



Noncontingent Praise: Effects of Praise on Reprimands



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INTRODUCTION

Praise is an effective management tool that teachers can utilize to decrease undesired or off-task behavior in order to improve and maintain appropriate student behavior (Brophy, 1981; Floress et al., 2017; Allday et al., 2017). Praise is free and is usually seen as desirable because it can be an effective reinforcer, but it is also thought to provide encouragement to students, enhance self-esteem, and foster close teacher-student relationships (Brophy, 1981).

Noncontingent praise (NCP) is an antecedent intervention used to prevent behaviors. In NCP, praise is still used to express approval, but it goes beyond mere correctness of response (Brophy, 1981). Unlike treatments that require reinforcement to be withheld, NCP allows a child to receive as much of the reinforcer (praise) as they require. This prevents an increase in undesired behaviors following initiation of the intervention. In other words, no brief increase in undesirable behavior that commonly follows treatments that involve withholding reinforcement occur because the child is already receiving as much of the reinforcer (praise) they require.

SPECIFIC PRAISES

General Praise: A broad statement of approval that does not specifically reference the behavior or process (e.g., good job)

Process Praise: A statement of approval that refers to the efforts and strategies utilized (e.g., great job being a real reader)

Person Praise: A statement of approval that is trait-related (e.g., you are smart)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what degree do reprimands decrease when utilizing NCP?
2. To what degree does praise increase when utilizing NCP?
3. Which specific praise increases the most in frequency in a fixed schedule of reinforcement?
4. Which specific praise increases the most in frequency in a variable schedule of reinforcement?

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS/ MATERIALS

All procedures in the study were approved by the International Review Board. Participants included six teachers and their classrooms at an elementary school located in the Midwestern region of the United States. Sessions were conducted in 20-minute intervals during a group activity. A frequency count form was utilized to count the number of general praise, process praise, person praise, and reprimands that were utilized throughout the observation. The data was recorded on the Classroom Behavioral Observation Form (Cates, 2011).

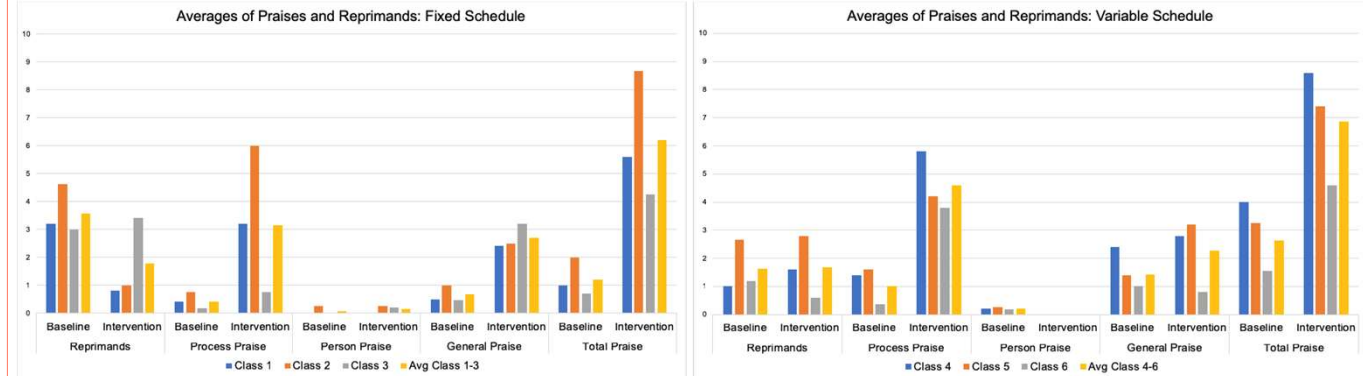
PROCEDURE

A multiple baseline design across participants was utilized. During baseline phase, the teacher was instructed to respond to the class as she normally would. Trained graduate clinicians took a frequency count of the specific praises and reprimands,

Between the baseline and intervention phase, the teachers were trained on NCP and its benefits, including the differences between general, process, and person praise. The trained graduate clinician then demonstrated the different types of praises to the teacher.

During the intervention phase, the teacher was provided with a MotivAider™ that vibrated on a predetermined schedule based on the frequency of praises given during baseline. The MotivAider™ for classrooms 1-3 was set on a fixed schedule of reinforcement (i.e., providing praise at a fixed rate) and classrooms 4-6 was set on a variable schedule of reinforcement (i.e., providing praise at a random time throughout the duration of a period). The teacher was instructed to provide class-wide (e.g., 3 or more students) praise statement every time the MotivAider™ vibrated.

RESULTS



DISCUSSION

It appears that a fixed schedule of reinforcement yields the highest reduction in reprimands. It also appears that the use of praise significantly increases when the teachers are trained to utilize NCP. Furthermore, results demonstrate that process praise increased the greatest in a fixed schedule of reinforcement and general praise increased the greatest in a variable schedule of reinforcement.

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