

The present issue of the journal contains three articles on several distinct, yet related areas of concern. "American Indians, Stress, and Alcohol," by Mail, reexamines the relationship between stress and alcohol consumption within this special population. She begins by reviewing current definitions and thinking in regard to stress, gradually linking these various views to the role and function of alcohol consumption in Indian and Native communities. This discussion serves as a backdrop for her careful review and update of studies of alcohol abuse/dependence, that suggest a range of causal factors, many of which can be understood in terms of different forms of stress. Mail then shifts the focus to her central question: "Does psychogenic stress -- a physiologic response to a perceived stressor that may in itself induce disease -- contribute to the high risk of alcohol abuse/dependence that is characteristic of many Indian and Native communities?" "Yes," she concludes, based upon her synthesis of results yielded by other lines of inquiry and extrapolation of them to the Indian/Native context. Mail subsequently calls for broadening the research agenda with respect to the interaction among Indian/Native people, stress, and alcoholism to include physiological conditions that may have important implications for the genesis of this illness as well as its prevention and treatment.

As Schacht and her colleagues point out in their article, "Home-based Therapy with American Indian Families," a number of the problems for which home-based therapy may be best indicated include those brought on or exacerbated by stress and alcohol abuse/dependence. The authors open with a brief overview of the therapeutic goals and format of this type of intervention. They next discuss the need for and ecological appropriateness of home-based approaches in working with Indian and Native communities. A detailed review of the components of effective therapy follows, with frequent attempts to illustrate process issues that can arise in the extension of such techniques to Indian clients. Several case examples highlight the types of problems that Schacht, Tafoya, and Mirabla actually encountered in their practice, underscoring the need for non-dogmatic, flexible strategies in applying home-based therapy to complex, dysfunctional family systems. This article enriches the therapeutic literature by providing a thoughtful, concrete discussion of a form of intervention that is often advocated but seldom explicated.

The third and final article, "Abuse and Neglect of American Indian Children: Findings From a Survey of Federal Providers," by Piasecki, Manson, Biernoff, Hiat, Taylor, and Bechtold, considers a phenomenon that is intimately tied to alcohol and stress within Indian families. The authors report a survey conducted by the Indian Health Service that employed key informant interviews to gather information about the emotional and psychological status of Indian children, from birth to 21 years of age, within

two Service Areas. The children in question were selected on the basis of current treatment, need thereof, or history of abuse/neglect. The investigators queried providers about such abuse-/neglect-related factors as living arrangements, handicapping conditions, familial disruption, psychiatric symptoms, substance abuse, and school adjustment. Their findings, though limited by certain aspects of the study's design, are consistent with those reported for the general population, yet differences of magnitude frequently emerge. Histories of abuse and neglect were strongly related to severe levels of family chaos, to increased psychiatric symptoms, greater frequency of running away as well as expulsion from school, and greater involvement in drugs. Hopefully, future studies will be able to move into community settings and address this sensitive topic in a more direct fashion.

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