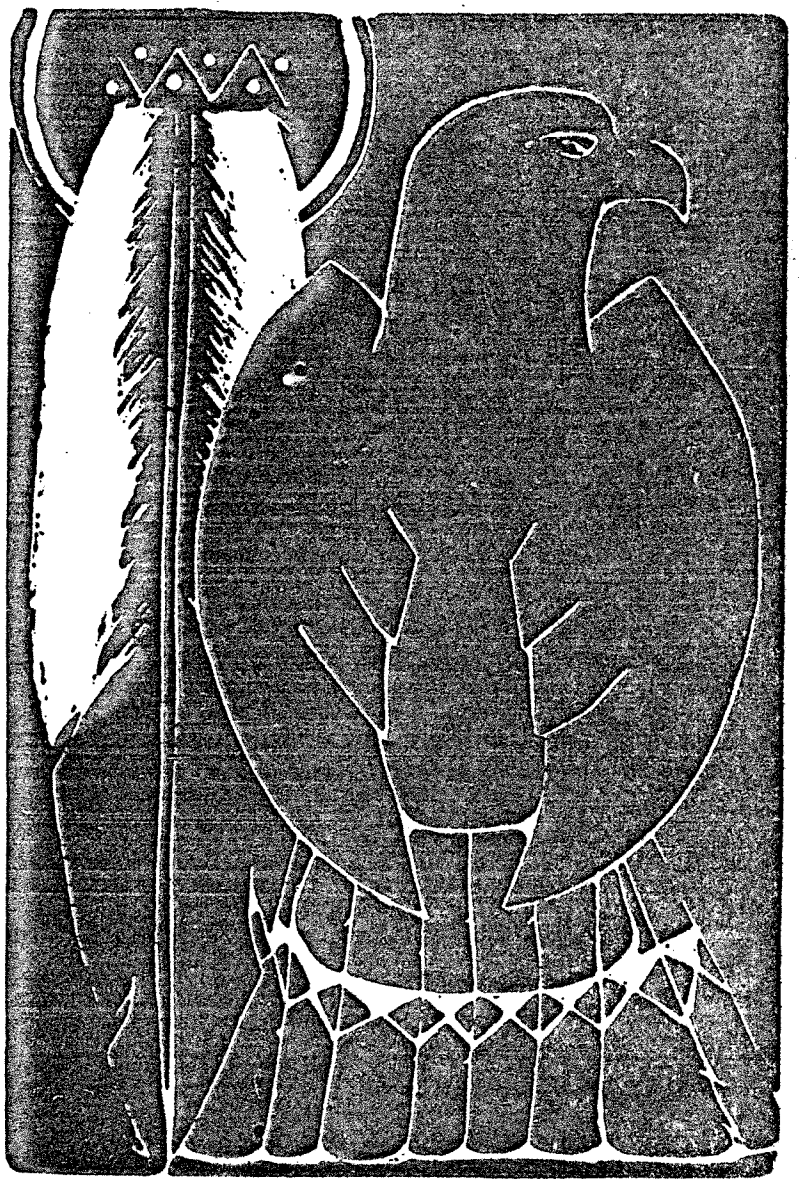
VOL. IV NO. 2 MAY 1978

INDIANS IN EDUCATION



EDUCATION OF NATIVE AMERICANS TODAY

Articles By:

Beuf
Burand
Havighurst
Jones
Kleinfeld
Medicine
Niemi
Oliver
Pierce
St. Germaine
Yazzie

Jamie Guzman

Are Parochial Schools In Alaska More Successful In Educating Indian And Eskimo Adolescents?

