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# "Why Don't You Kill Your Baby Brother?" The Dynamics of Peace in Canadian Inuit Camps

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The title, "Why Don't You Kill Your Baby Brother?" may come as a shock as the heading for an article about peace. Yet, as Jean Briggs shows, the teasing of children among the Inuit has a role in preparing them for a community life that is generally peaceful. We use the term *generally* because Inuit culture has been far from entirely peaceful. "Murder was known in many—perhaps all—Inuit societies, and in some it seems to have been a very frequent occurrence," writes Briggs. Today, too, even when camp life is tranquil, suspicion and fear are not far from the surface. The dynamics of peace and conflict management include such techniques as joking, reassurance, discretion, and isolation. What emerges very powerfully from Briggs's empathic treatment of Inuit life, however, is that peace may have a dark side. One would wish that a small community of closely related individuals would be held together by perception of mutual interest and the love and respect that emerges from long association. These qualities are abundant among the Inuit. But it appears that they are not sufficient. In their human, and therefore imperfect world, the peace is also maintained by institutions that generate (and yet contain) fear, anger, and distrust. How common is this pattern? It may be very general. Certainly, in this volume, we have several examples: Thomas Gregor examines the fear and antagonism that is linked to peaceful, intervillage politics among the Mehinaku of Brazil (Chapter 10); Clayton Robarchek looks at the anxiety that lies behind Semai harmony (Chapter 7); and Robert Dentan explores the ambivalent relationships of members of peaceful "enclaved" societies (Chapter 3). Human relationships are inherently ambivalent. Opposition and antagonism may coexist with and even help to construct systems of peace and nonviolence.

—THE EDITORS

◆ In selecting aspects of cultures for analysis, there is always the danger of focusing attention on matters of concern in one's own society, rather than in the society under study; in danger of reformulating the world of others in one's own terms. How to manage conflict in such a way as to avoid

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or minimize its socially disruptive consequences is certainly a problem that is salient to many of us who live, with a strong sense of helplessness, in the midst of poorly controlled violence of all sorts and with the threat of destruction on a massive scale hanging over us.

However, I found conflict to be of major concern also to the Inuit, with whom I lived in small, isolated, and apparently peaceful camps. The threat of violence, the scale of potential destruction, seems vastly different in their case, when looked at from outside the society by someone burdened with a sense of planetary doom, but perhaps it is not so different in the imaginations and experiences of Inuit themselves.

Inuit life, like life in the Western world, is rife with opportunities for hostile engagement, and the Inuit I knew were painfully aware of this fact. I think that conflict was writ large for them, both because they tended to have a very pervasive fear of aggression and because every individual was equally responsible for keeping the peace. I elaborate these points below and describe the ways in which these Inuit dealt with the conflicts and the potentials for conflict in their lives.

The data on which this chapter is based are drawn from my experience between 1963 and 1980 in two camps in the Canadian Northwest Territories—one camp, Utkuhikhalik, in the Central Arctic; the other, Qipisa, on Baffin Island in the Eastern Arctic. I cannot claim that the particular concatenation of circumstances, of behaviors and attitudes, that I observed in these camps obtains across the entire Inuit culture area from Alaska to Greenland and throughout the entire known history of that area. A comparison of Inuit groups shows striking resemblances in many respects; but, also, equally striking diversity, which inhibits facile generalization—not least in the area of aggression management. Readers of Canadian Inuit ethnography, my own *Never in Anger* (1970) in particular, have sometimes concluded that Inuit are always and everywhere pacific. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Murder was known in many—perhaps all—Inuit societies, and in some it seems to have been a very frequent occurrence (e.g., Rasmussen 1932: 17). Feuding was an obligation in some societies (e.g., Oswalt 1967: 184-185; Spencer 1959: 71) and there were cases in which the community took it upon itself to dispose of a person who was widely feared; for example, a recidivist murderer or someone who was violently insane. In Alaska, moreover, both Inuit and the cognate Yuit or Yup'ik (Siberian Eskimo) are known to have made war, not only on their Indian neighbors but also on other Eskimo groups (Oswalt 1967: 185-188).

Attitudes—that is, ideas, emotions, values—concerning aggression cannot, of course, be deduced directly from behavior. Similar behaviors may, in theory, be supported by quite different complexes of ideas, values, and emotions, whereas different behaviors may arise from very similar values and feelings. It is hypothetically possible that historically warring and

feuding Inuit societies might have had views and feelings about aggression that were profoundly different from those of other Inuit groups, but I think it is more likely that a comparative study would discover that Inuit societies were linked by a family of resemblances, a complicated and not at all tidy pattern of shifting similarities and differences among groups.

My reasons for thinking this are threefold. First, Inuit in widely separated parts of the Arctic have recognized themselves in the generalizations I have made about "Inuit" psychodynamics, based on my observations in two small camps in the Northwest Territories. Secondly, although Utkuhikhalingmiut and Qipisamiut are geographically far apart and their living conditions are to some extent diverse, the differences in the way they construe their worlds can be seen as variations on common themes. And thirdly, the social experiences that produce motivational and interactional patterns, not only in the case of Inuit but, I would venture to say, in all societies, tend to be so complex that it would be difficult to reproduce exactly the same combination in any two environments; and the motivational patterns themselves, equally complex, must be subject to different pulls in the different situations that various groups encounter. Thus, it is possible that warring groups might recognize as their own, at least in part, the attitudes of Utkuhikhalingmiut and Qipisamiut and, in the ordinary run of everyday life, they might have managed conflict in similar ways. It is also possible that Utkuhikhalingmiut and Qipisamiut under other circumstances might have feuded or even made war without changing their complicated values and feelings very significantly. They certainly recognized violence against *individual* human beings as a distinct possibility in some circumstances.

This chapter, then, should be read as an illustration of one very ingenious and often effective Inuit way of organizing and controlling the knotty human problem of aggression. Though much of the analysis may apply far beyond the boundaries of the camps from which I draw my data, I should not want it to be read as a statement about "Inuit culture." I shall describe the ways in which I saw conflict managed and the factors that I thought gave rise to that management in the two camps in which I lived. The larger questions concerning similarities and differences between these camps and other Inuit communities will have to remain open.

### ◆ The Camps

First, some background information about the two groups,<sup>1</sup> to put in perspective their ways of dealing with conflict. The Utkuhikhalingmiut, in Chantrey Inlet at the mouth of the Back River, were isolated from Western society until comparatively recently; whereas the Qipisamiut, in Cumberland Sound on southeast Baffin Island, participated in whaling enterprises at the end of the nineteenth century and have had continuous

contact with Westerners of one sort or another since then. As I have mentioned, the physical and social situations of the two groups at the time I lived with them were in some ways different and in other important respects similar. Both groups were seasonally nomadic and lived in camps about one hundred miles distant from the nearest settlements, Gjoa Haven in the one case, Pangnirtung in the other. To my eye, a major difference between them was that one was more prosperous than the other. The Utkuhikhalingmiut, in their river environment, lived primarily on fish, and their small cash income came from trapping foxes during the winter. The inventory of their household goods was small, and shortages of fuel, ammunition, and store-bought food were common. The living conditions of the Qipisamiut were much less austere than those of the Utkuhikhalingmiut. Whereas the Utkuhikhalingmiut lived in snowhouses in winter, the Qipisamiut lived in double-walled tents, *qammat* (singular, *qammaq*), that were insulated by a thick layer of Arctic heather between the two canvas walls. Unlike snowhouses, which drip unpleasantly if the indoor temperature rises above the freezing point, these tents could be heated up to 70-80°F with seal-oil lamps. The Qipisamiut also had a more varied diet than the Utkuhikhalingmiut. They hunted seal and harp seal, beluga, and caribou, as well as fish, birds, and eggs in season. Cash income came from sealskins and was ordinarily sufficient to provide expensive items such as tape-recorders, phonographs, shortwave radios, and so on, in addition to the essentials: food, clothing, fuel, ammunition, snowmobiles, boats, and boat motors. The Utkuhikhalingmiut knew about the more affluent conditions in which the eastern people lived, but they did not appear to feel deprived. As one young man remarked: "If I get twelve foxes this winter, I can buy everything I want."

