

# Adaptation of Whites in an Alaska Native Village

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## RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur présente un aspect relativement négligé des études de communautés en Alaska. Les conditions de vie dans le village étudié sont assez dures: un climat difficile, la pauvreté des moyens de communication, le manque de contact avec la population Aleut, des tensions dans les relations sociales entre blancs dues à la compétition sur le plan du travail. On trouve que les blancs sont en mesure de fonctionner efficacement parce qu'ils ne sont que de passage dans ce village et qu'ils vivent de leurs rêves futurs, en valorisant leurs liens affectifs avec l'extérieur.

Alaska native villages attract numerous social scientists interested in primitive cultures or primitive cultures in transition, but few have examined the social adaptations of whites who live in these villages.<sup>1</sup> So I decided to. I asked these questions: What are the characteristics of whites who migrate to a northern native village, and why do they come? How do they cope with isolation, long stormy winters, and the absence of commercial forms of entertainment? What kinds of social relations evolve in the absence of any long-standing social ties in a predominantly non-white community? How does limited opportunity for occupational mobility within the village affect their adjustments? Do they bring ways of living from their former places of residence or do they innovate in the new environment? I examined these questions in

<sup>1</sup> Canadian anthropologists have directed more attention to whites living in native-white settlements but these studies do not deal specifically with the white's adjustment to the north and the native settlement. Cf. Hawthorne, *et al.* (1958), Chapter 6; Ervin (1967); Vallee (1967); Cohen (1962); Fried (1963); Honigmann and Honigmann (1965).

a two-month participant observation field study of Rocky Bay,<sup>2</sup> a predominantly Aleut village.

To convey the findings of the study, this paper deals with the following topics: (1) village setting, (2) the people and why they came, (3) the stress of environment, (4) interpersonal relationships, (5) work relationships, and (6) social adaptations.

### VILLAGE SETTING

Rocky Bay is a small fishing village situated on a remote island. Air transport is the only means of passenger access and a small aircraft calls several times weekly. Supplies arrive by a ship on a monthly schedule. But arrival of both planes and ships is regulated by the characteristically stormy weather conditions.

Aleuts lived at Rocky Bay in earlier times but it was uninhabited at the time of recent settlement in the late 19th century<sup>3</sup> when cod fishing stations were established. Until the late 1940's only a few families lived in the village to work the small cod stations and salmon salteries. Shortly after World War II, a major fisheries enterprise was introduced and the population grew to its present size of 400. Of these 400, 317 are Aleut, 16 are other non-white, mostly Alaska Eskimo and Indian, and 67 are white.<sup>4</sup>

The white population of Rocky Bay falls into two groups. One includes whites married to natives, of which there are 14; and the other comprises members of all-white families numbering 53 (38 adults and 15 children). Intermarried whites generally adhere to a more "native" social pattern than other whites. Therefore, they are excluded from this discussion.

The only road in the village, built along a rise overlooking native residential sections, connects the town to the airfield. The large majority of whites lives in the heights along the road or near

<sup>2</sup> To protect the identity of the informants, I have used a pseudonym for the village and omitted certain details about the village setting such as precise location and the name of the local economic enterprise.

<sup>3</sup> Hrdlicka (1945) p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> I have not included transient whites such as college students who work at the fish processing plant during the summer.

company facilities on the waterfront. Most publically used buildings are also located in white residential sections.

Rocky Bay has many modern facilities including local and long distance telephone service and a community-wide water and electric power system. Most of the frame houses in which both whites and natives live have indoor plumbing and major household appliances. Other community facilities include a school (covering the first nine grades), fundamentalist church and associated health clinic, post office, city hall-jail house, bar, liquor store, market, cafe, and two movie houses.

The Rocky Bay fisheries company is part of a larger organization with stations in southwestern Alaska. Company headquarters are located in the state of Washington. Since its inception in the late 1940's, the company has retained a monopoly on fisheries production in Rocky Bay. It now processes several marine species which allows nearly year-round operations. As the central employment source in the village, the company provides direct and indirect employment for roughly 90 percent of the native labor force (primarily fisherman and unskilled fish processors) and 75 percent of the white. The company directly employs about 90 persons and indirectly employs, through the purchase of fish, about 100.

In addition to operating a fish processing plant, the company owns the majority of land in the village, a considerable amount of housing, and it owns and operates all utility services, a movie theater, the market, and the liquor store.

