much as I have, and then some, over these last three years and you are the reason I needed to continue my education. I needed to demonstrate how important a higher education is instead of just telling you. You are beautiful, smart, selfless, and courageous. You can have anything you work for.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The chapter introduces this study of Master of Social Work (MSW) students' beliefs towards substance abusing parents. As future social work professionals, MSW students represent the future of the field. Throughout their internships and as they enter their professional roles, social work practitioners, especially those who work in child welfare institutions, are likely to encounter parents who abuse substances. Practitioners' biases related to substance abusing parents have the potential to negatively impact service delivery, to the detriment of entire families. This chapter discusses the problem of practitioner bias in serving substance abusing parents, the purpose of this study, and the significance of this project for social work practice.

Approximately 60% to 70% of all substantiated child welfare referrals and over 80% of parents whose children are placed in foster care have substance abuse issues (Young, Boles, & Otero, 2007). This is an extremely high number of clients and necessitates social workers to effectively work with these parents without passing any judgment. These numbers also do not reflect the number of parents with substance abuse issues who are able to keep their children while completing a court mandated treatment program, as children are typically only removed when they are deemed to be in immediate danger. Some parents can

still function, provide basic needs, and properly parent their children despite being addicted to some substance.

Problem Statement

Master of Social Work (MSW) students must be able to provide services to clients who suffer from addiction issues without biases or preconceived notions about substance abusing parents. It can be difficult for MSW students and social work practitioners to be unbiased towards substance users, especially those with dependent children. Students reactions may be based on personal and family history with substance abuse, values and beliefs about prescription medication, street drugs, alcohol, and attitudes towards the people who misuse or abuse them. This can be even more difficult when the client is a parent who has allegedly mistreated their child because of substance abuse, as children are also a vulnerable population. Even further, there are often other allegations involved when a child is removed from his parent due to substance use. Those allegations can include, but are not limited to, general neglect, physical abuse, and sexual abuse. Despite the circumstances, a social services practitioner must provide services to the client and abide by the National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics by treating the client with dignity and respect (NASW, 2016).

Ball and colleagues (2006), found that stigmatizing attitudes of staff could affect both clients' desires to remain in treatment and the quality of service they

receive by providers. The clients are not ignorant to the biases others have towards them. They attend treatment to get help and it is conceivable that they may not complete treatment if they feel stigmatized by those who are providing the services. Developing rapport and trust between social workers and substance abusing parents is imperative to their success and maintaining or reunifying their families.

Rapport-building and trust are particularly important in child welfare, in which social workers are responsible for creating a case plan for parents to follow. The case plan acts as a guide for the parents to follow to get the necessary services to get their children returned to their custody. Objectives often included in the case plan are: attending parenting class, submitting to random substance abuse testing, and participating in substance abuse treatment. Parents are required not only to actively participate in their case plans, but to prove that they are learning and making progress.

Social workers are expected to engage parents as partners in case planning and execution; this engagement requires trust and rapport building. This partnership may be hard to achieve if social workers exhibit biases towards the substance abusing parents they are expected to serve.

Furthermore, clients who are court mandated to participate and complete a substance abuse treatment program may feel coerced to do so. There is a chance that their children will not remain in their custody or be returned to them if they are not successful in a program and the parents may only be participating

out of fear of not getting their children back. It is reasonable to believe these clients already feel that they are being judged and stigmatized. This is one of many reasons that social workers must be able to work with these types of clients with an open mind, compassion, and no negative personal beliefs.

The biases of the social work practitioner working with a substance abusing parent could affect the quality of service the client receives. In addition, the court decides whether to return children to the parents based on a report written by the practitioner. If the practitioner has little or no compassion towards a substance abusing parent, this could potentially affect the outcome of the case and permanently change the lives of the parents and the children involved.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) foundation and advanced year MSW students' beliefs about parents who suffer from substance abuse issues. The study used an online, self-administered survey to collect quantitative data about MSW students' experiences and beliefs related to substance abusing parents. A nonprobability, convenience sampling method was used to recruit participants from the MSW program the researcher attended. Data was analyzed using statistical methods and SPSS software. A quantitative research method was used to analyze the data collected from the surveys. This method is used for examining objective beliefs by testing the relationship among variables (Grinnell & Unrau, 2014). After

data collection, the results can be measured and comparisons can be made (Grinnell &Unrau, 2014).

