

Race Relations in an Alaska Native Village *

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article présente une étude faite selon la méthode d'observation par participation des relations entre aborigènes et blancs dans un petit village aléoute où les contacts interraciaux sont inévitables et où les blancs, pour la plupart immigrants du Nord des États-Unis, contrôlent les ressources et les institutions principales de la communauté. La contribution centrale de cette étude porte sur la forme que les relations raciales prennent dans une situation de contact interracial réel.

La plupart des blancs du village évaluent les Aléoutes selon les croyances raciales acquises avant leur contact avec ceux-ci. Les blancs, par leurs contacts fréquents avec les Aléoutes, jouent un rôle de socialisation vis-à-vis eux. Ce rôle des blancs a deux facettes: d'une part ils essaient d'inculquer aux Aléoutes les valeurs de la société dominante; d'autre part, ils empêchent la réalisation de ce but en assignant aux Aléoutes un statut de subordonné et en détruisant leur confiance en eux-mêmes suffisamment pour qu'ils ne puissent atteindre les standards que les blancs leur proposent. Ce comportement contradictoire est attribué d'une part à l'ethnocentrisme des blancs et d'autre part au désir de protéger leurs propres intérêts et leur position.

There is a voluminous body of literature on race relations in the continental United States but virtually no systematic investigations of race relations in Alaska native villages. The mixed native-white village in Alaska differs in a fundamental way

* The data for this paper were collected in a participant observation study of an Aleut village in the summer of 1971. The study was financed by a National Science Foundation grant.

from the usual setting in which American race relations are studied. Unlike the urban setting where members of different racial groups can successfully avoid nearly any contact, interracial contact is inevitable in the small space of the native village where there is usually only one school, one church, one market, one bar, one coffee house, and one movie theater.

I was interested in examining the form race relations assumes in this situation of real interracial contact. Specifically, I asked: How do whites categorize and stereotype natives? How do they behave in interactions with natives and what are the socialization implications of this behavior? What variations in race relations appear and with what factors are they associated?

I examined these questions in the small Aleut¹ village of Rocky Bay in the summer of 1971.² Of 400 Rocky Bay residents, 316 are Aleut, 16 are other non-white, mostly Alaska Eskimo and Indian, and 68 are white.³

Most attitude studies on race rely on questionnaire methods. In this approach, it is not clear if subjects respond in terms of what they think they *should* believe or actual beliefs. Similarly, in the area of interracial behavior, questionnaires usually furnish information about how respondents think they would act in a hypothetical situation. Since I was interested in determining actual racial attitudes and beliefs, those volunteered, for example, in unguarded moments; and in observing interracial behavior in a natural setting, I deemed structured research methods inappropriate. Instead, I conducted a two-month participant observation study of Rocky Bay. During this period, I became acquainted with most members of the village, conducted interviews with 80 percent of white adults and about 50 percent of native adults,

¹ Aleuts are both racially and culturally distinct from whites. Their ancestors came from Asia and developed a distinctive culture in roughly 8,000 years of habitation in the Aleutians prior to white contact. See William S. LAUGHLIN, "Human Migration and Permanent Occupation in the Bering Sea Area."

² To protect the identity of informants, I have used a pseudonym for the village and omitted certain details about village setting such as precise location and the name of the local fisheries company.

³ Transient whites such as college students who work in the fish processing plant during summer vacation are not included.

and observed a large proportion of both groups in interracial interaction.

In a prior paper dealing with the adaptations of whites living in Rocky Bay^{3a}, I described in detail the village setting and the characteristics of the white population. Here I shall summarize these descriptions.

VILLAGE SETTINGS

Rocky Bay in a remote fishing village accessible only by boat or air. Although it was the site of aboriginal habitation, Rocky Bay was uninhabited at the time of recent settlement in the 1880's when a customs house, supply station, and cod stations were established.⁴ Until the late 1940's, only a few families lived in the village to run the small cod and salmon salteries. After that a major fish processing enterprise was introduced, and the population grew to its present size. The fisheries company, which has retained a monopoly on fish processing in the village, is the major employment source, providing direct and indirect (through the purchase of fish) employment for about 90 percent of the native work force and 75 percent of the white.

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

There was no organized government in Rocky Bay until 1966 when the village incorporated as a fourth class city under Alaska law (fourth class cities can levy a sales tax but have no financial or administrative responsibilities for schools).

Rocky Bay has many modern facilities and services including frame houses with indoor plumbing and modern appliances, an airfield and local roads, local and long-distance telephone service, community water and power systems, a school, a fundamentalist

^{3a} Dorothy M. JONES: "Adaptations of Whites in an Alaska Native Village".

