Dear Parents,

We are currently participating in a research programme based at the University of Sussex. Dr Robin Banerjee is leading a project along with Dr Mark Bennett at the University of Dundee investigating children’s understanding of everyday social situations. This term, a member of the research team will visit children in Reception, Year 2, and Year 4, talking with children individually about short hypothetical stories where they will be asked to imagine breaking a rule. The researchers are interested in how young children think they should behave, and in their ideas about what happens when rules get broken. The researchers would like to stress that they are not interested in any individual child's responses but rather in the thoughts and feelings of each age group as a whole.

Please do not hesitate to contact Dr Banerjee on ***** ****** if you have any questions about this work. If you would not like your child to take part in this study, please complete and return this form by __________.

I do not want my child to participate in this research study.

Child’s Name __________________    Class _________________
Parent/Guardian signature ________________  Date _________________
Non-Technical Summary

Study 1
This study investigated young children’s awareness of self-presentational motives for, and consequences of, two specific ‘accounts’ (excuses and apologies) following different types of rule violation. A total of 120 children aged 4 to 8 years heard stories about either moral rule violations (e.g., hitting someone) or social-conventional rule violations (e.g., wearing very odd clothing), where the transgressor used an excuse, an apology, or no account. Even the youngest children perceived different self-presentational consequences of using excuses and apologies, with more positive evaluations anticipated following use of apologies. However, as predicted, references to concerns about social evaluation increased with age, and were significantly more common in the context of social-conventional rule violations.

Study 2
In an additional study not listed in the original proposal, 80 7- to 10-year-olds were asked to generate rule-breaking situations that would elicit two different types of social outcomes: those that focus attention on the self (e.g., being stared at) and those that focus attention on others (e.g., upsetting others). The children clearly discriminated between the two outcome types, providing violations of social conventions or behavioural norms for the former and violations of moral rules for the latter. This confirmed our expectation that children would spontaneously link social-conventional rule violations to self-focused attention from others. In addition, we found that children came to view deviations from social conventions and norms as carrying distinctive self-presentational risks, specifically the likelihood of a derisory social evaluation.
Study 3
In this study, 91 children aged 4-8 years were asked to imagine committing four social-conventional violations and four moral violations, and were then asked questions about the seriousness of the violations, how they would feel, what they would say or do afterwards, and why. Results showed that children in general viewed moral violations as more serious than social-conventional violations. However, social-conventional violations more frequently elicited self-presentational concerns about social evaluation and attributions of social emotions. The study supports our prediction that social-conventional rule violations are likely to be important contexts for the development of self-presentational reasoning.

Study 4
This study investigated more directly our prediction that self-focused attention is a key mechanism by which social-conventional rule violations elicit reasoning about self-presentational processes. In the study, we manipulated 4- to 8-year-olds’ level of self-focused attention, during the actual testing situation itself, by leading some children to believe that they were being video-recorded and that their answers would be seen by others. As in Study 3, the children heard stories about moral and social-conventional rule violations. The study showed that heightening self-focused attention through use of the video camera led to more frequent attributions of social emotions. However, the impact on children’s reasoning about self-presentational motives was less clear.

Study 5
In our final study, we evaluated the impact of manipulating self-focused attention by telling 4- to 8-year-olds about rule violation vignettes where the audience responded to the transgression by focusing attention (derisively) on the transgressor or by remaining entirely passive. In line with our hypotheses, children hearing about moral violations were more likely to attribute social emotions and identify social evaluation concerns when the audience focused attention on the self than when the audience was passive. This effect of audience reaction was not evident in the case of social-conventional violations, where references to social emotions and social evaluation concerns were generally more frequent.
Questions asked in each study

Study 1

Questions asked after each hypothetical story describing either a social-conventional or a moral rule violation:

1. Was it okay for [character name] to ...(hit/steal/etc.)?  
   Prompt: “yes” or “no”

2. How bad was it?  
   Prompt: “not at all bad”, “a little bad”, “quite bad”, “very bad”

3. [Only asked for stories where character will later give apology or excuse]  
   How much would the other children like [character name]?  
   Prompt: “not at all”, “a little bit”, “quite a bit”, “a lot”

[CHARACTER GIVES APOLOGY, EXCUSE, OR NO ACCOUNT]

4. Do you think [character name] should be punished for what happened?  
   Prompt: “yes” or “no”

5. How much do you think [character name] should be punished?  
   Prompt: “not at all”, “a little bit”, “quite a bit”, “very much”

6. What would the other children think about [character name]?  

7. How much would the other children like [character name]?  
   Prompt: “not at all”, “a little bit”, “quite a bit”, “a lot”

8. [Only asked for stories where character gave apology or excuse]  
   [Character name] said [read account]. Why do you think [character name] said that?

