

# Children in Society

Exploring Childhood / Family and Society



# Contents

Subject Matter of Unit:

The role of the larger society in providing resources for children, giving messages about the society's values and expectations.

	MAKER GOOD USE OF TIME	U	U
	<b>SOCIAL TRAITS</b>		
	IN ORDER IN GAMES AND ACTIVITIES	S	S
	SHARED AND PLAYS WELL WITH OTHER PEOPLE	U	U
	RESPECTS PROPERTY AND MATERIALS	S	S
	IS SELF-RELIANT	S	S
	ON OPERATOR WELL WITH TEACHERS	U	S

## Children's Tracks

6

### Societies Provide for Children

Kibbutz Childrearing

The Ibos Cope With a Crisis

Looking Back at Home

19

### Self and Society

Views of Some Young People



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**track** (trak), *n.* marks left behind, a trace that shows that someone was there.

# Children's Tracks

Scientists have long studied tracks as a way of finding out about a species and its environment. As children grow up, they leave many kinds of tracks. The records and documents a society produces about its children provide a rich source of evidence about the interaction between children and their society.

The minute Maurice was born, he was on record. Within a few weeks, dozens of facts about him had been filed and several organizations had made note of his life—the hospital and its staff, his parents' health insurance company, the state and federal governments, the baby-food and diaper makers. Soon a newspaper, a church, and even a hospital photographer had welcomed him. A new member of his society, he was already leaving his tracks as a consumer, patient, client, citizen, statistic, and tax deduction.

By the time Maurice entered first grade, he had attended a day care center where records were kept on his attendance, aptitude, health, and behavior. His center was regulated by state and federal regulations. He had used public facilities like a library and a clinic. Maurice's tracks were to be found in files, in drawers, and on charts. Each of Maurice's tracks made some mark on his society.

We can examine this kind of "children's tracks" for evidence of how a society defines the needs and interests of its children and their caregivers, and tries to respond to them.

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## school records

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Consider one familiar set of "tracks": school records. What does a report card tell you about what the school considers its role to be in helping parents raise their children? Examine each of the following preschool and first-grade reports for clues about how each of these institutions views the children it serves, and in what directions it intends to affect them. The first two are from nursery schools. The second two are from first grade.

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## activity

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Working in groups of four, each of you choose a different one of these reports and make up a set of marks or comments for another child. Think of a child who is very different from the child written about in the report you chose. You could make the marks or comments about an imaginary child, or you could make them for a child you know, perhaps at your fieldsite.

Read your new report to your group, and give your ideas about these three questions:

- How do you think that the form itself affected what you said about the child?
- If this report had been "for real," how might it have affected your work with that child?
- How might it have affected a parent who received it?

As a class, discuss how the preschool reports differ from the primary school reports and how they are alike.

HARTWELL SCHOOL

FAMILY-TEACHER CONFERENCE  
June 19, 1972

Marian S. S.  
Child's Name

1. Displays average motor ability (large muscle movement). *yes*
2. Displays manual coordination in use of crayons, scissors, toys, etc. and in play. *yes*
3. Displays awareness of rhythm. *yes*
4. Has self-control when participating in "quiet activity". *yes*
5. Appears to be mentally alert. *yes*
6. Approaches activities in a directed, purposeful manner. *yes*
7. Has a fund of general information. *yes*
8. Possesses a normal memory of objects and happenings. *yes*
9. Appears to be emotionally stable in relation with classmates, teachers, other adults, other children. *yes*
10. Possesses self-confidence in a small group, in a large group. *yes*
11. Appears to be developing independence and self-reliance. *yes*
12. Indulges in mature behavior (for age) in play and school activities. *yes*
13. Ambidexterity? *SOME*
14. Can perceive similarities or differences (visually). *yes*
15. Can differentiate between sounds (rhymes and initial consonants). Letter-sound. *yes*
16. Can listen intelligently and follow oral directions without frequent repetitions. *yes*
17. Expresses self intelligently and well. *yes*
18. Can follow a story when read to, with apparent comprehension. *yes*
19. Attention span. *Good*
20. Speaks in a complete sentence. *yes*

Barnsfort School

Student: Christie T

Date: August 22, 1972  
June 15, 1972

September assignment  
Rise School - Ungraded (K, 1+2)  
first year.

Reading	✓	
Journal - written English	✓	
Spelling - phonics	✓	
Problem solving	✓	
Written arithmetic	✓	
works independently	✓	
completes work	✓	
works well with children	✓	
Works well with adults	✓	

Comments:  
Christie reads above level, computes math readily and works well in all other areas. She has completed a different book of math and is into it. Socializing occupies much of her time and energies and some days it is difficult for her to focus in on Bk #3, which takes a bit more concentration. I presently, see this as a factor of avoidance but will be aware next year to arrange time and help her to get back into math. She is not alone with the problem of allowing time. *Parents' signature* *she does very well.*  
I will be team teaching next fall. We will have an (K, 1+2) ungraded class in the Race Building that has been assigned to *Christie* and I look forward to seeing her in the fall. *Parents' signature* *see you!*

January Conference - Kindergarten 1972 NAME Susanrah

Physical

Susanrah works well with her large and small muscles. She volunteers to work on projects, such as, weaving which demand small muscle coordination. She enjoys going out to the playground and using a variety of equipment.

Emotional

Susanrah is quite <sup>self</sup> confident and she enjoys leading the activity in which she is involved. She is quite insistent about getting her way in most situations which causes friction within the group with whom she is working. Susanrah is able to assume responsibility of herself in choosing the activities in which she wants to become involved.

Social

Susanrah spends much time working with Sarah and Jolly, however, at times their relationship becomes tense when Susanrah tries to force her ideas on them. Susanrah is learning how to compromise with her friends. Susanrah lacks responsibility for her belongings. She loses many things and her cubby is usually untidy.

Intellectual

Susanrah expresses herself quite well verbally. Her attention span is very good especially when listening to a story. She initiates several activities with her friends and she often includes other children that she likes. She is quite able to use information she has gathered to share with others and to relate to other areas.

NAME Alison S.

PERIODS	MATHS	READING	WRITING	SPELLING	ENGLISH	ARITHMETIC	SOCIAL STUDIES	HEALTH	MUSIC	ART	PERIOD	
											1	2
FIRST	A											
	B											
	C	X	X									
	D	X	X									
	E											
SECOND	A											
	B											
	C	X	X									
	D	X	X									
	E											
THIRD	A											
	B											
	C	X	X									
	D	X	X									
	E											
FOURTH	A											
	B											
	C	X	X									
	D	X	X									
	E											

AN X INDICATES YOUR CHILD'S NAME

U MEANS SATISFACTORY  
L MEANS UNSATISFACTORY

WORK HABITS

	1	2	3	4
FINISHES WORK ON TIME				U
FOLLOWS DIRECTIONS				U
IS NEAT AND ORDERLY				U
SHOWS EFFORT				U
MAKES GOOD USE OF TIME				U

SOCIAL TRAITS

IS POLITE IN SPEECH AND ACTION					S	S
WORKS AND PLAYS WELL WITH OTHER PUPILS					U	U
RESPECTS PROPERTY AND MATERIALS					S	S
IS SELF-RELIANT					S	S
CO-OPERATES WELL WITH TEACHER					U	S
DAYS ABSENT	10	0	8	16		
DAYS TARDY	0	1	0	0		

PERFECT ATTENDANCE IS ESSENTIAL TO YOUR CHILD'S PROGRESS

As a class, survey the kinds of reports that are made about children at your field-sites. Who sees them? What purposes do they serve? (If possible, bring some examples of the forms or the reports to class.) You might invent a preschool or primary school report you would like to see used. What purposes would you use it for?

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## Barry's Case

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In creating your own ideal report form, you may have thought about other uses agencies and groups make of written forms besides communicating to parents. Here is a psychiatrist's account\* of several ways in which a boy's early school records were used.

Barry Glass was a fifteen-year-old high school student arrested for stealing a car; most of the charges were dropped since the car was the family's. But they still had him charged with driving without a license. He'd driven his dad's car into a local cemetery where he and three other boys sat around sharing a six-pack of beer one of them had taken from his family's refrigerator. They were pretending to be drunk and giving speeches standing on top of tombstones when the police arrived. The other three boys ran away, leaving Barry with his father's car. The police didn't press for a drunk-and-disorderly charge because only four beer cans had been opened and most were still more than half full. . . .