With two exceptions, whites hold every higher level job (management and technical) in the company. Whites also occupy every position of authority in the village — magistrate, state trooper, fish and game enforcement officers, preacher, nurse, school principal, and teachers.

In 1966, Rocky Bay incorporated as a fourth class city under Alaska law.<sup>5</sup> Council membership has been predominantly white. In 1971, five of seven council members were white.

<sup>5</sup> Fourth class cities have no financial or administrative responsibilities for schools and assessment powers are limited to sales tax. *Alaska Statutes*, Title 29, Chapters 10, 15, 20, and 25.

Though whites comprise only 16.7 percent of the village population, they possess dominant power in the village — to hire, fire, give or withhold credit (at the company store), make arrests, impose sentences, and control council decision making.<sup>6</sup>

## THE PEOPLE AND WHY THEY CAME

Rocky Bay whites are predominantly old American; only two are foreign born; most of the others are third or fourth generation American. Aside from three Catholics, they are Protestant, and the majority of Protestants participate (to greater or lesser extent) in the one church in the village.

For 16 of the 21 white families, Rocky Bay constitutes the first Alaskan experience. Three adults originated in the deep south; and the remainder, in the northcentral and northwestern United States, with the largest proportion coming from the state of Washington. Fifteen of 37 adults have rural farm or small town (under 5,000) backgrounds.

Whites do not generally consider Rocky Bay a permanent habitation. Most leave after a short period of residence in the village. The median years of white residence is two and the mean is 3.5.

Rocky Bay whites have an atypical age distribution (Table 1). Note the shrinkage in the 10 to 19 year old group and the mushrooming in the 20 to 30 year old and 50 to 60 year old groups. This peculiar age distribution suggests that whites with preschool or primary grade children and those with grown children are attracted in greater numbers than those with children in the 9 to 12 year old or adolescent age group.<sup>7</sup> Two factors may account for this. One is the absence of a local high school. The other is the probable reluctance of white parents to send children to a predominantly native school especially as children near the age

<sup>6</sup> White control of major resources is common in northern native-white villages and settlements. Cf. Hawthorne, *op. cit.*; Cohen, *op. cit.*; Honigmann and Honigmann, *op. cit.*; Jones (1969); Dunning (1959).

<sup>7</sup> A similar age distribution characterizes the white populations of other Aleut villages I have studied.

for sex and dating relationships. Whatever the cause, the presence of two groups of white adults widely separated by age and stage in family life cycle limits the choice of white friends in an already restricted field, and thus adds to the stress these whites experience in the new setting.

TABLE 1

Age Distribution of Rocky Bay White Population* and U.S. Population**		
<i>Age</i>	<i>Rocky Bay Whites Percent</i>	<i>U.S. Population Percent</i>
0-9	20.8	21.5
10-19	7.5	16.8
20-29	30.2	12.1
30-39	13.2	13.7
40-49	3.8	12.6
50-59	22.6	10.1
60-69	1.9	7.5
70 plus	0.0	5.7
Total	100.0	100.0

\* Intermarried whites are not included.

\*\* Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1960, General Population Characteristics, U.S. Summary, Table 45, p. 146.

If we use occupation and income as criteria for determining position in the social class hierarchy, then the majority of Rocky Bay whites are middle class. Table 2 shows that nearly two-thirds of white males are employed at entrepreneurial, managerial, professional, or technical levels. Incomes reflect this occupational distribution. While precise data are lacking, mean annual family incomes for whites can be estimated between \$12,000 and \$13,000. This figure is effectively higher if we consider the multiple fringe benefits associated with company employment (these will be elaborated later). Despite high living costs in Alaska, these

fringe benefits reduce living costs below those of the places Rocky Bay whites formerly lived.

The central organizing theme of these whites' lives is the Protestant work ethic — hard work, self reliance, mobility, self improvement, and disapproval of dissipation.<sup>8</sup> Their dreams concern higher status jobs, larger salaries, larger houses, accumulation of other material symbols of success, and enough in savings or investments to assure a comfortable retirement.

Most white adults in Rocky Bay had only limited skills for achieving their mobility aspirations in the places they formerly lived. Twenty-four of 37 adults have no college; 9 of the 24 are high school drop outs; and 11 of the 20 males received no training for a specific occupation.

