

# **Characteristics of Alaska Native Students**

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**APPENDIX F**

## INTRODUCTION TO J. S. KLEINFELDT'S "CHARACTERISTICS OF ALASKA NATIVE STUDENTS"

A major goal of Project ANNA was to provide a bench mark of information on Alaska Native education. I think it did a fair job of this major goal and certainly Judy Kleinfeldt's scholarly paper is an excellent example of a review of the research literature on Alaska Native education. She divided her paper into seven sections.

**1. Strengths of Alaska Native Students.** The spatial strengths and remembering them as well as technical capabilities are not generally rewarded in a school setting. Nor is a "High visual ability."

**2. Educational Problems.** Achievement tests play an important role in this discussion, which applies today, 2007, as much as 1973, some 34 years ago. Perhaps standardized tests are as much of a measure of culture strength as they are of achievement. Cultural factors might be a major reason for the continued low test scores of Natives – and Indians. Klienfeldt recommends the use of national test norms when using them to measure native academic achievement. Her discussion of "Identify Formation" is recommended to any contemporary teacher and/or educator.

**3. Cultural Factors.** Klienfeldt thinks cultural factors are over-emphasized in the education of Natives. She prefers using common "Human problems." I think she has a point so long as even human problems are used as contrasted to the continued prevalence of stereotypical perceptions.

**4. Drop-Out and Transfer.** These two sections are closely related. The data on drop-outs is interesting and pertinent inasmuch as she includes an informed discussion of "Transfers."

**5. Success in Higher Education.** The data she presents in Table 6 should be a bench mark for anyone studying Natives in higher education.

**6. Institutional Impact.** Institutions refer to the different types of schools, day, boarding, boarding home, parochial and public. Her study of Saint Mary School, a Catholic boarding school were impressive to her consideration of different types of schools.

**7. Conclusion.** Klienfeldt's "Conclusion" merits including it in its entirety.

The central problems of Indian and Eskimo students occur at the secondary school and college levels. While academic achievement levels below national norms do cause students difficulty, **the fundamental issues appear to lie in the area of strong identity formation** [Emphasis added]. Almost never do teachers or employers say that Native students do not succeed because they lacked the necessary cognitive or academic abilities. Rather, when Native students do not succeed, it appears to be because they lack a sense of direction and purpose which leaves them vulnerable to negative social influences. Educational environments need to be designed which create strong identities. But strong identities mean more than a sense of pride in being an

Indian or Eskimo, as important as this is. Strong identity means the development of unified values that organize one's life and give it meaning.

Tom R. Hopkins

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF ALASKA NATIVE STUDENTS**

Discussing the "characteristics" of Alaska Native students presents a serious danger—the problem of overgeneralization and stereotyping of children. Many teachers, fresh from anthropology courses where they have erroneously been told that all Natives are "noncompetitive" or "concrete in thinking" expect their students to behave in these ways. Research on such teacher expectations suggests that they can become self-fulfilling prophecies and actually reduce school success.<sup>1</sup>

Both in teaching and in educational planning, it is of the utmost importance to keep in mind the diversity and range of talents among Native students. Certainly, many students are reading far below grade level, but others are reading at grade level or above. Certainly some students tend to be shy and withdrawn in class, but many others are highly articulate. By looking only at the "average" Native student, we may forget about other students, whose educational needs are also important. Indeed, the most neglected group of Native students is probably the academically gifted. Programs are inevitably aimed at the low achievers, the drop-outs. Academically talented Native students, who may also need some assistance to fulfill their potential, are often ignored.

### **Strengths of Alaska Native Students**

Most people learn best when the educational situation takes advantage of their areas of strengths and their preferred learning styles. By building on learning strengths, it may be much easier to increase achievement in areas of weakness. Alaska Native students tend to have major areas both of cognitive and social strengths, which schools rarely take advantage of.

#### **Cognitive Strengths**

Most of the research on the cognitive strengths of Alaska Natives has been done with Eskimos. However, there is reason to believe that Athabascan Indian and Tlingit Indians have similar areas of high ability because of their adaptation to the Arctic environment.

The demands made by a particular environment may stimulate the development of certain types of cognitive skills.<sup>2</sup> To hunt successfully in the visually uniform Arctic requires highly developed visual skills. The Eskimo hunter, for example, must be extremely sensitive to visual detail and must be able to memorize visual patterns in judging weather and in navigating through the Arctic.

