

The substantive foci of the articles in this issue of the journal are quite divergent, ranging from an assessment of mental health strengths and needs in two Alaska villages to the capacity-building legacy -- individually and collectively -- of the War on Poverty throughout Pacific Northwest tribes. Yet, despite these differences, a common theme can be discerned. Specifically, family and community play important roles in each set of experiences and serve as the context for understanding the processes at work.

"Two Eskimo Villages Assess Mental Health Strengths and Needs," by Minton and Soule, describes a study that, at virtually every turn, hinged on local participation in the research endeavor, from conceptualization and instrument development, through sampling, to data collection and analysis. The thrust of this effort was to elicit local perceptions and knowledge of emotional and psychological well-being and problems. Village members refined the areas of inquiry, developed the protocol, interviewed 216 fellow villagers, and translated, transcribed, as well as coded the data. Content analyses revealed sources of both happiness and sadness -- culturally syntonetic expressions of mental health and illness -- in the lives of these people and the resources available to them to cope with the latter. Minton and Soule emphasize the relevance of such information for subsequent intervention. They also underscore the supportive and facilitative functions served by the study itself.

"Tewa Children Who Have Epilepsy: A Health Care Dilemma," by DeBruyn, reminds us that many chronic physical diseases, in this case, epilepsy, plague Indian communities, child and adult alike. The author points out how social and cultural factors affect the understanding of as well as response to such diseases. Moreover, epilepsy, in particular, is both frightening and potentially stigmatizing, as reflected in harsh teasing by classmates. It should be no surprise, then, that these children are at high risk for emotional problems, which, in DeBruyn's experience, often came to pass. Parents, notably mothers, tend to deny the realities of their children's illness, further reducing families' ability to cope effectively with the attendant stress. Then, too, the burden of caring for more seriously impaired children increases the parent's isolation from other family and friends, jeopardizing her own well-being. Many of these circumstances, however, are not unique to the Tewa, leading DeBruyn to suggest closer examination of models of chronic illness in terms of their potential applicability across cultures.

"Panic Disorder Among American Indians: A Descriptive Study," by Neligh, Baron, Braun, and Czarnecki, illustrates the feasibility of training tribal health care staff -- specifically, Community Health Representatives -- to detect and refer community members who possibly suffer from panic disorder. The authors further demonstrate that, despite the sparse

literature on this psychiatric illness among Indians, symptoms of panic disorder are discernable. Furthermore, as is rapidly becoming evident in the general population, these symptoms frequently co-occur with those of depression and alcoholism, indicating the need for increased attention to questions of co-morbidity in diagnosis, treatment, and prevention.

"An Ethnographic View: Positive Consequences of the War on Poverty," by Miller, highlights the capacity-building effects of ICAP and CETA funds among individuals, family networks, as well as tribes during the 1960's and 1970's. Through historical analysis and case examples, the author argues that these programs enabled individuals, especially women, to acquire technical expertise that was necessary to the successful transitions then underway at the community level. Concomitantly, many of these women developed a sense of competence and mastery that carried over into their personal lives and those of their families. Miller also maintains that the funds in question provided additional means for supporting expensive cultural practices that experienced a resurgence during the same period. Finally, the availability of such funds are linked to the development of inter-tribal administrative and social services organizations that form the foundation for present-day collaboration among Northwest reservation communities.

Spero M. Manson, Ph.D.  
Editor-in-Chief