By Judith Kleinfeld

The purpose of this article is to draw attention to the effects of parochial schools in Indian education. In searching for more effective approaches to teaching Indian and Eskimo students, educators tend to ignore these schools. They are out of the usual communication networks. They evoke images of moral rigidity, authoritarian climates, and dogmatic narrowness. Yet the literature on Indian education contains scattered references to parochial schools that seem to have been atypically successful in cross-cultural instruction. For example:

—A study (Kohout, 1974) comparing the college success of Alaska Native students from different types of high schools found that parochial school graduates were significantly more likely to enter college and to succeed academically. Parochial school graduates did substantially better than graduates from public boarding schools. However, their academic skills were no higher than those of village students who had attended other types of high schools. This might suggest that parochial school graduates may be distinguished by other characteristics, such as higher motivation or internal resources that enable them to avoid social problems.

—A study of the difficulties of Sioux adolescents in public high schools concludes with the remark that "young people attending the Catholic mission school do not seem to develop the 'adolescent withdrawal' reaction to anywhere near the degree of young people who attend the Bureau (of Indian Affairs) day schools". (Way, 1968, p. 1487)

—In a follow-up study of Indian high school graduates from eighteen southwestern high schools which included four parochial schools, Michener (1973) indicated these preliminary findings:

1) Parochial schools do not excel in facilities, modern curriculum (one required Latin), or certification criteria, but their graduates are quite discernible in many ways.
2) Parochial schools have a much higher percentage of completers (5-10 times) greater than public schools and (10-20 times) greater than BIA graduates in terms of college completion.
3) While the differences are less noticeable, parochial school graduates achieve a high degree of vocational and technical skills.
4) Because parochial schools have a disproportionately high representation among the tribal leaders, parochial educational inputs may have greater feedback to Indian communities than do public and BIA schools.

I have recently completed an intensive study of a Catholic boarding school in Alaska which exemplifies this pattern. The school enrolls Eskimo students from small remote villages who are not especially talented academically. The school has poor facilities and equipment, no special bicultural or vocational programs, and no local control or other mechanisms for involving Eskimo parents. Most of the classroom teaching is done by young volunteers who lack professional training in cross-cultural education and who do not have teaching certification. Yet Eskimo graduates from this parochial school do significantly better in college than do other village students. They appear to adapt well when they return to a village

Dr. Judith Kleinfeld is an Associate Professor of Psychology in the Institute of Social and Economic Research at the University of Alaska.

environment and they are particularly active in community service. What is striking about these graduates is not only external indicators of "success" but, also, qualities of inner integration noteworthy in a period of rapid, disorganizing cultural change. Collier (1973, p. 123) describes these students in a film study of Eskimo education: "As a group they were the most eloquent, effectual, and assured students observed in our study...(They) appeared to have durable personalities that had definitely been strengthened within education." Graduates from this parochial school recall their high school with pride and affection. Many credit it with having significantly influenced their personal growth. As one wrote on a follow-up survey:

> I strongly feel now that it is a very great school with very interested teachers who really aim to teach...Thinking back I can say now that's when I learned to see people as people, like close friends, who never will end their friendship. (This school) helped me to look at life more like a challenge and a healthy adventure, and it not only taught me chemistry and math; it helped me as a person, and I am very happy I went there.

In the forthcoming study, I will detail what happens educationally in this school and what may underlie the graduates' unusual success. In the space of this brief article, I can only outline a few key differences between this Catholic boarding school and public high schools involved in Indian education.

This parochial school is based on an implicit theory of cross-cultural education radically different from the principles underlying the operation of public high schools. What it views as central aims of education, the public schools do not regard as goals. What it views as crucial processes of education, the public schools do not regard as methods. In the public schools, the fundamental educational objective is **technical** instruction, teaching knowledge and skills. The schools offer Indian and Eskimo adolescents generally what schools offer everywhere — reading and mathematics, history and science, and assorted vocational skills. In a cross-cultural context, this education lacks legitimacy. It is deplored as "white studies for brown students," a "curriculum laid down by culture-bound white values" (Collier, 1973, p. 123). Even where Native language and culture classes are added to the other subjects, educators point out that the inner structure of the school, its hidden curriculum, still teaches "white ways and white values."