Barry became very upset after he was arrested and began to cry in the car. The officer who took him home had planned to tell Mr. Glass to pick up the car and forget the whole thing, but Barry was shaking so badly the officer suggested the boy be brought in and evaluated.

Barry's school records hadn't arrived in time for me to read before my first interview with him. Barry told me his story, and I told him that I didn't find it so unusual.

"Why were you so upset, Barry?"

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\*Excerpted from David S. Viscott, M.D., *The Making of a Psychiatrist*. New York: Arbor House, Inc., 1972.

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"I just felt that I'd catch real hell at home. I know I've let my father down. And now look at me. I'm here with a head shrinker. That means I'm crazy, doesn't it?"

Barry was shy and down on himself. He had a good vocabulary that he used correctly. He just seemed very unsure of himself, very convinced he was a disappointment to his family.

"Look," he said at one point, "I know I'm not as bright as the average person but that doesn't mean I don't have *any* rights."

"What do you mean, you're not as bright as the average person?"

"Everyone knows I'm not."

"You're brighter than average." I'd felt that earlier in the interview when he had said something that seemed especially insightful to me. "Really, you have a good head. You just seem terribly unsure of yourself, but there's no question that you're OK."

Barry lit up. We talked for another half hour. I told him that I couldn't find anything wrong with him except his putting himself down all the time, and asked him if he would like to talk about that again. I left it up to him. He thought he might. In my report I described him as an insecure young man who was easily supported by praise and esteem and needed reassurance. I said it might be useful to have the social worker see the parents. I also suggested that he was not to be considered delinquent.

Two days later Grigsby came storming into my office, demanding to see me. "Did you write this?" . . .

"Yes, what's wrong?"

"What's wrong? Your incompetence is what's wrong. You sat down with this kid for one lousy hour and decided that he was normal and sent him away."

"Yes, I thought he was upset about his image but could be easily reassured. I'll probably see him again to help in that. He didn't appear pathological to me."

"You didn't bother to review his school report?"

"It wasn't there when I saw him. . . . I felt the kid was normal in most respects and told him so."

"You told him that? . . . Look at these," he said, handing me the school records. I read them quickly.

Barry Glass was in special classes in school although he was friendly with boys his own age, which is not the usual situation with retarded kids. His IQ was given at 76 and 73 on two tests taken in the first and second grade, but never again repeated. School IQ tests aren't terribly reliable. Barry did poorly throughout school and had been in special classes since the third grade. His work in special classes was no better than his work in regular classes.

"You still think he's normal?" Grigsby grabbed back the report. "What about these IQ tests?"

"They're wrong," I said. "This kid has at least a normal IQ and he belongs in regular class." . . .

"You review this." Grigsby jabbed the report at me. "You tell me that this kid is normal, in the face of all these reports, and expect me to believe you. Read this, then rewrite your report. Start acting like a professional." . . .

I walked into my office . . . and read the school report in detail. Apparently when Barry was in the first and second grades he had had severe allergies and couldn't work well in school. I guessed he was taking antihistamines. That would slow anyone down. The chart didn't mention that fact, but I was willing to bet on it. He was tested early in the fall and again in the latter part of May, the two worst times for allergy sufferers. Each time he did poorly. Somehow, although his work quality stayed poor, he seemed to maintain an achievement level that was higher than the other children in his special class. At the same time, he always seemed a year behind other kids his age in regular class. Retarded kids don't do that. Each year they fall more and more behind. Also, he was captain of the junior varsity football team and co-captain of the baseball team. Retarded kids aren't usually looked up to by the kids in other classes. Barry was, if they had elected him captain and co-captain.

I saw Barry again and asked his mother to come in with him. She told me that he *had* been taking antihistamines at the time of the

IQ tests. OK, lucky guess! I told Barry that I believed it was all a big mistake and that he deserved a chance to straighten out the records. . . .

Barry was tested. Overall, his IQ was 106, the bright side of normal. Barry was afraid of making mistakes. He probably could score higher. He saw each mistake as evidence he wouldn't do well. I could understand why.

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### discussion activity

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Brainstorm all the kinds of records you can think of that a school might keep about children.

- How might each kind of record help the society provide care and resources for children?
- What problems can you imagine any of these records might pose for children or their parents?

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## using the track pack

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Your work with children is affected by how society shapes a child's experience. The "Children's Tracks" package contains evidence that you can use to find out how some agencies view children and attempt to serve them. You can tell something about the values of our society, and its view of children and of its role in providing resources for them by examining these documents. You or your teacher should cut up the sheet of documents, then pass the items around the class and discuss them in small groups.

Look for clues to the society's values in the ways children are described. Notice what characteristics are considered important, what opportunities are made available to children and what stumbling blocks are placed before them.

Guide your exploration with these questions:

- What characteristics of a child is this group or agency interested in? not interested in?
- What children does it reach? How does it hope to affect them?
- Who participates in the decisions which will affect the child?

# Societies Provide for Children

A society's childrearing practices and the resources it provides to families may vary a great deal. Anyone trying to understand the variety of ways that societies have found to raise their children must take care not to judge other societies in terms of his or her own society's values. It is important to remember that the customs and practices of a particular society have evolved as responses to its own needs, resources, and history.

## Kibbutz Childrearing

Suppose you could arrange your life and surroundings exactly the way you wanted, in tune with your dream of an ideal society. Such dreams have proven difficult to realize fully or to make lasting. But where they have lasted, they provide an exciting way of taking a fresh look at the role of society in children's upbringing.

The kibbutz movement in Israel has survived and grown. The original founders were young Jews who had grown up in Europe, in a social system that discriminated against them.

Early in this century they, like some other Jews, returned to Palestine, their biblical homeland, seeking freedom and the right to be proud of their identity.

Those who founded the kibbutzim had a special vision of how they wanted to live:

We had to use our brains to buy, now we would use our hands to give, and in our communities we would do away with money altogether. We would have among us neither masters nor paid servants but we would give ourselves freely to the soil





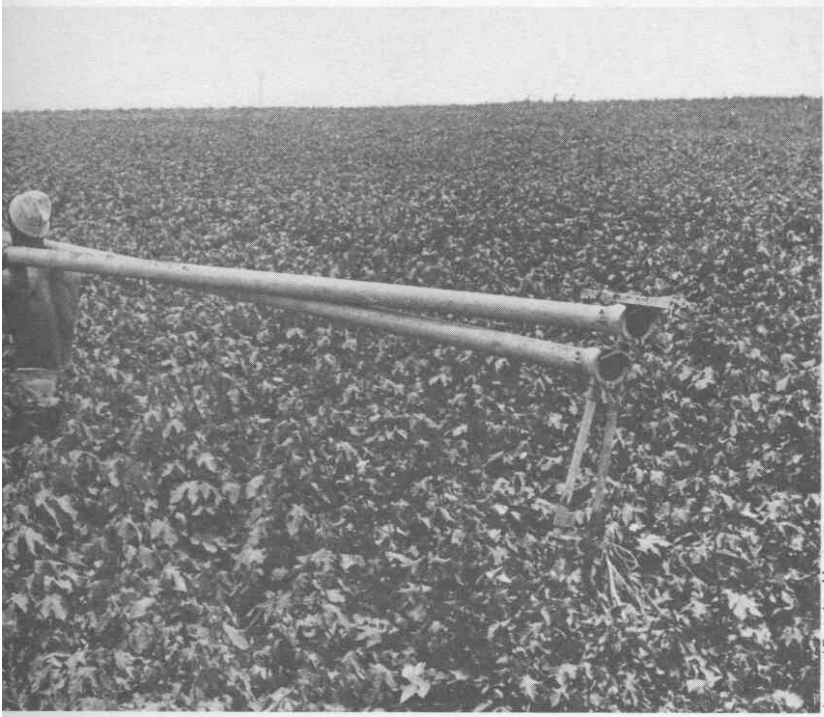
Leonard Freed — Magnum



Owen Franken / Stock Boston



Dave Vogt — EDC



Leonard Freed — Magnum



Owen Franken / Stock Boston



and to one another's needs. Thus nobody would have to be ambitious or to worry for himself or his family; the community would protect him, there would always be all the others to help him out. All our strength would go into the land, yet we would be strong in the face of sickness, difficulty or danger. Neither lacking nor possessing anything, we hoped in this way we would manage to have a just and peaceful life.

— *A founder of the first kibbutz*

These pioneer men and women struggled together to overcome the harsh conditions of building a home in the desert and to translate their ideals into a working system.

Kibbutz life is based on commitment to goals of absolute equality, unity, cooperation, and diligent work. Men and women are expected to live and work as equals, and the

possessions of the kibbutz (land, equipment, food, beds and books) are collectively owned.

