

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

Fall 2008

Review of *American Indians, the Irish, and
Government Schooling: A Comparative Study* By
Michael C. Coleman

Katie Kane

University of Montana

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Kane, Katie, "Review of *American Indians, the Irish, and Government Schooling: A Comparative Study* By Michael C. Coleman" (2008).
Great Plains Quarterly. 1311.

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1311>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Jones (*O Strange New World! American Culture: The Formative Years*), David Beers Quinn (*The Elizabethans and the Irish*), and Nicholas Canny (“The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America”) during the 1960s and 1970s. Work in the area of comparing the colonial experience of the two, very internally diverse communities went into a curious period of abeyance until recently in the 1990s and now in the early years of the twenty-first century when scholars such as Nancy Scheper-Hughes, David Harding, David Emmons, the still productive and analytically acute Nicholas Canny, and Michael Coleman began to refocus attention on the productive work of historical and cultural comparison yet to be done.

A senior lecturer in the English section of the Department of Languages at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, and the author of several books on the history of colonial schools in Indian Country (*Presbyterian Missionary Attitudes toward American Indians 1837-1893* [1985] and *American Indian Children at School, 1850-1930* [1993]), Coleman makes a substantial contribution to the extant scholarship in the field of comparative colonial study through the contexts of Ireland and Native North America. In part, the value of Coleman’s work involves his theorization, with the help of scholars such as Peter Kolchin, of a comparativist approach both global in its reach and solidly rooted in the local. Under this comparative framework Coleman argues that “from the early nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries Indians and Irish peoples confronted systematic state-controlled, and *assimilationist* educational campaigns, as the United States strove to Americanize the Indians and the British government to Anglicize the Irish.”

The book is exhaustively researched and provides its reader with a valuable archive of primary and secondary research materials. Coleman’s focus in nine individual chapters and a conclusion involves not only a critical and historical anatomization of colonial assimilationist philosophies and disciplinary regimes, but also entails a crucially important concentration on the often resistant and even

American Indians, the Irish, and Government Schooling: A Comparative Study. By Michael C. Coleman. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. xii + 367 pp. Maps, photographs, notes, bibliographic note, index. \$49.95.

Michael Coleman’s historical and comparative study represents the latest offering in a critical but still underdeveloped subfield of comparative colonialisms: Irish and Native American connections under the experience of colonization. The tradition of comparative work across the Atlantic Ocean, with its recognition of a fundamental similarity in the practical and ideological work of British and American colonialism in Ireland and Indian Country, has roots in the scholarship of such important intellectuals as Howard Mumford

refusing responses of Indigenous and local communities and of Native American and Irish students to the educational projects into which they were interpolated.

One wishes the category of race might have been more directly taken into account in Coleman's discussions of the goals of English and American educators involved in their respective versions of "mass assimilationist education programs," but he has done more than enough work in this text to provide scholars who share his disciplinary focus with new and productive avenues of thought and research, while making clear his claim about the strikingly similar assimilationist nature of the two colonial education models he studies.

KATIE KANE
Department of English
University of Montana