⁴ Aleš HRDLIČKA, *The Aleutian and Commander Islands and Their Inhabitants*, p. 39; Robert PORTER, *Report on the Population of the United States at the 11th Census*, p. 85.

church, health clinic, cafe, bar, market, liquor store, post office, city hall, jail, and two movie theaters.

THE WHITE COMMUNITY

For the majority of whites, Rocky Bay constitutes the first Alaskan experience and for nearly every white, it is the first experience living in a racially mixed community where interracial contact is unavoidable.

Rocky Bay whites come primarily from northcentral and northwestern U.S. with the largest proportion coming from the state of Washington. About 40 percent have rural farm or small town (under 5,000) backgrounds.

These whites share some of the characteristics typical of "core" society Americans. They are predominantly Protestant, old American, and northern European in origin. And they are strongly committed to the Protestant work ethic — hard work, mobility, self-improvement, and disapproval of dissipation.⁵ Rocky Bay whites are assertively mobile persons seeking opportunities for career and financial gain.

Before migrating to Rocky Bay, most white adults had limited skills for realizing their aspirations. Thirty-six of 52 adults have no college; 11 of the 36 are high school drop outs; and 16 of the 28 males have no training for a specific occupation.

Rocky Bay offered these persons unique opportunities. 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. In addition, the company offers fringe benefits such as transportation costs to and from the village, low rent company housing, and free utilities. Despite high living costs in Alaska, these fringe benefits effectively reduce living costs below those of the places whites formerly lived.

⁵ For a description of "core" society Americans, see Charles H. ANDERSON, *White, Protestant Americans: From National Origins to Religious Group*.

The majority of whites work at high level jobs in the village (Table 1). Of 28 males in the work force, 16 are entrepreneurs, managers, professionals, or technicians. The number working at higher level jobs would be even larger if school teachers were included but the majority from the 1970-71 school year permanently left the village and teachers for the coming year had not arrived at the time of the field work. The school principal is the only teacher included in the professional category.

TABLE 1
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
Managers	5	1	6
Professionals	4	1	5
Technicians	6	2	8
Skilled workers	6	1	7
Fishermen	6	0	6
Unskilled workers	0	4	4
	—	—	—
TOTAL	28	9	37

While precise data are lacking, mean annual family income for whites can be estimated between \$12,000 and \$13,000. This figure represents an even larger amount if one considers fringe benefits.

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, school principal, teachers, preacher, and nurse. In addition, white leadership is dominant on the council; in 1971, five of seven members were white. Thus, though comprising only 16.7 percent of the village population, whites possess dominant economic and political power — to hire, fire, give or withhold credit, make arrests, impose sentences, and control council decision making.

THE ALEUT COMMUNITY

The majority of Aleut adults (over 21) are not indigenous to Rocky Bay. Only 18.4 percent were born in the village. For the remainder, mean years of residence is 13.5. Most immigrants came from nearby villages in quest of jobs. As a result of varied origins and recency of movement to the village, the networks of social relationships are splintered and no village-wide leadership or specifically Aleut organizations have evolved or been revived.

Intermarriage with whites (mostly Europeans attracted to the area early in the century when cod fishing was at its height) was widespread in the villages from which most Rocky Bay Aleuts came. Although only 12 contemporary Aleuts are married to whites, the majority have had a white relative through intermarriage sometime in the past three generations. As a consequence, about half of the contemporary Aleuts look white and the majority think of themselves as part white.

The presence of a white role model through intermarriage is one of the factors associated with relatively high acculturation levels in the village.⁶ Rocky Bay Aleuts have had the opportunity to learn western values from trusted persons. In addition, Aleuts who look white tend to find greater acceptance by whites than their darker-skinned Aleut brothers.

Opportunities for nearly year-round employment and relatively high incomes have been major factors in hastening acculturation. Seventy of 84 males in the native work force are fishermen (Table 2); 55 of the 70 fish on a nearly year-round basis; the other 15 may work as unskilled fish processors when not fishing. Forty-one of 74 Aleut women also work, the majority as unskilled fish processors.

Although fishermen's incomes are variable, my estimate indicates a mean annual family income for natives in 1971 of \$10,000 (probably higher than that for any other native village in Alaska).

⁶ Bruner found the presence or absence of white relatives through intermarriage closely associated with group differences in Mandan-Hidatsa acculturation. Edward M. BRUNER, "Primary Group Experience and the Processes of Acculturation."

The Rocky Bay Aleut has responded to opportunities for jobs and relatively high incomes by largely abandoning traditional subsistence activities, thereby forging an irreversible link to western culture.