Study 2

Questions asked after being prompted to think of a situation that: a) made other children stare at you, b) made other children make fun of you, c) made another child upset, or d) meant you had to say sorry to another child:

1. What happened?

2. What do you think the other children thought about it?
Studies 3-5

Questions asked after each hypothetical story describing either a social-conventional or a moral rule violation:

1. Would it be okay for you to ...(hit/steal/etc.)?  
   Prompt: “yes” or “no”

2. How bad would it be to do that?  
   Prompt: “not at all bad”, “a little bad”, “quite bad”, “very bad”

3. How would you feel after you had...(hit/stolen/etc.)?

4. What would you do next?

5. Why would you do that?

6. What would you say next?

7. Why would you say that?

Note: In Study 4, children were either in a ‘self-focused attention’ condition or in a ‘control’ condition. In Study 5, children were either in a ‘self-focused attention’ condition or a ‘passive’ condition.
Initial coding categories for responses to open-ended questions

Study 1
*What would other children think?*
1. General positive or neutral
2. General negative
3. Account
4. Lying
5. Intentionality
6. Mitigation
7. Don’t know/unsure
8. Fix situation
9. Other
10. Account + fix situation
11. General negative + account
12. Negative + lying

*Why did he/she say that?*
1. Punishment
2. Social evaluation concerns
3. Other social consequences
4. Statement of transgression
5. Rules regarding response
6. Other person’s feelings
7. Don’t know/not sure/just because
8. Account
9. Remorse
10. Other
11. Other person’s feelings + social evaluation concerns
12. Account + punishment
13. Others’ feelings + punishment
14. Punishment + social evaluation

Study 2
*What happened? (EVENT)*
1. Performing
2. Harm to self
3. Control
4. School
5. Secrets
6. Mistakes
7. Good work
8. Bad work
9. Opinions
10. Clothing
11. Standing out
12. Gender
13. Aggression/deception
14. Exclusion
15. Property
16. Accidental harm
17. Other

What would/did other children think? (THOUGHT)
1. Protagonist: negative
2. Protagonist: positive
3. Protagonist: silly/unusual
4. Other negative
5. Other positive
6. Neutral
7. Other social
8. Punishment
9. Other
10. Interpretation attempts

Study 3
How would you feel?
1. General negative
2. Positive
3. Embarrassed
4. Guilt/shame/naughty
5. Sorry
6. Frightened/scared/worried
7. Other
10. Sorry + social

What would you do next?
1. Fix situation
2. Tell the teacher
3. Say something
4. Avoidance
5. Positive emotional response
6. Negative emotional response
7. Encourage others to join
8. Other

What would you say next?
1. Fix situation
2. Sorry
3. Excuse/justification
4. Deny responsibility
5. Admit responsibility
6. Tell the teacher
7. Encourage others to join
8. Other
10. Sorry + excuse

Why?
1. Punishment
2. Social evaluation concerns
3. Other social consequences
4. Statement of transgression
5. Rules regarding response
6. Other person's feelings
7. Restatement
8. Other

Study 4
How would you feel?
1. General negative
2. Positive/neutral
3. Social emotions
4. Sorry
5. Scared
6. Regret
10. Sorry + social
11. Negative + social
12. Negative + scared
13. Negative + positive
14. Scared + sorry
15. Social + scared
16. Positive + social
99. Other

What would you do next?
1. Fix situation
2. Tell someone
3. Say something
4. Avoidance
5. Continue
10. Avoidance + tell someone
11. Fix situation + tell someone
12. Fix situation + avoidance
99. Other

What would you say next?
1. Fix situation
2. Sorry
3. Excuse/justification
4. Deny responsibility
5. Admit responsibility
6. Nothing – child says they would say nothing
7. Challenge audience
10. Sorry + excuse
11. Fix + excuse
12. Excuse + challenge audience
13. Sorry and admit
14. Fix + challenge
15. Excuse + admit
99. Other

Why?
1. Punishment/direct retribution
2. Social evaluation concerns
3. Other social consequences
4. Statement of transgression
5. Rules regarding response
6. Prosocial
7. N/A
8. Fix situation
30. Regret
31. Accidental
10. Social evaluation concerns + statement of transgression
11. Punishment + statement of transgression
12. Rules regarding transgression + prosocial
13. Other social consequences + prosocial
14. Social evaluation concerns + fix situation
15. Punishment + social evaluation concerns
16. Statement of transgression + rules regarding response
17. Rules regarding response + prosocial
18. Punishment + rules regarding response
19. Punishment + prosocial
20. Other social consequences + fix situation
21. Other social consequences + regret
22. Punishment + other social consequences + prosocial
23. Other social consequences + statement of transgression
24. Social evaluation concerns + prosocial
99. Other
Study 5
How would you feel?
1. General negative
2. Positive/neutral
3. Social emotions
4. Sorry
5. Scared
6. Regret
10. Sorry + social
11. Negative + social
12. Regret + social
13. Negative + positive
14. Sorry + negative
15. Scared + social
99. Other

What would you do next?
1. Fix situation
2. Tell someone
3. Say something
4. Avoidance
5. Continue
99. Other

What would you say next?
1. Fix situation
2. Sorry
3. Excuse/justification
4. Deny responsibility
5. Admit responsibility
6. Nothing
7. Challenge audience
10. Sorry + excuse
11. Admit responsibility + excuse
12. Admit responsibility + fix situation
13. Fix situation + challenge audience
99. Other

Why?
1. Punishment/direct retribution
2. Social evaluation concerns
3. Other social consequences
4. Statement of transgression
5. Rules regarding response
6. Prosocial
7. N/A
8. Audience reaction
9. Fix situation
10. Other person’s feelings + punishment
11. Statement of transgression + concern for other’s feelings
12. Statement of transgression + other social consequences
13. Statement of transgression + rules regarding response
14. Other person’s feelings + other social consequences
15. Social evaluation concerns + other social consequences
16. Rules regarding response + punishment
17. Fix situation + social evaluation concerns
18. Punishment + other social consequences
19. Statement of transgression + social evaluation concerns
20. Social evaluation concerns + punishment
99. Other