

THE PREKINDERGARTEN CHILD'S USE OF  
INTENTION AND CONSEQUENCE IN  
RELATION TO TYPE OF DAMAGE

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Problem

Much attention has been focused recently on the moral conditions of our society. This attention is due in part to a belief in the so-called "moral decay" of our society and in part to the declining role of the church and family in transmitting moral standards from one generation to another (Bull, 1969).

With the stability and strength of these institutions appearing to decline, research sociologists and moral educators are beginning to direct their investigations toward examining the key factors and processes underlying the development of moral judgment. The fact remains, however, according to Bull (1969), that the moral field is one of the most neglected areas in the study of child development.

(Among the researchers who have studied moral development Jean Piaget has been the most influential.) His investigations were published in his book, The Moral Judgment of the Child, in 1932. Piaget's study of "stage" theory has served as a background for many succeeding studies. (His theory, that moral judgment is cognitively based and undergoes developmental changes as the child matures, has gained wide acceptance.)

Age, as a factor influencing the child's stage of moral development, has received a great deal of attention. To investigate intention, judging acts in terms of motive of the doer instead of physical consequences, Piaget used an interview technique consisting of a paired-story presentation. Piaget tested children ages 6-12 but noted that he was unable to question children under 6 with any profit due to the intellectual difficulties of comparison. According to Breznitz and Kugelmass (1967) most research oriented toward Piaget's theory concentrated on the age period, 6 to 10 years.

It is a significant fact that research involving intentionality in relation to moral judgment in kindergarten children is limited. Research involving intentionality judgment in prekindergarten children is even more limited. In fact, an extensive personal search and a computer search located only five studies investigating intentionality and using prekindergarten children as subjects: Peterson, Peterson, and Finley (1974); Berndt and Berndt (1975); Irwin and Moore (1971); Feldman, Klosson, Parson, Rholes, and Ruble (1976); and Moran (1978).

Researchers and educators are coming to the conclusion that the early preschool years of a child's life have a tremendous amount of influence upon the child's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development. It would, therefore, seem important that additional research dealing with the development of prekindergarten children's moral judgment be conducted.

#### Purpose of Study

The major purpose of this study was to develop a research paradigm suitable for use with prekindergarten children for ascertaining the



contribution of consequences and intentions in moral judgment. The specific purposes of this study were to (1) determine the difference between moral judgments of boys and girls; (2) determine the relationship between age and moral judgment; and (3) determine the relationship between type of damage and moral judgment.

#### Definition of Terms

1. Moral development - the process of individual experiences and growth by which the capacity to distinguish between standards of right and wrong is gradually achieved and becomes progressively influential in the individual's social behavior (Good, 1959, p. 167).
2. Mature moral judgment - making a judgment or decision about the "naughtiness" of an act on the basis of the motive (intention) of the actor.
3. Immature moral judgment - making a judgment or decision about the "naughtiness" of an act on the basis of the damage (consequence) of the act.
4. Intention - the motive of the actor or the reason for his actions (Hewitt, 1975).
5. Good intention - committing an act on purpose to help. Examples of good intention for this study would be: (a) to keep a friend from getting physically hurt; (b) to help a friend get something he cannot reach; or (c) to help a friend make something.
6. Bad intention - committing an act on purpose to do harm. Examples of bad intention for this study would be: (a) to hurt a

friend's feelings (psychological damage); (b) to hurt a friend physically; or (c) to damage a friend's property.

7. Consequence - the damage or result of the action. The type of consequence may be psychological, physical damage to people or property damage. Damage may be high or low.
8. Low damage - a small amount of harm. Examples of low damage for this study would be: (a) one block falling off a tower; (b) a slightly hurt hand; or (c) hurt feelings causing a sad face.
9. High damage - a large amount of harm. Examples of high damage for this study would be: (a) a whole block tower falling down; (b) a very bloody cut on a friend's head; or (c) hurt feelings causing a friend to cry.
10. Prekindergarten child - a child who is three, four, or five-years-old and who has not yet attended a kindergarten program.

### Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were examined:


- I. There is no significant relationship between "intent" and "damage" scores.
- II. There are no differences between "damage" scores and "intent" scores: (a) for all subjects, (b) by age, (c) by sex, or (d) by age x. sex.
- III. There are no differences among scale (type of damage) scores: (a) for all subjects, (b) by age, (c) by sex, and (d) by age x sex.

## CHAPTER II

### RELATED LITERATURE

#### Stage Theory of Moral Development

Piaget's cognitive theory of the moral development of children (1932) is concerned primarily with two stages. According to Piaget, the first stage, labeled as "morality of constraint," lasts until the child is approximately seven or eight years old and is defined by four basic characteristics: (1) unilateral respect, (2) sacred absolutes, (3) immanent justice, and (4) objective responsibility. "Unilateral respect" is a belief in the omnipotence of adults. Obedience is automatic submission to adult authority without reasoning or judgment. "Sacred absolutes" is a belief that rules are unchangeable absolutes handed down by some superior authority. "Immanent justice" is the belief in the existence of automatic punishments which often emanate from objects themselves. The offender must suffer for his misdeed and punishment should be given in proportion to the size of the misdeed. "Objective responsibility" is a belief that the seriousness of acts should be judged in terms of the amount of material damage, and not on the basis of the intention behind the act. A young child in this stage of moral judgment would be expected to judge as naughtier the child who broke fifteen cups accidentally rather than the child who broke one cup on purpose. The amount of damage done is more important than the intent of the actor.

According to Piaget, the second stage in the development of moral judgment, "morality of cooperation," begins around age nine or ten. This stage is characterized by: (1) mutual respect, (2) mutual consent, (3) reciprocal punishment, and (4) subjective responsibility. "Mutual respect" is a change in authority from that imposed by adults to an authority of equals. Authority is either mutually agreed upon among peers or rationally agreed upon with an adult. "Mutual consent" is reflected by the recognition that rules are not sacred and can be modified by cooperative agreement among peers. Rules are worthy of respect because they are based on mutual agreement. "Reciprocal punishment" is directly and logically relating punishment to crime. "Subjective responsibility" is a belief that the motives or intention behind an act, must be given consideration in evaluating behavior. In this more mature stage of moral development, the child would be expected to judge as  naughtier the child who broke one cup on purpose rather than the child who broke fifteen cups accidentally. The intent of the actor is more important than the amount of damage done for children who judge in terms of the "morality of cooperation."

While Piaget's stages progress in a definite order, the factors responsible for the transition from one stage to the other are not clear. Piaget (1932) noted three elements which interact to produce development change in moral judgment—{adult constraint, peer group cooperation, and the changing cognition of the child's mind.} To Piaget, interaction of these factors cause developmental difference in levels of responsibility and type of moral judgment used by children of different ages.

## Moral Judgment Variables

American writers have criticized Piaget for over-emphasizing the maturational factors in moral development and underemphasizing the environmental factors (Armsby, 1971). Many studies attempted since Piaget are concerned with the relationship of various antecedent conditions to moral judgment and have tried to point out environmental factors such as sex, social class, age, intelligence, and story content which might accelerate or retard the child's moral progress.

### \ Age

Tests of Piaget's developmental stages have shown age to be the only variable unquestionably related to the shift in moral judgment. This finding can be supported by the research studies of Lerner (1937); Boehm (1962a); Boehm and Nass (1962); Johnson (1962); Medinnus (1959); MacRae (1954); Bandura and McDonald (1963); Whiteman and Kosier (1964); Breznitz and Kugelmass (1967); Hebble (1971); King (1971); Gutkin (1972); Cowen, Langer, Heavenrich and Nathanson (1969); and Stuart (1967). Researchers in this area have generally concluded that the ability to consider matters of intentionality is a relatively late-maturing accomplishment of middle childhood (Kohlberg, 1969).

On the other hand, some current studies seem to support the idea that younger elementary children may also discriminate between an accidental act and one that is intentional (Armsby, 1971; Buchanan and Thompson, 1973; Chandler, Greenspan, Barenboim, 1973; Costanzo, Coie, Grumet, and Farnill, 1973; and Darley, Klosson and Zanna, 1978). In addition, the research findings of Peterson, Peterson and Finley (1974)

and Irwin and Moore (1971) indicate that although there is an age progression, their preschool subjects did not make more damaged-based judgments than judgments based on intention.

## 2 Story Content or Area

One criticism of age-related analysis of moral development is that little attention has been paid to the possible affect of differences in the items used to assess intentionality. Several researchers found that although there are some age trends in some areas, morality judgment varies with story content and type of morality tested (MacRae, 1954; Buchanan and Thompson, 1973; Moran, 1978; Lerner, 1937; Medinnus, 1959; Boehm, 1962b; Farnill, 1974; and Jensen and Hughston, 1973).

