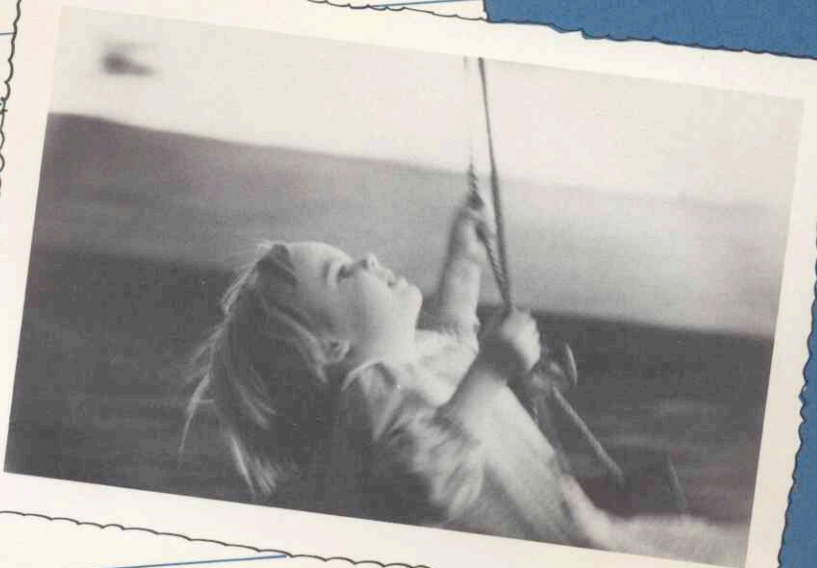


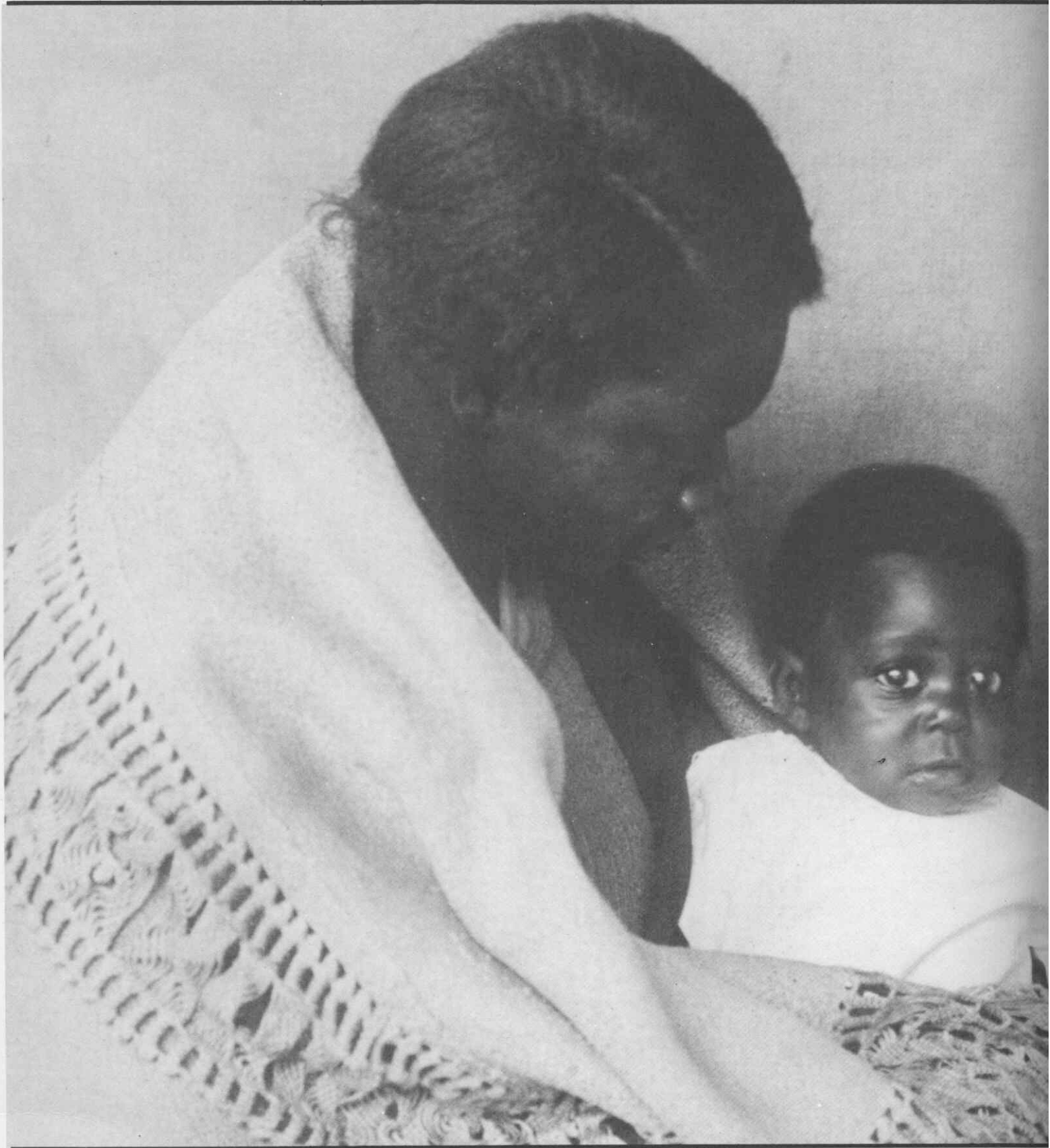
Exploring Childhood · Seeing Development **A Child's Eye View**

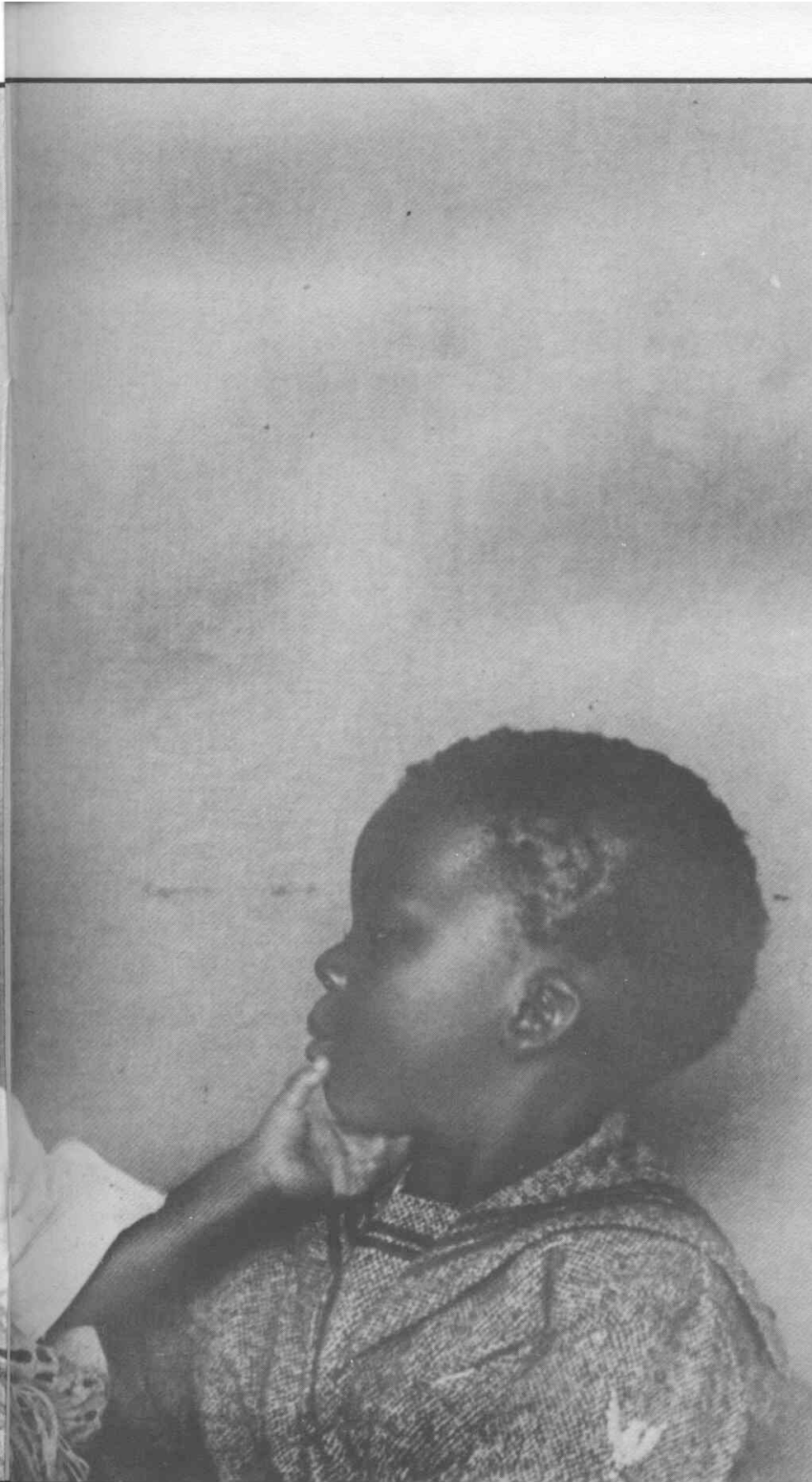
When I worked in a preschool, the children always wanted me to push them on the swings. Day after day at outdoor play they would yell, "Push me, push me!" Sometimes I would get tired and try to explain that I didn't feel like pushing anymore, but they would keep demanding that I push them.

