

INSIGHT & *action*

A Newsletter of the Office of Research and Training at the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences

Social Relationships Influence Outcomes of Addiction Treatment for Women

--by Paul M. Kubek

Chemical dependency counselors and social workers can help women in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs maximize the outcomes of treatment and the benefits of sobriety by helping them find new ways to understand and manage relationships in their social networks, including relationships with family members, friends, and peers in treatment and twelve-step programs.

The emphasis on *managing relationships* is important, says Elizabeth Tracy, PhD, the Grace Longwell Coyle Professor in Social Work at the Mandel School. Women in recovery might find it difficult to break ties completely with people who pressure them to keep using alcohol and other drugs, because those people may be family members and friends who provide childcare and important sources of emotional, financial, and material support.

NIDA-FUNDED RESEARCH

Tracy is principal investigator of a recently completed \$1.1 million three-year longitudinal study that was funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), titled "Role of Personal Social Networks in Post-Treatment Functioning" (also called the Women's Network Project). The study was conducted in collaboration with three service organizations in Cleveland—Hitchcock Center for Women, Recovery Resources, and Women's Recovery Center—where many of the research interviews

were conducted. The study followed 377 Cleveland-area women who were 18 years of age or older at intake and had been diagnosed with substance dependence.

A majority of the women who agreed to participate in the research were African American (60 percent), followed by Caucasian (34 percent). Over two-fifths had been in jail or prison at some point in their lives and many had been exposed to traumatic events, including rape, the sudden death of a relative or close friend, and seeing someone injured or killed. Almost half had experienced homelessness. Almost three-fourths (73 percent) had been in chemical dependency treatment for abuse of cocaine, marijuana, or alcohol and have been diagnosed with a co-occurring mental illness.

The research examined characteristics of the women's social networks that helped or hindered the positive effects of treatment, including sobriety. Tracy is interested in social influences upon substance abuse, because her previous research has shown that family members and friends are likely to make or break recovery with their willingness to support treatment and abstinence. The study fills a gap in research literature, because most research of addiction has been conducted on men, even though approximately 6.5 million adult women in the United States have been diagnosed with substance use disorders. As a result, many



Elizabeth Tracy, PhD, Grace Longwell Coyle Professor in Social Work



Meeyoung O. Min, PhD, Research Assistant Professor of Social Work

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chemical dependency counselors and social workers do not have information that can help them improve interventions with women.

“My son needs to see the new people in my life and my friends today. He said something that hit me like a brick. When they asked him, ‘How will you know when your mother is using?’, he said, ‘By the company she keeps.’ My understanding of recovery is that it is an active change, ... and if I’m not connecting the dots—that social part of me—then I’m not gonna grow or change.”

--Research Participant

cohesiveness of social connections. *Network isolates* are people in a person’s life who are not connected to others in a social network. For instance, a trusted co-worker would be an isolate if he or she did not have regular contact with a person’s close friends and family members. The researchers controlled for treatment modality (residential vs. outpatient treatment) among other factors and found that network density and isolates were significant predictors of sobriety or continued use. A sample of the findings includes the following:

PREDICTORS OF SUBSTANCE USE

Tracy’s research measured social support and composition of the personal networks at four different times: at the onset of treatment, then at one month, six months, and 12 months after. The study had a retention rate of 81 percent.

Analyses of the longitudinal data uncovered the influence of network structural variables, which include density and isolates. *Network density* can be understood as the

- A greater number of substance users in a personal network at 6 months post-treatment intake and the presence of less support from friends were related to increased likelihood of substance use over 12 months.
- Co-occurring mental illness (dual disorder) increased the odds of substance use.
- Higher network density and higher number of network isolates were associated with lower odds of substance use.
- Women who did not use substances over 12 months had significantly more non-users among their network isolates.

MANAGING NETWORKS

According to Tracy and Co-Principal Investigator Meeyoung O. Min, PhD, research assistant professor of social work at the Mandel School, the data uncovered a strength in social networks that women can use to increase the support they need for sobriety. The strength is the existence of isolates, those people who are not connected to other people in a personal network.

“Having isolates who are more supportive of sobriety is important,” Tracy says.

Tracy and Min explain that chemical dependency counselors and social workers can help women achieve and maintain sobriety by helping them develop assertive yet respectful methods for disconnecting with substance users in their networks. The women may also benefit from interventions designed to help them build connections (increase network density), develop friendships that support abstinence, and increase the number of isolates who encourage sobriety. ■

Investigators

Investigators of “Role of Personal Social Networks in Post-Treatment Functioning,” a recently completed \$1.1 million three-year longitudinal study that was funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA):

- Elizabeth Tracy, PhD, Mandel School, Principal Investigator
- Lynn T. Singer, PhD, School of Medicine, Co-Investigator
- Meeyoung O. Min, PhD, Mandel School, Co-Investigator
- Alexandre Laudet, PhD, National Drug Research Institute (NDRI), Co-Investigator

Predictable Relationships Help Improve Outcomes for Toughest Juvenile Offenders in Ohio

—by Paul M. Kubek

There is some good news about juvenile justice in the State of Ohio. The number of admissions to state correctional facilities has been declining, mostly because of early intervention initiatives and diversion strategies that provide sanctions, rewards, and close monitoring of behavior in the community.