TABLE 2

Occupational Distribution of Rocky Bay Native Population
(Over 21 Years of Age), 1971

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Self-employed	1	1	2
Managers and foremen	2	0	2
Professionals	0	0	0
Technicians	0	0	0
Skilled workers	3	1	4
Fishermen	70	6	76
Unskilled workers*	8	33	41
	—	—	—
TOTAL	84	41	125

Migration to a village with a resident white population has accelerated the speed with which Rocky Bay Aleuts abandoned other visible signs of traditional culture. In contrast to some other Aleut villages, there is no chief system, no Russian Orthodox Church (the Russian Orthodox Church had become integral to Aleut culture), no traditional ceremonies, and little Aleut is spoken.

Despite these signs of acculturation, Aleuts manifest some distinct cultural differences from whites. Because of the exceptional diversity in the Aleut community and because of variations in rates of change, it is difficult to identify a modal Aleut cultural pattern. The distinctly Aleut behaviors I shall mention may characterize, in one instance, about half of the Aleut population; in another, perhaps only a fifth.

The most visible signs of cultural differences between Aleuts and whites appear in orientations to work, money, drinking, and

* All but five of the unskilled workers are fish processors. Individuals who may work at the processing plant intermittently but whose major source of income is fishing are excluded from this category.

sex. In contrast to the white's dominant valuation of hard work and self-improvement, some Aleuts place top priority on the personal relationship and interpersonal harmony.⁷ These persons tend to be averse to the competitiveness and acquisitiveness necessary for success and status in the white world. In line with traditional values of cooperation, mutual aid, and egalitarianism, some Aleuts eschew fishing competition and see little reason for working after earnings are sufficient to purchase needed or desired items. If such persons possess more money than they need, or even if they do not, they often place higher value on a period of leisure or abandon or on sharing their larder with friends in the bar than in acquiring additional cash or material items.

Aleut attitudes toward drinking also differ from those of the middle class whites of Rocky Bay. Familiarity with alcohol is long-standing in the Aleutians. The Russians introduced *kvas* (home-brewed beer and wine) about the same time that they suppressed certain Aleut ceremonials such as mask dances, and thus the beer bust appears to have replaced these ceremonies. Aleut drinking is characteristically periodic and of the "bender" variety. It is rarely solitary but occurs in the context of parties and group celebrations.⁸ Drinking constitutes one of the goals toward which Aleuts may work. After arduous fishing for an uninterrupted week or month, for example, a fisherman may anticipate returning home to go to the bar, not count his sums. He is likely to dance until dawn, continue the party at friends' or relatives' houses, visit anyone in the village at any hour, return to the bar the next day for more dancing and socializing, and so forth. By contrast, when whites of Rocky Bay drink, they seek to remain prudent, sober, dignified, and in control of themselves at all times. They are, as a consequence, incredulous at the Aleuts' display of uninhibited abandon and waste of money.

Sex norms also constitute a source of cultural differences between Aleuts and whites. Before white contact, Aleut society observed few restrictions on sexual activity. Aleut unions were

⁷ Ioann Veniaminov, a Russian priest who lived in the Aleutians for ten years noted this propensity in the 1820's. William H. DALL, *Alaska and its Resources*, p. 389, citing Veniaminov.

⁸ Gerald D. BERREMAN, "Drinking Patterns Among the Aleuts."

polygynous although a wife's freedom to enter a new relationship required her husband's permission.⁹ While the nuclear family has become dominant, casual and open attitudes toward sex persist among certain segments of the village population.¹⁰ These orientations contrast sharply with white middle-class *ideal* norms regarding sexual fidelity in marriage and secrecy in pre and extra-marital sex relations.

These, then, are some of the characteristics that distinguish Aleut and white life styles in Rocky Bay, although it should be remembered that cultural similarities between whites and many Rocky Bay Aleuts are often more striking than cultural differences.

CATEGORIES AND STEREOTYPES

White Categorizations

Like most people everywhere, Rocky Bay whites try to simplify their social environments by placing people in categories. In this case, whites assign village members to a racial category. When I queried whites about the criteria they use for identifying Aleuts, most revealed the same five cues: (1) skin color, (2) place of origin — whether from the Aleutian area or elsewhere, (3) identity of parents and relatives, (4) place of residence in the village — whether in a predominantly white or native section, and (5) use of Alaska native health services. Generally, whites use a combination of cues because none by itself is uniformly effective in distinguishing Aleuts. For example, skin color distinguishes only about half of the Aleuts, and whites may lack information about an individual's place of origin or whether he uses Alaska native health services.

The tenacity with which whites pursue the information they need to make a racial classification suggests that it is an important

⁹ HRDLIČKA, pp. 160-168; Arthur RUBEL, "Partnership and Wife Exchange Among the Eskimo and Aleut of Northern North America."