From the first kibbutz, established in 1909, the movement has grown in Israel from twelve members to about 90,000 kibbutzniks (4 per cent of the Israeli population), living in 226 kibbutzim. Growth has meant change and adaptation, always with the attempt to fulfill the original goals. As children were born, one of the greatest challenges was to develop a way of raising them that would be consistent with these goals, and which would lead to the children's commitment to the values of the founding generations.

Although the 226 communities vary in national political outlook, they share fundamentally similar social goals, which are reflected in their childrearing arrangements.

Here is an American newspaper's explanation of those arrangements.

St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press,  
Sixteen

April 8, 1973  
First Section

## Commune's Babies Parted From Family

KIBBUTZ GALON, Israel —

Almost immediately after they come home from the hospital after birth, the babies of this communal settlement embark on a childhood unlike any other.

They are put into a nurse-tended "baby house" with a crib room lined with beds, a play room cluttered with toys and an outdoor patio with a row of playpens, one to a child.

**THERE, APART** from their families, they join five or so other infants with whom they will sleep, eat, play, learn and grow up until they leave or go into the army at 18.

With each passing phase of their development, they will move with their group to another

house, another housemother-teacher.

The separation from Mommy and Daddy is far from total. The mothers handle all the feedings for the first six weeks, for example, and can come visiting almost any time as baby grows to adolescence.

**EACH DAY** except Saturday, the hours from 4 p.m. to 7 or 8 are set aside for family togetherness. Parents come pick up their offspring for walks around the settlement, romps in the grass or just a quiet afternoon at home.

Then it's back to their group-mates for the children while the moms and dads return to their one-bedroom flats or head for the chess games, magazines and television of the communal game room.

Saturday, the Jewish sabbath, is wholly devoted to being together. Sometimes the entire settlement climbs into trucks or buses for an outing.

**ADVOCATES** of the kibbutz educational system argue that its families have just as much time together as the average family, say, in the United States.

"The educational process here is built on a children's world. It's their society so that they are not obliged to copy adults or to suit them."

According to Mrs. Grossman, "The family unit still has the biggest influence on the children in the final analysis. The moment a kid is unhappy, he doesn't call for his nurse but rather for his mommy.

**"TO THE CHILD** there is no confusing who is who — his family is his, the nurse is everyone's . . . the kids are enormously happy, never lonely. We demand from them only what they are capable of doing."

Thus, the everyday tasks of providing for children's needs are the responsibility of caregivers, called "metapelets." This arrangement frees both parents for work in the commune, and enables them to devote the hours they spend with their children to their spiritual and emotional needs.

How do the practices which have been developed for raising kibbutz children relate to kibbutz goals?

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## film viewing: "young children on the kibbutz"

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This film about kibbutz childhood was filmed at two kibbutzim; it gives you a chance to look at the daily life of four-year-olds growing up in that society. Shefeyim and Lahavot Habasham are both thriving communities which have existed for fifty years. One is close to Tel Aviv (Israel's largest city); the other is located in the rugged terrain of the Golan Heights close to a disputed border. In addition to farming for their basic needs, both have developed sources of additional income (a fire extinguisher factory, a guest house, a flower-exporting industry) which enable them to enjoy a relatively high standard of living.

After viewing the film, share your first impressions and ask any questions the film may have raised. Then, re-view the film and take notes in a format like this:

For discussion, the film can be divided into three parts. Refer to the film notes you made as you think about what is said on the soundtrack.

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### from *waking up to folding laundry* (6:00 a.m. to midmorning)

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This first part looks at the early morning activities in the children's house.

Each of the following statements was made in the film by Menahem Gerson, of the Oranim Center for the Study of Kibbutz Education.

Our children's house is not an institution. It is the world of the child, where the chair is the right height for him, and where everything is arranged according to his needs. We want the children's house to be a home for the child, and it does not mean that he can't have another room in his parents' flat. So you have, from the very beginning, two influences.

There was a period when the interest of the parent was very much played down, but that is a long time ago, and now the children's houses at all ages are open to the parents, and the parents cooperate and are meant to cooperate, and so on.

- From what you saw, what aspects of the children's house make it different from a family's home, yet "not an institution"?
- How does it reflect kibbutz values?

what the scene was about	values that were being communicated	how they were being communicated

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## from *singing to visiting* *the greenhouse*

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This section of the film follows children through some of their daily activities:

Young toddlers can walk all over the kibbutz and can be sure that if there is any problem with them, everybody will help them. They don't have the experience of dangerous people. They take it for granted that adults help the children.

- What values are reflected in this special aspect of a kibbutz child's life?
- How does it compare with your experience, and what you have been taught?

The next two statements were made by Hannah Lefkowitz, a grandparent and a founder of Shefeyim.

In this society, everyone is judged, not by what he does, but how he does what he does — so that the people are honored by the way they do their job, and not by the job. A person may do any job at all, the simplest job, if he does it well and if he is serious about it and thinks how to do it better, he will be regarded as an important person. Everyone knows and feels that work is the most important thing a human being can achieve. It is not done for the sake of existence, it is done for the sake of the person's worth.

- What does your society teach about work?
- How do you feel about what she says?

The real education is accomplished by example. They see it among grownups and they understand it in a very natural way. It is not being talked about, it is just experienced in everyday life.

- What does she mean by "learning by example"?
- What examples in the children's lives does the film show?
- What do children you know learn from seeing and knowing you?

I have made a big research about the behavior of caretakers and negative measures were very, very small indeed. Not only the physical punishment, which hardly existed, but all kinds of this sort of negative measure we have succeeded to wipe it out, so to speak, from our educational system, not because every one of our caretakers has a wonderful personality, but we have a social system which has a deep influence.

- How do caretakers in the film seem to handle problems or encourage children to behave in desirable ways?
- What do you think the scholar means when he says that the social system has a deep influence?

We don't educate towards competition. We educate towards cooperation. We want to bring up people who know that the first thing you have to do in a community is to contribute your share.

We start education towards work, training towards work, not by telling them you have to do this, but by allowing them to help the caretakers. We let them do it in their own time. How we bring them near the aim is permissive, but the aim exists and has its influence.

- What are some ways to educate towards competition? towards cooperation? towards work?

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from *visiting the cowbarn to going to bed* (4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.)

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This last section focuses on the interaction between children and their families.

Talking about the kibbutz system, the scholar tells us that if parents want to be in emotional contact with the children, "they have to invest a great deal. Otherwise, the child, not the very young child, but a little later, might decide it's more interesting to play with my peers than to go home." This society is planned so that from four o'clock until bedtime are the children's hours, and the parents spend that time with their children.

- Do you think what he says is more true or less true in your society?
- How does the way society is set up affect the quality of relationship possible between parents and children? other adults and children?

A kibbutz father described the system from a parent's point of view:

The fathers work in the field, but the mothers work in the kids' house. So they come; so they come. In the afternoon, they are with the parents more, I thought, more than the parents outside the kibbutz because when the father outside the kibbutz came from work, he is tired. He goes to wash; he has his business and they don't see the father enough. But here, the father, when he came from the work, he has four hours with his children and he wants to give them all the time he can, because he thought that in the morning when he is not with them he wants to give them in the afternoon all the time he can. And we hope that our children will be as good as we want them.

- In what ways does he feel he is different from fathers outside the kibbutz?
- What does he share with all parents?
- What do parents in this film seem to try to give their children during the time they spend together?

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## what about you?

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If you had been raised on a kibbutz. . .  
What do you think you would have liked about it? why?

What do you think you would have disliked? why?