Public school teachers have absorbed this viewpoint from the general climate of ideas current in educational thought. It is also pressed on them by the political pressures on the schools where they teach. The results have damaged the education that Indian and Eskimo students receive. The teachers' sense of participating in a system at best irrelevant and at worst harmful makes them uncertain of what, if any, academic or behavioral demands they can legitimately make on students. Lacking confidence in the value of what they are doing, they can present subject content, but they cannot motivate. They cannot fulfill what Whitehead (1959) has called the second function of the teacher: to create from one's own personality and commitment the "sense of value, the sense of importance" (p. 63).

In contrast, the parochial school I studied had a strong sense of legitimate purpose. The fundamental educational objective was not technical instruction. It was to help students growing up in a period of confused, fragmented life patterns to develop a coherent set of inner principles that would organize experience and provide direction for life. This philosophy of education was not the result of conscious deliberations on educational goals. It was an organic consensus, a world-view deriving from the similar Catholic socialization of the school staff. In interviews where I asked staff to describe "the kind of Native student the school was trying to produce," 59 percent spontaneously mentioned the development of inner strength and emotional stability. The head of the school pointed out that he had seen many Native students who had the technical skills necessary to succeed, but who did not have the "socialization to cope." As another staff member described this aim:

> Someone who has the strength, the inner resources, to cope with life. Someone who stands on his own two feet and is not always trying to escape. He faces problems and doesn't have to resort to alcohol to escape.

The specific value system upheld by the school centered not on individual achievement, but on concern and responsibility for others. Developing this ethic in students was a goal mentioned by 55 percent of the staff. These basic human values could be expressed in whatever cultural context the student chose:

> A boy or girl who leaves (this school) and works either in a village or in a city, whatever they decide on, does so with an outlook for the good of people.

The principles which guided the school were consistent with traditional Eskimo ideals that still formed part of students' primary identity framework. In interviews where students were asked to describe "good things people did in the village that made others like and think well of them," 75 percent of the group talked about helping others through such activities as sharing food and packing water for old people. The school extended this primary value framework to crucial areas of adolescent and adult life, such as social relationships in the dormitory and the choice of a vocation. This system helped adolescents solve the key developmental task of identity formation (Erikson, 1959); for example, finding directions for life that merge childhood values and identifications with available social roles that bring respect. The school developed this value framework by creating a total school society which was itself ordered by the school's principles. The manner in which the school organized recreational activities illustrates how this was done.

In contrast to public boarding schools, the recreational program of the parochial schools was not viewed as entertainment or as a

means to work off physical energy to keep students occupied. First, activities were consciously presented to students as ways in which they could help the school. Because the school was too poor to afford a special recreation director, the students themselves organized weekend events. Responsibility for putting on a big Friday night activity for all the students and staff—a dance, carnival, picnic, talent show—rotated among each class of students. Responsibility for putting on smaller Saturday night activities in each dormitory section—games, a movie, a student-staff slumber party—rotated among dormitory rooms. In the monotony of boarding school life, these activities were eagerly anticipated. A group that put on a good activity received acclaim from students and staff. A group that put on a poor activity felt embarrassed.

Second, activities were explicitly presented to the students as ways they could develop organizational skills that would be useful later on in organizing community activities in the village. Leadership was taught systematically at the school much in the way that typing or any other skill would be taught. In planning activities in class homeroom periods, students learned a pattern of (a) defining alternatives, (b) examining their feasibility, (c) revising initial plans, and (d) assigning task responsibility. The seniors carried out these organizational tasks with practiced ease. The freshmen who had not yet learned them required continual teacher direction and explanation as to why they should "have to do it."

Despite its high degree of structure and formal classroom arrangement, the parochial school generated a warm group climate very different from the impersonal atmosphere characteristic of public high schools. In evaluating the school, 53 percent of the students spontaneously mentioned the satisfying emotional climate of unity, group spirit, and friendliness. Of the group, 24 percent brought up, specifically, their positive relationships with staff. The teachers, primarily young volunteers, who boarded at the school, spent a great deal of time outside of class just talking to students and helping them with homework. The ideal of unity among the student group was another explicit emphasis of the school. Staff frequently discussed with students the importance of helping each other with homework and personal problems. Staff also combatted tendencies of students from the same village to remain in isolated cliques.

