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Review of Independent Practice for the Mental Health

Professional: Growing a Private Practice for the 21st Century.

**Ralph H. Earle and Dorothy J. Barnes. Reviewed by Rafael Herrera,
University of California at Berkeley.**

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and support of their parents, regardless of where those parents live, to give youngsters a sense of well-being and competence in life.

Dorinda N. Noble
Louisiana State University

Ralph H. Earle and Dorothy J. Barnes, *Independent Practice for the Mental Health Professional: Growing a Private Practice for the 21st Century*. Philadelphia, PA: Brunner/Mazel, 1999. \$24.95 hardcover.

Directed at newly minted clinicians and at seasoned agency clinicians new to private practice, *Independent Practice for the Mental Health Professional* presents essential information and material to those planning to start a private practice in the current mental health environment. While acknowledging the significant (and mostly negative) changes managed care has brought to the delivery of private practice mental health services, the authors are decidedly optimistic about the future of private practice in the 21st century. While many other works cover the nuts and bolts of setting up a private practice and the design of marketing strategies, the current effort by Earle and Barnes is unique in stressing the importance of the role of the personality and lifestyle of the clinician in meeting the expectations of clients and ensuring the success of private practice in mental health.

The book begins with a chapter that poses questions designed to assist clinicians reflect and begin to define the type of private practice they envision. It also helps them decide if they are suited for private practice at all. This is followed by a chapter devoted to providing readers with a brief description of the practices of several clinicians, which serve to illustrate the differences and similarities among private practice practitioners. One of the chapters addresses head on the apparent incompatibility between the image of a warm, trusting, and caring professional helper with that of the profit-driven, materialistic, unscrupulous, aggressive entrepreneur, and it shows how belief in these stereotypes can negatively affect the marketing strategy of the private practitioner. Also included in the book are chapters covering

the benefits of maintaining affiliations with such institutions as hospitals, insurance companies, physician groups and law firms as well as other strategies to keep private practice 'public.'

A chapter on managed care provides useful definitions and descriptions of the many mental health delivery systems in existence today and discusses the marketing of private practice in the current managed care environment. Coverage is also given to the question of what type of practice to pursue, solo or group? What kind of business structure to establish, sole proprietorship or partnership? Should incorporation be considered? The last two chapters cover a number of practical issues. These include office design, staffing, office procedures, billing, the setting and collection of fee and the legal ramifications of private practice, including legal mandates and malpractice insurance.

Despite providing information on these aspects of private practice, *Independent Practice for the Mental Health Professional* is not, as the authors point out, a 'how to do it' book. One of the book's strengths is that it does a very good job at leading the reader to ask important questions regarding the kind private practice they envision and provide examples of how some private practitioners responded to the same questions. Another strength of this work is that it is brief and straightforward. Divided into ten short chapters, the book quickly covers the essentials of private practice without treating, as other works do, this activity as a holy ritual reserved only for a chosen few. The authors should also be commended for refusing to take sides and favoring any particular theoretical orientation in psychotherapy.

The book's most obvious weakness is to be found in the chapter on legal concerns. The authors should recognize that those entering private practice are already licensed in their state and that they are already familiar with the basic tenets of mental health law. They will also be acquainted with various practice and ethical requirements such as confidentiality, duty to warn, dual relationships and legal reporting requirements. Although knowledge of these topics is essential for private practice, detailed instruction on these topics are not needed in the book. Nevertheless, the book contains a great deal of useful information and will be of benefit to those who are considering entering practice practice. It will

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

Rafael Herrera

University of California at Berkeley

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