TABLE 2  
Occupational Distribution of Rocky Bay White Population  
(over 21 years of age), 1971\*

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Self-employed	1	0	1
Management	4	1	5
Professional**	4	1	5
Technical	3	1	4
Skilled labor	4	2	6
Fishing	4	0	4
Unskilled labor	0	4	4
Total	20	9	29

\* Intermarried whites are not included.

\*\* Other than the school principal, teachers are not included in this category. No teachers were in the village during the field work and most from the previous year had permanently moved from the village.

Lacking the credentials and training necessary for achieving their mobility aspirations, these persons sought opportunities in

<sup>8</sup> For a description of the Protestant work ethic, see Anderson (1970, pp. 151-154).

out-of-the-way places. Rocky Bay offered unique advantages. To attract personnel to a remote location, the Rocky Bay company offers higher level jobs and higher salaries than persons could usually obtain elsewhere. Individuals without formal training can work as company engineers and manual workers can become foremen.<sup>9</sup> Most whites hold better jobs in Rocky Bay than in their former locations. For example, before he came to Rocky Bay, one assistant manager of the store was a truck driver, and another was a bus driver; a company engineer was a construction worker; a foreman was an unskilled laborer; the manager of the airline station was a bartender. Even some of the persons with training experienced a rise in status on moving to Rocky Bay. A seminary student, for example, was hired as preacher, and a relatively inexperienced teacher was hired as principal. For most, the move to Rocky Bay meant a change from working class to middle class status or from lower middle to upper middle class status.

Certain living costs can be substantially lower in Rocky Bay than in the places from which whites came. The company pays travel expenses to and from the village. (Travel expenses from the village are contingent on an employee remaining for a minimum of one year). Annual vacations for high level employees include transportation costs. In addition, company employees receive low rent housing (roughly \$50 monthly) and free utilities. Most whites keep food costs low by ordering in bulk quantity from Seattle. (Seattle prices are lower than those in Rocky Bay and ordering by caseload constitutes a savings over purchasing single items.) The virtual absence of commercial forms of entertainment and food contributions from fishermen further reduce living costs. One couple who came to Rocky Bay to save for a business were able to live on \$280 a month, about half of what they spent in their former place of residence.

Before migrating, limited opportunities for career and financial advance constituted the white's central source of stress which is not to say they were dissatisfied with other aspects of their

<sup>9</sup> The tight job market in the U.S. apparently has not altered this situation judging, for example, from the fact that company engineers in 1971 had no formal training.

lives. On the contrary, most regretted leaving homes, relatives, long-standing friends, and congenial life styles. The remarks of a woman hired as assistant store manager are illustrative:

We hated to leave X. Two of our married children and our grandchildren are there, and our friends for years. And we do so love our house. It is a dream house. We saved for it for years. I hope the people who are renting it take good care of the garden. You should see our grounds.

At this point, she showed pictures of her children, grandchildren, house, garden, and grounds, then continued:

But we couldn't seem to get ahead. Since the children are grown, we've both worked. Jim drove a truck for a cleaning establishment and I worked at Woolworth's. But neither of us could go much higher in our jobs and the money just didn't stretch far enough. We have big house payments and we're paying on a boat and trailer. And we want to do some more landscaping and buy a bigger trailer. We figure we'll stay for two years, maybe one, we'll see.

The majority of whites consider Rocky Bay an undesirable location and plan to remain for a limited period of time. Only six whites consider it their permanent home. Two are single adults: one finds enhanced opportunities for relationships with members of the opposite sex in Rocky Bay, and the other has no binding ties elsewhere and has come to think of Rocky Bay as home. A fisherman and his wife who find the Aleut people congenial and enjoy the similarity of Rocky Bay to the European fishing village in which they were born and raised also plan to remain. Then there is an older couple who initially came to Rocky Bay to build the fundamentalist mission and whose primary concern is the growth of the mission. Later, I shall discuss differences in the adaptations of these six persons and the other whites.

## THE STRESS OF ENVIRONMENT

Whites emphasize three primary sources of strain stemming from the environment of a northern native village: (1) the absence of a road system, (2) the absence of a shopping center and nearly all forms of commercial entertainment, and (3) the "cabin fever" syndrome. Evening or weekend drives and vacations



in a trailer roaming the country were integral aspects of the former life styles of a majority of whites. Regardless of length of residence in the village, whites seldom adjust to the absence of a road system. There are alternatives, of course. One can explore a vast wilderness on foot, camping expeditions, and boat excursions to nearby islands. Only a few whites engage in such activities, primarily those who plan to remain permanently in the village. Other whites fail to find or even seek compensations for this felt deprivation.

