
Elements Of Bio-Psycho-Social Plus (BPS+) Model In The Film The Spectacular Now

The Spectacular Now directed by James Ponsoldt is quite the interesting coming of age film. The element that sets this film apart from many other films in this genre is the emphasis on teenage alcoholism.

The focus of the film is on protagonist Sutter Keely, a laid back and charismatic high school senior that everyone knows as a party animal. From very early on in the film, it is evident that Sutter has a growing dependence on alcohol. In fact, the very first scene of the film is Sutter drinking a bottle of beer while attempting to compose an overdue essay for a college application. Upset after being broken up with by his girlfriend, Sutter gets drunk and is woken up on a stranger's lawn by Aimee Finecky. Aimee is very different than Sutter; she's a quiet and shy bookworm who is a less popular student in Sutter's school. While Aimee has promising plans for her future, Sutter is stuck in the deception of the "spectacular now". Sutter begins to spend time with Aimee in hopes that he can break her out of her shell but falls for her in the process. Sutter does in fact help Aimee gain more confidence, however, she also begins to drink along with him. Ultimately, Sutter's dependence on alcohol begins to flourish as different events in his life begin to unfold.

Through the scenes in the film, it becomes evident that Sutter's addiction can be viewed from biological, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual dimensions. These five dimensions are the essence of the Bio-Psycho-Social Plus (BPS+) Model presented by Herie and Skinner (2014). The biological dimension of the BPS+ model focuses on addiction as a deviation from proper brain and body functioning. It views addiction as a cause of chemical imbalances in the brain or as a kind of inherited brain disease. The effects of alcohol are psychoactive. According to Herie and Skinner (2010) in Substance Abuse in Canada, "alcohol acts on neurons in the brain, cells that communicate with other parts of the brain, spinal column and peripheral nerves". Alcohol is considered a depressant and therefore slows the communication between the neurons and results in uncommon behaviour. Furthermore, alcohol acts on the part of the brain that controls consciousness, the cerebellum, which controls coordination, the hippocampus, which controls memory, and the frontal lobes, which control judgment and emotion. In addition, Gabor Maté (2008), in the Realm of Hungry Ghosts, states, "in a study of alcoholics, opioid receptor activity was diminished in several brain regions, and this was associated with increased alcohol craving". All of these elements are evident in The Spectacular Now through the characterization of Sutter.

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

As mentioned, Sutter passes out on a stranger's lawn after a night of too much drinking. This is evidence of the impairment of his consciousness. Sutter's coordination is impaired as he drives after drinking in multiple occasions throughout the film and swerves through the lanes as well as smashes into a pole in front of his home. Sutter's memory, judgment and emotion are impaired as he forgets where his car is when he is found passed out on the lawn. They are also affected when he kisses Aimee at a party and tells her he will take her to the prom but forgets about it until the next morning when everything slowly begins to come back to him. In addition to the impairment of Sutter's brain and behavioural functioning, his alcohol addiction can be viewed as an inherited brain disease. For most of the film, Sutter's father is completely out of the picture. He lives alone with his single mother who works a lot to try and make ends meet for the both of them. The absence of this parental contact, both in his childhood and in his adolescence, makes him more vulnerable to addiction as he uses alcohol to try and make up for what his brain is lacking. Sutter makes a comment fairly close to the beginning of the film stating that his first beer was given to him at the age of six by his father. Although Sutter has great interest in meeting his father, his mother does not allow him to make any contact with him.

Finally, after being influenced by Aimee to stand up to his mother and make his own decisions, Sutter pays a visit to his sister who gives him their father's number and address. Sutter calls his father and makes arrangements to see him with Aimee. When they first get there Sutter's father does not seem to remember that he has made arrangements to meet with his son. It is at this point where it begins to become evident that Sutter's father is intoxicated. It becomes even more evident when he suggests Sutter meets him at a bar down the road for drinks. When they get there, they go through three pitchers of beer. Not only is it obvious that Sutter's father suffers from alcohol dependence, it also becomes clear that he has an addiction to tobacco as he has a cigarette in his mouth for most of the time that he appears in the film.

From the stance of the biological dimension of the BPS+ model, by Sutter being exposed to his father's drinking at young age as well as his father's clearly continuing addictions, Sutter developed a predisposition and greater susceptibility to the addiction. This can also be related to Aimee whose parents we come to find out throughout the film suffer from addictions as well. Her mother suffers a gambling addiction, which becomes evident through Aimee's dialogue about how she abandons her newspaper trail duties and leaves Aimee and her brother to fend for themselves so that she can go to the casino every night. Aimee also briefly mentions that her father died from his addiction to painkillers. This being said, Aimee's evident developing addiction to alcohol could be caused by an inheritance of the addictive qualities. Both Aimee and Sutter's inheritance of addiction can be related to Marine Woodrow's chapter in *Addicted* by Crozier and Lane. Woodrow mentions that after living with her father's alcoholism throughout her whole childhood, she begins to develop a dependence of it in her adulthood. Ultimately, alcohol disrupts self-regulation, which is needed in order to choose not to be an addict, and therefore makes Sutter and Aimee more vulnerable to the addiction of alcohol.

