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complex legal issues. The essays have to their credit the fact of contemporaneity, which is a blessing in itself. An editor more knowledgeable about both Indian history and law might have done wonders in sharpening the essays to a better focus and inter-relationship. If Felix S. Cohen, Nathan Margold, and William Brophy are not exactly quivering with jealousy in that big courtroom in the sky, they do have reason to express appreciation to these writers in their attempts to clarify the field of Indian law.

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**Red Children in White America.** By Ann H. Beauf. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 1977. 155 pp. \$9.00

Several recent surveys have indicated that American Indian adolescents have a suicide rate that is four times that of the general population. This fact has led researchers to look for possible causes in Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding schools, in the high unemployment and restricted opportunities that exist for teenagers on most reservations, and in the cultural anomie that is said to prevail in many Indian communities. Anne Beauf's slim volume shifts the research focus to pre-school age Indian children where the opportunity for mental health improvements are greater. *Red Children in White America* is essentially an account of Beauf's study of ethnic self-identification and preference among Indian children from three communities. Her findings, and interpretations, hold out the hope that self-esteem among Indian children can be successfully improved.

Beauf's study is clearly a doctoral thesis. As such it follows the classic dissertation approach used in the social sciences. The first part of the book discusses background factors affecting Indian children. Then a statement of the research problem is given, followed by a description of the study's sample, methodology, and results. Finally, there is an analysis of the implications of the experiment.

The author is seeking to answer the following main question about Indian children: To what extent, and in what direction, does the age of the children influence their responses to stereotype and

self-identification questions?

One hundred seventeen children from three separate, unnamed Indian communities constitute the experimental sample. Two tribes were selected from the Northern Plains, while the third came from the Southwest. In all three communities the entire population between the ages of three and five were included in the sample.

The basic data gathering approach used in Beauf's study was a combination of what is known as doll-play and projective story telling. Doll-play consists of involving the child in a story which the interviewer tells. At several stages in the story, the child is presented with a matched set of ethnically different dolls and asked to choose which one he wants to play a certain role in the story.

Through the doll-play technique and through free play observations, the author was able to reach the following conclusions. Indian children are much more likely than Anglo children to select dolls of the opposite ethnic group for positive stereotypes. In addition, they also identify themselves with the doll of their own ethnic group less frequently than do Anglo children. According to the author, these findings mean that at an early age both ethnic groups perceive that Indians and Anglos are different, and that Indians occupy a devalued status in American society.

Although the authors findings are certainly interesting, a question of validity needs to be addressed. How much and how accurately can playing with dolls tell us about children's true beliefs about themselves, and about others?

The problem of how to study prejudice has long vexed social science researchers. Individuals, when asked how they feel about themselves or others, are known to give socially acceptable answers. That is, the Anglo subject responds to questions on his attitudes toward American Indians with the answer that he likes Indians, regardless of his true feelings.

In an attempt to obtain more valid opinions from their subjects, researchers have turned to indirect or projective methods. The immediate problem with such approaches is obvious. Does the selection of a white doll over a brown one imply that the Indian subject prefers Anglo culture, or that he is fantasizing a desire to be Anglo?

Projective doll-play technique runs up against one of the rules of psychological research: the greater the departure from an objective assessment of a behavior, the greater the likelihood that there is an alternative explanation for the causes of that behavior. For instance,

research from a sociobiological perspective can provide a plausible explanation for Beauf's results. It may be that the preference for the color white is a human universal that is rooted in natural selection processes. These processes would be parallel to those that have led to the human preference for sweets. In nature, poisonous plants or spoiled animal meats are generally bitter rather than sweet in taste. A sociobiologist would say that man developed a preference for sweets as a natural selection process that saw non-sweet discriminating humans die from eating poisonous plants.

In a similar manner, natural selection processes could create a human preference for the color white. Preference for the color, along with a concomitant rejection of that which was dark, could have been a reaction to harmful side effects. Objects that are soiled, spoiled or partially diseased are usually dark in color.

The author's findings, and research conducted with other ethnic groups, indicate that younger children more frequently choose a white colored doll, while older children show a preference for the darker colored dolls similar to themselves. A sociobiological explanation would point out that the younger children are responding at a simple level to the color dimensions of the dolls. The older children, on the other hand, because of their greater cognitive maturity, are able to respond to the abstract concept of ethnicity that color represents.

An interesting test of the above hypothesis would be to present the doll-play technique to children in areas such as in China where there are few if any Anglos, and where racial stereotyping by Anglos does not exist. If such children still demonstrate a preference for white dolls, then the author's interpretation of her results becomes suspect.

Although projective assessment procedures such as the doll-play technique present interpretative problems, they often have considerable face validity. The following conversation between the author and one of her subjects (five years old), provides an insight that is open and clear.

Dom (holding up white doll): "The children's all here and now the teacher's coming in."

Interviewer: "Is that the teacher?"

Dom: "Yeah."

Interviewer (holding up a brown doll): "Can she be the teacher?"

Dom: "No way! Her's just a *aide*."

It is difficult to fault the author's interpretation that the conver-

sation indicates that the child understands the real power relations of the school: subordinate roles in the school are reserved for Indians.

The author's explanation of the practical and theoretical implications of her study is perhaps the strongest part of her book. In her explanation, the author views the data from a cognitive theoretical perspective. Although competing theories such as behaviorism have gained great support among psychologists, cognitive theories have been more successful in explaining how ethnic prejudice develops and is maintained. Behaviorists believe that the child's development of ethnic stereotypes is a product of his reaction to rewarding or punishing life situations. However, the author points out that there are few opportunities on the reservations she studied for very young children to be exposed to overt prejudice. In accordance with a cognitive view, the author believes that the child learns about ethnic identity and stereotyping through observing the world and mentally organizing what he sees. At an older age ethnic awareness is influenced by the increasing cognitive maturity of the child's mind. At age nine, the child begins to categorize by classifying social situations and objects in exclusive and non-overlapping ways.

The author's cognitive approach in the interpretation of her results supports her belief that the Indian child's preference for white dolls does not represent cultural pathology. Beauf believes that the children are not rejecting their own ethnic group. Instead, she believes that the children understand that the homes, jobs, material goods and power positions of Anglos are superior to those of Indians. The children, then, by choosing white dolls are expressing a desire for the better life of Anglos that the white dolls represent. If larger number of Indians held important jobs, and if economic conditions among Indians were improved, Beauf believes that Indian children would no longer see a one to one relationship between whiteness and a life filled with advantages. Finally, as conditions in and around reservations remain unchanged, Indian children will continue to grow into their teens where they will begin to experience the despair that has led to their high suicide rate.

In summary, Beauf's work offers some interesting analysis of ethnic attitudes among young Indian children. The author's major shortcoming is that she has little to say about other important issues affecting the child's early years. For instance, one third of

the book is contained in the background section where no direct mention is made of Indian children. However, in the final analysis, what she did include in her book is at least as important as what she left out.

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