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Abstract

Appreciation is extremely powerful. The exchange of this power through giving and receiving appreciation is enjoyed by many. Research has shown that appreciating others and receiving appreciation from others has a significant positive impact on our well-being. In this paper, along with discussing these benefits, I will elaborate on the various common languages of appreciation and the challenges faced while giving and accepting appreciation. Also, in addition to highlighting ways to make appreciation more aligned with the idea of positive psychology, I will draw on relevant literature from psychology and sociology, to propose the concepts of active constructive complimenting and active constructive accepting, as suggestions to better use the opportunity of giving and receiving verbal appreciation. In doing so, I suggest how we could transform our daily lives by building quality connections with others and have more meaningful interactions. To gain a better understanding of how people use appreciation in their daily lives, I created an online survey, open to the nonclinical adult population, which had inputs from 339 individuals from around the world.

Keywords

appreciation, compliments, praise, languages of appreciation, recognition, acknowledgement, Active Constructive Responding(ACR), Active Constructive Complimenting(ACC), Active Constructive Accepting(ACA)

Disciplines

Applied Behavior Analysis | Community Psychology | Organization Development | Social Psychology

Appreciation and Well Being: Proposing Active Constructive Complimenting (ACC) and
Active Constructive Accepting (ACA) to improve appreciation

Glory K. Singh

University of Pennsylvania

A Capstone Project Submitted

In partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Applied Positive Psychology

Advisor: Renee Jain

August 1, 2017

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Keywords: Appreciation, Compliments, Praise, Languages of appreciation, Active Constructive Responding(ACR), Active Constructive Complimenting(ACC), Active Constructive Accepting

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Appreciation and well-being: Proposal to improve appreciation using Active Constructive
Complimenting and Active Constructive Accepting

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

William James once said, “the deepest principle of human nature, is the craving to be appreciated” (Carnegie, 1964, p. 30). Feeling appreciated is a powerful and a fundamental human need. Knowing that our existence truly matters and that others recognize and appreciate the contributions we make is critical for our well-being (Prilleltensky, 2014). As Schwartz (2012) explained, genuine appreciation lifts people up and makes them feel safe, energizes them, and frees them to perform at their best. In contrast, feeling underappreciated puts our value at risk and this worry takes over our thoughts and emotions, further draining and diverting our energy and preventing us from adding value. Additionally, positive emotions such as feeling appreciated, loved and inspired can broaden our understanding, attention, action, and can build our physical, intellectual, and emotional resources (Fredrickson, 2004; Gable, Gonzaga, & Strachman, 2006).

Heartfelt appreciation is a muscle we’ve not spent much time building or felt encouraged to build. Among several reasons, one that I will discuss in detail is the lack of vocabulary to give and accept appreciation. Most compliments are given using the most common and simplest terminology like “great job”, “good work” or “you look good”, and responses usually fall into the simple “thank you” category or are rejected, denied, or deflected. I believe that we’ve overused this terminology to the point that it doesn’t even feel like a compliment anymore and has just become meaningless small talk.

So how can we get better at this? I suggest that appreciation can be enhanced by taking inspiration from Gable, Reis, Impett, and Asher's (2004) work on *capitalizing* and *response types* in which they describe that responses to good news fall in four categories: active constructive responding (ACR), passive constructive responding, active destructive responding, and passive destructive responding. Drawing from their work, I propose two styles of effectively giving and accepting appreciation, namely active constructive complimenting (ACC) and active constructive accepting (ACA). The idea behind ACC is to build on the compliment actively by asking more constructive and useful questions about the subject, while managing one's body language, carefully listening to the response and savoring the reaction. With active constructive accepting (ACA), my proposed idea is to move beyond simply saying "thank you" which has the same elements identified in a *passive constructive response* (Gable et al., 2004) which is expressed in quiet, understated agreement to responding in a way that expresses enthusiastic acceptance of the compliment, and follows up with question or an open-ended statement about the subject of the compliment.

I hypothesize that using ACC and ACA as a structure to give and accept compliments will enable us to have more *energizing interactions*, which are exchanges which create far more positive than negative moments (Rath, 2015) and also help us create more *High-Quality Connections* (HQCs), which are "short-term, dyadic interactions that are positive in terms of the subjective experience of the connected individuals and the structural features of the connection" (Stephens, Heaphy, & Dutton, 2011, p. 385). According to Dutton (2003), HQC's are marked by mutual positive regard, active engagement, and trust. By effectively implementing ACC and ACA we may be able to convey these attributes.

Understanding Positive Psychology

Positive psychology is the scientific study of human strengths and virtues. This field explores how, despite difficulties, a majority of people manage to lead lives of dignity and purpose (Sheldon & King, 2001). The field's interest lies in finding out what works, what is right, and what is improving. Positive psychology aims to understand the nature of individuals who are functioning efficiently by successfully evolving, adapting and learning. This young field does not intend to replace or ignore traditional psychology, but to *supplement* it. It is based on the belief that psychology should be just as concerned with making the lives of people *fulfilling* as we are with *healing pathology* (Seligman, 2002a).

The story of Seligman's pivotal encounter with his daughter, which started the positive psychology movement has become sort of a legend. Seligman was working in his garden, while his five-year-old daughter was trying to get his attention. In response to her tactics, Seligman snapped at her. Displeased with this response, she asked him whether he remembered how she used to whine when she was three and four years old? She told him that when she turned five she decided to stop whining – and if she was able to stop whining, then he was able to stop being a grouch! (Seligman, 2002a, p. 28). This revelation of focusing on 'what was right', rather than obsessing about 'what was wrong', sparked the idea of positive psychology.

The field of psychology took a new turn when Seligman was appointed as the president of the APA in 1998. He chose this new domain of positive psychology as the theme of his APA presidency saying in his speech as president, that the field of psychology had "deformed" and that the focus should not be only on disease, weakness, and damage. He emphasized that psychology should also include the study of strengths and virtues (Seligman, 2002b). "Treatment is not just fixing what is wrong; it also is building what is right. Psychology is not just about

illness or health; it also is about work, education, insight, love, growth, and play" (Seligman, 2002b, p.4). This was the time when rooting out mental disorders guided the thinking of many researchers and dominated the scientific researches. This was important as in the efforts to treat mental disorders, we gained more understanding of many illnesses and developed effective treatments for a wide range of problems; however, it also leads to an almost exclusive attention to pathology (Seligman, 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

The field of positive psychology functions at various levels, namely subjective, individual and group level (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) explained that at the *subjective level*, positive psychology focuses on positive subjective experience which includes well-being and satisfaction with past experiences; moments of flow and engagement, delight, sensual pleasures, and happiness in the present; and helpful thoughts, including feelings of optimism, hope, and faith for the future. Secondly, at the *individual level*, positive psychology is about positive personal traits including the capacity for love, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, courage, relational skills, forgiveness, resilience, originality, future- mindedness, talent, and wisdom. Lastly, at the *group level*, positive psychology attends to the qualities important for the community and institutions, which further aids individuals toward being better citizens, by taking responsibility; demonstrating a work ethic; and practising nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, and tolerance.

In the years since positive psychology was introduced as a supplementing field to the larger field of psychology, a growing body of research has developed on what contributes to and results from well-being. Two significant developments in the field of Positive psychology, which also play a crucial role in understanding the role of appreciation on well-being are, 1) the

PERMA model of well-being (Seligman, 2011) and 2) the classification of character strengths by Peterson and Seligman (2004).

PERMA Theory of Well-being

PERMA is a new theory of well-being that recently emerged from the field of positive psychology. This theory, given by Seligman (2011) helped gain a stronger empirical understanding of the elements which are critical for well-being. In the following sections, I will discuss each element individually and how pursuing each element can be assisted and enhanced by the use of appreciation.

Each of the five PERMA elements was selected by Seligman (2011) according to three criteria: it contributes to well-being, it is pursued for its own sake, and it is defined and measured independently of the other elements. The elements of PERMA are as follows:

Positive Emotions

Positive emotions are typically associated with hedonism – which means striving for the maximization of pleasure (positive affect) and the minimization of pain (negative affect; Boniwell, 2006). However, Fredrickson (2004), in her broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions highlighted that positive emotions are essential elements of optimal functioning because they broaden a person's repertoire of actions and thoughts, thereby helping individuals feel good. Fredrickson, therefore, argued that positive emotions are vital within the science of well-being. The broaden-and-build theory, together with research, suggests that positive emotions: (a) broaden people's attention and thinking (b) undo persistent negative emotional arousal; (c) build resilience (d) build personal resources (e) generate upward spirals towards increased well-being in the future; and (f) boost human flourishing (Fredrickson, 2004).

My argument for increasing appreciation for others in our lives aligns with the suggestion made by Fredrickson (2000) that one should work toward cultivating positive emotions not only in one's own life but also in the lives of others. Doing so not only increases one's pleasure and positivity; it also helps one serve as a catalyst in transforming the lives of others and living a flourishing, healthy and long life. In the survey I conducted (see Appendix A), over 85% of the respondents "strongly agreed" and over 13% "somewhat agreed" that receiving appreciation in form of compliments, praise, gifts or positive gestures, makes them feel good. Correspondingly, over 79% of the respondents 'strongly agreed' while over 20% 'somewhat agreed' that giving appreciation to others makes them feel good too. Just as Mark Twain said, "I can live for two weeks on a good compliment" (Paine, 1912, p. 1334), these findings emphasize the power of appreciation in building positive emotions and increasing well-being.

Appreciating others is one of the simplest ways to cultivate positive emotions within oneself as a giver and receiver of appreciation. Certainly, how we see the world and experience ourselves and others is determined by our thoughts and feelings; by thinking, feeling, and spreading positive emotions, we open our minds and hearts to notice more of what there is to appreciate about ourselves, others, and the world around us. Keeping our thoughts and feelings positive is essential to experiencing the full power of appreciation (Robbins & Carlson, 2013)

The Health and Well-Being Study released by O.C. Tanner Institute (2015) revealed a lot of information about the relationship between feeling appreciated (positive emotion) and well-being. This survey was conducted with 2,363 people from around the world and researchers found that the more people felt appreciated at work, the better they felt in their lives. More appreciation at work was correlated with feeling less stressed, more in control, and more inspired

to pursue passions outside of work. When people feel appreciated, their well-being, productivity, profitability, and purpose are also amplified (Adler & Fagley, 2005; Fagley, 2012).

Engagement

Engagement refers to involvement in activities that draws and builds upon one's interests. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) explained true engagement as *flow*, a highly focused mental state that leads to a sense of ecstasy and clarity. In short, engagement involves a passion for and concentration on a task and is assessed subjectively as to whether the person was completely absorbed, losing self-consciousness and awareness of surroundings (Seligman, 2011).

Relationships

Whether they are work-related, familial, romantic, or friendly, relationships are vital in powering positive emotions. As Christopher Petersons stated, "Other people matter" (Park & Seligman, 2013, p.1). Humans build, receive, and share positivity through relationships, which is why they are crucial not only in tough times but also in our good times.

Relationships are strengthened by people's positive reactions to one another. The value of appreciation in building and strengthening relationships is further stressed by Chapman (2010), in his book, *The Five Love Languages* as he explains the importance of giving and accepting appreciation in maintaining happy and healthy relationships. Chapman (2010) explained that couples who regularly said words of appreciation to each other, spent quality time, did acts of service for each other, exchanged gifts or expressed appreciation through appropriate physical touch like pat on the back or hugs, dealt with relationship conflicts more efficiently and experienced high levels of respect and appreciation for each other. Furthermore, appreciation helps strengthens relationships at work as well. A study conducted by Staw, Sutton and Pelled (1994) showed that employees who experienced positive emotions like appreciation,

achievement, inspiration, and joy at work achieved more and earned more than their peers and had healthier relationships with their supervisor.

Meaning

Meaning is what we also commonly understand as *purpose*; it is important to understand questions like why we work, what we decide to work on, why we are into certain relationships and other questions about life. Living a meaningful life instills the sense that there is a larger purpose to life, and being a part of it confers meaning (Seligman, 2011). Working with clear meaning and purpose energizes people to continue striving for a desirable goal despite challenges.

Accomplishments

Accomplishments, here, refer to the pursuit of success and mastery (Seligman,2011). Accomplishments are crucial for experiencing the other elements of PERMA, such as the positive emotions of pride, joy, ecstasy and so on. Accomplishments can be individual or community-based, fun, or work-based.

Further elaborating on this element, Seligman (2011) suggested that to be happy, people need to be able to look back on their lives with a sense of achievement and feel that they did it and did it well. If we think about it, what makes us value what we have? How do we know that we truly are good at something? That we are doing the right thing? How do we confirm our belief that we are talented, skilled, capable, or gifted? In addition to some level of self-assessment, it is common for us to need some form of appreciation to reinforce our beliefs about ourselves and that we are doing it right. It is the recognition and appreciation we receive from others in the form of applause, praise, awards, gifts etc. which helps us get a better understanding of how well did we really do. For instance, I remember conducting a difficult training at work.

Although I felt good about how it went, I did not get a sense of achievement until people applauded my work at the end of the session and left me personal emails appreciating my work. The applause and the compliments validated my skills and helped me determine how I would shape my future presentations.

