

Background

- Children are highly influenced by their environment, including by the way parents praise them and talk about activities¹.
- The way parents discuss liking of the activity and positive expectations could influence their child
 - To date, little research has investigated these potentially important types of language
- Parent gender may impact the way they praise children.
- Person praise (e.g., “you’re smart”) is associated with a fixed motivational framework².
- Process praise (e.g., “good idea”) is associated with an incremental motivational framework².
- Motivational frameworks influence how children view learning.
 - Those who possess a fixed motivational framework believe intelligence is fixed, avoid challenges³.
 - Possession of an incremental motivational framework is associated with belief that intelligence can be improved by effort and focus on learning⁴.
- Spatial skills and math ability are stereotyped as being male traits⁵.
- Females have more negative attitudes towards math than males and are less likely to pursue STEM related careers⁶.

Hypotheses:

- Boys will receive more beneficial process praise than girls.
- There will be a significant difference between the praise types mothers and fathers give.

Exploratory Questions:

- Are certain types of praise related to other types of motivational talk? Does this differ between mothers and fathers?

Methods

Participants

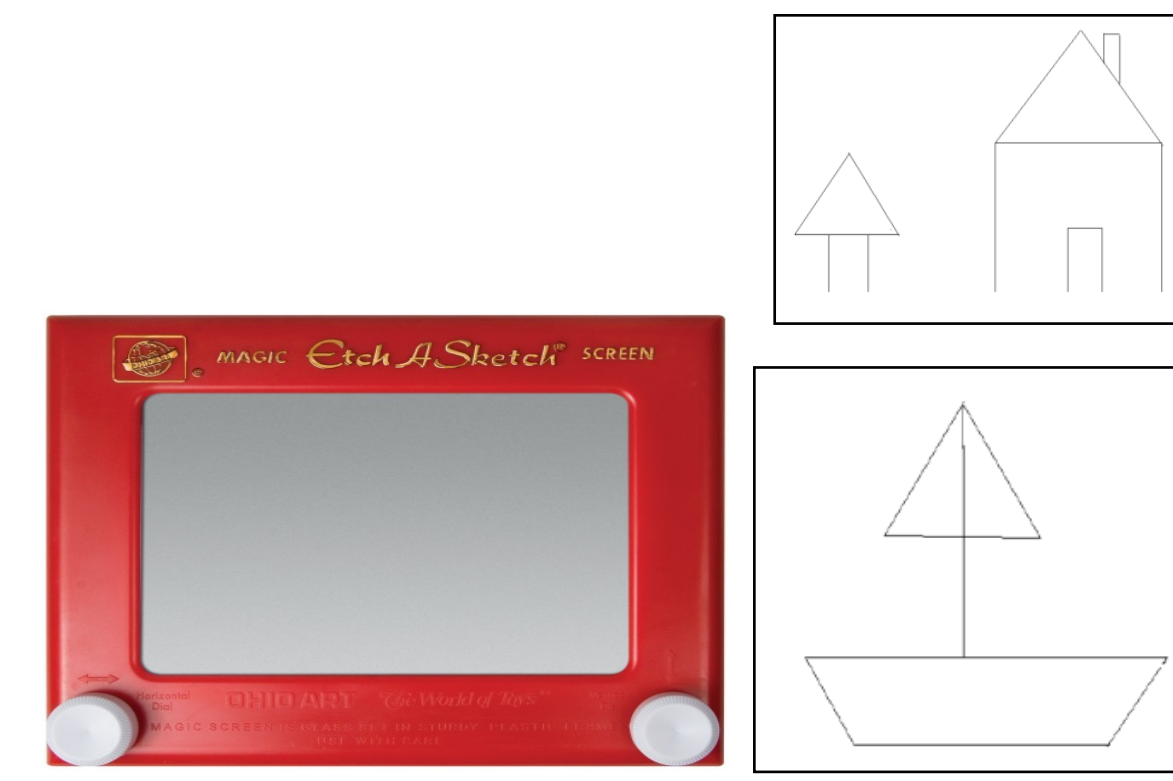
- First-graders and their mothers and fathers ($N=72$) from the Philadelphia site of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (SECCYD).

