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Learning Through Expressive and Representational Experiences in Social Studies : Eight-and-Nine-Year-Olds Study the Netsilik Eskimos

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by

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Abstract

The following paper is the record of a study of the Netsilik Eskimos that took place in a group of twenty-five eight- and nine-year-olds in 1973. Included in the paper are a description of the school, the classroom, and the children involved; a brief discussion of the overarching concepts inherent in the content of the study; a record of the ways in which the study was presented to the children; and finally, a detailed description of the children's work. The point is made throughout the paper that the children learned through expressive experience in the study and that this expressive experience was indeed part of their way of thinking about the concepts and information they were dealing with. Expressive experiences include words, spoken and written; construction; art; creative dramatics. A bibliography lists materials for both children and teachers.

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Preface

It would be misleading to convey the impression that I worked alone with the children or that, indeed, I could have. Although I have acknowledged the presence of other teachers within the paper, I would like them not to remain anonymous.

George Fuller, the shop teacher, and Edith Gwathmey and Lucienne Haessle, both art teachers, amde it possible to extend the study into their areas of work with the children by themselves becoming involved in and doing research on Eskimo art and craft. My two student teachers, Jane Lester and Virginia Meyer were actively engaged in the study and were particularly helpful during the time we were working on the play.

From the beginning, my advisor, Pearl Zeitz, kept a photographic record of the study. The slides proved very useful for my meeting at the end of the year with parents, affording them an opportunity to see what their children had been doing and facilitating my description of the social studies program. The most interesting use of all for the slides was that of a kind of summing up for me and the children. There is no doubt in my mind that the children gained a sense of

accomplishment as they saw how much they had done and remembered back to when they had known almost nothing about the Eskimos. Perhaps because of the emphases in our culture, it is easier for children to feel a sense of achievement about the measurables, such as math and spelling; here they could plainly see achievement in an unmeasurable area. I must confess, it gave me a sense of accomplishment as well. It is from this collection of slides that I have selected the illustrations, which appear in the Appendix, for this paper.

Chapter I

THE SETTING

The Eskimo study described here took place in a classroom of eight-and nine-year olds at The Bank Street School for Children, a laboratory school for The Bank Street College of Education. The school has 400 children from three to thirteen years of age, and is ungraded. There are seventeen classrooms; teachers have from one to three (usually two) student teachers from the college working in their classrooms for "placements" of at least eight and up to sixteen weeks.

The school is administratively divided into three parts: the lower school (ages 3 to 6), middle school (ages 6 to 10), and upper school (ages 10 to 13). Each school meets weekly with its advisor, who also meets individually with teachers every other week. There is a school psychologist and a reading specialist with whom teachers and parents consult. The mathematics and science teachers, who teach upper-school children, are available to lower and middle school teachers for consultation. There are also a children's librarian, a music teacher, a language teacher (for the upper-school children), two gym teachers, and a school nurse.

The school itself occupies the second, third, and fourth floors of the nine-story building which houses the college. Both

children and teachers are, therefore, in something of a goldfish bowl setting - even were it not for the thousands of visitors who go through the school each year. There is a children's dining room on the basement floor which is adjacent to the college dining room. On the top floor of the building is a large gym; on the fifth floor, next to the college library, is the children's library. There are also a play deck for younger children and a large park a ten-minute walk away, for outdoor play.

The school is, then rich in personnel and space. It would be easier for children and adults in some respects, though, if the children's spaces were all on consecutive floors.

My classroom, self-contained, is designed for individualized and small-group teaching. It is divided into five discrete areas: mathematics, language, science, reading and meeting (an arrangement of benches and bookshelves where the whole class can sit for discussions) and arts and crafts (including cooking). Teaching in segmented time units in which beginnings and endings (but not necessarily completions) are ruled by the clock is held to a minimum and the children themselves choose the when and how long they will work within clearly stated requirements. These are that they read, write and work at math every day each for at least half an hour, and that they complete weekly assignments in spelling and language arts.

Meetings take on great importance in a setting where children are pursuing their own work according to their own styles and level of development. And of the kinds of meetings we have, social

studies discussions bring the group together as a functioning, related whole more than any other kind.

The classrooms at Bank Street are greatly enriched by a variety of materials and equipment. There is always plenty of paper of all kinds, clay, plasticine, paint, brushes, linoleum, lino-cutting tools, felt pens, wood, cardboard, aquarian, microscopes, stream tables, etc. Teachers have a yearly budget of $150.00 which they can spend on their own special needs.

While they work regularly with an advisor, the teachers at Bank Street enjoy an unusual degree of autonomy in planning their programs. Advisors work differently, of course, with different teachers. But a main element of their role with all is helping teachers to articulate for themselves <u>why</u> they are doing what they are doing. Advisors also make suggestions with regard to difficult children; bring to teachers' attention materials and books; advise teachers in their work with student teachers; act as sounding boards; and work on special projects with children. Sometimes they attend parent conferences, and parents who are having difficulties with a teacher meet with advisors. Finally, and perhaps most important, advisors coordinate the curriculum from classroom to classroom to ensure that there be communication and logical sequence from class to class. As a teacher in the middle school, I am free to choose the content of a social studies program according to what interests and excites me as well as what I think is appropriate. While this state of affairs has its inconsistencies and inconveniences - especially in a non-graded setting - it has

its strengths, too, and the general, though perhaps not unanimous, feeling is that its strengths outweigh the inconveniences.

When a teacher is free to choose a content area on the basis of her own interests and on the basis of her knowledge of her particular children, the chances of it being a valuable and outstanding study are perhaps greater than if she is handed a content area to study. In settings where the teacher chooses her own social studies, the particular piece of content is not of the greatest importance; rather the themes, the kinds of thinking, and the expressive experiences that can arise out of the study are very important, as is the way in which the study becomes a core for classroom life. And, of course, availability of resources* for children is another, most important, consideration in choosing a program.

Some of the inconveniences and difficulties in this state of autonomy for the teacher should also be mentioned. First, teachers are less likely to adopt a set curriculum, but rather tend to develop their own programs, which is very hard, time-consuming work. Second, a teacher never has a group of children who have all had the same content in social studies (because in a nongraded setting groupings shift from year to year) and so one is often faced with conflicts arising out of the need to avoid repetition for some children while meeting the needs of others. Third, since most groups are made up of two age groups and a

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*See Availability of Resources in following chapter.

teacher often keeps many of the children for two years, her choice of social studies must change in alternate years. Fourth, insofar as education is seen as the transmission of specific knowledge deemed important by a society or culture, some children could conceivably end up "uneducated" in some respects; that is, a child might be grouped each year in such a way that he never is in a class that studies New York or the Greeks. Finally, there lacks a certain built-in sense of school tradition based on programs; that is, the child does not have the sense that in the third grade he will study the Indians and New Amsterdam, in the sixth the Greeks, in the eighth, American History, and thus lacks the sense of group identity that can build up around associations with these programs. All of the problems can be struggled with and, at least partially, overcome, but they remain problems and enter very much into the teacher's thinking when she chooses the social studies content for the group.

Chapter II

AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES

A study of the Eskimo puts at the teacher's disposal a wealth of interesting materials for children and for herself. There are many good books available that 4th and 5th and the best readers among 3rd-graders can read. At the end of this paper is an annotated bibliography and my description of the study illustrates the use of some of the literature.

In addition, in New York City, and probably in other large cities, there is a great deal of Eskimo art to be seen: sculptures, prints, and tapestries. In New York City there are permanent exhibits at the Museum of Natural History and The Museum of the American Indian. I went several times myself and, of course, took the children in small groups according to their research areas. The American Indian Arts Center at 1042 Madison Avenue has contemporary art works on display all the time and the children were really awed with the beauty of the sculptures and tapestries (a new art for Eskimos) they saw there. It was there that I was able to buy an Eskimo calendar which I used to inspire the children's print-making. There are countless books and pamphlets on sale there that describe Eskimo life, old and new.

