

ATTRIBUTION OF PUNISHMENT AMONG FILIPINO CHILDREN

LEILA C. ILAN AND ALLEN L. TAN
University of the Philippines

In a test of Piaget's proposed two stages of morality, a group of third-graders and sixth-graders from a Diliman and a Maquiling school were presented with three stories each involving some misbehavior and were asked to write down what they thought should be done to the offenders. In one story, the misbehavior was accidental; in another story, it was intentional; while in the third story, motives were present but no consequence ensued. Analysis of variance performed on the data resulted in a negligible Grade x Conditions-of-Misbehavior interaction which was contrary to Piaget's theory of moral development. The analysis revealed that females, as well as younger children from Diliman, tend to be more punitive while all children regardless of age, seem to consider intentions more than consequences in attributing punishments.

Piaget's (1932) investigation of moral development among Swiss children led him to formulate two stages of morality. The first stage, the "morality of constraint," is said to occur up to the age of 7 or 8 years. At this stage, punishment is regarded as necessary and given in direct proportion to the objective consequence or outcome of the misbehavior. Punishment administered is an expiation and the wrongdoer must realize the seriousness of his misdeed. Therefore, the more severe the punishments is, the better or fairer it is. The next stage, beginning at around 9 or 10 years of age, is termed the "morality of cooperation or reciprocity." At this stage, the child is supposedly able to assess intentions or motives which may instigate misbehavior. Hence, misbehavior is judged, and punishment meted out, primarily in terms of the offender's motives or "subjective responsibility" and not in terms of the objective consequences of the misbehavior. Furthermore, children at this stage are said to hold the principle of reciprocity in punishment. For the child, punishments are supposed to set things right, to restore previous conditions; hence, inflicting pain in retribution is not always necessary. At around 11 or 12 years, the consideration of equity emerges and the child

becomes more concerned with the details of the situation and realizes that some misdeeds can be forgiven.

Berkowitz (1964) has reviewed a number of studies patterned after Piaget's and found that few supported Piaget's formulations. Age differences were found to be significant in moral judgment but these were due to socio-cultural variables rather than the maturational process itself (Bandura & MacDonald, 1963; Boehm & Nass, 1962). Durkin (1959a) showed that "older children tend to show concern for possible mitigating factors in the situation being judged (p. 66)." However, increase in age does not always lead to more support for the principle of reciprocity (Durkin, 1959b). Berkowitz, therefore, suggested that mature moral judgment is not always characterized by considerations of subjective responsibility rather than moral realism, belief in reciprocity rather than retribution, greater advocacy of equity, and less regard of the notion that efficacy of punishment depends on severity.

The present study was designed to explore a portion of Piaget's formulation dealing with the development of "subjective responsibility" or the consideration of intentions of misdeeds among children. It was primarily designed to un-

cover any existing relationship which may hold between a child's chronological age and the growth of "subjective responsibility."

METHOD

Experimental Design

Four independent variables were manipulated in a $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 3$ factorial design with repeated measures on the fourth factor. The first factor tapped sex differences; the second factor tapped age (grade-level) differences; while the third factor tapped differences between a city and a provincial school.

The three levels under the fourth factor represented three conditions of misbehavior presented to the subjects in three different stories. All three stories involved one child inflicting a physical injury on another child while playing in school. In one story, the physical injury was inflicted accidentally; in another, it was inflicted intentionally; while in the third story, there were intentions of inflicting injury but the planned misdeed did not materialize. The stories presented to male subjects had male characters while female subjects were presented stories with female characters. The only difference between the two sets of stories was that the proper names of the characters were changed.

Before adoption, each story was rated for comprehensibility by 10 adults; these adults also rated the three stories for equivalence in terms of the physical injuries involved in each.

Response Measure

With each of the three stories, the task of the subject was to write down what he thought should be done to the offender. The subjects' responses, in terms of punishments attributed to the offender, were categorized. The categories were then rated for severity along a 7-point scale by 10 children and 5 adults. Categories rated close to each other were combined resulting in three major categories. From this, a 3-point scale of severity was derived and used as the basis for scoring the punishments attributed by the subjects to the wrong-doers. The scale used was:

- 0 = Not at all severe: do not punish the child; forgive the child.
- 1 = Mild punishment: make the child do something good to compensate for the misdeed; tell him to apologize; send the child to confession; send child to authority figure.
- 2 = Severe punishment: tongue-lashing; whipping; social isolation; suspension or expulsion from school.

Subjects

The three stories were presented in a questionnaire which was administered to 63 third-graders and 60 sixth-graders from the Univer-

sity of the Philippines Elementary School in Diliman, Quezon City and the Maquiling Elementary School in Los Baños, Laguna. Incomplete questionnaires were discarded resulting in the inclusion of 96 pupils as subjects. These 96 subjects were equally divided with regard to sex (48 males and 48 females), grade-level (48 third-graders and 48 sixth-graders), and the two schools (48 from Diliman and 48 from Maquiling). The ages of the third-graders ranged from 8-1/2 to 9-1/2 years with a mean age of 8-3/4 years. The sixth-graders ranged in age from 11-1/2 to 13 years with a mean age of 12-1/2 years. Using their father's occupation as an index, the subjects may be described as coming from a relatively high socioeconomic group.

