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SPIRITUALITY OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE COUNSELORS

Matthew Sasso

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SPIRITUALITY OF
SUBSTANCE ABUSE COUNSELORS

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
Matthew Sasso

June 2018

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Approved by:

Dr. Brooklyn Sapozhnikov, Committee Chair
Dr. Janet Chang, Department Chair, Social Work

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of spirituality among substance abuse counselors for those who are in the recovery process. The research demonstrates the effectiveness of how personal beliefs of substance abuse counselors influence the treatment experience. This study uses a qualitative post positivist paradigm to study the impact of practitioners' personal beliefs towards spirituality in the treatment of clients. It addresses essential factors from a spiritual and religious framework and reveals the consideration of personal beliefs of substance abuse counselors and its impact on the treatment experience of an individual's recovery. The content of the research is derived from personal experience and then interpreted through reason and logic to understand the layers of spirituality and religion. The results of this analysis can be used to illustrate the impact that spirituality has within the field of substance abuse treatment.

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CHAPTER ONE

ASSESSMENT

Introduction

The importance of understanding successful treatment in substance abuse continues to grow within the field of mental health. As the importance of this issue rises, so does the importance of understanding what factors contribute to successful treatment. As a result, spirituality is a topic of interest for clinicians and researchers interested in addiction because of its perceived role in the promotion of meaningfulness in recovery from addiction (Borras, Khazaal, Khan, Mohr, Kaufmann, et al. 2010). This perspective was echoed in the *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment* which stated, “There has been more collaborative research between religious groups and professionals working in the fields of mental health (Pardini, Plante, Sherman, & Stump, 2000).” Therefore, studying how spirituality is addressed should be considered in order to understand the impact of this approach as a worthwhile option for individuals recovering from substance use disorders.

This chapter establishes a research focus that seeks to develop an understanding of the practitioners’ personal attitudes towards spirituality, the impact of treatment with clients, and any link between spirituality and substance abuse treatment with clients. Furthermore, this chapter introduces the paradigm and rationale for why the paradigm was chosen, provides a literary review, the

project's theoretical orientation, potential contribution to the discussion of spirituality among substance abuse counselors, and chapter summary.

Research Focus and Question

Understanding the relationship between those who have found spirituality to improve their recovery from substance abuse can further help to substantiate the importance of incorporating a spiritual factor into substance abuse treatment. A substance abuse counselor's personal beliefs about religion and spirituality influence the treatment process positively for those seeking treatment. Studies have confirmed that spirituality can be a catalyst of recovery, a protective shield in early recovery, and a significant dimension of long-term recovery maintenance (White, Laudet, 2006). The link between spirituality and substance use has allowed medical and social scientists to demonstrate the beneficial effects of religion on a wide range of mental health measures and personal well-being (Borras, Khazaal, Khan, Mohr, Kaufmann, et al. 2010). Although research has been conducted it would be valuable to understand and improve on how spirituality can benefit the lives of individuals seeking treatment for a substance use disorder.

The focus and question of this research is to understand the positive or negative effects of spirituality among substance abuse counselors for those who are in the recovery process. From this research, further data can illustrate the impact that spirituality has within the field of substance abuse treatment. Therefore, it is important to think about what themes and threads emerge as a

result of this process. The goal is to understand what value and benefit there is to applying spirituality to substance abuse treatment, and how we might best define what aspects make this factor successful for clients seeking help. Understanding this difference is beneficial in order to effectively state a clear research question or comment. The focus of this research was to understand if there is any value or evidence to substance abuse counselor's personal beliefs of spirituality and what treatment interventions influence positively or negatively for one's success in the future. The result of this particular study could further improve the research already done.

Paradigm and Rationale

The research uses a qualitative post positivist paradigm to study the impact of practitioners' personal beliefs towards spirituality in the treatment of clients. The content of the research is derived from an individual's experience and then interpreted through reason and logic to understand the layers of spirituality and religion. The information was obtained through personal interviews with twenty-five individuals' and then analyzed for similarities. As a result of this field's history with spirituality, this approach is best suited in order to capture the participant's personal experiences. Collecting data in a narrative method allowed the data to be analyzed in order to understand the relationship between a participant's personal experiences and shared experiences within the field of substance use.

In addition, a literature review was conducted to understand previous studies on this topic. The research looked at the beliefs about religion and spirituality among substance abuse counselors and how they positively or negatively contribute to the clinical care of clients in substance abuse treatment. When considering this project, the post positivist model appears to be the most appropriate model to determine the role that faith contributes during successful treatment for substance abuse. Through interviews, observations, and literature reviews, the impact that a substance abuse counselor's spirituality plays on the process of treatment helped to bring a greater understanding to such a robust discussion.

Literature Review

This literature review discusses the role and its importance that spirituality has in the field of substance abuse recovery. This section focuses on explaining three main concepts: spirituality, religion, and substance abuse counselors that will be discussed in the paper. In addition, research from previous studies is introduced to emphasize the importance that spirituality has and continues to play in the field. This structure helps to emphasize the belief that spirituality is a personal belief and sensitivity to approaching participants in very important.

Spirituality was recognized when the U.S. Joint commission for Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) required accredited facilities to assess spirituality as part of health care (Miller, 1999). Research suggests loss of purpose due to excessive substance use, a feeling of inadequate social

support because of one's addiction, continued use of a substance while experiencing moral qualms over its consumption, and loss of self-efficacy in refusing substances are prominent factors for those in treatment for substance abuse (Borras, Khazaal, Khan, Mohr, Kaufmann, et al. 2010).

Substance Abuse Counselors

Substance abuse counselors represent a unique group because many of them are in recovery themselves (Chu, Sung, 2013). Often while working with those seeking help in treatment, the counselor is the one who has been through the same process which provides a lived experience that is valuable to someone in treatment. During this process the counselor uses engagement, assessment, and implementation skills in order to help an individual in treatment. These skills are used to identify the relationship between an individual's substance use and culture, values, and lifestyles. Through engagement, assessment, and implementation skills, substance abuse counselors look at the history that may manifest as a barrier or as a benefit to the treatment process. One area that may prove to be a barrier or a benefit is the spiritual background of the individual seeking help of the counselor.