The absence of a shopping center (the one market features groceries and a few sundries) and of commercial entertainment constitutes a stress for a minority, chiefly young women who have lived a short time in the village. For the majority, mail order shopping represents an interesting rather than an onerous experience. It can serve as an entry to social relations when women meet to examine and exchange catalogues. But the big excitement occurs when large mail orders arrive, casting a Christmas-like spell on the day. Similarly, lack of commercial entertainment concerns mainly the young and recent arrivals who deplore the absence of bowling alleys and television. But the majority infrequently complain about the absence of such facilities.

While nearly every white alludes to cabin fever, few consider it a serious frustration. Rocky Bay is located in the subarctic and therefore does not experience severe cold. But the winters seem dreadfully long, sometimes extending from October to June. Wind, rain, and snow storms are common. And heavy fogs frequently blanket the area. The weather station at nearby Cold Bay recorded a 20-year average of 12 clear days per year (defined as a 24-hour period with less than seven percent cloud cover).<sup>10</sup> During the winter months, people feel confined to their quarters and mobility to the outside is severely restricted. Mail and mail order purchases may be delayed for weeks. The supply ship may miss its monthly call. And people may have to postpone vacations from day to day sometimes stretching into weeks while awaiting the arrival of an airplane. I did not observe the operation of the

<sup>10</sup> Personal communication. Robert D. Jones, Jr., Aleutian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, May 10, 1971.

"cabin fever" syndrome in Rocky Bay because field work was conducted in the summer months. However, informants indicate that, by and large, people learn to live with these stresses. Employed persons continue to work. Children attend school. And housewives emphasize solitary creative activities — knitting, embroidery, and the production of various forms of art.

Neither cabin fever nor the other stresses imposed by the environment appear to cause maladaptation or migration. But they are indirectly related to both in that they generate an intense compensatory need for social relationships in a situation of restricted social opportunities (or so whites perceive it).

## INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

Whites do not come to Rocky Bay specifically to enhance their social lives. But the environmental stresses of the Aleutians, separation from relatives and long-standing friends, and residence in a culturally different place engender an intense need for friendship. Whites' most frequently mentioned complaint and the one most often associated with an interest in moving from the village is the lack of social life, friendliness, and friends. "This is a horrible place socially. Even downtown where we all work together, nobody seems to want to get together," was a typical lament.

The most plentiful source of potential friends, of course, is the Aleut community, but the majority of whites discount this source. Two factors could explain white disinterest in Aleut friends: cultural differences and white racial attitudes. Most people tend to associate with others like themselves, in this case, with others from the same culture group. But in Rocky Bay cultural similarities between whites and many Aleuts are striking.

There are, indeed, signs of cultural differences between whites and some Aleuts. The most visible signs of these differences appear in orientations to drinking, sex, work, and money. Aleut drinking may assume the form of periodic benders during which persons drink precisely to get drunk and make no effort to conceal the signs of drunkenness. The bender may last as long as

the combined capital of the party.<sup>11</sup> By contrast, when whites of Rocky Bay drink, they seek to appear prudent, sober, dignified, and in control of themselves at all times. The casual and open attitude toward sex among some Aleuts<sup>12</sup> also conflicts with white middle class *ideal* norms about sexual fidelity in marriage and secrecy in pre and extra marital sex relations. Cultural differences also appear in orientations to work and money. In contrast to the white's dominant valuation of hard work, self improvement, and accumulation of material objects, some Aleuts place a higher emphasis on traditional values of cooperation and egalitarianism. These Aleuts may eschew fishing competition and may see little reason for working after earnings are sufficient to purchase needed or desired items. If they possess more money than needed, and, at times, even if they do not, they may place higher value on a period of leisure and abandon or on sharing their larder with friends in the bar than in acquiring additional cash or material objects.