There is a detailed Eskimo curricula that I examined and that had some good material in it; Jerome Bruner's Man, A Course

of Study. The curriculum is designed for older children and much of it is inappropriate at this age level. It is, moreover, "over-designed" in my opinion and has the quality of set-pieces in a well-made play. (An exhaustive critique of it has been written by Richard Jones in his Fantasy and Feeling in Education.) It is nevertheless valuable as a source of information for teachers, and the films (see Bibliography) are superb and well worth using if the teacher views them first and really works out how she is going to use them.

Chapter III

THE CHILDREN

In choosing a social studies program for eight- and nine-year-olds, I looked at my prospective class from several points of view: social, intellectual, economic, and developmental. More specifically, I was able, through records and conversations with other teachers, to trace their previous social studies experiences at Bank Street. I then looked at the possibilities offered by a study of the Eskimos and put together what I judged to be the children's needs and readiness with the potentialities of such a study.

The children at Bank Street are, on the whole, a sophisticated group, with professional parents who have intellectual interests. Economically they may vary from those who could not afford to send their children to Bank Street without at least partial scholarship aid to those for whom the tuition is no drain on their resources whatever. But in their social, educational, and cultural attitudes they have much in common - and this includes children from minority backgrounds as well. There are very few working class children at Bank Street, and even fewer inner city children.

Most of the children either travel or go to the country in the summer; many do in the winter, as well. This is important, for they have real experiences of different geographies. Most of them are more familiar with airplanes than with trains or buses.

Many have been to Europe, Canada, and many parts of the United States. They go to museums, the zoo, children's concerts, and theater with their parents. They are often cared for part of the time by domestic help, and their mothers tend to have at least part-time careers. They keep rabbits, guinea pigs, birds, and fish (not to mention dogs and cats) at home, and their parents share these experiences with them, and together they use books to learn how to care for them. Their parents often read aloud to them.

When they are deprived, the deprivation is usually emotional rather than material. They have "dates" with other children or lessons of one kind or another nearly every day after school, and are rarely alone. Living in an unsafe city, they have less independence in moving about and playing out-of-doors than their suburban counterparts. They watch a great deal of television and have learned a great deal from it - especially a wide vocabulary, but their understanding tends often to be incomplete or superficial. They are often wracked with intense feelings of sibling rivalry and have a marked need for attention from adults. The importance of mastery and competence has been emphasized to them, perhaps at the expense of community and sharing. All of these characteristics suggest emphases and directions to a teacher of social studies.

As for their school experiences thus far, these children are quite experienced in social studies. Starting at three, they learn to attend "meetings," much like class discussions, during which they talk about themselves, the class and some of its problems, trips they have taken, other people around them, and so on.

These meetings differ from class discussions mainly in their intimate tone and setting; in most rooms an area is set aside for the meetings, so that everyone can sit clase together, more or less in a circle, and see everyone else. It is the kind of arrangement that is more familiar in nursery and kindergarten than in the primary and elementary grades.

The children are also accustomed to representing their experiences in a variety of ways: pictorial, "architectural," verbal, dramatic. Thus, after a trip to the George Washington Bridge, a group of five and six-year-olds might construct a bridge with blocks. A group of sixes and sevens might make a permanent model of the bridge out of other materials. From early on, they make graphs representing information about their own classrooms and about the neighborhood. They draw floor plans of their classrooms, their rooms at home, etcetera.

Some of them have studied the city: its water, transportation, and sanitation systems. They talk to people who work for the city and make it go. They study food coming into the city. They visit MacDonald's and see how the hamburgers get made, or go to a bagel-making factory. They become familiar with some of the processes that go into the very ordinary things in their lives and, it is hoped, become aware that the goods and services in man's life - his food, clothing, and shelter - all have interesting stories behind them and do not appear magically and without cause. Further, the theme of interdependence in human life is sounded over and over.

The children who enter the eights and nines from the sixes-

and-sevens group have had these and similar experiences. They have not necessarily, however, called it social studies, and the idea of a social studies program is new to them. (The children presented here were made up of 10 children who were with me for a second year, 13 who had been in a 7-8's group, and two from a 6-7's.)

Those who have been in the 8-9's group the year before and those who come from a 7-8's group have more definite ideas about social studies. Some of them have studied groups of American Indians, New Amsterdam, Mexican Indians. They enter imaginatively into the long ago - making models of an Indian village, dipping candles, weaving, putting on a play - thereby learning to use a variety of modes to express the information and concepts they are acquiring.

In looking over the group I would have in the fall, I saw a backlog of experiences that made them ready, I felt, to study a group of people removed in a new way: people strange, hard to identify with, and yet <u>contemporary</u> (and therefore less story-like). Again, they would study the basic activities related to food, clothing, and shelter; they would study the family, and, in a loose sense, government; beliefs; play; art. It seemed to me that the starkness of life in any preliterate group, a life ruled by necessity, would make it possible to take up the general themes of human existence without immediately immersing the children into a hopeless complexity.

But there are more important reasons for taking up the study of a preliterate culture. Developmentally, the children are

at a point where they are moving away from the immediate family; they push outward and find authority in adults other than their parents, even in their age mates; and in their age mates they also find a kind of strength against the overwhelmingly powerful adult. Along with the search for new authority there develops a need to see themselves in sexual terms. Both of these trends, the ascendency of the peer group as authority and the need to define their sexuality, can become negative influences upon classroom life: the first because the group can become a new tyranny and the child unable to stand up as an individual before it; the second because assertion of sexual identity at this age level can turn into constant expression of antagonism towards the opposite sex. Some of both of these trends is inevitable during this period of life, but it is wise for the teacher to include in her curriculum planning ways of, at least, minimizing, if not actually bringing to good use, the effects of these trends. Social studies is, of course, a natural arena in the classroom for the working out of such developmental struggles.

A study of the Eskimo provides an opportunity to look at small groups governing themselves and dealing with many problems that the children can easily recognize as in some way problems that they themselves have. A study of the Eskimo can show the strengths and benefits of group life. Children can identify with the sharing of food, the temptations to hide food from others, the working out of competitiveness and jealousies in the great igloo. The almost ritualistic clarity of sex roles in Eskimo life offers much opportunity for children and teachers to discuss sexuality,

to express feelings about roles associated with sex, to compare Eskimo sex roles with our own, and to see both the "masculine" and the "feminine" contributions to society as vital.

Finally, there is a quality in the life of any preliterate group, and that of the Eskimo in particular, that it seemed to me must strike a responsive chord in the souls of middle-years children. According to Erikson*, this is the age of Inferiority vs. Industry, a time when children can identify, and become involved in new ways with work. Surely they would identify with this group of hardy, hard-working, ingenious people.

Much about an Eskimo's life can be understood merely by looking. It is abundantly clear what is going on when an Eskimo harpoons a seal or flays a caribou. It is not so clear what is going on when a man sits behind a desk and talks on the telephone, or writes, or a woman puts a cake into an oven. The chain of economic and technological events can be followed without difficulty in the first case, but not in the second.

This reminds me of the children I teach in some respects: they are enacters and producers. They go beyond playfulness into a seriousness, a workman's frame of mind. To study a people who act on their environment to produce, who solve many of the problems of their lives with their hands and the materials at hand, is to begin close to what these children can appreciate, admire, aspire to. To study the Eskimo is, above all, to study the power of human inventiveness in the business of living.

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*Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: Norton, 1964.)