Many anecdotal records raise the possibility that Eskimos tend to have unusually

high visual and spatial abilities. For example, these types of abilities are important in mechanical tasks and tales of Eskimos' skills in this area have become part of the folklore of the Arctic. Carpenter<sup>3</sup> reports that in several instances Eskimos were able to repair complicated machinery that trained white mechanics could not fix. Oil companies working in Alaska have reported that "we have found that the Eskimo has more innate ability to work around equipment than anyone else in the world."<sup>4</sup>

Anecdotal reports also contain many descriptions of Eskimos' unusual skills in tasks requiring memory for visual information. For example, maps of the local terrain have later been found to be almost as accurate as aerial photographs.<sup>5</sup> Teachers commonly note that Eskimo children show an unusual ability to memorize visual patterns.

A number of psychological studies, comparing the figural abilities of Eskimos with those of other groups, support such anecdotal accounts. The pervasive problems of cross-cultural testing often lead to lower performance on standardized tests which are much lower than Eskimos' actual abilities. Nonetheless, a number of experiments suggest that Eskimos' perceptual abilities may be higher than or about as high as those of whites.<sup>6</sup>

These cognitive strengths may lead to success in certain occupations. Such skills are important in many areas in addition to mechanics. For example, high spatial and visualization abilities are important to pilots, a high demand occupation in the Arctic. High spatial abilities are also important in many advanced fields, such as mathematics and physics. It is possible that, after reaching a certain level of proficiency in English language skills, Eskimos could make significant contributions in these advanced fields. Yet, at the present time, Native students are systematically counseled away from scientific areas because counselors view such subjects as too difficult for them.

Teaching methods also need to be developed which build on Eskimos' frequent pattern of high visual abilities, low English language abilities. Teachers are often aware that Eskimo students have an "observational" learning style and place great emphasis on films and visual aids. However, mere visual emphasis is not enough and the wrong visual materials can actually interfere with learning. This interference occurs precisely because Native students are often so sensitive to visual detail. When students are shown a complicated picture, they may pick up not the central concept but rather the visual detail. By using abstract visuals, such as diagrams, the student who memorizes the visual pattern also memorizes the fundamental concept, not the minor detail.

## **Social Strengths**

Native students also have many social strengths, which educational programs rarely take advantage of. Again, most of the available research has been done with Eskimos, but other Native groups have other types of social skills which should be examined and built upon.

A recent study<sup>7</sup> of the self-concept of Eskimo adolescents suggests that students view themselves as strong in integrative social skills. On the Semantic Differential, Eskimo students rated themselves as above average on the characteristics of (1) friendly, (2) helpful, and (3) kind. On such qualities as (4) smart, (5) strong, and (6) good-looking they saw themselves as below average.

Most schools do not value and reward the friendly, helpful qualities which Eskimo students view as their area of particular strength. Rather, the social climate of schools tends to be individualistic and impersonal. In such a climate, Eskimo students often feel ill at ease and this anxiety may interfere with learning.

A number of studies have demonstrated the importance of a warm instructional climate for Native students. Native students participate more in a classroom where they perceive the climate as warm.<sup>8</sup> Native students receive higher scores on intelligence tests when the counselor behaves in a warm style.<sup>9</sup> Native students also learn more when the instructor is warm.<sup>10</sup>

In planning educational programs for Native students, the psychological climate of the learning environment should be considered as important as the curriculum. If attention is not given to ways of creating warm learning atmospheres, the psychological climate will naturally tend toward the impersonal. This occurs because of the pervasiveness of bureaucratic organization in schools which creates impersonal, professional roles. Teachers often define "professionalism" as maintaining emotional distance from students.

There are many different ways to create the more personalized learning situation that is conducive to learning among Native children. One of the most important is a small school situation. In small groups, it is easier to develop friendly relationships.

Another is to define teachers' roles as including personal guidance as well as instruction in cognitive skills. The most successful educational programs for Native students tend to create small, friendly cohesive groups of teachers and students.

## **Educational Problems**

The educational problems of Native children do not lie primarily in the area of

academic skills. Unlike many teachers of other minority group children, teachers of Native students almost never say that their students are not smart. Quite the contrary, most teachers emphasize that their students are very smart but lack "motivation."