The camp composition and the patterns of movement of the two groups were very similar. At the time my fieldwork was done, there were about thirty-five Utkuhikhalingmiut living in Chantrey Inlet and between fifty and sixty-five Qipisamiut in Cumberland Sound. Both groups were composed of bilaterally related kin—a core of close relatives together with a few other families who were related to the core in various ways. In both groups, the core comprised an old man, some of his married daughters and their families, and his other unmarried children of both sexes. Numbers fluctuated from year to year as less centrally related families joined or separated from the main group. They also fluctuated seasonally, because families tended to disperse in spring and summer and rejoin one another in the autumn at a central, winter camp. In the seasons of dispersal, the various families might live within sight of one another or at much greater distances, and lines of division within the group were reflected in the camping patterns. Men from the various camps met one another quite frequently while out hunting or fishing, but the women and children seldom saw those camped far away.

Among the Qipisamiut, households tended to be nuclear whenever sufficient building material or empty *qammat* were available—and some effort was made to find separate space for young couples after they began to bear children. Utkuhikhalingmiut households also tended to be nuclear during the summer, but in the winter, an occasional joint snowhouse was built, perhaps for added warmth as well as for increased sharing of food, work, and sociability.

Among the Utkuhikhalingmiut, there were no acknowledged group leaders. Each household head directed his own household but no others. In the case of the Qipisamiut, however, the senior man—who was father, grandfather, grandfather-in-law, or father-in-law of all but one of the other men in camp—was recognized as "leader" by almost all these younger men. In everyday matters of whether or not to hunt and where and what, the elder exercised authority only over his own household members; but in long-range decisions, such as whether to move to Pangnirtung or not, people deferred to his wishes, and when he moved his household to a new, seasonal campsite, others tended to follow, at least to the general vicinity of his camp. No household head was sanctioned if he made his own decisions in such matters; deference was voluntary, but, phrased as loyalty, it was nevertheless often there.<sup>2</sup>

Both groups had minimal contact with the outside world. As most Inuit were already settled in communities, there were no neighboring camps. Men travelled into the nearest settlement every month or so during the winter to trade skins for the store goods that they needed in their camp life. Qipisa men, who were equipped with snowmobiles and powered boats, were able to trade also in other seasons, when weather and ice conditions permitted, but the Utkuhikhalingmiut, who had only dog-sleds for long-distance transportation, were cut off from Gjoa Haven altogether for six months at a time. Women and children of both groups made the long journey rarely—usually once a year, in the summer, in the case of Qipisamiut; less often among Utkuhikhalingmiut, because winter travel was arduous and summer travel impossible.

The trading trips were almost the only contact the two groups had with the larger world, except for occasional visitors: Inuit from the settlement who were out hunting; officials from the settlement on official visits; and, in the case of the Utkuhikhalingmiut, groups of sports fishermen who were flown in by charter airlines in July and August. Individuals from both groups had been sent out to hospitals, and a few of the children in each group had had a little schooling. On the whole, however, both groups lived quite self-sufficiently, adjusting minimally to Western culture, except for the practice of Anglicanism and the incorporation of such material goods as were useful to life in a hunting camp. As far as I could tell, the quality of interpersonal relations in the camps, and the patterns of conflict management that I shall describe in this chapter, had been little, if at all, influenced

by Western contact. Patterns of childrearing, too, showed little outside influence and were variations on common themes of Inuit practice, which were—and are—found throughout the Inuit culture area, from Alaska to Greenland.

#### ◆ **Fear of Aggression**

I said that I thought one of the important motivating factors underlying the very stringent control of many forms of aggression, which I observed both in Utkuhikhalik and in Qipisa, was a pervasive fear of aggression. Pervasive fears rarely have simple origins or dynamics, and the fear of aggression that I saw among these Inuit was no exception. Its roots, I think, can be sought in various circumstances of their lives and in the culturally constructed ways in which those lives were organized. Subsistence patterns, social organization, rules governing social interaction, and the cognitive-symbolic-emotional dynamics of Inuit culture and psychology all played a role in the development and maintenance of fear.

First, these Inuit were hunters, and they identified symbolically with the animals they hunted. This identification was classically expressed by a shaman whom Birket-Smith quotes as saying: "Life's greatest danger. . . lies in the fact that man's food consists entirely of souls" (1959: 166)—souls that could revenge themselves if killed, as humans would want to do if they were not well treated. I am not sure that Qipisamiut and Utkuhikhalingmiut still believed that animals had souls, which needed to be treated with respect and gratitude, but they, too, in many ways clearly expressed identification with animals. They attributed thoughts and feelings to them; they believed that a person who had committed suicide and therefore couldn't rest peacefully in another world was reincarnated in animal form; they imagined words in the calls of birds; and sometimes they responded to animals emotionally as if they were human. Children played with puppies as if they were babies, cuddling, "nursing," and backpacking them; they dragged seal fetuses across the floor, crying "maaaa maaaa"—the stereotypic rendition of a cry of pain; and I heard women murmur to a wounded gull-chick as it fluttered toward the water the same sympathetic endearments they would murmur to an injured child. Such identification cannot help but create a sense of danger when violence is directed toward the creatures one identifies with, especially when, as often happens, the perpetrator of violence is oneself. Children not only "adopted" and cuddled puppies, they also killed superfluous newborn pups with gusto, dashing them against boulders, dropping them off cliffs, or throwing them out to sea. And the wounded gull-chicks to whom those endearments were murmured had been shot, for sport, by the same women who cooed at them sympathetically as they fell.

Physical violence directed against animals is, of course, a real and necessary part of a hunting life, and it is visible to all. In our camps, weapons were everywhere to be seen and were frequently tested in the immediate vicinity of camp. Boys were trained from infancy to enjoy killing, and in Qipisa at the age of four or five they might—with the assistance of their elders—shoot their first big game animal.

Human beings were also occasionally the victims of violence. Accidents were a common occurrence; suicide was a familiar form of death; and all adults knew stories about murders and attempted murders, a few of them committed by people they knew personally. Some of these tales may have been true, others may have been fantasies woven out of suspicion and fear, but whatever their origin, they engendered fear.

A second fact of camp life that could have been related to fear of aggression was the very high value that was placed on the autonomy of every household head and on noninterference with others' behavior, since associated with these values was the absence of an elaborated system of interpersonal controls.