Study Design

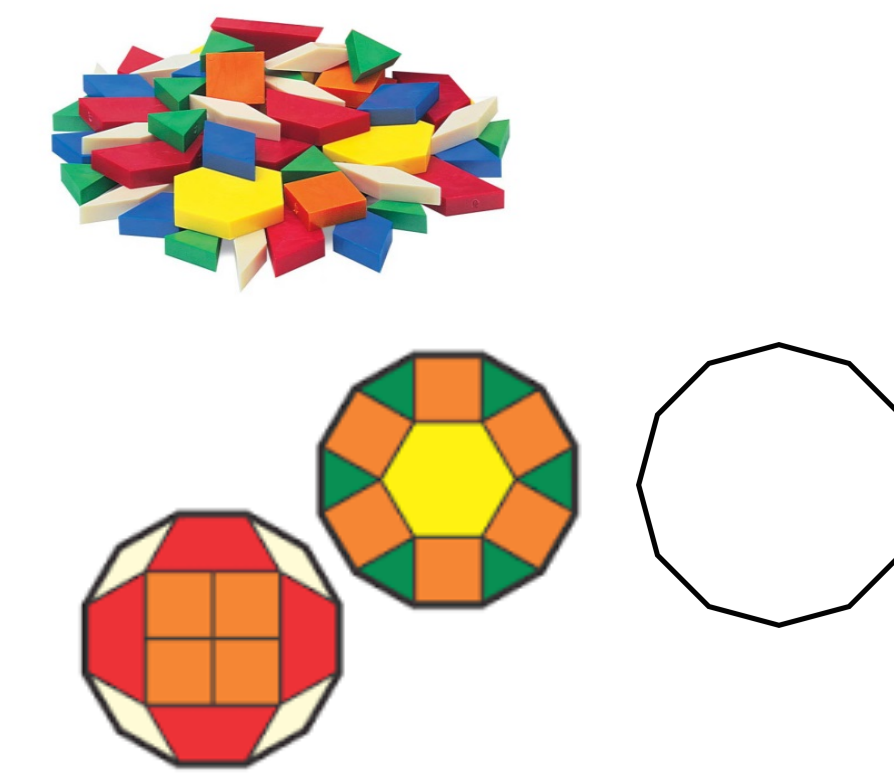
- Transcribed and coded videos of first graders interacting with their mothers and father independently while working on three tasks.
- Coding manual was adapted from Gunderson and colleagues (2013)⁷.

The Tasks

Etch-a-Sketch Task (Both)
Task: Copy target image.
Parent controls one knob and child controls the other



Pattern Block Task (Mother)
Task: Fill the 12-sided polygon two ways



Color Cubes Task (Father)
Task: Create two target images



Results

Child Gender and Praise Type

- No significant differences between praise to boys versus girls.

Parent Gender and Motivational Talk (as a % of total utterances)

	Example utterances	Father <i>M (SD)</i>	Mother <i>M (SD)</i>	Father vs. Mother (<i>p</i> -value)
Total praise		9.44 (4.85)	7.80 (4.16)	.017*
Process praise	Good work on that puzzle.	1.07 (1.38)	1.03 (.99)	.830
Person praise	You're smart.	.11 (.31)	.32 (.62)	.033*
Other praise	Good!	8.25 (4.32)	6.46 (3.65)	.004**
Positive expectations	We can definitely do it!	.09 (.23)	.18 (.23)	.051
Liking language	I think you're going to like this game.	.15 (.37)	.31 (.64)	.091

Note: Test of difference between mothers and fathers was a paired-samples t-test on arcsine-transformed percentages.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

	Mother ($N=72$)				Father ($N=72$)			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
1. Process Praise	-				-			
2. Person Praise	.23	-			.15	-		
3. Other Praise	.26*	.15	-		.26*	.19	-	
4. Positive Expectation	.14	.32**	.01	-	.18	.08	-.00	-
5. Liking Language	.21	.20	.18	.10	.18	.03	.19	.07

Note: Utterances were measured as a percentage of total utterances, arcsine transformed.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Correlations among types of talk

- Within father-child interaction, there was a significant correlation between other praise and process praise.
- Significant relationship between mothers' person praise and positive expectation utterances, as well as person praise and other praise.

Conclusions

- There was no significant difference in praise type by child gender, but there were differences between mothers and fathers.
 - Fathers gave more total praise, whereas mothers gave more person praise.
 - Mothers' use of person praise may be more integrated with positive expectation language.
- Future studies should investigate the relationship between parent gender and praise and explore liking and positive expectation language further.

References

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Acknowledgments

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