PSY 150
GROUP PROJECT ON DEVELOPMENT
Moral Judgment Task

As the second study in our investigation of the question "Do children of the same age think similarly?," each class researcher will ask his/her subject to make a moral judgment about children's actions described in two short passages.

Recall the Piagetian principle of moral realism (see text, p. 81) that characterizes children's moral reasoning in the preoperational stage. In this stage children judge an act more by its consequences that by the intentions behind it. As moral realism declines in the concrete operational stage, children now give weight to subjective considerations like a person's intentions.

Follow the same steps you followed in the first study:

1. Before you conduct the second study, formulate a research question and a hypothesis.

2. Each researcher will perform the moral judgment task with his/her subject and record the results.

3. Researchers will share their results with other group members and determine how to organize them best. It may be difficult to organize the results of this task meaningfully in tabular form.

4. In your group you will discuss the results of your study and whether they tend to confirm or disconfirm your hypothesis and why.

5. You will report the results and implications of your study using standard psychological report format.

Use the following protocol when performing the task with your subject:

Tell the child that you are going to read two stories, each about a child that did something. After you read the two stories, you want the child to tell you if the children in each story were equally guilty (bad), and if not, which was most guilty (the naughtiest) and why.

Story 1. A little boy who is called John is in his room. He is called to dinner. He goes into the dining room. But behind the door there was a chair, and on the chair there was a tray with 15 cups on it. John couldn't have know that there was all this behind the door. As he opens the door to go into the dining room, the door knocks against the tray, the tray tips over, and all 15 cups drop to the ground and break.

Story 2. Once there was a boy whose name was Henry. One day when his mother was out, he tried to get some cookies out of the kitchen cupboard. He climbed up on a chair and stretched out his arm. But the cookies were too high up and he couldn't reach them and take any. But while he was trying to get them, he knocked over a cup. The cup fell down and broke.

Are the boys equally guilty or is one more guilty than the other?
If equally guilty, why?
If one is more guilty than the other, which is more guilty and why?

If necessary, probe the child a bit to get as full an answer as possible.

Following the interview with the child, record as precisely as you can the child's explanation of his/her answer.

Your draft report should be approximately 5 pages, double-spaced, typed, and follow the Standard Format for Psychology Research Papers distributed in class. It is due classtime, Monday, March 16.