Research on moral obligations in childhood has shown that children ages 8 to 13 years believe it is a moral obligation to help the out-group in high need conditions (Sierksma, Thijs, & Verkuyten, 2014). Children feel a moral requirement to offer help in high need situations, independent of group membership. What is less documented is children’s sense of moral obligation to the out-group in contexts of varying need and disloyalty (Nesdale, Maass, Durken, & Griffiths, 2005). This study adds to the understanding of various intergroup contexts in which children weigh moral obligation of being loyal to ones group.

**Methods & Measures**

- Participants were surveyed and randomly assigned to one of three conditions (e.g., physical harm, psychological harm, and social conventional harm).
- Each condition included two levels of disloyalty (e.g., low level of disloyalty and high level of disloyalty).
- Participants responded to two questions about the importance of helping their in-group/out-group (“How important is it that X try to get more water for your/the other group?”) using a Likert-type scale (1 = really not important, 6 = really important).

**Participants**

- 37 children
- \( M_{age} = 13.27 \) years; SD=2.22
- 68% female

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Conditions</th>
<th>Story A: Low Disloyalty</th>
<th>Story B: High Disloyalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Physical Harm Condition</td>
<td>X gives 2 bottles to the other group and 4 bottles to your group. Question: How important is it that X try to get more water for your/the other group?</td>
<td>X gives 6 bottles to the other group and 0 bottles to your group. Questions: How important is it that X try to get more water for your/the other group?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Psychological Harm Condition</td>
<td>X intentionally passes the soccer ball to the other team. Question: How important is it that X try to win the game for your/the other team?</td>
<td>X intentionally scores a goal for the other team. Question: How important is it that X try to win the game for your/the other team?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Social Conventional Harm</td>
<td>X is not supporting your group by not wearing your teams shirt (grey). Question: How important is it that X try to support your/the other group</td>
<td>X is not supporting your group by wearing the other teams shirt color (yellow or green). Question: How important is it that X try to support your/the other group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Findings**

Findings show that overall participants thought it was more important to help the in-group than the out-group, irrespective of the level of disloyalty. The results suggest that participants in the high level of disloyalty story found it most important to help the in-group than the out-group in the physical harm condition. These findings add to the growing literature on intergroup attitudes in childhood and how children develop an understanding of morality in group contexts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance of helping in-group</th>
<th>Importance of helping out-group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Harm</td>
<td>Psychological Harm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Results**

1. Participants evaluated helping the in-group as more important than helping out-group in both the low level \((F(1, 34)=13.47, \eta^2=.28)\) and high level \((F(1, 34)=63.41, \eta^2=.65)\) disloyalty stories.

2. An Evaluation X Harm type Interaction effect \((F(1, 34)=16.96, \eta^2=.33)\) indicates that participants evaluated helping the in-group as more important than helping the out-group primarily in the psychological harm \((p<.01)\) and physical harm \((p<.01)\) conditions but less so in the social conventional condition \((p<.05)\). See Figure 1.

**Discussion**

**Figure 1:** Evaluating the importance of helping the in-group and out-group for the three conditions on a 6-point Likert-type scale.

**References**
