EDUC 530: Masters Research

Motivation in the Art Room: Effects of Teacher Praise on Student Motivation

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**Abstract**

Previous research on the topic has found praise for effort to have the most positive effect on student’s achievement and motivation in the classroom. Contrary to this belief, a study conducted in a high school art classroom demonstrated that praise for effort may not be the only useful form of feedback in a creative classroom environment in order to promote the most motivation and participation. Through the use of quantitative and qualitative methods, three forms of teacher given feedback were addressed, person praise, also known as praise for intelligence, praise for effort, and objective feedback. All participants from each of the research groups displayed some degree of improvement on self-worth measurement scales from beginning to end of the study. Participants receiving praise for effort marked a decline in their belief of their own memorization abilities. There was also a measured decline in willingness to participate from the participant receiving praise for effort. These findings have important implications for how motivation is best encouraged in the art classroom. The findings also begin to provide insight into more theoretical issues such as students’ self-worth or general academic self-concept, and willingness to participate in classroom activities.

**Introduction**

The ultimate goal for teachers is to have the most positive impact possible on their students. A teacher’s job is to educate students and guide them towards developing the skills necessary to become lifelong learners. With the knowledge of these skills comes a motivation to learn. This motivation is affected by a number of things, some of which are influenced by teachers. Teachers must create an environment in which they will have the most positive impact on their students; one in which students are motivated to participate. One way in which teachers can encourage student motivation is through praise. Praise is defined as “a public acknowledgement that the self surpassed certain relevant, important standards” (Baumeister, Hutton, & Cairns, 1990, p. 132). The effects of teacher praise transcend a single curriculum.

What happens in the art room is not devoid of what happens in all other classrooms. Art can have a stigma of being considered a talent that only a handful of people are born with. Also, students may unknowingly compare their abilities in one subject with their perceived abilities in another. Dimensional comparison theory states that students are constantly making judgments and comparisons of their performances in various subjects (Möller, 2005). Teachers must be aware of these self-analyses that students are conducting. The goals that students are setting for themselves are strongly influenced by the feedback they are receiving form their parents, coaches, and of course their teachers (Mueller & Dweck, 1998). Students may set learning goals for themselves or they may have a performance-oriented mindset. Through praise for effort, a teacher can raise a student’s awareness of the importance of developing their skills. On the other hand, praise for intelligence may end up developing a highly performance oriented mindset if they consistently receive this form of praise. The concerning fact is that students who become so singularly focused on their performance are therefore sacrificing what could be very valuable learning opportunities. The goal is not to focus all of the students’ attention on the end result, but rather encourage them to master the skills necessary to obtain the new material (Mueller & Dweck, 1998).

Just as praise can be effective in the art room, it can also have lasting effects on a student’s perceptions of himself as a whole. By affirming students of their individualism teachers can help students develop an individualized identity. It is through these practices of connective instruction that students can be allowed to make mistakes in a comfortable setting. This open environment allows students to develop competence and confidence (Möller, 2005; Nelson, Young, Young, & Cox, 2012). Even though there is quite a bit existing research on praise in the classroom, there is little research focused specifically on its affects in the art room. Simply through personal observations I have witnessed the effects of unmonitored praise on students self-perceptions.

By focusing the language in the classroom on students’ effort at a task, teachers can hope to motivate students to further develop their skills. Encouragement in the classroom will establish an environment that promotes the creative process. I have furthered the research on this topic by implementing a research plan that discovered what effects the various forms of praise have on student motivation in the art classroom. I worked with students using person praise, process praise and objective feedback. At the end of the study period, I analyzed the data to determine exactly what effects the various forms of praise had and these results can be found in the Findings Section below. In completing this study, I have gained a better understanding of how a teacher can best utilize praise to create an art classroom in which students are motivated to learn.

**Literature Review**

The topic of teacher praise in education is not necessarily a new one. For quite some time researchers have been interested to see what can be explained as a motivating factor to students. One such motivation that has been found is praise from teachers. Modern research dates as far back as 1979, when researcher Nicholls found that there is greater inherent satisfaction in praising individual mastery in a specific task rather than focusing on one’s ability (Butler, 1987). Since then, there have been various studies done on the topic of praise. More recently there has been a focus on the various types of praise that can be given and their implications, whether they be positive or negative. The focus of this review was to expand on the research and determine how praise can be best implemented in an art classroom.

