

University of Pretoria etd – Bain, K A (2004)

CHASED BY THE DRAGON:
THE EXPERIENCE OF RELAPSE IN COCAINE AND HEROIN USERS

by

KATHERINE ALISON BAIN

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MAGISTER ARTIUM
CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

in the

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

JANUARY 2004

*He is no hero who never met the dragon,
or who, if he once saw it, declared afterwards that he saw nothing.
Equally, only one who has risked the fight with the dragon and is not overcome by it
wins the hoard, the 'treasure hard to attain'.
He alone has a genuine claim to self-confidence,
for he has faced the dark ground of his self
and thereby has gained...
an inner certainty which makes him capable of self-reliance.*

Carl Gustav Jung

*Dedicated to my dragons and all those
who have helped me face them*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With grateful thanks to:

- Professor J.B. Schoeman for his patience, wisdom and support. The ability he has to make words and ideas exciting is a gift.
- The participants in the study. I am grateful for their honesty and willingness to face their dragons.
- The management and staff of Phoenix House for all their assistance. A special note of thanks to Adrie for putting up with all the phone calls.
- Debra, Hannes and Jocelyn for their ideas and a collective sense of humour that kept me sane.
- Sarah for all the commiseration only a best friend can offer.
- Kate for your endless willingness to help with editing and your superhuman efficiency.
- Lastly, to my parents and my sister for a lifetime of encouragement and support, and two lifetimes' worth of patience in the last three months.

CONTENTS

SUMMARY.....	viii
OPSOMMING.....	x

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2 RESEARCH GOAL.....	3
1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY.....	3
1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	7
1.5 USE OF TERMINOLOGY IN THE STUDY.....	8
1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN.....	10
1.7 BRIEF DISCUSSION OF THE FOLLOWING CHAPTERS.....	12

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	13
2.2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF COCAINE AND HEROIN.....	13
2.3 CURRENT THEORETICAL CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF COCAINE AND HEROIN ABUSE AND RELAPSE.....	14
2.3.1 Systems perspective of cocaine and heroin abuse and relapse.....	15
2.3.1.1 Introduction.....	15
2.3.1.2 Cybernetics.....	15
2.3.1.3 Family systems approach.....	17

2.3.1.4	The Medical Research Institute approach.....	21
2.3.1.5	Conclusion.....	22
2.3.2	The medical model.....	22
2.3.2.1	Introduction.....	22
2.3.2.2	The psychopharmacological effects of cocaine and heroin.....	22
2.3.2.3	Addiction as a biological process.....	23
2.3.2.4	Environmental cues.....	23
2.3.2.5	Conclusion.....	24
2.3.3	The cognitive-behavioural approach.....	24
2.3.3.1	Introduction.....	24
2.3.3.2	Cognitive-behavioural approach to substance abuse and relapse.....	24
2.3.3.3	Conclusion.....	27
2.3.4	The psychodynamic approach.....	27
2.3.4.1	Introduction.....	27
2.3.4.2	Psychodynamic understanding of substance abuse and relapse.....	27
2.3.4.3	Common defenses within the psychodynamic perspective.....	30
2.3.4.4	Conclusion.....	32
2.3.5	Archetypal-mythological approach.....	33
2.3.5.1	Introduction.....	33
2.3.5.2	The mythological context of substance abuse.....	34
2.3.5.3	Archetypes of substance abuse.....	35
2.3.5.4	Conclusion.....	36
2.4	INTEGRATION OF COCAINE AND HEROIN ABUSE MODELS.....	37
2.4.1	Addiction as a biopsychosocial process.....	37
2.4.2	Combining treatment approaches.....	41
2.4.3	Conclusion.....	42
2.5	CONCEPTS IMPLICATED IN RELAPSE.....	42
2.5.1	Craving.....	42
2.5.2	Identity.....	44
2.5.3	Coping styles.....	48
2.5.4	Control and powerlessness.....	50

2.5.5 Loneliness.....	54
2.6 HEROIN VERSUS COCAINE: THE DIFFERENCES.....	55
2.7 CONCLUSION.....	58

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	60
3.2 RESEARCH METHOD.....	60
3.2.1 Implications of a broad systems approach for research.....	60
3.2.2 Motivation for using a qualitative research approach.....	61
3.2.3 Motivation for using semi-structured interviews.....	62
3.3 RECRUITING OF PARTICIPANTS.....	63
3.3.1 Phoenix House.....	63
3.3.2 Selection criteria of participants.....	63
3.4 THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS.....	64
3.5 DATA ANALYSIS.....	66
3.6 CONFIDENTIALITY.....	69
3.7 CONCLUSION.....	70

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	71
4.2 THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY.....	71
4.3 CONTEXT OF THE INTERVIEWS.....	73
4.3.1 Phoenix House and the 12-Step approach.....	74

4.3.2	The 12-Step approach, the disease model and the biopsychosocialspiritual model.....	75
4.3.3	The influence of the 12-Step approach on this study.....	76
4.4	CONTEXTUAL FACTORS IN RELAPSE.....	78
4.4.1	The family situations of the interviewees.....	78
4.4.2	The social situations of the interviewees.....	81
4.5	THEMES AND SUBTHEMES IN RELAPSE.....	84
4.5.1	Introduction.....	84
4.5.2	Control and powerlessness.....	84
4.5.3	Trust.....	91
4.5.4	Splitting.....	96
4.5.5	Denial.....	102
4.5.6	Detachment.....	106
4.5.7	Loneliness.....	111
4.6	INTEGRATION OF THEMES.....	119
4.6.1	Lack of an integrated identity.....	119
4.6.2	The game without end.....	121
4.6.3	A process of self-destruction.....	127
4.7	HEROIN AND COCAINE: THE DIFFERENCES IN RELAPSE EXPERIENCES.....	128
4.8	CONCLUSION.....	129