The research reports of Baldwin and Baldwin (1970) and Shaw and Sulzer (1964) indicate that age trends for intent utilization might differ under conditions of positive and negative consequences. Constanzo et al. (1973) found five-year-old boys could make judgments on the basis of intent for positive consequence stories but not for negative.

Hewitt (1975) felt that studies using property damage generally support Piaget's contention that young children focus on the consequences or outcomes of behavior while older children take intentions and circumstances into account. He felt that little is known, however, about the way children evaluate persons who have caused personal injury. Rule and Duker (1973) studied harmful acts directed toward persons, and found that 8-year-olds were more influenced by harmful consequences than were the 12-year-olds. They did not, however, make a comparison between this type of consequence and other types. Hewitt

(1975) duplicated this study but varied the justification for the act. He could not, however, support the Rule and Duker finding that younger children place greater emphasis on consequences. Hebble (1971) included physical and psychological damage to people and reported no significant difference between story themes. Farnill (1974) concluded from his research that the findings of research studies investigating young children's use of intention in moral judgment are not applicable for all types of moral judgment.

### 7 Intelligence

Most research studies agree that high intelligence is a factor which is associated significantly with level of moral judgment (Boehm, 1962a, 1962b; Johnson, 1962; Porteus and Johnson, 1965; Whiteman and Kosier, 1964; Simon and Ward, 1973; and Lydiat, 1973). In contrast, little evidence of correlation between a child's intelligence level and kind of justice-concept in moral judgment in grades 2 and 8 was found by Durkin (1959). Simon and Ward (1973) suggest that a possible reason for this discrepancy may be the nature of the sample studied and the emphasis on different statistical and design procedures. Hebble (1971) failed to find a significant relationship between mental age and moral judgment but proposed that this may possibly be explained by restriction of IQ range.

### 8 Social Class

According to the research of MacRae (1954) and Johnson (1962), middle class children have higher IQ's than working class children and so do better in Piaget's tests. In general, Lydiat (1973) supports

the contention that children from working class homes more frequently show immature responses at most age levels. Maturity of judgment occurred earlier among academically gifted children of upper middle class status as reported by Boehm (1962a). Karrby (1973) also found moral development related to the socio-economic background of the family but explained this correlation as a reflection of differences in child rearing patterns. (Piaget (1932) recognized the importance and influence of the parent-child relationship in the child's moral progression from objective to subjective responsibility.)

### Sex

A brief screening of the research on the variable of sex seems to indicate great contradictions as to its significance in influencing moral judgment. No relationship between moral judgment and sex was found by Boehm and Nass (1962), Whiteman and Kosier (1964), Loughran (1967), Hebble (1971), Lydiat (1973), or Berndt and Berndt (1975). Simon and Ward (1973) found the sex factor of minimal importance in influencing level of moral judgment in their sample. Girls were found to be more advanced than boys in the area of moral judgment in the studies of Durkin (1960), Porteus and Johnson (1965), and Bull (1969). Irwin and Moore (1971) found no evidence of sex difference in their study using prekindergarten children. They suggest that it may be that sex differences do not emerge until the elementary years when peer group cooperation becomes a strong factor in the child's socialization.

[A review of the literature examining the relationship between moral judgment and sex, might be very meaningful if the studies were compared according to sample age.]

why  
not?



## 8 Designing Research for Prekindergarten

### Children

To determine the ability of children to use intentionality in making moral judgments, Piaget (1932) used a research technique consisting of a paired-story presentation in which children were asked to identify the naughtier central character in each of several story pairs. One story involved relatively heavy damage done unintentionally. For example, in one of Piaget's standard story pairs, a child who makes a large ink spot, while trying to be helpful, is contrasted with a child who makes a small ink spot while playing with his father's pen when the father is away. After hearing the story pair the child is asked to judge which boy is naughtier. A child who is presently in the "morality of constraint" stage of moral development would respond that the child who made the large ink spot is naughtier because he did the most damage and would not consider the motive or intention of the story character. Whereas, a child operating in a "cooperative morality" would say that the child who made the spot when his father was away was naughtier even though the spot was smaller.

### Limitations with Comparison

In the use of his story-pair interview technique, Piaget limited his research to subjects between the ages of 6 and 12. Piaget felt that children below the age of six lack the intellectual ability of comparison. Young children are, according to Piaget (1950) restricted to a highly centered, one variable perspective which allows them to focus on only one aspect of the problem at a time. As a result, they

are unable to simultaneously consider and compare the different factors required for solving a multi-faceted problem.

From this theory Piaget attempts to explain the fact that pre-operational children, before the age of 6 or 7, cannot conserve the quantity of a liquid as it is poured into a container of different dimensions. By concentrating on a single dimension such as height and ignoring the compensatory change in the dimension of width, the pre-operational child fails to conserve the identical quantity of the liquid. Whether a child focuses on the changing height or width of the quantity of water has been shown (Piaget, 1941) to vary depending upon the more noticeable dimensions of the container used.

Chandler et al. (1973) suggest that theoretical questions of moral judgment involving the covariation of intentions and consequences present a similar problem of comparison. They submit that

. . . the consistent finding that children below the age of 8 or 9 base their moral judgments on the consequences of, rather than intentions behind moral actions, is a methodological artifact of a particular assessment strategy which inadvertently highlights the perceptual saliency of the consequences of such actions and dilutes the significance of the intentions which prompted them (p. 316).

In addition to Chandler et al. (1973), Costanzo et al. (1973), Hebble (1971), and Armsby (1971) cite the importance of making the behavior intent and resulting consequence equally salient and identifiable in stories used to determine moral judgments of subjects. Armsby (1971) and Darley, Klosson, and Zanna (1978) contend that the Piaget stories are unnecessarily long and complex and are confounded by the factor of short-term memory ability found in young children.

Feldman et al. (1976) examined the recency effect in judgments

of young children by presenting the information through stories with either normal order, intent-consequence, or reversed order, consequence-intent. It was found that order has a significant impact on children's moral judgment. While investigating the recency factor, Moran (1978) found that 11- and 18-year olds gave similar ratings to the actor regardless of the presentation order of intention/consequence. [In contrast, 4- and 7-year-olds showed a pronounced tendency to make judgments on the factor (intention or consequence) that came last in the story.]

The story format of Irwin and Moore (1971) was similar to that of Piaget in that two story characters were compared by the subjects, however, the two characters were presented in a single story. Hebble (1971) used a single story comparison, as did Irwin and Moore, but each story involved only one character. Thus the problem of comparison was completely eliminated.

## 2. Abstract Presentation

Several researchers, recognizing the limitations imposed upon children by Piaget's verbal presentation of stories, attempted to write studies with other methods of story presentation. Variations of four types of story presentations can be found in the literature: (1) verbal, (2) written, (3) illustrated, or (4) videotaped.

Hebble (1971) read the stories aloud but used test booklets with a typed story text. He felt his method was applicable with children as young as six. Armsby (1971) used standard Piaget story-pairs, but gave the children a copy of the stories so that they could read along with the examiner and refer back to the stories during the questioning following each pair.

In a kindness study Baldwin and Baldwin (1970) presented story-pairs, each of which was accompanied by illustrated pictures. The subject was asked to select the picture in which he thought the child was kinder. Costanzo et al. (1973) presented stories to their subjects verbally, but while each story was being read, the subject was shown a cartoon drawing representation of the incident described in the story. Booklets with stick figure illustrations were used for story presentation and testing in a research study by Jensen and Hafen (1973) which utilized prekindergarten subjects.

Farnill (1974) used videotape episodes depicting various intentions and consequences. He felt that this technology would more closely simulate practical life situations than does the verbal story form. One standard Piaget story using a verbal format and one videotaped dilemma using children as actors were presented to 7-year-old subjects in a study by Chandler et al. (1973). [They found that Piaget's verbal presentation of stories drew responses largely based on consequences. Responses to the videotaped dilemmas were, however, largely based on intentions.] They propose that the age of onset of intentionality judgments is earlier than previously assumed and that the contradiction of earlier research is a result of the method of assessment. An attempt to replicate Chandler et al. (1975), was made by Berndt and Berndt (1975) with subjects preschool age and older. The hypothesis that advanced moral judgments would be more common with films was not confirmed.

In a study by Peterson, Peterson, and Finley (1974), the experimenters attempted to make the story presentation appropriate to the subject's age. Each story was acted out using dolls and doll

accessories as it was told to preschool children. In place of the dolls, a black line drawing, depicting the central action and consequences of each story, was used with the second grade subjects. The stories and subsequent questions were presented to the participating college students by means of a questionnaire.

Darley et al. (1978) used a combination of two story presentation techniques. The experimenter read each story while the action was depicted visually on slides with characters portrayed by realistic dolls.