I could never figure out whether they didn't understand how I felt or whether they were just plain selfish.

- Jim







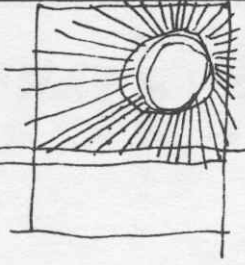
For the child, the world and the people in it exist only as he or she experiences them. There are joys, beauties, and mysteries in the child's view of the world as well as limitations. Working with young children calls for appreciating their way of understanding, and the way it affects how they relate to other people.

A Child's Eye View



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UNDERSTANDING OTHERS

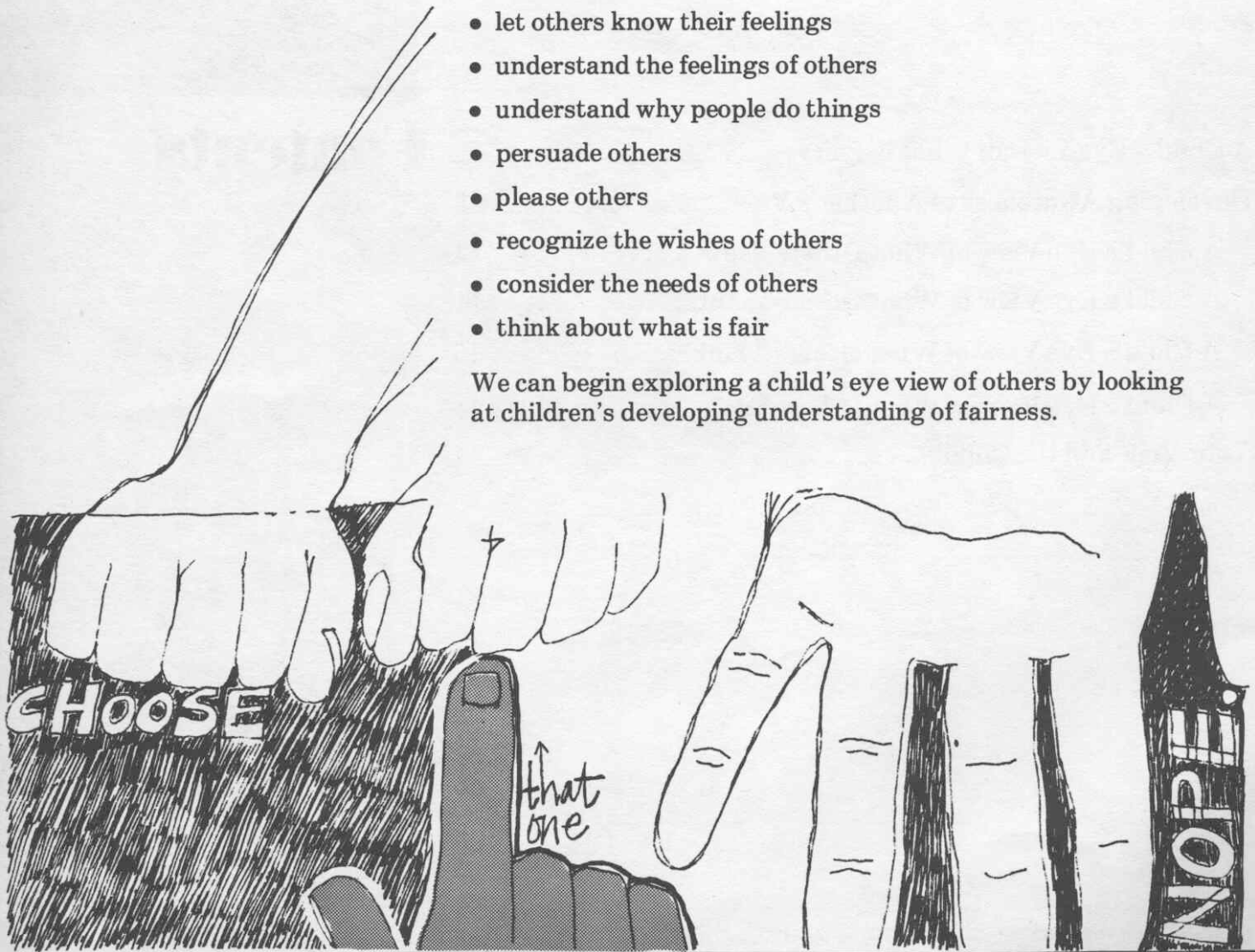
Play a game like Password or Guess-Which-Hand-Has-the-Penny. Notice that in these games you try to figure out what the other person is thinking, how the other person will react, what the other person knows, or can see.

This booklet is about children's abilities in understanding others and the difference between their skills in this area and yours.

Children's growing ability to consider other people's point of view influences lots of things they do. For example, it helps them to:

- get their ideas or information across better when they talk to others
- let others know their feelings
- understand the feelings of others
- understand why people do things
- persuade others
- please others
- recognize the wishes of others
- consider the needs of others
- think about what is fair

We can begin exploring a child's eye view of others by looking at children's developing understanding of fairness.



A Child's Eye View of What Is Fair

Somewhere around age three or four, children begin to use the phrase, "It isn't fair." To a child, it isn't fair when someone else goes first; it isn't fair for an older brother or sister to stay up later; it isn't fair for an adult to drink soda when the child must drink milk; it isn't fair for the baby to be held or cuddled more frequently; it isn't fair to be stopped from interrupting adults' conversation. Whose point of view does the child consider in each of these cases?

Children's early idea of fairness is reflected in the following example, which occurred at a fieldsite.

The December vacation is about to begin and arrangements must be made for someone to take the guinea pig home over the holiday. Jimmy had asked the teacher and also his parents if he could bring Spaghetti home. He'd brought a note from his parents giving their permission. When the other children hear that Jimmy is going to have Spaghetti home for ten days, they all want to have her.

"I want to take Spaghetti home," screams Tim.

Alice and Kent are both crying for their rights in the case.

Richard won't let go of the guinea pig.

"It isn't fair!" Francis storms.

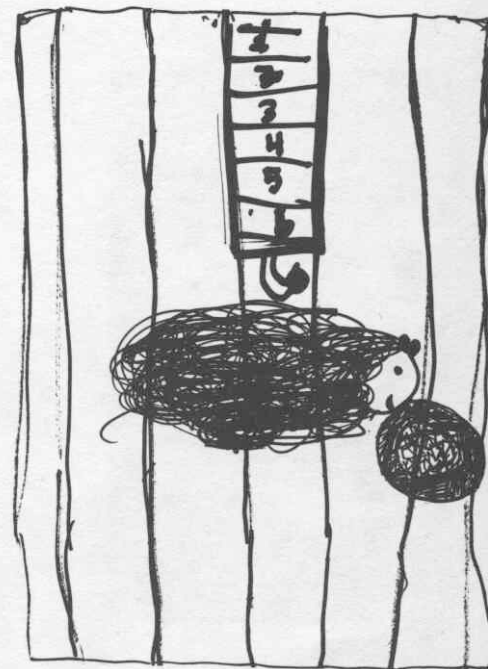
What Would You Do?

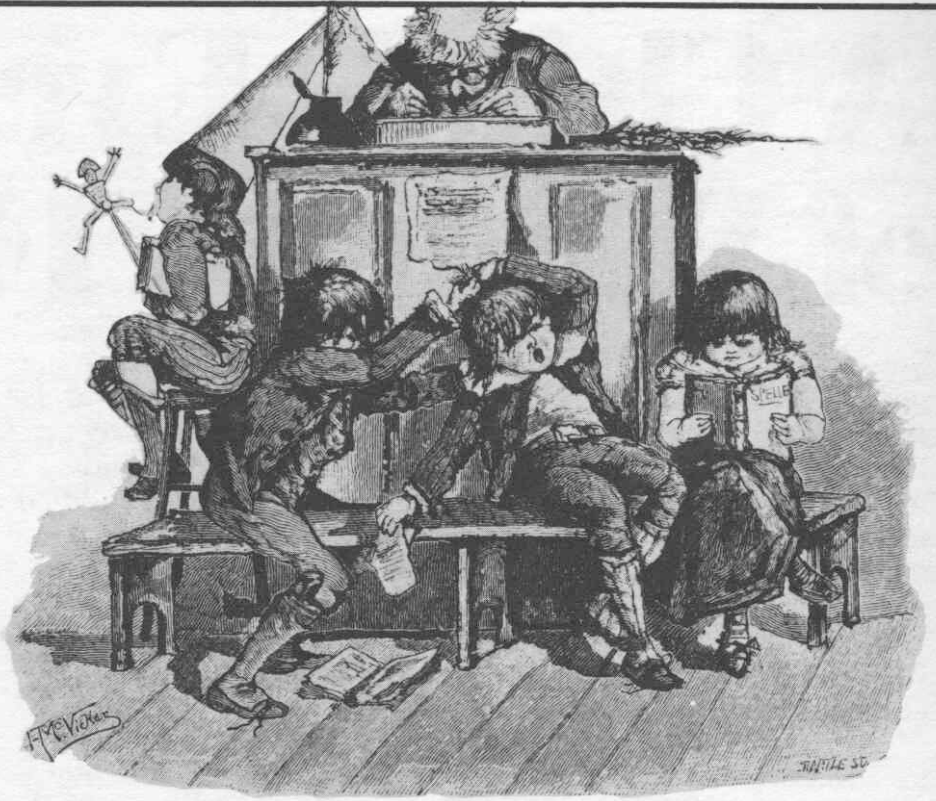
- Brainstorm how you would respond to these children.
- Look through your list of responses and explain what you think each response would mean to a young child.
- Suggest how you think the child might respond to each.