Chapter IV

THE STUDY - POSSIBLE CONCEPTS TO DEVELOP

Because I believe in the teaching/learning qualities of expression, it is the expressive experiences in this study of the Eskimo that I have chosen to emphasize. As I worked with the children I began to see that to study the Eskimo was to create him as much as it was to find out about him. The "Eskimo" thus created was perhaps anthropologically dubious in some respects, but he was authentic to the children in their struggle to make sense out of the larger human experience.

Before I met with the children, before they ever began to work at learning about the Eskimo, I thought about the concepts and themes inherent in the material. The primitive life of the Eskimo offers a manageable frame of reference through which children can study some fundamental principles of human existence: man's relation to his environment, especially as regards his development of a technology for survival; his need for other human beings; his creation of a cosmology; and his impulse to represent his experience. These themes, all of which may be brought out in the study of any group, are thrown into particularly high relief in the case of the Eskimo.

Man's dependency on his environment is clear in Eskimo life. No great technology intervenes between man and nature to give man a false and dangerous sense of security and faith in his own works. But the technology that does exist makes life

possible in a world where it seems it must be impossible. In studying the Eskimo we get a deep sense of man the wielder of tools. And we clearly see the use of nature to fight nature - or at least to hold it at bay.

The need for other people for survival is seen in the necessity for every household to have a male and a female to perform their various functions. The need for others beyond necessity is seen in the fact that the Netsilik Eskimos band together in seal-hunting camps during the winter months even though they do not need this coming together for survival. Here, in the winter camps, they construct the Great Igloo, where they meet together to play games, hold contests, and to laugh. And the group does serve survival as well, for any seal that is caught must be shared by all.

The beautiful stories, poems, and songs all betoken the Eskimo's need to explain the hard-to-accept, arbitrary aspects of life: violent weather, bad hunting, death. Like all people, the Eskimo gains a sense of mastery over his life through explanations of those phenomena he cannot really control. Taboos serve the same purpose: they cannot sew during the winter for fear of offending the seals; tools cannot be mended near the igloo, again, for fear of offending the animals out of which those tools are fashioned. These rituals and taboos and beliefs, it seems, relieve the guilt involved in plundering the earth. And it is interesting that many children, entering into the world of the Eskimo, accept explanations that, out of context, they would laugh at heartily from their superior scientific points of view.

Finally, Eskimo stone carvings, prints, stories, all represent man as creator and provide the children with vivid imagery which they adapt in their own art work.

The contemporaneousness of Eskimo life affords an opportunity to take up special themes that are timely and of great concern to the children. In studying a basically Stone Age culture in our midst, we touch upon one of the most pressing issues of our time: man's relation to his environment. The problems of conservation of energy and natural resources are easily seen when the fight between seal and Eskimo, for centuries perfectly balanced, tips in the Eskimo's favor with the introduction of the gun.

The idea of traditional vs. modern comes up again and again in any consideration of Eskimo life and from the beginning the theme of change as a basic human experience is sounded. In twenty-five years, the life of the Netsilik, as that of all Eskimos, has changed radically and disastrously fast. I was sure that if the children got a deep sense of what life was like for the Eskimo, they would be able to think through for themselves, almost, how change in one aspect of life carries with it the seeds for change in all aspects of life. They would be able to find out about similar changes from their grandparents' lives to theirs. They might even be able to consider what kinds of things remain unchanged.

The life of the Netsilik Eskimo was almost unrelievedly hard. It would be perfectly possible, I felt, to contemplate this fact with the children without falsifying it. It was necessary, however, to omit certain aspects of Eskimo life: such as the fact that they eat their dogs in times of starvation; they expose girl

babies if they are unable to make marriage plans for them; and they leave behind to die the old who cannot keep up with them during their migrations. These, the harshest realities, would, I believe, cause such anxiety and repugnance in a child of this age that to present them would be to undermine the whole point of the study.

Chapter V

THE STUDY - PRESENTATION

The children arrived in September with the question, "What are we going to study this year?" I knew very well that they meant what is the social studies theme going to be. We began our year with a study of the natural history of Central Park, which, though I had not at all intended it, at a certain point fed naturally into the Eskimo study.

I began to prepare the children for the transition to the Eskimos by immersing them in Eskimo imagery: I hung twelve prints from a recent Eskimo calendar which depicted various animals and animal spirits; a group of photographs I had gotten from the Canadian Film Board showing the Eskimos in various activities connected with food-getting; and several large posters showing a polar bear and its cub against the background of an iceberg and a snow rabbit in the spring, barely visible on the brownish, but flower-carpeted, tundra. I also got many books from the library and displayed them: fiction, folk tales, art books, children's anthropology, etc. I didn't say much about these things, but mainly listened to the children and answered some of their questions when they asked them. They found the Eskimos in the photographs ridiculous-looking.

Meanwhile, we were finishing up our study of Central Park with a fishing expedition to the boating lake. We had removed the

barbs from the fish hooks, for the fish we caught would either be thrown back into the lake or slipped into one of many gallon jars to be brought back to school for our Central Park fish tank. Each child had fashioned his own drop line from fishing line, a piece of wood, a hook, and a sinker. I mentioned to the children that the Eskimos did a great deal of fishing and that they had many different methods, none of which was like the one we were now using. I asked them if they could imagine any other kinds of fishing. They could. Spear fishing and ice fishing, but only with a hook and line, which made it basically the same as what we were doing. After pushing a bit, one child said, "net fishing." We brought our sunnies, crayfish, water insects and plants back to school and set up the tank.

I then showed them a film in which Eskimos in the autumn were fishing at a river and living in a karmak, or skin house. Everyone was surprised that they were not in an igloo. Most children found the Eskimo language (the sound track consisted solely of natural sounds and the Eskimos talking) hilarious, and their treatment of their dogs disgusting. They felt very distant from these people and made derisive comments throughout the movie but they were also very interested in what they were seeing. In the meantime, they were also looking in the films for tools, as I had asked them to do.

This was the first in a series of movies (see Bibliography) I showed them. The films all showed the Eskimos working at various tasks related to securing food, clothing and shelter. The children

were able to take in an enormous amount of information from this graphic presentation of the stone-age existence of the Netsilik of Pelly Bay in Canada. Through the films the children could also find out about men's and women's work, the treatment of children, the treatment of dogs, and get a sense of social life. And, of course, they had an unforgettable picture of the land itself, the flat, desolate, blindingly white land (brown in autumn, and bursting with the colors of an amazing variety of flowers in the brief spring) and, from the natural sound track, the incessant sound of the wind mingled with the sounds of the Eskimo language.

In the beginning of the study I also read to them from two books. The first, Songs and Stories of the Netsilik Eskimo, helped them to understand some of the rituals they saw in the films, for the songs and stories were all about the Netsilik religious beliefs, which revolve about the seal, the caribou, and other animals vital to their existence. The second book, a group of related stories called On Firm Ice, has children as its main characters and provides opportunity to discuss family life and social life, and especially, the problems of living, both in the sense of surviving and in the sense of getting along with others, within and outside the family.

A trip to the American Museum of Natural History was very exciting, for here they saw actual examples of the tools and clothing and carving that they had read about or seen in the films. More important, they could examine closely what had been a little difficult to see: how some of the raw materials, like stone and

bone, could be used so flexibly, and what sinew really looks like. "It looks like my leather shoelaces," one child cried out.

As the children began to be able to find out for themselves, I made books available to them for their own researches. Meanwhile, I read them an account by an Eskimo of a terrible journew he made with his family during a time of starvation (The Story of Comock the Eskimo) which had in it exquisite little drawings done by Comock, and the story of artist Pitseolak, who works today at the West Baffin Cooperative and who reminisces about her childhood and the drastic changes that have taken place in her lifetime.