Significance of the Project for Social Work Practice

Social workers have an ethical obligation to provide quality service to clients regardless of their own biases or feelings towards their clients. This is outlined in the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics (NASW, 2016). Social workers must respect the dignity and worth of the person and maintain integrity while providing service. This project is significant for social work practice and research because it investigates the beliefs of social work students who are the future professionals who will serve families in the future. This study may help identify inconsistencies between social work student beliefs about substance abusing parents' potential to effectively parent their children and social work professional ethics. Findings from this study may help inform changes in MSW curriculum. The study may also provide avenues for future research that could be pursued to better understand how social work students' beliefs translate into professional practice. Social workers practice under the Generalist Intervention Model (GIM). This means a social worker uses skills they have learned to assist with problems on an individual level up to expansive issues that affect entire communities (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2010). The phase of the generalist process that will be informed by this study is the beginning, when

future social workers are receiving their education prior to providing any service to clients.

The study's goal is to address the following research questions: 1) What are the beliefs of CSUSB MSW students towards substance abusing parents? and 2) Do students' beliefs vary significantly based on students' gender, MSW standing, parent/guardian status, or experience working with substance using parents?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter introduces the literature related to social work with substance abusing parents. First, the chapter discusses research related to substance using parents and children protective services. Second, the chapter addresses effectiveness of court mandated, as opposed to voluntary drug treatment programs. Third, the chapter describes the prevalence and impact of human service providers' stigmatization of clients, particularly on clients whose "lifestyle choices" are blamed for their problems. Finally, the chapter presents systems theory as the framework for developing this study.

Substance Using Parents and Child Protective Services

In one article, there is a study of two groups of mothers, both of which suffer with substance abuse issues (Lussier, Laventure, & Bertrand, 2010). One group of mothers received assistance from child protection services and the other group did not. Their findings indicate the mothers who were receiving services became mothers at earlier ages than those of the other group and those same mothers also had considerably less family and social supports than the others. The study revealed those mothers with child protection involvement had greater familial dysfunction than the other mothers. Among those dysfunctional

qualities include, inconsistent discipline and major lack of supervision (Lussier, Laventure, & Bertrand, 2010).

Additionally, Lussier and colleagues (2010) determined that the mothers who had child protective (CPS) involvement were no less involved in their children's lives than were the mothers with no social services involvement. The authors indicated the mothers with CPS involvement did not lack in their parenting skills in comparison to the other mothers. The major difference between the two groups was the lack of social support prior to CPS getting involved (Lussier, et al., 2010). Based on this study, there is no difference between the parenting skills of the two groups of mothers. It makes sense that the mothers who lacked the social supports prior to CPS involvement are now getting the support they need. Considering that there was also no lack of parental involvement, one should consider this before making assumptions about parents who are involved with CPS due to substance abuse issues versus those parents who are not.

Because of guidelines set forth by the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), there is increased urgency on child welfare systems and substance abuse treatment providers to perform timely assessments and provide services for parents who suffer from substance abuse (Traube, He, Limei, Scalise, & Richardson, 2015). This is an important reason for practitioners to be able to appropriately and effectively work side-by-side with these clients. The future of their families may depend on the relationship that is developed.

Court Mandated Drug Treatment

One dilemma in substance abuse treatment among child welfare involved families is whether court mandated treatment, often required of parents to retain or regain custody of children, is as effective as voluntary treatment. Some scholars suggest that court mandated drug treatment is intended to focus on public health interests of addiction, economic output, criminal activity, and infectious disease, not necessarily on the betterment of the client (Urbanoski, 2010). Practitioners sometimes wonder if court ordered treatment is a waste of time as parents may only attend treatment to meet requirements rather than to effectively address substance abuse issues. Further, court mandated drug treatment could pose an ethical dilemma in that it may violate the client's right to self-determination. Yet, court mandated substance abuse clients typically stay in treatment for longer periods of time and have comparable or superior results than those of voluntary clients (Urbanoski, 2010). Therefore, court ordered drug treatment for parents who abuse substances may be a more reasonable and effective approach to family reunification.