Spirituality

In understanding the meaning of spirituality it has been suggested that spiritually ultimately reflects a belief that life has a meaning and purpose (Bliss, 2008). It is no surprise that humanity looks for a greater significance that is beyond the material and physical world. Cultures in all time periods have looked

up to the stars and pondered the idea of greater meaning. Research suggests that levels of spiritual development mark important distinctions in the degrees of complexity with which individuals understand self, others, and social situations (Ogde, Sias 2011). Therefore, substance abuse counselors would greatly benefit from understanding how spirituality influences spiritual development and how spiritual diversity education is interwoven within fundamental counseling competencies in an environment that provides consistent structure, guidance, and a concrete and systematic orientation (Ogden, Ogden, & Sias 2011).

Spirituality is a belief which entails practice and experience. Research suggests seventy-nine percent of Americans believe that spiritual faith can help people recover from disease and 63 percent think that physicians should talk to patients about their spiritual faith (Califano 2001). Helping the client to recognize belief in themselves and a greater sense of spirituality can facilitate and impact growth in all aspects of the client's life. Furthermore, when considering spirituality, it is important to think about the difference between spirituality and religion.

Religion

Religion is one of the oldest social institutions in all of human history and its expressions go back to the dawn of humanity, and there has never been a wholly agnostic or atheistic culture (Dowd & Nielsen, 2006). Religion is a term, that when viewed etymologically, calls attention to the belief that humanity is a religious being and that as religious beings humanity expresses outward acts by

which humanity can indicate their recognition of the existence of a god or of gods. This may be demonstrated through profession of belief, observance of rituals and ceremonies, or through the conduct of daily living. Religion is the expression of belief in deity. In order for these expressions to be uniform, religion has defined ideas of belief commonly called doctrine or theology. The expression of these beliefs through actions serves as a means to connect with a deity. These methods of practice become central to one's ideology which may influence the rest of an individual's life.

Religion, in its broad definition including both spirituality (being concerned with transcendence or addressing the ultimate questions about life's meaning) and religiousness (specific behavioral, social, doctrinal, and denominational characteristics) is a concept, which is encountered with increasing frequency in the contemporary addiction literature (Borras, Khazaal, Khan, Mohr, Kaufmann, et al. 2010). While spirituality reflects a belief, religion has to do with the practice of that belief. When seeking to understand religion, it is important to look at the practices and behaviors that are governed by spiritual beliefs. These practices may be outlined in doctrinal teachings, religious tradition, and are practiced in group contexts. These practices are the outward acts of the internal beliefs that one holds. These practices are the visible expression of obedience, service, or honor to one's spirituality. Therefore, it is important to consider religion as not just what an individual ascribes to, but also the practices and behaviors that are associated with one's spiritual beliefs.

Spirituality, Religion, and Recovery

When considering the definition of recovery, some might conclude that recovery is simply the absence of addiction in a person's life. While abstinence is the beginning of this process, there is much more that a person must develop in order to practice recovery as a daily lifestyle. Therefore, recovery must be understood in a broader sense, as a process whereby an abstinent person is moving toward a positive adaptation in life (Borras, Khazaal, Khan, Mohr, Kaufmann, et al. 2010). Spirituality is a conduit for this type of living. As a result of spirituality, one can connect their life to guiding principles that allows for the development of emotional, psychological, and spiritual development. Those struggling with addiction are individuals who have adapted to the most dysfunctional coping skills for the need to protect their addiction. It is for this reason that recovery is so much more than the abstinence of drug use. It encompasses a broader skill set in order for the whole person to manage the disease of addiction. It allows the addicted to experience wholeness in their life rather than the wholelessness they have experienced as a result of addiction.

Given the sensitive and personal nature of religious beliefs, it is important to stay within ethical boundaries when working with clients. Taking into consideration that not all clients will be open to such a discussion and that, personal beliefs of substance abuse counselors are just that, personal beliefs. Prescribing them as black and white will more than likely negatively impact the therapeutic relationship between client and the clinician. As previously stated,

spiritual beliefs and religion on either the client or clinician can be a barrier or a benefit to the treatment process. Understanding how to address such a sensitive topic can be a delicate and challenging subject, especially when this subject is approached from different perspectives and negative life experiences.

Theoretical Orientation

The theoretical orientation of this research suggests that the dimensions of spirituality; practice, belief, and experience are successful in substance abuse treatment and overall recovery. When substance abuse counselors understand these personal beliefs they are able to positively influence the recovery process for an individual in treatment. The research relates to studies that have addressed the importance of helping an individual recover from a physical, emotional, and spiritual model. This approach takes into account the evidence that suggests the importance of incorporating spirituality into the treatment process. The goal is to demonstrate the effectiveness that personal beliefs have in substance abuse treatment. In this study it is important to address spiritual and religious practices as fundamental to recovery. Therefore, when there is a need for intervention that goes beyond that which can be provided in the patient–clinician relationship, the use of spirituality will be helpful based on the client’s own experience and openness (Koenig, Larson, 2001).

Potential Contribution of Study

Ultimately, the assessment and evaluation could provide an avenue for substance abuse counselors to demonstrate the influence their personal beliefs on spirituality have while working with clients during the treatment experience. The research would demonstrate the effectiveness of spirituality as well as how personal beliefs of substance abuse counselors influences a positive and successful treatment experience for those under the clinician's care. The data in this discussion of spirituality and substance abuse recovery is needed for improving the care of clients. Furthermore, it could help address factors that suggest adults who never partake in religious services are more likely to drink and use illegal drugs (Califano, 2001). Understanding the accuracy of this factor would add to the work that has already been established about its relevance to addiction treatment and therapies. Understanding how personal beliefs of spirituality in substance abuse counselors relates to treatment will demonstrate the importance of spirituality overall.

