

Research Identity Memo

As I contemplate my research study, questions and method, I feel curious and worried. The potential to propose a study that could provide meaningful information is both daunting and exciting. In many ways, I feel isolated and insecure. On my island, I am the only one that I know of, involved in this kind of work and as I grapple with limitless potential and the limitations of work in the mental health field: I experience paralysis; where do I begin, how do I start? All answers seem elusive. But I am pressing on.

The topic of the perception of counseling services from adults within the church resonates with me strongly. In a lot of ways, I myself wrestle with the vernacular connotations of mental health. I grew up in a conservative brethren church, where solid doctrine was taught and the Bible held all of the answers to life's problems. 1 Peter 5:7 says to "...cast all of our cares on him, because he cares for you." This foundation led me in a lot of ways to the belief that you only go to God for help. I believe this and I struggle with reconciling that counseling also helps. I suppose in some ways what I am hoping to discover and explore in others is also present in myself. Counseling is not a separation from God but rather a safe space to help others navigate their struggles and obstacles.

As a native Bahamian, I have often attributed my life journey which has largely been a positive, and meaningful journey to the environment my parents created for me, the power of the village, and by extension my island and nation. Upon completion of my Bachelors and Masters degree, I wanted to give back to my community directly. While I enjoy travelling and visiting other countries, there is no place like home. This perspective has led me to question myself "How can I help individuals in my community to better themselves and their lives with the knowledge that I have acquired"?

In the high school where I started back in 2006, after a few years, I saw the need for so many persons other than students who needed counseling services and there were no places on the island. I saw where parents needed help, other guardians needed help and I wanted to help them. This led me to further studies to acquire more knowledge and build upon what I already knew in counseling.

As a Christian Nation, in The Bahamas there are a lot of subtle nuances that exist, there are just as many churches as there are liquor stores. Most citizens have a quiet reverence for the church and act accordingly as needed. Some of my assumptions include: people may see needing counselling help as an inability to solve their own problems, if as churches teach: the bible has all of the answers – why would I need to go to counseling? What can another human being provide to help me out? On an island where quite a bit of people knows a lot of people; they are afraid to take a risk of sharing their private information. Can the counselor really be trusted?

Perhaps they view the idea of psychology and mental health as a little wacky or crazy, or that they may be brainwashed. I believe all of these assumptions exist, and I am truly curious to learn of what people are thinking when it comes to Mental Health. Maybe, they have no clue about what it really means and by extension they have allowed the fear of the unknown to reside in

their minds. Sometimes people are really afraid of what they can learn because it might demand something of them and they are quite content to stay in their neatly, carved box of life.

My position and belief system is- a faith in God, acceptance of his son Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, and a decision to follow his teachings as a Christian. Due to sin, I believe that the world will forever be fraught with troubles. As we journey in this world, I believe that God has inspired different men and women to invent, create, and work in many fields to bring about relief for individuals. Ultimately, I believe that God wants to work through willing vessels so that individuals can experience the abundant life that is still possible on this earth firstly from accepting the gift of salvation through his son Jesus Christ, and secondly living out that daily life to fulfill his purposes for our individuals lives.

The more that I reflect on this study, my thoughts wander to my objectivity and ability to stay true to the data. Will I be able to separate my thoughts from whatever the data may be, should there be a conflict? I would like to think that I can. My strongest desire in this study is to discover the truth of what people have experienced.

This is where I am at the moment through describing the beginning phase of this research study. I shall continue writing as I further develop questions, and expand my journal.