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Volume 28  
Issue 1 *March*

Article 14


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March 2001

## Review of *Addictions and Native Americans*. Lawrence Armand French. Reviewed by Michael Gorman, San Jose State University.

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### Recommended Citation

Gorman, Michael (2001) "Review of *Addictions and Native Americans*. Lawrence Armand French. Reviewed by Michael Gorman, San Jose State University.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 28 : Iss. 1 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol28/iss1/14>

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also be useful to those who are already engaged in the private practice field.

Rafael Herrera

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Lawrence Armand French, *Addictions and Native Americans*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publications, 2000. \$59.95 hardcover.

In this recently published work, Lawrence Armand French, Professor and Chair in the Department of Social Sciences at Western New Mexico University, offers an intriguing social and historical perspective with respect to the subject of Native Americans and addictions., and especially with regard to alcohol abuse in those populations. The book is chocked full of history and facts, both with respect to addictions and especially alcohol abuse in the US as well as in terms of the social history of Native Americans per se and their treatment in the broader by the US government over the past two centuries. French is clearly empathetic to the plight of Native peoples and in that light he provides a sympathetic view of the general issues at hand. In the context of the present interest in social work regarding issues of cultural competence with respect to substance abuse treatment and more generally in terms of social work practice, the book addresses topics of some currency. The book is divided into four sections: (1) Historical Perspectives on Native American Addictions, (2) The Nature of Substance Abuse among Native Americans; (3) Prevention, Intervention and Cultural Treatment; and (4) Indian Gaming—which is termed the new addiction.

The author, a clinical psychologist, possesses an unusual knowledge of both historical as well as epidemiological, treatment and prevention facts with respect to research and substance abuse treatment and prevention issues among Native peoples. He has authored two previous books: *Psychocultural Change and the American Indian* (1987), and *The Winds of Injustice* (1994). The current book is replete with numerous footnotes which convey a not inconsiderable familiarity, again, with both specific historical, political and economic constructs of the past approximately two hundred years of interface of Native vs European cultures. In addition, a strength of the book is the author's awareness of

culture itself as a dynamic entity and variable in the course of time and with respect to the very understanding or meaning a specific substance might have for a specific population in a given context (e.g. peyote). He is likewise conscious in thoughtful ways of political and economic nuance and arguments, such as in his discussion of gambling, and attempts to synthesize what is really a vast array of facts and detail into a one volume compendium which addresses a very wide range of topics. These range from the author's explorations of pre-Columbian worldview of Native Americans, to considerations of (Max Weber's) *The Protestant Ethic* and how this might have influenced the cultural interface between Europeans and Native peoples, to considerations of nineteenth century U.S. frontier social, political and legal history. Other topics include a discussion of the history of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM), a brief discourse on the neurophysiology of addictions, clinical and epidemiological perspectives on fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), to mention only a few of the diverse topics covered in the book. Other issues the author articulates include sociological/ecological perspectives on the 'drunk town' phenomenon, anthropological awareness of the complexity of issues regarding both biological changes as a result of intermarriage among tribal groups as well as corresponding transformations in tribal cultural dynamics. In one of his summations the author notes "Clearly, a combination of sudden cultural disruption (cultural genocide) and dramatic lifestyle changes (diet, disease, level of activity) contributed to the array of health problems plaguing American Indians and Alaska Natives today."

One of the most appealing aspects of the book is the author's obvious interest in, concern about and respect for Native American peoples and their historical traditions and values and about the social injustices these peoples have suffered. That said, in this reviewer's opinion, the book also suffers from some limitations, not the least of which is that the author seems to be attempting to do too much in one single volume. There is such an incredible array of information that at times one feels overwhelmed by the facts. In that regard, one has the sense that despite the author's obvious empathy for Native peoples, and considerable knowledge, he loses sight of the forest for the trees in the midst of so much documentation. There would likewise

appear to be instances of over-generalization, particularly when discussing 'Native' categories. At times one has the sense that all Native cultural domains become welded together and that true cultural diversity of North American Native cultures gets lost. This may be an inadvertent and unintended result of attempting to explain salient differences between core European and Native worldviews, but one comes away with a less than clear understanding of the considerable cultural and other diversity that exists among the various North American Native tribal and ethnic groups. Along these same lines there would appear to be an oversimplification when comparing other aspects of American Indian and 'Euro-American' approaches or cultural differences such as the discussion of American Indian Vs Traditional AA in Chapter 7.

In sum, there is much material in the book that social workers and others might find informative, albeit with certain caveats. The author's commitment to American Indians and his attempts to understand what he views as the disease of addiction, especially addiction to alcohol, in these peoples are noteworthy. By the same token, one comes away with the sense that there is more than one book here, and that a more narrow focus, with fewer digressions on various topics may have better served the objective of the book. The author is to be commended in his attempt to address this important social issue and have the book serve as a catalyst for critical thinking about the complexity of the issue's many and varied dynamics.

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Andrew J. Rettenmaier and Thomas R. Saving (Eds.), *Medicare Reform: Issues and Answers*. Chicago, IL.: University of Chicago Press, 2000. \$25.00 hardcover, \$17.00 papercover.

Medicare reform has been on the national agenda for the last several years as evidenced by the inclusion of the creation of the National Bipartisan Commission on the Future of Medicare as part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. The Commission was charged with examining the Medicare program and making