The PERMA theory of well-being is a useful model to understand the building blocks of our psychological well-being. We can see that appreciation could play a crucial role in maintaining and enhancing the elements of relationships, accomplishments and positive emotions.

Character Strengths

In 2004, Peterson and Seligman, the founding fathers of positive psychology, authored a manual called *Character Strengths and Virtues (CSV): A Handbook and Classification*. This handbook was created with the intention to complement the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*, published by the APA (2013), and is the standard classification of mental disorders. As per Niemiec, (2013), character strengths are stable, positive aspects of our personality that are evident through our thinking (cognition), feeling (affect), willing (conation or decision), and action (behavior). They also guide our skills, talents and interests; when used effectively, they benefit both us and the individuals, organizations, and communities with whom we interact (VIA Institute, 2017). Character strengths expose us to our inner most selves, thereby forming the core of our human nature which leads to flourishing (Niemiec, 2013).

Niemiec (2013), further explained that character strengths according to the following terms. First, they are *revealed in degrees*— individuals use their strengths in different ways and degrees based on the situations they encounter. Second, they are *Contextual*— people tend to use different strengths depending on different circumstances (e.g., interpersonal, social,

professional). Third, they are *interdependent* — in most situations, a combination of character strengths are used rather than one strength alone (e.g., wisdom and honesty). Fourth, they are *Stable but adaptive* —character strengths are a part of an individual's personality but can change in response to some notable life events or conscious effort and deliberate practice. Finally, character strengths are *best when balanced* —character strengths are easy to over- and under use but they are used most effectively when applied in the right degree and combination in the right situation. Peterson and Seligman (2004) identified six classes of virtue (i.e., “core virtues”), made up of 24 measurable "character strengths". This list was developed by Peterson and Seligman (2004) from a 3-year study, with assistance from over 50 leading scientists who studied all major religions and philosophical traditions. They found that the same six virtues were shared in all cultures across three millennia. Organization of the 6 virtues and 24 strengths is listed below-

Wisdom and Knowledge

- *Creativity*: thinking of new, unique, and productive ways to do things
- *Curiosity*: the desire to learn or know about anything; inquisitiveness
- *Open-mindedness*: thinking things through and examining them from all sides
- *Love of learning*: mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge
- *Perspective*: being able to provide wise counsel to others

Courage

- *Honesty*: speaking the truth and presenting oneself in a genuine way
- *Bravery*: not backing away from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain
- *Persistence*: Relentless pursuit of a goal
- *Zest*: approaching life with zeal and enthusiasm

Humanity

- *Kindness*: doing favors and good deeds for others
- *Love*: valuing close relations with others
- *Social intelligence*: being aware of the motives and feelings of self and others

Justice

- *Fairness*: treating all people equally according to notions of justice and equality
- *Leadership*: organizing group activities and seeing that they happen
- *Teamwork*: working well as member of a group or team

Temperance

- *Forgiveness*: forgiving those who have done wrong
- *Modesty*: letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves
- *Prudence*: being cautious; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted
- *Self-regulation*: being in control one's feelings and actions

Transcendence

- *Appreciation of beauty and excellence*: noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and skills in all domains of life
- *Gratitude*: being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen
- *Hope*: being optimistic about the future, expecting the best
- *Humor*: proclivity toward laughter and jokes; bringing smiles to other people
- *Religiousness*: having clear beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of life

Each person has certain character strengths, that he or she uses the most, and finds most natural to express and that are easily recognized as authentic. These strengths are known as

signature strengths (Niemiec, 2013). The number of signature strengths one can have can vary but typically most people embody three to seven signature strengths.

Giving appreciation to others and receiving appreciation from others can be a helpful tool to bring awareness to one's strengths, encourage exploration and further enhance the application of strengths. Knowledge and use of character strengths is important because their application has shown to buffer against challenges, decrease levels of stress, improve our relationships, elevate our mood and self-esteem, enhance goal achievement and facilitate overall well-being (Biswas-Diener, Kashdan, & Minhas, 2011; Lavy, Littman-Ovadia, & Bareli, 2014; Niemiec, 2013; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). In the article, *Ok, now what? Taking action*, VIA Institute (2015, August 18) highlights the Awareness-Exploration-Application (AEA) model of putting character strengths to effective use. A brief description of the AEA model includes:

Awareness

It is known that awareness is an important precursor to change. Unfortunately, less than a third of individuals have a deeper understanding and awareness of their strengths (Linley, 2008). Furthermore, VIA Institute (2015, August 18) suggested that once we know what our strengths are, we can begin to experiment with how we could put them to use. Research has found that conceptualizing who we are according to our signature strengths is positively related to the pursuit of goals that are intrinsic and value-congruent (VIA Institute, 2012). Taking the VIA Strength Survey, available for free at www.viacharacter.org, could be one helpful way to bring awareness to one's character strengths and signature strengths. Another helpful way to make others aware of their strengths is through appreciating them.

Exploration

The second step in working with strengths is to engage in deeper search, discovery or observation. In this phase, the individual self-reflects, practices journaling, and discusses with others the results achieved from the awareness phase. Research has shown that the identification of signature strengths followed by a discussion with a friend about strengths and use of three signature strengths in daily life boost cognitive (but not affective) well-being at three months follow-up (Mitchell, Stanimirovic, Klein, & Vella-Brodrick, 2009). Several questions to assist in the phase of exploration include the following: Do any of the strengths surprise you? Do the signature strengths reflect who you really are? Do you tend to combine certain strengths? Which strengths do you overuse or underuse? What strengths do you admire in others? Thinking about a situation when you were stressed or challenged, how did you use your strengths to persevere? Reflecting back on a moment when you were at your best, which strengths did you use? How might you tap into your strengths to create the positive future you envision? and the like (VIA Institute, 2015, August 18).

Application

After the exploration phase, the last and most crucial step is the application phase. Once we know what our strengths are, we can intentionally apply them in ways which may enhance our well-being. This step could be enhanced by establishing a goal for using a particular strength more intentionally, building up lesser-used strengths, imitating a strength we admire in others, consciously identifying strengths in specific situations (self-monitoring), or using a signature strength in a new way. In a study of 577 participants, it was found that using one's signature strengths in a new and unique way is also an effective intervention; it increased happiness and decreased depression for 6 months (Seligman et al., 2005). Also, deploying strengths on one day

makes one more likely to have a pleasant mood the next day, and having an unpleasant or negative mood one day makes one more likely to increased strength-deployment the next day (Lavy et al., 2014)

When we express our appreciation, we are basically saying, “I notice you/ I value this/You did it right/ You are special”. In context with character strengths, appreciation can be made more effective by focusing more on people’s character strengths, skills and talents and conveying that through compliments or praise (R. Niemiec, personal communication, January 16, 2017). For instance, rather than giving just any kind of generic and nonspecific compliment like “You are so nice” or “Good job” etc., we could highlight one’s strengths and say, “I see that you are very kind and humble” or “You tackled that situation so well, that was a great display of your leadership skills” which could serve as a great way to bring awareness to one’s strengths. Character strengths appreciation can be particularly useful in helping children build their skill sets. Generic praise given to a child for raising an intelligent question can be improved by highlighting his or her strengths of curiosity and analytical thinking. This can encourage awareness of one’s character strengths to the receiver and others and also inspire the child to explore and apply the strength even more (Mueller & Dweck, 1998).

The core of positive psychology suggests focusing on the strengths rather than solely focusing on the weaknesses. Appreciating others, having the language of character strengths through the VIA character strength survey scale (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), gives us the ability to do a kind of framing/specificity that we’ve never had before, and this could be a big step toward meaningful appreciation. As discussed in this chapter, giving and receiving appreciation will not only help enjoy and spread positive affect but also build healthier relationships and enhance feelings of achievement. In the following chapters I will explore the

meaning and need for appreciation, the various common languages (the methods used to communicate appreciation) used to give appreciation and how we can make giving and receiving of verbal appreciation more effective through ACC and ACC.

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING APPRECIATION

Recognition, acknowledgment, praise cause the heart of the endeavored to leap with joy—make his soul to thrill with new aspiration; enlighten his mentality with new impetus born of new vision of his own possibilities. They cause his cheek to glow with pride and satisfaction; make his eye to kindle with happy beams and his entire being to thrive as do those things that need the enlivening ardor of the sun to call them forth and are privileged to have it. (Fuller, 1922, pg. 2)

Appreciation is a word with varied connotations. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (n.d.a), *appreciation* is defined as a) “Recognition and enjoyment of the good qualities of someone or something b) As a feeling of gratitude c) A full understanding of a situation and d) Increase in monetary value. While, synonyms to appreciation include- to value, respect, prize, cherish, treasure, admire, hold in high regard, hold in esteem, rate highly, recognition, sense of obligation, think highly of, think much of, have a high opinion of, gain, growth, rise, mounting and the like. (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.a)

Adler & Fagley (2005) explain appreciation as recognizing the value and meaning of something and feeling a positive emotional connection to it. Fuller (1922, pg. 2), on the other hand, referred to appreciation as the “logical assessment, absorption, and practical incorporation of the good things discovered, and a disposition to give credit where credit is due”.

Clinical psychologist and consultant, Noelle Nelson (2005) claimed that appreciation is one of the most powerful yet misunderstood and untapped energies available to us. It can simply be understood as our ability to “recognize the full worth of someone or their actions” (p. 1). Quite often we transpose appreciation with gratitude, where gratitude is an expression of

recognition and thanks for a job well done, a service performed, an unexpected kindness, and so on. Real appreciation goes beyond just saying “thank you,” stated Nelson (2012). She defined appreciation in work settings as the deliberate, proactive valuing of employees and what they bring to the table. In unique ways, appreciation means letting an employee know in concrete ways that he or she matters and is important. I argue that this definition applies to showing appreciation to others in all areas of our lives.

Languages to communicate Appreciation

Every tribe, race, and culture has a ritual to express appreciation for others. Our modern-day appreciation ceremonies include everything from birthday celebrations to award ceremonies like the Oscars or the Nobel Prize, which show appreciation for people’s skills, talents and efforts. We also use a variety of ways to express appreciation, including verbal compliments, written cards and notes, spending quality time with others, giving autonomy, and even expressing our appreciation through various social media channels.

There are different ways to communicate appreciation to others, what I will refer to as *languages* of appreciation. Through research and exploration, I have identified eight common languages of appreciation, which I will discuss shortly. Before moving to the languages, it is important to understand certain assumptions that apply to these languages of appreciation. Chapman (2010) noted that individuals have a preference for a specific love language. Therefore, an individual could value a certain language more than another, which is why appreciation can be communicated most effectively when the message is conveyed in the language most valued by the receiver. The eight languages are as follows.

Verbal Appreciation through Compliments or Praise

“The tongue has the power of life and death” (Hebrew Bible, Proverbs 18: 21).

One way to express appreciation and give recognition emotionally is to use words. Finding the right moment and vocally giving compliments and praise becomes powerful communicators of appreciation. A compliment is understood as a speech act which directly or indirectly attributes credit to the addressee for some good possession, characteristic, skill, action etc. which is positively valued by the speaker and the other listeners (Holmes, 1988). The beauty of verbal appreciation given through compliments or praise is that it is a simple tool that is accessible to all of us, regardless of age, experience, education, spiritual practice, or other beliefs (Strobel, 2011). Also, no physical tools or materials such as a pen, paper, gifts, or trophies are required to give appreciation verbally. I submit that compliments can range from simple, straightforward statements of affirmation, such as, “You look stunning in this dress,” or “You are a wonderful cook,” to more detailed praise, such as “I really like how you’re always on time to pick me up at work. How do you always manage to do that?” or “You know how to always make me laugh. Your social intelligence is a skill I truly admire. Where do you learn these jokes from?”

In an attempt to understand the structure of verbal compliments, Manes and Wolfson (1981) examined a corpus of approximately 700 examples of compliments uttered in day-to-day interactions and revealed that two-thirds of all adjectival compliments in the corpus made use of these five adjectives: nice (23%), good (20%), pretty (10%), beautiful (9%), and great (6%).

Another dimension to verbal appreciation is that it can be given publicly or privately. It feels good to be told, “You did an awesome job” or “You look great today.” It feels even better to hear it when others are around. Giving praise publicly can increase the chances of other people feeling comfortable enough to show their support or to express their own feelings, which will greatly increase the recipient’s pleasure (Daum, 2014, July 10).

Verbal compliments and praise are useful tools of communication because they serve as useful icebreakers to initiate conversations and even can help sustaining an interaction (Billmyer, 1990; Dunham, 1992; Wolfson, 1983). In the survey I conducted (see Appendix, A), 13% of the respondents said that they use compliments as conversation starters. In organizations, a verbal recognition given to an individual in a group setting is more meaningful than giving praise individually, said Gary Beckstrand, vice president of research at the O.C. Tanner Institute; Beckstrand added that appreciation is most effective when it has an appeal to the emotion (as cited in Value of Workplace Recognition, 2017).

Chapman (2010) asserted “that sometimes our words say one thing, but our tone of voice says another. We are sending double messages” (p. 43). For instance, saying “That is a very nice watch on you” in a gentle, polite tone sounds like a compliment, but saying it with a scornful tone might seem condescending and insulting, implying that the watch is too good for the person wearing it. Therefore, while giving verbal compliments one should be mindful of the tone, speed, and pitch in order to avoid sending double messages.