¹⁰ In a study of a more traditional Aleut village, Berreman elaborated the casual and permissive attitude toward sex. "A Contemporary Study of Nikolski, an Aleutian Village," pp. 230-236.

determinant of behavior — that is, they act as if their social preconceptions would be profoundly upset if they made the mistake of treating a native like a white. I observed several whites in encounters with unknown persons suspected of being native. In these situations, whites fired a series of questions at the person regarding his place of origin, relatives, or area of residence in the village. Other whites asked neighbors or fellow church members similar questions about individuals whose racial classification was unknown to them. Among whites who have lived in the village for a year or more, I encountered not a single person who expressed uncertainty about the racial classification of every family in the village.

The Content of White Stereotypes

After identifying the Aleuts, what characteristics do whites attribute to them? Do they apply the same racial preconceptions to Aleuts as they do to other racial minorities such as U.S. blacks? Do they perceive Aleuts in terms of the “romantic Indian” image? Or does frequent contact with Aleuts generate a more realistic appraisal. Let the facts speak.

Shortly after arriving in the village, I visited a white couple who had lived in Rocky Bay for several years. They volunteered their impressions of Aleuts:

Have you ever seen such people in all your life? Have you ever seen such drinking and running around? Fish and drink, fish and drink, that's all they know. They don't care about money. They don't even care about their children... and they're so clannish. Not one of them has ever visited us.

Other whites elaborated the list of stereotypes. Aleuts are dirty, lazy, irresponsible, hostile, defiant, stubborn, non-assertive, lacking in respect for law and property, and lacking in pride (this euphemism refers to Aleuts' reliance on Alaska native health services for which whites are ineligible). The majority of whites interviewed applied some combination of the above stereotypes to Aleuts. Some whites drew analogies between Aleuts and other racial minorities: “They (Aleuts) are just as lazy, shiftless, and sexually loose as the Negroes in Seattle.”

Reinforcement of Stereotypes

Clearly, Rocky Bay whites judge Aleuts in terms of previously held racial beliefs despite the evidence before their eyes.¹¹ And their behavior suggests that they seek to discover evidence that confirms these preconceptions, and to deny that which contradicts them.¹² One white based his conclusion of Aleuts' lack of ambition on the observation of an Aleut house abandoned in the midst of construction for no apparent reason; time and money were available, he said. But this is the only such house in the village; about half of the Aleuts' homes are in good repair. Whites who charge Aleuts with being filthy housekeepers usually have been in only one or two Aleut homes. Several whites based their conclusion of Aleut promiscuity on tales they had heard about three sexually loose Aleut women. The large majority of whites believe that Aleuts en masse are drunkards even though more than half of the Aleut adults do not engage in excessive or "bender" drinking.

Whites' racial preconceptions receive reinforcement by the dearth of feedback that would contradict them.¹³ Whites tend to associate with others who perceive Aleuts the way they do. Therefore, they receive no negative feedback from their own group. Nor is there feedback from the Aleut group. For one reason, Aleuts, as members of a powerless minority group, are generally afraid to challenge the white's racial misperceptions. For another reason, whites are not susceptible to feedback from Aleuts. When encountering Aleut behavior that contradicts their racial preconceptions, whites usually discount it by designating such behavior as exceptional.

Another factor reinforcing whites' racial preconceptions in Rocky Bay is the visibility of negative attributes. Behavior that confirms racist beliefs is usually far more visible and memorable than that which contradicts them.¹⁴ It casts a far more striking

¹¹ Investigators of race relations commonly refer to the tendency for one racial group to judge another in terms of previously held racial beliefs. Gordon W. ALLPORT, *The Nature of Prejudice*, pp. 189-205; Arnold ROSE, *The Negro in America*, pp. 31-54; Henry TAJFEL, "Cognitive Aspects of Prejudice," p. 82; Reginald G. DAMERELL, *Triumph in a White Suburb*, p. 262.

¹² Tajfel, p. 83, refers to a similar tendency.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ I use the term "racism" to refer to the practice of basing invidious distinctions between groups on real or imagined genetically transmitted differences. See Pierre VAN DEN BERGHE, *Race and Racism*, p. 11.

impression to see one drunken Aleut than ten who remain sober, one open act of sexual promiscuity than 12 of sexual prudence, one act of destruction of property than dozens of instances of respect for property. Such dramatic and highly visible behavior, therefore, appears to whites to be far more prevalent than it actually is.

An equally or more important factor reinforcing whites' racial preconceptions is whites' need to rationalize inequality in terms that are acceptable to them. Because Rocky Bay whites occupy a position of advantage in the village and because they also perceive themselves as democratic and fair minded individuals who do not exploit or take advantage of others, they manifest a strong need to rationalize the inequality in terms of Aleut inadequacy and inferiority. This inadequacy and inferiority, they assert, is due to Aleuts' failure to live according to the Protestant ethic.