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

The psychological dimension of the BPS+ model of addiction focuses on state of mind in a way that emphasizes the urges and motivations that drive a person to a particular behaviour. This dimension also concentrates on outer rewards and punishments that might maintain and shape behaviours as well as disinhibit them. The psychological dimension puts great emphasis on the addictive personality that develops from a person's stress. Maté (2008) argues that "stress is a major cause of continuous drug dependence". Herie and Skinner (2010) state that some psychological affects that may motivate a person to drink include "slight euphoria, enhanced confidence and relaxation, and decreased inhibitions". We see plenty of evidence of these factors in both Sutter and Aimee throughout the film. It becomes obvious throughout the film that what drives Sutter to drink is the pain of the many events that occur throughout his life. It is clear that Sutter drinks as a way to escape the thoughts of his girlfriend breaking up with him. In fact, Sutter goes directly to a bar after the incident occurs and gets drunk. In addition, on many occasions we see Sutter drink as a way to boost his confidence, to loosen up and to feel better about himself. This is clear when his ex-girlfriend gets upset at him for always being drunk and unable to be serious, especially when thinking of the future. Aimee also uses alcohol to boost her confidence as she is afraid of standing up to her mother who puts a lot of responsibility on her as well as to her best friend who is always on her back about her personal life decisions, such as hanging out with Sutter.

Furthermore, stress plays a large role in Sutter's life and therefore makes him more susceptible to his alcohol addiction. It is evident that much of Sutter's stress is derived from the fact that he lived most of his life with no father figure. He spent much of life thinking of his father and when he actually met him it was not the outcome he expected. Though he uses alcohol to try to hide it, Sutter is also clearly stressed about his future. While all his classmates are getting accepted into colleges, Sutter can't even bring himself to compose an essay for his application. Towards the end of the film, it becomes known that Sutter is afraid of failure, letting people down, hurting people and also getting hurt so his urges to drink come from wanting to hide these feelings to protect himself.

Another aspect of the psychological dimension of the BPS+ model is Sutter's growing tolerance of alcohol. This is evident when he makes Aimee try the liquor in his flask and she nearly spits it out. When she asks Sutter how he drinks it so easily, his response is that he is used to it. Therefore, as the film progresses, he needs more and more alcohol to experience the psychological rewards of it. Sutter also loses his job towards the end of the film when his boss gives him the ultimatum to either continue working or stop coming to work drunk or drinking on the job. Sutter declines the offer as he admits that he is not able to do this and therefore is left with no job.

The social dimension of the BPS+ model of addiction focuses on the influences of the people and environment around the addict. This dimension also emphasizes modeled and valued

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

behaviours, as well as behaviours that become normalized and legalized in society. The way specific behaviours are promoted can also have a direct impact on an addict as they become more susceptible to them. Social and environmental factors are very influential in both the nature and rate of substance use and abuse. In *The Spectacular Now*, much of Sutter's drinking is done in a social context. He is in fact considered the life of the party by many of his classmates and seems to be well known for getting and supplying alcohol for them. As David Nutt states in *Drugs Without the Hot Air* the "...widespread availability and social acceptability of alcohol make becoming dependent more likely". Near the beginning of the film, Sutter opens his trunk and reveals a cooler filled with beer cans. He also always carries a flask filled with liquor in his pocket, revealing the availability of the alcohol to him. The elements of the social dimension could also be related to Sutter's childhood where he experienced his father's drinking and therefore carried on the behaviour through the modeling of it. This dimension can also be applied to Aimee who was never a drinker before being exposed to both Sutter's drinking and the parties he brings her to, where almost everyone has a drink in hand. Sutter even goes as far as to buy Aimee her own flask, which she begins to use daily, showing that Sutter's influence made her more susceptible to develop a dependence on alcohol. In addition, those who find it difficult to maintain or form lasting relationships are more vulnerable to addiction. This is evident as Sutter's relationship with his ex-girlfriend falls apart and his relationship with Aimee does not last as he begins to feel he is not good enough for her. It is also obvious that Sutter does not have many close friends.

The cultural dimension of the BPS+ model of addiction focuses on the integration and connection to culture and personal identity as a vulnerability to addiction. It is evident in the film that Sutter struggles with his personal identity. He does not seem to know how he wants to live his life. He has no plans for the future or any idea of the kind of person he wants to be. For Sutter, it is much easier to be the party animal everyone knows and loves. In addition, much of the peer culture Sutter is surrounded by is not one that will help with his addiction, as their party lifestyles do not provide alternatives for Sutter's dependence. The spiritual dimension of the BPS+ model of addiction focuses on strong religious affiliation as being less vulnerable to addiction. This dimension also emphasizes recovery in 12-step groups as well as promotes mindfulness and self-control. When people are able to connect with their outside world and come to the realization of their problems, they are able to find a means of recovery. There is no obvious religious affiliation for Sutter in the film. However, towards the end of the film Sutter starts to become aware for his alcohol addiction. He realizes that his drinking not only rids him of the pain he feels inside but it also shuts out everything and everyone around him. His dependence left him with no close relationships, no friends, and no job.

Although his alcoholism is never resolved in the film, it does end with Sutter admitting that he needs to focus on his self-control. Sutter continues to complete the essay for his college application and promises to pull himself together. He finally realizes that life is not always about

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

[GET HELP](#)

living in the now and that his alcohol dependence made him miss out on many good things in his life.

gradesfixer.com

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP