

The Culture of Recovery in  
America:  
Recent Developments &  
Their Significance

Bill White

Chestnut Health Systems

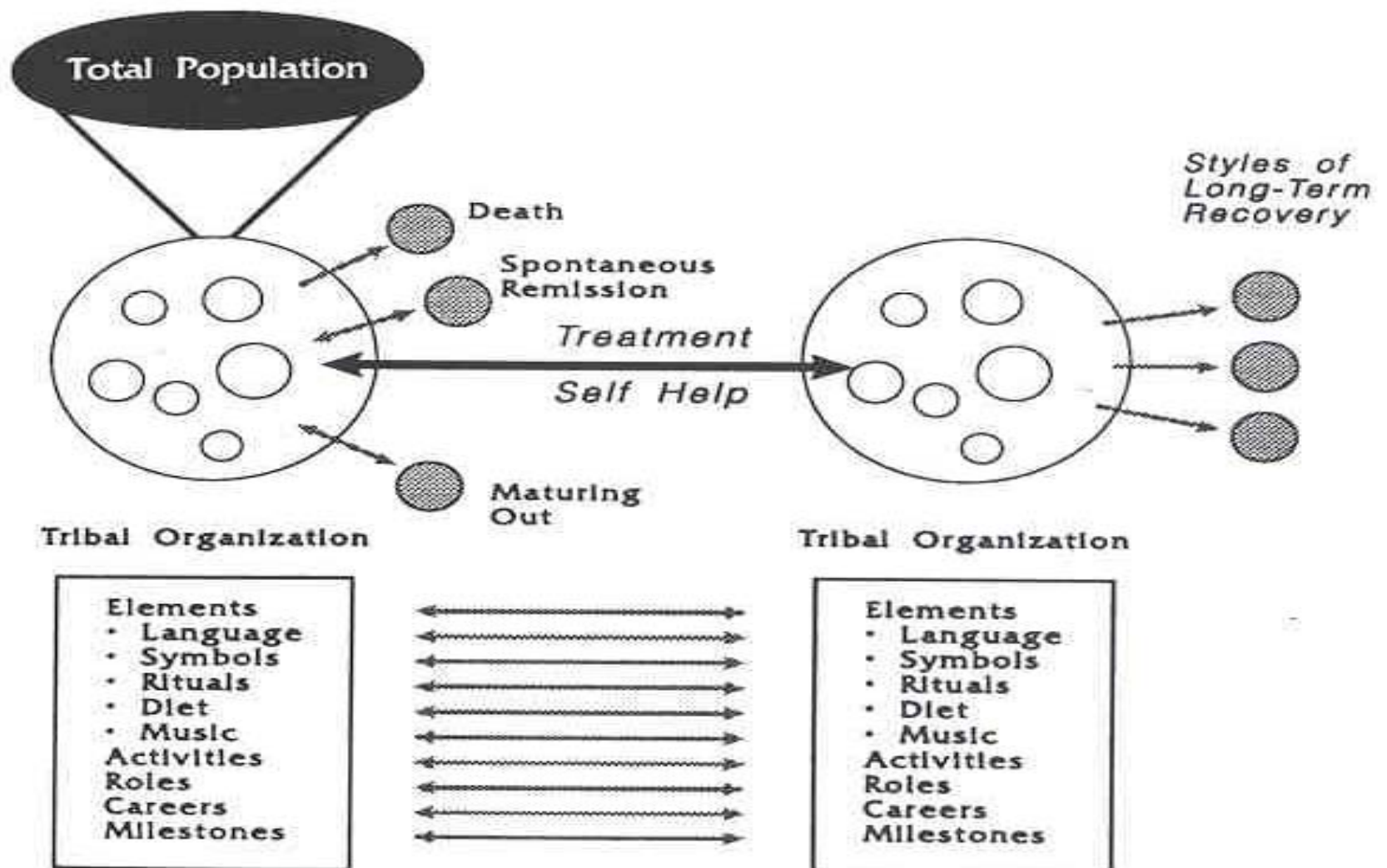
Email: [bwhite@chestnut.org](mailto:bwhite@chestnut.org)

# The Ecology of Addiction Recovery

1990: The Culture of Addiction, The Culture of Recovery

Transition from addiction to recovery often a journey between two quite distinct worlds.

# A Cultural Model of Addiction and Recovery



# Early Definition of Culture of Recovery

- Focused on Twelve Step Groups (AA and NA in particular) and fledgling alternatives
- Spoke of “recovery community” in singular
- Recommended assertive approaches to disengaging clients from C of A and linking clients to resources within the C of R
- Today, the doorway of entry into recovery is widening as are resources to enhance quality of life in recovery.

# Presentation Goals

1. Provide a historical update of the culture of recovery in America to include a review of diverse communities of recovery and emergence of cultural institutions beyond mutual aid societies.
2. Explore the implications of these changes for addiction professionals

# Recovery: From Self-help to Social Movement

Parallels with other modern social movements (civil rights, women's liberation, LGBT rights)

1. Institution Building
2. Cultural Development

# Institution Building

- National/Local Leadership Organizations
- Public Education & Media
- Law & Policy, e.g., discrimination
- Educational Access & Equity
- Business, Industry & Labor Practices
- Health Care Access, Equity & Response to Special Concerns
- Mobilization or Challenge to Religious Institutions

# Cultural Development

- Reconstruction of History
- Identity Reconstruction
- Language Audit & Construction
- Values Definition
- New Symbols
- Musical Anthems
- Artistic Expression
- Literature

# Culture of Recovery Update

- Recovery Support Societies
- New Recovery Advocacy Movement
- Spread of Grassroots Recovery Community Organizations & Recovery Support Centers
- Recovery Home Movement
- Recovery School Movement
- Recovery Ministries, Churches & Colonies

# Recovery Mutual Aid

- Growth of Twelve Step Groups
- Growing varieties of Twelve Step experience
- Dramatic growth in total membership
- Geographical dispersion in U.S. and internationally
- Diversification of recovery frameworks

# Spiritual Frameworks of Recovery

Twelve-Step Groups, e.g., -AA (1935) and NA (1947, 1953)

Primary Drug Adaptations: marijuana (1968, 1989), prescription drugs, (1975, 1998), cocaine (1982) nicotine (1985), benzodiazepine (1989), methamphetamine (?), heroin (?), persons in recovery on methadone (1991) & generic groups i.e., Recoveries Anonymous (1983) Chemical Dependent Anonymous (1988)

Non-Twelve Step, Spiritual Alternatives  
--The Red Road to Wellbriety

# Further Specialization

## Family

Al-Anon (1951), Alateen (1957), Families Anonymous (1971), Recovering Couples Anonymous (1988) & Teen-Anon (1999)

Emergence of Concept of "Family Recovery"

# Further Specialization

## Occupational

International Doctors in Alcoholics Anonymous (1949), Lawyers (1975), Anesthetists (1984), Nurses (1988), Veterinarians (1990), etc.

# Further Specialization

Co-Occurring Problem

Dual Disorders Anonymous (1982), Dual Recovery Anonymous (1989), Double Trouble in Recovery (1993)

Criminal Justice

Inner Circle

Winner's Circle/Community

# Meeting Specialization

- Gender
- Age or duration of sobriety
- Ethnicity
- Sexual orientation
- Smoking status
- Degree of religiosity
- Endless varieties of meeting formats

# Secular Recovery Support Groups

- Women for Sobriety (1975)
- Secular Organization for Sobriety / Save Our Selves (1985)
- Rational Recovery (1986)
- Men for Sobriety (1988)
- SmartRecovery® (1994)
- Moderation Management (1994)
- LifeRing Secular Recovery (1999)

# Religious Recovery Support Groups

- Calix Society (1947)
- Alcoholics Victorious (1948)
- Teen Challenge (1961)
- Alcoholics for Christ (1976)
- JACS (1979)
- Celebrate Recovery, Free N' One, Ladies Victorious, Overcomers in Christ, Liantamers Anonymous, Mountain Movers, Millati Islami

# Important Resource

Mutual Support Resources updated every 30 days at Faces and Voices of Recovery Web Site

[http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/resources/support\\_home.php](http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/resources/support_home.php)

