



Introduction

- Children prefer apologetic transgressors over unapologetic ones and think victims who receive an apology will feel better than ones who do not (Drell & Jaswal, 2016; Vaish et al., 2011).
- Apologies can signal that the transgressor feels remorse (Goffman, 1971) and promises not to cause harm again (Schlenker, 1980).
- But not all apologies are equally sincere; some are motivated by a desire to maintain one's reputation.
- Yet, young children do not evaluate prosocial acts motivated by a desire to look good in front of others less favorably than ones motivated by a genuine desire to do something nice (Heyman et al., 2014).
- We asked whether 6- and 10- year-olds (N=48) would evaluate a transgressor who apologized while others were watching differently than one who apologized when no one was watching?

References

Drell, M.B. & Jaswal, V. K. (2016). Making amends: Children's expectations about and responses to apologies. *Social Development*, 25, 742-758.

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Heyman, G., Barner, D., Heumann, J., & Schneck, L. (2014). Children's sensitivity to ulterior motives when evaluating prosocial behavior. *Cognitive Science*, 38, 683-700.

Schlenker, B.R. (1980). *Impression management: The self-concept, social identity, and interpersonal relations*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole Pub. Co.

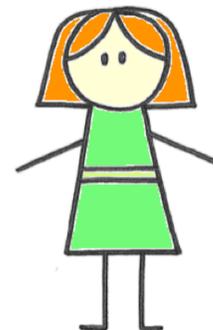
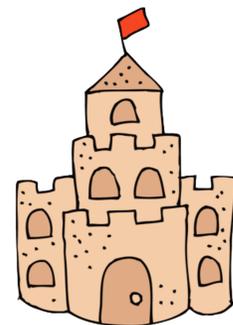
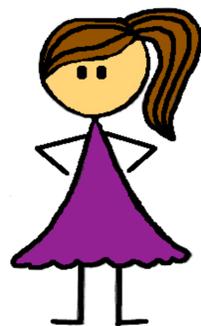
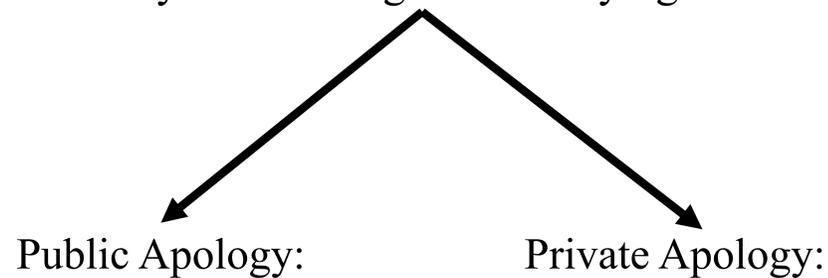
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Method

Example Vignette: Chelsea/Julia is playing with a friend in the sandbox. She brushes the sand off her clothes, sending sand flying into her friend's eyes and that girl starts crying.



Chelsea sees that *everyone* is watching. Chelsea runs over to the girl and says, "I'm sorry." So *everyone* sees Chelsea tell the girl that she is sorry.

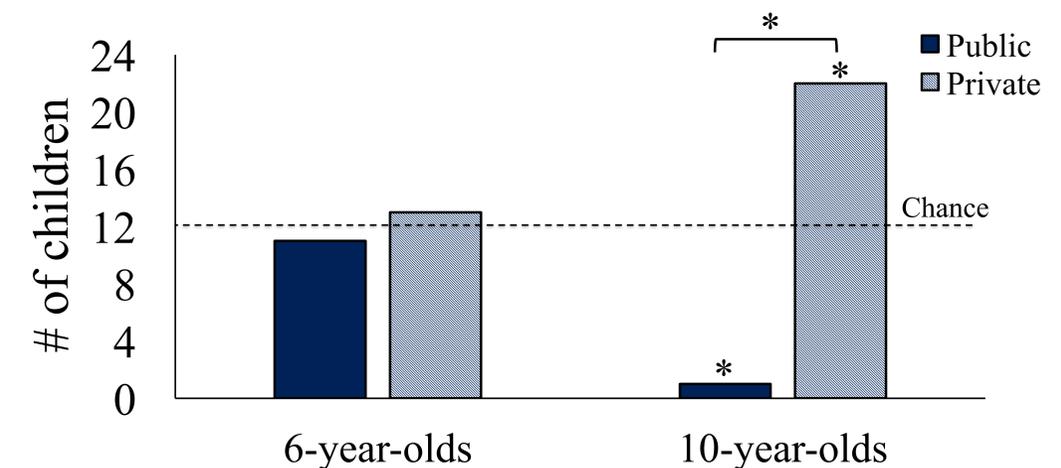
Julia sees that *no one* is watching. Julia runs over to the girl and says, "I'm sorry." So *no one* sees Julia tell the girl that she is sorry.

Test Questions:

- Is Chelsea or Julia nicer?
- How did Chelsea's/Julia's friend feel after she said, "I'm sorry."

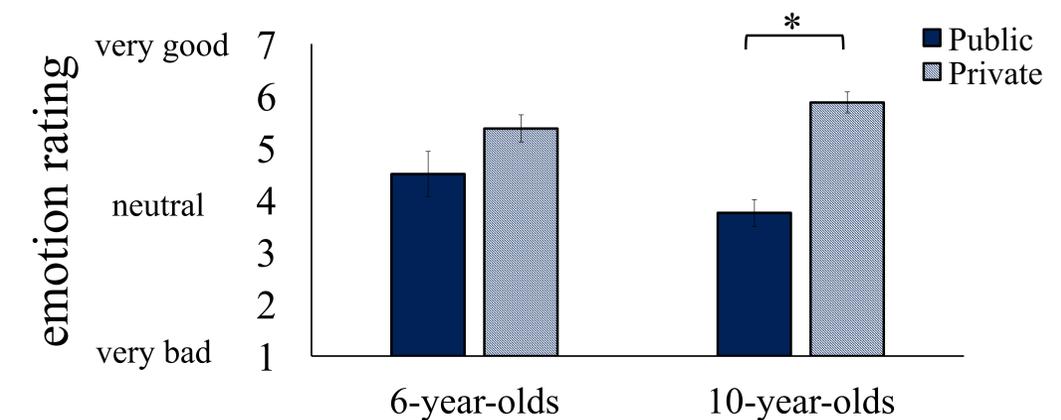
Results

1. Which girl is nicer?



- 10-year olds evaluated the private apologizer as nicer; 6-year-olds were ambivalent.

2. How did the victim feel?



- 10-year-olds thought a private apology would make victims feel better than a public apology, but 6-year-olds thought both types would be equally effective.

Conclusion

- 10-year-olds recognize that public apologies can be motivated by an ulterior motive to maintain one's reputation.
- 6-year-olds are still learning how impression management influences behavior and infer that both types of apologies are equally sincere.