Towards the end of the study, a parent made available to me an NBC documentary called The People of the Snow, which shows the life of a group of Eskimos today with their schools, hospitals, snowmobiles, and guns. Most of the children felt that they were no longer Eskimos; a few thought that their life had improved.

These were the various materials through which I "presented" the Eskimo to the children; these were experiences that we had as a whole group. Additional materials, resources that were used by some, not all, children on their own, are listed in the Bibliography.

Chapter VI

THE STUDY: WHAT THE CHILDREN DID

Like younger children, eight- and nine-year-olds gain understanding and meaning from their experiences, both emotional and intellectual, through expression - that is, in recreating experience - through representation or reenactment. As the analogy serves adults when struggling to grasp complex, abstract ideas, representational activities serve children's concept development. Such activities (e.g., model-making, drawing, dramatizing) bring depth to the child's learning. Indeed, it may be said that these activities are the child's way of thinking and of integrating what he knows. For, although at this age level he can mentally think through problems much more than he used to, he still thinks and learns through expression. If expressive experiences are not available to him, his learning will be much impoverished.

The children's expressions, or products, or outgo, include here processes involved in creating works of art and craft, written and oral expressions, charts developed out of discussion, responses to assignments - everything, in fact, that the children were able to give out. While this paper presents first the child's intake (my presentation) and then their outgo, in reality these two flows often occur simultaneously, or alternately, and the dynamic between them constitutes the central problem in building curriculum. For

intake and outgo* really respond to and depend upon each other.

Probably the first activity I asked of the children was to look for as many tools as they could see during the first two films. We then began a chart that was developed over the first half of the study: a list of tools used by Eskimos giving both their English and Eskimo names (see Picture 1, Appendix). Thus we began with a consideration of Eskimo technology (and of our own).

I asked the children what the tools were made of and pointed out to them when they said metal and wood that the Eskimos in the film were reenacting an earlier time when they had no metal and only the sparsest amount of wood. I found in the beginning that we had to do a lot of work on the differences between a tool and the raw material that went into making it. Further, the children began to extend their ideas of what a tool is: at first they were quite certain that a tool is something that you use with your hands. I asked them why, then, couldn't you use your hands, and they replied variously that hands weren't strong enough or big enough. I summarized for them by saying that tools were things that gave a person "super hands."

I then asked whether they could think of any tools that made other parts of the body stronger or better in some other way. One child immediately thought of the telescope, which, he said, made your eyes able to see very far away. Other examples came fast and thick: glasses, microscopes, cameras. Then someone won-

*Lucy Sprague Mitchell uses the words intake and outgo in Young Geographers, and they are infinitely preferable to the more recent input and output borrowed from computer technology.

dered whether a bicycle was a tool because it "makes your whole body go fast," and this gave way to a discussion of transportation. I frequently asked whether "this" or "that" was a tool, mentioning objects familiar to them and objects (such as snow goggles) we were encountering in the films and stories about Eskimos. Gradually their definitions became more extensive; from "it's something that helps you to make things," to "it's something that helps you to do things that you can't do just with your self." I read them a dictionary definition of tools ("an instrument, as a hammer, used or worked by hand") and Jerome Bruner's definition)"all objects that perform useful work for us by changing our physical and our social environment"). We discussed what they meant and some children liked one, some the other. And although we never agreed on a definition, the idea of tool extended until one child remarked that he thought money was a tool, and many children agreed with him. I was interested, during these discussions of meaning, to bring to the children an awareness of the complexity of some words, of the many ideas behind a single word. I introduced the word technology and we began to think of such words as "big" words.

The children wanted to make replicas of the tools they were seeing, and I arranged for the shop teacher to help them. We required the children to find a sketch or photograph of the tools they wanted to make, to sketch it, and write something about what it was made with and how used by the Eskimos. Several

children made bow drills and ulus (the women's knife); one made a doll; two made a large sled. (See Pictures 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, Appendix.)

On our trip to the American Museum of Natural History the children worked with a trip sheet and did sketches. It was very exciting for them to see real examples of the tools they had been studying.

For homework, I asked the children to make a list of raw materials available to Eskimos, and from their responses we made this list: skin, rock, bone, ice, snow, sinew, a little wood, seal blubber, walrus, whale, seal, narwhal, caribou, fur, ivory, fish skin, meat, blood, bird feathers, eggs, beak of bird, musk ox, water, moss, roots of moss (as kindling), and Arctic lice. I asked them if they could make the list smaller, but include everything in it. After some discussion they came up with: stone, animal skin, animal bone, water (including snow and ice), some wood, plants.

For the next homework and in preparation for the third film, in which I knew they would see and be amazed by the way the Netsilik Eskimo fashions his sled, I asked them to describe how they thought the Eskimo, knowing what his raw materials are, <u>might</u> make a sled. Here is what one child thought:

> The Eskimos could use bones to make the over brace and bones to make the under brace. They could use bones or wood,if they had it,to make sliders and string made out of sinew to tie the things together and if they wanted they could use skin to make everything warm.

They then saw the film in which the Netsilik fashion the sled runners out of frozen fish lined up and wrapped in frozen skin. They squirt water from their mouths onto the runners and run their mittens back and forth to make it smooth as it freezes. The cross pieces are made of bone or driftwood and secured with sinew. In the spring, the skin used for the runners is used to make their summer dwelling, a tent, and the fish are eaten by themselves or their dogs.

For the last homework on tools, I asked the children to think of something they could do with an old pair of shoes and with a newspaper instead of throwing them out. The children were very impressed with the lack of waste among the Netsilik and were able to see a connection between waste and necessity.

It was in the third film I showed that the children displayed a markedly different attitude towards the Eskimo. They were no longer laughing at the language nor outraged when the dogs were treated roughly. ("You gotta remember," said one child who had initially identified more with the dogs than with the people, "their dogs aren't pets to them. They need them for survival.") In this film I asked them, as usual, to look for new tools for our chart, but I also asked them to look at the ways the members of the family behaved towards each other, and, especially, how the children were treated.

The children had begun to ask questions about how the Eskimos get married, or whether they celebrate birthdays or have funerals. I felt that we had moved to a new phase of the study,

that the children had come to understand necessity in the life of the Netsilik and could accept the differences between themselves and the Eskimo and go on now to consider the less visible aspects of Eskimo life: the human interaction that exists within and among families and the beliefs that bind a group of people and help them cope with life. Their questions and their comments told me that they were ready to move on. (One child, watching the third film and looking at an old woman playing with a baby in the igloo said, "She looks like my grandmother.")

And so we turned our attention and looked more closely at some of the information and ideas we had gained from listening to the group of stories in On Firm Ice. The children had difficulty in differentiating the names of the characters in this book, and in keeping track of the relationships, so I made them a chart to help them keep track (see Picture 7, Appendix). The chart proved too cumbersome to consult in the middle of the drama of a story, so I made a new chart that gave, not only names, but graphically showed family relationships in the story (see Picture 8, Appendix).* I found that many children were uncertain about their own family relationships, so they made their own family charts (see Picture 9, Appendix).

For homework, I asked the children to interview members of their families. The question was: How do you think our family life would be different if we all lived, ate, slept together in

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*The family chart is shown in Man, A Course of Study in the booklet titled "The Netsilik Eskimos at the Inland Camps."

one room? The children themselves were also to respond to this question. Among the many responses from the children, three came up again and again. To paraphrase them: we would have to be much more considerate of each other's feelings; we would not have very much privacy; we would never be lonely.