Service Provider Attitudes

A variety of research addresses human service providers' attitudes towards substance users. In a study similar to the study described in this project, Chang & Yang (2013) studied Taiwanese registered nurses' attitudes towards

substance use. This study also used a survey and asked four key questions: “Have you taken care of clients with substance abuse problems?”; “Have you helped any family members or friends whose health problems were caused by substance use problems?”; “Have you taken school courses related to substance use?”; “Have you had in-service education or continuing education related to substance use since starting your nursing career?” The outcome of the study was that the nurses who had personally aided someone with substance abuse and had taken substance abuse education courses had more positive attitudes when dealing with substance-abusing patients. (Chang & Yang, 2013). This is a result that is expected. It makes sense that having a personal connection along with additional education leads to a more compassionate outlook on the disease of addiction.

Another study of graduate level counseling students’ beliefs and biases regarding substance abuse found that students’ typical views of addiction are one of a moral and legal dilemma instead of a treatable medical issue (Chasek, Jorgensen, & Maxson, 2012). This could be the result of the student not being adequately educated about addiction disorders. Counselor instructional programs are now adding more substance abuse education to the curriculum to better educate the counseling students and reduce the negative attitudes they have towards substance abusing clients (Chasek, et al., 2012)

Similarly, A study on nearly 550 health science undergraduate students to gather information on their beliefs of patients with intellectual disabilities, mental

illness, and substance abuse issues (Boyle et al., 2010). Of the three categories listed, respondents most negative responses were directed at substance abusing patients (Boyle et al., 2010). Those students who participated in the survey also reported they were the least compassionate towards substance abusing patients (Boyle et al., 2010).

Additionally, the authors hypothesized that non-stereotypical attitudes by the students would result in a more positive outlook on treatment (Chasek et al., 2012). Their findings supported this hypothesis. This is essential for the client because if the counselor has a positive outlook on his success, it is likely that he will too.

Established negative viewpoints can lead people to become biased in their relations towards the particular group for whom they have those negative beliefs. It is then likely that group will be treated inadequately and devalued (Boyle, Brown, Lewis, McKenna, Malloy, Malloy, Williams, 2010). As social workers servicing clients suffering from addiction issues, it is essential that this does not occur as it violates the NASW Code of Ethics.

Stigma

Several studies explore the impact of stigma from service providers on clients' health, well-being, and access to services. Ahern and colleagues (2007) study of 1008 illicit drug users found that discrimination was associated with poorer health and mental health among participants. The authors found that

participants' experiences with discrimination often generated anger, which also negatively impacted their mental health. This study suggests that providers' who stigmatize and engage in discriminatory practices towards substance abusing clients likely hinder their own efforts to clients improve their lives.

Similarly, a study which measured stigma from health-care workers and social service providers towards people who are sex workers, men who have sex with men (MSM), and HIV positive men, found that those providers displayed a range of stigma towards the different groups (Rogers, Tureski, Cushnie, Brown, Bailey, & Palmer, 2014). The group of people who practitioners showed the least amount of stigma towards were those who were heterosexual, who were not sex workers, and did not have HIV. The group who was most stigmatized were men who have sex with men and were HIV positive. This study highlights the nuanced levels of stigma practitioners exhibit towards different types of clients. The authors suggested that practitioner stigma stemmed from the notion that HIV clients' lifestyle choices placed themselves at risk for the diseases they contracted. Many believed that sex work and homosexuality were immoral and that HIV and AIDS are spread because of immoral behavior (Rogers, et al., 2014). The study revealed that most survey takers felt that these groups of people should receive excellent care however they placed a great deal of blame and poor moral judgments on their ailments (Rogers, et al., 2014).