Most of the articles discussed in this review were found using databases provided through the University of Mary Washington library; some of the databases were Education Research Complete, Education Full Text, and Google Scholar. The articles were supplemented through the use of the book *Adolescents in School*. The studies span several research methods including quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. The research discussed in this literature review was chosen because it was focused on kindergarten thru twelfth grade and university students.

This literature review outlines the various methods for praise, and other alternatives to praise and the varying effects of these different forms of feedback. These effects will be discussed separately for each method. Certain types of praise are more effective in providing students with motivation. The focus of this research analysis was to discover what forms of praise or encouragement are most effective in motivating students specifically in the art room. The idea is that art teachers cannot only provide a love for art; they must also shape students into self-motivated artists.

**Types of Praise**

There is no one perfect method that has been established as the most successful way to motivate students in the classroom. However, there are patterns in the research which link some forms of praise to student engagement (Cooper, 2014: Droe, 2012; Skipper & Douglass, 2012). On the other hand, some of the research found various forms of praise to be unsuccessful in shaping students into motivated and active learners (Baumeister, Hutton & Carines, 1990; Droe, 2012; Mueller & Dweck, 1998; Skipper & Douglass, 2012). There is little doubt that certain types of praise can have negative effects on students. Having the knowledge of the various forms of praise and encouragement is key in determining how to implement them in the classroom.

Praise has been defined as “a public acknowledgement that the self surpassed certain relevant, important standards” (Baumeister, Hutton & Cairns, 1990, p. 132). More specifically, there is praising a student for their effort on a task. Praise for effort is similar to process praise. An example of process praise would be telling a student “you worked hard” (Mueller & Dweck, 1998; Skipper & Douglas, 2012). One could consider the opposite of process praise or praise for effort to be praise for intelligence or ability, also known as person praise. Person praise might be heard in the classroom as “you are clever.” The idea around person praise is that the teacher or adult is drawing attention to a student’s natural abilities. Praising a student for intelligence has been found to lead a student to attribute success to smartness rather than motivating them to work harder and continuously grow and develop (Droe, 2012).

The form in which praise is given is also something to take into consideration. Much of the research on the topic of praise assumes praise is given verbally from adult to child. However, in a study done by Nelson, Young, Young, and Cox in 2012, they discovered that teacher-written praise notes, “promote a positive environment in middle schools” (p. 120). The research showed that there was significant negative correlation between praise notes and office discipline referrals; as praise notes increased, rates of office discipline referrals decreased.

**Positive Effects of Praise**

When discussing the positive effects of praise it is important to recognize that the various forms of praise have different effects on students. Praise for effort, or praising someone for their hard work on a task, has proven to have positive outcomes. It is considered by some to be the opposite of intelligence praise that is considered to make more ability attributions (Mueller& Dweck, 1998). Identity development theory also claims that placing emphasis on the individual provides a means for motivation (Cooper, 2014). Even with the numerous studies that have proven praise to be an effective motivator there are still researchers who believe that it is not praise but rather encouragement that promotes improved performance. Unlike praise, encouragement is seen as promoting an individual’s reaction to their own work rather than relying on an adult’s reaction (Geist & Hohn, 2009).

**Praise for effort.** Praise for effort feedback is providing information on how the task was completed. Praising a student’s effort is attributing the success to the student’s hard work. The feedback a student receives is one of the top ten influences on learning (Skipper & Douglas, 2012). It is believed by researchers that the type of praise a student receives can affect their mindset and their future performance on assignments. The type of praise students receive can shape and mold a student as well as affect their drive to improve as a learner and set goals for themselves as learners (Mueller & Dweck, 1998). In a 1998 study done by Mueller and Dweck students were given a set of ten problems. They were then given their results explaining that they had succeeded and given one of three kinds of feedback, either person praise, process praise or objective feedback. Afterwards, children’s achievement goals were measured using a choice of tasks questionnaire that embodied different goals. Three of the choices represented performance goals and a fourth represented a learning goal. Next, students were given a second more difficult set of questions, then they were asked to rate their task persistence, task enjoyment, and performance quality on a scale of one to six. They were also asked how well they did on the problems overall. Finally, students were asked to make attribution statements for why they scored as they did (Mueller & Dweck, 1998). Mueller and Dweck found that students who received effort-oriented feedback chose learning goals rather than seeking an immediate good performance. In fact, ninety-two percent of students who received effort feedback chose learning goals over performance goals. Learning goals are defined as focusing development on skills needed in order to master new material. Performance goals are centered around a successful performance. Students who choose performance goals are likely to avoid learning opportunities if it means sacrificing an immediate good performance (Mueller & Dweck, 1998). It has also been found that effort praise relevant to a specific effort-based task leads to improved performance. However, when task relevant effort praise is given it may lead to impaired performance on a skilled task. Butler hypothesized that students who receive individualized comments are more likely to attribute success to task-involved factors, defined as interest, effort and previous experience. Butler found that students praised for effort can be seen as more motivated to continue working and improve on skills (1987). It seems that students who are praised for their effort on a task benefit the most. Effort based praise can positively affect everything from students’ personal goals to improvement in performance.

