

12-1-1975

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Recommended Citation

Fields, Charles R. (1975) "Alaskan Natives and Caucasians: A Comparison of Educational Aspirations and Actual Enrollment," *Journal of Student Financial Aid*: Vol. 5 : Iss. 3 , Article 5.
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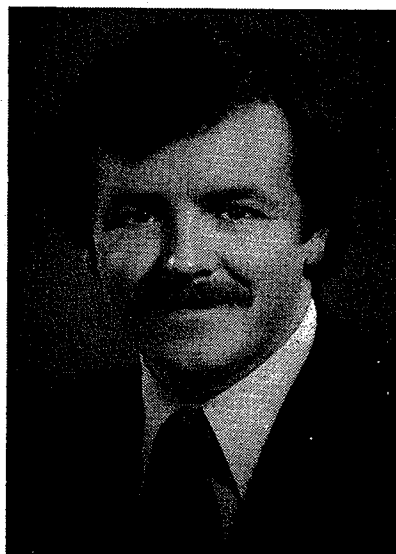
ALASKAN NATIVES AND CAUCASIANS: A COMPARISON OF EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND ACTUAL ENROLLMENT

Charles R. Fields

Considerable attention is presently being given to the issue of educational opportunities for Native Americans. Of interest are the aspirations of these groups for education beyond high school and the success they find in gaining access to the education they seek. One group of Native Americans — Alaskan Natives — has received little research in this area.

Each year approximately 4500 young men and women graduate from the high schools of the State of Alaska. What happens to them? Many of these graduates feel they need some type of training or education beyond high school to prepare them for satisfying jobs and happy, productive lives; but little research has been conducted regarding their educational plans and what they actually do following graduation. Little is known about differences between Caucasians and Alaskan Natives, between males and females, between youngsters from low-income and high-income families, in the proportions who reach their educational goals. This paper reports a research effort designed to determine the educational activities of Alaska high school graduates.

In the fall of 1972, the high school seniors of the State of Alaska were surveyed to determine their educational plans following their graduation. One year later, a random sample of these students was contacted to see how many and what types of students realized their educational goals. The study described here, conducted out of the University of Alaska's Office of Financial Aid and Admissions Counseling, thus consisted of two phases: the original survey and a follow-up of the sample.



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ORIGINAL SURVEY

Purpose of Original Survey

The purpose of the original survey was to determine high school seniors' educational plans following graduation. This information would be used as a basis for post-secondary educational enrollment projections for the various campuses in the State of Alaska, as well as give an indication of the number of students who would be seeking financial assistance.

It was also the intent of the survey to ascertain if different types of students had different aspirations for post-secondary education; specifically, if males differed from females and if Alaskan Natives (Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts) differed from Caucasians.

Method of Original Survey

In early November, 1972, the high school counselors of Alaska were contacted to enlist their support in a survey of the post-high school plans of their senior students. At that time they were asked to indicate the numbers of seniors currently enrolled at their schools and to distribute a questionnaire to each of them.

Students were asked to complete the questionnaires and return them to their counselors, who in turn were asked to submit them to the University of Alaska's office of Financial Aid and Admissions Counseling. High Schools which did not respond were sent follow-up letters. To those high schools where it was necessary, a third letter was sent along with another supply of questionnaires. Finally, a fourth letter was mailed to the few schools from which responses had not been received.

The questionnaires secured the following information from the respondents: 1) Name, 2) Address, 3) High School, 4) Sex, 5) Educational plan for the next fall, 6) Number of dependent youngsters in the family, 7) Family income category, 8) Ethnic background, and 9) Whether or not they planned to apply for financial aid.

Following are the various educational options that were listed on the questionnaires. Students were asked to indicate which one described their plan for the next fall.

1. Not Planning Further Education
2. Anchorage Community College
3. Juneau-Douglas Community College
4. Kenai Peninsula Community College
5. Ketchikan Community College
6. Kodiak Community College
7. Kuskokwim Community College
8. Matanuska-Susitna Community College
9. Sitka Community College
10. University of Alaska — Anchorage Senior College
11. University of Alaska — Fairbanks
12. University of Alaska — Southeastern Senior College

13. Alaska Methodist University
14. Sheldon Jackson College
15. Special School in Alaska (Beauty, Business, etc.)
16. Apprenticeship Program
17. Out-of-State College, University or School

Institutions numbered two through twelve above are all part of the state-wide University of Alaska system; Alaska Methodist University and Sheldon Jackson College are both small private schools in the state.

Results of Original Survey

Of the 51 high schools eligible for inclusion in the study, 49 are represented in the final results. One high school did not respond to any of the communications and another indicated it did not wish to participate in the survey.