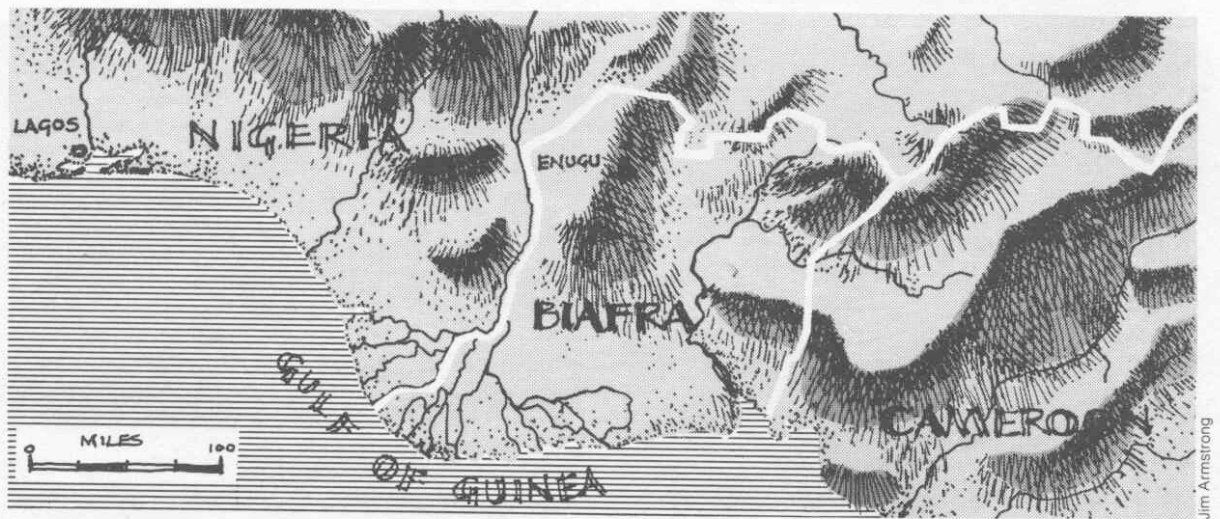
Write in your journal what difference you think it would have made to "who you are."

Think about your everyday dealings with other people. . .

Would your relation to peers be different from what it is now?

What about your relation to adults?

How do you think you'd feel about work? about your neighborhood? about school?



# The Ibos Cope With a Crisis

Few societies have been able to plan for their children's upbringing with as much self-conscious awareness of clearly expressed goals as the kibbutz movement. Yet in all societies, traditions and institutions evolve which both reflect and support the values of their people.

Once again, looking at a society outside your own can enable you to look more closely at attitudes and practices which are more familiar.

When a disaster like war convulses a society, it reveals in its wake some of the most basic values held by the people of that society as those values affect children. For instance, children who have lost their parents and family need care and upbringing. Societies faced with the problems of caring for these children have found various solutions. One might establish orphanages, another might create a complex legal system governing children, another might assign children to foster parents, another might even ignore the plight of some of its children.

In May 1967 a civil war broke out in Nigeria. The Central Eastern portion of the country, which was and still is dominated by a tribe of people called Ibos, fought against the Nigerian army until the war came to an abrupt

end in January 1970 when the Ibo government surrendered.

During and after the war, the Ibo people lost their homes and suffered from severe malnutrition. Many people were starving because they were unable to farm their land or get to "food stations" that had been set up by priests, missionaries, local doctors and nurses, and agencies like the Red Cross. The children in particular suffered from a total protein deficiency, called Kwashiorkor, that made their hair fall out and their bellies swell and which eventually led to death if not treated. Once the civil war in Nigeria ended, the problem was to feed the people and return them to their homes. During the war tens of thousands of children died and others were often separated from their parents and villages. Some were sent to feeding centers and clinics to receive care. Some were even sent to friends or relatives in Europe or other African countries. The villages grieved over losing each child.

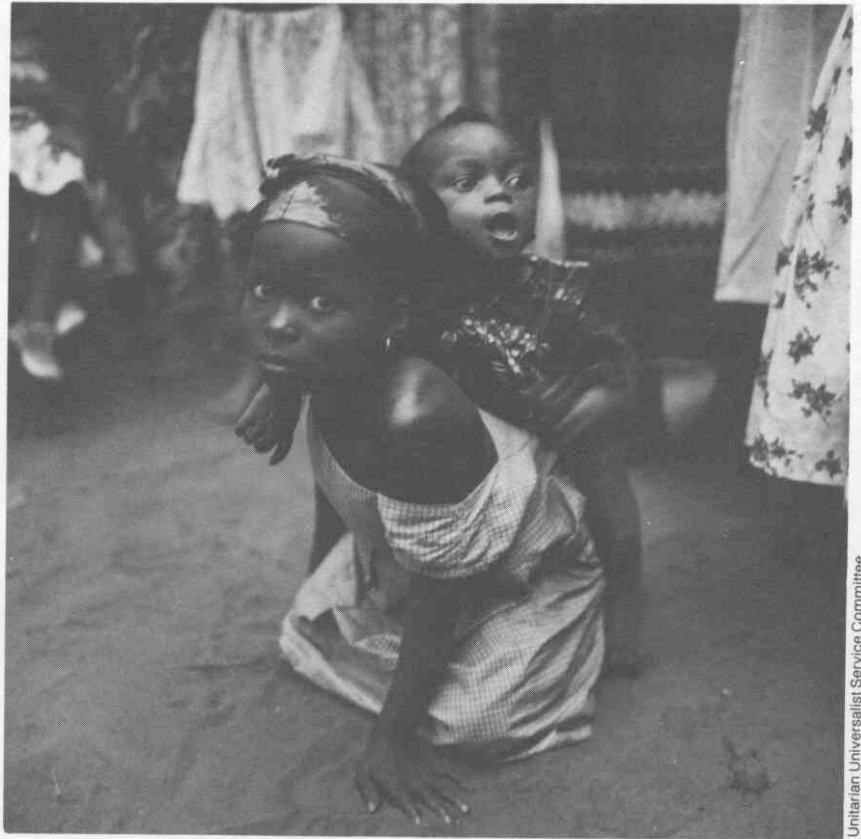
The following report illustrates how planning for the children grew out of the values and related resources of one society.

*(From the journal of a UNICEF Committee member)*

It was 5 o'clock in the afternoon on Sunday. The UNICEF National Committee

passed over the metallic bridge which crosses the Niger river, a natural frontier between Midwest state and East Central State, which for two years was known as Biafra. A check-point has been set up there by the Nigerians to check the movements of the Ibos but it was Sunday and the Nigerian guard was away from his post and . . . through we went. We traveled past destruction, ruined houses, tumbled-down walls, twisted metal carcasses reaching out their iron shafts towards the sky. Soon the road ceased to be a scene of war and destruction and turned into a normal African bush-track lined with banana trees.

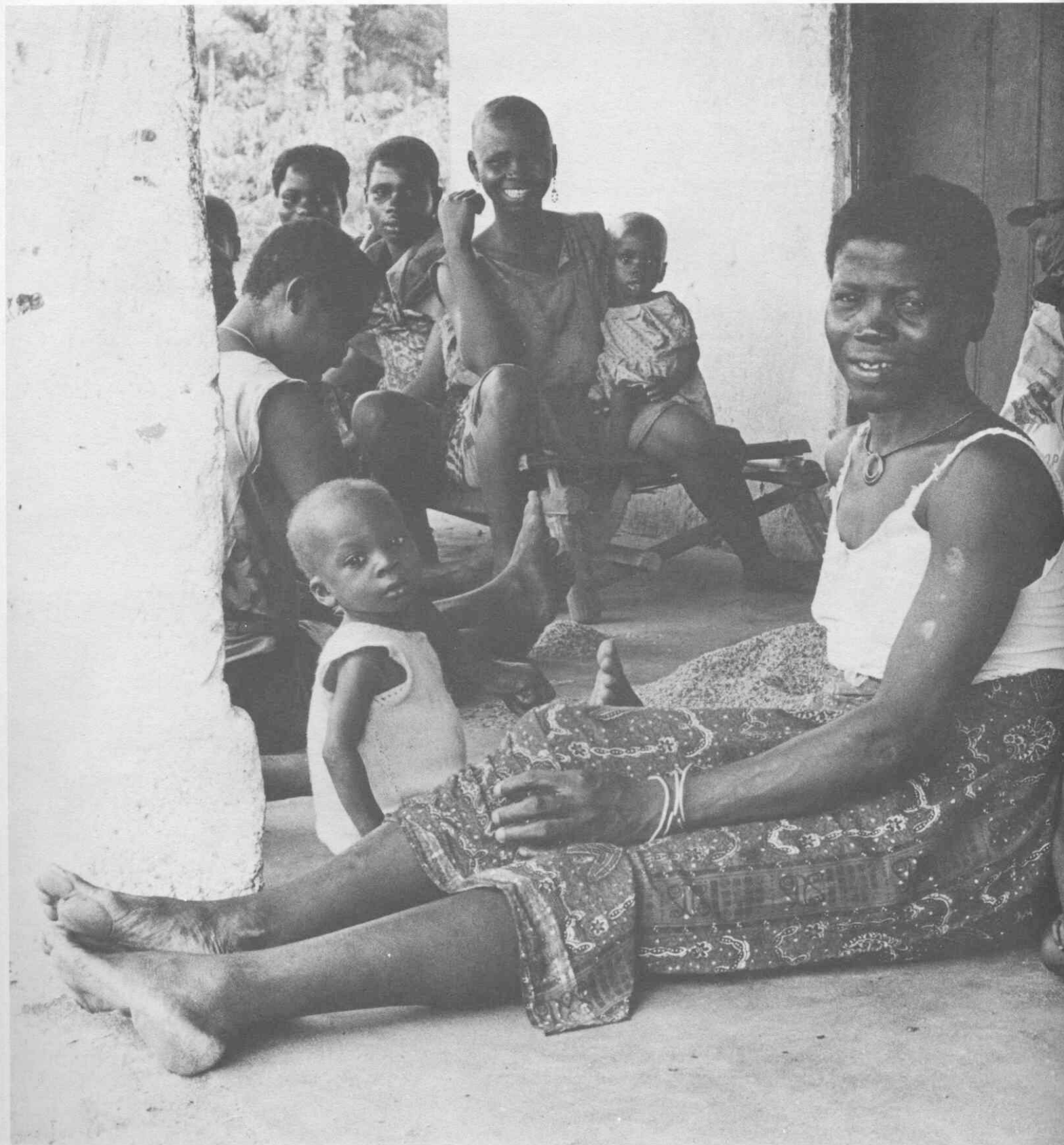
Many hours later we arrived in Okporo where we found the famous hospital in which so many children passed away during the events of six months ago, but also where so many children have found a haven and recovered, thanks to the activities of Dr. Ifekunigwe and his staff. While the little children with their swollen stomachs and sad eyes crowded around us and the smallest ones were given their meal at the doorstep, the doctor talked to us about his past, present, and future problems.