Questions for Discussion

Can you think of any similar incidents from your own experience with young children? What happened? Did the child seem able to consider any point of view other than his or her own?

Using the example above and others students have given, what do you think "fair" means to a young child?





AN OLD DEBATE

Over the ages, some people have held that a child is naturally fair, born with a knowledge of right and wrong that is only corrupted as the child grows.

Another view has been that children are born interested only in their own needs and wishes and that they must be taught (or forced) to care for the rights of others, to do what is right and fair.

What do you think? (Give examples to support your view.)

Recently, scholars have taken a new approach to this debate by studying how children's understanding of fairness changes as they grow up. They have found that children's judgment about what is fair or unfair depends upon the child's ability to understand the needs and claims of other people—other people's point of view.

Their investigations¹ suggest that there is a natural "path" through which all children's reasoning about fairness passes — from awareness of personal desires only, to concern about the welfare of others and for "putting yourself in the other guy's shoes."



HOW YOU THINK ABOUT FAIRNESS

What kind of thinking do you use when confronted with a dilemma in which you must decide what is the fair thing to do? Consider the following case:

Sally was babysitting for four-year-old Scott. While she was getting his lunch ready, he fell off the front porch and started screaming, then turned strangely pale and kept crying. Sally was scared. She ran out to the street looking for someone to take her and Scott to the hospital. But there were no cars on the street. Suddenly, she noticed an old man parking his car. She ran up and asked the man to take them to the hospital. The man replied, "Look, I have an appointment with someone about an important job. I must be on time. I'd like to help you but I can't."

So Sally said, "Just let me use the car."

The man said, "Look, I don't know you; I can't do that," and he rushed off to keep his appointment.

Sally noticed that he'd left his keys in the ignition.

Questions for Discussion

What should Sally do? Why?

What would you do? Why do you think that is the fair thing to do?

How would you decide what would be fair?

Suppose Sally stole the car:

How would the man feel when he got back and found it gone?

What would you do if you were the man then? Why?

Suppose he called the police and Sally was arrested for theft:

What would the judge's view be of Sally? of the man?

If you were the judge, what would you do and why?



How Children Judge Fairness

ISSUES IN JUDGING FAIRNESS

As you can see, deciding what is fair involves many issues when everyone's point of view is taken into consideration. Some of the issues you may have discussed in this dilemma involve:

- *rewards and punishment:*
for example, whether Sally should be punished or rewarded (if she took the car), and whether man deserved to have his car stolen
- *weighing values:*
balancing the importance of a job, property, and an injury
- *motives:*
what each person's reasons were (their reasons behind their actions) and the extent to which each considered the other's point of view
- *approval:*
what Sally thought others would expect of her; what the man thought others would expect of him
- *authority:*
whether it is all right to defy the law
- *universal principles:*
how the golden rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," might apply to this case



The number of issues you considered in the Sally situation, and your ways of thinking about them were probably more complex than a child's could have been. Consider this example:

What happens if you ask a child, "What is fair to do if another child comes up and hits you?" The three-year-old might say, "Hit back," and give as the reason, "Because I wanted to," or "I don't know." A preschooler might say, "Don't fight, you'll get hurt or the teacher will punish you." An older preschooler might say, "Hit him back," or "He deserves to get punished." But the child who is old enough to consider another person's intentions might say, "Think how he feels, why he might be doing it. Maybe he doesn't mean to." By this stage, fairness has come to mean putting yourself in the other person's shoes. This means considering the feelings and motives of others, not just their outward behavior.

Looking for clues as to where a child is on the “path” of developing a sense of fairness can help you help children in their relations with others.

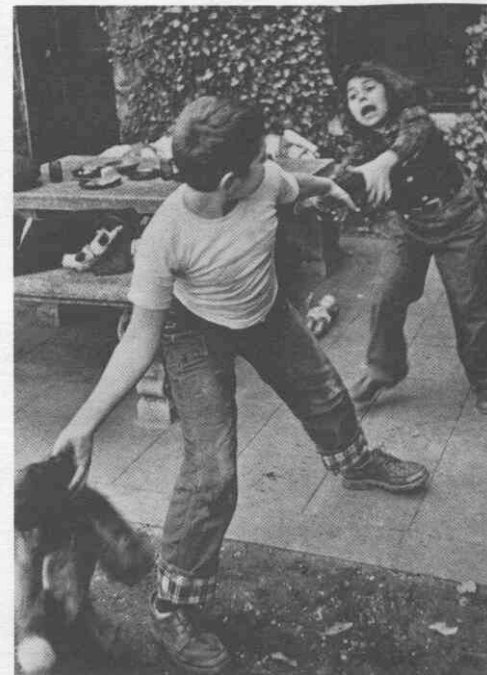
This path can be summarized as follows:

Children’s earliest ideas about fairness are based completely on what they want. Around the age of three to five a child’s view of fairness is, “Whatever I want is fair.”

Children next think of fairness in terms of equal exchange of punishment or reward, still thinking only in terms of themselves—“If I do something bad, something bad will (and should) happen to me. If I do something good, something good will (and should) happen to me.”

As they get older, they begin to consider “you” as well as “me,” but the focus is still on “me.” They feel that everyone should be treated exactly alike. Reward (or punishment) has to be equal for everyone—“If you hurt me, I can hurt you back. If you drink soda, I should be able to drink soda.”

A big breakthrough in children’s thinking comes when they begin to consider the other person’s intentions, needs, and feelings. A child no longer thinks only of personal wishes or strictly in terms of an eye for an eye, a treat for a treat.



CHILDREN AND MOTIVES

When do children begin to take into consideration the intentions which lie behind another person’s behavior?

On her birthday, Bernice was given a beautiful model ship which her uncle had made for her. The next day she proudly took it to kindergarten in a big box.

“Put your box on the blue shelf until Show and Tell time and then you can show us your surprise,” said Ms. Adams.

Bernice carefully put her box on the blue shelf. Everyone knew the class rule that things on the blue shelf were not to be touched.

During the morning, Harold got more and more curious about what the surprise in Bernice’s box might be. Finally, he could not stand the suspense, and he sneaked over to the blue shelf and looked inside the box. A big boat, full of marvelous details and bright colors! He couldn’t resist taking it out of the box, but as he picked it up, the boat slipped and fell to the floor and broke. Quickly, Harold gathered up the pieces and put them back in the box. Everyone else was busy, so no one had seen what had happened. When Bernice opened her box at Show and Tell time, she broke into tears.

What do you think a three-year-old would say should happen next? a five-year-old? an-eight-year old?



FINDING OUT FOR YOURSELF

Children do begin to consider people's reasons for doing things, but around what age? To explore this question, you might ask several children (of various ages) this set of questions made up by the Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget:

Who is naughtier: a little girl who broke ten cups when she was helping her mother or a little girl who broke one cup when she was sneaking some jam from a cupboard?

Should each be punished? How much? Why?

By asking children questions like these or telling them a story like the one about Bernice's boat, you can collect examples of their ways of thinking about fairness. Collect six to eight examples on 4" by 6" index cards. You might fill out your cards like this:

Child
Age
Response
Did he/she seem to consider someone else's motives? (give evidence)
Did he/she seem to consider someone else's needs or wishes? (give evidence)
Did he/she seem to consider someone else's feelings? (give evidence)

Share your collection of responses with the class. What differences do you find at various ages? Does what the class has collected seem to bear out the "path" which researchers have described? If not, what do you think accounts for the difference?

Developing Awareness of Another's View

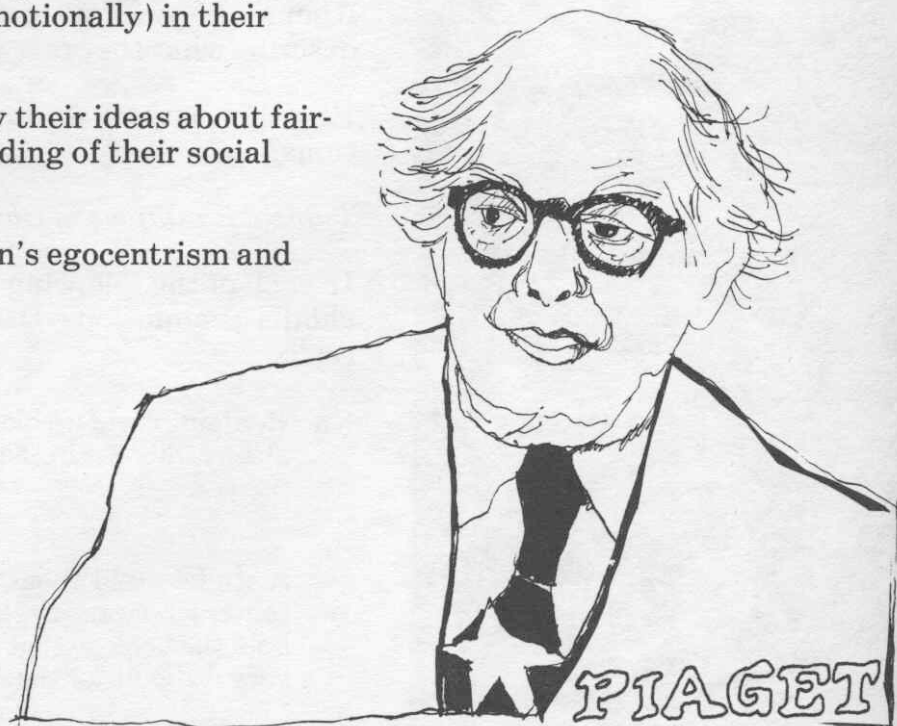
When children become able to take into consideration someone's good or bad intentions, they have made some major discoveries. Gradually these discoveries free the child from what has come to be called the *egocentrism* of early childhood—that is, from being unable to see the world from any other viewpoint than their own. Egocentrism means that stage of development at which children can consider things from only one point of view, their own.