Questionnaires were received from 2745 of the 4515 high school seniors in the state (60.8 percent). Of these students, 1382 (50.3 percent) were male and 1363 (49.7 percent) were female; 79.6 percent were Caucasians, 16.4 percent were Alaskan Natives (Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts), 2.6 percent were Blacks, and 1.4 percent were of other ethnic backgrounds. The number of students in the "other" category was too small to be considered significant and thus was not compared with the other ethnic groups in the present study.

Educational Plans Eighty-four percent of the high school seniors responding to the survey planned some type of formal education beyond high school. The percentages for males and females were 84.7 and 83.3, respectively. Of those planning additional education, males and females indicated similar patterns in virtually all categories, except for the following differences: Special School in Alaska (males 0.7 percent, females 6.7 percent); Apprenticeship Program (males 5.8 percent, females 0.3 percent); and Out-of-State College (males 55.7 percent, females 50.3 percent). The combined responses of males and females indicated that 53.0 percent of those who intended to pursue post-secondary education planned to do so outside of Alaska.

Size of Family The following summarizes the sizes of the respondents' families as measured by the number of dependent children: one or two children, 33.1 percent; three or four children, 38.9 percent; four or five children, 18.6 percent; and seven or more children, 9.4 percent.

Family Income Gross annual family income categories were indicated by the following percentages of students: \$0 through \$5,999, 13.3 percent; \$6,000 through \$8,999, 13.5 percent; \$9,000 through \$11,999, 18.6 percent; and \$12,000 or more, 54.6 percent.

Ethnic Background and Educational Plans Aspirations for post-secondary education were somewhat higher for minority students than for Caucasians. While 83.7 percent of the Caucasians planned further formal education, the figures for Alaskan Natives and Blacks were 87.9 percent and 90.6 percent, respectively.

Differences among ethnic groups in choice of educational institutions were substantial: Out-of-State College — Caucasians, 57.3 percent; Alaskan Natives, 29.1 percent; and Blacks, 81.3 percent. For education within the state no Black students intended to enroll in a private institution; for Alaskan Natives and Caucasians the figures were 13.7 percent and 2.8 percent, respectively

Financial Aid There was a close relationship between family income and plans to apply for financial aid. Of students who planned further education and whose gross family incomes fell in the \$0 through \$5,999 category, 71.6 percent planned to apply for financial aid; while in the highest income category (\$12,000 or more) this figure was 42.1 percent. Of the total respondents, 46.4 percent indicated that they planned to apply for financial aid for the next year. (Experience suggests that many students are not aware of their financial needs until shortly before or even after enrolling in college.)

Ethnicity, Family Size and Family Income Ethnicity, family size and family income were interrelated. In general, Caucasians had smaller families and larger incomes; Blacks had somewhat larger families and lower incomes; and Alaskan Natives had the largest families and the lowest incomes. (See Tables 1, 2, and 3.)

TABLE 1
Gross Annual Family Income by Ethnic Background

Ethnic Background	Income Category (\$)			
	0-5999	6000-8999	9000-11,999	12,000 & above
Alaskan Native (%)	47.1	17.8	17.2	17.8
Black (%)	17.7	26.7	20.0	35.6
Caucasian (%)	5.9	12.4	18.7	63.1

TABLE 2
Family Size by Ethnic Background

Ethnic Background	Number of Dependent Children in Family			
	1 - 2	3 - 4	5 - 6	7 or more
Alaskan Native (%)	21.8	24.7	21.1	32.4
Black (%)	20.0	36.7	26.7	16.7
Caucasian (%)	35.9	41.5	18.0	4.6

TABLE 3
Gross Annual Family Income by Family Size

Number of Dependent Children in Family	Income Category (\$)			
	0-5999	6000-8999	9000-11,999	12,000 & above
1 - 2 (%)	11.2	13.2	16.8	58.7
3 - 4 (%)	8.1	12.3	18.2	61.4
5 - 6 (%)	13.6	12.2	22.7	51.6
7 or more (%)	33.2	19.8	20.9	26.2

Family Size, Family Income and Educational Plans Desire for post-secondary education was not closely related to family income or size of family, as is shown in Tables 4 and 5.

