

ABSTRACT

In this study, children of different ages judged the central character who committed a harmful situation under conditions of high or low responsibility and high or low consequences. The actor then either did nothing or applied one of three types of increasingly elaborate apologies. As described, when the actor's predicament was most severe, subjects produced harshest judgments this was when the actor had high responsibility for committing an inconsiderate act and that produced a high consequence. Also, apologies were effective in lessening the bad image of the actor; elaborate apologies produced less blame and more positive evaluations from the subjects. The judgments of older children (grade five) were more of adult-like standards than were the judgment of younger children (grade one). Consistent with the literature presented, these age differences appeared to reflect the younger children's ability to judge. In the long run, as children reach school age, they possess the ability to take into account the major factors (apologies, consequences, responsibility) that are deemed relevant in influencing moral judgment.