### 3. Non-Verbal Response Dimension

Another aspect to be considered in working with preschool children is the response dimension. In Piaget's (1932) story-pair presentation technique, the subjects were asked which story child was naughtier and why they chose as they did. This research method is dependent upon the subject's ability to express himself verbally and is not well suited to young children. According to Vance (1973) one reason why so few studies of moral reasoning have been done with prekindergarten children may well be the problem of interpreting what the prekindergarten child means when he verbalizes. She went on to suggest that this may be one reason why Kohlberg (1969) theorized his Stage 0 or amoral orientation during the earliest years of life. Sound interpretation of a child's moral reasoning is highly dependent upon his verbal ability. Hebble (1971) supported this conclusion when he argued that if children are to effectively communicate the way in which they employ intention and consequence, they must be provided with a response dimension which is as well articulated as the discriminating judgments they are capable of making. Hebble compensated for limited verbal ability in his study by

the use of a rating scale. He asked the subjects to rate the behavior of one character at a time, using a four-point vertical rating scale consisting of 0, 1, 2, 3, with the numerals typed to the right of the story variation text.

At the conclusion of their stories Costanzo et al. (1973), asked each subject, "What kind of a boy do you think Michael is?" "Is Michael a good boy or bad boy?" The subject was then shown a scale of five squares of increasing size and asked to point to the square which represented his goodness or badness judgment (a little bit to very much). This scale and procedure were employed by Farnill again in 1974 when testing kindergarten, first, and third grades. Feldman et al. (1976) used the same scale in his study with children ages 4-5 and 8-9. A punishment scale, similar in theory to the scale of Costanzo et al. was utilized by Darley et al. (1978). One very significant difference, however, was that Darley's scale was a three-dimensional plexiglas scale and more suitable to a young child than a scale drawn on a piece of paper. The scale consisted of five rectangles mounted on white plexiglas. The smallest one on the left was yellow and the largest one on the right was red. A green rectangle, isolated to the left of the scale was designated as "no punishment." The subject assigned a punishment to the story character by placing a photograph of the character on the rectangle that corresponded to the amount of punishment the subject believed the transgressor deserved.

Buchanan and Thompson (1973) modified Piaget's clinical method by having the child make absolute quantitative judgments rather than relative verbal judgments. They used a "spank scale" which recorded the length of spanking to the nearest second that a subject gave to a

naughty character and a "devil scale" with scores varying from 1-10 depending on the size "devil" the subject pushed. Thus the quantitative task is not dependent on a child's ability to verbalize his decision-making process.

To identify children who make immature moral judgments, Jensen and Hafen (1973) asked their prekindergarten subjects to point to the naughtier story-character in a booklet after being read a pair of stories. The subjects, however, were also asked why one person was naughtier, and these responses were recorded too.

#### 4 Relating Research to Experiences

In reference to the story-types selected for presentation to his subjects, Piaget (1932) found that the first stories he selected were far beyond the child's complete comprehension and therefore, he concluded,

In psychology one must speak to children in their own language, otherwise the experiment resolves itself into a trial of intelligence or of verbal understanding (p. 116).

Breznitz and Kugelmass (1967) considered the role of experience in construction of an instrument to examine the use of intentionality in moral judgment. They suggest that as a child matures and broadens his range of experience, it is possible for him to respond to a wider range of situations with the moral-developed type of response based on intentionality. Their finding is significant to research using pre-school children as subjects. It would suggest that moral judgment stories should be carefully chosen to correspond to the subject's life

sphere. Stories based on situations to which young subjects have had no previous exposure would be very unlikely to result in intentioned based judgments. Medinnus (1959) found that a number of six-year-olds responded on a very concrete level if the incident described was within their range of experience. The more foreign and remote the situation is from the child's experience, the more likely it will be that he will give an immature response.

#### § Differentiation of Accidental and Purposeful Behavior

King (1971) studied children's ability to distinguish intention from accidental action in others through a technique that did not relate the choice to consequences. He concluded that preschoolers do not readily distinguish intention from accident and thus their social judgment could not be expected to depend heavily on recognition of intention in others.

In order to examine the development of intentionality judgment in children ages 6, 8, and 10, new moral judgment stories that clearly contrast an accidental act with a purposeful act were written by Armsby (1971). He presented standard Piaget story-pairs to half his sample and revised Piaget stories to the other half. The results of his study indicate that if children are asked to make moral judgment of the wrongness of two acts--one clearly purposeful and the other clearly accidental--the majority of these children will base their judgments on the intent that motivated the act.



Use of Four Variables of  
Consequence and Intention

Piaget's clinical method, since it uses only the high intent-low damage and low intent-high damage stories, can only be used to test a child's major preference for either intent or damage information. Therefore, Piaget's paired-story method is not an adequate procedure to test his assumption that the child considers damage as his sole criterion for making moral judgments and is not capable of qualifying his moral judgments on the basis of intent. The theory that Piaget's combinations of intent and consequence do not measure the degree to which a child employs the use of these factors is well supported in the literature. The research studies of Farnill (1973), Armsby (1971), Buchanan and Thompson (1973), Breznitz and Kugelmass (1967), Gutkin (1972), Hebble (1971), and Costanzo et al. (1973) include additional combinations and degrees of intent-damage in their paradigm.

Gutkin (1972) found six possible story types or combinations that could be used in his study. Buchanan and Thompson (1973) added high intent-high damage and low intent-low damage variables to the original Piaget design. Being aware of the problem that the classical research technique presented, covarying two parameters at once, Costanzo et al. (1973) used a procedure in which each subject was presented a single story. The story described a young boy acting either out of helpful or mischievous intent and producing either positive or negative consequences. (This procedure permitted the independent variation of intention and consequence parameters so that each subject could be presented with one of four possible combinations of intent and consequence.)

Hebble (1971) used four variations of each story which involved a combination of two intent levels and two consequence levels. He felt this method would constitute an overall measure of the degree to which a child based his judgment on intent or damage.

### 1 Story Content

Intent-consequence literature has basically concentrated on damage to property as did the original Piaget investigation (1932). (There is an obvious need for studies considering physical damage to people and psychological damage to people in all age groups.) The limited studies that include prekindergarten children do not attempt to examine the different types of consequence. This may be a significant developmental difference that has not been explored and that could reveal interesting and valuable information about the progression of moral judgment in the "morality of constraint" stage.

### Summary

The review of literature has suggested the following conclusions concerning variables influencing moral judgment:

- ①. Intention based judgments have been considered to be characteristic of older elementary children; however, current research indicates that this mature moral judgment may occur at a much earlier age.
- ②. Judgment may vary with story content or area tested. More research is needed which examines the influence of different types of consequences.
3. High intelligence is generally considered to be associated

with level of moral judgment.

4. Social class may be related to mature moral judgment, however, it may be that the difference is in child rearing patterns.
5. The relationship between moral judgment and sex is contradictory and a more systematic examination would be beneficial.

A review of the literature has suggested the following conclusions regarding research designed for preschool children:

1. Stories should be presented as concretely as possible to make motives and feelings equally salient with consequences and keep them before the attention of subject, thus compensate for short-term memory.
2. An instrument should include a non-verbal response dimension thus allowing a measure of the child's use of intention and consequence, without being dependent upon verbal ability.
3. Moral judgment stories that relate to experiences of preschool children are more likely to result in mature responses.
4. Moral judgment stories should be selected that clearly differentiate accidental from purposive behavior.
5. To measure the degree to which a child used intent-consequence, additional story combinations should be added to the original Piaget paradigm.
6. An examination of the influence of different types of consequence could add valuable information to what is known about moral judgment.

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURE

#### Subjects

The subjects for this study were 23 girls and 19 boys, ranging in age from 3 years and 8 months to 5 years and 5 months. All of the children attended Oklahoma State University Child Development Laboratories. The socio-economic status of their families was judged to be primarily middle class since most are faculty, students, and local business people. Letters were sent to the parents explaining the project and requesting that the researcher be allowed to interview their child (Appendix A). The parents were told to contact the investigator or laboratory teacher if they had any questions or concerns about the study. Consent was given by every parent and several requested that they be informed about the results. Three boys who were originally a part of the study were dropped due to their inability to give attention to the entire test, thus changing the number of boys in the study to 16. Two children, 1 boy and 1 girl, were later dropped after the test-retest procedure due to unreliable responses as discussed in Chapter III, Reliability of the Instrument. Subjects whose responses were analyzed were 22 girls and 15 boys.

## Instrument

Description of the Instrument

[Data for the present study were collected by using an instrument developed by the investigator. It is similar to one devised by Hebble (1971) which used a story design consisting of four combinations of intent of the central story character and damage done by him:

1. good intention followed by high damage (GH)
2. good intention followed by low damage (GL)
3. bad intention followed by high damage (BH)
4. bad intention followed by low damage (BL)

This intent-damage variation was adopted by the investigator in the present study. In addition to the traditional consequence of property damage, Hebble used psychological and physical damage to people. Hebble used a single story presentation and asked his subjects to rate the behavior of one character at a time. This scheme was adopted in the present instrument because it was felt that it requires less judgment than a story-pair combination for the subject.] The present instrument consisted of three story sets: (1) "Car," with physical damage to people; (2) "Birthday," with psychological damage; and (3) "Block," with damage to property. [Each story set contained four stories using GH (good intention-high damage), GL (good intention-low damage), BH (bad intention-high damage), or BL (bad intention-low damage) variation with a total of twelve stories to be heard by each subject. There were two story characters per set, an actor and a friend who was hurt in some way.] The "Block" story set was written by Hebble and adapted for use with this instrument. The other two story sets were written by the investigator, but followed Hebble's story form.