Fear of aggression was also inculcated in various ways during the process of socialization. I will discuss these at some length later on.

The last factor that I want to mention is the practice of emotional control—especially denial and nonexpression of hostile and resentful feelings. The knowledge that one is oneself covering up such feelings can make one suspicious and fearful of what others might be feeling and thinking. It might also lead to a dangerous accumulation of feeling. As one woman said to me: "A person who never loses his temper can kill if he does get angry."

Seen from the point of view of the Inuit individuals I know, I think the problem of conflict management is best phrased as a problem of keeping relations smooth; that is, keeping people happy, satisfied, unafraid, so that they will have no reason to be aggressive. This point of view was expressed very clearly by one old man who was listening to a radio broadcast of a hockey game. Hearing the cheers of the spectators, he said: "They're happy; I guess *they* don't make war." I saw the same emphasis on smoothness of relationships in expressions of approval for persons who were "patient" (*ninggasuit-*), "ready to accommodate" (*angiqsarait-*), and "stable" in mood and behavior, "never changing" (*su 'ragunnangngit-*).

### ◆ Organized Management Strategies

This chapter focuses on the common, ordinary mechanisms of conflict management that I saw in operation every day in camp life, but the work-

ings of which have not previously been analyzed. Usually, discussions of Inuit methods of social control have focused on more dramatic and organized "events," such as communally sanctioned murder, various forms of duel, and the eliciting of confessions. All of these were, historically, known in Utkuhikhalik and, because their distribution was widespread from Alaska to Greenland, I think it likely that they were known also in Cumberland Sound, the area of which Qipisa is a part. With one exception, which I note below, I did not observe these formal mechanisms. Most of them have perished. I was told about some of them, and others are well described in the literature. For the sake of completeness, I remind readers of these other methods, here.

I have already mentioned the occurrence of murder in Inuit communities. Sometimes it was committed impulsively; sometimes it was a matter of self-defense; and sometimes it was an obligatory act of vengeance. Thus, it can be seen both as an expression of conflict and as a response thereto. Impulsive murders—which are frequent—now seem to be committed mostly under the influence of alcohol. Feuding has stopped, and so, to a large extent, has the practice of killing dangerous people in self-defense. Instead, reliance is placed, when possible, on Western institutions. The police are called in to deal with murderers, and medical authorities are requested to remove the violently insane. I did know of one case in the 1960s in which an insane woman was killed because the camp in which she was living was so remote that Western authorities were beyond call.

Perhaps the most famous Inuit technique for dealing with conflict was the song duel. Song duels have been reported in Greenland, Alaska, and Canada (Weyer 1932: 227-228). In such contests, the offended parties exchanged scathing songs while an amused audience looked on. A most perceptive article on this subject was written by Eckert and Newmark (1980). Some of the songs that the authors analyze come from Utkuhikhalik, and my own summary remarks, below, on the institution of song dueling draw heavily on their work. I suppose that the disappearance of the song duel can be attributed to the influence of missionaries, many of whom condemned what they perceived as dangerously pagan festivities, associated with immoral activities.

Various forms of physical duel, such as mouth-wrestling and boxing, which were formerly known in the Utkuhikhalik area, have also disappeared, or been reduced in importance. The technique of mouth-wrestling is beautifully illustrated in one of Balikci's Netsilik films, *At the Winter Sea-Ice Camp* (1967), but in that film, wrestling is represented as merely a form of gaming—which, indeed, it often was and sometimes still is—quite apart from the role it played in the management of conflict.<sup>3</sup> Shoulder-boxing was described to me by a man who grew up in a Netsilik community near Utkuhikhalik. In this ritual, which, like the song duel, was performed in a festive context, two men (I think, never women) alternately dealt each

other single blows on the shoulder until one or the other gave up, out of pain.

Shamans used to deal with crises, such as famines or epidemics, that affected the whole community by eliciting confessions concerning taboos broken. When a confession had been obtained, the shaman would recommend measures to be taken to reconcile the offended powers who had caused the catastrophe (Birket-Smith 1959: 151). Another sort of public performance occasioned by wrongdoing, which I have not seen mentioned in the anthropological literature, was described by a man who grew up in the northern part of Baffin Island (Muckpah 1979). Muckpah says that when marital problems disturbed the community, one person would be delegated to give the miscreants a tongue-lashing at a feast to which the whole community had been invited. The couple who had disturbed the peace would be humiliated, and at the end would be "told to keep a harmonious relationship" (1979: 41). This technique is still occasionally used: I observed it, in Qipisa, just once.

Interestingly, though most of these indigenous, formal devices for restoring social balance have vanished, the principles underlying them remain alive. They are, by and large, the same principles that govern the informal techniques that I describe below. Anticipating my argument, I draw attention to the following points. The confrontations in the various kinds of duel and in the other public performances were carried out in festive or playful contexts. Moreover, the conflict was never clearly in focus, in all its particular, controversial detail. The accusations made were formulated in vague or very general terms, if they were formulated at all. The man who told me about the shoulder-boxing did not mention that accusations were made, and in confessionals conducted by shamans, the audience merely waited for the "guilty" person to come forward and make explicit the faults that the shaman had only hinted at. The case was similar in song duels. A successful song utilized metaphor and allusions and avoided argument and self-justification, and the countering song was not a rebuttal or a defensive statement, which might escalate the quarrel; rather, it was a counterattack on some other subject—just as the countering shoulder-blow "equalized" rather than "argued against" the original blow. The conflict never took the form of a logically linked series of propositions, which could have built either to a firm conclusion concerning right and wrong, with its residue of a disgruntled loser, or to an all-out battle between factions, each competing to have their version of truth recognized or to destroy the opposition. These would have been unbalanced solutions. At the end, some people would have belonged to the community more solidly than others. As it was, when the duel or the feast was over, the conflict was supposed to be over, too, and offenders were reincorporated fully into the community. I think readers will find resonances of these qualities in the informal workings of social control that I now describe.<sup>4</sup>

◆ **Principles Underlying the Management of Conflict**

The problem of conflict management can be examined from a variety of angles. One can look at the ways in which conflict is prevented, the ways in which it is expressed, and the ways in which it is resolved.

The ways in which Utkuhikhalingmiut and Qipisamiut managed all these aspects of the problem in daily camp life were, in both camps, based on the same principles. These principles were avoidance of serious confrontation, reassurance, and pacification. Justice and punishment were foreign ideas. And though winning and losing were part of the fun in competitive play, serious conflicts were not seen in these terms. What was important was the preservation and/or restoration of peace. Eckert and Newmark (1980: 209) argue that the aim of a song duel was to reestablish a "stable ambiguity" in which nobody won and nobody lost.

*Prevention of Conflict*

Not surprisingly, Utkuhikhalingmiut and Qipisamiut were actively concerned to prevent conflict, to avoid confrontations that might engender bad feelings; and they had many ways of doing this.

First, they were extremely cautious, both about putting themselves forward (making claims for themselves) and about making claims on others. An immodest person or one who liked attention was thought silly or childish. Utkuhikhalingmiut commented with amusement: "*Huuhugilaaqtuq*" (he thinks he's somebody). Qipisamiut said: "*Qaqayuq*" (he likes being the center of affectionate attention and shows off in response to it). Respected persons were reticent about their own accomplishments. They were realistic about their skills but did not call attention to themselves and were certainly not boastful.