EGOCENTRISM: A CHILD'S EYE VIEW

Jean Piaget explored the thought and actions of children by closely observing children's conversations, game playing, and efforts at moral reasoning. He concluded that during the first seven years, a child gradually becomes *less egocentric*, that is, more and more capable of understanding that other people see the world (physically, mentally, and emotionally) in their own way.²

Children's egocentrism affects not only their ideas about fairness, but all aspects of their understanding of their social world.

Let's look at various aspects of children's egocentrism and how it affects their behavior.



A Child's Eye View of What Others See

When Alice play hide-and-
seek with me, she never really
hides. Today she crawled behind
the piano and left her whole
self from the waist down stuck
out into the room. She stood
behind the easel and called
out, "You can't find me." It
was crazy. I pretended I
couldn't find her and she
was thrilled.

What did Alice think the student could see?

"What's this on it?"



Your Understanding of What Another Sees

Stand across the room from another classmate. Both of you, from where you are standing, look out the same window. Now describe what the *other* person is seeing. What happens?

How do you think a young child would carry out those instructions?

Typical Examples of Children's Behavior

In each of the following examples, what seems to be each child's assumption—that is, what does the child not seem to realize?

Benjamin held up his new yellow truck and called to his baby-sitter, who was in the next room watching TV, "What's this on it?"

A student told about children of two and three at the child care center who want to show her something in a book. They always hold the book so that the page still faces the child, making it very difficult for the student to see inside.

A little girl who wanted to be old enough to visit her new friend by herself was taken over to the new neighbors' house by her father. As they were standing on the porch, ringing the doorbell, the four-year-old said, "Get behind me, Daddy, so they can't see you."

When Marjorie was little she always wanted to "talk" to Grandpa on the telephone. These conversations were very one-sided. Grandpa would ask her something and Marjorie would just nod!

Questions for Discussion

What is the child's eye view in each example?

What examples have you found at your fieldsite of similar "children's eye views" of what others can see?

Can you remember yourself doing things like this?

The young children in these incidents seem to think that if they can see something, others can see it too, or that if they *can't* see something, others can't see it either. At this stage children see everything from one point of view only and don't realize that things may look different to others. Compare this with children's earliest ideas about fairness, which are also based only on their own point of view.

Being unable to "see through the eyes of another" is only one aspect of egocentrism. Here is another.



"I didn't eat the icing, Mom."



"Get behind me, Daddy, so they can't see you."



A Child's Eye View of What Others Want

How much does a child understand about what another person might want or like?

The young child in the cartoon makes a gift to his mother which probably isn't really appropriate; the child doesn't put himself in his mother's place and try to think of what she might like. Instead he chooses a gift that *he* likes—bubble gum. This is another example of egocentrism.

Of course, adults sometimes do give each other gifts based on their own wishes. But when older people do not take another's point of view into consideration, it is normally because they have forgotten to do so, or have chosen not to, but it is not because they *cannot*.

A child's egocentrism is not selfishness. Gift-giving is a good example of this difference. The child giving the gum is being generous, unselfish, BUT egocentric at the same time. He assumes that what would bring him great pleasure as a gift will do the same for his mother. If, however, he were older and chose the gift thinking, "My mother won't like it and so will give it to me to chew," then he would be acting selfishly and would NOT be egocentric because he would be aware of his mother's point of view.

STUDYING CHILDREN'S EGOCENTRISM

Researchers have been interested in finding out more about how and when children develop the ability to consider another person's point of view. They created things to do with young children which they hoped might reveal the extent to which children at different ages could take another person's point of view into consideration.

In the film "From My Point of View," an adult informally tries two such tasks with several children.

What Do You Think?

What did you learn about egocentrism in these children in this situation?

How do you think children of similar ages that you know would respond to these tasks?

Is it possible to draw any conclusions based on the behavior of these children? Why or why not?



uh thanks..

Try It Yourself

You might want to try one of these tasks with children you know or you might want to make up activities of your own. Here are instructions you could use to play the game *Birthday Present Store*. Report back to your class what happened when the children played the game.

This activity asks children to consider the preferences of other people. You will need to take to your fieldsite a doll, a toy truck, a necktie, a piece of jewelry like a bracelet or earrings, and an adult book.

Place these items on a table and sit down with a child. Say, "Let's pretend that this is a little store and it's your mother's birthday. Which gift would you choose for your mother?"

The child can pretend to buy the item; you could "charge" a penny for each item. Then have the child put the item back on the table and say, "Now let's pretend that it's your father's birthday; what would you choose for him?"

You could repeat the game for each of the following: friend, teacher, yourself, and the child himself (ask what he or she would prefer). After each choice the child makes, ask the child why the recipient would like that gift.

As storekeeper you can record each "purchase" and the reasons the child gave for choosing it on a chart like the one below. The filled-out chart will help you remember for class discussion exactly what the results of the game were.

Questions for Discussion

Did any children at your fieldsite choose toys for adults?

When you asked the children the reasons for their choices, which children seemed to be considering the preferences of other people?

Did age seem to make any difference in children's ability to choose what the person would prefer?

What did they choose to give you? Did their choice and their reason (if they gave one) show understanding of you?

The researchers who first did this experiment with children found that children's age made a difference in their choices. In general, the three-year-olds and some four-year-olds were so tied to their own point of view that they chose a toy truck or a

Birthday Present Game

Child

Age: 3 Sex: F

Choice for What Why

Choice for	What	Why
Mother	doll	because
Father	doll	(said nothing)
Friend	doll	so we can play
Teacher	book	cause we have lots of books in school
Me	doll	cause you're nice
Yourself	doll	cause I like it

doll for a parent. All the six-year-olds selected gifts that were clearly appropriate to both the age and sex of the adults (adult books, or earrings for mothers, ties for fathers).

There were some exceptions; for example, one three-year-old made only appropriate gifts. But generally the older the children were, the more appropriate their choices.

Being able to figure out what another person probably knows (or doesn't know) and how another person would think gives a child new power in coping with the world.

OTHER PEOPLE'S KNOWLEDGE

It is quite a discovery for a child to realize that everyone else doesn't know everything he or she knows. One reason children tend to explain things unclearly is that they assume you know it all already.

- Think back to times preschoolers have told you about things they have done or that have happened in their family. Did the story make sense to you? If not, why not?

Children love secrets. When they realize that everyone does not know what they know, they delight in keeping their knowledge from others.

- At what age do you think this happens?

FOOLING OTHERS

Being able to gauge what others know and how they are likely to think means being able to communicate better. It also means being able to fool people. The child who has discovered how to fool adults suddenly possesses a new magic. Being able to fool others means being able to imagine how the other person will think, based on what you figure they know.

Parents sometimes wonder why it is that their children seem to grow less honest when they get older. Many five-year-olds have been asked questions like, "Why can't *you* tell the truth? Your little brother always does."

What advice could you offer such parents?

A Child's Eye View of What Others Think

The following story is about a child who is growing in his ability to take his parents' point of view.

"Charles"
by Shirley Jackson

The day my son Laurie started kindergarten he renounced corduroy overalls with bibs and began wearing blue jeans with a belt. I watched him go off the first morning with the older girl next door, seeing clearly that an era of my life was ended, my sweet-voiced nursery-school tot replaced by a long-trousered, swaggering character who forgot to stop at the corner and wave good-bye to me.

He came home the same way, the front door slamming open, his cap on the floor, and the voice suddenly become raucous shouting, "Isn't anybody *here*?"

At lunch he spoke insolently to his father, spilled his baby sister's milk, and remarked that his teacher said we were not to take the name of the Lord in vain.

"How *was* school today?" I asked, elaborately casual.

"All right," he said.

"Did you learn anything?" his father asked.

Laurie regarded his father coldly. "I didn't learn nothing," he said.

"Anything," I said. "Didn't learn anything."

"The teacher spanked a boy, though," Laurie said, addressing his bread and butter. "For being fresh," he added, with his mouth full.

"What did he do?" I asked. "Who was it?"