Summary

Chapter one focuses on the effects that personal beliefs of spirituality have on the treatment experience for those in recovery. It provides qualitative data from a post positivism paradigm. It addresses essential factors used within an organization. From a spiritual and religious framework, it reveals whether or not consideration of personal beliefs of substance abuse counselors have an impact on the treatment experience of an individual's recovery. The research

focuses on the services offered within a specific organization. Through the incorporation of personal beliefs of counselors, clients receive a more balanced approach to recovery that encompasses physical, emotional, and spiritual care.

CHAPTER TWO

ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

Chapter two focuses on the engagement portion of the study. The first step is to look at the study site itself and the engagement strategies that are used throughout the research process in order to develop an understanding of the practitioner's personal attitudes towards spirituality and how they impact the treatment of clients. Furthermore, this chapter will address the self-preparation along with diversity, ethical and political issues relevant to the study. Lastly, it gives an explanation to the role that technology plays and concludes with a summary of the chapter.

Study Site

The agency is a treatment center with four programs in Southern California, offering residential treatment, day treatment, and outpatient services to help both male and female clients recover from their addiction through a disease model that utilizes the 12 Step program of Alcoholics Anonymous. The program offers a gender-specific setting and focuses on a comprehensive treatment approach that incorporates heart change that leads to life change. During treatment, clients have a choice between a traditional twelve step model and a Christian based twelve step model in order to allow clients an opportunity to define a higher power that is meaningful to them. Treatment is designed to

help clients with both symptom management and the development of new skills and perspectives, such as religious beliefs. In order to help with the spiritual component of the program model both alcohol and drug counselors and therapists, have a spiritual and religious background. Another unique component of the program is the use of spiritual counselors to have direct conversations about religion and faith. The program uses evidence-based practices in order to improve mental health, physical wellness, independence, and restore relationships with family. The program helps each client by providing a dedicated psychiatrist and primary therapist over the course of treatment, while receiving help and guidance from a certified substance abuse counselor. Through this process the client identifies personal recovery goals while taking part in developing an individualized recovery plan that focuses on educating clients on the effects of substance use, improving their physical health, developing activities of daily living skills, and establishing social networks within the Alcoholic Anonymous community. The goal is that clients return to their communities and enjoy sobriety and quality of life that they have yet to discover or have been missing for some time.

Engagement Strategies

The ability to access this agency as a study site will be accomplished through the Executive Director, the agency's gatekeeper, who oversees the treatment facilities. The executive director was approached with the intent of a research project for Cal State San Bernardino and the Executive Director was

assured that the facility will be anonymous in the writing of the research paper. During this portion of the engagement stage, the executive director was presented with a detailed explanation of the study, including a timeline of the proposed study as well as addressing preemptive strategies to neutralize potential issues.

Once establishing the strategies and explaining the purpose of the study, engagement with potential participants will be able to begin. During this portion of the engagement stage, it was beneficial to establish the personal beliefs and theological orientation of the substance abuse counselors. Through this process, the interviewer had the opportunity to build rapport. This proved to be valuable because spiritual beliefs are personal and pertained to emotional events in the life of participants. In order to convince the agency gatekeeper, the researcher's approach was to bridge on the existing relationship that has developed through time in the field of substance abuse. Based on comments from the gatekeepers, the spirituality of the counselor and its effectiveness was an agency concern and was helpful in obtaining permission for this research.

Self-Preparation

During this portion of the research, personal study of various faiths was conducted in order to understand what the participants' particular values are and how they contrast in respect to other religious beliefs. This course of action allowed for a more robust understanding of the practitioners' attitudes towards spirituality and its' impact on treatment. Through a dense and diverse literature

review a better understanding of the commonalities and the differences of various spiritual beliefs can be obtained. Preparation will also include careful consideration of terminology in order to respect diversity and family history. It was also valuable to think through my own personal experience of faith in order to be able to share it with participants. This experience gave the opportunity to disarm barriers during the assessment and engagement portion of the study. As a result of being vulnerable, rapport was established with participants.

Diversity Issues

It is important to consider diversity issues that arise in order to eliminate as many barriers as possible. Taking into account the importance of gender, spiritual upbringing, and ethnicity is necessary. As a result of the questions that are asked in the research, potential diversity issues include a lack of comfort with the researcher based upon age, gender, and ethnicity. This may result in lack of vulnerability to disclose information. Another diversity issue that may arise is a difference in spiritual upbringing or lack of spiritual upbringing that participants have encountered. The meaning of spirituality can vary drastically from person to person. These differences can create a number of problems for substance abuse counselors. In this research it will be important to pay attention to how gender, ethnicity, substance abuse, and spiritual upbringing can play a part in the lives of substance abuse counselors.

Ethical Issues

The proposed research was approved by the ethics committee to ensure the rights of the participants and organization are protected. In consideration of the participants, participants were given a clear explanation of the study and their personal rights to privacy. Recordings of the interviews were safely stored as another measure of protection to ensure confidentiality and protect the identity of the participants. This allowed the researcher to obtain accurate information and statements from the participants, while ensuring the rights of the participants are protected. Another ethical issue considered during the research was participants not giving full disclosure about their beliefs and the impact on the treatment process in response to feeling they would be reprimanded by supervisors if they were to be found out. In a similar way, the facility may be concerned with how the responses of the participants would affect the organization's reputation. Careful consideration was given to these issues in order to ensure that the data collected was as accurate as possible.

Political Issues

Current political issues that related to this research were those of lower socioeconomic status that cannot afford treatment at a private facility. The treatment center is insurance based or a cash pay facility and this type of financial structure could affect certain data. Another issue that was given attention was a participant's faith feeling discredited. Issues revolving around

political correctness were addressed to make sure that the participants are considered throughout the process.