### **Achievement Levels**

It is, of course, the case that Indian and Eskimo children are below national norms in academic achievement and require special assistance in this area. In the village elementary schools administered by the Division of State Operated Schools, students scored between 1.2 and 1.8 years below national norms. (See Table 1) The major areas of weakness were vocabulary, reading, and language abilities. Emphasis needs to be placed on language arts programs which raise students' achievement in these areas.

National norms should continue to be used as a standard through which to measure the school's progress in raising students' achievement. But it is also important to note that Native students, unlike many other minority groups, are *not* showing a *substantial* decline in the number of grade levels that they are behind national norms as they progress through school. Over each year, Native students fall behind only .1 to .2 of a grade level. Their rate of progress, in short, is not very far below the rate of progress of most children.

At the high school level, village students vary widely in their achievement levels. In a recent study of reading achievement among 100 village students entering high school, for example, we found that 75% of the students were reading at the sixth grade or below. (See Table 2) However, some students were reading very close to grade level, even though they came from small, remote villages. These students very likely have unusually high levels of academic ability.

In providing for the majority of village students, it is very important not to ignore the needs of the academically gifted. From these academically talented students may come many of the highly trained Natives needed by regional corporations and other employers. Too often, both in urban high schools and in college, talented village Native students are assigned to "slow" sections or remedial courses automatically because they are Native. Attention needs to be given to developing educational programs for such academically talented students to enable them to realize their potential.

### **Identity Formation**

The fundamental educational problems of Indian and Eskimo students appear to lie in the area of identity formation. Teachers are referring to this problem of lack

of direction when they refer to Native students' major school difficulty as "motivation." Similarly, employers almost never say that Native workers lack the skills to do the job. Rather, they note that social and emotional problems impair job performance. Such problems often signal weak identity formation.

"Identity formation" is a concept that is misunderstood in Indian education. It is viewed much too narrowly as a sense of ethnic identity, a feeling of pride in being an Indian or an Eskimo. While this is one part of identity, it is a small part of it. Educational programs designed to build identity by focusing entirely on ethnic pride will not solve the problem.

Identity formation refers to the development of a unified set of values and directions that organize a life and give it meaning.<sup>11</sup> For Indian and Eskimo adolescents, identity formation is an especially difficult task. It is difficult, first of all, because traditionally self-made identities were not necessary. Adult roles were relatively fixed and assigned primarily by sex. It is difficult, second of all, because Indian and Eskimo adolescents confront a range of



Table 1  
 Years Below Grade Level of Students from Village Schools (State Operated Schools Area)

The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills - October 1971																
Grade	Vocab- ulary	Read- ing	Language Skills					Work-Study Skills				Arithmetic Skills			Composite	
			Spell- ing	Capital- ization	Punctu- ation	Usage	TOTAL	Maps	Graphs	Refer- ences	TOTAL	Con- cepts	Prob- lems	TOTAL		
4	1.3	1.3	.6	1.2	1.0	1.5	1.1	9	1.1	.9	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.2
5	1.7	1.5	.8	1.3	.9	1.7	1.2	9	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.3
6	1.8	1.6	.9	1.4	1.3	1.9	1.4	9	1.3	1.5	1.2	1.6	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.5
7	2.0	1.7	1.0	1.3	1.4	2.1	1.4	13	1.5	1.2	1.4	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.7
8	2.2	2.0	1.1	1.4	1.7	2.0	1.6	11	1.6	1.7	1.4	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.8

**Table 2**

Reading Achievement Test Scores of  
Entering Village Freshmen in the  
Anchorage Boarding Home Program, Nome-Beltz  
Regional School, and Bethel Regional School  
California Achievement Test, 1971

	N	%
5th Grade or Below	45	45%
6th Grade	33	33%
7th Grade	15	15%
8th Grade	6	6%
9th Grade	1	<u>1%</u>
Total	100	100%

directions and values—traditional, religious, mainstream western, countercultural western—that is much wider and more contradictory than the alternatives confronting most children. It is difficult, third of all, because during adolescence, the critical period for identity formation, most village children are taken away from the standards of their childhood and placed in western school situations where they confront not merely a different set of western values but rather value confusion. The school staff itself is divided between traditional and countercultural value orientations. Moreover, some teachers who go to the bush are trying to solve their own identity problems and can provide little stable guidance for students.

The ways in which school programs try to help students solve identity problems are ineffective. Most teachers tell students to "choose the best of both cultures." This piety is not much help because the values from which students must synthesize an organizational framework for their lives are often incompatible. To tell children to form an identity by "choosing the best of both cultures" makes about as much sense psychologically as telling children to communicate by "choosing the best of two languages."