TABLE 4
Educational Plans by Family Size

	Number of Dependent Children in Family			
	1 - 2	3 - 4	5 - 6	7 or more
Percent of Students Planning Further Education	85.6	84.5	81.5	88.8

TABLE 5
Educational Plans by Family Income

	Family Income Category (\$)			
	0-5999	6000-8999	9000-11,999	12,000 & above
Percent of Students Planning Further Education	85.9	82.9	86.6	88.6

There were specific instances of family income being related to the institutions where students planned to pursue education. While 61.4 percent of the students in the highest family income category (\$12,000 and above) planned to go out-of-state to college, this figure was only 33.8 percent for those in the lowest (\$0 to \$5,999) family income category; whereas 2.9 percent of the students in the highest income category intended to enroll in private colleges in Alaska, 14.7 percent of those in the lowest income category planned to do so.

Summary of Findings of Original Survey

The results of the original survey can be summarized as follows:

1. A large percentage of Alaska high school seniors (84.0 percent) planned to pursue post-secondary education following graduation.
2. Aspirations for some type of additional education were not a function of gender, ethnic background, family income or family size.
3. A high percentage of those who planned further education (53.0 percent) intended to pursue it out-of-state.
4. Caucasians tended to come from relatively small families with relatively high incomes.
5. Alaskan Natives tended to be from lower income families that had larger numbers of dependent children.
6. Higher percentages of Caucasians planned to pursue post-secondary education out-of-state, while higher percentages of Alaskan Natives tended to aim toward private colleges in Alaska.

FOLLOW-UP STUDY

Purpose of Follow-Up Study

The follow-up study was designed to determine to what extent high school graduates realized educational goals which they had stated in the early winter of their senior year of high school. Additionally, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. Are Caucasians and Alaskan Natives equally successful in reaching their educational goals?
2. Do males and females differ in the numbers that achieve their goals?
3. What other factors are related to students' achieving their goals?
4. What do those students do who do not realize their educational goals?

Method of Follow-Up Study

In the fall of 1973 a random sample of 500 was selected from the group included in the original survey. The random sampling ensured that each member of the original survey had an equal chance of being included in the follow-up study.

The first set of follow-up questionnaires was sent out in mid-October, 1973. This time was chosen since students participating in the original survey had been asked to indicate what their educational plans were for the next fall. The follow-up questionnaires asked the individuals what they were doing as of October 15, 1973. Specifically, it sought to determine if they were pursuing post-secondary education and if so, where?

In November, second and third sets of questionnaires were sent out to those in the sample from whom responses had not been received. In December, high school counselors were contacted personally to determine if they knew what had happened to the students who had not responded to any of the follow-up questionnaires. In cases where the high school counselors definitely knew what students were doing on October 15, these data were included in the results.

For the purposes of this study, students were considered to have realized their educational goals if they enrolled at the campuses where they planned to enroll; or for those who planned no further education, if they did not enroll at all.

Results of Follow-up Study

Usable questionnaires were received from 417 students; data for another 27 were received directly from high school counselors. Thus, data for 444 members of the sample (88.8 percent) were available for analysis. Of these students, 221 (49.8 percent) were male and 223 (50.2 percent) female; 354 (79.7 percent) were Caucasian, 72 (16.2 percent) Alaskan Natives, 12 (2.7 percent) Blacks, and 6 (1.4 percent) were of "other" ethnic backgrounds. The numbers of Black and members of "other" ethnic groups included in the follow-up study were not sufficiently large to be considered significant and these groups were not compared with Caucasians and Alaskan Natives in the analysis.

Where Alaska High School Graduates Went Of the 444 individuals in the follow-up study, 231 (52.0 percent) pursued no further education, 86 (19.4 percent) went to the nine University of Alaska campuses, 7 (1.6 percent) went to private colleges in Alaska, 5 (1.1 percent) attended special schools in-state (business, beauty, etc.), and 115 (25.9 percent) left the state to seek post-secondary education. Of the 213 who enrolled in school by the fall after graduation, 40.4 percent went to the various University of Alaska campuses, 3.3 percent went to private colleges in Alaska, 2.3 percent went to special schools in-state, and the other 54.0 percent left the state to study.

Realization of Educational Goals If the category "No Further Education" is considered an educational plan, 179 of the 444 individuals in the follow-up study (40.3 percent) realized their educational goals in terms of doing what

they planned to do. Of the 385 who planned some type of education following high school, 129 (33.5 percent) actually went to the school where they intended to go. Looking at the 180 who indicated plans of seeking post-secondary education within Alaska, only 36 (20.0 percent) went to the campus where they originally planned to enroll. While 205 students in the sample had intended to leave the state for further education, 93 of these (45.4 percent) actually did. (It should be noted that "College Out-of-State" was an educational plan, without a location being designated. Thus, a student who planned to attend Oregon State University and who enrolled at the University of Maine was considered to have realized his/her educational goal.)

