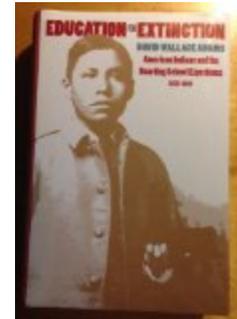


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

David Wallace Adams. *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995. xi + 337 pp. \$17.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7006-0838-6; \$40.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7006-0735-8.

Reviewed by Robert J. Franzese (Western Michigan University)
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For most Native Americans, years spent in boarding schools proved definitive times in their lives. Dragged, cajoled, or convinced to attend schools from Carlisle, Pennsylvania to Riverside, California, students' lives changed. Adams' work attempts to explore the complex nature of these schools. His "three-tiered focus" examines federal policy formation, the translation of policy to the institutional level, and the varied student responses to the assimilation program. Within this process he provides perspectives of Christian reformers and Indian students.

Adams organizes the ten-chapter work thematically into four sections. "Civilization" presents the philosophy behind assimilation, development of the Indian reform movement, variety of school models, and incipient rise of an Indian education system. "Education" focuses on the institutional framework established at many schools, components of the classroom environment, and rituals of the academic year. "Response" asserts the varied reactions of students within boarding schools in terms of their resistance and accommodation to the new system. "Causatum" explores the results of the assimilation program on students as they return to their reservations, along with the rethinking of Indian school policy in the 1920s.

Education for Extinction maintains that the Indian School system included a conglomerate of institutions with distinct leaders, community support, and student populations. School administrators had specific personalities and agenda that molded the institution. Local communities varied in their support (or lack thereof) for the school. Students arrived with diverse tribal backgrounds and experiences with American schooling. Commission-

ers of Indian Affairs like Thomas Morgan (1889-93) attempted to mold a unified system through bureaucratic structure and national legislation. Still, politics on the local level often determined a school's direction. Educational administrators, Indian agents, and tribal police played significant roles in the dynamics and varied implementation of federal policy.

The study reveals that the story of Indian boarding schools includes more than a bureaucratic maze of automatons. Adams presents individuals who make independent decisions. He also moves beyond the simplistic notion of evil school teachers. Instead, he presents educators like Gertrude Golden who left Michigan to join the Indian service for better pay and new experiences and Minnie Jenkins who traded in the comforts of her Virginia life for long hours and poor living conditions in Blue Canyon, Arizona.

Adams also accounts for the variety of students perspectives. In leaving for boarding school, Lakota Charles Marshall made a furious thirty-mile ride from his Cheyenne River Reservation home to plead for acceptance to go to Hampton Institute. Lakota Sioux Luther Standing Bear (Plenty Kill), however, prepared for his departure from the Rosebud Reservation to Carlisle Indian School as if bravely going there to die. Students also reacted differently to their school experiences. Winnebago Henry Roe Cloud hated the monotony of turning a washing machine; Helen Sekaquaptewa endured hours of Christian preaching; various Carlisle students praised their school's assimilation program; Navajo Frank Mitchell and his comrades persisted in speaking their native language.

Adams does not focus on boarding schools to provide

apologetics of their founders or diatribe against “the system.” He uses boarding schools instead as a forum for the complex analysis of intercultural relations, identity formation, and cultural tenacity. In doing so, he critiques the “replacement model” of cultural change by which Christian reformers hoped to substitute tribal traditions with an American identity. Adams’ analysis reveals the reality that assimilation programs influenced each individual to a different extent, but rarely in a complete fashion. These assertions are not new. They fall consistently in line with boarding school monographs by Sally McBeth, K. Tsianina Lomowaima, Clyde Ellis, and others.

Adams’ contribution to the field lies in the breadth of the study. While many recent works provide fine analysis of specific schools, this work provides the most recent comprehensive study. Adams pays particular attention to the Hampton and Carlisle schools. He chronologically frames the work with the founding and closing of Indian programs at the two eastern institutions. Still, he provides significant discussion of student experiences

from varied tribal traditions and explores federal schools at Genoa, Nebraska; Chilocco, Oklahoma; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Fort Hall, Idaho and many others. Like other previous studies, Adams makes only slight mention of boarding schools administered by religious denominations.

Students of federal policy, Indian-white relations, and intercultural studies will find this work informative and well-written. Adams’ lengthy research led him to federal and school archives. It also enabled him to integrate poignant, humorous, and ironic student remembrances of boarding school experiences from a wide array of previously published literature. Scholars will value the nine tables, index, and detailed endnotes, but be disappointed by the lack of a bibliography. All readers will appreciate the twenty-seven photographs.

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