Many of the specific educational methods of this parochial school could benefit public schools involved in Indian education. School activities, which are so important to students, could be used to pursue important educational ends. For example, the value of warm personal relationships established between teachers and students outside of the classroom needs to be brought to the attention of public school educators. The fundamental question, however, is what, if any, contribution of public schools can make in helping Indian and Eskimo students growing up in a period of rapid cultural change develop basic values. Specifically, is the secularism of the public schools in itself a barrier to meeting crucial developmental needs?

Yet, religion is not the critical factor. Schools that exercise powerful effects on students' values are not necessarily religious schools (Jacob, 1957). These schools are generally private, usually small residential schools which have the freedom to select staff and students who support the distinctive value climate that the school is trying to create. These schools have the opportunity to exert influence over many facets of a student's life. Educators should explore the potential of private schools in Indian education, or of special public schools for the purpose of achieving specific outcomes, one of which might be leadership.

Of course, schools are not the only institution for exerting educational influence. In many societies, youth organizations play a crucial role in helping adolescents solidify a value commitment. In Alaska, there have been intriguing, often undocumented reports of the success of certain religious youth groups. These groups provide an atmosphere of peer support for a value stance oriented against drinking and toward individual responsibility. Youth organizations may participate in significant educational tasks which are very difficult to accomplish in public schools.

The major lesson to be learned from parochial schools involved in Indian education is the importance of a school's intangible climate of purpose. In striving to avoid ethnocentrism, while pursuing a curriculum which teaches "white ways and white values," the public schools have become nervous and uncertain institutions. If schools are to develop students with self-confidence, clear identity, and direction, they must develop these qualities in themselves.◀

REFERENCES

Collier, John. **Alaskan Eskimo Education,** New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1973, 118, 123.

Erikson, E. Growth and crises of the healthy personality. Identity and the life-cycle, **Psychological Issues.** 1959, 1, 50-100.

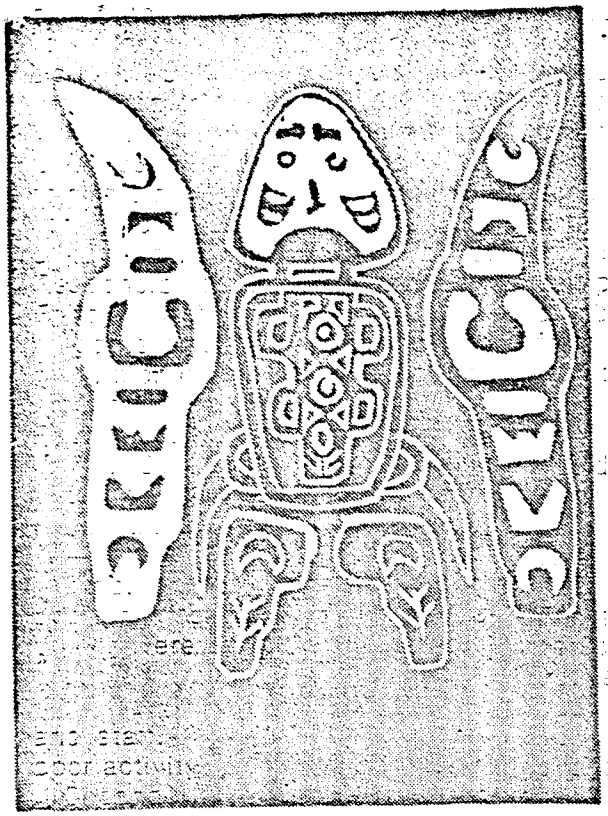
Jacob, P. **Changing Values in College: An Exploratory Study of the Impact of College Teaching,** New York: Harper, 1957.