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

One theory that was researched to guide this project is the systems theory. The systems theory identifies the relationship between the many systems which have an impact on the MSW student. These systems can range from very small (the individual) to very large (the child welfare system) but they all work together to mold a person's beliefs and behaviors (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2013). To further explain, the individual pieces of the systems share relationships with each other which create a whole new component (Turner, 2011).

Another theory which was necessary to learn more about to better understand the parents' substance abuse issues is the biopsychosocial model (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2013). This model explains how the biological, psychological, and social elements of a person's life all work together or against each other. The biological element comes from genetics, the traits a person receives biologically from his parents. The psychological component is how a person thinks (Turner, 2011). Finally, the social factor is influenced by those people who around the person. These people could be school peers, coworkers, or friends. These three parts all work together to influence a person to act a certain way or do certain things and these parts overlap constantly (Turner, 2011). This is important for the MSW student to understand about the parents they will be involved with as many of them derive from generational addiction issues.

Summary

This study explored the feelings and beliefs about substance abusing parents by CSUSB MSW students. Future CFS social service practitioners will inevitably work with this population considering many child welfare cases result from substance abuse issues. Many factors will contribute to how compassionate a student is towards this group.

The systems theory and biopsychosocial model will guide social work students to have a better understanding of addiction and will hopefully lead to higher levels of compassion in servicing these clients to ensure their families remain intact. This study seeks to examine the students' personal feelings and bring awareness to any biases to increase compassion and assure the clients are serviced treated with dignity.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This study sought to examine MSW students' beliefs towards substance abusing parents. This chapter discusses the study design, sampling, data collection and instruments, procedures, protection of human subjects, data analysis, and summary of the research methods.

Study Design

The intent of this study was to explore MSW students' beliefs towards parents who suffer from substance abuse issues and if those beliefs varied significantly based on students' demographics. The study's sample was generated by recruiting participants from CSUSB's MSW program. This quantitative study used a self-administered, online survey delivered using Qualtrics software. The survey included both demographic questions and Likert-type scale responses. The study sought to answer two basic questions regarding parents with substance abuse issues: 1) What are the beliefs of MSW students towards this population? 2) Is there a significant difference between foundation and advanced-year students' beliefs?

The study's limitations include a lack of generalizability and the potential that participant responses reflected socially desirable reactions. The study's use

of a convenience sample is a limitation in that the data generated by sampling a relatively small number of CSUSB MSW students' may not generalize to CSUSB MSW students as a whole, to other MSW student populations, or to social workers in general. In addition, participants may have felt compelled to provide answers they thought the researcher or school staff considered appropriate. Although students' identities were not collected or revealed by the study, students may have felt compelled to present their student body and social work school in a positive light by providing answers that indicated more accepting or tolerant beliefs about substance abusing parents. Finally, the survey questions were developed by the researcher and therefore have unknown validity and reliability.

Sampling

This study utilized a nonprobability, convenience sample of MSW students. MSW students were sampled for this study because they represent the future social work professionals who are likely to work in child welfare systems. All MSW students, including full-time, part-time, and online students were invited to participate in the study. No other inclusion or exclusion criteria were used. Sixty-two participants were recruited from the CSUSB MSW program.

Data Collection and Instruments

The study used a quantitative survey including 6 demographic questions and 12 questions with Likert-scale responses. The demographic questions were developed by the researcher and asked students to identify: their gender, MSW standing (foundation or advanced year), field of interest, elective course choice, parent/guardianship status, and prior experience working with substance abusing parents. The researcher developed the scaled questions based on her professional and classroom experiences. The scaled questions included statements such as: "Parents who abuse substances should always be arrested"; "A parent forced into treatment by the courts will not benefit as he did not go willingly."; "Children of substance abusing parents should always be removed if a CFS referral is made."; and "Parents can use substances in their home as long as their children are not present." The Likert-scale responses included: "strongly disagree," "moderately disagree," "slightly disagree," "don't know," "slightly agree," "moderately agree," and "strongly agree."