# Update on Science of Recovery Support

Emerging Recovery Research Agenda

Key Findings Emerging on:

- Recovery Prevalence
- Diversity of Recovery Pathways
- Active Ingredients
- Additive Effects to Treatment
- Best Linkage Procedures
- Point of Recovery Stability

# New Recovery Advocacy Movement

## History

2001 Recovery Summit in St. Paul

Influence of CSAT's RCSP and ATR

## National Organization

Faces and Voices of Recovery

NCADD

Johnson Institute

Legal Action Center

# Movement Goals

- **Political/Cultural Mobilization of Communities of Recovery**
- **Recovery-focused Public & Professional Education**
- **Advocacy of Pro-recovery Laws & Social Policies**
- **Push for Recovery-focused Redesign of Treatment**
- **Promotion of Peer-based Recovery Support Services**
- **Recovery Celebration**
- **Promotion of Recovery Research**



by our  
silence  
we let  
others  
define  
us

How will anyone know about  
recovery from addiction if we don't tell them?  
Will we continue to allow stigma, shame and  
misunderstanding to destroy our friends,  
our families, and our communities?

**How will anyone know?**



**Be an Agent of Change!**

Join the Missouri Recovery Network and support the Face and Voice of Recovery!

Toll-free 877-669-2280 [www.morecovery.org](http://www.morecovery.org)





WE ARE THE  
FACES OF RECOVERY

Recovery is *everywhere*.

[www.recovery.org](http://www.recovery.org)





# Grassroots Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs)

- Organized by and on behalf of communities of recovery
- Focus on advocacy, education and peer support services
- Establishing Recovery Support Centers, e.g., CCAR's Network of RSCs in CT
- Some contracting to do telephone-based, post-treatment recovery checkups

# Recovery Home Movement

- Halfway Houses (1950s) to Social Model Rehabilitation Programs (1970s)
- Oxford House (1975) (1,200 homes, 48 states, 24,000 residents per year)
- Federal Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 (Loan Fund)
- Broader Recovery Home Movement
- Philadelphia Survey (21 funded; 250 unfunded)

# Recovery School Movement

- High School and Collegiate Levels
- Association of Recovery Schools (2002)
- Key Elements
  - Active recruitment of people in recovery
  - Scholarships
  - On-campus recovery support
  - Academic mentoring
- \* Early Evaluations (high rates of continuous recovery & academic excellence)

# Recovery Industries

- Formats range from “recovery friendly” (Zingerman’s Deli, Venturetech) to “recovery exclusive” employers (Recovery at Work)
- Preparatory or Permanent Employment
- Core Elements:
  - Skill training
  - Work-based peer recovery coaching
  - Linkage to recovery communities
  - Establishment of legitimate work history

# Recovery Ministries, Churches & Colonies

- "Recovery friendly churches"
- Mega-churches with a "recovery pastor"
- Lay leaders of recovery support groups
- recovery-focused worship services and workshops
- Recovery Churches, e.g., Central Park Recovery Church in St. Paul
- Faith-based recovery colonies, e.g., Dunklin Memorial Camp in Okeechobee, Florida
- National Association for Christian Recovery

# Cultural Development Between (rather than within) Communities of Recovery

- Identity Reconstruction
- Reconstruction of History
- A New Language
- Values Definition
- New Symbols
- Musical Anthems
- Artistic Expression
- Literature

# Implications for Addiction Professionals

1. We must all become students of American Communities of Recovery
2. We (recovering and non-recovering) can play key roles in the new recovery advocacy movement and local recovery community development
3. We must help re-engineer addiction treatment toward a greater focus on long-term recovery.

# Implications for Addiction Professionals

4. The growing diversity of communities of recovery calls for use of a philosophy of choice with clients in addiction Tx.
5. We must move towards more assertive models of linkage to recovery support societies and larger recovery support institutions.
6. We must begin to see the community as our client—openness to models of community organization and community/cultural development

# Primary References

- White, W. (in press). "With a Little Help from my Friends": The mobilization of community resources to support long-term addiction recovery. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*.
- White, W. (in press) The culture of recovery in America: Recent developments and their significance. *Counselor*,