The Role of Technology in Engagement

During this research, technology was used to capture audio recordings and computers were used to store documentation. The intention for these uses were to help the interviewer focus more on the participant and to back up data for final evaluation. In addition, technology allowed the researcher to better protect the information and ensure the confidentiality of the participants.

Summary

Chapter two focused on the engagement portion of the study. This chapter focused on understanding how substance abuse counselors' personal attitudes towards spirituality in treatment impact the treatment of clients. This stage allowed the opportunity for effective evaluation of the research and offered a valuable perspective to participants' attitudes towards spirituality. Finally, this chapter focused on the processes used in gathering qualitative data in order to find the best approach to understand the impact of practitioners' attitudes towards spirituality.

CHAPTER THREE

IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

Chapter three focuses on the implementation stage and the components that were used during this qualitative research study in order to develop an understanding of the practitioner's personal attitudes towards spirituality in treatment and their impact on the treatment of clients. This chapter describes how individuals were selected in order to participate throughout the study and the procedures used to make sure participants were appropriate for the study's paradigm. The study is a post positivist study and a non-probability sampling procedure were used. This chapter focused on the study and selection of participants, the gathering and collection of data including sample questions for the interview process, methods of data recording and analysis, future methods of communication of findings and dissemination plan, method of termination, and follow up procedures as well as a chapter summary.

Study Participants

The study participants during the analysis were the substance abuse counselors participating in the research study at a designated study site. Participants were selected with the support of the Executive Director. Any participation was voluntary and would not be held against them in any way, shape, or form. After communication was given from the program director, the

interviewer visited the facility and engaged with people through conversation. This study recruited participants that provide care for residents within a Twelve Step based drug and alcohol treatment center. Information was gathered about the spiritual beliefs of the participant's in order to better understand their spiritual history. Study participants consisted of males and females between the ages of 21-65 for this research study. Their ethnicity ranges from a variety of Caucasian making up for 56%, Hispanic making up for 12%, Jewish making for 12%, Asian making up for 8%, African American making up for 8%, and Muslim making up for 4%. During the study, information from participants was collected about how to better understand the strategies and techniques used when discussing religion or spirituality. Through a careful research study and a variety of participants these factors helped to identify the effects the personal beliefs of religion and spirituality of substance abuse counselors have while working with clients in residential treatment.

Selection of Participants

In this study, criterion sampling was used in order to obtain formative evaluations and provide knowledge and understanding through interviews of participants. This provided the most accurate and complete data related to the research and provided the researcher the best opportunity to understand in greater detail the connection between the research findings and a literary review. The process for this selection was an email from the program director informing staff that the agency gave permission for the research to take place Participants

in the study were selected from 4 residential and 2 intensive outpatient programs in Southern California consisting of 25 individual participants. In order to collect qualitative research, interviewing through a framework of investigation does not consist of a pre-determined hypothesis. The interviews that were conducted with the selected participants during this stage help to understand the interviewee's perception of the ideology of spirituality and its relevance to the participant's personally. Through the interviews, each participant in the study answered questions about their personal spirituality and possess an Alcohol and Drug Credential with their respective state. The participants included substance abuse counselors who are in recovery and those who are not in recovery, meaning those who have not been identified as having an addiction. The participants represent their involvement with clients that have been diagnosed with a DSM-V substance abuse disorder of one or more substances including; Alcohol, Stimulant, Opioid, Sedative, and Tobacco.

During this process, the facilitator of the interview applied engagement and assessment skills, while paying attention for those who are playing potentially positive roles or those who are playing potentially negative roles. This approach allowed the interviewer to choose a sample that provides a representation of the population results of the current study. This is beneficial for understanding the effects of spirituality for substance abuse counselors in their work with clients. Once qualified participants were identified, appointments with the participants were arranged, and the Executive Director and researcher

corresponded on a consistent basis. This procedure allowed for a more effective scheduling process while causing the least amount of impact on the daily schedule of the study site. Lastly, it allowed the scheduled appointments to be purposeful and planned, while reducing participants' fears or anxieties about the process.

Phases of Data Gathering

During this portion of the study, interviews were conducted in order to obtain qualitative data through open-ended questions designed to allow the participant to give responses that best resemble their own personal beliefs about spirituality. Through this process, the researcher was able to determine the effects of practitioners' personal attitudes towards spirituality and the impact it has while providing treatment to clients. The data collected was influenced by the participant's personal experience and the comfortability of the participant to share personal information. The interview began with engagement oriented questions in order to establish comfortability and rapport. Using open ended and exploratory questions with the group of participants, the interviewer used their clinical experience as a mental health professional to conduct the research and gather the presented data. The goal of the interview was to allow the participant's responses to guide the questions and assist with the progress of gathering data. In order for privacy to be maintained, a naturalistic environment such as an onsite private therapy room was used during the course of this study. During the interviews, a digital recorder was used in order to capture the data.

This process has several benefits. The first is that it allowed the data collected to be safely stored. Safety of the information is an integral part of the entire research study. The second is that it allowed the data to be categorized for further analysis later in the study. The third is that the interviewer was able to focus on the participant's responses. As a result, the interviewer was able to have greater attention with descriptive and structured questions. Interviews lasted on average 30-45 minutes in length and took place at the treatment center during times convenient for each participant as well as the study site.

Data Collection

During this phase, interview guides were created by the interviewer. Participants engaged in an introductory interview in order to establish the beliefs of the participant and assess their current level of spiritual beliefs as personal methods of spiritual engagement with their clients. The guides included general and specific questions in order to allow participants to elaborate and provide data relevant to the study. During this process, the interviewer listened and expressed interest in what the participants shared and established a friendly conversation that did not approve or disapprove with the participant's statements. Some examples of these questions are: What is your definition of religion? What is your definition of spirituality? Can you share about your religious/spiritual beliefs? In order to review the full list of questions, refer to Appendix A.