The act of sharing appreciative words with others is an act of kindness in its simplest form. This kindness opens our hearts and softens our edges while making the other person’s world slightly brighter.

Written Appreciation (Paper or Electronic)

Although verbal and written appreciation differs only in the medium of giving compliments/praise, this difference in medium affects their uses. Written appreciation includes showing appreciation through a handwritten or typed note, card, letters, and so on. It also includes compliments shared privately through digital text messages, e-mails, and the like. (I will

discuss written appreciation shared on social media websites like Facebook or LinkedIn as a separate language because of it being a public medium.)

In my opinion, some people prefer to give written appreciation instead of saying it one-on-one when they are shy or unsure about the person's response. In the survey I conducted (Appendix A), about 20% of the respondents agreed that they hold back giving appreciation because they feel shy. Unlike verbal appreciation, written appreciation does not require an immediate response from the receiver, so it could be a preferred language for some.

Additionally, written appreciation requires the use of materials (i.e., a pen and paper or an electronic/digital medium) to share the compliment, which is not a requirement for verbal appreciation. Another reason why some people would prefer written appreciation is that it leaves people with something tangible. I personally enjoy re-reading cards, notes, text messages, or e-mails written by friends and family that show appreciation. Nothing boosts my confidence or fills me with joy like spending time with these messages of love and praise.

There is also a certain pleasure in receiving and writing someone a handwritten note of appreciation. It shows that the person giving appreciation truly values what he is complementing on and therefore took out the time to write a handwritten note of appreciation. As Daum (2014) stated that an electronic 'thank you' sent through emails or texts is better than not acknowledging at all, but it is most likely to be skimmed and forgotten. Daum instead emphasized taking the time to carefully handwrite a message of appreciation, which will increase the chances of it being read (compared to a digital text) and increases its value for the receiver.

There can be many motives for leaving written appreciation instead of verbal. However, according to Gary Beckstrand, vice president of O.C. Tanner Institute (as cited in *Value of Workplace Recognition*, 2017), receiving recognition solely electronically, either through a

platform or via e-mail, is the least effective. He argues that appreciation can't be only a play of technology and is most effective when it has an appeal to the emotion of the receiver. He suggests that the most effective method is actually a combination of written and verbal recognition.

Gifts, Bonuses, and Incentives

Gifts are one way to show a person how much we appreciate them. The gift does not need to be big, expensive, or flashy to convey this message of appreciation. However, for a gift to be a suitable expression of appreciation, it is important that the gift be appropriate for that particular person. For instance, giving a bottle of wine to a teetotaler will not be a great gift for him or her as compared with someone who enjoys wines. Personalized gifts make the appreciation even more meaningful and valuable. If we know that a person enjoys tea or coffee, then exquisite teas would make a good gift. Personalized gifts require thought and effort, but they serve as tangible memorabilia of the compliment for the receiver. For instance, my grandparents presented me with a pair of earrings as a token of appreciation for my outstanding performance in high school. Even after several years, those earrings still serve as a memento and a wonderful memory of how proud they are of me and of their love for me.

According to Daum (2014), another way of giving a gift of appreciation could be leaving a *lagniappe*. As Daum explained, a lagniappe is a small, inexpensive gift like a flower, an origami crane, a hand-drawn doodle, or a smiley face on a post-it note. Even a small gesture can make a big difference.

Besides gifts, performance-based pay in organizations has long been accepted as a compelling incentive that drives people to produce more or to work faster. Appreciating employees by giving them monetary bonuses and incentives or presenting them with gifts is

common practice. Similarly, tips are a simple way of showing appreciation to a service provider. A tip is a simple way of saying “I liked your service” or “You were good at your job.”

In recent years, there has been some criticism of using gifts and bonuses. While this may make sense for repetitive or mechanical work, bonuses don’t quite resonate if any rudimentary cognitive skill is needed to complete the task, according to Daniel Pink (2009), author of the book *Drive*. Pink further explained that various monetary incentives instead hamper out-of-the-box thinking and can even stall performance.

In another study that showed negative effects of rewards on internal motivation, Lepper, Greene, and Nisbett (1973) found that preschool children who were getting rewarded after drawing with magic markers later showed less interest in drawing than children who either received the same reward unexpectedly or neither expected nor received a reward. Lepper et al. (1973) argued that the interest of the first group was undermined or over justified by the unnecessarily powerful compensation, leading to a subsequent decrease in interest. Therefore, although gifts, bonus and incentive seem like an attractive option to show appreciation, it needs to be handled with care.

Gestures and Physical Touch

This language includes expressing appreciation through gestures like smiles, giving a thumbs-up, applause/standing ovation, cheering, or other culturally acceptable positive gestures. Gestures are a common language when appreciating strangers or acquaintances (Chapman, 2010). Physical touches such as hugs, kisses, pats on the back, touching the shoulder, high-fives, and fist bumps are also a common language of appreciation (Chapman & White, 2012). However, physical touch is a common language in personal relationships—but not in the workplace and other social settings, because it can be misinterpreted (Chapman & White, 2012).

In the survey I conducted (Appendix A), physical touch and gestures along with verbal appreciation were expressed as the preferred language to express appreciation to immediate family and close friends.

It is easy to express appreciation through gestures and physical touch because there is no need to use any tools. It is, however, important to be careful with the use of gestures, as they can have various different interpretations in different cultures. Axtell (2001), for example, explained that a thumbs-up is accepted in a positive sense in most English-speaking countries, yet it conveys a sense of disapproval in parts of West Africa, Iran, and Greece. It is therefore important to use culturally appropriate gestures to convey the right meaning.

Attention and Quality Time, Assistance

Another common language of appreciation is providing attention, quality time, and assistance (Chapman, 2010). One can show appreciation using this language by simply offering one's undivided attention through a simple one-on-one session or providing assistance when help is required. This language, which is common in organizations, shows support and can be encouraging.

When I asked a friend how she likes to be appreciated at work by her seniors, she reported, "I really like it when my manager stops by my office and asks how I'm doing and if I need any help . . . What more does one need other than feeling cared for?" (S. Marwaha, personal communication, June 12, 2017). In organizations that I have worked with, senior management has often used this language with employees and it seems to work well in establishing a culture of appreciation in the organization. It is a show of respect by management and a matter of pride for the employee that the management considers him or her worthy of their time. Similarly, within friends and colleagues, when everyone is leading a hectic life, it is a show

of appreciation when someone takes the time to be with a friend. It is a sign of saying, “I am here because I value you.” This language can be expressed in many ways: by taking the addressee out for a meal, stopping by the person’s office, or even simply making a phone call to check in if any kind of assistance is needed—and then making time to provide that help.

I argue, that it is important that some quality interactions involving eye contact, no distractions, active listening take place during the time spent together. If the addressee leaves with a feeling that the assistance offered was insincere or the time spent was a waste, it will become counterproductive. If assistance is offered, it is important that it is provided if needed.

Autonomy and Control

When I was young and starting to cook, my mother, who is a great cook, would always stay around and watch me, making sure that I was doing it right. After a couple of days, when she decided that she no longer needed to watch me, she told me that she was sure that I could handle it on my own. Giving me autonomy (i.e., the power to make key decisions in a particular field) is an expression of appreciation that says, “I am good at it now and therefore can do it on my own.”

Similarly, in organizations, managers and leaders babysit an employee in tasks they feel the employee is not fully competent in. Eventually giving that employee the opportunity to lead on a project is, in my understanding, a clear expression of appreciation and a show of faith in his or her abilities. According to Schwartz (2015), granting employees autonomy boosts levels of trust, commitment, and respect within the workplace.

Awards and Titles

An award is a mark of recognition given in honor of an achievement to a person, a group of people, or an organization (Oxford dictionary, n.d.b), while a “title” is defined as “a prefix or

suffix added to someone's name in certain contexts" (Title, n.d). A title may signify either veneration, an official position, or a professional or academic qualification. Titles like knight, saint, guru, or mahatma are given in appreciation of one's service to the society. An award may simply be a public acknowledgment of excellence without any tangible token or prize of excellence, or it may be accompanied by a trophy, title, certificate, medal, badge, pin, ribbon, or monetary prize. For example, Academy Awards are given to artists in appreciation of their work in the entertainment industry.

Ethnologist and author Simon Sinek (2013) described in his book *Leaders Eat Last* that when people receive awards, they actually have a chemical reaction that makes them feel good. In response to an accomplishment, Sinek said, reward recipients' bodies release dopamine, a hormone that makes them feel happy and satisfied. He explained that when the award is accompanied by applause, the body releases serotonin, another "feel-good" hormone that is released in moments of pride or recognition. Additionally, giving an award raises the serotonin level of the one who gives the award, and even those who just witness such an interaction can have a hormone reaction that makes them happier (Sinek, 2013).

Social Media Appreciation

Another emerging language of appreciation is demonstrating appreciation through social media networks. Various networks have their own tools to encourage and express appreciation and give recognition. The most popular ones are the "like" and "love" buttons on social networking websites like Facebook and Instagram. The "like" feature is a quick way to interact with status updates, comments, photos, and links shared by friends and to express that one enjoys and appreciates the post (Facebook, 2017). Thus, it is common for people to post their best pictures and status updates with the intention to get compliments and praise from others in the

form of likes and comments. The amount of “likes” received by a post on social media often serves as an expression of interest and popularity (DeMers, 2014, October 20). Simply said, posts often gain popularity or go viral based on the number of likes it was able to garner. Such features are becoming exceedingly popular on other social networking sites such as Quora and Reddit, where the equivalent of the like feature is known as an “upvote.”

LinkedIn’s skill endorsement feature is another popular way for people to publicly share an appreciation for others. According to LinkedIn (2017a),

Skill endorsements helps recognize and discover your 1st-degree connections’ skills. . . .

Endorsing others is a great way to recognize your colleagues for the skills you’ve seen them demonstrate. . . . You may find that after endorsing a colleague from the past, it’s easier to reach out to them because you’ve recently been in touch.

Another popular feature on LinkedIn is *recommendations*, which refers to “a comment written by a LinkedIn member to recognize or commend a colleague, business partner, or student”

(LinkedIn, 2017b). The purpose of skill endorsements and recommendations is similar to the like, love, and comments features on Facebook and Instagram. Employers often scour through the social media profiles of potential employees to get a better idea of the employee’s profile and thought processes. As social media is gaining popularity, appreciation through social media is becoming a powerful language.

Here, research finds that not only do Facebook and depressive symptoms go hand-in-hand (Baker & Algorta, 2016; Huang, 2017; Steers, 2016) but the mediating factor seems to be a well-established psychological phenomenon: “Social comparison.” (Steers, Wickham, & Acitelli, (2014). This might not always be the case but Facebook and other social media users may end up competing or become envious of their various friends and can often feel inadequate as a result.

Blease (2015) in the article, *Too Many 'Friends,' Too Few 'Likes'?* explains that users routinely observe numerical data such as the number of 'likes' or comments that their postings and the postings of other users' attract. Although social media provides for a wonderful medium to express appreciation, such a comparison of could be damaging to one's well-being.

What appreciation is not?

Appreciation Versus Gratitude

Although gratitude and appreciation are often used interchangeably, there has been an increase in research highlighting that these terms have different meanings (Fagley, 2005).

Inferring from the definitions mentioned above, appreciation denotes recognizing and highlighting the good in something or someone through the various languages of appreciation. However, feeling appreciative toward someone does not imply an underlying feeling of indebtedness. For instance, I could feel appreciation for a friend who braved through a terrible life crisis or sickness, but that does not imply that I will feel indebted to her for this action.

In contrast, however, feeling gratitude has been related to a feeling of indebtedness. Roberts (2004) argued that gratitude is a "three-term construal" that involves a benefactor, a benefice, and a beneficiary, and these constitute the fundamentals of the definition of gratitude. According to Watkins, Van Gelder, and Frias (2009) "an individual experiences the emotion of gratitude, when they affirm that something good has happened to them and they recognize that someone else is largely responsible for this benefit" (p. 438). Furthermore, Komter (2004, p. 195) argued that gratitude is "an imperative force, a force that compels us to return the benefit we have received . . . [and] part of the chain of reciprocity." Other recommendations include that the benefit must be perceived by the recipient as a benefit and that it must cost the benefactor something (McCullough, Kimeldorf, & Cohen, 2008; Tesser, Gatewood, & Driver, 1968).

Hence, I argue that the receiver of appreciation *might* feel indebted (gratitude) towards the giver of appreciation for the expected benefit of positive affect, but the giver of appreciation does not compliment the receiver with a feeling of indebtedness. The feeling that encourages the giver to appreciate in the first place could simply be understood as an effort for self-expression (Fuller, 1922), to simply recognize and acknowledge the good that he or she noticed in the receiver.

In short, all gratitude is appreciation, but not all appreciation is gratitude. As Fagley (2016) argued, “appreciation is present in every case of gratitude, just as all birds have feathers. But there are instances of appreciation that do not involve gratitude, just as there are birds that are not cardinals” (p. 78). Therefore, in this paper, I am referring to appreciation only as a term that is separate from gratitude.

