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Review of *White Man's Water: The Politics of Sobriety in a Native American Community*. By Erica Prussing

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White Man's Water: The Politics of Sobriety in a Native American Community. By Erica Prussing. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011. viii + 272 pp. Map, photographs, notes, references, index. \$49.95 cloth.

Epidemiological evidence consistently emphasizes the challenges American Indian tribes of the Great Plains confront through excess alcohol consumption. Until Erica Prussing's recent book, however, we have lacked a detailed analysis of the social and cultural context in which these challenges unfold. With a focus on women's experiences across two generations, *White Man's Water* provides us with a careful description of the social and cultural world of contemporary Northern Cheyennes, coupled with an understanding of how individual experiences within the milieu vary, especially as a function of history.

The first generation of women Prussing describes saw alcohol introduced in their youth; the second often grew up with heavily drinking parents. As a consequence, women of the older generation recall a world relatively unaffected by alcohol, while younger women have no such memories. This has important implications for the moral worlds these women inhabit and also shapes their imagination of possible solutions to current problems involving alcohol: women from the older generation emphasize the need to return to the traditions of the alcohol-free world of their childhoods, while younger women find inspiration in 12-step approaches emphasizing personal growth and healing, which would seem to suggest an important role for 12-step programs, at least in the lives of younger women.

It is curious, then, that Prussing's final chapters on culturally appropriate services turn, instead, to a critique of the 12-step approaches used in the tribal treatment center. While she makes many important points in these chapters, the critique of the 12 steps seems somewhat out of place, given the discourse of the younger generation of women. If the point is to move beyond a static definition of culture as tradition, then we would most certainly want to allow for the ways in which even the 12 steps can be culturally appropriate treatment, and there is presumably much to be learned from the ways in which tribal communities make the 12 steps work for them. Nevertheless, as the experiences of the older generation of women make clear, the 12 steps are not likely to work for everyone. In addition, moves toward increasing requirements for evidence-based practice in substance abuse treatment nationally will only exacerbate the bureaucratic problems Prussing describes that discourage local innovation. One hopes the emphasis here on the need to attend to local structures of meaning and variation within local communities can provide an important corrective in what might otherwise become a rush toward standardization.

White Man's Water is a truly significant book: the first book-length ethnographic account of drinking in a Plains tribe, the first representation of American Indian drinking to focus on women's experiences, a careful analysis of subjectivity in culture, and a critical statement on the ongoing need for health

care improvements in tribal nations. It deserves to be widely read by audiences sharing any of these interests.

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