During the study, two journals were kept: one was kept in order to summarize the researcher's rationales each week, and the second one was kept

in order to capture reactions to what will be discovered during the interviews and collection of data (Morris, 2014). The interview was guided through pre-established questions, but the responses of the participants dictated the proper follow up questions in order to ensure that the data was as clear and concise as possible. After the interviews were completed, the data from the digital recorder was transcribed, where it was categorized and stored for further analysis and the final organization of the research findings.

Data Recording

Notes of the progress were created and stored for further review throughout the course of the research. The recording of the data was collected on a digital recorder as well as notes from the interview that were created after the interview was conducted. Participants were informed of the recording device prior to agreement and were assured throughout the study that, information collected will only be in the hands of the researcher and that any information collected will remain anonymous in relationship to name and other identifying factors. The information was stored on a computer and backed up on a secondary hard drive. During the collection of the data, consent and confidentiality was provided.

In order to maintain accuracy of the content between the digital recording and the journals, transcription of the interview sessions were recorded in a timely and efficient manner. Notes that were transcribed in the journal were also backed

up on the hard drive in order to prevent any loss of data. Through this approach a thorough and emotional engagement was obtained.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data was done concurrently during the collection of the data. During this portion of the study, a coding chart of the progress was used and open source coding was used during this portion of the study. Interviews were transcribed by the interviewer and then evaluated for accuracy in order to make sure the content was successfully recorded. During this stage, portions of the narrative that demonstrate relationship to one another such as sentences or a paragraph were coded and categorized (Morris, 2014). During this procedure analytical tools such as asking sensitizing, theoretical, practical, and guiding questions about the portions of data were used. During this process data that was repeated was categorized together for further analysis and evaluation. After finding the repeated themes through the process of open coding, axial coding was used with the emergent categories and statements about the relationship between categories will be made (Morris, 2014). After that, selective coding was used in order to integrate and refine the categories. A core category was established that included a comprehensive statement. Lastly, conditional matrix coding was used in order to identify how this research fits into the greater discussion.

Data analysis required consistent literary review. Literary research was ongoing in order to demonstrate a robust knowledge of pre-existing research and

patterns that have been identified and appear relevant to the discussion of spirituality among substance abuse counselors.

Communication of Findings

The first group these findings will be communicated to is the participants of the research project. Participants were given a statement of closure after each interview thanking them for their time and providing contact information if any further questions arise. During this time, participants were given a general statement of findings. The second item of communication was with the research site's gate keeper. The third item was with the research paper, that encompassed the generalist model within social work practice. The analyzed/organized findings were submitted as a detailed research paper to the research committee at California State University of San Bernardino for review.

Termination and Follow Up

After the interview, termination and follow up consisted of answering any questions interviewees had, providing feedback of the research process, and informing participants of the project's results and complete findings. Follow up took place within the organization by informing the staff involved in the process of the results. The researcher also provided contact information to the study site for any additional follow up.

Summary

Chapter three focuses on the implementation process of the study. Through all the steps listed in this chapter, it shows whether there is an impact on the life of those seeking treatment. The recovery model, being a person-centered construct, focuses on “quality of life”, which addresses a person’s self-appraisal of life, personal goal achievements, environmental restrictions, opportunities, and daily functioning (Chiu, 2009). Therefore, it is valuable to understand the connection spirituality plays in the life of those providing treatment.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter is devoted to presenting the findings that emerged while collecting data. The chapter will be summarized by a brief conclusion.

Presentation of Findings

The findings below are the result of twenty-five interviews with substance abuse counselors. The interviews were made up of 56 percent male and 44 percent female. As noted in Table 2: Ethnicity, the ethnic makeup of the those that participated was 64 percent Caucasian, 16 percent Hispanic, eight percent African American, eight percent Asian, and four percent Middle Eastern. The themes that emerged were religion, spirituality, spirituality through recovery, faith, prayer and meditation, positives factors, willingness to discuss, personal experiences, and measures of spiritual growth.

Religion

The topic of religion is often one that is very personal and sensitive. The individuals that participated all expressed some form of religious beliefs. The interviews resulted in 56 percent Protestant, 20 percent Theist, 12 percent Catholic, eight percent Jewish, and four percent Muslim (see Table 3). The participants' comments indicated the general opinion that religion is considered to be the "practice of beliefs". As a result, the idea of religion came with a list of things you could do and things you could not do. One example of this from the

interview was, “I would define religion as the practice of beliefs (Participant #3, personal communication, July 2017). This comment identifies religion more as humanistic behaviors, which the individual determines. While the majority of the participants spoke favorable of their religion, there were negative connotations associated with the meaning of the word religion. While interviewing one of the participants they stated, “Religion has been used to subjugate people (Participant #5, personal communication, July 2017). In a similar tone one participant states, “I am not a religious person and see more bad in organized religion than good (Participant #25, personal communication, December 2017).” These examples help to demonstrate the challenge that some participants had due to the personal and sensitive nature of the meaning of religion.

Relating this finding to the original research question is important because when substance abuse counselors discuss matters of spirituality, counselors will likely experience a barrier because of the client’s negative experiences with religion. In some cases, the counselor will hear negative undertones from the client when discussing topics such as doctrine and theology. The findings suggest that discussing religion acts as a barrier to helping the client understand and develop a habit of spirituality. The ironic portion of this dilemma is that within the substance abuse counselor, religion can provide stronger values, ethics, and morals. These principles are central to the counselor’s ability to provide excellent services to the client. Therefore, some clients may be turned

off by religion, but the religious values of the counselor can positively impact the counselor-client relationships.

