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Ethnic Identity and the Boarding School Experience of West-Central Oklahoma American Indians. By Sally J. McBeth.

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ficiently researched; Calvin Martin has commented (personal communication) that the treatment of Choctaw alcohol addiction is less than satisfying; and I find the treatment of the missionary influence among all three groups totally insufficient. But this is, as Josephy himself states, merely carping.

Without question more detailed research concerning the complicated processes that combined to erode Native American independence is called for but this should not blind us to what is, perhaps, the even more pressing need—the integration of the already exhaustive body of specialized information into larger and more meaningful patterns. White's work is a notable step in this direction but it constitutes only one step. The breadth of White's conception suggests a great deal more than he has undertaken in this relatively slim volume. Most obviously, we learn very little about the various goals of the White participants in the complex historical interactions that White describes. A few statements about "the global capitalist system" found in the Introduction constitutes the closest thing to an explanation of White motivation to be found in *The Roots of Dependency*. If we are to appreciate the complexity of the structure that White wishes us to see, we must examine the White participants under the same lens as the Indians. Only in this way can we avoid the sort of reductionism that the author has so nobly and justifiably battled against.

This being said, it remains only to congratulate Richard White on the scope of his vision and the weight of his contribution. American society has labored far too long under the assumption that Indians were either too stupid or too polite to resist White encroachment. It can only be hoped that *The Roots of Dependency* will lead to increasing attention to the complex realities which lay behind Indian/White relations in both the past and present.

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Ethnic Identity and the Boarding School Experience of West-Central Oklahoma American Indians. By Sally J. McBeth. Washington, DC: University Press of America, Inc., 1983. 184 pp. \$21.75 Cloth. \$10.00 Paper.

In the last few decades as more public schools have become commonplace in American Indian communities, student enrollments

dramatically declined in federally operated boarding schools. The decreasing enrollment brought with it closures or threats of closure of some federal Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools. Where it was financially feasible, some of the vacant boarding schools have been contracted by local tribal groups as facilities for the handicapped, the aged and other service programs. Efforts to save the larger, off-reservation boarding schools have not been as successful.

The psychological attachments some Indians have to their boarding schools are understandable. Some of the present schools have been in existence since the early 1800s, and are, therefore, part of the familiar life and history of many Indian communities. Thus any attempt to close them is met with strong opposition by Indian tribes and groups. In addition, any closure or threat of closure signifies to many Indians an attempt by the federal government to renege on its treaty obligations and commitments; but as long as schools or facilities remain in use, there is visible evidence of federal recognition and realization of educational commitments. Sally J. McBeth demonstrates the importance of this in portions of *Ethnic Identity and the Boarding School Experience*.

By use of ethnohistorical research, informal interviews and archival materials, McBeth states she undertook this study in an effort to comprehend the "hate-love" relationship Indians have regarding boarding schools. Some of her key informants were members of the Kiowa, Caddo, Comanche, Kiowa-Apache, Wichita and Delaware tribes. The majority of the respondents were women who attended one or more of the six mission or federal boarding schools in Oklahoma between 1920 and 1960. At the time of McBeth's study most of the boarding schools mentioned had been closed.

The first four chapters of the book concentrate on various background information, including development of the study and description and history of key tribes in West-Central Oklahoma. In chapter five, McBeth provides the history and policy overview of Indian boarding school experience. The concluding chapter is an analysis of the meaning and functions of boarding schools. McBeth's underlying premise is that boarding school experiences are symbolically central to the sociocultural values and ethnic identity of her informants. McBeth's definition of ethnic identity is somewhat vague and oversimplified when she states:

Ethnic identity is based on the articulation and interdependence of a number of symbols, and the boarding school is one part of this symbolic system .(p. 113)

Once she makes this assumption, McBeth fails to adequately demonstrate in her analysis how her research data supports this generalization. It is not clear where the linkages occur between boarding school memories and ethnic identity. Some more basic information is needed to assist the reader in following the author's conclusions. For example, McBeth does not indicate how long her informants were enrolled in the schools or at what ages they were placed there. She also does not distinguish the experiences of informants in the 1960s from those of the 1920s. Obviously, the schools and the students changed over these six decades. One commonality which McBeth acknowledges is that the subject of boarding schools brings a mixture of contradictory responses and memories from Indians but that most memories or experiences are essentially positive. At one point McBeth likens some of these bittersweet boarding school experiences to those of foster children placed with surrogate families. As a matter of fact, McBeth proposes a foster-child experience model as a possible way to analyze Indian Peoples' feelings about and experiences with boarding schools. She does not, however, use this approach but utilizes symbolic anthropology as her analytical model to describe the experiences and memories of her informants.

In the discussion of the functions of the boarding schools, McBeth's analysis is more easily understood. She claims that boarding schools provided a sense of belonging and safe refuge from the pressures of assimilation on her informants. In addition, the mixing of tribes in the boarding schools also helped promote Pan-Indianism. Thus the segregated Indian Boarding schools were instrumental in shaping and maintaining ethnic boundaries.

Despite some weaknesses, McBeth's study nevertheless presents cogent arguments for the boarding schools' role in reinforcing or fostering some Indian ethnic identity. The degree to which this identity is influenced specifically by boarding school experiences, however, remains questionable. Particularly, since the memories and experiences of her informants do not appear to be significantly different from non-Indian students' experiences in private boarding schools.

Having graduated from a boarding school noted in the study, I also find it difficult to give generous credit to institutionalized school experiences for developing such a complex process as identity, particularly since these schools were historically designed to "de-Indianize" Indians. My view is further influenced by knowing that most of my peers in boarding school appeared to have their ethnic identities well resolved before coming to school. In addition, my recollection of ten years in boarding school contradicts another of McBeth's observations, i.e., boarding school experiences reinforced tribal rather than Pan-Indian identity. This was perhaps because everyone knew they were Indians and it was, therefore, more important to accentuate tribal differences. On the other hand, group solidarity was evident at certain times, especially during sporting contests and when all opponents, Indian and non-Indian, were viewed as "Outsiders."

Again, my experiences during the 1950s and 1960s were different from those of people who attended in the 1920s. Boarding schools have changed and so have the attitudes of Indians toward them. McBeth offers us an opportunity to see this as well as to ask some new questions regarding the contemporary role of boarding schools on the lives of Indian children and their families. McBeth allows her informants to speak for themselves, thus presenting through their reminiscences a positive side of boarding school experiences. Her work is a welcome addition to the literature on Indian education and studies on institutionalization and ethnicity.

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Columbus Day. By Jimmy Durham. Minneapolis: West End Press, 1983. 88 pp. \$4.50 Paper.

During the past decade several members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) have acquired a certain celebrity, both within circles of Native American activism and—by virtue of mass media exposure—before the nation as a whole. Certainly this could be said of Russell Means, whose post-Wounded Knee accolades