A copy of the stories may be found in Appendix B. [Following a procedure employed by Armsby (1971), the moral judgment stories presented to the subjects clearly contrasted accidental and purposeful acts of behavior. In addition, stories were written to clearly relate to experiences appropriate for the prekindergarten child.] Hebble's stories, printed in individual booklets, were read to the subjects and they recorded their response beside each story. [The present investigator read the stories aloud but used a three-part cartoon strip to illustrate the stories as they were being read.] Costanzo et al. (1973) followed a similar procedure but used a single cartoon representation of the incident described in the story. [Each cartoon strip in this instrument was based on a series of events depicting a format of (a) intention, (b) action, and (c) consequence.] A copy of the story illustrations may be found in Appendix C.

(In order to obtain a non-verbal response which would reflect "degree," a nine-point rating scale developed by Costanzo et al. (1973) was modified for use in this study.) After asking the subject if the child in the story was good or bad, Costanzo et al. would show a scale drawing of five squares of increasing size. He would then ask the subject to point to the square which showed "how good" (or "how bad") the child in the story acted. Using the "little bit" end of the five point scale as the midpoint, Costanzo et al. obtained a nine-point scale for all judgments ranging from "very bad" to "very good." The midpoint was treated identically as a "little bit good" and a "little bit bad." Using this same basic idea, a scale for this study was designed with five plastic blocks of increasing size. For the purpose of scoring, a number was assigned to each block. These graduated

blocks were glued on a thin wooden board to make a three-dimensional scale that could not be manipulated by the subjects. The numerical response for each story was recorded by the experimenter on a score sheet. (Any pertinent comments by the subjects were also recorded.) A sample score sheet is provided in Appendix D.

### Validity of the Instrument

Several factors were included in the design of the instrument to make it as valid as possible for use with young children.

1. In order to limit the influence of any pre-set prejudices or attitudes about members of the opposite sex, stick figure characters were used in the illustrations. Boys' names were used for the story characters when the subject being tested was a boy and girls' names were used when the subject tested was a girl.
2. In order to limit the possible influence of sex-typed materials, toys selected for use in the stories were rated as androgynous--appropriate for both sexes (Sawyers, 1977).
3. In order to avoid the influence of color preference, illustrations were drawn with black magic markers on white background.
4. In order to avoid the possible influence of color preference with use of the scale, a color that is not highly preferred, yellow, was selected (Hoppe, 1975).
5. In order to prevent the subjects from identifying with a specific person, story characters' names were selected that did not belong to any of the subjects.

6. In order to prevent sequential preference the story set introduced first was rotated in order and the specific story of each set was randomly selected.

✓ 7. [To obtain some indication of the validity of the instrument in terms of the appropriateness of the stories, they were submitted to a panel of five judges for objective evaluation.]

A copy of the letter asking people to serve on the panel can be found in Appendix E. [The panel consisted of (1) three

lead teachers from the Oklahoma State University Child Development Laboratories, (2) a researcher who had previously completed research in the area of moral judgment, and (3) a person with twenty years experience working with preschool

children.] [The judges were asked to evaluate each story in terms of the message, age-appropriateness, and <sup>appeal</sup> interest to the preschool child.] A copy of the moral judgment checklist

can be found in Appendix F. [In order for the story to be included in the study as submitted, it must have been approved by four out of five panel members. If three out of five

found it unacceptable, then it must be changed. Upon the recommendation of two panel members and the agreement of the researcher, one story set was rewritten so that it would clearly communicate the message as proposed. The new story was resubmitted to the panel and approved by all members.]

#### Reliability of the Instrument

[In order to establish a measure of reliability for the moral judgment instrument all the subjects were retested, using the same stories,



and procedure, two weeks after their initial test.) The initial test responses and the retest responses were compared for each individual through the use of the Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test. Of the 39 subjects who completed the instrument, only 2, 1 boy and 1 girl, were found to have responses which differed significantly between the initial test and the retest. Since 95 percent of the subjects gave retest responses which were not significantly different from their initial responses, it was assumed that for this group of children this instrument could be judged to be measuring reliably their ideas. Since two children gave responses to the retest which were significantly different from the responses which they gave on the initial test, these children's responses were discarded before analyzing the data.

#### Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted by the investigator to develop ease and consistency with the subjects when explaining the block scale and in story presentation. During the pilot study, the investigator recognized that the procedure of turning the block scale in one direction for "bad behavior" and in the other direction for "good behavior" was confusing to the children. It was also awkward and cumbersome to manipulate into different positions. However, by setting the block scale before the subject with the largest block always to the right, the scale could be utilized for both "goodness" and "naughtiness" responses. Thus the largest block on the right represented a response of "very good" or "very bad" and the smallest block on the left would mean "a little bit good" or "a little bit bad," depending upon the subject's judgment.

Administration of the  
Instrument

Prior to the story presentations, the interviewer visited the nursery school during its informal play time to become familiar with the subjects and establish rapport. On the testing day the interviewer accompanied each subject into a quiet area where the instrument was administered individually. After the child was seated, s/he was allowed to examine the block scale and ask questions about what it was and how it was made. Usually the subject attempted to manipulate the blocks and remove them from the board. The subject was told that the interviewer would tell some stories about a boy (or girl) who was sometimes good and sometimes bad or did naughty things. [The subject was told to listen carefully because after hearing the story s/he would be asked if the child in the story was good or bad.]

At this time, the interviewer explained that the block scale allowed the subject to show how "naughty" or how "good" the child in the story was. Pointing to the largest block the interviewer explained that the big block meant that the child was "very, very naughty." The littlest block meant that the child was just a "tiny bit naughty," and the other blocks were in-between. The explanation was repeated with the interviewer showing the block that meant "very, very good" and the block that meant "a tiny bit good." To make sure that the subject understood the directions, he was asked to pretend that he had been told a story and to point to blocks showing specified degrees of behavior such as "a tiny bit bad," etc. Praise was given to the child as he completed this task according to the directions of the researcher. More instruction was given, if necessary.

The interviewer then placed the first illustration in front of the block scale and read the appropriate story. At the conclusion of each story, with the illustration still before the subject, the subject was asked, "What kind of boy do you think Harry was? A good boy or a bad boy?" After the subject's response the illustration was removed, and he was asked to point to the block which represented how "good" or "bad" the boy was. The interviewer recorded the block selected by circling the block number from one to nine on the score sheet. The subject was then asked the reason s/he selected as s/he did and this answer was recorded also. Some subjects did not respond verbally, while others chatted at length about the behavior. This procedure continued until all twelve stories of the instrument were completed, which required a total of 15-20 minutes for each subject.

#### Scoring of Instrument

The 9-point moral judgment rating scale was scored by assigning point values from 5 to 9 to the "goodness" response scale and values from 1 to 5 to the "naughtiness" response scale. A value of 5, the mid-point on the whole scale, was assigned to responses of a "little bit good" or a "little bit bad" and was treated as a neutral response in scoring. A response of "very good" received a value of 9 and "very bad" received a value of 1. Therefore, "low" numerical scores reflect the child's judgment of "bad" or "worse than" in judging the story character. (Each subject was told three story sets with four stories (CH, GL, BH, BL) in each set, so each subject would have a total of twelve scores. The scores range from a possible 4 to 36 total for one story set.)

Subscale scores were determined for the following:

1. Good intention scores were determined by the total of scores on six items (stories) which include "good" intention (GH, GL).
2. Bad intention scores were determined by the total of scores on six items (stories) which include "bad" intention (BH, BL).
3. High damage scores were determined by the total of scores on six items (stories) which include high damage (GH, BH).
4. Low damage scores were determined by the total of scores on six items (stories) which include low damage (GL, BL).

Subscale scores were determined for the three story sets (Car, Birthday, Block):

1. Scale I - the total of the score of the four items (GH, GL, BH, BL) in the Car story set reflected the judgment subjects made regarding physical damage to person.
2. Scale II - the total of the score of the four items (GH, GL, BH, BL) in the Birthday story set reflected the judgment subjects made regarding psychological damage to persons.
3. Scale III - the total of the score of the four items (GH, GL, BH, BL) in the Block story set reflected the judgment subjects made regarding damage to property.

In addition scores were obtained for the following conditions:

1. Good intention/high damage - the total score of the three GH items.
2. Good intention/low damage - the total score of the three GL items.
3. Bad intention/high damage - the total score of the three BH items.