Procedures

The researcher sought and received written authorization from the Director of the School of Social Work, Dr. Laurie Smith, as well as from the university's IRB to survey the students. The School of Social Work sent email messages to all MSW students inviting them to participate in the study. Students who chose to participate in the study followed a link to the Qualtrics survey which

was preceded by the informed consent form. Data collection took place from March 2017 and April 2017. The researcher downloaded the collected data from Qualtrics into SPSS for analysis.

Protection of Human Subjects

The study used several techniques to protect the identities of the participants. No identifying information was collected from participants, so their identities were not known to the researcher nor was any identifying information recorded in Qualtrics. The informed consent form was provided to each participant and indicated that the surveys were completely voluntary and the student had the choice to opt-out at any time. Upon completion of the study, a debriefing statement was provided to participants to indicate that no deception was used in the study. At the conclusion of the study, all study data were destroyed.

Data Analysis

The goal of this study was to assess the beliefs of CSUSB MSW students towards substance abusing parents and to determine if there were significant differences in those beliefs between foundation and advanced-year students. Descriptive statistics were used to describe participants' responses to the 6 demographic questions and to describe participants' responses to the 12 Likert-scale questions.

Inferential statistics including t-tests were used to analyze the relationships between participants' gender, MSW standing, parental/guardianship status, and experience working with substance abusing parents and the participants' beliefs about substance abusing parents. The independent variables were the MSW students' responses to the demographic questions, while the dependent variable was students' beliefs about substance abusing parents.

Summary

This chapter discussed the study's goal of examining MSW students' beliefs about substance abusing parents. The chapter described the quantitative survey design and limitations, sampling, data collection and instruments, procedures, and analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the study's findings. First, the chapter describes the demographics of the study participants. Second, the chapter describes the participants' overall beliefs related to substance abusing parents. Third, the chapter presents the inferential statistics used to analyze the relationships between participant demographics and beliefs about substance abusing parents. The chapter is summarized by a brief conclusion.

Presentation of the Demographics

The sample consisted of 62 first and second year students from the Masters of Social Work Program at California State University, San Bernardino. The majority of the sample was comprised of females ($n = 48, 71.6\%$). Approximately 49 percent of participants were in the advanced year of their program ($n = 33, 49.3\%$). Most of the students identified mental health as their field of interest ($n = 23, 34.3\%$), followed by child welfare ($n = 19, 28.4\%$), and hospital/health ($n = 8, 11.9\%$). The most common elective course students reported taking was substance abuse ($n = 25, 37.3\%$), followed by child welfare ($n = 14, 20.9\%$), and gerontology ($n = 11, 16.4\%$). Just over 50 percent of participants stated that they do not have children, ($n = 35, 52.2\%$) and a little

more than half of participants have experience working with substance abusing parents (n = 40, 59.7%) (See Table 1).

Table 1. Participant Demographics

	N	Percentage
Gender		
Male	14	20.9%
Female	48	71.6%
MSW Standing		
Foundation Year	29	43.3%
Advanced Year	33	49.3%
Field of Interest		
Child Welfare	19	28.4%
Mental Health	23	34.3%
Hospital/Health	8	11.9%
Adults & Aging	4	6.0%
Schools	4	6.0%
Policy	2	3.0%
Other	2	3.0%
Elective		
Substance Abuse	25	37.3%
Gerontology	11	16.4%
Child Welfare	14	20.9%
Other	11	16.4%
Children		
Yes	27	40.3%
No	35	52.2%
Experience with Substance Abusing Parents		
Yes	40	59.7%
No	22	32.8%

Student Beliefs About Substance Abusing Parents

The overall feelings and beliefs among foundation and advanced-year CSUSB MSW students towards substance abusing parents were mostly similar. Of the 10 scaled questions, roughly half of them were answered similarly

between both groups. Most students agreed or strongly agreed (42.3% of foundation-year students and 45.4% of advanced-year students) with Question #16: “A parent forced into treatment by the court will not benefit from services because he did not choose to go willingly.” A similar result was found for Question #17: “Non-white parents are more likely to have substance abuse issues than white parents are,” with 65.5% of foundation students and 60.9% of advanced-year students agreeing or strongly agreeing. Finally, an overwhelming 93% of foundation-year students, and 94% of advanced-year students agreed with Question #8: “A person who relapses after treatment can still become sober.”