Unitarian Universalist Service Committee



Awo Omamma, Nigeria. Unitarian Universalist Service Committee



When asked what was to be done with these children Dr. Ifekunigwe said,

“Every day people come here. Walking many miles to look for children. Their own lost children, the children of relatives, the children of their villages. Lately, we have gone out to try and trace the families. We do this by taking those children who know from which villages they come and who know their own names to the surrounding villages. Those who cannot tell us, we observe their ways to guess what villages they come from. It has been very successful. Often the children begin to recognize the village about one or two miles before we get there and the moment they get out of the Land Rover the whole village comes running out to the car and the children get swept off their feet and are passed from person to person with great rejoicing. The children are often overwhelmed by this welcome. When the excitement has died down a bit, we tell whoever has claimed each child to come back with us to the hospital to get the medicine and instructions for any special care the child needs. Of course, we would like to care for everybody, but where we cannot care for everybody we must give priority to the children. You may like to know that plans are now complete for bringing back the several thousand children who were sent out of the country during the war.”

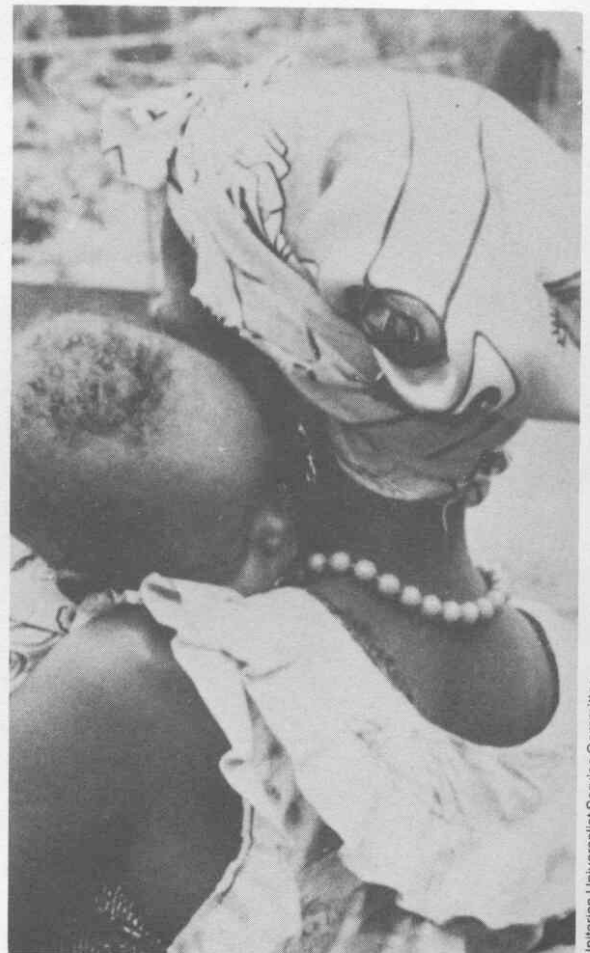
“But, Dr. Ifekunigwe,” someone asked, “what plans do you have to build orphanages for those children who have no one? A great sum of money has become available to build places for these children, places which can insure their health care and provide for their education.”

“Orphans?” Dr. Ifekunigwe answered. “Orphanages? We need money for other things, sir, but not orphanages. There can be no child who does not have a family. Do you see those people over there?” he said, pointing at a group of men and women with arms and legs as thin as match sticks. “Those people have walked many miles to find their children, children of their relatives, children from their villages. The sun burns hot in our sky over the banana trees. Always this happens. Even in war and times of starvation, the sun comes.

Just as always do our children belong. We have no word in our language for ‘orphan.’ Our children are our greatest treasure. Always they belong.”

### questions for discussion

- What is clear to people of one culture may not be clear to those of another because of differing basic assumptions. What did the UNICEF visitors assume? When Dr. Ifekunigwe said that Ibos have no word for orphan and that “there can be no child who does not have a family,” what do you think he meant?
- What does this story suggest that the Ibos want their children to value?
- Why might the hospital staff’s plan for the children serve those values better than a system of orphanages could?



Awo Omamma, Nigeria, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

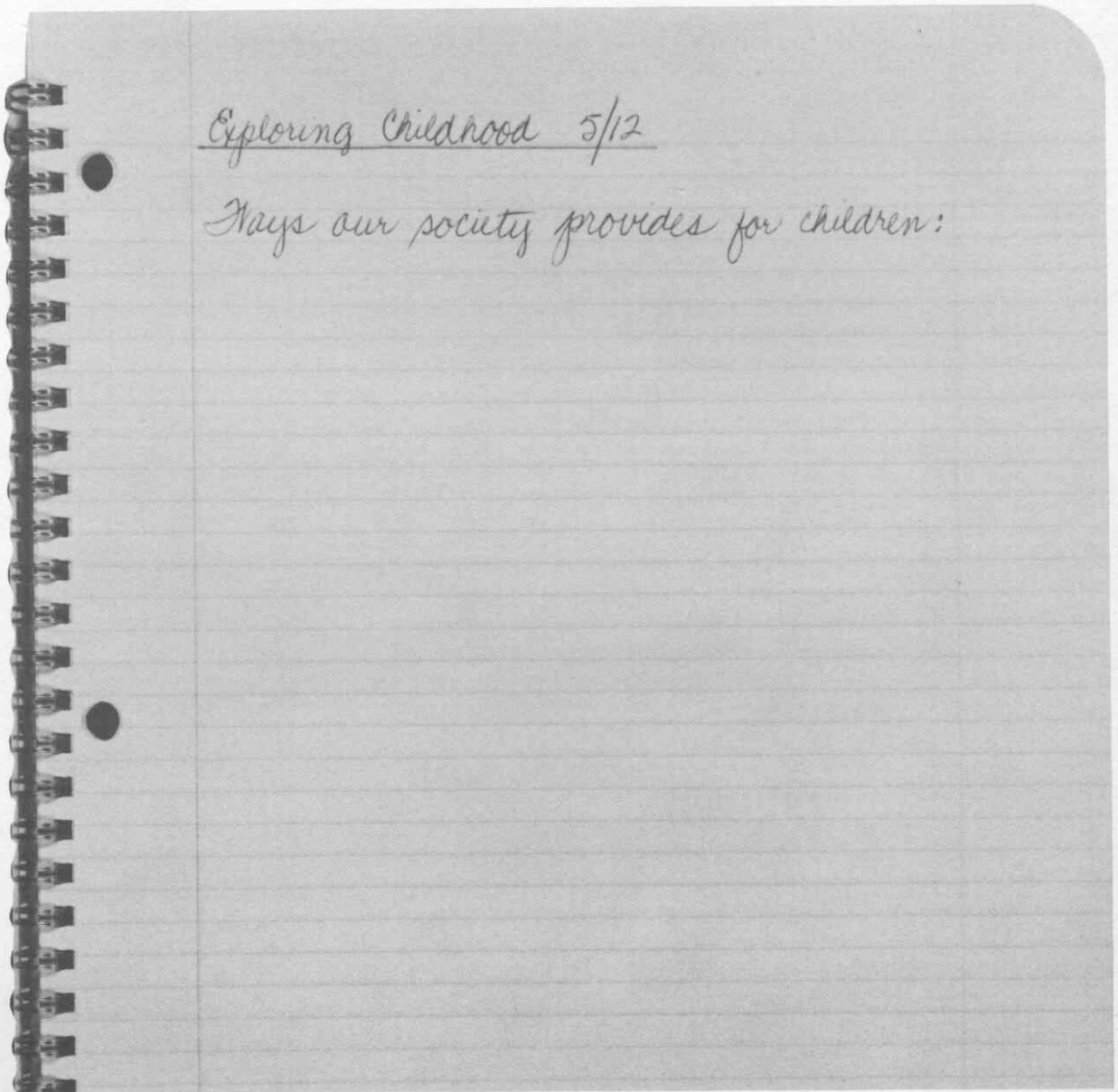


# Looking Back at Home

Our diverse society has developed many ways of providing for children. As a group, list as many of these ways as you can think of.