**Encouragement vs. praise.** The term praise must not be confused with the term encouragement. “The difference between praise and encouragement is that between making a judgmental evaluation of a child’s work and making encouraging statements that promote the creative process” (Geist & Hohn, 2009, p. 146). Providing students with encouragement has been found to give students with pride in their own accomplishments. This method of encouragement over praise can be particularly useful in the art classroom, as it has also been found to promote the creative process. Instead of simply providing teacher responses to students’ work, one could strive to develop a classroom that promotes open-ended questioning and active listening; this will help students become active learners (Geist & Hohn, 2009). Geist & Hohn support the belief that it is not always good to praise a child for their creative work. The goal is to avoid judgmental evaluations about students’ work and instead incorporate encouraging statements that support creativity, thus focusing on the act rather than the actor (Chisholm, 2011; Geist & Hohn, 2009).

**Connective instruction.** Another alternative to praise is connective instruction. In a recent study done by Cooper it was found that various methods of teaching, known collectively as connective instruction, have been found to be effective in creating students who are significantly more engaged in the classroom. One of the major strategies that Cooper found to be successful was getting to know and affirming students that they are perceived at as individuals. The practices of connective instruction also include providing written feedback and opportunities for success (Cooper, 2014). One more alternative to praise that is considered to be particularly effective in the art room is using qualitative language as a response to art. Through the use of objective language, art can be viewed for what it is rather than making evaluations of the work. For example, phrases such as “the colors you’ve selected for your painting remind me of a gentle wind on my face (Tollifson, 2011, p. 12) ” or “the shapes in your sculpture hurt like a sharp jab in the arm (Tollifosn, 2011, p. 12)” draw the students attention to what is happening in their art. Qualitative language in the art room focuses on three things: media, form and subject matter. The concept behind qualitative language is to encourage student motivation (Tollifson, 2011).

**Developing individuals.** Adolescents’ self-evolutions and self-worth plays a major role in their engagement and their motivation in the classroom. As Sadowski states, “Few if any psychologists would argue that the process of identity development is not crucially important and deeply felt during adolescence “(Sadowski, 2012, p. 15). It is in part Erickson’s Identity Development Theory that Cooper finds to be a positive reinforcement to students’ engagement in the classroom. It has been found that getting to know the students as individuals can be beneficial to students’ engagement in the classroom. By eliciting the six practices of connective instruction: promoting relevance, conveying care, demonstrating understanding of students, providing affirmation, relating to students through humor, and enabling self-expression, Cooper (2014) describes how teachers can expect a higher level of student engagement in the classroom.

**Helplessness and Other Negative Effects**

The positive effects of praise do not necessarily outweigh the negative effects that some forms of praise can have on students. Overall it is widely believed that giving praise in person terms or otherwise praising a child for their intelligence has been linked to an array of negative outcomes. The negative effects of this type of praise have been found to last long after the actual praise is given (Baumeister, Hutton & Cairns, 1990; Möller, 2005; Mueller & Dweck, 1998).

**Living up to the label.** The goal of giving praise or encouragement to students should be to motivate them. It has been found, however, that specific types of praise can have the complete opposite effect. Specifically praising students in person terms such as using the phrase “you are clever” is more likely to lead a student to show lowered motivation. Praise in person terms can also lead a student to become less likely to persist at tasks (Skipper & Douglas, 2012).

