

Students Accept Personally Warm Teachers than Otherwise

FAIRBANKS — Whether or not a teacher smiles and instructs within a close body distance can make a big difference in how

much students learn, according to Dr. Judith Kleinfeld, associate professor of educational psychology at the University of Alaska.

In an experiment on the efforts of nonverbally communicated warmth, Kleinfeld found that both Eskimo and white students learned significantly more when the teacher was warm and personal rather than impersonal.

"Using Nonverbal Warmth to Increase Learning: A Cross-Cultural Experiment," a Research Note published by the university's Institute of Social, Economic and Government Research, presents Kleinfeld's findings.

"Teachers have been trained to think that to be professional, they should be impersonal," says Kleinfeld. "This approach can be counterproductive; it can actually reduce teaching success.

"It is especially bad for children raised in small villages who are not used to impersonal social relationships. A village native child often thinks that the teacher doesn't like him when the

teacher is impersonal."

In an earlier experiment, Kleinfeld found that when counselors used a nonverbally warm approach, native children scored higher on intelligence tests.

This study was conducted by the University of Alaska with the support of the Fairbanks Native Association and the assistance of the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, and represents a collaborative effort to improve the education of both white and native children.

Copies of the Research Note are free and may be obtained by contacting the librarian at ISEGR. A more technical discussion of this research will appear in the "Journal of Social Psychology," 1973.