Spirituality

Participants in the interviews generally saw spirituality as something intangible. This was different compared to the participant's understanding of religion. One participant stated that, "I see spirituality not as something that you do, but rather something that one possesses. It is intangible and yet personal (Participant #21, personal communication, December 2017)." This particular quote illustrates that spirituality cannot be obtained through action, but rather it is a state of being that impacts what someone does. This intangible and personal force provides meaning, strength, and peace of mind resulting in acceptance and service. For example, "I believe spirituality is the exercise and expression of man's soul, the primary core of his existence, enabling him with the power to fulfill his purpose as a unique created being (Participant #7, personal communication, July 2017)." Examples such as the ones previously listed reveal that spirituality is something that has greater meaning than behavioral actions. Understanding spirituality in such a way feels more like a call to align one's beliefs rather than a feeling of connection.

The findings in the research led to understanding the importance that spirituality plays in the recovery process. As previously stated, religion can often be a barrier in the recovery process for the client, yet spirituality is a doorway to a greater understanding of God and self. Spirituality brings a calmness and

confidence to those that are living a spiritual life. One participant stated, “When these things (calmness and confidence) start to slip away, it is usually because I am losing track of my spirituality (Participant #5, personal communication, July 2017). For those that embrace spirituality, it makes all the difference. As defined by many of the participants, this embracing of spirituality is called a spiritual awakening. When one has a spiritual awakening it reorders every aspect of an individual’s life. In the recovery process, this is exactly what is needed. If someone is to be successful in the recovery process, their entire life must change.

Spirituality Through Recovery. One subtheme that emerged from the data was spirituality as a result of personal recovery. The discussion around this subtheme was the result of participants facing severe situations such as long periods of homelessness and legal consequences. These circumstances compelled some participants to enter spiritual environments in order to address their basic needs and refrain from the use of substances. This resulted in participants with negative religious beliefs to be awakened to spirituality and the benefits it has in personal recovery. One participant stated, “I believe in a loving, merciful God that I give credit to for the person I am today (Participant #1, personal communication, July 2017).” During the interviews there was sometimes a tone of expectations regarding spirituality through recovery. One participant stated, “I believe that authentic recovery is best facilitated by employing the 12 Step program because for the alcoholic there are only two options: Be destined

to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis and these are not always easy alternatives to face (Participant #13, personal communication, August 2017)."

Another example of spirituality through personal recovery is, "As a member of AA it is my relationship with my higher power who I define as God that aids in my sobriety & recovery (Participant #3, personal communication, July 2017)."

Participants who made similar statements like the ones previously mentioned spoke about their personal recovery with meaning. This new found meaning was the result of spiritual transformation.

These understandings demonstrate that the recovery process is a unique time in the life of an addict and alcoholic. It is a time of questioning and examining, and during this process the addict/alcoholic is more open to matters of spirituality, faith, and a higher power. In order to experience transformations such as the ones listed, an individual must be open to the possibility of transformation. At some point in the recovery process, an individual may give credit to their higher power for the change they are experiencing.

Faith. A second subtheme that emerged from the data relating to spirituality was faith. During the interview, participants discussed their personal beliefs and experiences. Faith during the interviews was seen as a deeper level of spirituality and one that was based on protestant beliefs. For example, one participant stated, "Spirituality is an expression of our faith in God. I see spirituality as an active work of the Holy Spirit within me (Participant #17, personal communication, September 2017)." Participants who embraced faith

understood that faith is the result of a power that is manifested through relationship with God. The result of personal spirituality caused some participants to believe in a personal God. For the individuals that expressed this theme of faith they generally saw the concepts of spirituality, faith, and religion as meshed together. These topics were unique, but they were also layered into one another.

During some discussions the context of the participants' statement demonstrated how these terms can be intertwined and even exchanged for one another. Although the words do have entirely different meanings, the discussions about faith show the importance of understanding how to articulate the difference. This ability is important in helping the client to understand how to define their own beliefs.

During some of the discussion of faith, some participants saw faith as providing participants with something specific. One participant stated, "Faith impact can be huge. It provides relief and removes some shame that a person feels. Shame is a really bad thing because it beats you down. However, faith in God lifts us up (Participant #24, personal communication, December 2017)." Another participant stated, "Religion and spirituality have been key parts of my recovery. Once I found Christ and his love for me I was able to embrace changes in my life with a newfound confidence (Participant #21, personal communication, December 2017)." The experience of faith changes the etymology of faith.

Higher Power

The examination of the importance of a higher power in recovery among counselors resulted in an overwhelming positive response. The consensus of the counselors suggests that a higher power is the foundation for recovery. This is illustrated in one of the participant's comments that stated, "I strongly feel that in order to get sober and maintain sobriety that an addict must find a higher power (Participant #15, personal communication, September 2017)." The importance of the higher power is directly linked to the ability of the individual to maintain sobriety. The importance of a relationship with a higher power is a determining factor in one's spiritual practices. For example, one participant stated, "It could be said that religion drives the seeker to spirituality, and that spirituality leads the seeker to a relationship with a Higher Power (Participant #3, personal communication, July 2017)."

During the interviews, the data revealed the nature of the relationship with a high power. In the interview it was clear when relationship with a high power was discussed, it required an individual to "fully surrender". Another participant stated, "Those who fully submit to the higher power concept have a better chance of sobriety than those who do not (Participant #19, personal communication, October 2017)." In the recovery process, the idea of a higher power has been widely accepted by those who are willing to embrace spirituality. The impact of this idea is best understood through a change in leadership. For the addict and alcoholic, their best choices resulted in whatever circumstances

they now find themselves in. In order for the recovery process to be successful, the addict/alcoholic believes that there is an important need for something greater than themselves to govern their lives.

Prayer and Meditation

Participants of the research study agreed that prayer and meditation are laudable in the recovery process. This was illustrated in one of the participant's comment, which stated, "Meditation is a very broad term that can include Mindfulness from secularized and traditional Christian approaches. I encourage clients to make prayer and meditation part of their daily lives (Participant #11, personal communication, September 2017)." Another counselor stated, "I encourage clients to make prayer and meditation part of their daily lives. In the tradition of Brother Lawrence, "Practicing the Presence of God" I encourage them to connect to a fellowship for aid, support, comfort, and growth (Participant #14, personal communication, September 2017)." The utilization of these elements are encouraged in recovery. For example, "I believe prayer and meditation are critical elements in recovery (Participant #15, personal communication, September 2017)." The reason prayer and meditation become so encouraged in the recovery process is because of their ability to help someone reflect on one's circumstances. These elements are tools in order to help someone experience their higher power.

