INTRODUCTION

probably due to the social revolution taking place throughout the world, ethnicity and transculturality have become a fashionable issue. It is an element which should be closely scrutinized by anyone working in the field of the behavioral sciences. Its relevancy is equally important to the orthodox, traditionally encapsulated, psychoanalyst, as well as to the community worker engaged in the delivery of mental health and human services.

Within the scope of the behavioral sciences, dependency disorders (alcohol and/or drug abuse) deserve special attention due to their particular, and frequently legal complexity. From the point of view of causation, these disorders are still confined to three broad etiological categories: the biochemical–neurophysiologic, the psychogenic, and the social–environmental.

At the present time nobody would deny that, as in the case of affective disorders, psychoneuroendocrinology plays an important role in the understanding of dependency disorders. With regard to addiction, the suspicion of defective neurotransmitter functioning is emerging from the constraints of scientific hypothesis and is now gaining validity through laboratory finding.

While psychogenic and social–environmental factors are less concrete, more subjective, etiological elements of the addiction problem, they are more attractive to and more readily understood by the majority of those who work with addicts since these caregivers are trained principally in the social sciences.
The abundant literature on psychogenic and social-environmental factors of addiction reveal a common denominator: the role of the family. Theoretical overviews and research findings seem to merit the conclusion that, the more cohesive the family group and the more acute the sense of human solidarity and belonging, proportionately less is the risk of becoming a delinquent drug user. However, it is surprising to find that little importance is given to ethnicity and transculturality in the effort to preserve family cohesiveness.

Very few medical schools or department of behavioral sciences have introduced course material on the cultural aspects of substance abuse. In this regard, a review of the literature reveals the still embryonic effort in terms of course content and class hours. One medical school offers only one hour on the "cultural aspects of addiction."

In psychiatry—the most sophisticated and integrated off-spring of medicine and the behavioral sciences—the study of culture has not yet come into its own according to a very recent statement of Favazza and Oman (1978), in spite of the fact that most social change is accompanied by an intensification of social and cultural sources of psychological conflict (Kiev, 1976). In this regard, Bernal y del Rio (1977) who has elaborated upon the concepts of ethnophobia and ethnophilia or the expression of feelings and/or attitudes for or against certain ethnic groups, has gathered, along with other, pertinent data on the importance of transculturality in psychiatry training.

We believe that efforts to include subject matter on ethnicity and transculturality in the curricula of training programs on dependency disorders is far from adequate. In this paper, we would like, first, to clearly state our opinion that such academic apathy, not to say ignorance, is truly regrettable. Secondly, we would like to share with you a training experience related to special Spanish-speaking populations which was conducted by the Training Institute of the Department of Addiction Services of Puerto Rico.

THE RELEVANCY OF TRAINING

In all training programs for personnel working with clients with dependency disorders, the same basic question must be answered: who

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1 A good review of the literature can be found in the annotated bibliography drawn from sociology, psychology, psychiatry, and social work which appears in a Research Issues Series edited by NIDA in November, 1974.