Substantial differences existed between Alaskan Natives and Caucasians, and between males and females in terms of the percentages that realized their educational goals. Table 6 shows a low-to-high progression in each category from Alaskan Native Males to Alaskan Native Females to Caucasian Females to Caucasian Males.

Educational Plans and Actual Enrollment What happened to those students who did not enroll where they intended to? Did they go to different campuses or were they not enrolled at any post-secondary educational institution by the fall after high school graduation?

Table 7 compares students' actual educational activities with their stated plans. It shows differences between Alaskan Natives and Caucasians and also indicates that the large majority of students who planned additional education but did not enroll where they planned to enroll did not seek further education at all.

Table 8 summarizes data derived from Table 7 and demonstrates differences between Alaskan Natives and Caucasians in college enrollment. This table compares the numbers in each group who planned further education with the numbers who actually enrolled in a post-secondary educational institution, whether or not it was the actual campus the students planned to attend. Whereas Alaskan Native Males had higher aspirations for further education than did Caucasian Males, they were considerably less successful in reaching their goals. Alaskan Native Females had somewhat higher aspirations than Caucasian Females and were very slightly more successful in attaining their goals.

TABLE 6
Realization of Educational Goals by Ethnic Background and Sex

Group*	Students Who Realized Educational Goals					
	Alaskan Natives			Caucasians		
	Males (N) (%)	Females (N) (%)	Total (N) (%)	Males (N) (%)	Females (N) (%)	Total (N) (%)
A	8 20.0	11 34.4	19 26.4	79 46.2	77 42.1	156 44.1
B	7 18.4	7 25.0	14 21.2	60 40.8	52 33.5	112 37.1
C	2 8.0	3 16.7	5 11.6	15 25.4	16 21.3	31 23.1
D	5 38.5	4 40.0	9 39.1	45 51.1	36 45.0	81 48.2

* Group A: All Alaskan Natives and Caucasians in sample
 Group B: Those who planned some type of post-secondary education
 Group C: Those who planned post-secondary education in Alaska
 Group D: Those who planned post-secondary education out-of-state

TABLE 7
Educational Plans versus Educational Activities by Ethnic Background and Sex

Education Plan	Number of Students With Plan	Educational Activity										Not Enrolled (N)	Not Enrolled (%)	
		As Planned		University of Alaska		Private School in Alaska		Special School in Alaska		Out-of-State School				
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)
Caucasian Males														
No further education	24	19	79.2	3	15.8	0	0	0	0	0	2	8.3	**	
One of U of A Campuses	49	15	30.6	6	12.2*	0	0	0	0	6	12.2		22	44.9
Private school in Alaska	4	0	0	2	50.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	50.0
Special school in Alaska	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Apprenticeship program	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	100.0
Out-of-state school	88	45	51.1	12	13.6	0	0	0	0	**	**		31	35.2
TOTAL	171	79	46.2	23	13.5	0	0	0	0	8	4.7		61	35.7
Caucasian Females														
No further education	28	25	89.3	3	10.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**	
One of U of A Campuses	57	13	22.8	4	7.0*	1	1.8	2	3.5	6	10.5		31	54.4
Private school in Alaska	7	2	28.6	0	0	**	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	71.4
Special school in Alaska	11	1	9.1	2	18.2	0	0	**	0	2	18.2		6	54.5
Apprenticeship program	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Out-of-state school	80	36	45.0	12	15.0	0	0	0	0	**	**		32	40.0
TOTAL	183	77	42.1	21	11.5	1	0.5	2	1.1	8	4.4		74	40.4
Alaskan Native Males														
No further education	2	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**	
One of U of A Campuses	18	1	5.6	5	27.8*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	66.7
Private school in Alaska	4	1	25.0	0	0	**	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	75.0
Special school in Alaska	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	100.0
Apprenticeship program	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	100.0
Out-of-state school	13	5	38.5	2	15.4	0	0	0	0	**	**		6	46.2