Inferential Statistics

Independent sample t-tests were conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in beliefs among participants based on participants’ gender, MSW standing, parent/guardianship status, or experiences working with substance abusing parents. An overall belief score was calculated for each participant by adding the coded responses to each of the 12 Likert-scale questions. The results from these tests are described below.

Gender and Beliefs

An independent sample t-test showed that men were more likely than women to agree with the statement, “It is acceptable for an addicted parent to

use substances in their home if their children are not present” (Question 5), $t(60) = 2.389, p = .020$ (See Table 2).

Table 2. Gender and Beliefs

Variables	<i>n</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Question 1	62	60	-.258	.798
Question 2	62	60	.225	.823
Question 3	62	60	.161	.873
Question 4	62	60	.094	.925
Question 5	62	60	2.389	.020
Question 6	62	60	-1.269	.209
Question 7	62	60	-1.116	.269
Question 8	62	60	.694	.490
Question 9	62	60	.644	.522
Question 10	62	60	1.305	.197
Question 11	62	60	1.321	.192
Question 12	62	60	.821	.415
Total	62	60	1.190	.239

MSW Standing and Beliefs

An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to determine whether there were significant differences between Foundation Year and Advanced Year MSW students in their beliefs about substance abusing parents. The *t*-test revealed that foundation year students were more likely than advanced year students to agree with the statement, “Parents who misuse substances care less about their children than non-using parents” (Question 8), $t(60) = -2.721, p = .009$. The *t*-test also revealed that advanced year students were more likely than foundation year students to agree with the statement, “Children of substance abusing parents

should ALWAYS be removed if a CFS referral is made and parents are currently using” (Question 12), $t(60) = -3.489$, $p = .001$ (See Table 3).

Table 3. Student Beliefs by MSW Standing

Variables	<i>n</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Question 1	62	60	-.288	.774
Question 2	62	60	1.128	.264
Question 3	62	60	.417	.131
Question 4	62	60	-.252	.802
Question 5	62	60	-1.053	.297
Question 6	62	60	1.442	.155
Question 7	62	60	-1.212	.230
Question 8	62	60	-2.721	.009
Question 9	62	60	-.352	.726
Question 10	62	60	.127	.899
Question 11	62	60	-.312	.756
Question 12	62	60	-3.489	.001
Total	62	60	-1.875	.066

Parent/Guardianship Status and Beliefs

Independent sample t-test revealed no significant differences between MSW students who are parents or guardians and those who are not parents or guardians (See Table 4).

Table 4. Parent/Guardian Status and Beliefs

Variables	<i>n</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Question 1	62	60	-1.037	.304
Question 2	62	60	1.629	.109
Question 3	62	60	-.705	.483
Question 4	62	60	1.690	.096
Question 5	62	60	-1.819	.074
Question 6	62	60	.018	.985
Question 7	62	60	.790	.433

Question 8	62	60	-.990	.326
Question 9	62	60	.099	.922
Question 10	62	60	1.608	.113
Question 11	62	60	1.272	.208
Question 12	62	60	-1.118	.268
Total	62	60	.281	.780

Experience with Substance Abusing Parents and Beliefs

Independent sample t-test revealed that participants who had experience working with substance abusing parents were more likely to agree with the statement, “Children of substance misusing parents are subjected to being victims of crime at a higher rate than children whose parents do not use,” (Question 7), $t(60) = 2.222$ $p = .030$ (see Table 5).