Another way schools attempt to help Native students solve their identity problems is through Native heritage courses. At the elementary school level, such courses are often very successful. However, at the high school level, when students are struggling with identity problems, many village students question the relevance of some of aboriginal Native culture courses to their own lives. The major exception is bilingual programs because high school students often see these

courses as relevant to becoming a bilingual teacher. Native history and art courses are important. These courses have as much place and probably more place in the school curriculum as western history and art courses. But to expect Native history and art courses to solve Native students' identity problems is as reasonable as to expect western history and art courses to solve western students' identity problems.

Clues to how a school environment might be structured to help students resolve the problem of developing an organizing value framework for their lives are provided by certain parochial schools in Alaska. These schools frequently produce village student graduates with a strong sense of direction and a clear set of values. Parochial school graduates at the University of Alaska, even when they have very low academic ability levels, succeed more often than graduates of other types of high schools who have high ability levels. (See Table 3) Case studies of such students suggest that their unusual success stems in part from a sense of direction that leads to persistence in difficult situations.

Two factors seem critical to the effects of parochial schools on students. The first is intimate, extensive contact between teachers and students. At a school such as St. Mary's, for example, teachers live in the dormitories with students, organize extracurricular activities, and are with students continually on evenings and in weekends. Much informal education occurs through such personal teacher-student contacts. Village students, for example, become aware of the similar identity problems teachers faced and how they resolved these issues.

Another important basis of the success of parochial schools is their emphasis on continuity between the values of the villages and the values of the school. In part, this can occur in a parochial school because parents, students, and school staff share a common religious tradition. But many other ways these schools help students see continuity between village and western values can be used by public schools. For example, some village students view talking in class as showing off, a behavior traditionally disapproved of. The school staff at St. Mary's may explain that participating in class discussions is a way of contributing to the welfare of the group. Helping others is traditionally valued. Thus, rather than a clash between traditional and western values in class participation, the student sees value continuity.

**Table 3**

First Enrollment Success Rates for  
Alaska Native Students Enrolled  
at the University of Alaska by  
Type of High School and ACT Scores  
1968-1972 (Inclusive)

School Type	Low ACT		Medium ACT		High ACT		Total	
	(N)		(N)		(N)		(N)	
Public Native Majority	3/21	14%	21/58	36%	4/9	44%	28/88	32%
Public White Majority (no dormitory)								
Rural Background	2/7	29%	6/25	24%	2/4	50%	10/36	28%
Urban Background	1/6	17%	16/37	43%	9/16	56%	26/59	44%
Public Boarding	0/9		9/44	20%	0/5	—	9/58	16%
Private Boarding	7/12	58%	15/37	41%	4/5	80%	26/54	48%

This table is taken from K. Kohout and J. S. Kleinfeld, *Alaska Natives in Higher Education*, Institute of Social, Economic, and Government Research, (forthcoming).

Such personal relationships between teachers and students and such emphasis on value continuity can most easily be achieved in village schools. It is a serious educational mistake to send most village students away to high school at adolescence, the critical time for identity formation. In large high schools away from home, especially boarding schools, students have little informal contact with adults and are socialized primarily by confused peers. In large schools away from home, the school staff has little idea of the values and life style of the village and cannot show students value continuities. A small village high school alone will not, of course, automatically have positive benefits. Teachers, if they wish, can be as impersonal and as insensitive to students' value orientations in a small village school as in a large school away from home. But small village high schools can more easily achieve personal teacher-student relationships and suggest value continuities.

### Cultural Factors

The importance of cultural differences in designing educational programs for Native students is very much over-emphasized. Educators often miss the basic problems and the best solutions by expecting every educational issue involving Indian and Eskimo students to be explained by cultural differences and resolved by adapting the educational program to aboriginal culture. When I was in Bethel recently, for

example, I listened to a boarding home program student complain that his Eskimo boarding home mother often picked on him for no reason at all. He also said she was depressed and nervous. While I wondered about such cultural factors as the effects of migration from a small village to a regional center, the Boarding Home Program co-ordinator, (who knew the boarding home mother), put a hand on the student's knee and said, "Oscar, have you ever heard of menopause?"