But these signs of cultural differences are not necessarily characteristic. Over half of the Aleut adults do not drink excessively or go on benders. Many Aleuts manage money similarly to whites. Sexual fidelity appears as common as sexual promiscuity. In fact, Rocky Bay is a highly acculturated village. Unlike some other Aleut villages, there is little evidence of traditional cultural forms such as the chief system, traditional ceremonies, the Russian Orthodox church (the Russian Orthodox church had become integral to Aleut culture), steam baths, fish camps, or subsistence hunting and fishing. Virtually all Rocky Bay Aleuts speak English, have attended American schools, and wear western clothes. About half of the Aleuts are phenotypically white. Nearly every male is a commercial fisherman; many own their vessels. Mean annual family income for Aleuts in 1971 can be estimated at \$10,000, probably higher than that for any other Native village in Alaska. About half the Aleut homes are large and in excellent repair. And a small proportion of Aleuts participates in the

<sup>11</sup> Berremen (1956) and Jones (1969), pp. 176-178 describe similar drinking patterns in other Aleut villages.

<sup>12</sup> Berremen (1953), pp. 230-236 described a similarly open and casual attitude toward sex in the more traditional Aleut village of Nikolski.

Protestant church in the village which most whites also attend. Given the propensity of individuals to seek friendships with persons similar to themselves, one could understand social separation between whites and traditional Aleuts or impoverished and alcohol-prone Aleuts. But in Rocky Bay where many Aleuts adopt similar life styles to whites, where income differences between members of the two groups are not substantial, and where even color differences are obscure in many instances, a foundation for friendship exists.

It is not cultural differences between whites and some Aleuts that keep the two groups socially separate. Rather, racial biases and preconceptions cause whites to attribute negatively valued behavior to the Aleut group en masse. I am dealing with this issue in another paper. Here I want to point out that whites tend to judge Aleuts in terms of previously held beliefs about the inferiority of other racial groups. They tend to seek evidence that supports their racial preconceptions and to discount the preponderant evidence that contradicts them. If whites hear tales about three sexually promiscuous Aleut women, they tend to conclude that Aleuts en masse are sexually promiscuous. If whites see one drunken Aleut, they tend to forget the 12 quietly sober Aleuts they saw in the same day. Similarly, if a white sees one dirty Aleut home, he tends to stereotype all Aleuts as dirty. Most whites in Rocky Bay perceive Aleuts as drunkards, clannish, dirty, unambitious, improvident, non-assertive, stubborn, promiscuous, irresponsible, and lacking in respect for law and property. Clearly, whites would not seek association with people they perceive in such negative terms.

This is not to suggest that Aleuts await overtures from whites with open arms. Aleuts show a similar pattern of social avoidance of whites. They generally exclude whites from their social affairs and infrequently make social overtures to whites. But it is important to point out the difference when whites avoid Aleuts and when Aleuts exhibit similar behavior. As decision leaders and dominant members of the community, white avoidance of social relations with Aleuts is an offensive act conveying contempt. Aleut exclusion of whites is defensive and self protective based on a lifetime experience with racially prejudiced whites and resentment at white control of major community resources. Once

social separation between racial groups is set in motion, it proceeds with self-perpetuating certainty.

In sum, white adults do not anticipate and their experiences once in the village do not encourage the seeking of friendships with Aleuts. This reduces the potential source for primary group relations to 37 white adults.

One would expect a close knit group given the cultural homogeneity of these 37 persons — similarities in religion, regions of origin, nativity, class position, racial attitudes, life styles, immigrant status in the village, and especially a common need for friendship. But this is hardly the case. Interpersonal relations among whites resemble those described for socially atomized societies, characterized by isolation from one another, suspicion, hostility, contention, and the failure to develop cooperative associations beyond that of the immediate family.<sup>13</sup> Backbiting and gossip frequently dominate interviews and social visits. Interpersonal conflicts are widespread. Housewives may quarrel over a mix-up in the wash day schedule. (Residents of one area use a common washing facility.) Fellow workers may develop intense conflicts regarding their respective areas of jurisdiction and authority. These antagonisms may become so severe that participants refuse to speak to one another and others not directly involved in the conflict feel compelled to choose sides. An uninvolved individual may find that if he speaks to one antagonist, he loses access to the other and the other's allies. Under these conditions, individuals may succeed in finding several friends, though loyalties frequently shift, but there are few associations beyond this level other than the immediate family. The church has no membership organization that regularly supports its activities or raises funds; nearly all church funds as well as program direction come from the parent organization in the eastern United States. Cocktail parties and evening socials involving neighbors, fellow workers or fellow church participants are infrequent. Whites have neither formed conventional associations in which they formerly participated nor evolved new ones in the new setting. Other than work, the only formal secondary group relations occur

<sup>13</sup> See Balikci (1968); Piker (1968); Spielberg (1968); Honigmann (1968); Levy (1968).

at city council and school board meetings, but here too, interpersonal antagonisms may influence proceedings more than the issues at hand.