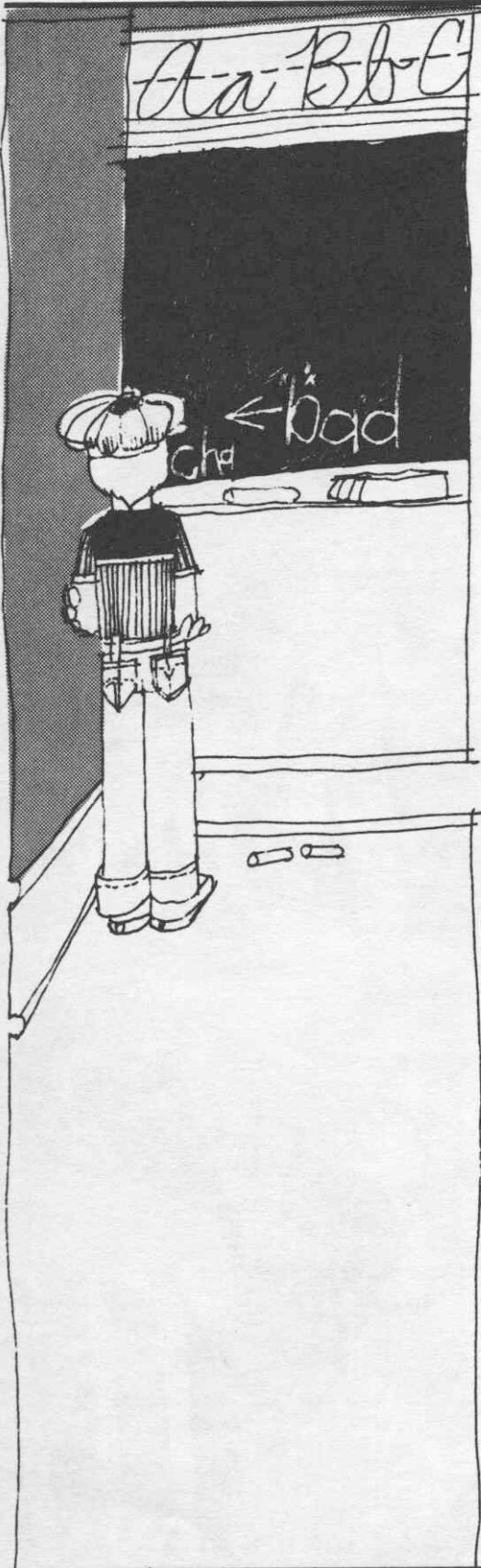
Laurie thought. "It was Charles," he said. "He was fresh. The teacher spanked him and made him stand in a corner. He was awfully fresh."

"What did he do?" I asked again, but Laurie slid off his chair, took a cookie, and left, while his father was still saying, "See here, young man."

The next day Laurie remarked at lunch, as soon as he sat down, "Well, Charles was bad again today." He grinned enormously and said, "Today Charles hit the teacher."

"Good heavens," I said, mindful of the Lord's name, "I suppose he got spanked again?"





"He sure did," Laurie said. "Look up," he said to his father.

"What?" his father said, looking up.

"Look down," Laurie said. "Look at my thumb. Gee, you're dumb." He began to laugh insanely.

"Why did Charles hit the teacher?" I asked quickly.

"Because she tried to make him color with red crayons," Laurie said. "Charles wanted to color with green crayons so he hit the teacher and she spanked him and said nobody play with Charles but everybody did."

The third day—it was Wednesday of the first week—Charles bounced a see-saw on to the head of a little girl and made her bleed, and the teacher made him stay inside all during recess. Thursday Charles had to stand in a corner during story-time because he kept pounding his feet on the floor. Friday Charles was deprived of blackboard privileges because he threw chalk.

On Saturday I remarked to my husband, "Do you think kindergarten is too unsettling for Laurie? All this toughness, and bad grammar, and this Charles boy sounds like such a bad influence."

"It'll be all right," my husband said reassuringly. "Bound to be people like Charles in the world. Might as well meet them now as later."

On Monday Laurie came home late, full of news. "Charles," he shouted as he came up the hill; I was waiting anxiously on the front steps. "Charles," Laurie yelled all the way up the hill, "Charles was bad again."

"Come right in," I said, as soon as he came close enough. "Lunch is waiting."

"You know what Charles did?" he demanded, following me through the door. "Charles yelled so in school they sent a boy in from first grade to tell the teacher she had to make Charles keep quiet, and so Charles had to stay after school. And so all the children stayed to watch him."

"What did he do?" I asked.

"He just sat there," Laurie said, climbing into his chair at the table. "Hi, Pop, y'old dust mop."

"Charles had to stay after school today," I told my husband. "Everyone stayed with him."

“What does this Charles look like?” my husband asked Laurie.
“What’s his other name?”

“He’s bigger than me,” Laurie said. “And he doesn’t have any rubbers and he doesn’t ever wear a jacket.”

Monday night was the first Parent-Teachers meeting, and only the fact that the baby had a cold kept me from going; I wanted passionately to meet Charles’s mother. On Tuesday Laurie remarked suddenly, “Our teacher had a friend come to see her in school today.”

“Charles’s mother?” my husband and I asked simultaneously.

“Naaah,” Laurie said scornfully. “It was a man who came and made us do exercises, we had to touch our toes. Look.” He climbed down from his chair and squatted down and touched his toes. “Like this,” he said. He got solemnly back into his chair and said, picking up his fork, “Charles didn’t even *do* exercises.”

“That’s fine,” I said heartily. “Didn’t Charles want to do exercises?”

“Naaah,” Laurie said. “Charles was so fresh to the teacher’s friend he wasn’t *let* do exercises.”

“Fresh again?” I said.

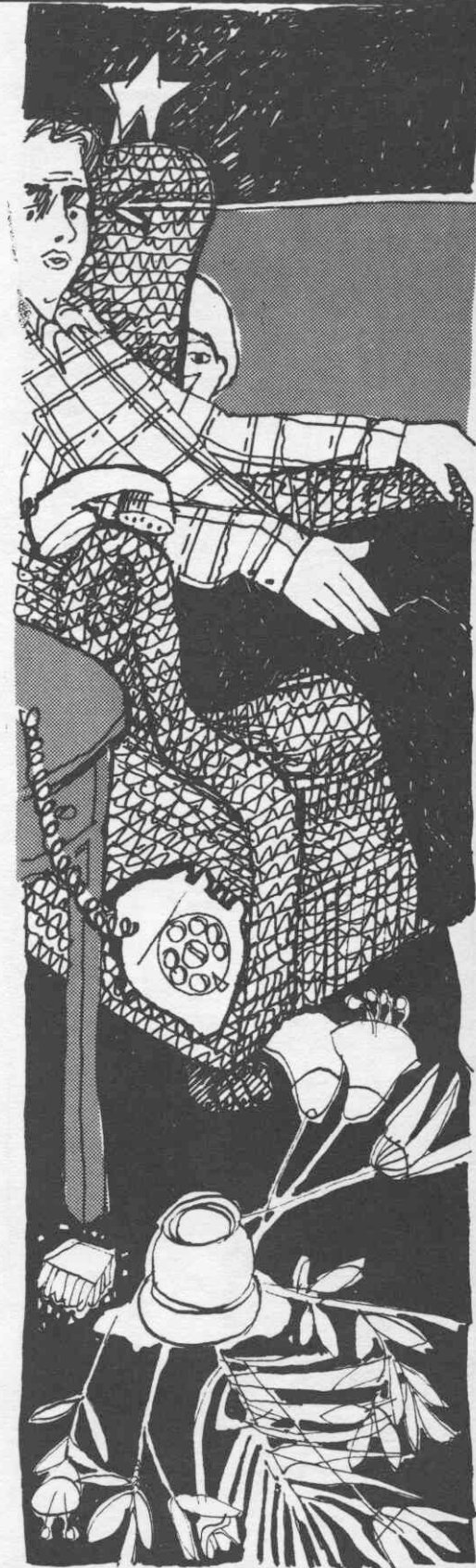
“He kicked the teacher’s friend,” Laurie said. “The teacher’s friend told Charles to touch his toes like I just did and Charles kicked him.”

“What are they going to do about Charles, do you suppose?” Laurie’s father asked him.

Laurie shrugged elaborately. “Throw him out of school, I guess,” he said.

Wednesday and Thursday were routine; Charles yelled during story hour and hit a boy in the stomach and made him cry. On Friday Charles stayed after school again and so did all the other children.

With the third week of kindergarten Charles was an institution in our family; the baby was being a Charles when she cried all afternoon; Laurie did a Charles when he filled his wagon full of mud and pulled it through the kitchen; even my husband, when he caught his elbow in the telephone cord and pulled telephone, ashtray, and a bowl of flowers off the table, said, after the first minute, “Looks like Charles.”





During the third and fourth weeks it looked like a reformation in Charles; Laurie reported grimly at lunch on Thursday of the third week, "Charles was so good today the teacher gave him an apple."

"What?" I said, and my husband added warily, "You mean Charles?"

"Charles," Laurie said. "He gave the crayons around and he picked up the books afterward and the teacher said he was her helper."

"What happened?" I asked incredulously.

"He was her helper, that's all," Laurie said, and shrugged.

"Can this be true, about Charles?" I asked my husband that night. "Can something like this happen?"

"Wait and see," my husband said cynically. "When you've got a Charles to deal with, this may mean he's only plotting."

He seemed to be wrong. For over a week Charles was the teacher's helper; each day he handed things out and he picked things up; no one had to stay after school.

"The P.T.A. meeting's next week again," I told my husband one evening. "I'm going to find Charles's mother there."

"Ask her what happened to Charles," my husband said. "I'd like to know."

"I'd like to know myself," I said.

On Friday of that week things were back to normal. "You know what Charles did today?" Laurie demanded at the lunch table, in a voice slightly awed. "He told a little girl to say a word and she said it and the teacher washed her mouth out with soap and Charles laughed."

"What word?" his father asked unwisely, and Laurie said, "I'll have to whisper it to you, it's so bad." He got down off his chair and went around to his father. His father bent his head down and Laurie whispered joyfully. His father's eyes widened.

"Did Charles tell the little girl to say *that*?" he asked respectfully.

"She said it *twice*," Laurie said. Charles told her to say it *twice*."

"What happened to Charles?" my husband asked.

"Nothing," Laurie said. "He was passing out the crayons."

Monday morning Charles abandoned the little girl and said the evil word himself three or four times, getting his mouth washed out with soap each time. He also threw chalk.

My husband came to the door with me that evening as I set out for the P.T.A. meeting. "Invite her over for a cup of tea after the meeting," he said. "I want to get a look at her."

"If only she's there," I said prayerfully.

"She'll be there," my husband said. "I don't see how they could hold a P.T.A. meeting without Charles's mother."

At the meeting I sat restlessly, scanning each comfortable matronly face, trying to determine which one hid the secret of Charles. None of them looked to me haggard enough. No one stood up in the meeting and apologized for the way her son had been acting. No one mentioned Charles.

After the meeting I identified and sought out Laurie's kindergarten teacher. She had a plate with a cup of tea and a piece of chocolate cake; I had a plate with a cup of tea and a piece of marshmallow cake. We maneuvered up to one another cautiously, and smiled.

"I've been so anxious to meet you," I said. "I'm Laurie's mother."

"We're all so interested in Laurie," she said.

"Well, he certainly likes kindergarten," I said. "He talks about it all the time."

"We had a little trouble adjusting, the first week or so," she said primly, "but now he's a fine little helper. With occasional lapses, of course."

"Laurie usually adjusts very quickly," I said. "I suppose this time it's Charles's influence."

"Charles?"

"Yes," I said, laughing, "you must have your hands full in that kindergarten, with Charles."

"Charles?" she said. "We don't have any Charles in the kindergarten."³



What Do You Think?

How well do you think Laurie understands his parents' point of view?

Does Laurie seem to consider how his parents think, or what they would like or dislike?

Laurie's mother and the teacher are old enough not to be egocentric; reread the account of the P.T.A. meeting with these questions in mind:

What do you think each of them is thinking as they meet?

What do you think each thinks the other is thinking?

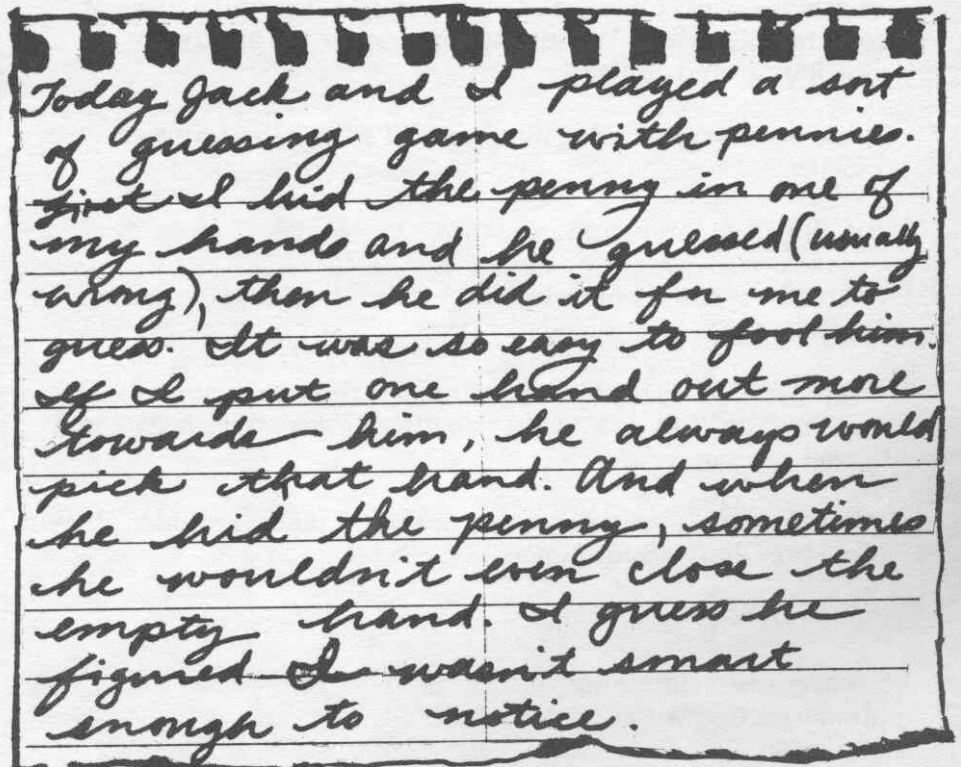
Does the way they talk to each other suggest to you what is going on in their heads?

What might make adults behave egocentrically?

Egocentrism does not explain everything; growing up is complicated.

Why do you think Laurie told his parents about Charles?

Do you think he is fooling himself as well as his parents?



Today Jack and I played a sort of guessing game with pennies. First I hid the penny in one of my hands and he guessed (usually wrong), then he did it for me to guess. It was so easy to fool him. If I put one hand out more towards him, he always would pick that hand. And when he hid the penny, sometimes he wouldn't even close the empty hand. I guess he figured I wasn't smart enough to notice.

Do you agree with this student's explanation of why Jack played that way?

Games at Your Fieldsite

Several simple games can give you insight into a child's ability to consider the point of view of another person. Playing **Guess-Which-Hand-Has-the-Penny** means trying to figure out which hand the other person will put the penny in next.

Playing **Hide-the-Button** or **Hide-and-Go-Seek** involves trying to figure out where the other person is likely to think is a good place to hide (or where "it" is unlikely to think of looking).

Many card games call for trying to guess someone else's thoughts. Some children, when playing cards, don't hold their cards up because they do not realize that they can hold their cards so that others cannot see the card faces.

In games you have played with children, have you noticed any attempts they have made to fool you? If so, how old were the children?

CONSIDERING MUTUAL PROBLEMS

"Reading the thoughts" of another person is important in finding solutions to problems like this one:

One hot afternoon, two teenagers, Larry and George, rode their bicycles to a playground where they were soon able to collect enough people for a pick-up game of basketball. Larry complained on the way home that the long ride over had made him too tired to play well. He said there was a playground near his home and that they should go there the next afternoon. George said he didn't know any of the kids there and anyway the bicycle exercise was good for Larry. He said he'd rather go back to the same playground, where the same kids would be needing them to make up the team tomorrow.

The next day was overcast, but around three o'clock it cleared up. George telephoned Larry and said, "If we hurry, we can get a game in. I'll meet you at the playground."

"OK, I'm on my way out," answered Larry, and hung up.

Which playground?

Divide into small groups. Half the class should make Larry's decision; the other half should make George's decision. After five minutes, reassemble and find out where, and if, the two boys will meet.



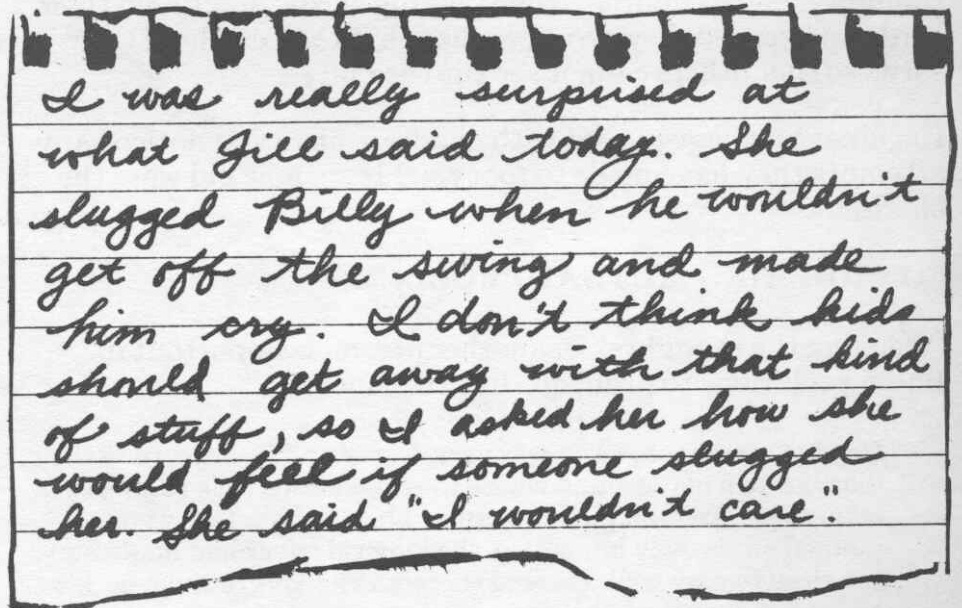
Questions for Discussion

Why did you make the decision you did?

What would you predict would happen if Larry and George in the story were five-year-olds, each deciding whether to go to the sandbox in the yard next door to Larry's or the sandbox at the far end of the block where Larry didn't want to go but George did. What would their thoughts be?

What would happen if one boy were five and the other were a teenager?

A Child's Eye View of What Others Feel



I was really surprised at what Jill said today. She slugged Billy when he wouldn't get off the swing and made him cry. I don't think kids should get away with that kind of stuff, so I asked her how she would feel if someone slugged her. She said "I wouldn't care".



Is Jill being callous or is she too young to be able to put herself in another person's shoes?

Imagine this scene at a fieldsite: Steve falls over some blocks and starts crying. Two children are watching him when he falls.

- How would you expect Johnny, age three, to react to Steve's distress?
- Do you think Gina, age five, would react differently?
- Would you expect children of either age to feel *sympathy* for the child who fell down?

Have you noticed any children trying to respond to you in terms of what they thought your thoughts or reasoning might be? If so, tell what happened. How old were the children?

The following reading describes some of the possible responses children may express toward another person in distress:

... the child is capable of sympathetic feeling toward members of his own family, at least from toddlerhood; the toddler may sooth an unhappy parent, or offer one of his toys to an ailing sibling. But the toddler's or young preschool child's first reaction to the distress of a child his own age is likely to be to burst out crying himself. Such crying is less a matter of sympathy, however, than an act of empathic participation [a feeling that he actually *is* the other child], reflecting a lack of sharp boundaries between other people's feelings and his own—it is as though what hurts the other child hurts him, too ... Sympathetic reactions to age-mates begin when the child pauses in his play to stare at another child who is suffering. Later in the preschool years we can see behavior akin to mature sympathy. One child will console another, or run to fetch the teacher to deal with an emergency, or rebuke a child who has been unkind.

... Observe, too, that the child who acts sympathetically in one situation may behave quite cruelly in another; this is particularly likely to be the case when the mob spirit takes over and children gang up to taunt and abuse a victim. Other times, a usually sympathetic child may simply not understand another's distress and so take pleasure in it as an amusing spectacle, as when he witnesses a tumble.⁴

Sympathy means being able to “put yourself in the other person's place and understand how that person feels.”

Child psychologist Selma Fraiberg offers this typical example of a child's developing sense of sympathy:

At three years and four we can even see how the child sometimes finds pleasure in cruel acts. I was watching my four-year-old neighbor, Marcia, one afternoon a few years ago. A caterpillar crawled cautiously along the sidewalk and Marcia, the most charming and sweet-tempered of little girls, moved toward it with a sinister smile on her baby face. Then with a sudden movement, she lifted her foot and squashed the caterpillar, juicily, under her shoe. Afterwards she inspected the smashed remains with interest and undiminished pleasure. Yet only two years later, when Marcia and I would walk together in the park, the sight of a mangled worm or a dead bird would fill her with horror and disgust. It made her sick, she said, to see something dead. It made her feel like crying. If it was dead, it could never come alive again.

Somehow in these two years Marcia had lost her pleasure in destructive acts. She had also discovered that death was final, that a lost life was irretrievable, and that life, even the life of a





The burial of the young birds.

caterpillar, was a precious thing. In her child's way she did not put a higher value on the life of a human being than the life of an insect. She believed that the worm and the bird had a consciousness like human consciousnesses, that they loved mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, and through a brutal act had lost life. *She had put herself imaginatively in the place of the worm and suffered through identification.*

If I now say that Marcia was becoming civilized, I do not mean, of course, that mourning for dead insects is a civilized trait but that the capacity to put oneself in the place of another living creature, . . . is the unique quality of man's intelligence and is the indispensable quality in the morality of man. We will see that this capacity for identification reveals itself more significantly in Marcia's relationships with people. Her understanding of "how another person feels" becomes an important factor in governing her behavior, in restricting aggressive and destructive acts and words.⁵

What Do You Think?

Do you think the child was being cruel when she stepped on the caterpillar? Why might she have done it?

Can you recall similar feelings from your own childhood?

Can you think of times when children at your fieldsite showed sympathy for others? What happened?

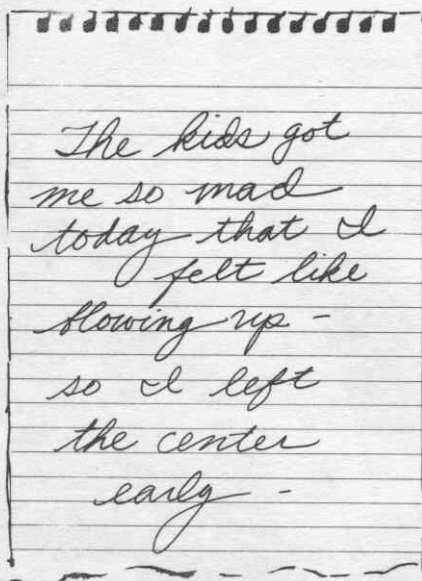
How does understanding how another feels affect children's developing sense of fairness?

IT ISN'T EASY

Understanding another person's feelings doesn't mean knowing everything about what they are feeling. It simply means being able to appreciate that they are experiencing feelings—feelings that may be similar in some ways to our own, yet special to the other person.

Some people become better than others at sensing others' feelings, but all people become *capable* of separating their own feelings from the feelings of others and of knowing the difference.

Of course, understanding the feelings of others is not easy. Often people hide their real feelings. For example, many people bury their sadness in anger, reacting in anger to situations which in fact cause sadness. It is said that some people become





so good at covering sadness with anger that they no longer recognize the feeling of sadness in themselves.

Children also confuse *sad* with *mad* and often react in terms of anger when they or others are actually feeling sad.

An example of this process of replacing sorrow with anger occurred when a group of friends aged five to seven were on the verge of angry blows and hard feelings over a broken teapot. A mother came along and said to the owner of the broken pot, "You must be very sad that your china pot was broken." The little girl broke into tears. Her grief was shared by all the children; and all banded together again in sympathy, some even crying in empathy.

Questions for Discussion

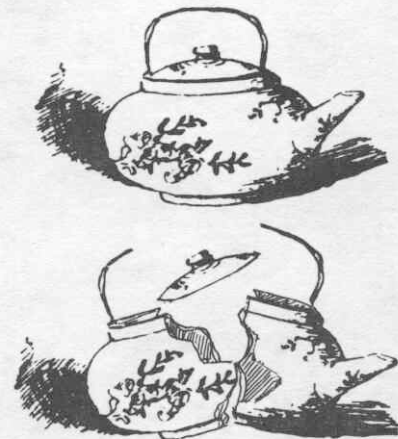
Can you think of any incidents you have observed where children behaved in this way?

Can you think of any reasons why this happens?

When do you think people "grow out of" this confusion?

How are children's emotions dealt with at your fieldsite?

Do you always let children know how you feel?



Your View and the Child's

Do you sometimes wonder what a child at your fieldsite thinks of you? Using your journal, consider in the following way what some of those thoughts might be.

Think of a specific child and write a brief description of how you think that child sees you.

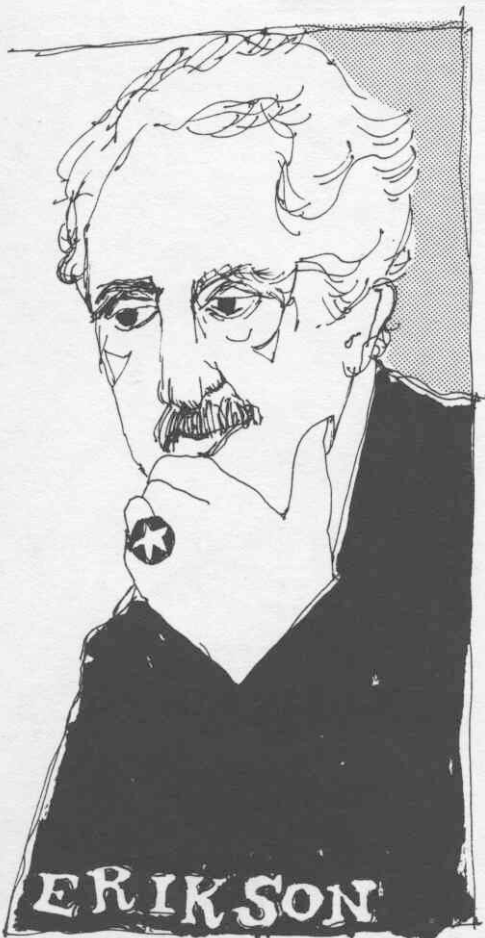
- What does he or she think of you? feel about you? expect from you?
- How does he or she treat you or respond to you? What do you think that behavior means about the child's opinion about you?

A great deal of what you do in situations involving other people, like at the fieldsite, is probably guided by your guesses about other people's point of view, and particularly their view of *you*.

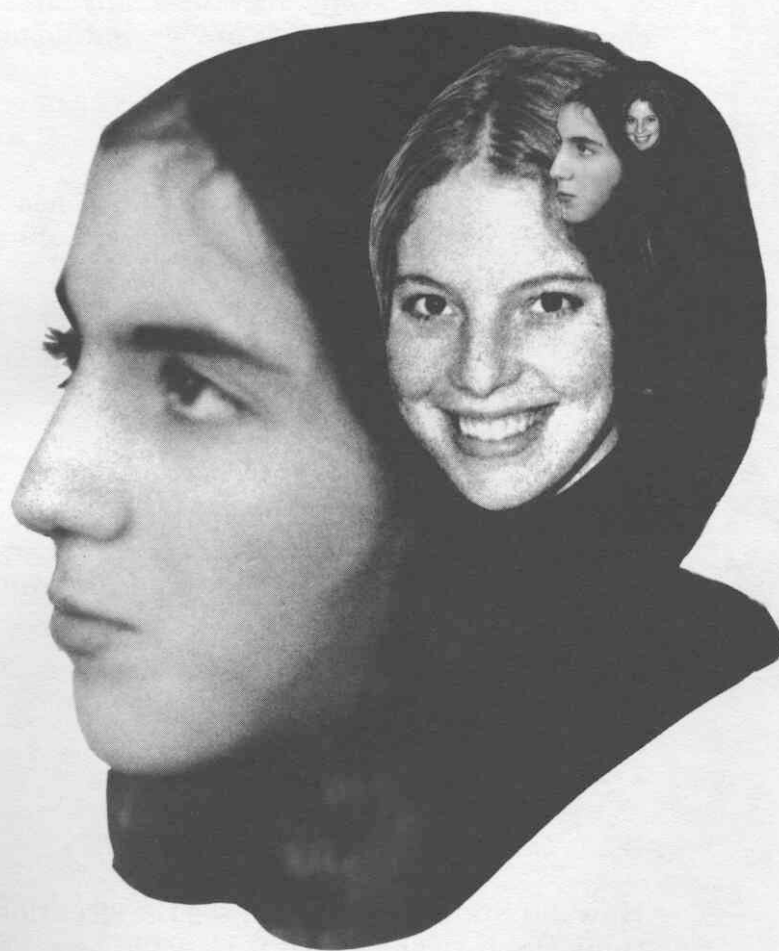
Erik Erikson describes adolescence as a period when young people are "primarily concerned with what they appear to be in the eyes of others compared with what they feel they are." He feels that teenagers during these years are trying to fit their own view of themselves with how they think others view them.

It has been said that the "special egocentrism" of teenagers is that they constantly assume that others are thinking about them and judging them.

- Do you agree?
- Do teenagers pay too much attention to their ideas of the views of other people?



Here is a feat of paying attention to the views of others which students can and do attempt.



This is a student thinking about what her friend might be thinking about what the student is thinking about what her friend might be thinking about her.

- Think of a time when you thought about what someone else might be thinking. What was it?
- Think of a time when you thought about what someone else thought of you or something you did. Jot it down in your journal along with your responses to these questions.

How did the other person's opinion affect how you felt?
How you acted?

Were you right about what the other person was thinking?

How did you try to find out?



EGOCENTRISM IN ADULTS

A young child sees only one side of any situation. Older people can consider several points of view but do not always do so.

Can you think of an example where you or someone else behaved egocentrically?

As a class, brainstorm some possible times when students or adults are likely to act egocentrically. For example:

- when you're tired, or
- you're preoccupied with a problem, or
- you've just failed a test.



Look at the film "Little Blocks," in which a student runs into difficulty trying to work with a shy little boy. Try putting yourself in the shoes of each of the people in the incident. After viewing the film, consider the situation from these four points of view:

- Rodney's (the child)
- Bobby's (the student)
- the teacher's
- your own.

What Do You Think?

How did Rodney (the child) see the situation? What did he think Bobby wanted to do? How did he see the teacher?

What did Bobby (the student) think Rodney wanted to do? How did Bobby see Rodney? How did Bobby see the teacher? How did Bobby see himself? How is his view of himself influenced by how he thinks others see him?

What was the teacher's view of each of the boys in this situation?

How do you see the situation? What advice would you offer Bobby?

HOW IMPORTANT ARE OTHER PEOPLE'S POINTS OF VIEW?

Consider the following dilemma:

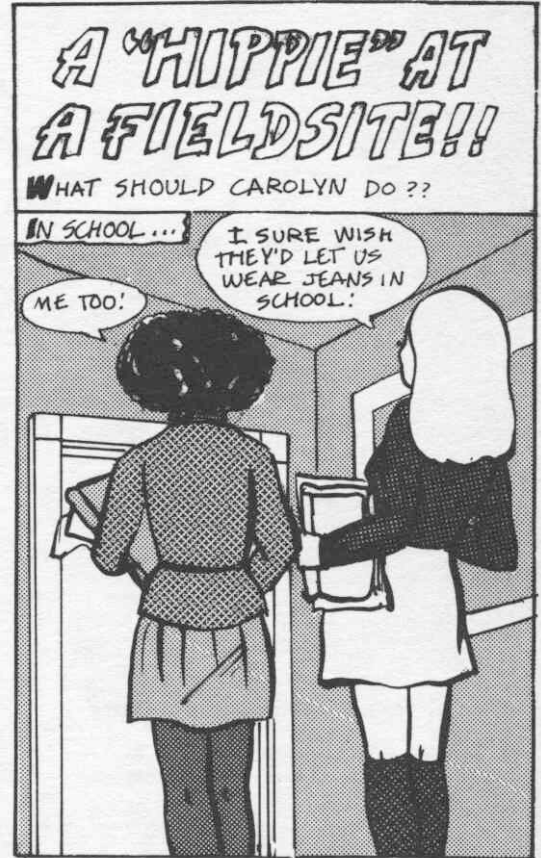
Carolyn, a student, very much wants to wear blue jeans when she works at her fieldsite. Her school has a rule against girls wearing blue jeans and so, the first time she wore them, her teacher told her she should not wear them again. The fieldsite teacher, who has not said anything about Carolyn's clothes, always wears a dress, but has praised Carolyn for the way she gets down on the floor with the children and "gets into things" with them. The children greet her weekly visit eagerly. Since she began her work, a parent has complained about "hippies" working at the preschool.

Questions for Discussion

What should Carolyn do and why?

How do you think she should decide what is fair among all these points of view?

Describe any problems that have come up in your work which involve weighing the points of view of several people.



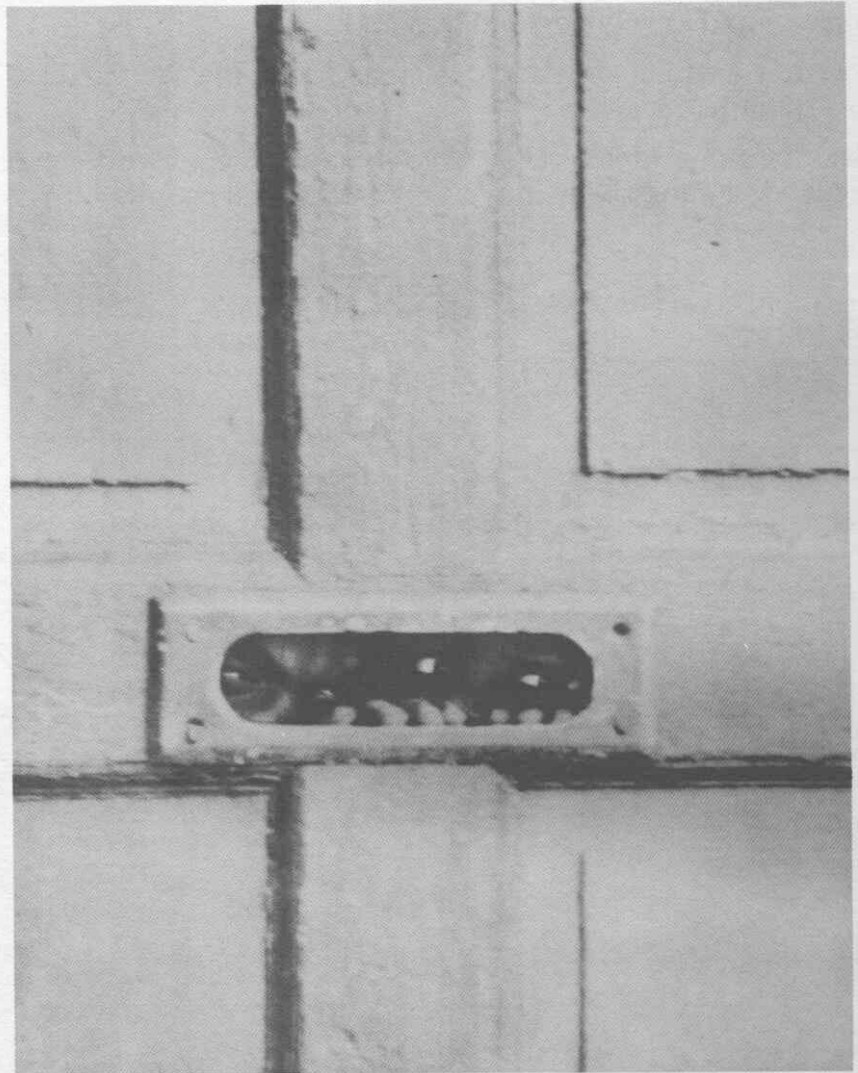
¹Lawrence Kohlberg, "The Child as Moral Philosopher," *Psychology Today*. Sept., 1968.

²Jean Piaget, *The Language and Thought of the Child*. (New York: World Publishing Company.)

³Shirley Jackson, "Charles," *The Lottery* (New York: Avon Books, 1949) pp. 70-74.

⁴L. Joseph Stone and Joseph Church, *Childhood and Adolescence* (Random House, 1957) p. 283.

⁵Selma Fraiberg, *The Magic Years* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959) 1 pp. 190-191.



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