The point, of course, is that the explanation for problems involving Indians and Eskimos often lies not in cultural factors but in common human problems. As Henry Stack Sullivan has said, "We are all more human than anything else." Cultural factors may color the particular problem, but if we look at these factors alone, we may miss the major problem for the detail. Yet, it is very tempting to do this because cultural factors are "interesting." Discussions of cultural influences lead to the publication of research studies and to large educational program grants. Discussions of cultural influences alone, however, may not lead to the solution of the fundamental educational problems of Indian and Eskimo students.

In any educational situation, many factors must be taken into account. The response of an Indian or Eskimo student to a particular type of teacher, for example, may be influenced in part by cultural factors. But it is also influenced by such factors as the religious influences in the village, the educational style of previous teachers, and the student's learning problems.

In planning educational programs, it may be far more productive to ask, first, what is the fundamental problem—lack of self-confidence, reading skills, weak identity? Only then is it important to ask how cultural as well as other factors shape this problem.

### **Drop-out**

High drop-out among Indian and Eskimo students occurs primarily at the high school level, especially in high schools away from home. In 1973, drop-out of students in the boarding home program averaged 16%, and drop-out of students in state operated dormitories averaged 36%. (See Table 4)

Drop-out figures alone, however, can be misleading. First, many students who drop-out of school during one school year re-enroll during later years. These figures, thus, do not show how many students permanently leave school. Drop-out figures are also misleading unless transfer figures as well are considered. For example, in 1971-72, the drop-out rate of village students in urban boarding home programs was only 11%. The drop-out rate of students in rural boarding home programs was 15%. Does this mean that village students are slightly more satisfied in big cities? Not at all. In the big city programs 11% transferred; in the rural towns, 4% transferred. What was happening was merely that a village student unhappy in a big city was transferred to a rural town because the staff thought he might find it easier to adjust. But a student unhappy in a rural town was usually sent home because there was nowhere else to go.

Focusing exclusively on drop-out as an educational problem moreover, has negative effects on students. Since drop-out is the only way the success of the school, (and

**Table 4**  
**Drop-Out and Transfer of Students**  
**In State Boarding Home and Dormitory Programs 1971-1973**

	Enrollment	Drop-out		Transfer		Total Withdrawal	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>BOARDING HOME PROGRAMS</b>							
1971-72							
Urban White Majority Towns	707	78	11%	79	11%	157	22%
Rural White Majority Towns	295	24	8%	34	12%	58	20%
Rural Native Majority Towns	286	43	15%	12	4%	55	19%
1972-73							
Urban White Majority Towns	554	87	16%	78	14%	65	30%
Rural White Majority Towns	236	36	15%	30	13%	66	28%
Rural Native Majority Towns	320	48	15%	27	8%	75	23%
Rural Native Majority Towns	320	48	15%	27	8%	75	23%
<b>DORMITORY PROGRAMS*</b>							
1971-72							
Kodiak Aleutian Dormitory	249	39	16%	40	16%	79	32%
Beltz Dormitory	187	5	3%	18	10%	23	12%
1972-73							
Bethel Dormitory	205	87	42%	27	13%	114	56%
Kodiak-Aleutian Dormitory	73	22	30%	14	19%	36	49%
Beltz Dormitory	173	52	30%	15	9%	67	39%

\*Includes students who transfer to dormitory programs.

thus the performance of the staff), is measured, the staff is under pressure to produce the lowest possible drop-out figures. Students who are suffering severe emotional problems from being separated from their families are kept at the school or merely transferred to a different school when it would be in their best interests to go home. Indeed, some students away at high school purposefully get into serious trouble so they will be sent home when their previous requests to go home are ignored.

In sum, while drop-out is a problem, emphasis on drop-out figures alone diverts attention from anything else that happens to students in a school except whether their bodies are still there. Drop-out figures are emphasized in part because, if students are not in school they are not learning academic skills and, in part because these figures are easy to obtain. But it is of the greatest importance to evaluate schools by many other measures than drop-out rates. The effects of the school program on mental health, academic progress, and the success of graduates in adult life also should be examined.

### Transfer

While attention is paid exclusively to the problem of dropping out, transferring from high school to high school is also a common and serious problem. Of course, in some circumstances, it is quite desirable for a student to transfer from a high school where he is dissatisfied to a school which might have a better program for him. What is psychologically damaging, however, is the common

practice of transferring to a different school almost every school year and even within a school year as well. Many students have told us that they "tried out Anchorage this year and it was okay. Covenant was better. Next year I'm going to see what Edgecumbe is like. See you."