In discussion we reviewed the films we had seen so far. Which elements of family life seemed to be the same, which different from ours. Almost the first difference between themselves and Eskimos the children noted was that Eskimos do not go to school. This led to a consideration of learning, and the children agreed that both Eskimo children and themselves learn a great deal from adults. We then looked at how we learned so far that year and developed the following chart:

HOW WE KNOW WHAT WE KNOW

Central Park Study

seeing and touching (observation)

information books

museum visit

asking experts (interviewing)

thinking together (discussion)

making drawings

Eskimo Study

films

books - fiction
folktales
poetry
information books
magazines

thinking together (discussion)

making drawings (observation)

An Eskimo Child's Sources of Knowledge

seeing and touching (observation)

thinking

watching and asking adults

playing (imitation adults)*

*Interestingly enough, the children could readily see, from the imitative play of children in the films, that play is a way of learning. It never occurred to them about themselves until I pointed it out to them. Then they easily saw that little kids learn from play. I said I thought that making tools and trying to use them, for example, was a combination of work and play.

The chart was entirely developed by the children, the words in parentheses were mine. We discussed the differences in our list under the Central Park study, which involved much firsthand experience, and under the Eskimo study. I then asked them if they could account for the differences between our lists and that of the Eskimo child, and we got back to a consideration of technology and the changes that take place as technology becomes more complex.

Another difference that the children noted was the fact that Eskimo families move around so much. Here we had a lengthy discussion of the word migration in all its forms and saw how basic food-getting profoundly affects life style.

For the most part, however, the children felt that family life was similar to ours: the adults took care of the children, and man and women each had different jobs to do to keep life going (though many children felt that their parents shared in all aspects of family life). We discussed the fact that the Eskimo had no choice about what he was going to do as an adult, and many girls were intrigued with the question of what would happen if a girl wanted to go on a seal hunt. Several girls wrote stories in which this happened.

Throughout the study the children worked on printmaking, both in relief and stencil forms. I chose this medium because contemporary Eskimos use it. (They do relief printing on stone, and sealskin stencil prints.) I worked closely with the art teacher and much of the children's weekly art periods were taken up in

exploring the medium.

We began with linoleum cutting, which was carefully supervised because of the dangers of using cutting tools. (See Pictures 10 to 14.)

We then moved on to making stencils. For this we used 5 by 7 cards and larger pieces of oak tag. The children drew figures and designs which they then cut out with matt knives, sometimes with quite a bit of help, and, using a dry brush technique, made their stencils. The exploration of negative and positive space was fascinating and difficult, the prints themselves remarkable, I think. (See Pictures 15 to 18.)

Having seen appliqué work on wall hangings and blankets done by contemporary Eskimos at The American Indian Art Center, the children wanted to try appliqué. We made felt pictures, which some children made into pillows, and a large mural on burlap. (See Pictures 19 to 25.)

In this and other artwork, the children were inspired by the Eskimo prints that were displayed in the room and by artwork they had seen at The American Indian Art Center. Much of this inspiration was unconscious; they had, through the study, absorbed much of the imagery of the Eskimo culture and used it in their artwork quite naturally.

Likewise with their writing. The children's stories and poems were steeped in Eskimo imagery and used Eskimo conflicts and situations and characters. One girl wrote about an Eskimo girl

who wanted to be a hunter. Her father's anger turns to amazed admiration when she kills a polar bear. Having proved herself, she decides never to go hunting again! A boy wrote about his first seal hunt. He ends up making friends with the seal when he discovers that it can talk. (Eskimo stories and myths all refer to a paradisiacal time with animals and men talking with one another.)

What was happening was that the content, the study itself, was providing the children with a vehicle for expression, or outgo. And this expression represented a way of thinking and learning more deeply about the Eskimos and about themselves.

Chapter VII

TWO CULMINATING EXPERIENCES: A BOOK AND A PLAY

The children's ever-deepening interest in and growing knowledge about the Eskimos suggested to me that it was time to work on large, whole-group projects. I asked them if they would like to write a class book - a kind of reference book - about the Netsilik Eskimos. I felt that they needed to find out some of the answers to their questions themselves and I wanted to give them some formal exercises in research and report-writing. The children were eager to work on a book and asked, as I thought they might, if they could also do a play for the rest of the school. We decided to work on both and to get the book underway before starting work on the play.

In order to help them work on the book, I set aside a corner of the room for research materials: books, pictures, magazine articles. Children began to sign up for various topics to write reports on, and I developed a chart on which we kept track of who was writing what and at what stage it was in (Notes and Reading Completed; Rough Draft Completed; Final Copy Completed; Ditto Made; Illustration). More ambitious children signed up for second and third reports as we noticed important information missing.

Four afternoons a week were set aside for research and writing. Teachers had individual and small group conferences to help children with various skills, such as skimming. summarizing, writing notes, proofreading. After each child had made a final copy, he copied it onto a ditto master, and line drawings were made to go with reports. (See Picture 26, Appendix.) These were run off on the duplicating machine, the book collated and covers made. Every child in the class had a book as did each class in the middle school, the library (which it catalogued), and various administrators.

The book was called The Old Ways of the Netsilik Eskimos and the children made covers with the stencils they had made earlier in the year. (See Pictures 27, 28.)

When the book was well underway and everyone understood what was needed to be done, we had our first meeting about the play. I had decided to begin work on it just after our mid-Winter vacation and to present it before our next vacation, which gave us just four weeks and two days to work on it. Thus we knew from the beginning when our play would be performed and that our time was limited, which was important for me, if not the children.

During the first week we had meetings every afternoon to discuss what should happen in the play. Several children thought we ought to have a script, but others, who had been in my class the previous year, explained to them that we would not need a script. We would "make up the play as we go along," and "you can build up your part as much as you want."

In the beginning there was a marked difference of emphasis - very naturally - on the children's part and mine. I wanted to help them focus on the story line; they wanted to discuss theatrical effects and props. Along with their very practical and sensible ideas, they had many elaborate plans for the production. Steeped in television and disaster movies (such as The Towering Inferno and Earthquake), their ideas took on Cecil B. DeMille proportions. I allowed these ideas to run rampant for the first two meetings. Then I called a halt. We could not, I pointed out, discuss production any further until we knew what the play was about.

I asked them what they thought should happen in the play, and which elements of Eskimo life they would consider most important to convey to others. Three central plot ideas came up again and again: that a boy should wish to go hunting and his father insist that he is too young (an idea original with them); that a girl should break a taboo by sewing in the winter (something that happens in one of the stories I read to them); and that two hunters should resolve a disagreement with an Eskimo boxing match. The children also mentioned other events and aspects of Eskimo life that they wished to include in the play. The ideas that were repeated were a seal hunt, starvation, songs in the great igloo, some story-telling scenes in which a grandmother tells Eskimo tales to her grandchildren, going to angatoks (shamans) for advice, and the migration of Eskimos to follow their food. One child suggested that we begin with a family packing up for the winter and moving

off onto the sea ice to join other Eskimo families in seal hunting. Thus we had our first scene.

The children's ideas did not all come tumbling out at once. At first only a few had ideas. Then ideas developed out of the few and the whole gathered a momentum that was very exciting for me and enabled me to see, out of the initial chaos of ideas, form emerging.

My role during the creation of the story line was to keep them thinking about the story (rather than production) and to help them work out together what makes a story. For example, one boy, who had read the biography of Matthew Henson, wanted to have some Eskimos meet up with an explorer. I acknowledged his idea as a good one and asked the children how it could fit into our story of the two Eskimo children, one who wants to hunt and isn't allowed to and one who breaks a taboo. As they tried to fit in this new idea, they got further and further away from the kernel of their original story, and I pointed this out to them. We had many, many discussions about what a story is and concluded that too many elements would make the story confusing. As she saw that pursuing the idea of the explorer was going to leave our original story up in the air, one girl said, "When you start something you have to finish it."

We discussed the stories we had read together and looked at each from the point of view of its story line. We found that every story had a conflict or problem and that the story ended when the conflict was resolved. The children also said that a

good story makes you wonder what is going to happen next.