4. Bad intention/low damage - the total score of the three BL items.

### Analysis of Data

The data collected in this study were described by computing means and standard deviations for all of the subscale and "condition" score groups. The hypotheses were examined by means of the Median test and by coefficient of correlation for Hypothesis I and by two-way analysis of variance using a randomized block design for Hypotheses II and III. In examining the results in relation to age of subject, the subjects were divided into two groups, those who were younger than four years and those who were older than four years. No subject was exactly four years, 0 months, at the time of data collection.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

A summary of means and standard deviations for all groups on all subscales may be found in Table I. As a result of analysis of the data collected in this study, it was concluded that among this group of pre-kindergarten children:

1. Intent and damage scores were significantly associated with each other ( $p < .05$ ) when the Median test was applied; however, more specific examination by calculating the coefficient of correlation revealed no significant relations. These results suggest that children who scored high on "intent" items tended to score low on "damage" items but that there was no linear relationship between pairs of scores.
2. Intent and damage scores were different for all groups of subjects except for younger boys.
3. Damage to person (both physical and psychological) was considered to be worse than damage to property by the total group, by all girls, and by older girls but such differences were not found among boys or younger girls.

These results suggest the possibility that a developmental factor is operating or the possibility that some differential socialization process is affecting to a significant degree the responses of boys and girls even at age four and five years.

TABLE I  
SUMMARY OF MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS

Score Group	All Subjects N=37		All Females N=22		All Males N=15		Older Females N=7		Younger Females N=15		Older Males N=10		Younger Males N=5	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
GDINT <sup>a</sup>	30.9	14.26	33.5	14.32	27.1	14.32	35.4	12.55	32.6	15.40	25.8	15.66	29.8	9.91
BDINT	17.8	5.87	17.7	5.57	17.8	5.57	17.0	3.83	18.1	6.32	15.1	5.57	23.2	4.76
HHDAM	22.3	9.88	24.1	9.91	19.7	9.91	24.3	8.64	24.0	10.74	17.4	10.37	24.2	6.22
LWDAM	26.4	7.74	27.1	7.80	25.3	7.80	28.1	6.47	26.7	8.52	23.5	7.90	28.8	6.91
Scale I <sup>b</sup>	14.1	6.56	14.5	6.93	13.5	6.9	14.0	4.73	14.7	7.89	12.8	6.41	15.0	6.04
Scale II	16.1	8.47	16.6	7.20	15.3	7.2	16.4	6.13	16.7	7.85	13.4	9.94	19.0	10.98
Scale III	18.5	6.67	20.1	6.37	16.1	6.4	22.0	6.81	19.3	6.20	14.7	7.47	19.0	3.32
GL <sup>c</sup>	15.5	7.53	16.5	7.71	14.0	7.7	17.1	7.24	16.3	8.15	13.5	8.36	15.0	4.95
GH	14.5	7.83	16.5	7.62	11.6	7.6	17.1	6.96	16.1	8.12	10.5	8.41	13.8	5.12
BL	9.9	4.05	10.1	3.69	9.7	3.7	9.9	2.85	10.2	4.11	8.2	4.18	12.8	4.32
BH	7.8	3.60	7.6	3.57	8.1	3.6	7.1	2.41	7.9	4.05	6.9	3.98	10.4	1.95

Note: Detailed descriptions of score groups may be found in Chapter III.

<sup>a</sup>GDINT - All good intention stories; BDINT - All bad intention stories; HHDAM - All high damage stories; LWDAM - All low damage stories.

<sup>b</sup>Scale I - Physical damage to people; Scale II - Psychological damage to people; Scale III - Damage to property.

<sup>c</sup>GL - All good intention-low damage stories; GH - All good intention-high damage stories; BL - All bad intention-low damage stories; BH - All bad intention-high damage stories.

### Examination of Hypotheses

Hypothesis I: There is no significant relationship between "intent" and "damage" scores. The Median test was applied to the intent and damage scores, with a resulting  $\chi^2$  of 4.59 ( $p < .05$ ). Further examination through use of Pearson  $r$  resulted in non-significant  $r$  for each comparison.

Hypothesis II: There are no differences between "damage" scores and "intent" scores: (a) for all subjects, (b) by age, (c) by sex, or (d) by age x sex.

1. An analysis of variance indicates that for all subjects there was a significant difference between intent and damage scores  $F(39,108) = 4.33$ ,  $p < .0001$ . Bad intent (17.8) was judged to be worse than good intent (30.9). Low damage was not significantly worse than high damage at  $p < .0549$  although there does appear to be a trend in that direction. This would indicate that subjects are discriminating between good and bad intention but not low and high damage.
2. An analysis of variance indicated that for all female subjects there was a significant difference between intent and damage scores,  $F(24,63) = 5.01$ ,  $p < .0001$ . Bad intention (17.7) was judged to be worse than good intention (33.5).
3. An analysis of variance indicated that for all males there was a significant difference between intent and damage scores,  $F(17,42) = 3.23$ ,  $p < .01$ . Bad intention (17.8) was judged to be worse than good intention (27.1). The difference between high damage and low damage was not significant.



4. An analysis of variance indicated that for all younger females ( $< 4$  years) there was a significant difference between intent and damage scores,  $F(17,42) = 4.10$ ,  $p < .0001$ . Bad intention (18.1) was judged to be worse than good intention (32.6). Young females did not differentiate between high and low damage.
5. An analysis of variance indicated that for older females ( $> 4$  years) there was a significant difference between intent and damage scores,  $F(9,18) = 5.87$ ,  $p < .0001$ . Bad intention (17.0) was judged to be worse than good intention (35.4). No significant difference was found between high and low damage.
6. For younger males ( $< 4$  years) there was no significant difference between intent and damage scores,  $F(7,12) = 2.44$ ,  $p < .1$ . This finding could be explained by the possibility that young boys are often destructive and are more frequently punished for damage. Therefore they would view damage as being very naughty regardless of intent. Another possibility is that their judgment is an indicator of the developmental process of moral judgment, with young boys functioning at a less mature level.
7. An analysis of variance indicated that for older males ( $> 4$  years) there was a significant difference between intent and damage scores,  $F(12,27) = 2.63$ ,  $p < .02$ , although the difference was not as great as in the other age/sex groups. Bad intention (15.1) was judged to be worse than good intention (25.8). No significant difference was seen between low and high damage.

8. Analysis of variance indicated that for all young subjects (<4 years) there was a significant difference between intent and damage scores,  $F(22,57) = 3.88$ ,  $p < .0001$ . No significant difference was found between high and low damage.
9. For all older subjects (>4 years) there was a significant difference between intent and damage scores,  $F(22,57) = 3.88$ ,  $p < .0001$ . An examination of high and low damage did not reveal a significant difference.

The results of this study clearly indicate that this group of children utilize intent information in making moral judgments. The difference between intent and damage moral judgment scores is highly significant at the .0001 level for all subjects, all females, older females, younger females, all young subjects and all older subjects. The difference was found to be significant at the .01 level for all boys, and significant at the .02 level for older boys. Younger males was the only group where no significant difference was found ( $p < .1$ ) between intent and damage scores.

Hypothesis III: There are no differences among scale (type of damage) scores: (a) for all subjects, (b) by age, (c) by sex, and (d) by age x sex.

1. Analysis of variance indicated that for all subjects there was a significant difference of the mean scores between scales,  $F(38,72) = 2.57$ , and that the difference was significant at the .01 level of probability. The mean and standard deviation scores seemed to indicate a progression with damage to person (14.11) judged to be worse than psychological damage to person (16.05) which was worse than damage to property (18.51).

However, when Duncan's Multiple Range test was applied the largest directional difference was between damage to people (both physical and psychological) and damage to property. The finding that there was a judgmental difference between types of damage confirms a suspicion held by Hebble (1971) but not statistically supported by his study.

2. Analysis of variance indicated that for all females there was a significant difference between scales,  $F(23,42) = 3.40$ ,  $p < .01$ . The mean scores of all the female subjects indicated that Scale I, physical damage to people (14.5), was judged to be worse than Scale II, psychological damage to people (16.6) which was judged to be worse than Scale III, damage to property (20.1). Duncan's Multiple Range test indicated two patterns: (a) that all females judged physical injury (Scale I) to be worse than property damage (Scale III), and (b) that all the females indicated that psychological damage (Scale II) was worse than damage to property (Scale III). Physical damage (Scale I) was not significantly supported as judged worse than psychological damage although a difference can be seen in that direction.
3. Analysis of variance indicated that for all males there was no significant difference between scales,  $F(16,28) = 1.64$ ,  $p < .6$ . All male subjects made judgments that did not indicate a difference between types of consequences, physical injury, psychological damage, or damage to property.
4. Analysis of variance indicated that for young females (<4 years) there was no significant difference between

scales,  $F(16,28) = 3.02$ ,  $p < .1$ . Judgments made by young females did not indicate a difference in importance of consequence scales.