Appreciation Versus Feedback

According to Merriam-Webster (n.d.a), feedback refers to “helpful information or criticism that is given to someone to say what can be done to improve a performance.” In their book, *Constructive Feedback*, Roland and Frances Bee (1998) explained that feedback on our performance is imperative for us to learn and grow. It gives us the chance to vary our approaches and work harder to produce better results.

Feedback is given with a focus to improve performance and includes a mix of appreciation for what went well and criticism for areas to improve in, whereas the focus of appreciation is to recognize and highlight what is good and valued (according to the giver). Appreciation is often used synonymously with the term *positive feedback*, which implies sharing only the positive aspects and avoiding criticism.

Appreciation Versus Encouragement

Although the outcome of giving appreciation and encouragement may be the same, they have different meanings and are given with different intentions. Encouragement refers to the action of giving someone support, confidence, or hope (Merriam-Webster, n.d.b), and is given mostly when the receiver needs motivation or assurance for a specific task. There is a clear intent to inspire, cheer, reassure. For example, one might tell a friend, “You are an exceptional singer.” If this is stated right before a singing competition with the intent to boost morale, this is an example of encouragement. However, if this is said after the performance to highlight one’s singing skills, this is an example of a compliment or praise.

As Manes (1983) asserted, appreciation is often not given in reference to a specific behavior and hence there is no reason to assume that they are given with the intention to encourage the receiver. Manes adds that in such cases, the major function of appreciation will be the establishment, strengthening or maintenance of solidarity between the speaker and the receiver. In short, I would say that all encouragement includes elements of appreciation, but all appreciation is not for encouragement.

Why We Need Appreciation

Each of us is born with a gift, an ear for music, a knack for science, a flare for writing. For a time, these seeds of genius lie dormant within us, then it happens. With the mark on a page or a comment with a smile, someone we trust appreciates a task well done and appreciation changes everything. It awakens our gift from slumber and makes it real. Talent becomes expertise. Potential becomes performance. We look around and see possibilities everywhere, in everything, and we’re inspired to invent, to create, to discover, to change the world. All because someone appreciates our potential, that the

real epiphany comes, that the fastest way we can change the world is to appreciate the potential in those around us. (Tanner, n.d.a)

Esteem Needs

Abraham Maslow (1943) described that human needs can be arranged in a prepotent hierarchy—a lower level need must be mostly satisfied before someone can give their attention to the next highest need. Although the hierarchy remained, Maslow (1954) clarified that these “hierarchies are interrelated rather than sharply separated” (p. 97).

At the bottom of the hierarchy are the basic needs or physiological needs of a human being: food, water, rest, sex, and defecation. The next level is safety needs, which include the need to feel safe and protected. The third level of need is love and belonging, which pertain to our psychological needs and include importance for relationships and connections. The fourth level is the esteem level, which refers to the need for reputation, appreciation, prestige, recognition and attention or the importance of being recognized as competent. The topmost need is the need for self-actualization, which is characterized by engagement and the use of full potential and leads to a state of harmony and understanding (Maslow, 1968).

To understand the need for appreciation, I will discuss the esteem needs in detail. While satiation of the self-esteem needs leads to an increase in self-confidence, self-worth, strength, capability, and feeling useful and necessary in the world, the deprivation of the esteem needs may lead to an inferiority complex, weakness, vulnerability, helplessness, dependence and feelings of discouragement (Maslow, 1954).

The importance of self-esteem was highlighted in a meta-analysis of 208 stress-related studies by Dickerson and Kemeny (2004). The researchers found that threats to one’s self-esteem or social status are associated with the highest rises in cortisol (stress hormone) levels compared

with other stress-inducing situations. To lead a balanced and healthy life, one must have one's ego stroked once in a while by others through appreciation and acknowledgment.

Here, it is critical to note that it is now common to give praise to children, ignoring their output, with the intent to build their self-esteem and to make them feel good (Seligman, 1996). However, Seligman, argues that this could be detrimental to their mental health and even lead them to depression. He suggests that instead of praising children to make them feel good, one should instead teach the child how to do good and how to improve performance or output, which will then improve the child's self-esteem automatically (Seligman, 1996).

Cognitive Bias toward Negative Information

We constantly come in contact with negative messages from the media, advertisers, politicians, and even the people around us. A *negativity bias* is a general bias, based on both innate predispositions and experience, to give greater weight to negative entities such as events, objects, personal traits (Rozin & Royzman, 2001). Simply said, it is a mental inclination toward noticing and being concerned with negative information and overlooking positive information. Negativity bias helps explain why people are more likely to focus on what they dislike in others and criticize them rather than remembering the good things and appreciate them for these traits. Because of this cognitive disposition, it becomes all the more valuable to be mindful of recognizing and appreciating the good in others.

Our Need for Mattering

Corresponding with our self-esteem needs, *mattering* is fundamentally about the feeling that one is valued and is important to others (Taylor & Turner, 2001). Mattering is divided into two essential moments: recognition and impact (Prilleltensky, 2014). The moment of recognition refers to signals we receive from the world that our presence matters, that we add meaning and

are of value in our families, at work, and in the community at large. The moment of impact refers to our sense of agency—that what we do makes a difference in the world and that other people depend on us. Prilleltensky (2014) adds that we all tend to have a need to feel accepted and appreciated without coming across as demanding or seeking too much attention, especially at the expense of others. When someone is made to feel invisible, ignored, neglected, unappreciated, and forgotten, he feels that he does not matter and it is a terrible violation of a psychological human right (Prilleltensky, 2014).

Feeling valued is as essential to the wellbeing of each and every one of us. The more we feel that our value is at risk, the more energy we spend in an attempt to protect it, leaving us with less energy to create more value. On a similar note, Daniel Goleman (as cited in Schwartz, Gomes, McCarthy, 2011), expressed, “Threats to our standing in the eyes of others are remarkably potent biologically, almost as powerful as those to our very survival.” As much as we aspire to feel good about ourselves regardless of what others may say, our senses of self-worth are profoundly influenced by the degree to which others respect us. In his book *On Desire*, William Irvine (2005, p. 34), emphasized the importance of mattering: “We might want them to love us, and if not love us then at least admire us. And if we can’t have people’s admiration, we seek their respect or recognition”. Hence, appreciating and recognizing others can be a great way to enhance feelings of mattering and satisfy this need.

Appreciating Others Aligns with the Core of Positive Psychology

The basis of positive psychology is to focus on an individual’s strengths and what makes life worth living. Instead of falling into the trap of the negativity bias and criticizing others by highlighting their weaknesses, it becomes vital to focus on the good and to appreciate the good in others as well. Everyone loves being praised and appreciated. While it seems self-evident that

being praised and appreciated boosts one's self-esteem and self-efficacy and thus makes one feel good, researchers, particularly in the field of positive psychology, have asserted that *being* appreciative also brings about happiness. Peterson and Seligman (2004) included "appreciation of beauty and excellence" and "gratitude" into their 24 character strengths and proposed that constant utilization of these strengths in life will bring about gratification and authentic happiness (Seligman, 2002a). Moreover, Schneider (2001) suggested that appreciation promotes positive affect, more satisfying relationships, and improved coping with stress. Additionally, according to Adler (2002), being appreciative and giving praise facilitates and enhances subjective well-being. Expressing appreciation to others also helps build and maintain social bonds.

Functions of Appreciation

To Express Admiration or Approval

The most basic function of appreciation is to express admiration and support of someone's actions, appearance, or taste (Herbert, 1990; Manes, 1983).

To Establish/Confirm/Sustain Harmony

Wolfson (1983, p.86) describes compliments as social lubricants helping to 'create or maintain rapport'. Compliments are powerful in establishing mutual support and solidarity (Holmes, 1988; Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Wolfson, 1989). Appropriate appreciation helps us achieve and even strengthen good social relationships, thereby encouraging solidarity and sympathy among people. For example, this conversation illustrates this function. The context is two women meeting in the elevator at their workplace. Speaker: "Wow! You look stunning.", Receiver: "Thanks. You made my day!" This brief conversation describes how a simple compliment can be so useful in establishing rapport, and solidarity.

To Motivate and Encourage Others

The use of appreciation and praise has shown to bring an increase in the level of intrinsic motivation (Cameron & Pierce, 1994; Dev, 1997; McKay, 1992; Shanab, Peterson, Dargahi, & Deroian, 1981), increase productivity and loyalty (Gallup, 2016, June 28). Praising others is commonly used a means to encourage people to produce desired behavior or develop an interest in an activity or task (Manes, 1983). In research with undergraduates, Shanab et al. (1981) found that appreciation led students to spend more time on a puzzle-solving task and rate their interest as higher than participants who received neutral feedback. In a similar study, adults who received praise for a puzzle-completion task were more interested to participate in the task again when given a choice later as compared to those given no appreciation (Deci, 1971).

A number of theories may lay the groundwork for these positive effects of praise. Self-efficacy, which refers to personal beliefs about one's capacity to achieve a particular outcome (Bandura, 1982) is one such mechanism. Although one is more likely to build stronger self-efficacy beliefs when these beliefs arise from one's own achievements; however, verbal praise can also be used to convince others that they do in fact have the required ability, thereby improving their perceptions of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

Alternatively, the principle of operant conditioning could also be used to explain this relationship between motivation and appreciation. According to these principles, praise increases the frequency of behavior because the positive experience of being appreciated reinforces the behavior that elicited appreciation (O'Leary & O'Leary, 1977).

However, Manes (1983) said that compliments often do not refer to specific behavior sets and therefore the speaker is not showing appreciation to motivate the listener. In such cases, complimenting only reinforces the solidarity between the speaker and the receiver.

Appreciating Someone Can Be a Great Conversation Starter

Giving compliments is acknowledged as an excellent conversation strategy, a tactic to open and sustain the conversation and to establish contact between people and make them communicate more effectively (Billmyer, 1990; Dunham, 1992; Wolfson, 1983). In doing so, compliments function as unique tools to reduce the social gap between people and to make them more relaxed in interacting with each other.

In the survey I conducted (see Appendix A), about 20% of the sample agreed that they use appreciation in its various languages to start a conversation. From experience, I can say that starting a conversation with a stranger is easier by complimenting them on their appearance or actions. Both the placement and content of the compliment provide opportunities to the conversation partners to reveal more details about the complimented item and about one's own personal preferences (Billmyer, 1990). Therefore, learning to give and accept compliments appropriately can be helpful in creating opportunities to engage in meaningful social interaction.

To Ease Communication

As Wolfson (1983) pointed out, compliments as used compliments can be used to ease communication by strengthening or even to replacing several speech acts, including giving thanks, apologies, and greetings. These are often accompanied by or substituted by compliments. In the case of thanking, compliments may function in a number of situations as an appropriate means of expressing gratitude, such as, "You are such a kind soul. Thanks for helping us in our tough times." or "You have always been so considerate and supportive, I apologize for not being able to help you when you needed me"

Being social requires people to carry out a variety of acts that could threaten face, for example, making requests, complaints or criticisms. Compliments are often also used to soften

face-threatening acts such as apologies, requests, and criticism (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987; Wolfson, 1983). This sort of behavior is more common in interactions involving close relationships, when the relationship between the interactants is likely to continue and in which it is important to maintain harmony, but it is also frequently used when status is unequal (Wolfson, 1983).

To Create Positive Affect

It can be hard to find someone who doesn't like receiving appreciation. The language of appreciation may vary among individuals, but being appreciated generally increases positive affect. In the survey I conducted, over 93% agreed that giving and receiving appreciation through any language "makes them feel good," and over 32% of the respondents confessed that they only give a compliment to "make the other person feel good." Praise and appreciation also may be effective simply because it creates a positive mood (Delin & Baumeister, 1994) or because it makes people feel good about themselves (Blumenfeld, Pintrich, Meece, & Wessles, 1982).

To Enhance Psychological Well-being

Appreciation is critical for our psychological well-being. Praise, compliments, and appreciation have been shown to boost self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997); enhance feelings of competence, ability, mastery, and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1985); serve as an incentive for task engagement in adults (Madsen, Becker, & Thomas., 1977) as well as children (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997); inspire children to explore and adapt the complimented effort even more (Henderlong, 2000; Mueller & Dweck, 1998); and provide motivation for achieving excellence (Koestner, Zuckerman, & Olsson, 1990).

Features of Compliments

Compliments have Therapeutic Value

Therapists often use compliments to ease the acceptance of the rest of the message by the clients (Wall, Amendt, Kleckner, du Ree, 1989). Most commonly they are used when the therapist wants the client to perform an activity or assignment before the next session, preceding the task with a compliment is used as a technique to increase the likelihood that the client would complete the task. Wall et. al, (1989) stated that compliments are highly effective in motivating clients, increasing therapeutic leverage and making therapy and task achievement a much easier process.

Status of Giver and Receiver Affect Appropriateness of Appreciation

According to Wolfson (1983), the social status or the relationship between the speaker and the addressee has a great influence on the type of compliment that is considered appropriate to give. Knapp, Hopper, and Bell (1984) also found that a majority of compliment exchanges occur between people of similar status and age, though this does not mean that compliments do not occur when status is unequal. Wolfson (1983) explains that compliments in unequal status relationships do occur, but the choice of topics may differ. In these cases, most compliments are in some sense work-related, focus more on trait or ability, and are more commonly given by a person with higher status who is expected to make judgments concerning an activity. Compliments from higher to lower status are twice as likely to relate to work performance or ability as to appearance or possessions, while the reverse is true between equals or where the speaker is of lower status (Wolfson, 1983).

