

IN THE WORLD OF BOOKS

'Black child'

By Phyllis Harrison-Ross, M.D. and Barbara Wynden.

The authors of this practical guide -- a Black pediatrician-psychiatrist and a White magazine editor -- call it "the first complete manual for Black and White parents." And, in its scope, in terms of its intended readership, in its careful "both sides now" approach, the book is an admirable guide for raising Black children in a White world. The text is forthright, nontechnical, at times even a bit folksy, but it is never patron-

izing. Intellectuals, however, should not shun the book. The many ways in which color consciousness and prejudice can be instilled in children are often as obscure to the intellectual as they are to the sharecropper.

Using a case history technique, the authors trace color consciousness from its origins in infancy through its continued reinforcement during adolescence and adulthood. Incidents such as a White child asking her mother why a Black child's face is "dirty," are detailed and the parents' reactions are

given. Then proper responses for both parents are suggested in addition to this instruction, situation oriented approach, the book makes casual reference to facts that should explain the origins of some cultural differences between Blacks and Whites. Many aspects of Black history, Black psychology and child psychology are touched upon, and the book can serve as an introduction in these areas.

"The Black Child" is most useful, however, when it is detailing the numerous ways in which even the best intentioned parents unwittingly

plant the seeds of bigotry in their children. We are warned, for instance, that a White mother can communicate fear and hatred of Blacks to an infant simply by tightening her hold on him and in tensing her face muscles when she finds herself and her baby alone with a strange Black man in an elevator; or that a Black mother can psychologically damage her children by talking about "good" and "bad" hair or by favoring the light-skinned child over the darker. Everyone can learn something from this book.

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