The idea behind this lack of motivation is that students who receive praise for their intelligence develop a lower self-esteem. Dweck explains it best in that praise for intelligence leads to “short bursts of pride followed by a long string of negative consequences (Droe, 2012, p. 2).” Students develop a fixed mindset wherein they attribute their successes to their smartness (Droe, 2012; Mueller & Dweck, 1998). Praising students for their intelligence teaches students to measure their ability from their performance. By forcing the label of ‘gifted’ onto these students they then struggle with the idea that they must live up to this label (Mueller & Dweck, 1998). They can reach the point where they begin to crave everyone’s approval so much that it will lead them to cheat and lie about how much time it took them to complete a task (Chisholm, 2011). Chisholm puts it this way: “high self-esteem doesn’t necessarily correlate to accomplishment (2011, p. 71).” It could be called the ‘pat on the head’ mentality; students begin to realize that they will receive a pat on the head for everything they bring home to show someone. This is following the ‘everyone gets a trophy psychology’ (Chisholm, 2011).

**Impaired performance.** In 1990, Baumeister, Hutton and Cairns took another approach by studying the effects of praise on students’ performance. They found, “praise endangers a global self-conscious state which impairs the automatic nature of effective skilled performance” (p. 146). This quote sums up the idea that praise for intelligence has been found to negatively impact a student’s performance in more ways than one. For one, students who received person praise displayed more negative responses to a single failure. Baumeister and research partners believe that the timing of the praise does not affect the impaired performance. It has been found that praise impaired performance even when the praise did not coincide with peak or highly successful performance (Baumeister et al., 1990). Droe believes that praising students for intelligence leads to a fixed mindset, which therefore leads students to attribute their success to smartness. Students then lose interest in challenging problems, which leads to a decline in performance (2012). One way to avoid this impairment in performance would be to simply avoid giving praise for students’ intelligence.

**Goal setting.** It has been proven that praise for effort leads a student to develop learning goals. On the contrary, praise for intelligence is believed to bring students to develop performance goals. Praising students for their ability teaches them to measure their ability from their performance (Mueller & Dweck, 1998). These ability inferences alter their goal setting mindset. Students become so caught up in pleasing adults that they lose interest in the task (Geist & Hohn, 2009). Overall, it is understood that praise for intelligence leads to a “…short burst of pride followed by a long string of negative consequences” (Droe, 2012, p. 2). Teachers should steer clear of developing students with a lack of self-determination by avoiding praising students based on their intelligence.

**Motivation in the Art Room**

All of this discussion of techniques for student motivation is useful; however, in order to really put them in to action a teacher must consider how they can be used in their particular pedagogy. Dimensional comparison theory in particular stands out as a phenomenon that could be exceptionally detrimental in the art room. In a study done by Moller, he found that there were paradoxical effects of dimensional comparisons. Part of this understanding is that a student may compare their abilities in one subject with their performance in another subject. This comparison may lead them to form a below average self-concept. It is not uncommon to hear a student say they are not ‘good at art’; the idea here is often that they are comparing their perceived ability in one subject with that of another. In some cases dimensional comparison can lead to paradoxical effects. This would mean a student’s ability attributions may differ based on the feedback given (Möller, 2005).

One way to avoid these effects of comparison would be to implement a routine of qualitative language in the art room. In using qualitative language to discuss art the teacher is not making evaluations; but rather focusing on form, media and subject matter. Part of an art teacher’s job is to enhance students’ understanding of their own and other’s works of art. The use of qualitative language and objective feedback will likely help increase students’ willingness to become an active participant in discussion about art and therefore increase student motivation in the art room (Skipper & Douglas, 2012; Tollifson, 2011). Through the practice of studying art critics writing, students can better understand how to use qualitative language to describe the artwork they are studying (Tollifson, 2011).

Connective instruction is another method that could possibly be very effective in the art room. Getting to know your students as individuals has proven to lead to higher student engagement in the classroom. Connective instruction provides “opportunities for students to develop competence and learn from mistakes” (Cooper, 2014, p .367). Often times it is not only the students’ unwillingness to participate, but also behavioral problems that become an issue in the art classroom; implementing a system of teacher written praise notes might be useful in managing this disturbance (Nelson, Young, Young, & Cox, 2012). Managing students who claim they don’t have any interest in the topic is an unfortunate but very real issue in the classroom.

**Conclusion and Areas for Further Study**

Student motivation is vital for all subjects; it is the job of educators to develop a method that draws in the students’ attention to the content of their classroom. In the art room it is specifically important that art teachers provide methods for intrinsic motivation early on (Geist & Hohn, 2009). Due to the fact that art can have a stigma of being considered a talent that only a handful of people are born with, some students will write it off, claiming they do not have that talent. It is the art teacher’s job to encourage learning-goal oriented students who strive to practice and achieve more.

