Introduction

- Women are believed to apologize more frequently than men.
- This phenomenon has been documented and is in part driven by the fact that women have a lower threshold for what constitutes offensive behavior (Schumann & Ross, 2010).
- When transgressors apologize, it signals to the victim that the transgressor regrets the harm they caused and cares about the victim's feelings (Lazare, 2004).
- Research on children's early moral development has shown that girls are more sensitive to harm, more empathic, and place more value on their relationships than boys (Sears et al., 1965; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1990).
- Similar to adult women, girls may perceive transgressions as more serious and thus believe that an apology is more necessary than boys in order to maintain positive interactions between individuals.
- Here, we asked when gender differences emerge in how serious 5-, 7-, and 10-year-olds (N = 48) rate ambiguous transgressions and how important they think it is to apologize.

References


Acknowledgments

Thanks to the children and parents who participated in this research, and the research assistants in the Child Language & Learning Lab who helped collect the data as well as Tiffany Hwang for her drawings. Contact: sms4dg@virginia.edu

Conclusion

As children get older they have more experience with transgressions and thus can differentiate levels of severity. This may be why they are more likely to report minor ambiguous transgressions as less severe.

Although older children rate minor ambiguous transgressions as less severe than younger children, they still believe that it is just as important to apologize. Irrespective of how severe a transgression is, children learn from an early age that they should employ the apology script as a means of maintaining positive interactions between individuals.

“Do I need to say I’m sorry?”

Children’s evaluations of the need to apologize following ambiguous transgressions

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