Avoidance of making claims on others took many forms, some of which might seem rather extreme to many Westerners. Direct requests were either avoided altogether or were phrased extremely modestly and considerately: "I just want (need) a little bit. Do you have enough? It's not your last? No no, that's too much." Often, requests were phrased as benevolent, made on behalf of someone else, usually a child, more rarely an old or sick or exceptionally needy person. In other words, the very high value that these Inuit placed on nurturant behavior was invoked. Both giver and asker bathed in its light, appearing as virtuous people.

Another very common way of asking for something was to phrase the request as a joke, so that if the recipient of the request wanted to refuse, both parties could pretend that there was no serious content to the interaction. In other words, there was no confrontation and there were no hurt feelings.

In addition to avoiding or minimizing direct requests, both

Utkuhikhalingmiut and Qipisamiut avoided making promises, and they rarely issued direct invitations, either. A promise might be broken and cause resentment. An invitation might be refused, and as a result, the feelings of the inviter might be hurt. Or invitees might feel they had to accept in order not to hurt the feelings of the inviter, which would create awkward feelings all around. So plans were formulated tentatively: people said "maybe" they would do this or that, rather than making definite commitments, and invitations were phrased as statements of what the speaker himself was going to do: "I'm going clamming." People addressed were free to follow or not as they pleased. Often, no statement at all was made: one noticed what others were doing and followed or not at will.

Still another way of avoiding possibly offensive confrontations was not to ask questions about another's mental or physical condition—that is, about motives, thoughts, feelings, or health. This was especially true of open-ended questions that might put a person in the awkward situation of having either to invent an answer or to refuse to answer altogether. It was proper to respect a person's privacy and autonomy with regard to the control of information. "Why?" was one of the rudest questions one could ask. If people wanted to know why I was silent, they might ask: "Are you feeling hungry? Tired? Sleepy? Homesick?" But if I said "No" to all the items in the standard repertoire, they would stop asking. The assumption was that if people wanted others to know something, they would tell them. The initiative was left to the holder of the information to communicate it. One did not ordinarily ask questions about another's plans, either. Even the head of a household might wait for his adult son to take the initiative in informing him of his hunting or travel plans. I have more than once asked a young man's father (his "leader") whether his son was planning to go with some others on a certain trip that was being discussed, only to have the father reply: "He hasn't told me yet."

So far, I have been describing ways of avoiding conflictful confrontations by respecting the autonomy and privacy of others: being indirect, discreet, not putting oneself forward, not making claims on others, or attempting to influence them. Another way of avoiding confrontations was to deny that one was unhappy, angry, dissatisfied, resentful—to "forget" the situation and "try to be happy," as Inuit from various parts of the Arctic have said to me. A very frequently used technique was to turn the situation into a joke; to laugh at it. I once observed a teenage Utkuhikhalingmiut girl teaching this attitude to her six-year-old niece. The latter was sulking because of something her younger sister had done. The aunt, noticing this, asked her niece: "Are you annoyed because of what your sister has done?" And when the child admitted that she was, her aunt said, "That's not annoying, it's funny."

But a resentful person was not the only one who might try to turn a difficult situation into a joke. People who had caused others to become unhap-

py or resentful—by saying something critical or by refusing an ever-so-modest request—might also deny that their offensive behavior had been serious; and by pretending that their behavior was frivolous—even when it was not—they would try to reassure the offended individuals that they had no reason to be upset.

Reassurance is another very important Inuit technique of avoiding conflict. In addition to pretending that meaningful behavior was meaningless—"only a joke"—Qipisamiut and Utkuhikhalingmiut made great efforts to be helpful, obliging, and considerate (*nallik-*). They made an effort to anticipate and meet the needs of others, so that the latter never had to be demanding. A good deal of the "welcoming" behavior that non-Inuit visitors notice in Inuit and attribute to simple warmth and good nature is motivated by the wish to reassure possibly dangerous and powerful strangers that they have nothing to fear: that Inuit are willing to help them, so that they will have no reason to attack or mistreat the Inuit, either. I have mentioned already that these Inuit believed that a major motive for aggression was fear, and that the only safe person was a happy one.

#### *Cause of Conflict*

Of course, these methods of keeping people happy and relationships smooth did not always work. In fact, though they prevented some resentments and conflicts from arising, they created others. For example, resentment could be created when people failed to take the initiative that others silently expected or wished them to take; when they failed to perceive others' needs, spontaneously, or neglected to offer voluntarily the information that others wanted to have or felt was their due. Moreover, when people withheld or denied negative feelings instead of expressing them, they left a wide field for others to imagine all that was not being expressed; and, as I have said, imagination is likely to be vivid when one is aware of all the thoughts and feelings that one is oneself suppressing.

Interpersonal relations in Inuit society are often not at all smooth. There are many causes of disagreement, discontent, and resentment in Inuit society, as there are in other societies. As is evident from the examples I have given, two major sources of trouble in these camps were envy and jealousy and the associated feelings of deprivation and loneliness. Generous though they were, these Inuit were extremely possessive of both material goods—including, very importantly, food—and people; and individuals were extremely inclined to compare what they did not have with what others did have and to feel aggrieved by the comparison.

Another major cause of conflict that I observed—especially between parents and adult children, and between spouses—was the question of where to live or camp, and with whom. This problem is perhaps particular-

ly important in nomadic society, where alternatives are numerous and living patterns are flexible and changeable.

Disagreements also arose within each gender concerning matters related to work: who was to do what and with whom. I had the impression that this was a more important problem for men, who needed to have companions in the hunt, and who were sometimes dependent on large equipment, such as boats and motors, which were always owned by one person and used in conjunction with others.

#### *“Serious” Methods of Coping with Conflict*

The methods used to deal with problems when they arose were in keeping with the principles of avoidance, indirection, and reassurance that I have described.

One method was by hinting. Ruupi<sup>5</sup> might mention in conversation with Ilisapik that Aluki had said Ilisapik had not visited her (Aluki) for a long time; or that Aluki wonders whether Ilisapik brought any cigarettes with her when she came home from her trip to the settlement. Then Ilisapik might take the hint and visit Aluki or give her some cigarettes.

Prayer and sermons were also used on occasion by these very Anglican Inuit. The sermons were mostly directed at me, because I wasn't sufficiently sensitive to subtler methods of correction (see, for example, Briggs 1970: 257); but prayer, in the course of the Sunday services that were conducted by the Qipisa camp leader, was directed at one of the young men of the camp, who sometimes spoke loudly and angrily to his wife.

I have mentioned that a person who never got upset was very highly valued. A person who did get upset easily, one who "took things seriously" (*pivik-*) was not approved of. Nevertheless, it did sometimes happen that angry accusations were made directly. Even then, however, people refused to escalate a conflict by arguing or by taking sides.