There are Gender Differences in Appreciation

Several researches have highlighted that gender differences impact the exchange of appreciation. Some gender differences in the giving of compliments include that female speakers tend to give compliments that have a personal focus and use first and second person pronouns: “I love your lipstick!” “You look amazing!” (Herbert, 1990), whereas male speakers are more likely to give compliments that are disengaged, such as “Nice game!” “Good job!” or “That’s a cool phone” (Herbert, 1990; Holmes, 1988). Additionally, women give more compliments and receive significantly more compliments than men (Holmes, 1988), but males are also more likely to accept compliments than female (Herbert, 1990).

Appreciation is Affected by Cultural Nuances

While best practices of appreciation hold true in every country, the kind of appreciation given, the preference of language and responses given are heavily dependent on the culture and this can become a source of miscommunication among different races of speakers. Golato (2005) explained that Germans are unskilled when it comes to giving compliments and pay relatively fewer compliments as compared to Americans. In another study, Mir, & Cots (2017) found that the Peninsular Spanish speaker do not compliment as frequently as the American English speakers, however, both language groups prefer to accept a compliment. However, western speakers tend to use and accept compliments more often than Asian speakers (Fujimura-Wilson, 2015). In addition, Polish people tend to give compliments on possessions while Americans tend to compliment people’s characteristics, especially in conversation with someone close to the speaker (Barnlund & Araki,1985; Herbert, 1991). Another research found that Japanese tend to compliment on the ability, effort and skills to acquaintances rather than people with whom they have a close relationship (Barnlund & Araki,1985; Daikuhara,1986).

The list of functions presented in this section is not definite; compliments may serve more than one function, depending on many factors such as context, relationships between interlocutors, and the gender of participants. However, the functions discussed are fundamental in the sense that they help establish good relationships and emphasize positive politeness.

Challenges in Expressing Appreciation

From the functions mentioned above, it can be said that appreciation has a positive impact on one's psychological well-being and serves as what Ginott (1965), calls an "emotional medicine" (p. 39). However, just as one needs to be careful with the administration of any potent medicine, the administration of praise must be done following some precautions and rules about the timing, dosage, and possible reactions (Ginott, 1965). In the following section, I will draw from my survey results (Appendix A) to discuss the challenges faced while giving and receiving appreciation. The challenges are as follows.

May Make the Receiver Feel Uncomfortable

Receiving a compliment can leave the receiver feeling uncomfortable and unsure of how to respond because compliments and compliment responses can themselves be considered as face threatening acts (Brown and Levinson, 1978, p. 71-73). Appreciation may imply envy on the part of the giver and his or her desire to have something that belongs to the addressee. This has been observed to exist in a number of societies, but it is more obvious in some cultural contexts such as with the Samoan, where an expression of admiration for an object imposes an obligation on the addressee to offer it to the giver. Holmes (1988, p. 449) provided the following example to illustrate this phenomenon. The context is a *Pakeha* (i.e., a New Zealander of European origin) speaking to a Samoan friend she is visiting.

Speaker: "What an unusual necklace. It's beautiful."

Receiver: “Please take it.”

This example by Holmes (1988) clearly illustrates how receiving a compliment on a possession can put the receiver in the moral dilemma or obligation (depending on one’s culture) to offer the item to the one giving the compliment.

Busy Schedule

A lot of people do not give compliments because they perceive they are too busy to do so. In the survey I conducted (see Appendix, A), responses to the statement “You sometimes hold back appreciation (compliments, praise, gifts, gestures) for others because . . .” included “I’m focused on a goal/outcome, and fail to show appreciation until I’m no longer in the moment (e.g., in a work meeting),” “I just don’t make the time—but I should,” “ Sometimes I mean to then forget in the hecticness of life (sic),” “I am sometimes too distracted or busy to notice,” and “I think about it but then forget to say it.” These responses shared in the survey offer perfect examples of how one can often miss the opportunity to give praise and compliments because of one’s demanding schedule.

Structural and Logistical Issues

Besides a busy schedule, another common reason is that the time and place do not fit well to express appreciation. For example, not getting the chance to express appreciation to a stranger for his kindness, due to the lack of his or her contact details etc. In my survey (see Appendix A) the answer to reasons why people hold back appreciation for others included responses such as “Sometimes I just miss the opportunity.”, reemphasizing the fact that sometimes due to logistical or structural challenges one is not able to appreciate others when appreciation is due.

Unsure of Which Language to Use

People feel unsure of how to express their appreciation, wondering whether the language they choose to express will be valued by the receiver. Over 26% of the respondents of my survey (see Appendix A) said that they fail to appreciate others because “they are unsure of how to express appreciation.” Other reasons for holding back appreciation included “I feel awkward, afraid to sound superficial” and “I feel the praise might make the person uncomfortable.” This ties in well with the proposition that everyone has a different preference regarding appreciation language (Chapman, 1995).

Unpredictability of Receiver’s Reaction

Over 31% respondents of my survey (Appendix A) agreed that they hold back appreciation because they are unsure of the receiver’s reaction. One respondent said, “Sometimes it might be perceived as intruding one’s privacy.” Another asserted, “I’m generally quite free with praise/compliments, but I’m wary of complimenting men because so many have taken that as a sign of romantic interest and proceeded to hit on me. So, for male strangers, I hold back now unless there is no conceivable way they could hit on me afterwards.” These answers explain how the unpredictability of the receiver’s reaction can be a deterrent to giving appreciation.

Shyness

In the survey I conducted (see Appendix A), 20% of the sample accepted that they hold back an appreciation for others because they feel shy. A possible explanation for the shyness could be due to the unpredictability of the receiver’s reactions and also because of a lack of awareness about the receiver’s preferred language of receiving appreciation.

Intention to Praise Indirectly

In the survey (see Appendix A) reasons to hold back an appreciation for others also included “I believe that it is appreciated when I inform a supervisor/manager about excellent service by a particular individual. I want the person to get the credit they deserve” and “I admire them secretly.” These answers highlight how some people do not see the need to express their appreciation directly to the person. Even though more than 97% of the sample agreed that receiving praise makes them feel good, there is an unawareness of the fact that appreciation makes the receiver feel positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2000) and therefore one should be encouraged to praise directly.

Lack of Culture of Appreciation

Due to increasing work pressure, competition, and hectic schedules, our focus is moving away from creating an environment which ensures that everyone feels important and respected. Although a small percentage, but about 7% of the sample agreed that they hold back appreciation simply due to a lack of a culture of appreciation.

Inappropriateness of Language

Not using suitable language can sometimes result in awkward or uncomfortable moments for learners. Holmes and Brown (1987) demonstrated that if a compliment fails because of language or logical reasons, it can cause embarrassment or offense. For instance, a male coworker may attempt to compliment a colleague by saying, “Wow! this dress makes you look so slim.” However, this compliment fails on linguistic and pragmatic grounds because it highlights that the giver thinks the receiver generally looks fat and also because a male’s comment to a female coworker on her body type could be viewed as inappropriate.

Overlooking the Expectation of a Compliment

There are times when compliments are expected. For instance, when someone spends money on an elaborate makeup application or spend hours to cook a special meal for a loved one, an expectation of appreciation arises. In such cases, when a compliment is not received, it could be interpreted as a sign of disapproval (Billmyer, 1990).

Solution to Challenges and Suggestions to Improve

I propose several solutions to the challenges discussed above. I will also include some suggestion how we can improve appreciation.

Understand the Power of Feeling Valued

It is important to savor how it feels when appreciation is received. Knowing how pleasurable it feels to be valued by others will, in turn, encourage giving the gift of positive emotions to others through appreciation.

Prioritize

As discussed above, giving others, the gift of appreciation can be helpful in many ways. Therefore, it is helpful to prioritize giving appreciation to others when due. Some languages such as verbal appreciation and digital messages, as with some gifts and awards, take longer than some other languages. However, they take only a couple of minutes. If one has the intention, one will be able to find time in a busy schedule.

Create a Culture of Appreciation

According to my survey, over 95% agreed that receiving and giving appreciation makes them feel good. On the whole, we as a society seem to believe that praise affects children positively. Parents and teachers are often given similar advice: “Be generous with your praise. Find as many opportunities to sincerely praise your children as you can” (McKay, 1992, p. 243).

I also recommend that not only children but adults should also be regularly praised. As Carnegie (1964) wrote that one key to winning friends and influencing people is to “be hearty in your approbation and lavish in your praise” (p. 38). Hence, creating a culture of appreciation will benefit the organization and community. Leaders should set examples by appreciating others publicly and encouraging others to do the same.

Build the Vocabulary of Appreciation

Highlighting character strengths, talents, skills, efforts, appearance, and possessions can be a great way to focus and build a vocabulary of appreciation. In order to build the vocabulary of appreciation, one can appreciate, talents, interests, actions, and much more. The VIA classification of 24 strengths (listed in chapter 1) provides a framework for building a meaningful and systematic vocabulary.

Observe the Strengths and Efforts Others Make

One should also be aware of the language of appreciation that people value. Because not everyone feels valued in the same ways, leaders need to learn different ways to communicate appreciation. Although giving verbal praise may be meaningful to one person, others may think that “words are cheap.” Some individuals are delighted when someone helps them with a task; others want to do it themselves. It becomes important to observe and ask about people’s preferred style of receiving appreciation.

Share the Data

One should share with others how one likes to be appreciated—and then should ask the other person about his or her preferred language to receive appreciation. If appropriate, one could also gather information on the preferred language of appreciation of common friends or colleagues.

Practice

Lots of new things in life are awkward, so it is important to practice giving praise and compliments to get better at the skill. Being mindful about other's preferred language to receive appreciation can also be a great way to start. If one is particularly shy in giving compliments, one should start with general compliments, and then gradually move toward trait- or person-specific praise.

Think Before You Speak: Know the *what* and *why*

It is helpful for a person to think about how he or she wants to phrase a compliment. It will make the person feel more confident and less likely to fumble around for words or say things that could be hurtful to the receiver. Knowing *what* one appreciates and *why* it is worth appreciating can be helpful in giving meaningful and rich appreciation.

Be Specific about the Compliment

“That necklace looks really good on you” makes a bigger impact than “You look really good today.” More specific compliments make the person feel noticed.

Kohn (1993) argued that praise should be directed at specific aspects of performance because it is “less likely that there will be a gap between what someone hears and what he thinks about himself if we don't make sweeping comments about what he is like as a person” (p. 108).

Be Genuine

A compliment perceived to be dishonest could hamper the relationship and do more damage than good. Therefore, it is important to be truthful while giving compliments. As suggested above, knowing the *why* becomes crucial here as a receiver needs to be convinced that the compliment was sincerely meant because of so and so reason.

Don't Go Overboard

Typically, a couple of sentences are enough to get the message across (“You were great in the presentation” or “Your performance was great”). Going overboard with compliments can be confused with flattery or cause doubt regarding an ulterior motive to the praise. For instance, saying something like “You were outstanding! I’ve never seen anyone play like this. It was the best music I’ve even heard—it felt like angels were singing to me!” Words like these could overwhelm the receiver and seem ingenuine.

Smile and Be Enthusiastic When Giving Compliments

Smiling and enthusiasm make the receiver feel that the giver means it. Body language plays an important role in how the compliment is received.

Be Appropriate

It is important to be mindful of the setting and the relationship with the person. Commenting on the fit of a dress to a friend at work is fine, but the same words to one’s boss could be stepping out of bounds.

CHAPTER 3

GIVING VERBAL APPRECIATION USING ACC

Because of the scope of this paper, I will focus only on the verbal language of expressing appreciation. Through my experience, exploration, and understanding, I propose that compliments fall into five categories: (a) General compliments, (b) Factual compliments. (c) Appearance- and possession-specific compliments (d) Effort- or action-specific compliments (e) Trait-specific compliments. After elaborating on the five categories, I will explain ACC in detail.

Categories of Giving Verbal Compliments

General Compliments. General compliments do not specifically refer to an aspect or an action and include expressions like “Good job!” “I love you!” “You’re amazing,” “You’re so nice,” “You’re an angel,” and the like. General compliments are also given in formal situations when it is understood that the other person has an expectation to hear praise. For instance, when a colleague gives a singing performance, even though you may not particularly care for the singing, you are likely to say something like “good job” because of the formality of the relationship and because there is an expectation to hear praise after a performance.

O’Leary and O’Leary (1977) indicated that praise must be contingent, specific, and sincere if it is to function as a reinforcer because global compliments (e.g., “You’re such an angel!”) can be easily discounted if one thinks about instances in which one’s behavior was contrary to the praise (e.g., “I lied to my mom today, so I can’t really be an angel.”). Researchers have argued that extremely effusive or general praise runs the risks of being perceived as dishonest (Ginott, 1965; Kohn, 1993; O’Leary & O’Leary, 1977). In organizations, White (2016) suggests that rather than giving a generic compliment to the whole team, personal communication fitted to the individual works better.

Generic compliments like “You’re amazing” or “You are so nice” might leave the receiver unsure of the particular action that led to the compliment. These are also more likely to be forgotten because they don’t hold much meaning as the other categories.