What produces such fractionation and splintering among a group of individuals who bemoan the restricted social life in the village and who identify it as a central source of adaptation stress? Divisions based on age and stage in family life cycle have already been mentioned. The majority of adults, 27 of 37, are divided into two age groups — one between 20 and 30 and the other between 50 and 60. Clearly members of one age group may find friendships with members of the other uncomfortable or uninteresting and may not pursue them. But this would not account for widespread hostilities or the failure to develop personal relationships with members of the same age group.

Differences in drinking orientations may also affect group formation. With four exceptions, whites are evenly divided between social drinkers and teetotalers. Though the majority of whites attend the fundamentalist church, the most committed members do not use alcohol. Social drinkers use alcohol in moderate amounts, usually limiting themselves to several drinks in an evening. Members of each group, the social drinkers and the teetotalers, anticipate discomfort when they consider participating in evening socials with members of the other, and consequently, avoid them. But again, this division could account for separation between teetotalers and social drinkers, but not for contention, the failure to develop group associations, or the failure to form ties with those having similar orientations to drinking.

There are also residential divisions among Rocky Bay whites. Eight white families live in the downtown section near company facilities, another nine live in the hill section overlooking native residential sections, and four families live in native sections. But these residential separations would not seem to explain the isolation of whites from one another. It is only a short walk from the downtown section to other areas of white residence. Most people in Rocky Bay make this trek daily or more often.

If divisions based on age, residence, and drinking orientations fail to explain the socially atomized relations in Rocky Bay's otherwise homogeneous white group, then what does?

## WORK RELATIONS

While whites are initially attracted to Rocky Bay for financial and career gain, there are few opportunities for further advance within the village. The company is virtually the only employment source and its hierarchy has only a few slots. Above the level of manual workers, there is only a superintendent, assistant superintendent, two store managers, two assistant store managers, a bookkeeper, a radio operator-secretary, three foremen, and three engineers. The advance of a member at any of these levels depends not only on talent *per se* but on job turn-over, that is, for one to move up the ladder a superior must leave or be terminated. Consequently members at each level operate under the two-pronged tension of limited opportunities to move up in the hierarchy, and insecurity stemming from the threat that others at lower levels will replace them. Antagonisms and conflicts are intrinsic to this situation.

Crozier, in an analysis of the relations between groups in a bureaucracy, pointed out that each group, to enhance its power in the organization, struggled to enlarge the area upon which it has some discretion and to limit its dependence on other groups, accepting such dependence only when it proved a safeguard against another and more feared one<sup>14</sup>. While Crozier's analysis referred to larger organizational units than the Rocky Bay company, the power relations he described appear to underlie most of the work-related interpersonal disputes among Rocky Bay whites, and even some that occur outside the work setting.

The relations between the company store managers and assistants are illustrative. In the course of about eight months, the store managers developed antagonistic relations with five assistant managers, culminating in the termination of all five. Incessant conflicts erupted over seemingly trivial matters that participants and others attributed to personality clashes. Protagonists were charged with being perfectionistic, overly demanding, dominating, resistant to authority, and so forth. But the underlying factor appears to be managers' fears of being replaced. This is

<sup>14</sup> Crozier (1964), p. 56.

suggested by their refusal to grant any decision prerogatives to assistant managers, thereby masking whatever talents the assistants might possess. The assistants, apparently eager to demonstrate their competencies, became rebellious and sought support from customers and others. At that point, managers apparently tried to provoke their resignations by subjecting them to incessant criticisms and public rebukes.

The store managers' power is enhanced by the company superintendent's dependence on them. The superintendent, of course, is in the top occupational slot in the village so his competitive field lies outside the village, with counterparts in other company branches. The Rocky Bay superintendent has an advantage over some of his competitors. He operates ancillary enterprises which, if they show profit, can reduce his overhead costs below those of competitors. Therefore, he supports the store managers in nearly any act so long as they continue to increase store profits. This is his primary interest, not the effects of a tight credit policy and high prices, and not the bitter intra-organizational disputes managers' policies and behavior provoke.