Apply the following questions to each of the ways you have listed:

- What values underlie that way?
- Who makes the decisions affecting the children?
- What institutions have grown up or adapted to serve that way?



## babysitting: a well-known institution

Surprisingly little study has been made of the widespread American childrearing practice called babysitting. Imagine you are explaining babysitting to someone from another society. What would you say?

Babysitting is such a common custom in our society that we take it for granted. But Dr. Lee Salk, a doctor concerned with children's upbringing, thinks babysitting decisions should be made carefully. As you read his comments, which follow, think about your own experience: Do you agree with Dr. Salk's advice?

"It is strange that many people are much more careful in selecting people to care for their automobiles than they are in choosing people to care for their children. . . . In spite of the fact that many people think that selection of babysitters is not an important task, let me emphasize that it is. Babysitting should not be assigned to just anyone available to be in physical proximity with your child. . . . Try to have familiar people as babysitters. If you can't, make some attempt to have your child experience some positive interaction between his parents and the new babysitter. As a general principle, it is best for your child to meet strangers in your presence, if for no other reason than that you can offer reassurance if your child reacts to the stranger fearfully. Remember that children often establish their attitudes about people by using their parents' responses as guides. If it becomes apparent that the babysitter is a friendly person acceptable to you, your child will most likely accept the babysitter, too.

"Some parents are inclined to short-circuit proper introductions. They get all ready to leave. As soon as the babysitter comes, whether or not their child is familiar with that person, they immediately depart, leaving the sitter to cope with their child's anxiety. This common procedure is a most traumatic experience for your child and can make it extremely



Robert Smith

...AND, I CHARGE 75¢ AN HOUR—TIME AND A HALF IF THE TV DOESN'T WORK—AND ALL THE FOOD I CAN EAT.

difficult for him to accept amiably subsequent departures. Worse yet, many parents think it is advisable to put a child to bed before the babysitter comes, so that the child will not even know that his parents have gone. This procedure is highly inadvisable.”\*

### activity

In small groups consider these questions:

- What needs in our society does babysitting reflect?
- What opportunities and what difficulties does it include?
- What should be expected of a babysitter? of parents?
- What values in our society are reflected in the practice of babysitting?

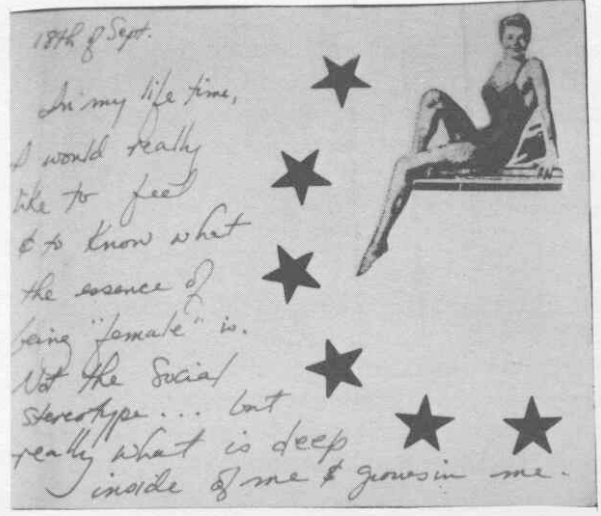
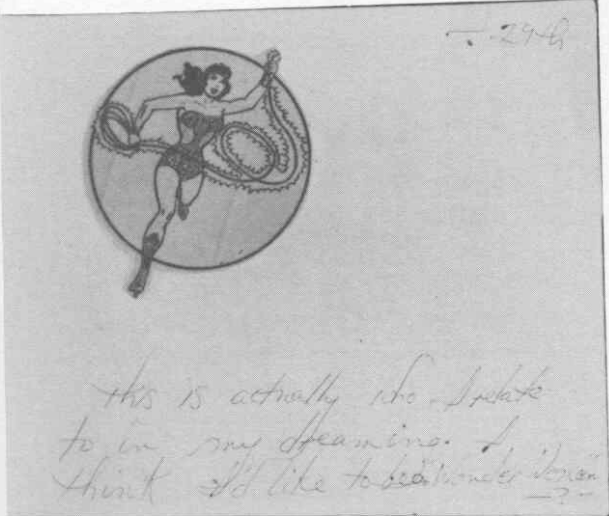
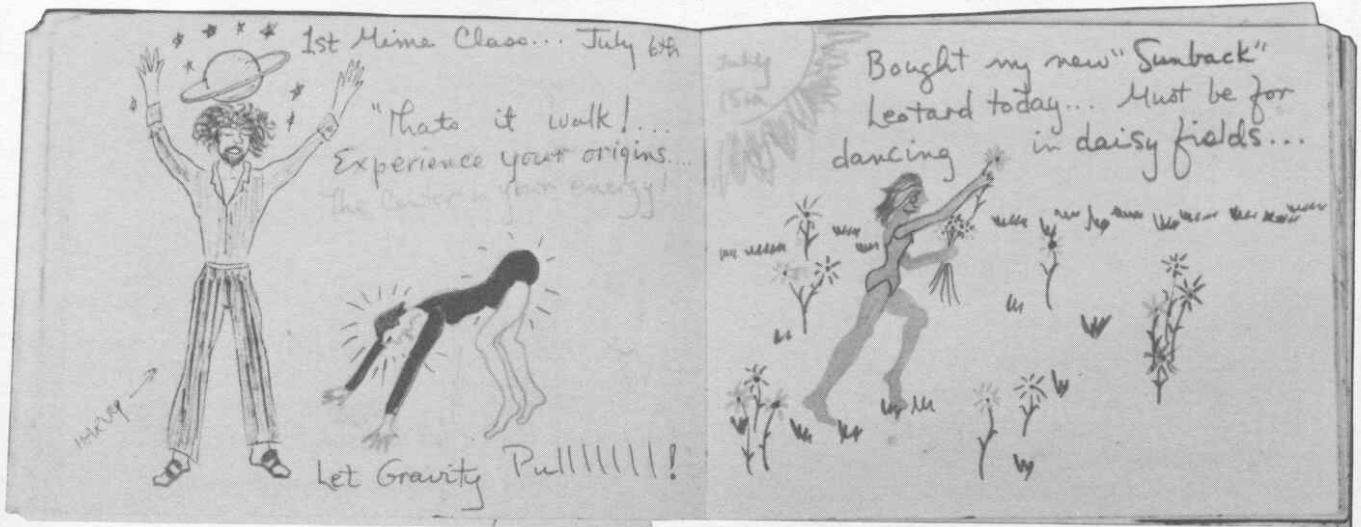
As a class, compare your ideas and make up a set of guidelines for babysitting in your community.

\*From *What Every Child Would Like His Parents to Know* by Lee Salk, M.D. New York: Warner Books, 1973.

# "roz's adventures with reality"\*



Two drawings by my mother, Betty, from our adventures.



# Self and Society

Growing up,  
becoming,  
always becoming who  
you are.

## Views of Some Young People

On a visit to his grandmother, a little boy went next door to play with a friend he had not seen since his last visit six months before. The friend's mother greeted him warmly and asked, "Are you the same Danny who played here last winter?" "He's me, but I'm not him," answered the five-year-old gravely.