Table 5. Experience with Substance Abusing Parents and Beliefs

Variables	<i>n</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Question 1	62	60	1.129	.263
Question 2	62	60	.401	.690
Question 3	62	60	1.436	.156
Question 4	62	60	.788	.434
Question 5	62	60	.468	.642
Question 6	62	60	-.781	.438
Question 7	62	60	2.753	.008
Question 8	62	60	-.274	.785
Question 9	62	60	.649	.519
Question 10	62	60	.603	.549
Question 11	62	60	1.319	.192
Question 12	62	60	1.642	.106
Total	62	60	2.222	.030

Summary

This chapter discussed the study's results. First, the chapter presented the descriptive statistics related to the participants' demographic characteristics. Second, the chapter described participants' overall responses to the 12 scaled questions. Third, the chapter presented the results of the inferential statistics used to describe relationships between participant demographics and responses to the scaled questions.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the implications of the results of this study. Some limitations of the study will be discussed as well as recommendations for MSW program curriculum will be addressed in this chapter. Finally, the chapter will discuss final thoughts about beliefs that CSUSB MSW students have towards substance abusing parents and how that can affect practice and ethics.

Discussion

The intent of this study was to explore the beliefs that CSUSB MSW students have towards substance abusing parents and to see if there were any significant differences in responses between different groups of students. The researcher hypothesized that there would be significant differences in beliefs between most foundation-year and advanced-year students, but overall, that was not the case. The study found that most students believed substance abusing parents had the potential to address their substance abuse problems and to parent effectively. The results of this study indicated that there were only two questions in where there was a significant difference in the responses. In Question #8, "Parents who misuse substances care less about their children than non-using parents," foundation students had a higher level of agreement on this

than did advanced-year students. This result could be because advanced-year students have more education and/or experience working with these parents than foundation students do. Advanced year students have more practice experience via their internship placements and therefore may have a more nuanced view of substance abusing parents than do foundation year students. In response to Question #12: "Children of substance abusing parents should ALWAYS be removed if a CFS referral is made and parents are currently using," advanced-year students responded that they agreed or strongly agreed at a rate of 30% higher than foundation-year students. The response to this was surprising to the researcher. This could indicate that advanced-year students feel more obligated to protect the children instead of immediately intervening and offering the parents substance abuse treatment. Again, the researcher hypothesizes that this finding may be influenced by advanced year students' experiences in field placements, especially with child welfare agencies, in which child safety is prioritized.

The question in which both groups had the highest rate of agreement was Question #1: "A person who relapses after treatment can still become sober." Foundation-year students' responses were at 93% and advanced-year students' responses reflected 94%. This reveals that both groups believe strongly that substance abusing parents can still become sober after relapse. This finding is particularly encouraging as it suggests that these future social workers believe in parents' abilities to recover, even after setbacks, suggesting that students may

remain likely to support parents, to refer them to treatment, and to pursue the goal of family reunification even under challenging circumstances.

This finding also generates implications for social work curriculum. Education is the key to ensuring that students are properly informed about addiction. Addiction courses are being added to counseling education programs to better educate students so they are better able to serve substance abusing clients (Chasek, et al., 2012). Students beliefs in substance abusing parents' abilities to recover reinforce the importance of providing social work curriculum which develops students' broad understanding of addiction, the likelihood of relapse, and the appropriate services and supports families need to weather parental substance abuse.

Limitations

There are roughly 270 total students enrolled in the CSUSB MSW program, foundation and advanced-year. One major limitation was that only 62 students participated in the study, which represents less than 25 percent of all enrolled students. This sample size is relatively small thus making it difficult to obtain an appropriate representation of CSUSB MSW students' feelings and beliefs towards substance abusing parents. Further, the study may not be generalizable to all MSW students or to social workers in general. Finally, the validity and reliability of the researcher-created questionnaire is unknown.

Recommendations for the Social Work Practice, Policy & Research

This results from this study suggest that, at least at this particular university, MSW students believe that substance abusing parents have the potential to successfully address their addictions and to parent their children. These results are encouraging in that they suggest that these future professionals possess a minimum of bias towards the substance abusing parents they are likely to serve. Keeping one's biases towards substance abusing parents at a minimum is crucial to the practitioner-client relationship, the client's willingness to participate in services, and ultimately the client maintaining or regaining custody of his children. However, this study only addresses students' beliefs during their MSW programs and does not address how those beliefs may change as students move into professional roles and progress in their careers. Future research should address whether and how beliefs towards substance abusing parents change over time and in relationship to professional experience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sought to identify MSW students' beliefs about substance abusing parents. The study used an online, self-administered survey with questions designed by the researcher to assess students' beliefs. The study found that most participants from CSUSB's MSW program believed parents had the potential to address their substance abuse issues and to successfully parent their children. These findings are encouraging in that they suggest that future

social workers, at least from this particular school, may enter the social work profession with limited biases toward the parents they are likely to serve. The study suggests that further research is warranted into how these beliefs may change over time.