I then pointed out to them that they had created three problems: those of the two children and that of the hunter who is mad at his hunting partner, and that solving these three problems was going to be part of the excitement and suspense of the play.

I asked them if they could think of a way to make these three problems connected. I had no particular idea myself, but I felt that the story would be more coherent if the children could do this. Their first suggestion was to make the two children brother and sister. They connected them by making them related, I pointed out. Could they relate the problems in any other ways? At this point one of the children said that they could be starving because the girl sewed the boot in the winter and that the boy could break the starvation by sneaking off and catching a seal. Another child said, no, he couldn't do that because only confessing the breaking of the taboo in the Great Igloo could break the taboo. These discussions, and many others like them, were most exciting and gratifying for me. They represented a kind of integration among the emotional (the issues of the play were, indeed, affective issues of great moment to the children), intellectual (the children insisted that the information in the play coincide with what they learned; thus, the boy could not break the taboo), and group dynamics (they were working together to solve the problems the various elements of the play presented). This kind of integration is, after all, the greatest reward in teaching.

Finally, the children arrived at the following connections. The boy and girl would be part of Family I, as we then called it. The hunter in Family II is angry at his hunting partner, the father in Family I. The son in Family I accidentally sees the hunter in Family II break something of his father's. When he has the courage to tell what he saw in the Great Igloo, his father allows him to go hunting.* The story really had form now and I said that I would now go through all my notes and work out a sequence from their ideas.

In the meantime, I asked the children to write down two characters they would like to be in the play. I told them that I would try to see that they were able to play one of their two choices; that they would not have to play a part they didn't want to play; and that if two or more people wanted to play the same role, we would draw lots. Except for some of the obvious roles that emerged in our discussion of the story (for example, the girl who sews in the winter, the boy who wants to hunt, the angatoks) there were no defined roles; the play was still quite flexible.

Children wrote down what they wanted to play - a mother

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*It is interesting that the boy who contributed most to the part of the story concerning the conflict between the boy and his father, and its resolution, was himself a child who chafes against being a child. He had a great deal of independence and a highly developed sense of responsibility, being, as he was, the eldest of four from whom a great deal was expected. He became easily angry at adults, particularly his father, when he felt that he was being restricted because he was a child. This kind of "autobiography" happens again and again in play-making with children, and the integration of the child's own life situation, the general developmental level of all the children, and the "outside" content they are working on is one of the great pleasures and excitements in working on plays with children.

or a father, a son or a daughter, a grandparent, an angatok, a "bachelor" hunter, a husky. Two children asked to be "narragators" (narrators) and two asked to be in charge of the lights.

Their choices helped me to fill out the play with characters, but I had other reasons for choosing to arrive at the assignment of parts in the way that I did. I was very concerned that we not create an atmosphere in which we had predefined "star" parts to give out or audition for because of the competitiveness and overexcitement that would, in my opinion, result. Further, I wanted to ensure, as far as possible, that the children had some choice in their own roles. Finally, I wanted to assure the children that they could extend and enlarge their parts as we worked out the scenes within the framework of the story.

Looking over the children's responses, I realized immediately that there weren't really enough parts to go around, that we could have made four, even five families out of the parts they signed up for. We had determined that we needed three: Family I, Family II and a very old couple, both angatoks, and their "bachelor" son. Even giving the two families three children and a grandparent each, there wouldn't be enough parts, and to make the families larger would have been obvious filling.

I had the idea that when the grandmother in each family tells a story, the stories themselves could be pantomimed, thus creating new characters. I brought this idea to the class and they were very enthusiastic. Several children wanted to do the pantomiming and the two boys who were doing lights immediately

began to think of ways of making the lighting very dramatic. One of the children who chose to work in the pantomime sections was a deaf girl. She chose to play Nuliajuk, ruler of all beasts on the land and the sea.

Almost all of the parts were arrived at by a combination of choice and consensus. There were some temporary disappointments and irritations, but these are to be expected. In the initial stages, any undertaking with children produces a kind of anxiety that sometimes expresses itself in negativism, because of the uncertainties involved in beginnings, that dissolves as the children feel clearer about the nature of the undertaking. And these disappointments turned out to be just that; once we began to work on the play and the children began really to understand what it was we were doing, the little spurts of ill feeling disappeared entirely.

I made a chart outlining the major events of the story for us to refer to in our rehearsals. The story outline was this: Scene I: Kunak's (he was not yet named) family packs up for the winter to leave the tundra and move out onto the sea ice and join with other Eskimo families. The grandmother tells the children the story of Nuliajuk. Scene II: Kunak's son asks if he can go on the hunt this year; his father refuses to let him. Orkatuk's family is also on stage in their igloo. Orkatuk complains to his wife about Kunak, his hunting partner, and vows to break something of Kunak's. The grandmother tells the story of the first people on earth. The angatok couple, also on stage, await their son's

return from the hunt. He comes back empty-handed.

Scene III: Pamiok, Kunak's caughter, is in the igloo alone and mends her boot. Her brother rushes in to tell her that he has seen Orkatuk break their father's harpoon. They go to the angatoks for help.

Scene IV: The hunters go off to hunt, and day after day return empty-handed. Starvation sets in. Kunak and Orkatuk go to consult with the angatoks. They suggest a "purge" at the Great Igloo.

Scene V: In the Great Igloo, everyone in the camp has gathered together. One by one, various members of the community take up the drum and bemoan their starvation. The singers encourage anyone who had done something wrong to speak out, for Nuliajuk must be offended and hiding the seals from them. Finally, Kunak's son takes up the drum and tells that he saw Orkatuk break his father's harpoon. Pamiok realizes that she has broken a taboo by sewing in the winter. Kunak says that his son may hunt because he was so brave to take up the drum.

Scene VI: The hunters stand at their breathing holes waiting for seals. Kunak's son catches a seal offstage.

Scene VII: In the Great Igloo everyone has gathered again. The hunters come in dragging a great seal. They all take up the drum again and speak their thankfulness.

I also made a chart in which the family relationships were graphically depicted, just as I had when we were reading <u>On Firm Ice</u>.

Thus we came through the first, and in some ways, the most

difficult phase of playmaking with children: the development of a story line and the distribution of parts. In the story outline, motivation and many causes and effects were absent. This was what the children would work out as we began to act out the scenes; their ideas would come, I knew, and be far better than any I could make up. One of my main aims during this two weeks was to set a tone in which everyone was encouraged to make suggestions and the whole was seen as a great cooperative effort with no person being considered any more important than another.

It is essential that children feel important, and different children gain this feeling in different ways. For example, Herbie did not want to have a speaking role in the play. When I felt assured that he truly did not want a speaking role, I assigned him two parts in the pantomime which he was satisfied with. However, during rehearsals he was listless, bored, distracting to others; understandably, since he did not have very much to do. But when I suggested he bring a book, drawing paper, to rehearsals, he never used them. Finally it occurred to me to ask him if he would like to be in charge of props, and he lit up. I called him the stage manager. After a day of keeping records on props and making sure they were getting made, he came to me and said, "I really feel important now, Joan." It is this feeling for every child that I strive to achieve in the first stages of playmaking.

While the planning was going on, we had made a list of props we would need, and different children were busy making them in the shop. Each adult female needed an ulu, or woman's knife;

each adult male needed a pilaut, or man's knife, and each hunter needed a harpoon. Some children made their own props. Others had someone else make them for them. Two girls were working on a huge papier maché seal in the classroom, and several children were working on the floor out in the hall on scenery. I conferred with two children and the shop teacher about working out a way of indicating igloos on stage. The shop teacher worked out a way to make a semi-sphere frame with bent wood and worked with children every morning for three weeks to get three igloos made in time for the play.