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1	INTRODUCTION.....	130
5.2	RELAPSE AS AN ESCAPE FROM EMOTION.....	130
5.3	THE ROLE OF A LACK OF AN INTEGRATED IDENTITY IN SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND RELAPSE.....	132

5.4 THE ROLE OF CONTROL AND COPING IN SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND RELAPSE.....	137
5.5 THE ROLE OF LONELINESS IN SUBSTANCE ABUSE RELAPSE.....	140
5.6 THE SELF-DESTRUCTIVE GAME WITHOUT END.....	143
5.7 CONCLUSION.....	154

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION.....	155
6.2 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THIS STUDY.....	155
6.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	156
6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS.....	157
6.5 CONCLUSION.....	158
REFERENCE LIST.....	159

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to describe the subjective psychological experience of relapse in cocaine/crack and heroin users with the aim of identifying the significant cognitive, emotional and social themes involved in relapse. A better understanding of relapse may aid in providing more effective treatment for substance users. Both the intra- and interpsychic factors involved in relapse that emerge from the study are viewed from within a broad systems theory approach. In this study, not only the whole system is of relevance, but also the subsystems. Various sub systems are also identified to allow for the recognition of patterns, functions and recursive feedback loops that maintain substance-using behaviour. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the context surrounding substance abuse and the substance users assumes vital importance. The interrelationships between the various intrapsychic structures, the family unit, the social contexts, the drugs themselves and the physiological aspects of substance abuse are identified.

A qualitative research design was applied. In-depth semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from the eight participants, who were crack and heroin users who attended the in-patient rehabilitation programme at Phoenix House. Seven of the participants were still in the in-patient rehabilitation programme at the time of the interview, while one participant was in the aftercare programme. All have been through a rehabilitation process before and were at Phoenix House due to a relapse. A thematic analysis was conducted and the process of analysis settled on eight overall themes. Extensive descriptions of these themes are provided. The discussion highlights the role of relapse in the cycle of self-destruction that constitutes substance abuse, in addition to the role relapse plays in the process of recovery. Connection seems to be the key to breaking the cycle of alienation that users experience. Falling into the trap of rejecting users without looking beyond their behaviour allows them to continue functioning in a way that confirms their view of themselves as unlovable, which, in turn, maintains their behaviour. Although systems theory is an independent approach in its own right, the nature of its view allows for the incorporation of other approaches. Where possible and relevant, other theories are incorporated into the discussion of the results, with the aim of gaining

an integrated understanding of the findings of the study within the broader field of substance abuse.

KEY TERMS

Relapse; substance abuse; substance dependence; heroin use; cocaine/crack use; identity; control; coping; denial; detachment; splitting; repression; suppression; self-destruction; systems theory; cybernetics; psychodynamics

OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie studie is om die subjektiewe sielkundige ervaring van terugvalle in kokaiën en heroïengebruikers te beskryf met die doel om kritieke emosionele, kognitiewe en sosiale temas te identifiseer. Die beter verstaan van terugvalle kan behulpsaam wees in die voorsiening van meer effektiewe behandeling aan substansmisbruikers. Beide intrapsigiese en interpsigiese faktore word ontleed aan die hand van 'n brêe sistemies-teoretiese benadering. In die studie word aan beide volledige, sowel as sub-sisteme aandag gegee. Dele van die sisteme word ook geïdentifiseer om die herkenning van patrone, funksies en terugkerende terugvoersiklusse wat die substansgebruikende gedrag onderhou, te fasiliteer. As gevolg van die kwalitatiewe onderbou van die studie, sal die kontekstuele omgewing van substansmisbruik en van die substansmisbruiker 'n sentrale rol speel. Die interverwantskappe tussen intrapsigiese strukture, die familie eenheid, die sosiale konteks, die dwelms en die fisiologiese aspekte van substansmisbruik word geïdentifiseer.

'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsontwerp is in die studie gebruik. In-diepte, semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude is gebruik om data van die agt deelnemers te verkry. Sewe van die agt deelnemers was binne-pasiënte in 'n rehabilitasieprogram by Phoenix House; een was in 'n nasorgprogram. Hulle het ook almal voorheen deelgeneem aan 'n rehabilitasieprogram by Phoenix House en is weer opgeneem as gevolg van terugvalle. 'n Tematiese analise is gebruik om die rou data te verwerk en daar is op agt hoofemas besluit. Gedetailleerde bespreking van die agt temas word onderneem. Die bespreking fokus op die rol wat terugvalle speel in die proses van herstel. Dit wil voorkom asof verbintenis die sletuel is om die siklus van isolasie en verwydering wat substansmisbruikers ervaar, te verbreek. Deur die verwerping van substansmisbruikers sonder om verder as hulle gedrag te let, blyk dit dat hierdie verwerping hulle toelaat om voort te gaan met die manier waarop hulle funksioneer. Die verwerping blyk die substansmisbruiker se beeld van homself as onwaardig, te beklemtoon, wat die misbruikgedrag onderhou. Alhoewel sisteemteorie 'n onafhanklike teorie in eie reg is, laat dit spasie vir die inkorporering van ander teoretiese benaderings. Soos toepaslik en relevant, is ander teorieë geïnkorporeer in die bespreking van die resultate, met die doel

om 'n geïntegreerde beeld van die bevindinge in die studie, asook die breër veld van substansmisbruik, te verkry.

SLEUTEL TERME

Terugvalle; substansmisbruik; substansafhanlikheid; heroïen gebruik; kokaiën gebruik; identiteit; beheer; hantering; ontkenning; afgetrokenheid; splitsing; regressie; onderdrukking; selfvernietiging; sisteemteorie; kubernetika; psigodinamika.