This practice of continual transferring may produce personality disorder. Psychiatrists who have studied extensively among Indian students in boarding schools call this condition "psychosocial nomadism." When students repeatedly transfer to different schools, they experience constant change in the people who are

**Table 5**

**Alaska Natives Receiving Higher Education Degrees in Alaska and in Other States (1967-1972)**

	1967-1968	1968-1969	1969-1970	1970-1971	1971-1972
4-year degree	5	23	18	21	22
2-year degree	6	3	4	12	13
Total	11	26	22	33	35

Coverage outside Alaska was incomplete so this table underestimates the number of Native graduates. Since most Natives attend college within Alaska, the error should not be substantial.

This table is taken from K. Kohout and J. S. Kleinfeld, *Alaska Natives in Higher Education*, Institute of Social, Economic, and Government Research, 1973, (forthcoming).

meaningful figures in their lives. With each transfer, the child must form new relationships with new people who have different standards and expectations for him. Always a stranger in a strange land, the student never feels in control of his world. As Krush puts it:<sup>12</sup>

Frequency of movement and the necessity to conform to changing standards can only lead to confusion and disorganization of the child's personality. The frequency of movement further interferes with and discourages the development of lasting relations in which love and concern can permit adequate maturation.

Such practices as yearly transfers are encouraged by the lack of co-ordination between Bureau of Indian Affairs, the state Division of Regional Schools and Boarding Home Program, and Alaska's private high schools. Students transfer from one agency to the next without anyone responsible for considering what their problems are and the most appropriate programs for them. Means of

coordinating the different agencies involved in rural secondary school education need to be considered.

### **Success in Higher Education**

The formation of regional and village corporations through the Land Claims Settlement has generated high demand for trained Natives in professional occupations. Very conservative manpower estimates indicate that by Fiscal Year 1978, at least 400-600 professional, technical, and clerical personnel will be needed by these corporations.<sup>13</sup>

The present rate of Native college graduates is far short of the demand both from Native corporations and government and private businesses. Over the last four years, only from 18 to 23 Natives per year have graduated with four-year degrees. (See Table 5)

Over the last ten years, the number of Alaska Natives entering and succeeding in college has substantially increased.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the greatest increase had been in those Natives at the most educationally disadvantage, rural Native with low levels of academic skills. However, the proportion of Natives succeeding in college is still far below that of non-Natives. Indeed, during 1971-72, the success rate of Native students at the University of Alaska was half that of non-Natives. (See Table 6) The greatest gap between Native and non-Native success occurs among high academic ability students. The college success of Native students with high levels of academic skills, at least at the University of Alaska, has shown no improvement over the last ten years. This suggests the importance of non-academic factors such as the drive and persistence that occurs through strong identity formation to college success.

**Table 6**

**COMPARISON OF FIRST ENROLLMENT SUCCESS RATES\*  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA, FAIRBANKS,  
1971-1972 FOR ALASKA NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE STUDENTS  
BY ACT GROUP**

<u>ACT Group</u>	Alaska Native Students		Non-Native Students	
High (21+)	6/12	50%	202/250	81%
Medium (11-20)	21/56	38%	106/166	64%
Low (0-10)	11/29	38%	7/16	44%
All Students**	40/105	38%	347/486	71%

\*Success was determined by achievement of a college G.P.A. of 2.00 or better while



averaging 7.5 or more completed credits per session completed during first enrollment.

\*\*Includes students for whom no ACT scores are available.

This table is taken from K. Kohout and J. S. Kleinfeld, *Alaska Natives in Higher Education*, Institute of Social, Economic, and Government Research, 1973, (forthcoming).

Much attention has been given to adapting Alaska college programs to the academic ability levels of Native students. For example, the University of Alaska has established special freshman courses designed to improve students' language skills and understanding of the expectations and structure of college courses.

The area in which much improvement is still needed is the college social environment. For example, placing Native students in large, impersonal dormitories, where no one knows if they stay in their room and do not attend classes, may not be as desirable as placing Native students in small dormitories where people know each other. Much attention also needs to be given to the possible functions of social organizations in creating a college climate which supports academic achievement.

### **Institutional Impact**

Very little research has been done in Alaska on the relative effectiveness of different types of educational institutions on the success of Indian and Eskimo students. Evaluations of the effects of different types of educational environments is important in determining policy directions. Such studies, however, need to consider not merely what type of agency—the state of Alaska, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, or Native organizations—control the school. Such studies must also consider specifically how the particular educational environments differ and through what processes these different environments influence students.