5. Analysis of variance indicated that for older females ( $> 4$  years) there was a significant difference between scales,  $F(8,12) = 4.15$ ,  $p < .02$ . Duncan's Multiple Range test indicated the same directional pattern occurred for older females as existed for all female subjects. Physical damage to people (14.0) was judged to be worse than damage to property (22.0). Psychological damage to people (16.4) was judged to be worse than damage to property (22.0). Although the mean scores seemed to indicate that physical injury (Scale I) is judged worse than psychological damage (Scale II) the Duncan's Multiple Range test does not statistically support this conclusion.
6. Analysis of variance indicated that for young males ( $< 4$  years) there was no significant difference between scales,  $F(6,8) = 0.60$ ,  $p < .7$ . Judgment indicated no difference for these subjects among the three consequence types.
7. Analysis of variance indicated that for older males ( $> 4$  years) there was no significant difference between scales,  $F(11,18) = 1.76$ ,  $p < .9$ . Judgment indicated no difference for these subjects among the three consequence types.
8. Analysis of variance revealed that for all young subjects ( $< 4$  years) there was no significant difference between scales,  $F(18,32) = 2.53$ ,  $p < .1$ . Judgments made by all young subjects (male and female) did not indicate judgmental

influence by type of consequence.

9. Analysis of variance indicated no significant difference between scales for all older ( $> 4$  years) subjects,  $F(18,32) = 2.53$ ,  $p < .1$ . When analyzed separately a significant difference between scales existed for older females but not for older males. Therefore one cannot reach the conclusion that age alone influences judgment in type of consequence. The sex variable appears to be an influencing factor.

#### Summary of Results

Results of analysis of variance indicate that for this study damage to person (both physical and psychological) is considered to be worse than damage to property by the total group. All females and older females also indicated that physical injury and psychological damage to people are worse than damage to property. Neither older males, younger males, nor young females denoted a difference in types of consequence in moral judgment. A moral judgment progression following a developmental growth pattern seems to be a possibility. Sex and age appear to be variables influencing moral judgment when the outcome consequence is varied according to type of damage.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the weight or use very young children (prekindergarten) made of intention/consequence in moral judgment. An extremely limited amount of research investigating intentionality with preschool children is available. This is due in part to the generally supported belief that very young children are not intellectually and developmentally capable of intention-based judgments. The finding that young children do not consider intention may, however, be due to the limitations of an instrument unsuitable for the unique characteristics of the preschool child. The major purpose of this study was to design an instrument appropriate for use with the pre-kindergarten child and to use this instrument to examine the contribution of motive and damage in moral judgment.

The specific purposes of this study were to (1) determine the difference between moral judgments of boys and girls, (2) determine the relationship between age and moral judgment, and (3) determine the relationship between type of damage and moral judgment.

#### Summary

An instrument designed by the investigator was used to examine the

degree to which 37 prekindergarten children - 22 girls and 17 boys use intention and consequence in making moral judgments. For the purposes of examining the hypothesis this sample was divided into four age groups - girls older than four years, 0 months; girls younger than four years; boys older than four years, 0 months; and boys younger than four years.

The subjects were asked to listen to three story sets, including a total of twelve stories, and indicate the degree to which they felt the story character was "good" or "bad." They did this by pointing to a square on a scale that was a revision of one developed by Costanzo et al. (1973). A measure of reliability was determined for 37 children by a test-retest procedure and through the use of the Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks test.

Analysis of variance was used to determine whether significant differences existed between "damage" scores and "intent" scores for children according to sex, age, and type of damage. The results of this study clearly demonstrate that prekindergarten children in this sample utilized intent information in making moral judgments.

Previous research concluding that young children disregard intent and concentrate on the damage factor was not supported ( $p < .0001$ ). All age and sex groups showed a significant difference between intent and damage scores with the exception of younger boys.

Damage to person, both physical and psychological, was determined to be worse than damage to property by the total group, all females, and older females. Neither older or younger males, nor younger females, denoted a difference in types of consequences in moral judgment.

### Implications of the Study

Results of this study are in contrast to the findings of Peterson, Peterson, and Finley (1974) who found no significant differences for preschoolers between the overall frequency of intention-based and damage-based judgments and no significant sex differences. They did not, however, find more damage-based than intention-based judgments. They explained their findings (lack of consequence based judgment) upon the possibility that social class differences (Boehm, 1962a) may exist between their university-oriented nursery school and the more heterogeneous public schools. (In which case the higher level of intentional judgment could genuinely reflect a more mature moral judgment.) Their failure to find a significant level of intention-based judgments may be due to the limitations of their moral judgment stories which do not clearly indicate intention--accidental action is not clearly contrasted with purposeful action (Armsby, 1971). In addition, they used the traditional story-pair format which presented a multi-facet problem--remembering the events of two separate stories and comparing them (Chandler et al., 1973).

The findings of Peterson, Peterson, and Finley (1974) supported an earlier study by Irwin and Moore (1971) which found no significant differences in judgments for their intent-accidental story themes. They felt that their stories were appropriate for a child because the subject's response was made following a single story; however, limitations still exist which make the paradigm less than sensitive to the characteristics of the prekindergarten child. Within the single story the damage and intention of two story characters must still be



compared, a difficult cognitive task for a prekindergarten child. All damage in their story themes was accidental regardless of the intention of the actor and thus followed the format used by Piaget (1932) and criticized by Armsby (1971).

In the present study a highly significant difference was found between preschool children's use of intention and consequence ( $p < .0001$ ). This finding could possibly be attributed to (a) a mature moral judgment, which was revealed through an age-appropriate research instrument sensitive to the characteristics of the prekindergarten child, (b) influences of the socio-economic level of the sample, or (c) limitations of the size of the sample.

No sex differences in moral judgment were found to be significant by Peterson, Peterson, and Finley (1974) or by Irwin and Moore (1971) in their sample of prekindergarten children. In this study a significant difference existed between intention and consequence regardless of age with the single exception of young males. An examination of the relationship between sex and age and moral judgment on different consequence types reveals a sex difference. Damage to person (physical and psychological) was considered to be worse than damage to property by the total group, by all girls, and by older girls but such differences were not found among boys or younger girls. The trend in this study to find more mature judgments in girls than boys correlates with developmental growth patterns that hold that girls mature earlier than boys, and suggests that an instrument sensitive to the characteristics of prekindergarten children may find subtle sex differences.

The fact that there is a judgmental difference when consequence type is varied is in contrast to the findings of Hebble (1971) who

found no significant difference in story themes. The finding in this study that physical and psychological damage to people is worse than damage to property could possibly be a reflection of a developing maturity in moral judgment and the recognition of the value of people over objects. Perhaps, we underestimate the young child's affective maturity. However, an examination of the stories presented to the children does suggest that consequence in the Block story could possibly be a different level of damage. Knocking down a block tower built by another person is considered a serious offense by prekindergarten children; however, it may be recognized that this is not permanent and thus not as serious as other types of damage. The amount of research utilizing injury and psychological damage to people is extremely limited and additional research is needed before the conclusions of this study related to consequence type can be substantiated.

#### Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for future research:

1. Refine instrumentation by making more specific the story character who is acting in each situation.
2. Refine instrumentation for gathering data with the aim of keeping number of stories to a minimum. To allow for the prekindergarten child's short attention span it is suggested that a shorter period of time be planned for presenting the stories.
3. Replicate this study to investigate the impact of presenting all 12 stories randomly as compared to presenting groups of stories in a random order. It is felt that this procedure

might maintain maximum interest and participation by subjects.

4. Replicate this study using a three-dimensional scale of the same design but instead of 9 degrees limit the scale to a smaller number of response degrees, perhaps 6. The pre-kindergarten children of this study seldom utilized as many degrees as were available for their response.
5. Expand the sample to include subjects from lower socioeconomic levels.
6. Increase the sample size and include an equal number of boys and girls who are of similar ages.
7. Expand the sample to include older children such as those in first and third grades.

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## APPENDICES



APPENDIX A

LETTER TO PARENTS



# *Oklahoma State University*

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY RELATIONS  
AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA 74074  
241 HOKIE ECONOMICS WEST  
(405) 624-5057

January 16, 1978

Dear Parents,

I am conducting a study in which I plan to investigate the extent to which preschool children consider intention and consequences in making moral judgments. The study will also consider the possibility that judgment may be influenced by the type of consequence--hurt feelings, damaged toy, or hurt hand.

The children involved will be told a short series of stories in which the amount of damage and intent of the actor is varied as in the two stories below.

## Bad intention - high damage

Harry asks a friend to play "store" with him. But his friend is building a tower out of blocks and keeps working on it. This makes Harry angry, since he wants to play "store" so Harry walks over and knocks the whole tower down.