If the angry person was a child, a fool, or the female anthropologist, this refusal to participate was rationalized by the belief that getting angry is childish and that it is demeaning to lower one's own behavior to a childish level. Instead, others laughed and turned the incident into a joke; tried to reassure the angry person that "it's nothing to get angry at, have some tea"; commented disapprovingly: "*You* get angry easily"; or just ignored the angry behavior. There is, however, an interesting exception to this principle of pacification, which I will describe below.<sup>6</sup>

If the angry person was not defined as "childish" in mentality and was therefore feared, people would again take care not to participate in or escalate the conflict, but in this case the motives were different. People might stand aside, be silent, or retreat, owing to a fear of dangerous consequences. If answering back did not further anger an already angry oppo-

ment, it might frighten him or her. As I have said, fear was thought to be as dangerous as anger, since a frightened person might attack in self-defense.

I observed a striking example of these attitudes one day while a number of people were trying to haul a heavy boat out of the water. The rope slipped and struck a man named Eliya painfully in the face. Eliya stood silently, recovering, for a few moments and then said loudly to Paulusi: "If you hadn't let go, this wouldn't have happened!" Paulusi said nothing, and they continued to haul in the boat. But Paulusi's wife, who had also been helping with the boat, silently left the group, went home, and had a severe asthma attack, which lasted for some hours. It was eventually cured with the help of her family, who came to pray and sing hymns with her; and she later told me that the attack had been caused by her fear of Eliya's anger. Eliya, in the meantime, left on an extended hunting trip and was gone for several days.

Eliya's departure was an instance of a very common way of dealing with anger; namely, isolating it. If the angry person did not remove himself for a while, as Eliya did, he might withdraw into silence or physically leave the house; alternatively, all those who witnessed the incident might leave, so that the angry person was left alone. Later, the person who was angry might try to reassure the victim of his annoyance that he had meant nothing by what he said, that he had not been angry at all but only "joking."

Occasionally, isolation of the angry or easily upsettable person might be more than temporary. Ostracism is an extreme form of withdrawal, but even this behavior might be so subtly performed that the ostracizers could not be faulted. They would appear warmer and more nurturant (*nallik-*) than ever—to the untutored eye—as if to say: "The problem is not our fault. The problematic person has gotten angry or upset for no social reason, just from 'himself' (*imminik*)."

If a person was greatly feared—if, for example, he had killed a person or threatened to do so, or if he was violently insane—he would be isolated in another way. Either he would be left to live alone while the others moved away; or, in the case of the murderer, he himself might move away and live alone, because he knew that he was feared and that a person who was feared might be killed. And indeed, the most serious of the "serious" modes of dealing with conflict was to kill the difficult person. The decision might be made either by one frightened individual or by the group, to prevent a killing on the part of the feared person. As mentioned above, a modern alternative is to ask the police, or sometimes the medical authorities, to intervene and to imprison or hospitalize the dangerous person.

It is clear that withdrawal serves a variety of functions. It is a way of preventing conflict before it happens; a way of expressing disapproval or fear in the presence of conflict; a way of solving or dissolving the conflict; and, finally, a way of sanctioning the persons who caused the disturbance, since being isolated is a very unpleasant experience, especially for people

who do not enjoy solitude and are very sensitive to public opinion and very disturbed by disturbances of the peace.

*"Playful" Methods of Coping with Conflict*

The other major way of coping with conflict—joking—serves all the same functions that withdrawal serves.

The distinction between *serious* and *playful*, between *pivik-* and *pingnguaq-*, was very important to Utkuhikhalingmiut and Qipisamiut. I have said that they valued a happy person because they believed that a happy person was not likely to create conflicts. A happy person would not make others afraid, and therefore he would be liked. He would also be safe, they said, because if others liked him, they would not be inclined to attack him. People frequently insisted that they did not wish to be frightening (*iliranaq*), and in part their desire to be unafrightening was self-protective.

One way to prove that one was a happy person was to laugh and joke a lot, and Utkuhikhalingmiut and Qipisamiut did laugh and joke a lot. Indeed, I think in many contexts this was the preferred mode of interaction. To be "serious" had connotations of tension, anxiety, hostility, brooding. To "think too much" was considered dangerous, both to one's own health and to the health of others, since it was believed that concentrated thought could kill. On the other hand, it was highest praise to say of someone: "He never takes anything seriously."

I have presented joking so far as a means of avoiding confrontation, a means of reassuring both the joker and others that there is nothing to fear. But joking was also a means of airing grievances and keeping them in the forefront of everybody's consciousness without appearing to do so. It was a means of testing responses to a grievance without appearing to do so, and a means of sanctioning others—criticizing or humiliating them—without appearing to do so. In other words, because of its ambiguity, joking was not only a means of *avoiding* confrontation but also a means of *confronting*—without committing oneself to the "serious" and therefore frightening consequences of confrontation.

It was a very powerful means of confronting because, as long as one was defined as "joking," one did not need to limit oneself to presenting one's grievance in realistic terms. One could exaggerate and dramatize, threaten to pull a person's hair, burn down his house, steal from him, or kill him. Joking was also powerful because the exaggerations and dramas, the playful threats, resonated in the recipient of the joke with real vulnerabilities and fears, which had been aroused by past experiences and which provided strong motives for resolving the conflict.

I still have a vivid memory of an occasion in Qipisa on which joking was used to deal with my annoyance. I was making bannock, a sort of fried bread, one day, when two teenage girls came in to visit. Anna was fifteen,

Lucy fourteen. At one point I had difficulty in picking up one of the newly fried bannocks. It was too hot to pick up by hand, but it kept slipping off my pocket knife and finally fell into a puddle of water on the side platform of my tent. I swore—in English—stabbed the bannock with my butcher knife, and finally succeeded in moving it to where I wanted it.

When I swore, Anna, who understood a few words of English, whispered to Lucy: "She scolded." When I looked at Anna suspiciously, she smiled at me. Then Lucy said to me, smiling: "Are you angry, Yiini?" Immediately, I recalled with most unpleasant vividness a time sixteen years earlier in Utkuhikhalik when my irritability had caused me to be ostracized (1970: 285-299), so I smiled back and said, "Not at all!" Lucy, smiling in a manner that looked to me "amused," said: "Please fight." Somewhat startled, I said: "What?" Lucy said: "Attack us." I asked: "Why?" Lucy: "Because we'll cry." I: "Because you want to cry?" Lucy: "If you attack us, I'll push your seal-oil lamp over," and she demonstrated how she would shove it. Her smile never changed. I said in a mild voice and with a smile: "*Aijai!*" (an exclamation of fear). The girls said to each other: "Let's go to Maata's house." They went out and didn't return until the end of the evening, several hours later.

It is clear that these "jokes" hinted at power relationships and at violent behaviors, but the latter were rarely or never actualized. In the case I just described, what I feared—ostracism—had in fact happened, though in a faraway camp, in a time before my interlocutors were born. But in many cases, the fears were originally aroused not in serious experiences but in playful ones, when the frightened person was a child and adults were playing with him or her as an object. And so we come to the question of socialization.

### ◆ Socialization<sup>7</sup>

Why did these indirect, playful ways of keeping the peace work? Socialization for the management of conflict in a style appropriate to life in Qipisa and Utkuhikhalik involved several interrelated lessons. I will present them sequentially, but they were not learned sequentially.