	40	8	20.0	8	20.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	60.0
TOTAL	40	8	20.0	8	20.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	60.0
Alaskan Native Females													
No further education	4	4	100.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**	61.5
One of U of A Campuses	13	2	15.4	0	0	1	7.7	0	1	1	7.7	8	0
Private school in Alaska	2	1	50.0	0	0	**	0	0	0	0	50.0	0	0
Special school in Alaska	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	50.0	1	50.0
Apprenticeship program	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	100.0	0	0
Out-of-state school	10	4	40.0	2	20.0	0	0	0	**	**	0	4	40.0
TOTAL	32	11	34.4	2	6.2	1	3.1	0	4	4	12.5	13	40.6
Total Alaskan Natives and Caucasians													
No further education	58	49	84.5	7	12.1	0	0	0	2	2	3.4	**	53.3
One of U of A Campuses	137	31	22.6	15	10.9*	2	1.5	0	13	13	9.5	73	58.8
Private school in Alaska	17	4	23.5	2	11.7	**	0	0	1	1	5.9	10	57.1
Special school in Alaska	14	1	7.1	2	14.3	0	0	**	3	3	21.4	8	88.9
Apprenticeship program	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	11.1	8	38.2
Out-of-state school	191	90	47.1	28	14.7	0	0	0	**	**	0	73	40.4
TOTAL	426	175	41.1	54	12.7	2	0.5	3	20	20	4.7	172	

* These students went to a campus of the University of Alaska different from the one where they planned to enroll.

** These figures have been placed in the "As Planned" column.

TABLE 8
Educational Plans versus Actual Enrollment by Ethnic Background and Sex

	Alaskan Natives			Caucasians		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Percentage Planning Additional Education	95.0	87.5	91.7	86.0	84.7	85.3
Percentage Actually Enrolling in Any Post-Secondary Institution	37.5	46.9	41.7	53.2	45.9	49.4

Summary of Findings of Follow-Up Study

The following points summarize the findings of the follow-up study:

1. Almost one half (48.0 percent) of the high school graduates were enrolled in post-secondary education by mid-October following graduation.
2. Of those enrolled, 40.4 percent went to the various campuses of the University of Alaska, 3.3 percent to in-state private colleges, 2.3 percent went to special schools (business, beauty, etc.) in Alaska, and the other 54.0 percent left the state to study.
3. Educational plans stated early in the senior year of high school did not predict with a high degree of accuracy where students would seek post-secondary education. Only 40.3 percent realized their educational goals in terms of doing what they planned to do (i.e. enrolling at the campus where they planned to enroll, or not enrolling at all if they planned no further education).
4. Alaskan Native Males had the lowest percentage (20.0) realizing their educational goals (as defined in Number 3 above); Alaskan Native Females were next with 34.4 percent; next were Caucasian Females (42.1 percent); and the highest percentage realizing their goals were Caucasian Males (46.2 percent).
5. Perhaps more meaningful than the percentage of students going to the specific campus where they planned to go, was the percentage pursuing some type of post-secondary education at all. Again, Alaskan Native Males had the lowest percentage (37.5 percent) but Alaskan Native Females were slightly higher than Caucasian Females (46.9 percent versus 45.9 percent). Caucasian Males were highest with 53.2 percent.
6. Most students who did not realize their educational goals (i.e. did not enroll at the campus where they intended to enroll) did not pursue post-secondary education at all.

CONCLUSION

This study compared high school seniors' educational plans with what they actually did following graduation. Its finding that most students do not carry out their plans supports the belief that the last year of high school is a period of fluid goals and considerable uncertainty for students.

Although Alaskan Native students as a group come from relatively low-income families with large numbers of children, they actually had slightly higher aspirations for post-secondary education than did Caucasians. Alaskan

Natives typically come from small communities scattered across the state and prefer education as close to home as possible. This is reflected in the fact that while 57.0 percent of the Caucasians who planned further education desired to go out-of-state, this figure was only 29.0 percent for Alaskan Natives.

Although Alaskan Native Females were about equally successful with Caucasian Females in reaching their educational goals, Alaskan Native Males were considerably less successful than either group of females or than Caucasian Males. This is a particular concern since the various regional Native corporations and Native village corporations which were established to receive and administer the benefits of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act have immediate and long range needs for trained Alaskan Natives to carry out the activities they are undertaking (Alaska Native Foundation, 1974).

While differences in enrollment rates did exist between groups from different income categories, these differences were perhaps not as great as might have been expected. Quite possibly the availability of Bureau of Indian Affairs grants and other types of student financial aid are effective in reducing inequities in access to post-secondary education.

The present study raises questions for further research:

1. What role does student financial aid play in the educational decisions and success of various types of students?
2. How many and what types of students who do not pursue post-secondary education immediately following graduation do so at a later date?
3. Do differences exist between Alaskan Natives and Caucasians in the percentages that persist and succeed in college?
4. What accounts for the difference between Alaskan Native Females and Males in the percentages who attend college immediately following high school graduation?
5. How many students transfer to in-state institutions after having attended out-of-state colleges for a short period of time?
6. How realistic are high school seniors' educational goals in terms of academic potential?
7. To what extent are differences between stated educational plans and actual enrollment attributable to changes in plans rather than inability to realize a strongly held goal?

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