Yet, there are youth who are still in the facilities, and it is they who most concern David Hussey, PhD, associate professor of social work at the Mandel School and associate director of research at the School's Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education.

"They have the highest needs, present the highest risk, and are the most difficult to engage and retain in interventions," Hussey says. "A high percentage of them end up recidivating into either the juvenile or adult correctional systems."

Hussey understands these kids and the circumstances that contribute to their troubling outcomes. Many experience relationships that are battered and broken. They are also victims and witnesses to maltreatment and violence in their homes, neighborhoods, and schools.

Hussey has almost three decades of experience in social work practice and research and evaluation. He is a licensed mental health clinician and chemical dependency counselor who has worked with adolescents and adults in a variety of settings, including inpatient, outpatient, and residential treatment; foster care; schools; and juvenile justice facilities and programs. He joined the Mandel School faculty in the summer of 2012 and was recently appointed director of the School's Leadership Fellows Program, a social work master's degree initiative for individuals who are seeking a career in clinical leadership with a goal of implementing evidence-based practices in human service organizations.

TRAUMA, ADDICTION & BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS

Hussey is currently the lead evaluator of the Offender Reentry Program for Juveniles (ORP-J) in Cuyahoga County, a pre- and post-release intervention that utilizes a reentry court model headed by Magistrate Terease Neff. This highly coordinated approach integrates corrections, parole, and court staff with treatment providers. The collaboration is a three-year program funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and headed by Catholic Charities of Cleveland. The results of Hussey's research will help fill a gap in knowledge about the impact of multiple risk factors upon reentry.



David Hussey, PhD, Associate Professor of Social Work

Hussey is especially interested in this population of youth offenders, because a disproportionate number of them come from Cuyahoga County, where he has been a practicing clinical social worker for much of his career. Cleveland is the county seat. In 2011, for instance, 23 percent of (173 of the 738) admissions to the state juvenile correctional facilities were from Cuyahoga County. The other 77 percent came from a cross-section of Ohio's other 87 counties.

Hussey cites some statistics from the ORP-J project to highlight the dire circumstances faced by these youth, almost all of whom are male. Half have an immediate family member who is incarcerated. Over half (52 percent) have experienced victimization during their lifetime. More than 10 percent are parents and a significant number have a special education designation (39 percent). A high number (76 percent) have had prior mental health treatment and over half are receiving mental health services from the Ohio

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Department of Youth Services. The incidence of co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders is also significant. Other published studies show that youth with co-occurring disorders are more likely to return to jail or prison after release.

STRUCTURE OF ORP-J

Hussey explains that ORP-J currently serves 192 youth who are between the ages of 14 and 20. All have a felony offense as a juvenile and have been diagnosed with substance abuse or dependence.

ORP-J has a pre-release, release, and post-release phase, and in each, the youth interact with a consistent group of professionals, including a magistrate, parole officers, and case managers, among others. ORP-J uses evidence-based intake, assessment, and intervention strategies, including the Ohio Youth Assessment System (OYAS), which assesses for recidivism risk; the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs (GAIN-I) assessment, which assesses for health, mental health, substance abuse, legal and environmental risk factors; the Forward Thinking Curriculum, which focuses on setting and achieving reentry goals; Motivational Enhancement Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (MET/CBT-5); 10 months of comprehensive case management (four months pre-release and six months post-release); cognitive behavioral group services; family group therapy; regular drug screening, and weekly participation in reentry court.

RESULTS

The program is in its second year, and Hussey reports that 12-month outcomes for youth who have been followed up have been positive so far. There have been statistically significant decreases in drunkenness (3.1 days average prior to admission versus .6 days at 12-month follow-up); marijuana use (35 days versus 6.3 days); as well as decreases in levels of traumatic stress, conduct-disordered behavior, and criminal behavior, including general, property, interpersonal, and drug crime.

“I’ve worked on a number of reentry programs,” Hussey says. “I have not seen one implemented as well as this one. There’s tremendous continuity of personnel. Case managers providing services in the facilities are the same ones working closely with the parole officers who follow youth into the community. And the magistrate is also a consistent presence—the person who pulls it all together.”

Hussey adds that these relationships are often the most consistent and stable ones in the lives of these youth and appear to have a positive impact upon their abilities to manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors and to stay focused on the reentry goals that they have set for themselves, like finding a job, continuing their education, and remaining abstinent from alcohol and other drugs. ■

Hussey understands these kids and the circumstances that contribute to their troubling outcomes. Many experience relationships that are battered and broken. They are also victims and witnesses to maltreatment and violence in their homes, neighborhoods, and schools.



For more information about the Research and Training activities at the Mandel School, please contact David E. Biegel, Ph.D., Associate Dean for Research & Training (david.biegel@case.edu).

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