In this rather small sample of the literature on the topic of teacher given praise and motivation there is a wide array on the various practices. The concept of teacher praise is not exactly a new topic of discovery in education. There have been numerous studies done on how the various types of praise can either help or hinder students’ engagement in the classroom. There are only a few studies to this date that focus specifically on the effects of praise in the art room. The methods in which the research for this literature review was found yielded few results on how praise can be effectively used in the art room in particular. With more of a focus placed on praise in art one could focus more closely on praise and grades in art. What is the teacher’s role at the various stages of the art making process? How does a teacher encourage individual exploration while still guiding students through the technical methods? How, specifically, does qualitative language and critique of art encourage students in their own art making?

Through certain types of praise and encouragement, teachers can motivate students to be deeply involved in the art content. The goal is to shape students into self-motivated learners; who are intrigued by the art world and strive to investigate further.

**Methods**

In order to investigate the impact teacher-administered praise has on students’ motivation in the art room, I implemented the following research project. My research question specifically was: To what extent does praise from teachers affect students’ motivation in the art room? Art education tends to be based more on subjective feedback, therefore teachers should be conscious of the effects that their feedback has on students’ motivation. Research shows that a small change in the phrasing of a praise statement can lead to very different performance outcomes (Mueller & Dweck, 1998). Due to the fact that students are so easily influenced, there is a need to study how teachers’ praise influences student motivation.

**Site and Participants**

This study was carried out at a high school in a suburban neighborhood near the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area. The population of the county is reflected in the student enrollment in the school, the school is the largest high school in the county. The student population has performed well on all standardized tests, scoring higher than the national average in all content areas. This study focused specifically on praise and motivation in the art room. Participants were chosen from a variety of levels of art classes ranging from grade nine to twelfth grade.

**Research Design**

This was primarily a qualitative study with an emphasis on participant feedback via interview; there were some quantitative aspects through the use of a Likert scale survey. Data was collected over the course of about five weeks, during which I spent my time as a student teacher in the classroom. The study coincided with other teaching duties, however the study remained focused on praise and motivation in art. The data was collected using a number of different methods, including field notes, interviews with one to two students from each research group, and surveys (see Appendices) focusing on student perceptions of teacher given praise. The Educational Outcomes Measures Likert scale survey was administered as a pre and posttest. Some of the questions from this survey were adjusted to better meet the needs of this particular classroom. The purpose of these changes was to adapt to focus specifically on praise and its effects on motivation in the art classroom setting. One on one interviews were conducted with participants.

**Data Collection**

The study was divided into three research groups. The three variables being tested were person praise, process praise and objective feedback. The research groups were determined based on class periods. There was an emphasis on the type of language being used in the classroom. For example, person praise focused on what might be considered the students’ natural abilities, or talent. An example of this type of praise would be to say, ‘You are so good at working with paint Sally, I can tell you really enjoy it.’ Process praise is different from person praise in that it focuses on a student’s effort on a task. An example of process praise might be, ‘I can see you have done well and really taken the time to plan out your project, it seems to be working well for you.’ Objective feedback will focus more on the knowledge of the techniques being taught. I hypothesized that students receiving process praise would be more intrinsically motivated when it came to their own success in art.

**Data Analysis**

The focus was specifically on the effect of praise in an art classroom setting. A comparative analysis of the data assessed the differences in the three research groups: student motivation in relation to person praise, student motivation in relation to process praise and student motivation in relation to objective feedback. In order to most accurately assess the data these interviews were coded based on similarities and patterns that might appear in participants’ responses.

**Findings**

An analysis of the interview transcripts, pre/post tests and field notes revealed three major themes regarding students self image and motivation in the art classroom. The themes are visualized in the chart below. These themes developed naturally from students’ responses, as well as through the manifestation of behavioral changes throughout the study.

*Figure 1*: This figure illustrates the themes that developed from the data collected.

**Theme 1. Student’s Self-Image**

The first theme outlines the students’ understanding of their achievements as a student. This theme plays a significant role in the results of this study. Students’ self-image will likely have lasting effects on their intrinsic motivation. All participants from the three research groups displayed some degree of improvement on self-worth measurement scales. Post-test results from participants in both the Objective Feedback and Person Praise groups indicated a positive increase in students’ self-image, or general academic self-concept across three testing factors. Students from both the person praise and praise for effort test groups tested as having a more positive self-image on the post-test concerning their talent as compared to other students.