Aleut Stereotyping of Whites

I did not set out to study Aleut patterns of categorization and stereotyping of whites but some casual observations seem worth noting. In contrast to the white's tendency to refer to Aleuts as "they", I seldom heard Rocky Bay Aleuts allude to whites in similar terms. Aleuts frequently refer to whites but nearly always as individuals. They might say: "X is nice, he is lots of fun," or "Y is a funny guy, he wants to boss everyone around," or "M isn't very friendly." Aleuts in Rocky Bay generally discuss only what is concretely known about a person.¹⁵ If my observations are valid, it raises the question of why Aleuts use stereotypes far less frequently than whites. I suggest that Aleuts have a greater need for accurate information about the characteristics of whites than whites do of Aleuts. To maneuver successfully in white-controlled economic and political institutions, Aleuts must know the characteristics of the individuals with whom they deal. Aleuts need whites for other reasons; some aspire to marry whites, to

¹⁵ The Honigmanns noted the same tendency among the Eskimos of Frobisher Bay in Canada. John and Irma HONIGMANN, *Eskimo Townsmen*, p. 5.

acquire white friends, and to use whites as models of acculturation, all of which require accurate information about individual whites.¹⁶

Variations in Patterns of White Stereotyping

While the forms of white stereotyping discussed above characterize a majority in Rocky Bay, two small groups show variant patterns. One, a group of fishermen and their wives, consistently characterize Aleuts in positive terms. The other, the better educated whites, stereotype Aleuts in equivocal terms rather than strictly negative or positive ones.

Eight whites express positive attitudes toward Aleuts. Aside from a company engineer, this group comprises fishermen (four of the six white fishermen in the village) and their wives. Each of the seven works side by side with Aleuts, the men on boats, and the women on the assembly line in the fish processing plant. When I asked these persons their impressions of Aleuts, they generally replied, "...they live the same way we do, there is no difference." I never heard these persons generalize from the behavior of a minority to the entire Aleut group. Rather, similar to the way Aleuts evaluate whites, they tend to judge Aleuts on an individual basis.

A striking characteristic of the setting in which these fishermen and their wives encounter Aleuts is the lack of competition for jobs. Employment opportunities for both fishermen and fish processors are usually abundant in Rocky Bay. Moreover, white and Aleut fishermen work together in a relatively non-hierarchical situation so there is little competition for position advancement. There is no career ladder in fishing to speak of — one can be either crew member or skipper. Similarly, Rocky Bay white women who work as unskilled fish processors are not seeking career advancement; they usually view the job only as a temporary source for cash.

¹⁶ In a study of social categories used in urban India, Berreman noted that persons from lower status groups were more familiar with the characteristics of higher status groups than members of the latter were with the characteristics of lower status groups, "Social Categories and Social Interactions in Urban India."

That the most positive racial attitudes are found among the lowest status whites in the village raises an interesting question about the relationship between social class position and prejudice. A large body of race relations literature posits an inverse relationship between class and prejudice.¹⁷ Although the numbers are too small to warrant a definitive statement, the Rocky Bay data suggest that there is nothing intrinsic in the personality or position of working class whites to make them racists. Rather, these data suggest that economic competition is a more critical determinant of race attitudes than class position. Where economic competition is minimal, as with white and Aleut fishermen and fish processors in Rocky Bay, positive racial attitudes develop. Thus, we may assume that the inverse relationship between class position and prejudice characterizes situations of economic competition between racial groups.

Seven other whites also stereotype Aleuts differently than the majority of Rocky Bay whites. These seven are middle class — professionals and managers and their wives. But their patterns of stereotyping are not typical of middle-class whites in Rocky Bay. Rather, they appear to be representative of those with advanced education. Only 11 Rocky Bay whites have two or more years of college. I interviewed nine of these. Of the nine, seven stereotyped Aleuts in ambiguous terms, emphasizing positive attributes only to contradict or deny them in the next breath. Some typical examples are:

Aleuts are very warm and generous people. But have you ever seen such filth?

Aleuts are remarkable people. They are so accepting of one another, even of their ex-mates. You know, they frequently change mates and then they socialize freely with them, often sitting with two of them at the same time in the bar. You wonder if they have any pride or self respect.

Some people object to their (Aleut) drinking and sexing around. But I tell them, it's none of their business. Aleuts have as much right to their life styles as we do to ours. And who is to say which way is better.

¹⁷ William MACKINNON and Richard CENTERS, "Authoritarianism and Urban Stratification"; Seymour M. LIPSET, "Democracy and Working Class Authoritarianism"; Albert COHEN and Harold HODGES, Jr., "Characteristics of the Lower Blue Collar Class."

But what gets me is that they have no interest in getting ahead. They don't understand the value of money. They don't care about improving themselves.