Positive Factors

During the interview, participants were asked what factors positively influence the ability to talk about spiritual beliefs. One participant stated, "...the client's willingness for change and openness to either trusting God or knowing God depending on their life experience (Participant #10, personal communication, September 2017)." This was further emphasized by another participant that stated, "Willingness and openness to learn are always positive factors (Participant #9, personal communication, September 2017)." The concept of willingness was discussed several times. On the surface willingness referred to a willingness to change. One example of this was, "When a client has a positive attitude and a willingness to make the commitment change will occur (Participant #11, personal communication, September 2017)."

Willingness to Discuss. In considering how the willingness of the client influences the counselor's ability to discuss spiritual beliefs, data emerged about how willing the counselor is to discuss spiritual beliefs. One participant stated, "I feel that I need to be flexible and not push religion on someone no matter how important I think it is (Participant #5, personal communication, July 2017)." Some participants stated that they are careful that their comments are not confrontational. For example, "I am very open about faith, but I do not shove Jesus down anyone's throat (Participant #20, personal communication, November 2017)." This was further contrasted by a participant who stated, "I look for commonalities from which I can build our discussions and share my faith in a

general sense when appropriate (Participant #6, personal communication, July 2017).”

These findings suggest that the more open the counselor is to ideas of spirituality the more likely the person they are counseling will be to find their own spiritual path to recovery. The counselor acts as a guide, someone who has traveled the path. In order to help the client, develop their spirituality, the counselor must not have an agenda but rather be willing to allow the client to do his or her own investigation. The willingness of the client and the counselor are like pedals on a bicycle, one is the client and the other is the counselor. Both are needed in the recovery process.

Personal Experiences. During the interviews, data did emerge about the counselor’s personal experiences with recovery. Sixty-eight percent of the participants were individuals in recovery from drugs and/or alcohol, while 32 percent of the participants were not personally in recovery. One of the participants stated, “Between 1985 and 2008 I lived a life of addiction and the disease that came with it. I no longer wanted to live like that anymore. In the fall of 2008, I decided to enter recovery. In doing that I also wanted to help others battling the disease of addiction (Participant #6, personal communication, July 2017).” In this statement the theme that merged was the reason the counselor was there was because they have lived experience.

The experiences of the counselors' personal lives were stated to be a tool in order to help others. For example, one participant said, "I use examples from my life where God has intervened and made a difference (Participant #8, personal communication, August 2017)." In addition, another participant stated, "Where I see parallels to my life experience I offer the client the spiritual principles that have guided me through those difficult and challenging times. I think a healthy exchange of experiences can reassure and encourage the client to press on to the goal because they are not alone (Participant #1, personal communication, June 2017)." The data revealed how counselor's personal experiences transpired into their professional role.

Measures of Spirituality

The participants were asked in the interview if there were any indicators that would be able to measure spiritual growth. This is a challenging task because the process of spiritual growth is internally taking place in the life of the client. Despite this challenge, the participants indicated two significant factors. The first is seen in this comment by one of the participants who stated, "I look for self-motivation on the client's part (Participant #1, personal communication, June 2017)." Motivation is a key factor in substance abuse treatment and throughout the treatment process, it is being evaluated. The data suggests that when motivation increases so does the client's spiritual growth. The second was a change in behavior which is seen in this particular comment, "The success of religious beliefs is not determined in consecutive days sober. Instead it is evident

in the change that occurs in the person's life (Participant #23, personal communication, December 2017)." In a similar way one participant stated, "I look for after care or follow up participation in support groups that can reinforce this new way of thinking and acting (Participant #25, personal communication, December 2017)." Although spiritual growth is internal, the evidence of this growth is external.

Summary

Chapter four summarizes the findings that were collected during the interviews of the participants. It revealed the themes of religion, spirituality, spirituality through recovery, faith, prayer and meditation, positives factors, willingness to discuss, personal experiences, and measures of spiritual growth. It shows that the personal beliefs of substance abuse counselors have an impact on the treatment experience because clients receive a more balanced approach to recovery that encompasses physical, emotional, and spiritual care.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The data that was collected was the result of a post-positivist qualitative study to help understand the positive and negative effects of spirituality among substance abuse counselors in the treatment experience. Twenty-five interviews were conducted in order to explore the impact that the spirituality of substance abuse counselors has during the treatment experience. Through a qualitative approach, interviews were collected and then analyzed for themes to assist in the research.

Discussion

One hundred percent of the participants believed that spirituality is important in the process of recovery. Listening to the participants and their personal experiences showed that spirituality in the recovery process is a necessity for long-term recovery because spirituality entails a re-ordering of one's values, which was commonly referred to as an "awakening". In order for the client to experience this change, the counselor plays a role in the process. During the interviews, it became apparent that the counselor's personal beliefs do contribute to the treatment process. The primary evidence of this was that their spirituality was largely described as a source of hope to clients who are willing to embrace it and a source of strength to deal with clients who were resistant to change.

Therefore, the most significant way that the counselor's personal beliefs impact the treatment experiences was that spirituality was a source of power to accomplish their responsibilities and without this source of power the counselor would be less effective in their efforts to help clients navigate the road to recovery.

The research revealed that willingness to discuss one's situation was a positive factor that impacts spirituality in a treatment setting. Willingness was identified as a central theme because it was contingent upon the counselor and the client. While discussing the topic of willingness, there was overall agreement that personal beliefs were not to be forced upon clients because it could negatively impact the client's willingness. If clients were resistant, it was best to role with the resistance and look for common ground to build rapport. The imperative in this scenario is that counselors see themselves as guides more than teachers. This resistance was commonly associated with the term, religion. Due to the personal and sensitive undertones of the word religion, many counselors focused on spirituality and the belief in a higher power.