## Good intention - low damage

Harry asks a friend to play "store" with him. But the boy says, "No, I'm going to build a tower out of blocks." So Harry helps the boy build the tower. But while Harry is adding a block to the tower, his hand slips and knocks off one of the blocks that is already on the tower.

At the completion of each story the children will be asked how they feel about the child (Harry) in the story. All testing will take place during nursery school hours. The children's names will not be included in the final results.

If you have any questions please feel free to call me at 372-2513 or ask your child's laboratory teacher. If you do not want your child included in this study please notify the laboratory teacher.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

*Janet Gambill*

Janet Gambill, Graduate Student  
Family Relations and Child Development

*Frances Stromberg*

Frances Stromberg, Thesis Adviser  
Head, Department of Family Relations  
and Child Development

## APPENDIX B

### MORAL JUDGMENT STORIES

## I. CAR MORAL JUDGMENT STORY

## Physical Damage to People

Good intention - high damage

Jimmy and his friend were having a good time playing with the toy cars. His friend wanted a certain car but could not reach it. So Jimmy rolled it to him. But, the car hit his friend on the head and made a very bloody cut.

Good intention - low damage

Jimmy and his friend were having a good time playing with the toy cars. His friend wanted a certain car, but could not reach it. So Jimmy rolled it to him. But, the car hit his friend's hand and hurt it a little bit.

Bad intention - high damage

Jimmy was very angry with one of his friends. He picked up a toy car and rolled it as hard as he could at his friend. The car hit his friend on the head and made a very bloody cut.

Bad intention - low damage

Jimmy was very angry with one of his friends. He picked up a toy car and rolled it as hard as he could at his friend. The car hit his friend's hand and hurt it a little bit.

## II. BIRTHDAY MORAL JUDGMENT STORY

## Psychological Damage

## Good intention - high damage

Paul was worried about his friend because he was riding his tri-cycle too fast. Paul told him to slow down so he would not get hurt. But his friend did not slow down. So Paul said, "Well, I won't invite you to my birthday party!" The friend was so upset by what Paul had said that he cried and cried and cried for a long time.

## Good intention - low damage

Paul was worried about his friend because he was riding his tri-cycle too fast. Paul told him to slow down so he would not get hurt. But his friend did not slow down. So Paul said, "Well, I won't invite you to my birthday party!" His friend was upset by what Paul had said and looked sad for a little while.

## Bad intention - high damage

Paul was very angry because his friend would not ride tricycles with him. So he said, "Well, I won't invite you to my birthday party!" His friend was so upset by what Paul had said that he cried and cried and cried for a long time.

## Bad intention - low damage

Paul was very angry because his friend would not ride tricycles with him. So he said, "Well, I won't invite you to my birthday party!" His friend was so upset by what Paul had said that he looked sad for a little while.

## III. BLOCK MORAL JUDGMENT STORY

## Damage to Property

## Good intention - high damage

Harry asks a friend to play "store" with him. But the boy says, "No, I'm going to build a tower out of blocks." So Harry helps the boy build the tower. But, while Harry is adding a block to the tower, he slips and knocks the whole tower down.

## Good intention - low damage

Harry asks a friend to play "store" with him. But the boy says, "No, I'm going to build a tower out of blocks." So Harry helps the boy build the tower. But, while Harry is adding a block to the tower, his hand slips and knocks off one of the blocks that is already on the tower.

## Bad intention - high damage

Harry asks a friend to play "store" with him. But his friend is building a tower out of blocks and keeps working on it. This makes Harry angry, since he wants to play "store" so Harry walks over and knocks the whole tower down.

## Bad intention - low damage

Harry asks a friend to play "store" with him. But his friend is building a tower out of blocks and keeps working on it. This makes Harry angry, since he wanted to play "store" so Harry walks over and knocks one block off the tower.

