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Review of *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* By David Wallace Adams

Rebecca Dobkins
Willamette University

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Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928. By David Wallace Adams. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995. Preface, illustrations, tables, notes, index. xi + 396 pp. \$34.95.

David Wallace Adams provides a richly descriptive account, full of illustrative case studies from a wide range of Indian boarding schools, of federal Indian education policy formulation, local institutional practices, and student responses for the period 1875-1928.

By design, *Education for Extinction* is largely the story of the policymakers, offering an overview of the schools' ideological underpinnings, organization, and ultimate demise. One of the book's greatest strengths is that Adams also relies upon evidence from native people themselves, quoting from published autobiographical accounts, oral histories, and student-authored archival documents, in an attempt to portray the "Indian students' perspective." While these sources are a vital complement to the official story, they pose interpretive problems of their own which Adams acknowledges in his introduction but does not consistently address throughout the book. An example is the author's discussion of the Carlisle Indian School's "outing" program. Students participating in the program lived with and worked for white families for varying periods; Adams bases his discussion of their experiences largely upon letters from students to school superintendent Colonel R. H. Pratt, which were published in the Carlisle newspaper, *Red Man* (the fact of their publication is made clear only in the book's endnotes). Though acknowledging it is "difficult to assess . . . the students' attitude toward the experience," Adams goes on to conclude that "most students' letters indicated satisfaction with being able to experience the white world beyond the gates of Carlisle." Adams's analysis neglects to consider that the expression of this "satisfaction" had traveled through multiple filters from the students' possible self-censorship to Pratt's ultimate editorial selection. One is left to

wonder whether unpublished letters or other data might tell a different tale. This example points out a methodological concern for any scholar dealing with these materials: the interpretation of historical documents (whether authored by Indian students or school officials) must be fully contextualized within the power relations within which they were produced.

Adams makes a number of important contributions, including raising several significant topics deserving further investigation: the local consequences of tension between centralization and decentralization in the boarding school system, the connections between the movement for compulsory education for Indians and for the U.S. school-age public at large, and the relationship between the schools' project of Indian assimilation and American nationalism of the time, particularly the drive to make citizens out of the immigrant "melting pot." In addition, Adams's research, building upon that of many other scholars, demonstrates that the Indian boarding school experience offers rich ethnographic and historical material for refining theoretical notions of resistance and accommodation.

Overall, *Education for Extinction* contributes to the growing literature on the Native American boarding school experience and will be particularly useful to students and scholars seeking an engaging introduction to and overview of this critical chapter in Indian-white relations.

REBECCA DOBKINS

Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Willamette University