

A "Puzzling" Experiment

Learning Targets:

1. Identify the components of psychological research (variables, operational definitions, research design, etc) in a research study.
2. Draw conclusions about the formation of a growth mindset from a seminal research study by Dr. Carol Dweck.

In 1998, a group of researchers led by Carol Dweck conducted a series of studies examining the effects of praise on motivation. Her studies included over 400 5th graders from a wide variety of ethnic, racial and socioeconomic backgrounds as well as varied geographical locations. The first task that the students were asked to complete was a puzzle. Once the students completed the puzzle they were praised in different ways. $\frac{1}{3}$ of the students were praised for their intelligence. $\frac{1}{3}$ of the students were praised for their effort. The final $\frac{1}{3}$ of the students were praised for their performance - with no specific comments about why they were successful. As a follow up, the students were then given the opportunity to try a challenging task or an easier task. The majority of the students who received praise for being intelligent chose the easier task. The majority of the students who received praise for effort chose the harder task. The students who did not receive specific praise did not indicate a preference for either task.

Adapted from <https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/PraiseSpring99.pdf>

1. Identify the dependent variable and independent variable in this study.
2. Write an operational definition for the independent variable.
3. Identify the type of research design being used: case study, naturalistic observation, experiment or survey. Explain how you can differentiate this type of research from the other types of research listed.
4. Identify the experimental and control groups in this study.
5. Explain how this study supports the existence of a "growth-mindset."

This activity was originally designed as a supplemental resource for the upcoming TOPSS "Positive Psychology" module (Fall 2021 release)