First, it is obvious that in any society one has to learn one's place in the social system, which means—in terms of our categories—learning relations of belonging and of power: who will support one and who won't; who is Us and who is Them; who has the power and/or the authority to injure and to sanction. A system of classification more psychologically real to Qipisamiut and Utkuhikhalingmiut might be: who is frightening, socially (*iliranaq*) and/or physically (*iqsinaq*) vs. who is happy (*quvia-*), accommodating (*angiqsarait-*), unchanging (*su 'ragunnangit-*), and helpful (*ikayurumayuq*). In other words, with whom does one need to be most

circumspect and obliging, and with whom can one be most expressive and relaxed?

In Qipisa and Utkuhikhalik, it was also necessary to learn the dramas of everyday life; that is, learn to recognize—and, indeed, to anticipate ahead of time—situations that might lead to conflict: the dangerous situations in which people might feel envy, jealousy, anger, or resentment. One also had to learn the appropriate ways of defusing those situations; that is, the appropriate values, behaviors, and feelings to display.

What is perhaps less obvious is that one also had to learn to think and feel like an Inuk, not only to behave like an Inuit. In other words, one had to learn the appropriate vulnerabilities and sensitivities that would make the dramas *work* in predictable ways. It was not enough to recognize dangerous situations; one had to fear them.

These fears and associated sensitivities were of several sorts. One had to learn to fear aggression and conflict; that is, learn to anticipate and fear their consequences. One had to learn to fear being the center of attention: fear putting oneself forward. One had to learn to associate these situations with self-exposure and the possibility of ridicule and rejection, or possibly even physical attack, so that one would be motivated to avoid conflict and to be conciliatory. One also had to learn to suspect serious meanings in joking remarks—to perceive, interpret, and fear hints, both about the wishes of others and about the possibility of sanction.

In other words, one had to build up a backlog of emotional experience before it was needed, so that when a conflict occurred, indirection would work: the aggrieved person's grievance would be heard, even if it was only jokingly alluded to, and the person who caused the grievance would be motivated to pay serious attention to it.

So, how did children learn to recognize potentially dangerous situations and how to deal with them? How did they learn the appropriate psychological sensitivities when adults did everything in their power to keep conflicts from occurring and, when they did occur, tried to make them seem other than what they were? How could children learn to fear the possible consequences of aggression and conflict in a society in which children were rarely or never aggressed against in a serious mode—in anger or as a punitive measure—and often were given what they wanted when they screamed for it? A society in which even adults rarely aggressed against each other in serious mode and were pacified more often than not? How could children learn to fear being the center of attention when they got a lot of gratification from being the center of everyone's affectionate attention? How could they learn to suspect and fear hidden meanings when they were benignly treated and cherished? And how could they learn to fear sanctioning power that was very rarely exercised?

One answer to all these questions is—perhaps predictably—through play. I have said that adults expressed in jokes—sometimes dramatic jokes,

like Lucy's—all sorts of grievances and violent fantasies that could not be expressed seriously. They did something similar when playing with children. All the problem areas of adult life were dramatized in vividly exaggerated form in interactions with small children. I call these interactions games, because, if asked, adults would claim to be "only playing" (*pingnguaq-*, *uqangnguaq-*); but they dealt with very real problems—all the ones that caused conflicts: envy, jealousy, possessiveness, doubts about belonging and being loved. They dealt also with fears of many kinds—of being abandoned, attacked, humiliated, loved too much—fears that both caused conflict and motivated people to solve conflicts.

I think that, in part, the adult players' were relieving their own feelings when they played; but, often, the children who were played with had the same problems as the adults. Indeed, since the games were consciously conceived of partly as tests of a child's ability to cope with his or her situation, the tendency was to focus on a child's known or expected difficulties. If a child had just acquired a sibling, the game might revolve around the question: "Do you love your new baby sibling? Why don't you kill him or her?" If it was a new piece of clothing that the child had acquired, the question might be: "Why don't you die so I can have it?" And if the child had been recently adopted, the question might be: "Who's your daddy?"

Often, too, I think the games were a way of suggesting problems to children: they structured and interpreted the children's world for them, so that they began to feel envy, jealousy, possessiveness, doubts, and fears that they did not feel before, in the situations in which Inuit expected those emotions to be felt.

The children, of course, did not know that the adults were playing when they asked these dangerous questions. Consequently, the games were very hard work for them. Because this is so, and because the questions tend to shock Westerners who hear about them, I think it is worthwhile to digress here: to put the games in the larger context of the children's other experiences with their adult caretakers, and to show how they worked.

Utkuhikhalingmiut and Qipisamiut, by and large, loved babies and small children very much and gave them a great deal of sensitive care and attention, nursing or feeding them when they were hungry, putting them gently to sleep when they were tired, comforting them when they were unhappy, holding and cuddling them a great deal of the time when they were awake, chanting to them over and over again special affectionate refrains that wove strong dyadic bonds between them and their caretakers, and always including them in the company and activities of others, both children and adults. Several times I heard older women chide young mothers for failing to pick up a baby or a small child as soon as it woke. They considered the mother's behavior careless and unfeeling. Parents expressed momentary annoyance, now and then, when a child was obstreperous or disobedient; but rarely did they express anger. To be angry with a child was

demeaning. It demonstrated one's own childishness, and one older woman told me that, as an educational device, it was thought likely to backfire and cause a child to rebel. When it did happen, it was strongly disapproved.

In any culture, socialization is a multifaceted process. Adults in Qipisa and Utkuhikhalik frequently instructed children verbally concerning proper social behavior, telling them what they should and should not do. Often, they rewarded a small child's good behavior with an affectionate nod or comment; and, once in a while, they created some other pleasant experience in support of an approved value. But older children were not given much praise: they were not thought to need it. Qipisa people, unlike Utkuhikhalingmiut, sometimes raised their voices at children; but scolding, which was heard as an expression of anger, was disapproved of. Instead of insisting that children obey instructions and punishing them if they didn't, adults had various other options. They might ignore the misbehavior, remind the child of proper behavior, laugh, or make a disapproving sound, a wordless *moo*.

Most important of all in the context of this discussion, they might question the child and create dramas of the sort I have mentioned. This they did repeatedly every day. A central idea of Inuit socialization is to "cause thought": *isumaqsayuq* (Stairs, 1989: 10). According to Stairs, *isumaqsayuq*, in North Baffin, characterizes Inuit-style education as opposed to the Western variety. Warm and tender interactions with children help to create an atmosphere in which thought can be safely caused, and the questions and dramas are well designed to elicit it. More than that, and as an integral part of thought, the dramas stimulate emotion.

Thought and feeling are inevitably related in any culture, because emotions always provide the motives for thinking; and, conversely, thought defines emotions and makes it possible for us to experience them. But whereas we downplay the importance of this relationship and even like to imagine that emotions and rational thought are in opposition, the Inuit that I observed utilized the relationship in powerful ways, creating intense emotions as a means of stimulating thought, including the most pragmatic and "rational" varieties.

So, while interaction between small children and adults was consistently good-humored, benign, and playful on the part of the adults, it taxed the children to—or beyond—the limits of their ability to understand, pushing them to expand their horizons, and testing them to see how much they had grown since the last encounter.