The participant in the Praise for Effort group explained in the interview how she has been able to draw animated characters since she was five years old. She was confident in the fact that art was a part of her character; it makes her who she is. She explained, “I like art. I love art. I draw all the time.” While the participant receiving Person Praise showed improvement in self-concept ratings from pre test to post test he also presented signs of shyness and unwillingness to accept person praise throughout the study. The student presented with very brief responses and reserved body language when praised for his skill in working with various art materials. The participant receiving Objective Feedback withheld a general sense of positive body language throughout the study. This participant maintained a confidence about her work that neither of the other participants displayed consistently.

While each group did display some increase in self-concept measurements, the participant from the Praise for Effort test group also marked a decline in their belief of their own memorization abilities.

**Theme 2. Value of Art Education**

Students from the Person Praise and the Objective Feedback test groups displayed some degree of positive increase in their attitude towards art education. The participant whom received Person Praise displayed signs of intrinsic motivation when responding to the following statements:

“I do my art work because I want to understand the subject matter.”, “I do my artwork because it is important to me.”, “I work hard in school because I want to do well.” “I participate in class because it is important to try hard.”

During the post test the Praise for Effort participant placed a greater importance on the need to try hard in class. Adding to this she explained how there is very little she dislikes about art, “let me think because I really like art. I don’t think there is anything I really dislike.” This student receiving Praise for Effort was generally a very talkative person. In the beginning of the study she was always more than willing to chat about her work and displayed signs of elation when discussing the concept behind her work. However, towards then last few weeks of observation, this participant displayed signs of frustration when discussing her work. This is not to say her willingness to talk with the researcher was diminished in any way, there was more so a change in the content of what she was saying. The mood of the conversation went from lighthearted and comfortable to more of frustration and struggle.

**Theme 3. Willingness to Participate**

“I look forward to coming (to art class) most of the day.” This is a comment made by the participant from the objective feedback test group. This student receiving objective feedback displayed a strong willingness to participate. She developed a detailed design for her project and followed through with the plans, working through the struggles she experienced with the medium and asking an abundance of questions on her concerns about the process. She explains her creativity process, “Just being able to think of something. I have good spatial analysis. I like being able to form the ideas that I have in my head.”

“I want to major in animation, so the more I watch a cartoon I think, will I be able to do this.” This is a quote from the participant receiving praise for effort. She went onto explain, “I see what they (the teacher) wants me to do but I don’t exactly want to do it.” She seemed particularly motivated to create art, however when she received feedback from her teacher there was a mood of discouragement that seemed to develop. She explains this further:

“I feel like there could be more encouragement like I feel like if you praise us a little bit more for the small things we do then you should do that because I feel like the critiques, or the feedback can come off a little discouraging.”

In the cases of Praise for effort and Objective Feedback students willingness to participate in the art classroom seems to be directly impacted by the feedback received. In the case of Person Praise, the student’s opinion of participation seems to be influenced by other factors. The participant from the Person Praise group explained how his interest at the time was directly impacted by the content of the class. He explained he is less interested in art class now “because of the portraits and stuff.” His class was beginning a self-portrait drawing exercise at the time this interview was conducted.

**Discussion**

The information gathered from observation, interviews and survey results provides some interesting insight into the inner workings of the minds of high school students. The findings from this study only begin to touch on how students view themselves and what motivates them in the art classroom.

**Influence of Feedback on Students Self-Image**

Each of the three participants displayed some degree of improvement when it came to the measurement of their self-concept. However, this is not to say this increase was in the same form or to the same degree. The subject receiving objective feedback maintained an air of confidence about her work throughout the study unlike either of the other two participants from the other research groups. The Objective Feedback and Person Praise participants also both tested as having an increased understanding of their talent as compared to others. The subject receiving Person Praise also showed an increase in self-concept ratings, however, in interview and observational notes this individual maintained a sort of shyness to their character. Also, this individual receiving Person Praise also maintained unwillingness to accept praise. This trend in the data may mean that certain personality traits play a role in the development of students’ character at this age. Things such as parent involvement, friend groups, influences of coaches or mentors and changing hormones all play a role in students personality and therefore influence how students’ understand and accept various forms of feedback from their teachers (Mueller & Dweck, 1998).

