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### The Devil's Playground

1. There are several ways in which I can relate to the Amish children featured in "The Devil's Playground". Looking back at my childhood, I felt that I was raised in a very sheltered manner in comparison to other children in the community. This was partly why entering middle school was such a challenge for me. I found it difficult to comprehend things larger than I had previously seen in elementary school, including the fact that school did not revolve around me. Although there was never any "official" transition for me to explore life, I slowly realized how naïve and innocent my perception of those my class was. Prior to high school, I had never considered that things like drug and alcohol use were part of other students' lives because I had hardly known or cared about their existence. At the time, I began to understand how certain things could only be understood through experience and personal observation or hearing it secondhand.
2. There are many different sociological concepts that can be used to describe the rite of *rumspringa* and the factors influencing its final decision. The concept of deviance is especially prominent, as many actions or things which Amish children like those in the documentary have heard about are considered deviant for nearly all of their lives within the context of Amish society. Indeed, Amish culture is quite strict and fundamentalist in upholding its values and certain conduct or the discovery of the possession of certain things can warrant a violation of these established social norms and negative sanctions or

consequences for the individual(s) involved. Throughout their whole lives, Amish children are raised in this manner, such that they cannot breach social norms because they may not even know how to. It can be easily understood what the rite of *rumspringa* entails, but difficult to understand how it affects those who undergo it. The concept of mores is also important as the contrasting differences between Amish mores and “regular” American mores creates the difficulty of the Amish children’s final decision on whether or not to stay in the Amish community.