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

Choose one answer for each question

1. Gender:
 - A. Male
 - B. Female
 - C. Other

2. MSW Standing:
 - A. Foundation Year
 - B. Advanced Year

3. Field of Interest:
 - A. Child Welfare
 - B. Mental Health
 - C. Hospital/Health
 - D. Adult and Aging
 - E. Schools
 - F. Policy
 - G. Other

4. For my elective, I have taken:
 - A. Substance Abuse
 - B. Gerontology
 - C. Child Welfare
 - D. Not yet taken an elective

5. I have children (biological, step, adoptive, foster, guardianship)
 - A. Yes
 - B. No

6. I have experience working with substance abusing parents
 - A. Yes
 - B. No

APPENDIX B
SCALED QUESTIONS

SCALED QUESTIONS

1. A person who relapses after treatment can still become sober.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Don't Know	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

2. Parents who abuse substances should always be arrested.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Don't Know	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

3. An alcohol- or drug-dependent person can benefit from treatment BEFORE they have hit "rock bottom."

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Don't Know	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

4. A person with strong will power can easily refrain from using drugs and/or alcohol.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Don't Know	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

5. It is acceptable for an addicted parent to use substances in their home if their children are not present.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Don't Know	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

6. Children whose parents abuse substances are more likely to become victims of crime than children whose parents do not use substances.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Don't Know	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

7. Children of substance misusing parents are subjected to being victims of crime at a higher rate than children whose parents do not use.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Don't Know	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

8. Parents who misuse substances care less about their children than non-using parents.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Don't Know	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

9. A parent forced into treatment by the court will not benefit from services because he did not choose to go willingly

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Don't Know	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

10. Non-white parents are more likely to have substance abuse issues than white parents are.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Don't Know	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

11. Families who are considered middle-class are less likely to have substance abuse issues than those who live in poverty.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Don't Know	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

12. Children of substance abusing parents should ALWAYS be removed if a CFS referral is made and the parents are currently using.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Don't Know	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

APPENDIX C
INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT



College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Social Work

INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to examine the beliefs among MSW students towards substance abusing parents. The study is being conducted by Angela Golden, a graduate student, under the supervision of Dr. Dierdre Lanesskog, Assistant Professor, in the School of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board Social Work Sub-committee at CSUSB.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the study is to examine the beliefs among MSW students towards substance abusing parents.

DESCRIPTION: Participants will be asked about their beliefs of substance abusing parents.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in the study is totally voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences.

CONFIDENTIALITY OR ANONYMITY: Your responses will remain anonymous and data will be reported in group form only.

DURATION: It will take 10 to 20 minutes to complete the survey.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks to the participants.



College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Social Work

BENEFITS: There will not be any direct benefits to the participants.

CONTACT: If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Dierdre Lanesskog at (909) 537-5501.

RESULTS: Results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library ScholarWorks database (<http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/>) at California State University, San Bernardino after July 2017.

This is to certify that I read the above and I am 18 years or older.

Place an X in the box below

APPENDIX D
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

The study you participated in was intended to better understand the feelings of CSUSB MSW students about substance abusing parents. It is important for one to be aware of and confront their biases when working with this population, especially if one will be working in child welfare. A student's negative preconceived feelings and ideas about substance abusing parents can affect the way they interact with the parents and can affect service delivery.

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Angela Golden or Dr. Deirdre Lanesskog at (909)537-7222. Results of the study will be available at the end of the Spring quarter and can be obtained by contacting Dr. Lanesskog at the number provided above.

Thank you for your time and involvement in this study.

APPENDIX E
IRB APPROVAL

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