When highly mobile people compete for a limited number of jobs within the village, antagonisms and rifts are bound to develop. These conflicts transcend the protagonists and draw in other persons whose occupational interests are indirectly involved. One's neighbor's or fellow worker's advancement may prevent his, and their failures may enhance his. Therefore, spectators to disputes may become intensely involved in who wins or loses a round, and may try to influence the outcome for their future prospects may rest on it.

Clearly, a situation of limited opportunities for advancement in the village among mobile, ambitious people creates an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust that discourages close interpersonal relations. Rather, it produces the social atomism described above.

## SOCIAL ADAPTATIONS

Given certain hardships stemming from the environment of a northern native village, isolation from relatives and long-stand-



ing friends, atomized and tension-producing social relationships, and fierce competition in work relations, how do these persons adjust? Are they mentally ill or malfunctioning? On the contrary, Rocky Bay whites show no sign of mental breakdown or inability to perform essential social roles. In work, they are reliable, competent employees and earn more than the average U.S. resident. In family relations, their marriages remain intact — roughly 80 percent of adults have never been separated or divorced. Their children show no signs of neglect, disturbance, or malfunctioning. And women are either economically productive or engage in creative activities in the home. Moreover, these whites assume civic responsibilities. What accounts for the discrepancy between the intensely frustrating conditions of their work and other social relationships and their effective functioning in terms of economic, family, and community responsibilities?

The central reason: they view their residence in Rocky Bay as a brief interlude, a stopping off place, one of the necessary hurdles to attain more ultimate goals. To the upwardly mobile white who came to Rocky Bay to further his career, loneliness, boredom, isolation, antagonistic social relations, and demeaning work relations represent but a pause in a life for which he has more gratifying dreams.

Rocky Bay whites dull the pain of contemporary frustrations and deprivations not only by dreams but by rooting their psyches outside the village. The conversation of nearly every adult centers around parents, adult children, grandchildren, long-standing friends, the house they hope to pay off in Seattle, the trailer and boat they plan to purchase after putting in their Rocky Bay time, and the vacations they plan when their bank accounts mount. While living in Rocky Bay, the white's primary attachment is to the past, ties to the outside, and future rewards.

As mentioned earlier, there are exceptions to this modal adaptation — the six whites who consider Rocky Bay their permanent habitation. These individuals have lived in the village far longer than others: a mean residence of ten years compared to 3.5 for the white population at large. They have learned to exploit the environment and enjoy hiking, beach combing, boat trips to nearby islands, and the challenge of mastering physical hard-

ship. Most in this group have developed new interests in Rocky Bay such as photography, boating, and research into the history of the area. Three of the six have native friends and the other three appear to have substituted civic activities, e.g., church and council, for primary group relationships. The adaptations of these six persons represent a direct response to the immediate environment. They abandoned some of their former ways of living and evolved new ones appropriate to a northern native village. By contrast, the majority of whites, on finding former standards and models of living inapplicable, do not try to modify them but simply reject the village. Their adjustments are successful not in terms of a creative response to a new environment, but in terms of forbearance and staying power while they put in their Rocky Bay time.

### SUMMARY

We have described a group of assertively mobile whites who possess limited skills for mobility in dominant society terms of training and credentials. Thus they seek opportunities for financial and career gain in out-of-the-way places such as the remote Aleut village of Rocky Bay. A harsh physical environment, the absence of most forms of commercial entertainment, and isolation from relatives and long-standing friends produce a strong need for social affiliation and friendship which is frustrated in the village. White racist attitudes preclude the formation of bonds with Aleuts despite life style and value similarities between whites and a substantial proportion of Aleuts. And fierce competition in the economic arena, stemming from limited opportunities for continuing advancement within the village, prevents the formation of cooperative alliances and close interpersonal relations with members of their own group. Despite these stresses, Rocky Bay whites adapt rather well in terms of performing essential social roles as breadwinners and family members and in assuming civic responsibilities. Their adaptations reflect not a response to the environment or people of the village but to their view of Rocky Bay as a way station leading to future rewards. Therefore, they can tolerate their short stay in Rocky Bay, neutralizing frustrations by focusing on ties to the outside and dreams of the future.

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