## APPENDIX C

### STORY ILLUSTRATIONS

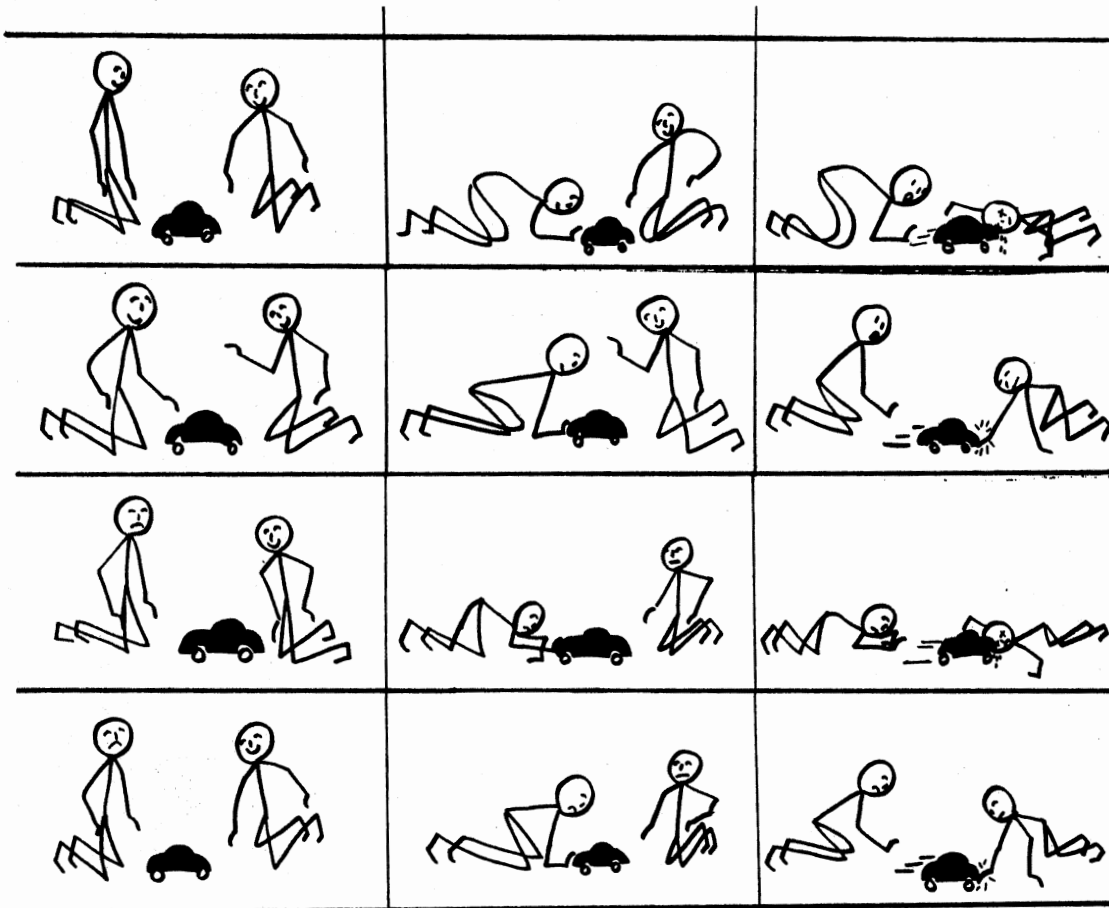


Figure 1. Car Story Illustrations: Damage to People



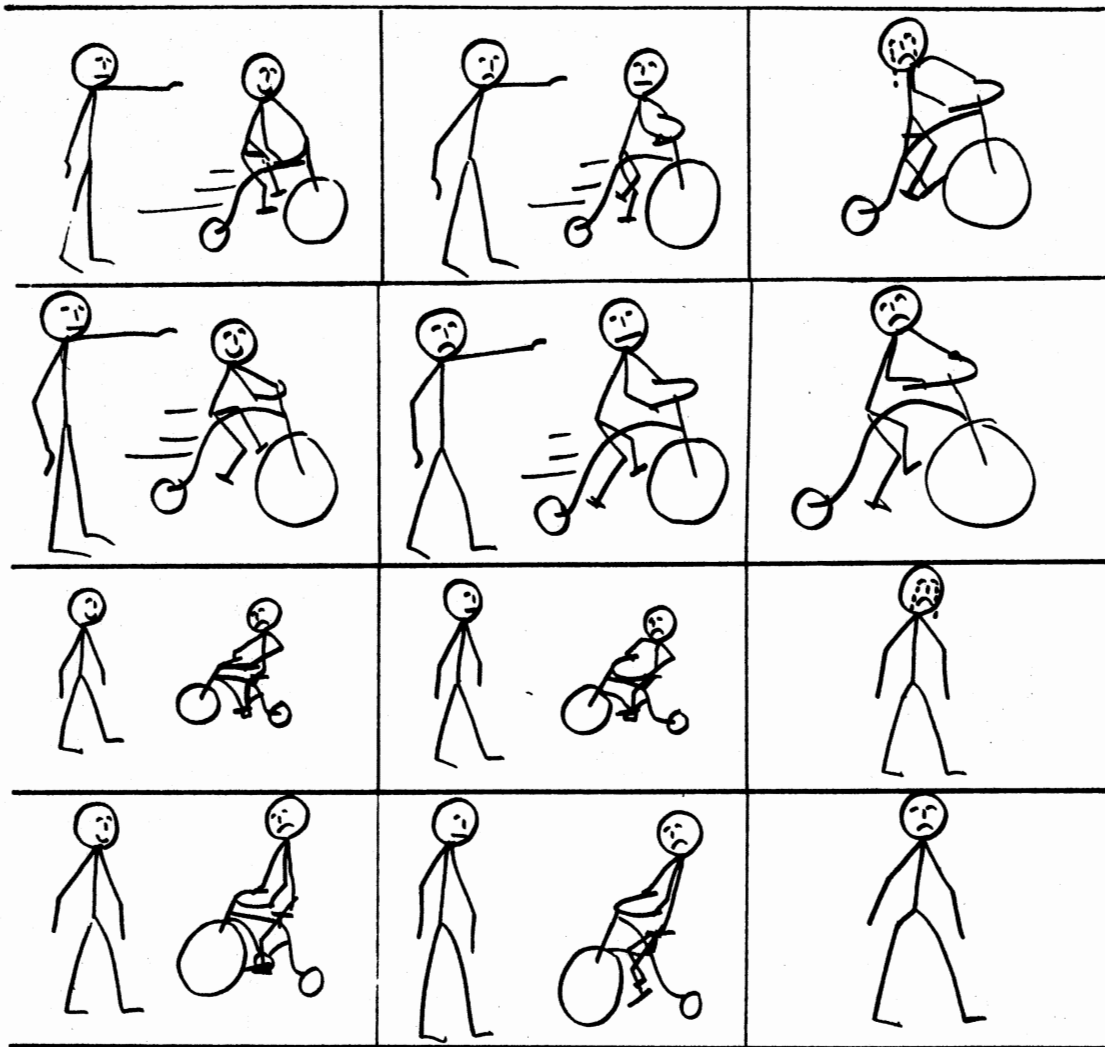


Figure 2. Birthday Story Illustrations: Psychological Damage to People

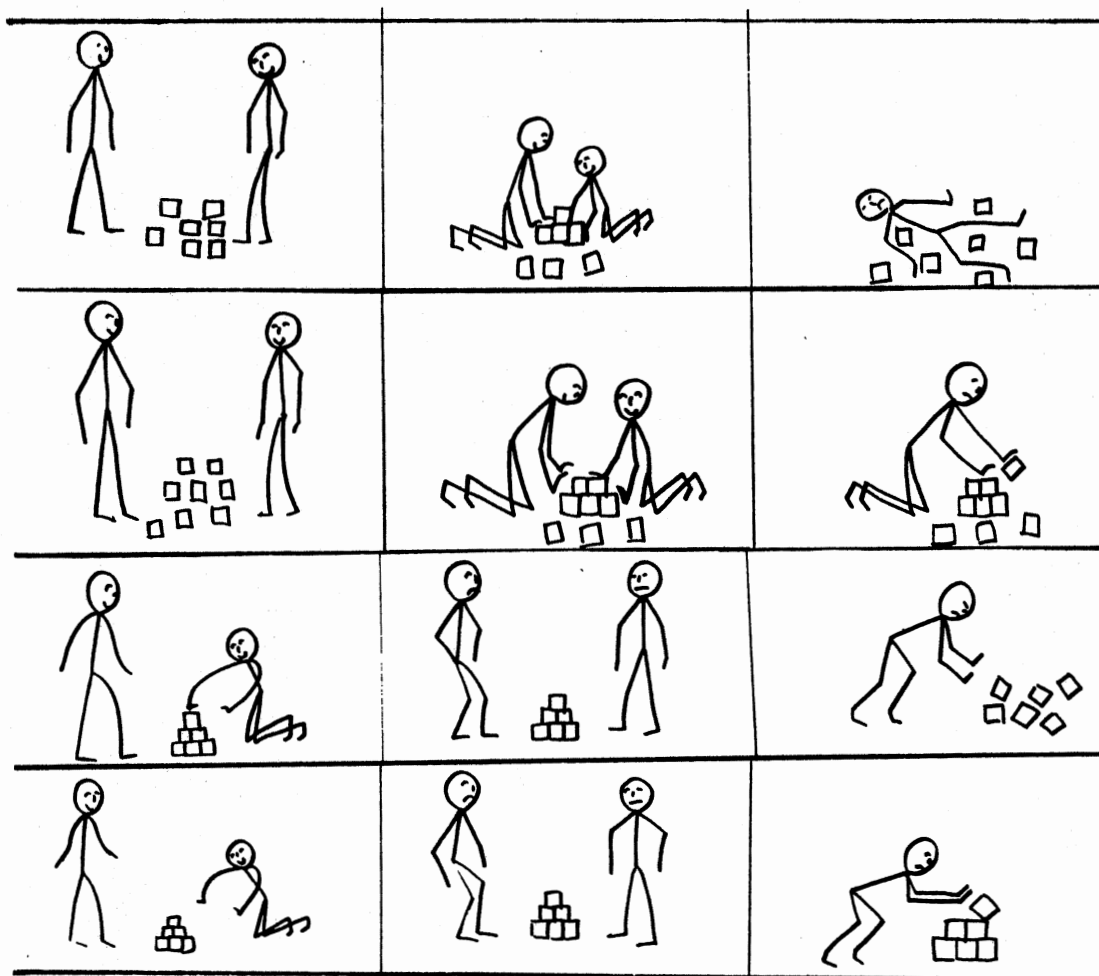


Figure 3. Block Story Illustrations: Damage to Property

**APPENDIX D**

**MORAL JUDGMENT SCORE SHEET**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ LAB \_\_\_\_\_  
 AGE \_\_\_\_\_ BIRTHDATE \_\_\_\_\_  
 SEX \_\_\_\_\_ INITIAL TEST DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
 RE-TEST DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Subject's Comment

I. CAR

	<u>Bad</u>	<u>Good</u>
GH	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	_____
GL	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	_____
BH	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	_____
BL	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	_____

II. BIRTHDAY

	<u>Bad</u>	<u>Good</u>
GH	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	_____
GL	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	_____
BH	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	_____
BL	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	_____

III. BLOCKS

	<u>Bad</u>	<u>Good</u>
GH	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	_____
GL	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	_____
BH	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	_____
BL	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	_____

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**APPENDIX E**

**LETTER TO PANEL JUDGES**

December 1, 1977

Dear

You have been selected as a member of a panel of judges to evaluate a few brief stories which will be used for the purpose of obtaining more information about children's moral judgment. The pattern for the stories comes from the literature, but I feel that it is important that each story be evaluated in terms of the following criteria:

- 1) Message - Each story should show clearly variation in motive or intentions of the actor in one of four ways:
  - a) good intention followed by heavy damage;
  - b) good intention followed by light damage;
  - c) bad intention followed by heavy damage; or
  - d) bad intention followed by light damage.

Does each story clearly communicate the message as proposed?

- 2) Age appropriate - Do you feel that the story situation is appropriate for a preschool child? Would he be able to understand and relate to the activity?
- 3) Interest - Do you feel a preschool child would give attention to the story?

Please read the stories carefully and consider the criteria mentioned above. A check list has been provided for your evaluations. If you would like to indicate specific changes or additions to a story please write them directly on the story pages.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Janet Gambill

APPENDIX F

MORAL JUDGMENT CHECKLIST

## MORAL JUDGMENT CHECKLIST

Please write no in the box if the story does not meet the criteria in the specific category. Please check appropriate box under overall evaluation.

	Specific Criteria			Overall Evaluation		
	Message	Age Appropriate	Interest	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable with minor revision
I. TRUCK						
Bad intention - high damage						
Bad intention - low damage						
Good intention - high damage						
Good intention - low damage						
II. BLOCK						
Bad intention - high damage						
Bad intention - low damage						
Good intention - high damage						
Good intention - low damage						
III. BIRTHDAY						
Bad intention - high damage						
Bad intention - low damage						
Good intention - high damage						
Good intention - low damage						



VITA<sup>2</sup>

Janet Strickland Gambill

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: THE PREKINDERGARTEN CHILD'S USE OF INTENTION AND  
CONSEQUENCE IN RELATION TO TYPE OF DAMAGE

Major Field: Family Relations and Child Development

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Muskogee, Oklahoma, November 16, 1943,  
the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ruel James Strickland.

Education: Graduated from Muskogee Central High School, Muskogee,  
Oklahoma, in May, 1961; received Bachelor of Science degree  
from University of Oklahoma in May, 1966; completed require-  
ments for the Master of Science degree in July, 1978.

Professional Organizations: Oklahoma Association for the Educa-  
tion of Young Children, Southern Association on Children  
Under Six, Oklahoma Association on Children Under Six,  
Friends of Day Care, Omicron Nu, Phi Kappa Phi.