In order for conversations about spirituality to be successful it requires willingness on both sides. Willingness from the client to listen and discuss and the willingness of the counselor to discuss and listen. Willingness on both sides creates the ability to utilize spirituality and is dependent upon eagerness and motivation. With the right guidance, clients see spirituality as a doorway to achieve their personal goals in recovery because social workers are placed in a

unique opportunity to help a client discover how spirituality creates personal power in the client's recovery.

The lesson that social workers learn from substance abuse counselors is that spirituality is influential in recovery and its benefits should be considered in other aspects of recovery. The field of social work has the opportunity to address areas of trauma, mental health, aging, and many others. Social workers are valuable because of their diverse skills. They have the knowledge and a skill set to address numerous challenges in order to assist in an individual's recovery. This is the result of spirituality being a practice that shares fundamental principles of behavioral and cognitive science (Miller, 1999). Due to a social worker's training in the field, social workers can use spirituality to assist the client in achieving their personal goals. Social workers would benefit from helping clients embrace spirituality in their recovery.

Limitations of Study Design and Procedures

After some consideration, the study has three indefinable limitations. One of the limitations of this study is the sample size. This particular study consisted of 25 interviews from one specified agency. The reason this is important to mention is that this is only the consensus of a small population. If the study consisted of a greater number of individuals it has the possibility to influence not just the number of results but also the themes and their rating of importance. Therefore, the negative factor of a small sample size is that it distorts the accuracy in numerical statistics and reduces the number of themes.

The second limitation is that the study does not obtain enough information to offer insight into cultural factors. Some examples of these cultural factors are socio-economic, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. These examples of cultural factors in a different setting could cause a change in the outcome of the results. The negative of a small sample size in relationship to cultural factors is that it limits the number of people for whom the results would apply. This particular research was conducted with individuals in Southern California and whose cultural factors would be vastly different than someone who lives in another part of the country. The field of recovery and substance abuse treatment is an expansive community that provides services to numerous populations and further study would need to incorporate such factors.

The third limitation of the small sampling size is that research was conducted with a program that embraces the 12 Step Model. The negative of this particular aspect is because the 12 Step Model embraces spirituality. Since spirituality plays such a significant part in the research, it is likely that the counselor's openness to spirituality influences the study. This specific limitation hinders the study because within the substance abuse field, there are other models of treatment. The negative side of this aspect is that it inflates the results. Consideration of this aspect, demonstrates a bias within the study and a need for further study to be conducted in other models of treatment.

Recommendations for Research

Professionals in the behavioral health field will most likely provide services to clients with substance abuse disorders. Those that are directly involved with individuals struggling with substance abuse disorders greatly benefit from understanding how spirituality impacts one's recovery. Substance abuse counselors are in the most strategic place in order to make an impact in the lives of those wanting services to assist them in their recovery. Further research in this field is needed in order to help more clinicians understand the way spirituality impacts those in recovery.

Summary

As previously mentioned, the topic of religion and spirituality is personal and sensitive. Discussion centered around religion is often discouraged in social settings, but during treatment for substance abuse there is an openness to discuss such a topic. The data shows that spirituality can make a difference if it is embraced. The study revealed that in this process the counselor plays a role in the process. When substance abuse counselors understand the importance of their own role and their own personal beliefs, there is the opportunity to guide clients in their own personal journey of recovery.

APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee

Researcher(s): Matthew Sasso

Proposal Title: Spirituality of Substance Abuse Counselor

SW1749

Your proposal has been reviewed by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board. The decisions and advice of those faculty are given below.

Proposal is:

approved

to be resubmitted with revisions listed below

to be forwarded to the campus IRB for review

Revisions that must be made before proposal can be approved:

faculty signature missing

missing informed consent debriefing statement

revisions needed in informed consent debriefing

data collection instruments missing

agency approval letter missing

CITI missing

revisions in design needed (specified below)



Committee Chair Signature

5/24/2017

Date

Distribution: White-Coordinator; Yellow-Supervisor; Pink-Student

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT



California State University, San Bernardino
Social Work Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee
APPROVED 5/24/2017 VOID AFTER 5/23/2018
IRB# SW1749 CHAIR [Signature]

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 impact of spirituality among substance abuse counselors. The study is being conducted by Matt Sasso, a student at the School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board Social Work Sub-committee, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the study is to examine the impact of personal beliefs among substance abuse counselors.

DESCRIPTION: Participants will be asked of a few questions on their experience as substance abuse counselors, and their personal beliefs about spirituality.

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 30 to 45minutes to complete the interview.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks to the participants.

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. Brooklyn Sapozhnikov, at Brooklyn.Sapozhnikov@csusb.edu.

RESULTS: Results of the study will be available (can be found) at the ScholarWorks (<http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/>) database at the Pfau Library, California State University, San Bernardino."

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

Name

Date

909.537.5501 909.537.7029

5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

The California State University - Bakersfield Channel Islands Chico Dominguez Hills East Bay Fresno Fullerton Humboldt Long Beach Los Angeles Maritime Academy Monterey Bay Northridge Pomona Sacramento San Bernardino San Diego San Francisco San Jose San Luis Obispo San Marcos Sonoma Stanislaus

APPENDIX C
DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 1: Gender

Gender	Percentage
Male	56%
Female	44%

Table 2: Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Percentage
Caucasian	56%
Hispanic	44%
African American	8%
Asian	8%
Middle Eastern	4%

Table 3: Religion

Religion	Percentage
Protestant	56%
Catholic	12%
Theist	20%
Jewish	8%
Muslim	4%

Table 4: Counselors in Recovery

Counselors in Recovery	Percentage
Recovering	68%
Non-Recovering	323%

Table 5: Spirituality Through Recovery

Spirituality Through Recovery	Percentage
Conversion	36%
Other	64%

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