Kohout, K. and Kleinfeld, J. "Increasing the college success of Alaska Natives." **Journal of American Indian Education,** 1974, 13, 27-31.

Michener, Bryan, Dr. Personal communication, November, 1973.

Way, R. and Way, M. "Drop-out of American Indians at the Secondary Level, 1964." In **Indian Education,** Hearings before the Special Subcommittee on Indian Education of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, United States Senate, Part 4, 1968, 1457-1523, p. 1487.

Whitehead, A. **The Aims of Education and Other Essays,** New York: The Macmillan Co., 1959, 63.



Jamie Guzman

Are Parochial Schools In Alaska More Successful In Educating Indian And Eskimo Adolescents?

By Judith Kleinfeld

The purpose of this article is to draw attention to the effects of parochial schools in Indian education. In searching for more effective approaches to teaching Indian and Eskimo students, educators tend to ignore these schools. They are out of the usual communication networks. They evoke images of moral rigidity, authoritarian climates, and dogmatic narrowness. Yet the literature on Indian education contains scattered references to parochial schools that seem to have been atypically successful in cross-cultural instruction. For example:

—A study (Kohout, 1974) comparing the college success of Alaska Native students from different types of high schools found that parochial school graduates were significantly more likely to enter college and to succeed academically. Parochial school graduates did substantially better than graduates from public boarding schools. However, their academic skills were no higher than those of village students who had attended other types of high schools. This might suggest that parochial school graduates may be distinguished by other characteristics, such as higher motivation or internal resources that enable them to avoid social problems.

—A study of the difficulties of Sioux adolescents in public high schools concludes with the remark that "young people attending the Catholic mission school do not seem to develop the 'adolescent withdrawal' reaction to anywhere near the degree of young people who attend the Bureau (of Indian Affairs) day schools". (Way, 1968, p. 1487)

—In a follow-up study of Indian high school graduates from eighteen southwestern high schools which included four parochial schools, Michener (1973) indicated these preliminary findings:

1) Parochial schools do not excel in facilities, modern curriculum (one required Latin), or certification criteria, but their graduates are quite discernible in many ways.
2) Parochial schools have a much higher percentage of completers (5-10 times) greater than public schools and (10-20 times) greater than BIA graduates in terms of college completion.
3) While the differences are less noticeable, parochial school graduates achieve a high degree of vocational and technical skills.
4) Because parochial schools have a disproportionately high representation among the tribal leaders, parochial educational inputs may have greater feedback to Indian communities than do public and BIA schools.

I have recently completed an intensive study of a Catholic boarding school in Alaska which exemplifies this pattern. The school enrolls Eskimo students from small remote villages who are not especially talented academically. The school has poor facilities and equipment, no special bicultural or vocational programs, and no local control or other mechanisms for involving Eskimo parents. Most of the classroom teaching is done by young volunteers who lack professional training in cross-cultural education and who do not have teaching certification. Yet Eskimo graduates from this parochial school do significantly better in college than do other village students. They appear to adapt well when they return to a village

Dr. Judith Kleinfeld is an Associate Professor of Psychology in the Institute of Social and Economic Research at the University of Alaska.

environment and they are particularly active in community service. What is striking about these graduates is not only external indicators of "success" but, also, qualities of inner integration noteworthy in a period of rapid, disorganizing cultural change. Collier (1973, p. 123) describes these students in a film study of Eskimo education: "As a group they were the most eloquent, effectual, and assured students observed in our study...(They) appeared to have durable personalities that had definitely been strengthened within education." Graduates from this parochial school recall their high school with pride and affection. Many credit it with having significantly influenced their personal growth. As one wrote on a follow-up survey:

> I strongly feel now that it is a very great school with very interested teachers who really aim to teach...Thinking back I can say now that's when I learned to see people as people, like close friends, who never will end their friendship. (This school) helped me to look at life more like a challenge and a healthy adventure, and it not only taught me chemistry and math; it helped me as a person, and I am very happy I went there.