One student teacher was in charge of working out a lighting plot with the two boys who were doing lights. The other student teacher was in charge of making costumes. I had asked parents to send in old sheets and had cut out, on the fold, a kind of basic tee shirt with long sleeves. These the children sewed together by hand or with the sewing machine, and we dyed them brown to suggest skin.

The children knew what prop or props they were responsible for making and Herbie kept track of everyone's progress. All these prop-making activities began in the second week and reached a fever pitch during the third and fourth weeks. These activities usually took place in the morning along with their regular activities, while rehearsals took place in the afternoon.

At the end of the second week I announced to the children that we would rehearse four afternoons a week until we were ready to perform. Our rehearsals took place in the classroom and in the auditorium. Children were allowed to bring books, drawing materials

and quiet games, so that they could do something when they were neither rehearsing nor watching.

In the beginning we worked mainly on the first two scenes because these were awkward and carried the burden of exposition. The second scene involved three different families talking in their igloos, so, after discussing which points had to be made, each "family" went off with a teacher to work out the three different parts. We did this several times and came together again to show the rest of the class what we'd done and to get criticism.

At this early point of acting out the scenes, two moods among the children prevailed: one of a feeling that they couldn't think of anything to say, the other of making fun, of thinking of funny or incongruous things to say, and of teasing each other. For example, "Gwen is Tommy's wife," an observation made repeatedly by several children was found to be uproarious, presumably because Gwen was literally twice Tommy's size. They were in the process of feeling their ways into their parts and into the play, and of integrating the various levels of experience they were having - and of projecting themselves - and they were somewhat uncomfortable. I helped them by being very serious, and taking them more seriously than they were taking themselves, and by asking them questions about what an Eskimo might say or do at this point.

In the beginning of the third week, the children suddenly, as it seemed, loosened up and began to collaborate very creatively. As they began to flesh out the play, I took notes on the particularly effective bits they contrived and encouraged those elements

that helped maintain the line of the story by reminding them when we rehearsed again. The first breakthrough into real dramatic inventiveness occurred in the second scene. Orkatuk (Tommy) and his family had, until this particular rehearsal, sat around poker-faced and still while the necessary bit of story was gone through (his expression of anger against his hunting partner and his threat to break something of his). The scene always opened with them eating their meat with their hands. On this particular occasion, they began to look as if they were really eating tough meat, and they began to laugh. It wasn't, however, their own laughter outside the play, but the kind of hearty laughter they had heard from the real Eskimos on the soundtrack of the films. It was a small, but very convincing touch. Inspired, I think, by the introduction of humor, Peter, who was playing their dog and lying outside the igloo, kept trying to come into the igloo, and finally the "children" of the family pushed him out and everyone laughed.

It is difficult to describe or chronicle how the children moved into a very stirring expression of themselves through their social studies, but this was exactly what happened. It can best be expressed in scattered anecdotes that are representative of what happened and of the way we all worked together. I can do this best by following the evolution of one part, and I will describe Tommy because in his acting the change was so dramatic.

Initially, he could not be heard. He has a lisp and a very light voice, with little power. We all reminded him, but it was very difficult to hear him. His main task, as far as the story

line was concerned, was to express the anger that makes him do something bad against his hunting partner, which in turn was in part responsible for the anger of Nuliajuk against the whole camp. It was not really necessary for him to do or say much except in the second scene.

It was Tommy who began the laughter in the second scene and his laughter actually sounded like laughter in a different language. I told him this and encouraged him. When he expressed his anger against his hunting partner, it was up to him (as it was up to all the actors in all but the barest outlines of the story) to provide motivation and connecting links. Here is the first rendering of the scene:

Tommy: It's time to go out and feed the dogs, children. (Children exit and Tommy turns to his "wife.") You know, I'm very angry at my hunting partner.

Gwen: Why?

Tommy: Because he annoys me.

Gwen: Oh.

I asked the children, when they objected to Tommy's "reason" for his anger, what might cause a hunter to be angry with his hunting partner. The children all responded, "If they hord food and don't share." We tried the scene again.

Tommy: Children, it's time to go out and feed the dogs.* (Children exit and he turns to his wife.) You know, I'm very angry at Kunak.

Gwen: How come?

Tommy: Because last year he broke my harpoon.

Gwen: Oh.

Tommy: I'm going to break something of his.

Gwen: Oh.

I was interested that Tommy did not take up the children's suggestion as a reason for his anger, but persisted in being what appeared to be unreasonable. I also noted that his voice was getting louder and that he was affecting a husky, manly tone. I decided to leave his reason alone and work at it from another angle. I asked Gwen what she thought of Tommy's reason. She said she didn't think that Kunak (who was played in a very dignified fashion by Jonathan and who was emerging as a kind of leader of the Eskimos because of his bearing) would break someone's harpoon for no reason. "What, then, could you say to your husband," I asked her. She couldn't answer then, but I told her to think about it and to try to respond the way she actually felt. At the next rehearsal, the scene went like this:

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*Notice that Tommy "gets rid" of the children before he engages in this serious conversation with his wife, something that Tommy himself, as a child, had undoubtedly experienced many times with his parents.

Tommy: It's time to go out and feed the dogs, children. (Children exit and he turns to his wife.) You know, I'm very angry at Kunak.

Gwen: Why is that?

Tommy: Because last year he broke my harpoon.

Gwen: But that was an accident!

Tommy: He should have made me a new one. I missed a whole hunting day to repair it. I'm going to break something of his!

Gwen: But when he caught the big seal he shared it with us.

(Tommy, who hadn't expected this was stumped for a moment, then smiling slyly, said):

Tommy: That wasn't so great. After all, we have more children to feed than he does.

Gwen: That's true . . .

Tommy: And not only that, he took my dog! Isn't that so, mother? (He turned to the grandmother.)*

Amy, who was playing the grandmother, was so surprised she didn't know what to say. So I asked her what she thought. She said she thought he was exaggerating and that Kunak wouldn't do that, but she thought an Eskimo woman wouldn't dare to say that to her son. I asked her what she might say, and she finally came up with this:

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*I had pointed out, just before this rehearsal, that the grandmother was sitting there throughout the entire conversation without participating. Amy was clearly upset by this, and I asked Gwen and Tommy to figure out a way to bring her in, so Tommy did.

Amy: I do not know if he did. But if you say so, it must be true, my son.

Tommy: I'm going to break his harpoon.

Gwen: That's serious business.

Tommy was clearly relishing his part. A sly, humorous child, himself soemwhat unable to see things from the point of view of others and prone to unreasonableness, he was clearly enjoying the way his character was emerging, and throughout the play established himself as an exaggerator and greedy. He began really to project his voice and to walk around in a kind of sneaky way; clearly he was totally immersed in dramatic play. He developed a kind of sly smile that was almost always there and at the very end of the play, when the seal is brought in and the people got up one by one, beating the drum and chanting their thanks to Nuliajuk, Tommy, at a late date in rehearsals, took up the drum and chanted:

> I have never seen such a seal. It's so big.
> I wish I could have it all to myself, but I
> know this cannot be.

We all laughed when he said this, partly because it was so in the character of Orkatuk, partly because it was so in the character of Tommy.

The aim, then, is to help the children experience the play on several levels, not least of which is a kind of working through of individual and developmental issues and problems.* Tommy was Tommy and, within the context of the play, he also became Orkatuk,

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* I noticed, incidentally, that in scenes where two characters were in conflict or arguing with each other, the children often saw it as a competitive situation and tried to get the upper hand, as Tommy did in the scene with Gwen. This lent a freshness, a reality, to the conflict.

an Eskimo hunter, and the two became fused. The result was, for him and for the other children, that they became Eskimos, threw themselves into the context of Eskimo life and achieved an astonishing identification with the "otherness" of the Eskimo. Such identification, at this age level, is only possible, I believe, if the children are truly expected and encouraged to create story, character and motivation, and if they are expected to do this afresh each time they rehearse. (I made notes throughout and reminded children when they had created something that worked well, encouraging them to repeat it, and they began, very naturally, to memorize, although the words were never exactly the same at each rehearsal.)