By the time one is teenaged a very great deal of living has been accomplished. A sixteen-year-old has logged over 5840 days. All of your experiences have been shaping you while you have been shaping your experiences. How does it all add up in your relationships to others? your values? your own self-expectations?

Following are several ways in which young people have expressed their sense of who they are, their sense of their relationship to their family and society.

As you look at each one, ask yourself:

- What influences do each of these people

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\*From the notebook, "Roz's Adventures with Reality" © Rosalyn Gerstein.

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seem to suggest have affected their thoughts and actions?

- How may they in turn have influenced what is around them?

Joe seeks to understand his childhood relationship to a neighbor by writing about a small incident he remembers.\*

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### The Man

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We lived in a town, on a street crowded with old proud houses, and the yards were all small, very small except for one. Across the street lived "The Man" and beside his house, where he should have had a neighbor, was an empty lot. We never knew his real name but he loved his title and was addressed in no other manner. There were furrows carved into his brow, between his graying hair and his bright, glowing eyes, and he was always smiling, at least, as far as we were concerned

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\*Reprinted from *As Up They Grew*, Herbert R. Coursen, Jr., ed. Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1970.

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he was, for we were always happy then and his joy came from us. He loved us, the kids who lived on his block, and he loved to have us play in his yard. He would watch us, maybe join us and when any of us received a phonograph record on a birthday or Christmas, we would take it to him and he would lead us to his shed and play it on an old, hand-cranked victrola. His face would bear that smile and maybe he would tell us stories of Geronimo—an old friend of his. Certainly he knew Geronimo; he said he did. Besides, the time I dressed up as an Indian and crept over to his house, he could tell right away that I wasn't the old chief.

The grass is gone now—covered up by a new house, and The Man's house has long since been sold. Yet every once in a while, my sister receives a postcard from some distant place signed "The Man." No, The Man has never written me, but when he takes his pen and addresses a card to my sister maybe he thinks of me, and that expression that I remember so well returns to his wrinkled face.

And then there was baseball and football and his sacred grass yielded to our insignificant weight. But it was only for us. No one outside our block was allowed on his grass. I suppose it was inevitable that I should make my mistake. A friend of mine from a few blocks away had come over to see me. It was summer and our own lawn was too small anyway. Tommy didn't want me to, but I couldn't see any reason for not asking The Man if he could play with me on the sacred lawn. The Man wore his glowing smile as I approached him. I asked my question and that bright smile stole silently from his face. He wasn't angry; rather, his expression denoted worry and disappointment. No he'd rather not . . . Please . . . Then finally, a resigned "All right. Go ahead." He quickly turned away and I strode jubilantly back to Tommy with the triumph on my lips. But Tommy acted strangely. He decided he'd better not invade The Man's yard after all. I hadn't really understood what I had done; I couldn't understand The Man; and I couldn't understand Tommy's decision; but I never played on The Man's lawn again.

— Joe Dane

A poem is another way of reaching into one's experience to express a sense of self.

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### People Used To\*

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People used to  
Ask me  
    Why are you so quiet?

And  
I'd answer  
    I don't know.

People still  
Ask me  
    Why are you so quiet?

But  
Now I answer  
    Because I'm me.

They  
Reply  
With  
    Oh.

— Shirley L'ai

Retelling a childhood memory helps David trace his roots in rural Maine.

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### My Spud Day \* \*

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My mother, sister, and brother had been picking potatoes for two and one half weeks now, but this day was to be my day. I was only five years old but when mom came to wake me up I felt ten feet tall. After all I was getting up at five o'clock for the first time in my life. My grandmother used to babysit for me when I stayed home, and sure enough, today she wouldn't have to watch over me. I was a big boy now.

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\*Permission is granted by Asian Writers' Project, Berkeley High School, California.

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\*\*Reprinted from *As Up They Grew*, Herbert R. Coursen, Jr., ed. Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1970.

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It was cold outside my warm comfortable bed, but I had to come out. I shivered as my feet touched the cold boards of my room. I went downstairs and went right next to the wood stove where everybody else was. I brought my clothes with me and my mother offered to help me but I refused help from anybody. I could do it myself.

After I had dressed up, I went to the table, which was right next to the wood stove, and ate breakfast. For breakfast my mother had prepared me a hot bowl of oatmeal covered with sweet maple sugar.

With the hot stove shedding its heat over my body and the hot oatmeal warming my stomach, I was almost hoping that my cousin would not show up. But then I heard his horn honking outside.

"There's Danny," mom said. "Let's go everybody." Then she looked at me and said, "*Vien temps*, David."

Then everyone went outside in the cold air. I was shivering but I wasn't sure if it was from fear or because it was cold out. Just in case it was from fear, I kept away from mom and I think nobody noticed it.

My cousin came out of the cab and helped me get on the rear of the truck which was covered with barrels. As the truck started to move forward, the cold air pierced my clothes. Now I noticed how small I was because I could easily duck down into a barrel and keep some of that cold air away from me. In that barrel, I realized that my spud day had begun.

Even though I had ridden on that road before, the ride from home to the potato field seemed to be a long one because I couldn't see a thing around me. I could only feel the bumps and hear the tires whistle on the roads the truck moved on.

By the time we got to the potato field my whole body was so frozen that I could hardly move. I got out from my barrel and jumped off the truck. That time I knew I was shivering from the cold and not from fear. And so from that moment on I had one objective for that

day; it was to recondition my body to the temperature outside. Potatoes were just not interesting to me.

I soon figured out a way to warm my body up. This was to turn a barrel over my head. It was effective in some ways but there were exceptions to the rule. The air soon became stale in the barrel and my continual movement caused dust particles to fly around. My nose and throat soon became dried up and I could hardly breathe. I also received plenty of dust in my eyes. I only found a few years later that I shouldn't have been under that barrel as a truck could easily run over me.

While I was in the barrel I kept peering through a knot hole in one of the planks. It happened to be turned toward the potato pickers, and I watched them with extreme curiosity. Most of the time I was watching my mother because she seemed to be the fastest moving potato picker. I just couldn't imagine how those people could stand the cold but it didn't seem to bother them at all. I just loved the sound of the potatoes hitting the bottom of the other barrels because it sounded like fifty cannons firing at once.

From the knot hole I could see the sun coming over the horizon when my cousin came up and shoved the barrel from over me and invited me in his truck. He told me it was to help him out and there once again I felt grown up. But I also knew it was warm in the truck. This was also a new experience for me because I had never ridden in the cab of a truck before.

I was soon ready to run around so I went to see my mother and helped her pick potatoes. I would pick one potato at a time; that was once in a while. For the rest of the time I either watched mom pick or I'd run errands for her such as getting the barrels which I rolled all the way to her then stood them upright for her to fill up.

I went through that over and over again until lunch time. By that time the sun had heated up the earth and I was warm. But I was already tired of potatoes by then and I expected to stay home in the afternoon but I found out different.



Mom said, "Don't forget that next year you'll be picking with us full time. You're a big boy now."

I nodded in agreement. I would stay and help again this afternoon. Maybe I was a big boy now.

— David Marquis

Through writing a story, John imagines what his future holds.

### No Expectations

This is a story about a youth and his expected future. The boy's name is John, a teenager just getting out of SHS.

His first words are "It's all over." But he doesn't realize that he has very little future and it very well could be ALL OVER!

When John was out of school for a little while, he went out looking for a job until he finally had to settle into a job he really didn't like. John gets to know his job very well and does it very efficiently. In return for this, the boss gives him a raise. Starting to think he has a future, he decides to get married to the girl he has been dating most of his life. John feels that he is really getting settled. Then he is drafted and his wife gets pregnant. What can he do?

John lets his wife live at her parents while he goes off and fights a stupid war.

John, while overseas, goes through things that he thought he would never see. But after two years he comes home. To a wife who loves him. For the time being.

Well, John comes back and starts in his old job. Things start happening for the worse. He gets laid off and his wife gets very sick. John's life just seems to be falling all around him.

Time passes and John can go back to work and start to live his life again, but his little job just isn't making the money roll in. So his wife gets a job; it helps a lot. Everything goes ok and he starts to feel the pressure reduce. Then his wife gets pregnant and he has to get two jobs. He does and everything is fine because he is killing himself.

A Chinese-American girl uses a dialog to reflect on growing up.

### Paradox\*

Daughter: Ma, uh . . . well, uh, well, my friends are going to a movie this Friday after school and a dance afterwards.

Mother: So? What do you want me to do?

Daughter: (Shyly) Could I, uh, go? Please, Ma?

Mother: I don't know. Who's going?

Daughter: A bunch of friends from school.

Mother: Boys, girls, and what kind of movie are you going to watch?

Daughter: Both guys and girls are going and it's a Chinese movie we're going to see in SF.

Mother: Well, I don't know. I'll have to think about it. You might as well ask your father, too.

\*\*\*\*

Daughter: Hey Dad. Could I go to a movie with my friends this Friday?

Father: No, and don't ask me why.

Daughter: OK. I won't ask you why. (Pause) How come?

Father: That's the same thing as "why?"

Daughter: Aw, Dad! I haven't gone anywhere with my friends for a long time.

Father: Do you always have to go somewhere with your friends?

Daughter: Never mind, I'll just tell my friends that I can't go.

\*\*\*\*

(Friday after school)

Daughter: Hi, Mom. Hi, Dad!

Father and

Mother: We thought you went to the movies with your friends.

Daughter: But you told me not to!

Father: Well, you could have gone.

Daughter: I'll never understand parents.

-Lisa Fong

\*Permission is granted by Asian Writer's Project, Berkeley High School, California.

WHEN I WAS I WAS  
 & I HAD THE FIRST  
 FIGHT OF MY LIFE I LIVED  
 ON HANSON ST. AND ONCE I  
 BROKE A WINDOW WITHOUT  
 GETTING CUT, ANOTHER TIME  
 I ALMOST GOT SUSPENDED  
 FROM SCHOOL.  
 THE FIRST  
 PIECE OF FURNITURE  
 WAS A BIG CHAIR THAT  
 WAS FOR MY FATHER  
 ONE DAY I BROKE  
 IT.

THE FIRST TIME I EVER  
 WENT SOMEWHERE  
 ALONE WAS TO THE BOSTON  
 COMMONS. I  
 PLAYED GOALIE  
 WHEN I WAS  
 9 YEARS OLD,  
 AND I GOT HIT  
 OFF THE MASK,  
 I WENT ONE YEAR

TO THE YMCA, AND  
 I LEARNED TO  
 SWIM AT THE AGE  
 OF ELEVEN, AT  
 NORTHEASTERN,

I READ LOTS  
 OF COMICS,  
 I RIDE  
 ALL BIKES,

I HAVE  
 FRIENDS  
 SUCH AS:  
 PABO  
 INOCENCIO  
 DAVID  
 HPOO  
 ROY  
 RICHARD  
 NELSON.

I LIVED  
 AT A LOT  
 OF HOUSES,

I FIGHT  
 WITH MY  
 SISTERS

ANDRÉZ  
 GONZÁLEZ

Pat's poem is a collection of images she remembers of growing up.

Now I Remember Then

Now, I remember then  
 when I used to go the grocery store  
 and steal apples and tatorchips and  
 get caught.

When I was little I used to run around  
 and let the little boy chase and catch  
 me for a big kiss.

In my world for growing up meant being  
 bad and noseey cause I used to get into  
 devilishment everyday and pay for.

And Now I remember I used to eat  
 watermelons like eating peanuts and get  
 so full and so ill I'd be throwing up all night  
 long.

— Patricia Hicks

Writing an essay Sherrie thinks through her feelings about who she is in her changing neighborhood.

Looking for Where I Belong

I feel like I have lived in a foreign land most of my life. I never knew any children on my street, except when I was very small. Now those children have moved away and we still visit them or they visit us. And of course we see them at church, since they still come back on Sundays. We go to St. Patrick's since that is where all my mother's friends go, even though my father always went to St. Stan's before. St. Patrick's doesn't belong really in this neighborhood. It is foreign also. That is what I meant. I have always been really afraid to go out in the street and my Mother won't let me do it after dark. I used to think how rough all the girls around us were. I didn't even think about the boys because they were just hoods.

I've always taken the bus out to school. School and church were alike. They were pretty quiet and smelled the same (do you



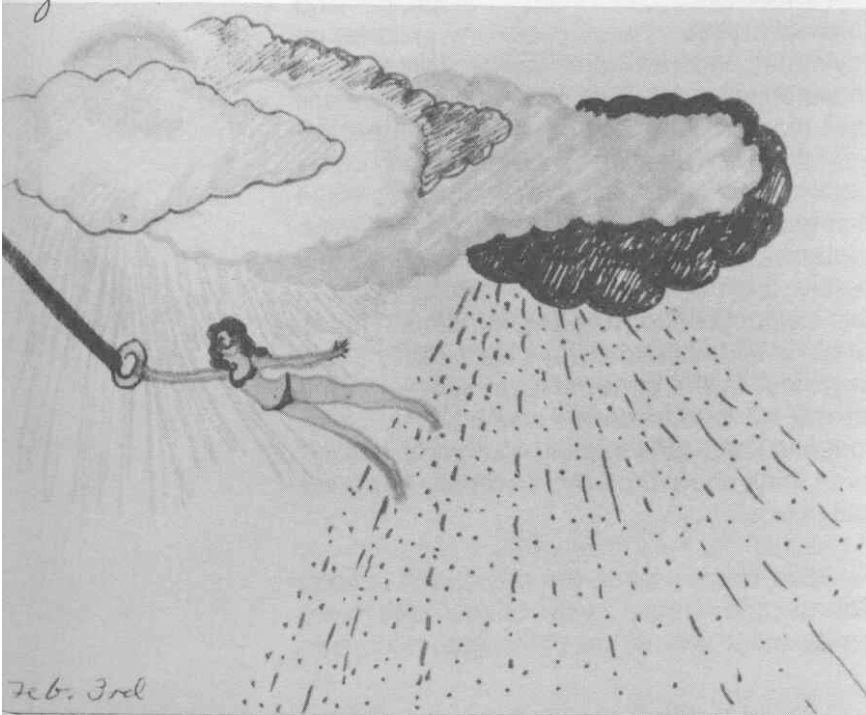
know what a Catholic school smells like? It is stale and sweet at the same time). My street smells different from that.

Then when I went to High School at St. Joseph's I really got a surprise. I guess I didn't like the new way at school because it scared me and made me think about how I was scared back home. What if I couldn't ever move out and would have to be scared all my life! That's when I just didn't know where I belonged.

I saw all the kids around Block's Corner drugstore and I knew they were stoned and I didn't like that, but I felt real bad at the same time. I did not know even their names! But I guess I am not being really honest. Because it was much more important that I had no real close friend. And I wanted one very badly. I couldn't find girls who were like me. Either they were just too silly and pretty and goodie-goodie, or they scared me. I didn't fit either way. And I always looked at the girls on Block's Corner.

The youth worker talked me into coming to the teen center to hear Fr. Berrigan that night when he spoke there. I don't think I

*I feel as if all I have to do is just hold on to the golden ring, and I will be taken through a lot of wondrous "weather."*



listened to him. He just mixed me up a lot. But there was one of the girls from Block's Corner I had seen every day when I came home from school. I just stared at Rita and finally she said, "I didn't expect to see you here."

Now the whole reason I have told all of this is that it is how I learned. I learned a lot about books and stuff, but it didn't make any sense to me personally and I got scared when I realized that. I just didn't want to learn anymore until I knew what I could do with it and where I could live, and find some friends. I have a friend now. Her name is Rita. She smokes dope. I don't still. But Rita is a friend of mine so we will just let each other be a little different. I am still scared around my street and I don't think I belong too good at the Center. I don't think I want to. I really think you learn when you have a friend who is NOT exactly the same as you are. But that doesn't mean I have to be like her. I just won't feel like a foreign inhabitant on my own street all the time.

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## try it yourself

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There are many ways to pause and express to yourself and others who you are. You can look for yourself through your childhood memories and present experiences. You can seek your reflection in the people and institutions touching (or that have touched) your life.

If you haven't done so lately, pause now and in whatever method feels comfortable, express something about who you are.

To help you get started, you might brainstorm and discuss with your class how you feel about:

- independence
- responsibility
- love
- individuality
- conformity
- work
- femaleness or maleness
- home

# Credits

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## CHILDREN IN SOCIETY

**Developers:**  
John Nove  
Emma Wood Rous  
Judith Spock  
Ianthé Thomas  
Susan Christie Thomas

**Research:**  
Thomas Reeves

**Editor:**  
Marcia Mitchell

**Designer:**  
Roz Gerstein

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**Production Assistant:**  
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*Assistant Professor of Social Psychology  
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**EXPLORING CHILDHOOD** has been developed by the EDC School and Society Programs with the support of the Office of Child Development, the National Institute of Mental Health, and the Office of Education.