### *Facing Children with Issues*

The issues that children were presented with in the playful dramas were dangerous, as we have seen. It would be hard for a child not to be threat-

ened when asked who she would like to live with on the death of her mother; or when told that his father is never coming back from his hunting trip; when asked whether he is as lovable as his elder brother, or why she doesn't kill her baby sister. Such issues must strongly motivate children to learn to deal with them in some manageable way. The emotionally powerful words, voices, and gestures of the dramas drew and held the attention of the children I observed; and, repeated day after day in a variety of contexts, I think they helped children to trace paths from one context to another and to construct social and psychological worlds of meaning that, in their cognitive and emotional complexity, were closely related to the everyday dramas of adult life in Qipisa and Utkuhikhalik.<sup>8</sup> The issues might grow in salience over time, accumulate and shift meanings as children acquired more experience with them, and they probably faded in importance as children learned appropriate ways of dealing with them, and as other, more immediately troublesome problems took their place; but their emotional power was such that they never disappeared altogether. The attitudes and feelings, social characters and skills, that the dramas helped to create were of lifelong duration and governed conduct in all the varied contexts of everyday life.

The emotional power and, thus, the educational efficacy of the dramas derived from a number of characteristics. For one thing, children were active participants in the dramas, which were performed not only *for*, but unwittingly *by*, the children. And it was the children who had to make sense of them—a point to which I shall return. Moreover, dramas were highly personalized in several ways. On any given occasion, one child—or at most two, in interaction with each other—would be played with, and usually the attention of every adult present was focused on the drama, either as audience or as participant, supporting the main adult performer. The problems that were presented were of personal concern to the child played with, because they were geared to that child's own stage of development, and because the formulations of the drama made use of the child's own individual fears and wishes, understandings and misunderstandings, which were known to, or suspected by, the adult players. Often a drama focused on a troublesome transition that a child was going through—weaning, adoption, the birth of a sibling—and investigated his or her feelings about that transition.

Adult players did not make it easy for children to thread their way through the labyrinth of tricky proposals, questions, and actions, and they did not give answers to the children or directly confirm the conclusions the children came to. On the contrary, questioning a child's first facile answers, they turned situations round and round, presenting first one aspect, then another, to view. They made children realize their emotional investment in all possible outcomes, and then allowed them to find their own way out of

the dilemmas that had been created—or perhaps, to find ways of living with unresolved dilemmas. Since children were unaware that the adults were "only playing," they could believe that their own decisions would determine their fate. And since the emotions aroused in them might be highly conflicted and contradictory—love as well as jealousy, attraction as well as fear—they did not always know what they wanted to decide. "Oops! I almost agreed!" exclaimed one three-year-old, mounting guard over her mixed feelings when a neighbor she liked threatened her by inviting her, insistently and in tender tones, to come and live with her.

Sometimes adults might give a child a clue that he, or she, was on an appropriate track: "Now she [the child] is beginning to just smile!"; or, a broader hint, "Do you imagine he [the tormentor] doesn't love you?" But if the child failed to pick up the clue, the adults were not likely to point out the road more clearly. Instead, they would wait for the child's understanding to mature "by itself." Children might temporarily avoid a too-difficult decision by refusing to respond to the questions or, more amusingly, by abruptly changing the subject with an exclamation like: "POP goes the weasel!" or "One-two-three GO-O-O!" or "My daddy has a nice little long penis!" But in the long run, there was no escape. The adults kept presenting the issues and testing the child's responses until the child consistently fell within the limits of the range recognized as adult.

In short, active learning was assured by focusing on one child at a time and making that child the protagonist in a drama; by tailoring the drama to the child's special situation, state of feeling, and understanding; by making the ground that the child had to tread seem perilous and, thus, important to tread carefully, but at the same time, introducing the play when the child was not upset, not feeling imperilled and resistant to learning; by expecting the child to develop her or his own resources to formulate and deal with issues; and by continuing to test that development until the child consistently demonstrated adult behavior in the face of temptation to be nonadult.

The training was hard, but in most cases, the ground was not really shaking under the child's feet. Since the adult players were usually not themselves angry or afraid, they were perfectly in control of the situation,<sup>9</sup> and I think that children did tend to perceive the safety as well as the danger. Though they might yell in wordless protest, stare in fear, or raise an arm threateningly, they did not develop permanent terrors of the neighbors who offered to buy or adopt them or who invited the puppy to bite off the penis.

From another point of view, the games actually enhanced the children's safety even while they elicited their fears. They relieved children of the burden of carrying their painful, dangerous, antisocial feelings alone, and they indirectly suggested solutions for those feelings. The adult who,

with no sign of fear, asked a little girl why she did not kill her baby brother instead of carrying him, on the one hand recognized the possibility that the child might want to kill; on the other hand, she was demonstrating that such thoughts were not so terrible that they had to be hidden, and that she trusted the child not to act on them. Most importantly, she was also giving the child an opportunity to realize that she enjoyed nurturing that baby brother and did not entirely want to kill him.

The qualities engendered in these dramas—acute watchfulness, sensitivity to the messages of others, a tendency actively to correlate experienced events and draw conclusions from them—had many uses, in both social and physical worlds. Elsewhere, I have argued that, through these means, children learned both a flexible, experimental, problem-solving approach to life (1991a) and a strong attachment to important values (1979). Here I focus, of course, on lessons more directly relevant to problems of conflict management. Let me give now some examples of games that I think contained such lessons, and point out what children might have learned from them. I want to emphasize that I am presenting only fragments of these games, am choosing from among many variants on the same themes, and am outlining only a few of the many possible lessons that could be contained in these games. I do not assume that all possible lessons were perceived by all children on every occasion on which a given game was played; only that some lessons might be picked up by some children on some occasions, and that any lesson that *was* perceived would be reinforced by many other games on many other occasions.

*Example 1.* A mother put a strange baby to her breast and said to her own nursling: "Shall I nurse *him* instead of you?" The mother of the other baby offered *her* breast to the rejected child and said: "Do you want to nurse from *me*? Shall *I* be your mother?" The child shrieked a protest shriek. Both mothers laughed.

Some of the lessons that children might learn from this game are: (1) that they belong to mother; (2) that they *want* to belong to mother; (3) that the person they belong to will feed them; and (4) that the person they belong to, and want to belong to, could be taken away. In other words, they could learn to be a little bit uneasy about their life situations; and they could learn that it is very important to belong, but that it is not quite certain that they can keep what they want.

Such uneasiness could in turn have several effects: (1) it could make children watchful to see whether people have intentions to deprive them; (2) it could make children cling more strongly to mother—that is, could focus them on keeping what is theirs; and (3) it could make children anxious to please mother.

It is easy to see how such feelings can *create* conflicts, through suspicion and resentment of the imagined intentions of other people. But if the same feelings of suspicion and resentment are projected onto others—"they feel suspicious of *me*"—then the lesson taught by the game could ultimately be an awareness that such feelings are dangerous, and thus the groundwork is laid for a tendency to conciliate others as well as mother.

*Example 2.* An aunt held out a piece of bannock and jam to her one-year-old niece, who happily reached out for it. The aunt slapped the child's face lightly. The child cried and was cuddled and nursed by her mother. The aunt held out the bannock again. . . and the sequence was repeated until the child no longer reached out for the bannock but instead looked at her aunt warily.