The teacher, while being firm in holding the children to the story line that has been worked out, holds in suspension most ideas about character and motivation. I facilitated the emergence of these two elements by asking questions - the kind outlined above. This requires self-control -- it's even nerve-wracking sometimes when things aren't going well -- and faith in and respect for the children's perceptions and reactions and creativity. I should say, too, that although the final performance matters very much to the children and to me, it does not, in itself, convey the process that went into its making, and in that sense is the least interesting aspect of play making.

As a final illustration of the children's immersion in the life and imagery of the Eskimo, I include here the texts of some of the "songs" they chanted in the Great Igloo. First there was

the song duel, or insult song:

> You're as awkward as a dizzy snow rabbit.
> You smell like a bear breathing in my face.
> Your seal is as big as a bird's tear.
> You are as slow as a walrus on land.
> The seal probably wanted you to catch it, or you wouldn't have.
> Your face is so ugly, when you smile the ice cracks.
> You are like a wolf without teeth - you live off others and let them feed you.
> You're like an ice block, you only take in and don't let it out.

> Eikov, he's like a caribou that can't run. He sits around all day laxily, like an ulu with no blade. Like a seal hunter with no harpoon, no patience. Like an Arctic hare with no ears, a bird with no feathers. He's like an angatok with no spirits. I might as well say he's like the Arctic with no snow.

Here are some songs about starvation:

> (An old man, too old to hunt): I should not be complaining like a starving wolf pup, for I stay home with a family and they feed me. As you know, we are here to find out who has offended Nuliajuk. Please don't hold back, like a scared caribou. Be more like a playful pup. If you do this, Nuliajuk will be pleased and so will our people.

> (A four-year-old child): Oh, I am <u>so</u> hungry, like a starving wolf pup. Please Nuliajuk, send us a seal.

Kunak's song to his children:

> Any child who has the courage to speak out against a mighty hunter like Orkatuk and tell what he saw has the courage to hunt the seal. You may go with us, my son, on the next hunt. As for you, little Pamiok, you had the courage to speak out before all these people and tell what terrible thing you have done. I forgive you for breaking the taboo and if we catch a seal we will know that Nuliajuk forgives you, too.

Finally, Sekinek's (the old woman angatok, or shaman) song when the starvation is over:

> Nuliajuk has heard us and she forgave Pamiok.
> Many of you have taken up the drum to say your
> thanks. But that is enough. Let us eat!.

She walks over to the great seal in the middle of the stage and puts her ulu in its back and the lights go out.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

I. Following are books that I consulted, although they are not about Eskimos, and they influenced the way I went about the study, or the kinds of information I gave to children.

Eisley, Loren. The Immense Journey. New York: Random House, 1946.

Erikson, Erik H. Childhood and Society. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1950.

Jones, Richard. Fantasy and Feeling in Education. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.

Lorenz, Konrad. King Solomon's Ring. New York: Crowell, 1952.

Mitchell, Lucy Sprague. Young Geographers. New York: Agathon Press, 1934.

Mowat, Farley. Never Cry Wolf. Boston: Little, Brown, 1963.

II. The following books were chief among those I consulted in my own research on the Eskimo and the Arctic.

Balikci, Asen. The Netsilik Eskimo. New York: Natural History Press, 1971.
A full account of the traditional way of life of the Netsilik Eskimo. This was a basic background for me and for some children as well. Its language is simple enough for more sophisticated juvenile readers.

Birket-Smith, Kaj. Eskimos. London: Methuen, 1936.

Boas, Franz. The Central Eskimo. Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1888, 1964.
I used this mostly for its wonderful etchings and used it in class as an illustrative reference.

Bruner, Jerome et al. Man, A Course of Study.
Although I did not use the study the way it was intended, the background books for teachers were invaluable. These were:

"The Netsilik Eskimos at the Inland Camps."

"The Netsilik Eskimos on the Sea Ice."

Carpenter, Edmund S., Frederick Varley and Robert Flaherty. Eskimo. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959.
Carpenter's view of the characteristics of the Eskimo people. Beautiful photographs of Eskimo carvings and sketches make it a good visual reference for children as well.

Lisitzky, Gene. Four Ways of Being Human. New York: Viking, 1960.
A fine introduction to anthropology designed for high school students, but excellent for anyone.

Mirsky, Jeannette. To the Arctic! The Story of Northern Exploration from Earliest Times to the Present. New York: Knopf, 1948.

Mowat, Farley. People of the Deer. Boston: Little Brown, 1967.

Rasmussen, Knud. Across Arctic America. New York: Putnam, 1927.
The story of the Fifth Thule Expedition, a highly readable, fascinating book.

III. The books that follow were invaluable resources for me, but, more important, were books children could easily use, too.

Berrill, Jacquelyn. Wonders of the Arctic. N.Y.: Dodd, Mead, 1959.
About the Arctic environment.

Bleeker, Sonia. The Eskimo. New York: Wm. Morrow, 1959.
This is a good reference for children engaged in research.

Carpenter, Edmund S. (ed.). The Story of Comock the Eskimo. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968.
A story told by the Eskimo Comock to Robert Flaherty. A gruelling, compelling account of survival - and non-survival - it should be expurgated for children under age ten. A good book to read aloud. Gives a good sense of affective life of Eskimos. Illustrated with delicate expressive drawings by Comock.

Carter, Robert. On Firm Ice. New York: T.Y. Crowell, 1961.
A group of related stories featuring children during the seal-hunting time of the Natsilik.

Freuchen, Pipaluk. Eskimo Boy. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepherd, 1965.

Louvain, Robert. Walt Disney's White Wilderness.
New York: Golden Press, 1958.
Out of print, but can be found in libraries. Informative and good photographs of animals

May, Charles Paul. Animals of the Far North.
New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1964.
A fine book on animals and their adaptation to the Arctic.

Rousseliere/Rasmussen. Beyond the High Hills.
Cleveland: World Publishing, 1961.
Photographs by Father Guy Mary-Rousseliere. Beautiful poems taken from Rasmussen's accounts of his expeditions in the Arctic.

Steffansson, Evelyn. Here is the Far North.
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957.

Tolbloom, Wanda. People of the Snow.
New York: Coward-McCann, 1956.

IV. Of great value were the following booklets and films from the Man, A Course of Study material:

"The Data Book," an illustrated dictionary of Eskimo tools, animals, beliefs, giving Eskimo and English names.

"Songs and Stories of the Netsilik Eskimo," wonderful stories about the origins of the Eskimo (i.e., man), the moon and sun and others.

"This World We Know," a fine, clear discussion of Eskimo cosmology, beautifully illustrated with black and white woodcuts.

"The Arctic," a clear, concise description of the Arctic, its animals, its eather, its place on the globe in relation to the sun.

"A Journey to the Arctic," excerpted from Rasmussen's diary, it tells of his meeting with the Netsilik and what he learned about them.

"Antler and Fang," a booklet describing the balanced, ecological relationship between the caribou and its predator, the wolf.

"The Many Lives of Kiviok," a fascinating folktale.

"At the Autumn River Camp, I and II and "Winter Sea Ice Camp," I and II are the four films I showed from the Bruner study. They are superb. There are others in the series, as well as many other films on Eskimo life which are produced by the National Film Board of Canada, and distributed locally by Modern Film Rentals, 2323 New Hyde Park, New Hyde Park, New York.