Factual compliments. This category includes compliments in which the giver is stating a well-known fact about the receiver to the receiver, such as complimenting a professional singer by stating “You have great voice,” praising a beauty pageant winner by saying “You are beautiful,” or telling a famous actor that “Your acting skills are amazing.” These might be the most obvious and most frequently received compliments as a virtue of their profession, a clear talent, or any distinct characteristic. These compliments are meant sincerely, but because they are very commonly received, they leave very little to no impact on the receiver.

Appearance- and possession-specific compliments. These types of compliments are aimed at one’s appearance, including one’s physical features and sense of style. According to Wolfson (1983), one of the most outstanding aspects of American English compliments is the astonishingly high number of compliments on personal appearance, such as clothes and hairdos. Additionally, I also include in this category compliments on people’s material possessions, including their cars, houses, phones, or accessories etc. Compliments on one’s lifestyle, job, or resources also fall in this category. It is my expectation that receiving these compliments will tend to boost confidence.

Manes (1983) pointed out that women tend to be more concerned about their appearance and that women of all ages typically try to make themselves attractive, mostly in hopes of receiving compliments. Manes further argued that such compliments not only reflect the importance of personal appearance but also reinforce that importance. Thus, when one’s effort to make oneself attractive receive praise, one is likely to continue those efforts. The importance of

this is highlighted when such efforts are not appreciated, in which case one may feel hurt or insulted.

The importance of newness. According to Manes (1983), while the term *new* is not in itself a positive term, the value that it brings about is regularly reflected in compliments. What that means is that any new or recent acquisition, whether it be a new phone or watch, will be noticed and commented on in a positive manner by almost anyone who either sees it for the first time or is asked to notice it. Also, the lack of such compliments in these cases may nearly always be taken as an insult or rejection.

However, it is not always in the best interest to give appearance compliments. In a study on an ethnically diverse sample of 220 college women, all 220 women reported higher body surveillance and more body dissatisfaction in association with feeling good about receiving appearance compliments, supporting the idea of *complimentary weightism*, which means that seemingly harmless types of social interaction may have detrimental consequences for women's self-objectification and body image (Calogero, Herbozo, & Thompson, 2009).

Effort- or action-specific compliments. Effort-specific compliments correspond to Kamins and Dweck's (1999) work on *process praise*, which refers to examining and appreciating one's strategies or effort (i.e., the process). Effort- or action-specific compliments, praise a specific action, process, or effort. Examples include statements such as these: "I saw you generously helping that poor man even when you were running late," "Great job! You really studied for your science test and your result shows it," and "I like the way you tirelessly kept trying until you finally got the right answer".

This category leaves the receiver with a clear understanding of the action or aspect that was appreciated. Butler (1987), found that children receiving appreciation specific to an effort or

process showed higher levels of interest and challenge seeking, which improved their performance on a task over children receiving other forms of praise, such as an evaluation of their performance.

Trait-specific compliments. Kamins and Dweck (1999) define trait-related praise (also known as *person praise* or *ability praise*) as a global assessment based on a specific behavior or performance. This refers to praising a trait rather than the effort put into achieving the task. E.g., by saying “You’re so smart” as opposed to “You must have worked hard.” Schunk (1994) found ability (i.e., trait-specific) praise was most often (though not always) somewhat better than effort praise in promoting self-efficacy and performance during skill acquisition.

In contrast, according to Kamins and Dweck (1999) trait-specific praise, even when positive, can “create vulnerability and a sense of contingent self-worth” (p. 835). In their study to test this hypothesis, Kamins and Dweck found that children displayed significantly more “helpless” responses (including self-blame) on all dependent measures after trait praise (e.g., “You’re so intelligent”) than after effort praise (e.g., “You really worked hard for this”). Furthermore, another downside of trait-specific compliments was that statements like “You’re so intelligent” led the recipients of these trait-specific compliments less willing to take learning risks and to lie in order to protect their status (Kamins & Dweck, 1999). Those praised for intelligence were three times more likely to lie about their performance than those praised for effort or action—even when they knew their names would not show up on the forms, they overstated their scores (Kamins & Dweck, 1999).

There is no doubt that one needs to be careful with how much and how frequently praise is given related to given aspects. Each kind of praise has a unique set of pros and cons, but it seems effort praise should be used more frequently than the others, and focus should be placed

on encouraging character strengths using the language of VIA strengths survey instead of highlighting traits (which run the risk of making feelings of self-worth dependent on praise given by others), or highlighting appearance, (which could encourage self-objectification or low body image).

Active Constructive Complimenting

In this age of multitasking and pressure-packed schedules, it's easier to remain focused on our own challenges rather than the strengths, achievements, and positive aspects of others. Moreover, with the increased use of technology and digital media in our lives, we are connected through the Internet but are losing physical connection with others to notice their strengths, traits, and characteristics.

I propose ACC, which is a more organized way to allow us to initiate conversations, have healthier conversations, build stronger bonds with others, and more. It goes beyond being just another type of compliment as mentioned above. Instead, ACC reflects a novel way of delivering compliments in that the speaker actively builds on the subject or aspect being complimented by asking questions, managing one's body language and expressions, and savoring the receiver's reactions to the compliment. Using this structured way to give compliments will enable us to have more energizing conversations (Rath, 2015), and to express mutual positive regard, trust, and active engagement, which are also features of an HQC (Dutton, 2003).

- **Active** – The word *active* refers to the intention of making the compliment an ongoing conversation.
- **Constructive** – *Constructive* refers to giver's determination to make the compliment productive, beneficial, and valuable to the receiver by highlighting strengths, traits, skills, talents, or positive actions.

- **Compliment** – This term refers to praise conveyed with the intent to highlight a positive quality one values.

As mentioned earlier, verbal appreciation through compliments and praise can be a great way to start a conversation and keep it going (Billmyer, 1990; Dunham, 1992; Wolfson, 1983). In one way, ACC helps us do that and more. The idea is to go beyond general compliments like “You’re amazing” because such praise is not specific. Instead, highlighting the other person’s character strengths, skills, appearance, possessions, abilities, actions, and/or talents is critical to ACC; the giver then builds on that appreciation by actively asking more positive questions about that aspect. We want to give ACC with the intent to make the person cherish that aspect and start a spiral of positive thoughts about it. For instance, when we give a regular compliment to someone for a wonderful painting they made, we may say something like, “That’s a beautiful painting,” but following it up with a question like “What is it that you like the most about the painting?” Although the artist might respond immediately, it is likely that he or she will muse on the best aspect of that painting for some time, as well.

The Core Elements of ACC

Compliment. A person should give genuine praise to the person for his or her strengths, traits, efforts. I suggest focusing more on the individual’s strengths, traits, and efforts to build self-efficacy and bring awareness to strengths (Niemiec, 2013). One should avoid giving direct compliments on appearance in ACC because they can sometimes be detrimental to one’s body image and self-objectification (Calogero et al., 2009). However, because appearance compliments are commonly given and commonly expected, one suggestion is to praise the effort in creating that appearance. For instance, instead of “Wow, you look stunning,” one could say,

“Wow, I love how you have styled your look to be very chic and classy. Where did you get that dress from?”

Use of exclamations. Whenever appropriate, I propose making use of exclamations to in ACC such as “Oh” “Wow,” “Awe,” “Oh my God,” “Voila,” “Hey,” “Aha,” or “Ah.” For example, one could say “Wow! You handled that situation like a true leader. How did that feel?” One can also upgrade the degree of compliments by emphasizing the key noun phrase: “Wow! The flavour of the chicken is exceptional!”

Follow compliments with a question or open-ended statement. As Cooperrider (2012, p.109) says, “we live in worlds our questions create. The questions we ask determine what we find, and what we find becomes a powerful resource for planning and learning”. My suggestion here is that a compliment should serve as a “door opener” leading to a conversation. It can be tricky to come up with questions to follow a compliment, but it will come naturally with some practice. A couple of suggestions include questions such as these: How does it feel? How long did it take to complete/make/paint? Is it comfortable? Where did you buy it from? Is it the first time you’re wearing this? Doesn’t it feel great? What do you like the best about it?

Carefully listen to the response. Because the idea is to highlight a quality, encourage a healthy conversation, and build an HQC that is based on mutual regard, active engagement, and trust, it is important to listen to the response of the receiver and not interrupt or lose focus. One is not doing a favor by complimenting the other person, and it should not come across like that.

Savoring. Once the person is given a compliment, the giver should acknowledge and savor the receiver’s reaction. Knowing that you added joy to another person’s life could be a great feeling to savor and will encourage repeating such acts of appreciation.

Example 1**Context: Appreciating a Friend's Cooking Skills****The regular way.**

Speaker: "Delicious food—you're a great cook!"

Receiver: "Thank you."

The ACC way.

Speaker (looking excited): "Wow! This pasta is the best I've had in a while. I didn't know you were such a great cook. How long did it take to prepare this sauce? There are quite a lot of flavors in there."

Receiver: "Oh thank you! It takes about an hour. It is actually my mom's recipe."

Example 2**Watching a Colleague Help an Elderly Couple****The regular way.**

Speaker: "You are so nice!"

Receiver: "It's my pleasure."

The ACC way.

Speaker: "It was so thoughtful of you to help that elderly couple. I bet they are blessing you right now. It only takes a minute to help someone have a better day, doesn't it?"

Receiver: "Oh yeah, you're absolutely right! I learned that from my dad—he would go out of his way . . ."

Example 3

Complimenting a Stranger on His Watch

The regular way.

Speaker: “That’s a very nice watch.”

Receiver: “Thank you so much”

The ACC way.

Speaker: “Hey! That’s a very nice watch. I love the detailing on the straps. Is that custom made?”

Receiver: “Yes, in fact, it is. It’s from this website called . . .”

Mindfully investing into using ACC benefits not only the one who receives the appreciation by making him or her happier, more productive, engaged, energized, and confident, but it also benefits the giver because his or her focus will be to look for the good in others and not criticizing or focusing on the negative.

In work settings, regular use of ACC can help in building more positive work cultures and cultivating healthier relationships by encouraging more energizing interactions (Rath, 2015) and building more HQCs. The importance of a positive work culture is felt throughout the world. Employees often spend most of their waking hours at work; it is imperative that the culture be as positive as possible so as to keep them motivated and energized.

Using ACC Effectively

As ACC is a new concept, there are certain suggestions which can make the use of ACC most effective. The suggestions are as follows:

Listen Carefully to the receiver's response to ACC

After giving ACC, I suggest that one carefully listens to the receiver's response to the ACC. The receiver should feel that the giver of the ACC gave full attention while making the compliment and is now fully attending to the response. According to the 'iPhone effect' explained by Rath (2015), having a phone visible when we are around others has been known to immediately decrease the quality of your interactions. For the same reason, it is suggested to avoid the use of gadgets, or other distracting stimuli while engaging in ACC.

Watch Body Language, Tone, and Pitch

As in any conversation, the tone and pitch while giving ACC become very important. If the body language or the tone comes across as aggressive or condescending, the compliment will lose its meaning. While giving ACC is it important that the body language, tone and pitch convey warmth, regard and respect.

Don't Impose

ACC should be employed when there is enough time at hand, such as when one is at a party, hanging out with a friend or with colleagues during the break, in the waiting lounge of an airport, on a flight, or anywhere when one won't feel one is imposing a conversation onto someone. Asking questions when the other person is busy can seem intrusive. For instance, a person holding the door open for you at a mall is not expecting anything more than a smile. Even here, however, we can compact ACC and simply improve on the compliment by saying "Thanks, that is so kind of you" instead of simply smiling or saying nothing.

Careful Use of Exclamations

The use of exclamations is a great way to show enthusiasm and support, but it could seem inappropriate in certain situations. For instance, saying "Oh my God! That is a gorgeous tie!

Where did you get it from?” may be appropriate to say to a friend, but it might seem out of place if said to one’s boss.

Ask Follow-up Questions

One can employ questions such as these: Where did you learn that from? What do you like best about it? Where did you get it? Do you enjoy doing it? Questions can also be an affirmation with a follow up using phrases such as “isn’t it?” or “doesn’t it?” For instance, one might say, “Your daughter is very wise, isn’t she?”

Maintain Variety

As one’s social circle does not change very often and very dramatically, it is suggested that one uses variety while giving ACC in the social circle. For instance, noticing and complimenting everyone in the family on their appearance or character strength of love might start to feel superficial. Therefore, one could vary between appreciating appearance, character strengths, traits, action, or efforts with the same individual and within the social group, to make it more meaningful and effective. This will also encourage to be more open to noticing different aspects and not just focusing on one single aspect, like appearance

CHAPTER 4

RESPONDING TO COMPLIMENTS

Before diving into understanding how we respond to compliments, it will be helpful to first understand how our responses to the good news have been categorized by Gable et al. (2004). Gable et al.'s (2004) work on capitalization and response types lays the groundwork for ACA and hence is critical to discuss here.

Background: Capitalization and Response types

The process of sharing good news about a positive event with someone else has been called *capitalization* (Langston, 1994). Capitalizing on positive events has been linked to increases in positive affect and well-being, independent of the positive events themselves; however, these effects are largely dependent on the reactions of persons with whom the events are shared (Gable et al., 2004). Research has shown that when close relationship partners regularly respond to positive event disclosures in a supportive manner, disclosers report feeling closer, more intimate, and generally more satisfied with their relationships than those whose partners typically respond in a no supportive manner (Gable et al., 2004).