**Praise Versus Creative Development**

Throughout the study, the student in the Praise for Effort test group’s discussion of their work went from a sort of elation about the content to a deep frustration on what was occurring in the development of their artwork. It was inconclusive as to whether or not this shift in mentality was related to a loss of motivation, or even if it was caused by praise at all. One such limitation of this particular occurrence might have been due to the fact that there was a strict timeline for which this class was to complete their assignments. This particular student receiving Praise for Effort was struggling to keep up with the schedule for this course. Also, the content of this participant’s artwork was very personal. It was a visual storytelling of this student’s relationship with another student. When the two students were disagreeing the participant found it difficult to portray this in her artwork. In the future this variable may be avoided through the use of a more universal art content study. This is not to say that the creative aspect of the assignment should be diminished but rather more restricted to a more easily monitored subject matter.

The goal of praise in the creative classroom is to support the natural development of student’s ideas. However the data presents varying results. When the student receiving Praise for Effort explained it in these terms, “I see what they (the teacher) wants me to do but I don’t exactly want to do it.” The exact cause for such a comment cannot exactly be determined however, it could possibly be concluded that such a student is not experiencing the positive effects of Praise for Effort that were predicted to have occurred. Various influencing factors were noted throughout the study such as, mood changes due to typical negative experiences with friends of this age. This particular student was creating a body of work in the art room that was conceptually framed around a relationship of hers. When things went badly in this student’s relationship she would come to class and not want to do her work. This could be one cause for the comment quoted above.

**Implications**

It might be best to consider the implications of this study to be based on the concept of dimensional comparison theory. When it comes to feedback they are providing to students teachers must take in to account the judgments and comparisons that students are constantly making from one subject to another (Muller & Dweck, 1998). Overall, there were periods throughout the study in which positive effects were being recorded across the board on all variables. However, there were more negative effects found for the Praise for Effort test group than previous literature on this subject led to. Though there were themes that developed throughout the study, it is appropriate to point out that this study was completed on a small scale similar to a case study basis.

The analysis of the data does raise an important point in that educators in the arts play a crucial role in providing an outlet by which students may freely express themselves and vent on what they are experiencing in their day to day interactions with the individuals and world around them. It is necessary that teachers spend ample time getting to know each and every student as an individual in order to be sure they provide them with the most effective form of feedback so that they may thrive to their own fullest potential in the art room. This study frames that there is not yet one singular formula of feedback that will provide each and every student with the motivation to succeed. Instead, each learner must be provided with a form of praise or, “a public acknowledgement that the self surpassed certain relevant, important standards” (Baumeister, Hutton & Cairns, 1990, p. 132).

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Appendix A

Education Outcomes Measures Survey

General Academic Self-Concept

I am doing as well as the others.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

I am not very good at memorizing things.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

Some things I just can’t remember.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

I am not as talented as others.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

I am not very good at learning.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

It is a fluke if I understand something at school.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

My teachers are satisfied with me.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

I am not very capable of doing school work.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

Even if I am well prepared for a test, I do worse than the others.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

I consider myself successful.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

Attitudes to School Work

I do my artwork because I want to understand the subject matter.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

I do my artwork because it is important to me.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

I work hard at school because I want to do well.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

I participate in class because it is important to me to try hard.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

Appendix B

Learning Motivation Questionnaire - Modified

1. I think learning about art is interesting and valuable.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

2. I would like to learn more and observe more in the art class.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

3. It is worth learning those things about art.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

4. It is important for me to learn the art content well.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

5. It is important to know the art knowledge related to our community.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

6. I will actively search for more information and learn about art.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

7. It is important for everyone to take the art class.

**Really Agree Agree I’m not sure Disagree Really Disagree**

Appendix C

Sample Interview Questions

1. How would you say your instruction in art affected your willingness to participate?
2. Are you more or less interested in your art class now as compared to the beginning of this nine weeks period? Why or why not?
3. How do you think the teacher’s feedback impacted your outlook on art?
4. Would you say you “like art”?
5. How much do you think your desire to create was impacted throughout the language used in the classroom?
6. Tell me about your art?
7. How excited are you attend art class?
8. Is there a specific aspect of art that you really enjoy? Why?
9. Is there a specific aspect of art that you particularly dislike? Why?