In a recent study of anti-semitism, Selznick and Steinberg^{17a} found that the higher a person's educational level the lower his level of prejudice. They attribute this finding to the influence of higher education in developing a commitment to an "enlightened" world view and to rules of evidence. The seven educated whites mentioned above, indeed, showed far more concern with demonstrating "enlightened" racial attitudes and objectivity than other whites. They tried to present a balanced picture, giving as much weight to positive as negative Aleut attributes. But the resulting picture was not really a balanced one because the negative statements were inaccurate. The positive statements these whites made appear to serve as a cover for basic prejudice against Aleuts.

These seven whites would undoubtedly score higher on a race attitude questionnaire than the less well-educated. But differences in racial attitudes based on education may be only rhetorical, reflecting the better-educated person's greater skill in rationalization and verbal disguise.¹⁸

BEHAVIOR IN INTERACTION

Earlier I mentioned that Rocky Bay whites tend to rationalize racial inequality in terms of Aleuts' failure to live according to the Protestant ethic. Whites, however, do not simply rationalize the issue of inequality and then forget about it. They tend to be activists. They act on their belief in their own superiority and Aleuts' inferiority by trying to instruct the Aleut in Protestant ethic virtues. In this way, they actively function as agents of culture transmission.

If whites succeed in this effort, however, they face the threat of competition from Aleuts and the actual or potential loss of

^{17a} Gertrude J. SELZNICK and Stephen STEINBERG, *The Tenacity of Prejudice*.

¹⁸ In reviewing attitude studies on race, Simpson and Yinger point to the bias that may arise from the fact that middle-class respondents possess greater verbal skills than lower-class ones. George E. SIMPSON and J. MILTON YINGER, *Racial and Cultural Minorities: An Analysis of Prejudice and Discrimination*, p. 105.

their positions of advantage. Consequently, whites face a dilemma. On one level, their ethnocentrism leads them to try to change Aleuts' values and behavior, to convince Aleuts to emulate them. On another perhaps less conscious level, their positions of advantage promote an interest in preventing Aleuts from entering into competition with them. This dilemma appears to be critical to an understanding of the interracial behavior of a majority of Rocky Bay whites.

I examined interracial behavior in informal social relations, excluding those that occur at the work place. Again, I found a modal and variant pattern based on degree of social closeness with Aleuts. The majority of Rocky Bay whites who perceive Aleuts negatively tend to avoid interpersonal relationships with them while the minority who view Aleuts more positively usually engage in primary group relations with Aleuts. (For ease of communication, I shall refer to the latter group as "variant" whites.) However, the apparently positive correspondence between racial attitude and behavior disappears when examining the socialization roles whites perform *vis-a-vis* Aleuts. Both groups of whites exhibit similarities in their efforts to socialize Aleuts to dominant society values and to a subordinate position. First, I shall discuss the interracial behavior of the majority of whites in Rocky Bay.

Social Separation

Most Rocky Bay whites live residentially segregated from Aleuts — in the all-white section near company facilities and in the predominantly white area in the hills overlooking native sections. On the surface, this residential segregation does not appear to reflect racist attitudes of whites. Everybody in the village knows and seems to accept that whites live in segregated residential sections because of the availability of low-rent company housing in these places. However, the very fact that the company places its housing in areas distant from native residential sections suggests a demand by white company employees. Residential segregation in Rocky Bay is an example of institutional racism, of how housing segregation has become so well accepted that it seems natural.

The majority of whites remain socially distant from Aleuts in other ways, leading separate social lives and avoiding primary group relations with Aleuts. This social distance is not one-sided. Aleuts manifest a similar pattern of social avoidance of whites. But there is a difference when whites display disinterest in and avoidance of Aleuts and when Aleuts exhibit such behavior. Since whites are the decision makers, leaders, and dominant members of the village, their social avoidance of Aleuts is an offensive act connoting contempt for Aleuts. Aleut exclusion of whites is defensive and self-protective. Moreover, Aleuts' exclusion of whites usually gives way to acceptance when whites demonstrate a sincere interest in and respect for them.

The White as Socializer

Despite the social distance between Aleuts and whites in Rocky Bay, frequent contact between members of the two groups is unavoidable. They encounter each other at the dock, processing plant, market, bar, liquor store, cafe, movie theater, post office, church, and on the street. In these casual encounters, whites' socialization efforts focus on two issues. One is when Aleuts' behavior deviates from the whites values such as industry, self-improvement, respect for property, and avoidance of dissipation.

Drunk Aleuts are common targets of white socialization efforts. It should be noted that many whites appear to consume as much alcohol in absolute amounts as Aleuts but these whites drink small amounts on a regular basis rather than large amounts in periodic drinking binges. Thus, it is not the amount consumed but the style of drinking that concerns the white. When seeing a drunk Aleut on the street, whites may publicly chastise him, as one does a misbehaving child, telling him to go home. I have heard whites lecture drinking Aleuts about their profligate spending habits and all the improvements they could make on their homes if they stopped drinking. This contrasts with whites' behavior toward the few white persons who drink excessively. Though whites gossip about these drinkers, I saw or heard of no instance in which they intruded with advice or instructions.

Whites also instruct Aleuts in respect for property. One white, in a stroll through the village, saw Aleut children playing

in a boat not belonging to their parents. Shocked at their disregard for private property, she severely admonished them. On another occasion, she observed Aleut children playing in a car not belonging to their parents. To intensify her concern, she saw adult relatives of the children standing nearby. This time, she exhorted both children and adult relatives. This woman had lived in the village for a number of years but was apparently uninformed about Aleut orientations to property. Aleut children are accustomed to relatively free access to belongings of relatives and close family friends.

A common issue is white socialization efforts concerns self-improvement. When an Aleut woman just back from a year at college announced her intention to remain permanently in the village to a group of fellow workers at the processing plant, a white co-worker reproached her: "But you have a chance to make something of yourself. You'll never get ahead in a place like this." As this white later confided to me, her efforts to instill motivation in this relatively educated Aleut to get ahead in the world were unrelenting, albeit ineffective. "I keep trying to influence her but I don't know how to make an impression. She's so stubborn," said the white socializer.

The second socialization issue that prompts white interventions is when Aleuts violate whites' conception of a proper racial etiquette,¹⁹ that is, when Aleuts become "uppity" and forget their subordinate place.

In the market, if an Aleut child, especially a dark-skinned one, says, "give me a package of gum," the clerk, at times in a snappish voice, may instruct him to say, "Please Mrs. X, may I have a package of gum." I did not see clerks exhibit such behavior when white children used similar forms of address. When the native child commits the cardinal sin of interrupting the white adult, he may evoke a sharper response either in a chilling stare or a verbal reproach.

With Aleut adults, whites generally use more indirection in posing the expectation for subservience. A scene at the church

¹⁹ The concept "racial etiquette" refers to forms of control that define and maintain social distance. See Robert E. PARK, *Race and Culture*, p. 183; Gunnar MYRDAL, *An American Dilemma*, Vol. 1, pp. 610-618.

sewing circle attended by six white and three native women is illustrative. The white women monopolized the conversation, apparently expecting the native women to accept and enjoy their role as passive spectators. Then one native, who possesses greater verbal facility than the other native women present, assertively entered the conversation, telling a lengthy story about her childhood in a more traditional native village. Shortly after she finished, a white woman addressed the following comment to her: "I'm cleaning the rubbish out of my closets and cellar. Do you want my junkies?" The native woman mumbled an affirmative reply but thereafter was subdued.

Situations such as these occur in encounters in private homes. An oldtime Aleut raconteur visited me and was spinning yarns when three whites arrived. The whites acted bored and indifferent, looking away, yawning, grim-lipped when the native recounted a humorous incident. Then, after a few minutes, with apparent resentment at the central role the native played in the conversation, the whites rudely interrupted him with a complete change of subject, and proceeded with their own conversation. The Aleut left, with the comment, "I feel I'm in the way here."

Aleuts are not very assertive in a dominant society sense. This is undoubtedly due not only to Aleuts' traditional reserve but also to the opposition they encounter from whites when they do assert themselves, as the above descriptions suggest. When Aleuts' assertiveness takes the form of direct economic competition, more severe sanctions than those mentioned above may be applied. To illustrate: an industrious Aleut couple in Rocky Bay sought to establish an enterprise that would be independent from the company. The husband's long-range plan involved building his own dock and warehouse. As a first step, he arranged to sell fish to a Japanese firm. But the company owns the dock and the white company superintendent refused to allow the Japanese vessel to tie up at the dock. Subsequently, when the wife opened a bakery, the white company superintendent threatened to withhold water and power utilises (also owned by the company) and refused to sell oil to her husband. Since profits from the company store cover a large share of the administrative costs for the fish processing plant, the superintendent was obviously concerned about competition with the company store.

While the company superintendent may have behaved similarly with a white competitor, it is important to point out the difference when a white competitor is thwarted and when the few Aleuts who seek to compete with white-owned enterprises are defeated. In the former case, only the individual white is involved. In the case of an assertive Aleut being defeated, the entire Aleut community, the members of which are generally keenly aware of these interactions, is affected, for Aleuts, in both this and the preceding incidents, must cope with contradictory socialization messages when the very whites who urge them to be assertive prevent them from doing so.

Before considering the implications of the socialization role of these whites, let us examine the interracial behavior of the small group of whites who do engage in primary group relations with Aleuts.

Variations in Interracial Behavior

Other than whites married to Aleuts who obviously engage in primary group relations with at least one Aleut, ten whites maintain friendship relationships with natives. This group comprises the eight individuals who perceive Aleuts in positive terms and two of the seven better-educated persons who apply both positive and negative stereotypes to Aleuts. This group has two distinguishing characteristics. First, seven of the ten — fishermen and their wives — work in a non-competitive situation with Aleuts. Second, nine of the ten have no stake in the community power structure. They are not employers, council members, law enforcement agents, school or church administrators, or persons with authority to give or withhold credit. Thus, it appears that interracial friendships are more likely to arise in situations where economic competition and political domination are not issues.

The 12 natives involved in these interracial friendships constitute a select group. All but three look white, four are married to whites, and all but one are among the most highly acculturated in the village. Thus, unless natives have special attributes attractive to whites, they are excluded from any primary group relationships with whites.

On the surface, the socialization roles of these "variant" whites differ from those of other Rocky Bay whites. "Variant" whites do not try to change the behavior of their native friends, most of whom have already adopted western values and life styles. But on an implicit level, their socialization roles parallel those of other whites. The frequency with which "variant" whites inveigh against Aleut life styles in the presence of Aleut friends suggests an implicit mandate to the Aleut to change the behavior of his less acculturated associates. To illustrate: one white, just back from a visit to a white friend in another Aleut village, vigorously derided Aleut life styles in that village to a visiting native friend. She said: "The way they (Aleuts) live is horrible. The kids are so filthy. And they run into your house and climb all over the furniture and touch everything in sight. Ugh! I wouldn't let my kids play with any of those kids after seeing what they were like." Another white, in the presence of an Aleut visitor, launched into a 20-minute tirade against Aleut life styles in Rocky Bay. She addressed the evils of drinking, sexual immorality, and especially parents allowing children to run wild. "There are no other ways to live here," she lamented, "everyone lives like that." "Variant" whites are either grossly insensitive or are indirectly conveying an injunction to native friends to change the behavior of less acculturated Aleuts.

The behavior of "variant" whites matches that of other whites in enforcing an etiquette of race relations, although the context shifts from the casual encounter to primary group relationships. The most striking way in which "variant" whites keep Aleuts in their place is by assigning a higher status and importance to white than to native visitors. In a native visit to a white home, if other whites are present, the host invariably ignores the native, directing eye gaze and conversation to the white. The native may respond by leafing through a magazine or mail order catalogue, or by leaving. The host may barely notice the leave taking.

"Variant" whites teach natives their proper place in other ways. They infrequently visit natives but expect native friends to be available to visit them when invited. I observed several instances in which natives countered the white's invitation with one to their homes. In each case, the white simply said, "No, you come to my place," as if it were a command. "Variant" whites

also discourage verbal expressions of affection from native friends. When a native told a white friend, just back from a lengthy vacation, how much she had missed her, the white abruptly changed the subject. Some "variant" whites respond with more biting rejections. After a native remarked to a white she was visiting, "I don't know what I would do if I didn't have you to visit," the white looked uncomfortable and several minutes later said, "Goodness, you're getting fat in the rear end."

Thus, even whites who befriend Aleuts express racist sentiments that consign natives, however acculturated they may be, to a secondary and subservient status. How can we explain this apparent paradox? Unlike the majority of Rocky Bay whites, most "variant" whites do not enjoy a position of economic and political advantage in the village, and therefore we can assume that their interracial behavior is not motivated by an interest in protecting a privileged economic or political position. But in a racist society that accords, in addition to economic and political privilege, rewards in social status for the dominant white group, all whites may perceive benefits in maintaining the symbols of racial inferiority and superiority.

CONCLUSIONS

Rocky Bay whites are not formal agents of culture change; they do not plan an agenda for changing Aleut behavior; they are responsible to no one for the consequences of their interventions with Aleuts. But, nonetheless, because they come into frequent contact with Aleuts, they play a socialization role. Free from the organization imperatives that accompany formal, publicly acknowledged socialization roles, their informal socialization roles reflect the imperatives of the racist structure of the larger society, a society whose ideology emphasizes the superiority of the values of white middle-class Americans, and whose structures determine the distribution of economic, political, and social status rewards along racial lines.

The whites' belief in the unquestioned superiority of their culture prompts them to socialize Aleuts to mainstream values and life styles. But the whites' desire to protect their positions of

advantage leads them to defeat these socialization goals. By socializing Aleuts in denigrating and humiliating ways, by assigning them to a subservient status, and by opposing their assertiveness, whites succeed in undermining Aleut confidence and self-esteem sufficiently to prevent them from achieving the standards whites set for them, and most importantly, to exclude them as serious competitors for economic, political, and social status rewards.

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