

September 2023

## Choosing Sides: Children's Expectations of Consequences of Loyalty Towards Authority

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### Recommended Citation

Knieriem, Shelby; Norris, Megan N.; and Noles, Nicholaus S. (2023) "Choosing Sides: Children's Expectations of Consequences of Loyalty Towards Authority," *The Cardinal Edge*: Vol. 1: Iss. 4, Article 6. Available at: <https://ir.library.louisville.edu/tce/vol1/iss4/6>

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# Choosing Sides: Children's Expectations of Consequences of Loyalty Towards Authority

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## ABSTRACT

Previous research has found that children recognize social group membership and status early in development (Aboud, 2003; Gulgoz & Gelman, 2017). However, children increasingly value loyalty towards authority figures with age, although they prefer members of their own social groups (Norris & Noles, 2022). In this study, we are interested in whether children expect there to be positive consequences associated with loyalty towards authority figures over a subordinate, as well as negative consequences associated with loyalty towards subordinates over authority figures. We presented children ages 6-8, as well as adults, with a situation in which a worker was loyal to either the boss (authority figure) or another worker (subordinate). We then asked two questions: whether the boss was nice to the (dis)loyal worker (Positive Consequence) or mean to them (Negative Consequence). Both children and adults significantly chose the worker to receive a negative consequence when the worker was loyal to the subordinate as well as to receive a positive consequence when the worker was loyal to the boss. These results suggest that at a young age, children recognize that risks are associated with loyalty towards authority figures over in-group members. Future studies should further explore how loyalty influences the way children interact in relationships with friends, parents, and teachers.

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