According to Gable et al. (2006), responses to capitalization attempts can be divided into four types: (a) Active–constructive (e.g., enthusiastic support); (b) Passive–constructive (e.g., quiet, understated support); (c) Active–destructive (e.g., demeaning the event); and (d) Passive–destructive (e.g., ignoring the event). These four different responses are illustrated in the following example: Julia comes home from her job as a junior consultant in a large firm and excitedly tells her best friend, Ronda, that the senior partners called her into a meeting today and assigned her to be the lead consultant for an important case filed on behalf of their most prestigious client. An active–constructive response from Rebecca might be, “Wow, this is great

news! Your skills and hard work are definitely paying off; I am certain that your goal to make partner will happen in no time. What is the case about?” A passive–constructive response could be a warm smile followed by a simple, “That’s nice, dear,” or, “Your dress is nice, too.” An active–destructive response might be, “I bet the case will be complicated; are you sure you can handle it? It sounds like it might be a lot of work; maybe no one else wanted the case. You will probably have to work even longer hours this month.” A passive–destructive response might be, “You won’t believe what happened to me today.”

ACR also extends to nonverbal communication. An active constructive response includes eye contact and a smile, while an active destructive response features frowning or glaring. Both types of passive response include little or no emotional expression. A passive and destructive response may also include a lack of eye contact (Gable et al., 2006).

Even though people naturally understand the importance of ACR, only a few do so with consistency. Based on Gable et al.’s (2006) work on ACR, my argument is that simple thanks, nods, and smiles fall in the *passive–constructive* category. With the proposition of practicing active constructive accepting (ACA), I suggest going beyond this passive–constructive response, moving toward a more active and constructive response.

In the next section, I will dig deeper into common responses to compliments and then discuss the four types of accepting based on the categories of responses mentioned by Gable et al. (2004). I will then give examples of ACA.

Responses to Compliments

We all respond to compliments differently, and sometimes differently with different people. The variance occurs simply because there are a number of ways to respond to compliments. These responses can include accepting the compliment, completely ignoring the

compliment and changing the topic (e.g., discounting the compliment and saying, “Hey! I almost forgot—did you get the new job?”); disagreeing with the compliment or some part of the compliment (e.g., “Trust me, the fabric is of terrible quality”); denying or dismissing the compliment (e.g., “Oh, this is really old; it’s nothing special”); mocking (e.g., “Of course you think this is pretty! Isn’t everything pretty for you?”); self-criticizing (e.g., “Oh! But I think I look fat in this”); or simply laughing, smiling, or nodding.

It is easy to assume that responding to a compliment poses a dilemma for the recipient; agreeing with a compliment may appear to be boasting, whereas disagreeing or rejecting the compliment risks coming across as impolite or rude. Manes (1983) highlighted that one of the most common strategies to avoid this conflict in the United States is to play down or deny the worth of the subject or aspect being complimented by the speaker without openly denying the compliment. This is why respondents in America do something other than accepting a compliment two-thirds of the time (Herbert, 1990).

Compliment responses are heavily dependent on one’s cultural background, race and ethnicity. In a comparison study, it was found that American English speakers consider a simple ‘thank you’ as a suitable compliment response, while the Peninsular Spanish speakers prefer to agree with the compliment by making a meaningful comment (Mir, & Cots, 2017). Nelson, Al-batal, and Echols (1996) studied how Americans respond to compliments and found that responses fall into three categories: (a) *Acceptance of compliments* which further includes sub categories of Appreciation token (“Thanks”) – 29%, Agreeing utterance (“Well, I think so too”) – 14%, Compliment return (“Yours is nice, too”) – 7%. (b) *Mitigation or justification of the compliment* which further includes sub categories of Deflect or qualify comment (“I bought it ABC store”) – 32%, Reassurance or repetition request (“Do you really like them?”) – 13%; and

(c) Rejecting the compliment which includes Disagreeing utterance (“I feel fat”) – 3% and No response – 2%.

Similar results were found in a study by Herbert and Straight (1989) who also researched the American way of responding and divided the responses into larger categories of 1) Agreement and 2) Nonagreement. Their further distribution is explained below.

- *Agreement* is divided into categories of *Acceptance and non-acceptance*. In which *Acceptance* includes: (a) Appreciation token (“Thanks/Thank you”) – 29% (b) Comment acceptance (“Yeah, it’s my favorite, too”) – 7%, (c) Praise upgrade (“it goes really well with my shoes too, doesn’t it?”) – 0.4% while the category of *Nonacceptance* includes: (a) Comment on history (“I bought it last week from the thrift store”) – 19%, (b) Reassignment (“My dad got it for me”) – 3%, (c) Compliment Return (“So is yours”) – 7% (Herbert and Straight, 1989)
- *Nonagreement* includes: (a) Scale down (“it’s a very old jacket”) – 4%, (b) Question (“Do you really think so?”) – 5%, (c) Disagreement (“I actually don’t like it”) – 10%, (d) Qualification (“It’s alright, but yours is nicer”) – 7%, (e) No acknowledgment (“Receiver responds with an irrelevant comment or gives no response”) – 5%, (f) Request interpretation, that is the receiver interprets the compliment as a request such as, “Do you want to borrow this one?”) – 3% (Herbert and Straight, 1989)

Similar trends in responses exist in other cultures as well. According to Holmes' (1995), New Zealanders tend to accept compliments 60 percent of the times, deflect approximately 30 percent of the times and reject about 10 percent. In a study by Chick (1996), data collected from Indian, white and black University students, approximately 40% of compliment responses by Indians and Whites were acceptances, while only 27% of responses by Blacks were acceptances.

In addition, 10.4% Indian students expressed disagreements as compared to 3.6% White students and 3.1 % Black students. Moreover, Chick (1966) found that Indians tended to disagree in a very direct way (For example, “A: Your hair looks nice today. B: It's a mess.” (Chick, 1996: p. 335), while the white speakers tended to soften the disagreement in order to avoid conflicts among speakers (For example, “A: You look very bright today. B: Well, I don't feel very bright” (Chick, 1996 p. 335).

Similarly, Barnlund & Araki (1985, p. 14.) conducted research on Japanese compliment responses and found that Japanese tend to (a) inquire about the accuracy of the compliment (33%), (b) deny the compliment (19%), (c) give reasoning on why they think the compliment is not deserved (17%), (d) smile or say nothing (25%)

In another study on Japanese culture on compliment responses, Daikuhara (1986) found comparable results; 95% of all compliment responses were avoidance of self-praise. For instance, the respondents replied with “No! That’s not true” about 35% of the time, only smiled or gave no response about 27% of the time, or asked a confirmatory question like “You honestly think so?” about 13% of the time (pp. 119–120).

Similar to the culture in Japan, a study by Chen (1993) on Chinese compliment responses revealed that only about 4% of the sample accepted or acknowledged compliments. A distribution of the responses given by (Chen, 1993, p. 56) is as follows:

- Rejecting (96%), which includes *disagreeing and denigrating* 51%, *expressing embarrassment* 26%, *explaining* 19%
- Thanking and denigrating (3%) Thanking but immediately following with self-criticization. E.g. “Thanks, but I know I don’t look good in this.” Or Thanks, but I know I scored well because the questions were easy”

- Accepting by thanking 1%

Based on these findings, accepting compliments is uncomfortable across cultures. In the survey I conducted (Appendix A), I asked the respondents to think of a recent time when someone gave them a compliment and discuss their response to the compliment. Over 65% shared they only said “thanks”; 14.33% followed that “thanks” with a statement of disagreement with the compliment, and over 17% responded by complimenting the other person.

Several theories have tried to explain why people can have difficulty accepting compliments. Reasons range from a desire to appear modest (Gu, 1990), to avoid self-praise (Pomerantz, 1978), or simply because one does not feel that he or she deserves the compliment (Gu, 1990). Moreover, rejecting the compliment can be helpful in denying the implication that the receiver of the compliment is superior to the speaker, as people with high self-esteem are likely to associate appreciation with pampering and find receiving compliments to be demeaning (Winch, 2013, August 27). The preference of response strategies other than acceptance may be related to the notion of democracy and the equality of all human beings, particularly in the American context (Herbert & Straight, 1989, p. 39). Further, sometimes people also doubt the honesty of the person giving the compliment. In my survey, although 49% said that they give a compliment “to genuinely highlight a quality in the receiver,” over 32% of the respondents confessed that they only give a compliment to “make the other person feel good” and over 6% agreed that they give compliments “to make the receiver of the compliment like them.” In my understanding, this lack of sincerity in giving compliments can cause doubt about the intention of the person giving the compliment.

Four Styles of Accepting Appreciation

Based on Gable et al.'s (2004), work on styles of responding, I argue there are four distinct styles of accepting appreciation, as Figure 1 shows.

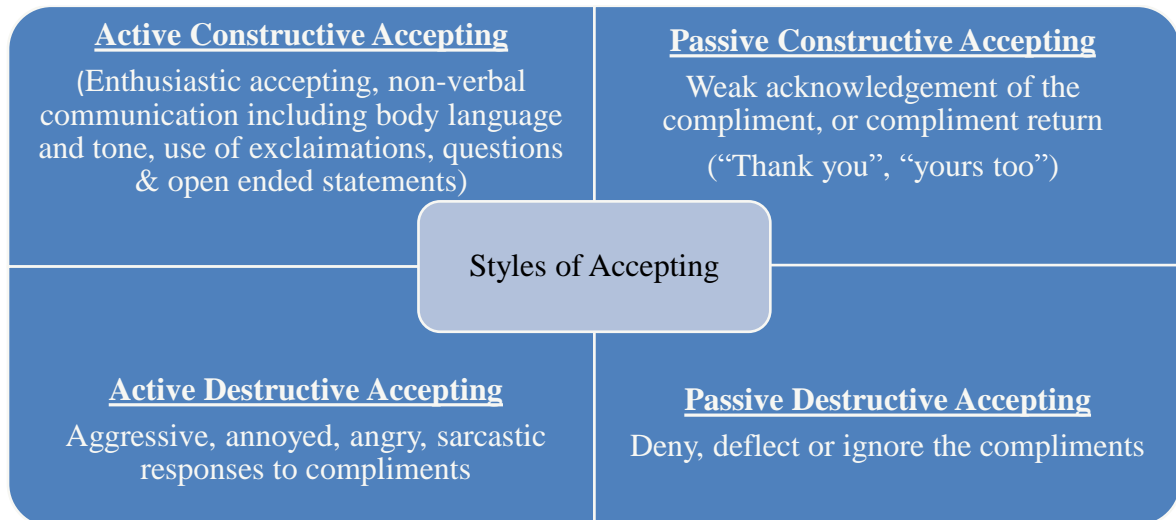


Figure 1. Styles of Accepting

Active Constructive Accepting

Being able to express acceptance of other people's positive comments about our appearance, our actions, our strengths, or traits can be an important social skill. ACA, in simple terms, refers to responding actively and constructively to compliments one receives. Accepting a compliment in any setting echoes good behavior, confidence, and self-assurance and could also be a great way to build rapport and sustain conversations (Billmyer, 1990; Dunham, 1992; Wolfson, 1983). Just as with ACC, I propose that ACA can also be helpful in establishing HQCs (Stephens et al., 2011). ACA includes the following elements.

Enthusiastic accepting. This means expressing that one gladly accepts the compliment by saying words like “Thanks a lot” or “Thank you so much.” Graciously embracing appreciation can lead to additional positive thoughts and interactions and encourage us to start believing the compliments received.

Non-verbal communication. Facial expressions and body language should convey warmth and delight. A “Thank you” said without expression is not as meaningful as thanks expressed with a smile and warmth.

Use of Exclamations. I suggest the use of Exclamations like “Oh,” “Awe,” “Ah,” and “Wow”, whenever appropriate to add more expression and value to the response.

Following with a Question or Open-ended Statement (whenever Possible). It is often good to use a compliment to further the conversation. People commonly respond to compliments by simply saying “thanks” or something that denies, rejects, or devalues the compliment, putting an end to the conversation or starting a negative spiral. However, following the expression of acceptance with a question like “What did you like about this the most?” or a statement such as “Tell me more” would encourage a healthier conversation. An open-ended statement would be something like “Thanks! I found it in on Amazon—it’s amazing what we can get online.” This statement shows the recipient has accepted the compliment and moves on to something about which both parties can talk.

In short, responding to compliments in an active constructive way means accepting the compliment positively; match the body language, tone, and energy of the speaker; and following up with a question if time and the situation allows. Various examples differentiating a regular response from an ACA response are listed below.

Example 1 – Receiving a compliment on a shoe style (appearance or possession)

ACA response: “Oh thank you, they are also very comfortable. Have you tried this brand?”

Example 2 – Receiving a compliment for an act of kindness

ACA response: “Awe! Thanks! It only takes a few minutes to help someone, doesn’t it?”

Example 3 – Receiving a compliment on one’s personality (trait/skill)

ACA response: “Oh! I appreciate you saying that. Would you mind telling me some more about it?”