Prediction

Piaget's theory of moral judgment would predict an Age-Grade \times Conditions-of-Misbehavior interaction effect. If the younger third-graders were more concerned with the objective consequences of misdeeds, then they would be more punitive towards offenders inflicting injury accidentally than offenders who intended to inflict injury but whose plans did not materialize. The older sixth graders, on the other hand, would be expected to be more punitive towards the second class of offenders.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An analysis of variance was performed on the data, the results of which are summarized in Table 1. The use of the analysis of variance may be questioned in view of the fact that the response measure could only vary along a 3-point scale. It was, however, the only statistical technique available that could handle all the possible main and interaction effects of the independent variables. The investigators decided, therefore, to supplement the analysis of variance with nonparametric analysis of the data.

An inspection of Table 1 reveals that the three conditions of misbehavior elicited significant differences among the subjects in attributing punishments to the offenders. This effect was also found to be significant in a nonparametric analysis of the data. A Friedman analysis of variance by ranks performed on the data resulted in a $X^2 = 22.8$ with two degrees of freedom, significant at the .001 level.

Generally, subjects were most punitive when misbehavior was motivated and yielded consequences; somewhat less punitive when misbehavior was motivat-

TABLE 1
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE: FILIPINO CHILDREN'S ATTRIBUTION OF PUNISHMENT

Source of Variance	SS	df	MS	F
Between Subjects	53.50	95		
A (Sex)	2.72	1	2.720	5.80**
B (Grade-Level)	2.00	1	2.000	4.26*
C (Schools)	.12	1	.120	
A x B	.22	1	.220	
A x C	.34	1	.340	
B x C	6.12	1	6.125	13.06**
A x B x C	.68	1	.685	1.46
Subjects within groups	41.28	88	.469	
Within Subjects	102.00	192		
D (conditions of misbehavior)	25.64	2	12.820	33.21**
A x D	2.12	2	1.060	2.75
B x D	.26	2	.130	
C x D	.58	2	.292	
A x B x D	.16	2	.082	
B x C x D	2.30	2	1.150	2.98
A x C x D	.42	2	.212	
A x B x C x D	2.53	2	1.265	3.26*
D x Subjects within groups	67.97	176	.386	
Total	155.50	287		

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

ed but did not result in any injury; and least punitive when misbehavior was accidental. Contrary to what Piaget's theory would predict, there was a negligible ($F < 1$) Age-Grade x Conditions-of-Misbehavior interaction effect and both third-graders and sixth-graders seemed to be utilizing the concept of subjective responsibility in their attributions of punishment.

This finding may be explained in a number of ways, the most plausible of which seems to be the relatively high socioeconomic status of the subjects who were mostly the children of faculty members of the University of the Philip-

ppines. Harrower (1934) for one has shown that among English children, Piaget's two stages of moral development was present only in the lower class children. The upper class children displayed relatively mature moral judgments even at ages below six. This might very well be the case with the Philippine sample. This possible explanation could have been tested had we added a fifth factor in the study: socioeconomic class.

Two other findings are worth noting. One was a significant sex difference, with females generally tending to be more punitive. In a nonparametric

analysis of the data, male and female subjects were categorized according to the severity of punishments attributed to the offenders over the three conditions of misbehavior (totals of 0-4 vs. 5-6 over the three conditions). A 2 x 2 contingency thus derived yielded a $X^2 = 5.2$, significant at the .05 level.

There were significant differences between the two grade levels with the third-graders tending to be more punitive than the sixth-graders. Further analysis of the significant Grade x Schools interaction, however, reveals that the significant difference in grade levels holds only for the Diliman sample. In this city school, the third-graders were much more punitive than the sixth-graders. In the provincial school, however, sixth-graders were slightly (but negligibly) more punitive than the third-graders.

This interaction effect was also borne out by a nonparametric analysis of the data. The frequency with which grade three and grade six students from the Diliman and Maquiling schools attribute severe punishments over the three conditions of misbehavior (a total score

of 5 or 6 over the three stories) was set up in a 2 x 2 contingency table. Analysis of these data resulted in a $X^2 = 5.7$, significant at the .05 level.

REFERENCES

- BANDURA, A. & MACDONALD, F. J. The influence of social reinforcement and the behavior of models in shaping children's moral judgments *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 1963, 67, 274-282.
- BERKOWITZ, L. *The development of motives and values in the child*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1964.
- BOEHM, L. & NASS, M. L. Social class differences in conscience development, *Child Development*, 1962, 33, 565-574.
- DURKIN, D. Children's concepts of justice: A comparison with Piaget data. *Child Development*, 1959, 30, 59-67. (a)
- DURKIN, D. Children's concept of justice: A further comparison with Piaget data. *Journal of Educational Research*, 1959, 52, 252-257. (b)
- HARROWER, M. R. Social status and the moral development of the child. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 1934, 4, 75-95.
- PIAGET, J. *The moral judgment of the child*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1932.