Appendix D

Consent Letter

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Hello, my name is Gabrielle Frohock, and I am a student teacher in your child’s classroom for the Spring. I am currently a graduate student at the University of Mary Washington working towards my Masters in Education with an endorsement in art education. A requirement of our program is to conduct an action research study in an area related to our studies. *I am inviting your child to participate in a research study I am doing. Involvement in the study is voluntary, so you may choose to have your child participate or not. I am now going to explain the study to you.*

*I am interested in learning about how teacher given feedback affects students’ motivation in the art room.* I will be focusing specifically on praise. Praise is defined as a public acknowledgement that the self surpassed certain relevant, important standards. For the next 10 weeks, your child’s class will be experiencing different forms of feedback on their work in order to determine which form best increases their motivation in the creative environment. *I am requesting permission to give your child a survey to complete about his or her feelings. I will also be observing and taking field notes in the classroom about your child’s responses to various forms of praise and feedback. I am also requesting to interview and tape record your child answering questions about the project. These interviews will take place during semi-private interview sessions.* ***This project will be part of your child’s work for class. It will in no way require extra work for him or her.***

Your child’s work will be kept confidential. His or her name will not appear in any papers in the project. All names will be changed to protect his or her privacy. Following the project, all interview recordings, surveys, transcripts and field notes I collect will be destroyed. Participation in this project will not affect your child’s grade in any way. His or her participation in the study is voluntary, and you have the right to keep your child out of the study. Also, your child is free to stop participating in the study at any time. Your child would still participate in the classroom project, but data for the research study would not be collected from him or her.

*The benefit of this research is that you will be helping me understand the effects of praise and encouragement on students motivation in the art classroom. The only potential risk is that your child may be uncomfortable being interviewed. This risk will be minimized by interviewing your child during times that all students are working individually.*

If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact my university supervisor, Dr. Teresa Coffman (tcoffman@umw.edu) or myself (gfrohock@mail.umw.edu). Please return this form by January 30, 2015. I look forward to working with you and your student!

The research described above has been approved by the University of Mary Washington’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is a committee responsible for ensuring that research is being conducted safely and that risks to participants are minimized. For information about the review of this research, contact the IRB chair, Dr. Jo Tyler at jtyler@umw.edu.

Thank you,

Gabrielle Frohock

I have read the above letter and give my child, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, permission to participate in this project.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Parent/Guardian Signature)

I give my child permission to be tape-recorded during interviews.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Parent/Guardian Signature)

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ agree to keep all information and data collected during this research project confidential.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Researcher Signature)

Appendix E

Student Assent Letter

Dear Student,

I am very excited to be your student teacher throughout the spring! We will be working on a number of different art projects, using many different mediums. I am very excited to see how you work best as individuals in the creative environment.

I will be collecting information throughout the spring for a research project that I am doing to see how teacher and student interactions have an effect on students’ motivation to learn. During my study, I will give you two questionnaires, I will make notes about our interactions in class, and I may interview you to see how you feel in the classroom. I may take an audio recording during the interview in order to remember what you say. You will not be graded on the information I am collecting for my study, and your participation in the study will not require you to do extra work. The only thing you will have to do for the study is to talk with me about how you feel and answer questions on a survey.

*Your parents were given a letter about taking part in this study. If your parents did not allow you to participate in this study, you will not be asked to sign this form. However, if your parents did allow you to participate, I encourage you to participate in this study.*

*You do not have to be in this study. No one will be mad at you if you decide not to do this study. Nothing bad will happen if you take part in the study and nothing bad will happen if you do not. However, if you decide not to participate you still will do all of the work that we will do; I will just not use your work in my research. Even if you start, you can stop later if you want. You may ask questions about the study.*

*If you decide to be in the study, I will keep your information confidential. This means that I will not use your names or the name of the school in anything I write and I will not reveal any personal, identifying information about you.*

*Signing this form means that you have read it or have had it read to you, and that you are willing to be in this study.* If at any point you have any questions, please ask me!

The research described above has been approved by the University of Mary Washington’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is a committee responsible for ensuring that research is being conducted safely and that risks to participants are minimized. For information about the review of this research, contact the IRB chair, Dr. Jo Tyler at jtyler@umw.edu.

Thanks,

Ms. Frohock

I have been read the above letter, all my questions have been answered, and I agree to participate in the project.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Student Signature) (Date)

I agree to be tape-recorded during interviews.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Student Signature) (Date)

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ will keep your names confidential.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Student Teacher/Researcher Signature) (Date)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_