In the forthcoming study, I will detail what happens educationally in this school and what may underlie the graduates' unusual success. In the space of this brief article, I can only outline a few key differences between this Catholic boarding school and public high schools involved in Indian education.

This parochial school is based on an implicit theory of cross-cultural education radically different from the principles underlying the operation of public high schools. What it views as central aims of education, the public schools do not regard as goals. What it views as crucial processes of education, the public schools do not regard as methods. In the public schools, the fundamental educational objective is **technical** instruction, teaching knowledge and skills. The schools offer Indian and Eskimo adolescents generally what schools offer everywhere — reading and mathematics, history and science, and assorted vocational skills. In a cross-cultural context, this education lacks legitimacy. It is deplored as "white studies for brown students," a "curriculum laid down by culture-bound white values" (Collier, 1973, p. 123). Even where Native language and culture classes are added to the other subjects, educators point out that the inner structure of the school, its hidden curriculum, still teaches "white ways and white values."

Public school teachers have absorbed this viewpoint from the general climate of ideas current in educational thought. It is also pressed on them by the political pressures on the schools where they teach. The results have damaged the education that Indian and Eskimo students receive. The teachers' sense of participating in a system at best irrelevant and at worst harmful makes them uncertain of what, if any, academic or behavioral demands they can legitimately make on students. Lacking confidence in the value of what they are doing, they can present subject content, but they cannot motivate. They cannot fulfill what Whitehead (1959) has called the second function of the teacher: to create from one's own personality and commitment the "sense of value, the sense of importance" (p. 63).

In contrast, the parochial school I studied had a strong sense of legitimate purpose. The fundamental educational objective was not technical instruction. It was to help students growing up in a period of confused, fragmented life patterns to develop a coherent set of inner principles that would organize experience and provide direction for life. This philosophy of education was not the result of conscious deliberations on educational goals. It was an organic consensus, a world-view deriving from the similar Catholic socialization of the school staff. In interviews where I asked staff to describe "the kind of Native student the school was trying to produce," 59 percent spontaneously mentioned the development of inner strength and emotional stability. The head of the school pointed out that he had seen many Native students who had the technical skills necessary to succeed, but who did not have the "socialization to cope." As another staff member described this aim:

> Someone who has the strength, the inner resources, to cope with life. Someone who stands on his own two feet and is not always trying to escape. He faces problems and doesn't have to resort to alcohol to escape.

The specific value system upheld by the school centered not on individual achievement, but on concern and responsibility for others. Developing this ethic in students was a goal mentioned by 55 percent of the staff. These basic human values could be expressed in whatever cultural context the student chose:

> A boy or girl who leaves (this school) and works either in a village or in a city, whatever they decide on, does so with an outlook for the good of people.

The principles which guided the school were consistent with traditional Eskimo ideals that still formed part of students' primary identity framework. In interviews where students were asked to describe "good things people did in the village that made others like and think well of them," 75 percent of the group talked about helping others through such activities as sharing food and packing water for old people. The school extended this primary value framework to crucial areas of adolescent and adult life, such as social relationships in the dormitory and the choice of a vocation. This system helped adolescents solve the key developmental task of identity formation (Erikson, 1959); for example, finding directions for life that merge childhood values and identifications with available social roles that bring respect. The school developed this value framework by creating a total school society which was itself ordered by the school's principles. The manner in which the school organized recreational activities illustrates how this was done.

In contrast to public boarding schools, the recreational program of the parochial schools was not viewed as entertainment or as a

means to work off physical energy to keep students occupied. First, activities were consciously presented to students as ways in which they could help the school. Because the school was too poor to afford a special recreation director, the students themselves organized weekend events. Responsibility for putting on a big Friday night activity for all the students and staff—a dance, carnival, picnic, talent show—rotated among each class of students. Responsibility for putting on smaller Saturday night activities in each dormitory section—games, a movie, a student-staff slumber party—rotated among dormitory rooms. In the monotony of boarding school life, these activities were eagerly anticipated. A group that put on a good activity received acclaim from students and staff. A group that put on a poor activity felt embarrassed.