Comparison has been made of the relative effectiveness of different types of high schools on Native students' college success. Methodological problems, such as differences between entering students, make conclusions tentative. However, this study does suggest that attending integrated schools leads to no higher college success for Native students than attending all-Native schools.<sup>15</sup> Integrated schools also appear to provide no advantage in achievement gains for Native students.<sup>16</sup>

While differences must be viewed with caution because of student selectivity, it is of interest that parochial boarding schools in Alaska have the highest rate of college entrance and success of Native graduates while public boarding schools are least successful.<sup>17</sup>

Case studies of graduates from these two types of schools suggest that the public boarding schools socialize students into dependent, passive ways of behaving that are self-defeating outside of the boarding school environment. Parochial boarding schools, with their educational emphasis on character development, tend to produce students with

strong identities who are much more successful.

### Conclusion

The central problems of Indian and Eskimo students occur at the secondary school and college levels. While academic achievement levels below national norms do cause students difficulty, the fundamental issues appear to lie in the area of strong identity formation. Almost never do teachers or employers say that Native students do not succeed because they lacked the necessary cognitive or academic abilities. Rather, when Native students do not succeed, it appears to be because they lack a sense of direction and purpose which leaves them vulnerable to negative social influences. Educational environments need to be designed which create strong identities. But strong identities mean more than a sense of pride in being an Indian or Eskimo, as important as this is. Strong identity means the development of unified values that organize one's life and give it meaning.

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<sup>1</sup> See R. Rosenthal, *Experimental Effects in Behavioral Research*, Appleton, New York, 1966. See also R. Rosenthal and C. Jacobson, *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, Holt, Rinehard & Winston, New York, 1968.

<sup>2</sup>This section is based on J. S. Kleinfeld, "Intellectual Strengths in Culturally Different Groups: An Eskimo Illustration," *Review of Educational Research*, 43(3), pp. 341-359, 1973.

<sup>3</sup>E. S. Carpenter, "Space Concepts of the Aivilik Eskimos," *Explorations*, pp. 131-185, 1955.

<sup>4</sup>"Democrats Talk on Oil," *Anchorage Daily Times*, September 26, 1970.

<sup>5</sup>Carpenter, loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup>See especially J. W. Berry, "Temne and Eskimo Perceptual Skills," *Journal of International Psychology*, 1., pp. 207-299, 1966. See also N. Forbes, *Effects of Attitude and Intelligence Variables on the English Language Achievement of Alaskan Eskimo*, Unpublished master's thesis, San Jose State, 1971. Oregon State University.

<sup>7</sup>E. Benajmin, *An Investigation of the Self-Concept of Alaskan Eskimo Adolescents in Four Different Secondary School Environments*, Doctoral dissertation, Oregon State University.

<sup>8</sup>J. S. Kleinfeld, "Classroom Climate and the Verbal Participation of Indian and Eskimo Students in Integrated Classrooms," *Journal of Educational Research*, 1973, (forthcoming).

<sup>9</sup>J. S. Kleinfeld, "Effects of Nonverbally Communicated Personal Warmth on the Intelligence Test Performance of Indian and Eskimo Adolescents," *Journal of Social Psychology*, 1973, (forthcoming).

<sup>10</sup>J. S. Kleinfeld, "Effects of Nonverbal Warmth on the Learning of Eskimo and White Students," *Journal of Social Psychology*, 1973, (forthcoming).

<sup>11</sup>Sec Erik Erikson, *Identity and the Life-Cycle*, Psychological Issues, 1 (10), 1959, whole volume.

<sup>12</sup>T. P. Krush, J. W. Bjork, M.S.W., P. S. Sindell, and J. Nelle, "Some Thoughts on the Formation of Personality Disorder: Study of an Indian Boarding School Population," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 122:8, pp. 868-875, February 1966.

<sup>13</sup>Kleinfeld, P. Jones, and R. Evans, *Land Claims and Native Manpower*, Alaska Native Foundation, Institute of Social Economic and Government Research, 1973.

<sup>14</sup>K. Kohout and J. S.

Kleinfeld, *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>Kohout and Kleinfeld,

*Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup>W Bass, *An Analysis of Academic Achievement of Indian High School Students in Federal and Public Schools*, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1971. This study involved primarily outside Indian but also Alaska Native students.

<sup>17</sup>Kohout and Kleinfeld, *op. cit.*