From such a game children might learn (1) some doubts about the benignity of the outside world—about the wisdom of expecting or demanding to be given things, and about the power of others to sanction undesirable behavior. They might also learn (2) a little watchfulness, suspicion about hidden meanings, and perhaps (3) a little fear of aggression, too.

All of these feelings could become motives for being reticent, not putting oneself forward, not making claims that might cause conflict. (The aunt confirmed that undemandingness was what she was trying to teach.) And, as I have suggested, a feeling of suspicion might encourage one to become watchful of people's behavior and to learn to read complex meanings in apparently simple messages.

But perhaps the most interesting—because least obvious—way of learning to avoid conflicts is illustrated by the following example.

*Example 3.* An aunt put her niece's hand on the head of another child (both of them were three years old) and whispered: "Pull his hair." As the niece didn't immediately pull, her aunt did it for her, with adult strength. The victim shrieked and hit the aggressing child, who hit back. The conflict between the children became a battle royal. Adults urged them on and laughed: "Look, look! She's going to hurt him!" But before the children could do serious damage to each other, the adults stopped them by distracting their attention with the offer of a bottle of milk.

Some of the lessons that might be learned from this game are: (1) that aggression hurts; (2) that adults consider aggressive behavior comical and childish; (3) that pacification is comforting and feels better; and perhaps also (4) that it is better not to be noticed than to be playfully made the center of attention and laughed at.

## ◆ Conclusions

These were not the only kinds of experience that taught the plots of everyday life and the emotions and behaviors appropriate to them; but they were important ones, because they were highly charged with emotion, and therefore, I have suggested, children were strongly motivated to pay attention to the messages contained in them. The questions children were asked, the behaviors that were suggested to them, and the comments that were made about their behavior in the context of a game all focused their attention on the aspects of the event that the adults considered important and relevant, and suggested or reinforced appropriate emotional and behavioral reactions.

By arousing and focusing on antisocial and anxious emotions, games created possibilities for conflict that might not exist otherwise; but they also created the imaginative ability to empathize with others' feelings, or to project one's own feelings onto others, and it is partly this ability that makes it possible to anticipate conflict situations. In addition, and most importantly, the games helped to create the fears that made conflict situations not only recognizable from afar but also dangerous to the well-being of the children themselves, and thus motivated them to avoid or resolve those situations. As in a shadow show, they demonstrated the dangers inherent in the inappropriate reactions and awakened the children's imagination, so that thereafter, if they seemed to be in danger of really misbehaving, it was only necessary to hint—jokingly—at experiences they had had before they were sure how to interpret adult behavior in its complex mixture of seriousness and joking. All that was necessary was to reawaken doubts. And those doubts were easily awakened, not only because the original experiences were powerful but also because the games taught children to rely on their own senses in interpreting their own experience, to be watchful, alert to hidden meanings and intentions, and to keep testing others, as adults had tested them in childhood. One young woman, from a different part of the Arctic, demonstrated this attitude clearly when she said, discussing my analysis of these dramas: "Whenever an adult says something to me, I ask myself, 'Why did she say that? What did she mean?'"

Finally, the games taught the appropriate responses to conflict. I have pointed out how children might learn to withdraw in response to being catechized, tested, and laughed at in play. That is one way in which they were able to defend themselves against being played with, and, as we have seen, withdrawal was one of the main ways in which adult Utkuhikhalingmiut and Qipisamiut dealt with—and deal with—conflict situations.

A child's other alternative was to learn to play actively; that is, to respond in the playful mode to being played with. The games were, themselves, models of conflict management through play. And when children learned to recognize the playful in particular dramas, people stopped play-

ing those games with them. They stopped tormenting them. The children had learned to keep their own relationships smoother—to keep out of trouble, so to speak—and in doing so, they had learned to do their part in smoothing the relationships of others.

### ◆ Notes

Although this chapter draws on impressions I have absorbed on all of my field trips (1960, 1961, 1963-1965, 1968, 1970, 1971, 1972-1973, 1974, 1975, 1979-1980), the data on socialization dramas is taken primarily from observations made between 1974 and 1980, when my work focused directly on those interactions. I am grateful to the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the National Museum of Man (now the National Museum of Civilization), and Memorial University of Newfoundland for their support of these later trips. Earlier versions of the paper were read at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Bar-Ilan University (1981), the University of Copenhagen (1983), the University of Chicago (1984), and the University of Tromsø (1987). Comments and questions received on all those occasions helped to develop and clarify my thinking. Gratitude of a special sort goes to the Inuit with whom I have discussed my analyses and who have encouraged me by recognizing my interpretations as true to their experience.

1. When I was socialized as an anthropologist, it was our custom to write in the present tense—of course, with appropriate disclaimers—even when the situation that was being described had changed. I participated—of course, with appropriate disclaimers—in that tradition. Now, however, the current concerns about the limits of "authorial authority" [*horrid term*] have infected me. In this chapter, I change my practice and write in the past tense, even though much of what I describe is alive and well in many parts of the Arctic.

2. There was one man in the camp who did not consider the old man his leader; namely, the man who was not a member of the leader's family. This man was himself elderly, though, I think, younger than the leader. He and his wife lived in the camp because two of their sons had married into the group. The elder son had married a daughter of the leader, and the younger had married one of the latter's granddaughters. Interestingly, though the sons helped their father a lot in various ways—hunting with him, providing him with food—nevertheless, in matters of camp movements they deferred to their father/grandfather-in-law, not to their father, who came and went quite independently of the rest of the camp.

3. A Netsilik man who was participating in the regional games held in his area in the summer of 1992 told me that mouth-wrestling had been excluded from those games on the ground that it was "too violent"

4. As I mentioned, my analysis of the workings of the song duel is drawn from that of Eckert and Newmark (1980). I would point also to a fine paper by Morrow (1990: 141-158) for a similar but more far-reaching exposition of the fundamental philosophical concerns that underlie conflict-management behavior, and much other behavior, too, in Inuit and Yupik societies: ideas about the indeterminate and experiential nature of knowledge and the proper uses of knowledge in the service of

maintaining the "balanced dynamic tension of the world" (1990: 155). Morrow's analysis, like that of Eckert and Newmark, greatly enriches my own.

5. All personal names used in this paper are pseudonyms.

6. See Example 3 in the section, Socialization.

7. Though here, as elsewhere in the chapter, I limit myself to the past tense and to the scene that I observed, discussions I have had with Inuit from various parts of the Arctic indicate clearly that the educational process I observed in Qipisa and Utkuhikhalik closely resembles that found today in a number of other widely dispersed Inuit communities, from Alaska to Greenland. The socialization dramas, in particular, which play an important part in this paper and in all my work, are very much alive, not only in communities from Alaska to Greenland, but also, in many cases, in southern cities, where Inuit are bringing up children. Their stability across time and space is amazing. Though, of course, one can't necessarily assume that their effects will be the same in all the environments in which they occur, it would be a great mistake to assume that they have died, together with the camps where I observed them.

8. For a more extensive discussion of this process of creating meaning, see Briggs 1991b.

9. One woman told me that teenagers sometimes did not play the games appropriately: they lacked sufficient self-control. She added (speaking in English): "I have to watch myself, because I could begin to enjoy myself too much."

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