Second, activities were explicitly presented to the students as ways they could develop organizational skills that would be useful later on in organizing community activities in the village. Leadership was taught systematically at the school much in the way that typing or any other skill would be taught. In planning activities in class homeroom periods, students learned a pattern of (a) defining alternatives, (b) examining their feasibility, (c) revising initial plans, and (d) assigning task responsibility. The seniors carried out these organizational tasks with practiced ease. The freshmen who had not yet learned them required continual teacher direction and explanation as to why they should "have to do it."

Despite its high degree of structure and formal classroom arrangement, the parochial school generated a warm group climate very different from the impersonal atmosphere characteristic of public high schools. In evaluating the school, 53 percent of the students spontaneously mentioned the satisfying emotional climate of unity, group spirit, and friendliness. Of the group, 24 percent brought up, specifically, their positive relationships with staff. The teachers, primarily young volunteers, who boarded at the school, spent a great deal of time outside of class just talking to students and helping them with homework. The ideal of unity among the student group was another explicit emphasis of the school. Staff frequently discussed with students the importance of helping each other with homework and personal problems. Staff also combatted tendencies of students from the same village to remain in isolated cliques.

Many of the specific educational methods of this parochial school could benefit public schools involved in Indian education. School activities, which are so important to students, could be used to pursue important educational ends. For example, the value of warm personal relationships established between teachers and students outside of the classroom needs to be brought to the attention of public school educators. The fundamental question, however, is what, if any, contribution of public schools can make in helping Indian and Eskimo students growing up in a period of rapid cultural change develop basic values. Specifically, is the secularism of the public schools in itself a barrier to meeting crucial developmental needs?

Yet, religion is not the critical factor. Schools that exercise powerful effects on students' values are not necessarily religious schools (Jacob, 1957). These schools are generally private, usually small residential schools which have the freedom to select staff and students who support the distinctive value climate that the school is trying to create. These schools have the opportunity to exert influence over many facets of a student's life. Educators should explore the potential of private schools in Indian education, or of special public schools for the purpose of achieving specific outcomes, one of which might be leadership.

Of course, schools are not the only institution for exerting educational influence. In many societies, youth organizations play a crucial role in helping adolescents solidify a value commitment. In Alaska, there have been intriguing, often undocumented reports of the success of certain religious youth groups. These groups provide an atmosphere of peer support for a value stance oriented against drinking and toward individual responsibility. Youth organizations may participate in significant educational tasks which are very difficult to accomplish in public schools.

The major lesson to be learned from parochial schools involved in Indian education is the importance of a school's intangible climate of purpose. In striving to avoid ethnocentrism, while pursuing a curriculum which teaches "white ways and white values," the public schools have become nervous and uncertain institutions. If schools are to develop students with self-confidence, clear identity, and direction, they must develop these qualities in themselves.◀

REFERENCES

Collier, John. **Alaskan Eskimo Education,** New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1973, 118, 123.

Erikson, E. Growth and crises of the healthy personality. Identity and the life-cycle, **Psychological Issues.** 1959, 1, 50-100.

Jacob, P. **Changing Values in College: An Exploratory Study of the Impact of College Teaching,** New York: Harper, 1957.

Kohout, K. and Kleinfeld, J. "Increasing the college success of Alaska Natives." **Journal of American Indian Education, 1974, 13,** 27-31.

Michener, Bryan, Dr. Personal communication, November, 1973.

Way, R. and Way, M. "Drop-out of American Indians at the Secondary Level, 1964." In **Indian Education,** Hearings before the Special Subcommittee on Indian Education of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, United States Senate, Part 4, 1968, 1457-1523, p. 1487.

Whitehead, A. **The Aims of Education and Other Essays,** New York: The Macmillan Co., 1959, 63.