Herbert’s (1990) and Herbert and Straight’s (1989) response category of *praise upgrade* in the research on American responses to compliments closely align with ACA but does not include all mentioned elements. However, it is important to note that *praise upgrade* was reported only 0.4% of the times in these studies. Therefore, there is a need to practice ACA, embracing all its elements.

After getting a response in the form of an ACA, the giver will feel pleased for being able to provide some positive feedback that he or she sees is accepted, and the receiver will experience the feeling of accepting the compliment well. Because ACA also serves to sustain the conversation, such a connection filled with warmth, respect, and positive regard for each other can be classified as an HQC.

Passive Constructive Accepting

Passive constructive responses are characterized by a low energy, delayed response (Gable et al., 2004). I consider a passive constructive response to be a weak acknowledgement of the compliment. Only saying “thank you,” or returning the compliment is included in passive constructive. For Nelson et al. (1996), the response categories of appreciation token (“Thanks”), agreeing utterance (“Well, I think so too”), and compliment return (“Yours are nice, too”) fall into this category. Passive responses could be a result of nervousness or uncertainty to respond but are likely to leave the speaker with neutral feelings.

Example 1 – Receiving a compliment on a shoe style

Passive constructive acceptance: “Thanks, they’re nice”

Example 2 - Receiving a compliment for an act of kindness

Passive constructive acceptance: “Thanks”

Example 3 – Receiving a compliment on one’s personality

Passive constructive acceptance: “I like yours, too”

Active Destructive Accepting

Aggressive, annoyed, angry, sarcastic or responses of outright disagreement to compliments fall in the category of active destructive accepting. As with ACA, it is an active process, which means there is an intent to keep the conversation going, but this category leads to a more negative conversation. Quashing, dismissing, and demeaning the capitalization process is critical to active destructive responses (Gable et al., 2004), and I align such reactions to active destructive responses as well. As with passive responses, this may result in the other person feeling awkward or even insulted. Chen (1993) included one category of compliment responses as rejecting, which included disagreeing and belittling, expressing embarrassment, and explaining; these all belong to the category of active destructive accepting.

Example 1 – Receiving a compliment on a shoe style

Active destructive acceptance: “I hate these shoes! My wife forced me to buy these. You know how she is.”

Example 2 – Receiving a compliment for an act of kindness

Active destructive acceptance: “how was that a big deal...I only gave him 10 bucks, won’t change his life, can it?”

Example 3 – Receiving a compliment on one’s personality

Active destructive Acceptance: “Do you keep checking me out, dude? I wonder what you keep noticing all the time!”

Passive Destructive Accepting

A passive destructive acceptance of a compliment will include attempts to deny, deflect, or ignore the compliment. Nelson et al.'s (1996) response categories of *reassurance*, *repetition request*, and *rejecting*, reflect this style. Passive destructive accepting could leave the speaker feeling awkward and silly as if his or her opinion is not valued at all.

Example 1 – Receiving a compliment on a shoe style

Passive destructive acceptance: “They are so uncomfortable”

Example 2 – Receiving a compliment for an act of kindness

Passive destructive acceptance: “Did you go to the meeting this morning?”

Example 3 – Receiving a compliment on one's personality

Passive destructive acceptance: “Haven't you seen Julia's personality?”

Although I have demonstrated how to accept compliments in a more organized and conversational way through ACA, it will be useful to think in a more assertive and helpful way to challenge negative thoughts when receiving compliments. One can think that it is possible that the compliment may be genuine and remember similar compliments (e.g., “Rachel also complimented me on this coat; maybe it actually looks really nice on me”). Secondly, one could think that the speaker is highlighting a positive aspect even though the intention may only be to please the recipient and it is important that one appreciates such an effort. Moreover, it is not rational to believe that people lie all the time when giving praise or that accepting the compliment will make one seem arrogant. Another way of thinking could be remembering how it felt when someone did not accept a genuinely offered compliment. Additionally, one can remember how it feels after accepting a compliment (e.g., “I feel good when I accept Rachel's compliment on my coat, Rachel was also pleased that I acknowledged. Maybe I should do that

more often”). Savoring the positive affect after accepting the compliment will serve as reinforcement to the receiver to be more accepting of compliments. Finally, another way to think while accepting a compliment is to think that is a great way to make a situation lighter.

MAKING APPRECIATION A PART OF EVERYDAY LIFE

After having discussed the power of appreciation and its impact on well-being, it is important to learn how to use this powerful resource in our daily lives. I would like to propose a positive intervention, which is a “treatment methods or intentional activities primarily aimed at raising positive feelings, positive cognitions, or positive behavior” (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009, p. 467).

Proposed Intervention

I propose giving two ACCs to two different people, every day for at least 1 week.

Procedure

Each day for at least one week, look for things to appreciate/praise in others and share that with them by giving them an ACC. The compliments should be directed toward a personal quality—a strength, talent, skill, action, effort, or trait. Once the person is appreciated, acknowledge and savor the receiver’s reaction.

Sample

School children studying in the same class. For example, two sections of 10th grade at the same school. One section would be the control group and the other would be the experimental group.

Proposed Study Design

Hypothesis. Regular appreciation in the form of ACCs increases the life satisfaction and positive affect of both the giver and receiver of the compliments.

Method. I will divide the sample into a control and an experimental group and administer the Satisfaction with Life Scale, the PANAS scale, and the VIA Strength Test on both groups.

The subjects in the experimental group will further be randomly divided into “receiver” and “giver.” (This could be done by picking chits with codes so that the subjects are unaware of the criteria of the decision.) Nothing is told to the members of the control group.

Once divided, the subjects in the giver group are to be given a demonstration on what an ACC looks like and any doubts are clarified. The subjects of this group are then to be instructed to implement the intervention by regularly, actively, and constructively appreciating the subjects in the ‘receiver group’ for one week. The receiver group can be instead told to watch whether the member of the giver group is punctual to class or not (this will avoid suspicion or expectation regarding intervention).

First, after ten days, the scales could be administered to the control group and the experimental group to see whether there are increases in life satisfaction and positive affect or whether newer strengths made it to the top ten or the scores increased. The scales could be re-administered after a month and three months to see how long the effects on well-being persist.

I expect the proposed intervention to have similar results as the “three good things” intervention, which involves noting three things that went well each day and their causes every night for 1 week (Seligman et al., 2005). In my opinion, each of these interactions using ACA and ACC are intended to be positive, energizing, and building HQCs, which is why I expect them to serve as one good thing for the day.

Suggestions for Effective Implementation of Two ACCs Per Day

The giver should try not to appreciate the same person repeatedly within the week. Further, the giver should employ variety in observing and appreciating character strengths, efforts, and traits.

Future Direction

In this paper, we only discussed ways of advancing only verbal appreciation. Future directions could include more structured and organized ways of giving and accepting appreciation in other languages wherever possible. For instance, how should verbal or written appreciation be paired with awards and titles or how often and with what variability each language should be put to use.

Another future direction could be to do extensive research into how impactful is the use ACA and ACC in personal relationships, organizational settings, and with children.

Conclusion

As Benjamin Disraeli, a British politician and writer, puts it, “The greatest good you can do for another is not to share your riches, but to reveal theirs” (Gaffney, 2006). Revealing the riches in others by expressing appreciation for the good in their character, their actions, skills, traits etc. is not only the duty of a leader but also of family members, friends, colleagues, and fellow human beings.

Feeling understood and appreciated by others contributes to one’s feeling connected and valued, which in turn greatly impacts well-being. If one appreciates others and expresses that appreciation appropriately and effectively, the perceived closeness and connection of the two can be strengthened (Fagley, 2016). Giving appreciation to others, and as a receiver, making others feel that their appreciation has been accepted and is respected, are both great ways to enrich lives with positive emotions. Using Active Constructive Complimenting (and Active Constructive accepting) is a structured way to frame the compliment and how we accept it. I propose that we broaden our horizons and value relationships and conversations, as the PERMA theory suggests. Appreciating and focusing on the positive aspects of others will teach us lessons and can

brighten our days as well as those of the recipients. Once we adapt to these ways of valuing others, we can hope for a wonderful change in our lives and relationships and in our well-being. As Kets de Vries (2009, p. 132) puts it, "The secret of happiness is the ability to find joy in another's joy, the desire to make other people happy... We need to care about others"

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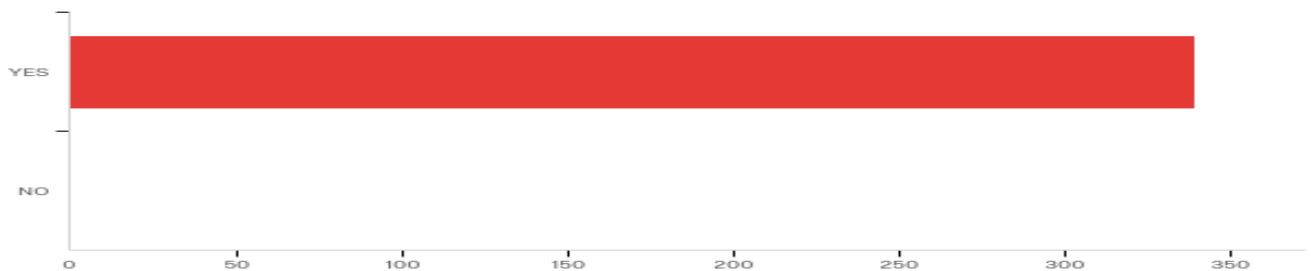
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Appendix A

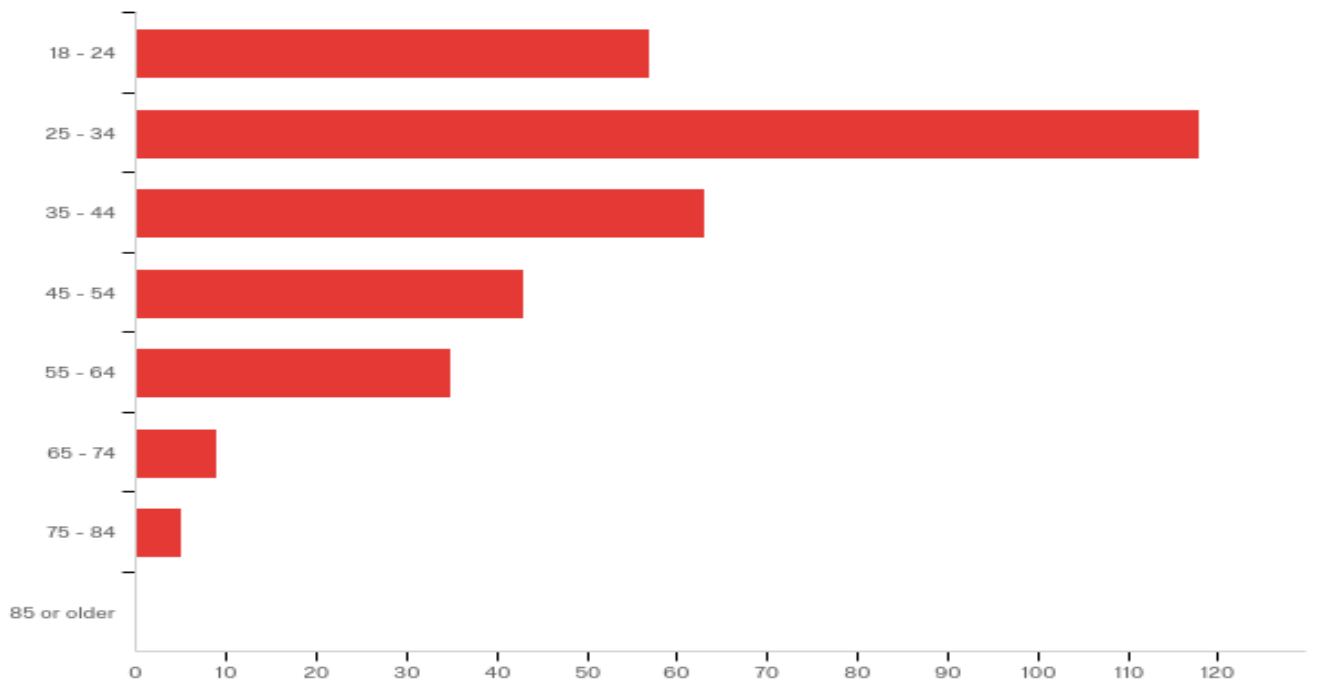
(Online survey conducted with IRB approval (exempt) from University of Pennsylvania. The purpose of this survey was to gather data on how appreciation is used by people in their daily lives and how it impacts wellbeing. The survey questionnaire including responses is attached below)

Q1 - UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA CONSENT FORM The purpose of this survey is to gain a better understanding of appreciation and its impact on the well-being of the giver and receiver of appreciation. Appreciation in this context is understood as praise, compliments, expression of respect, in recognition and enjoyment of the good qualities of someone or something. Requirements: The data need to be collected from nonclinical adult populations; please refrain from filling out the survey if you are seeing a psychiatrist, therapist, or counselor for any mental health concern. You need to be 18 years or older in order to be eligible for the survey. This survey will take about five to seven minutes to be completed and will not require you to share your personal details like name or address. Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to drop out of the research study at any time during your participation in the survey. If you no longer wish to be in the research study, please do not submit the survey results. If you submit the survey results, there is no way to identify your answers from the others. Do you give consent?



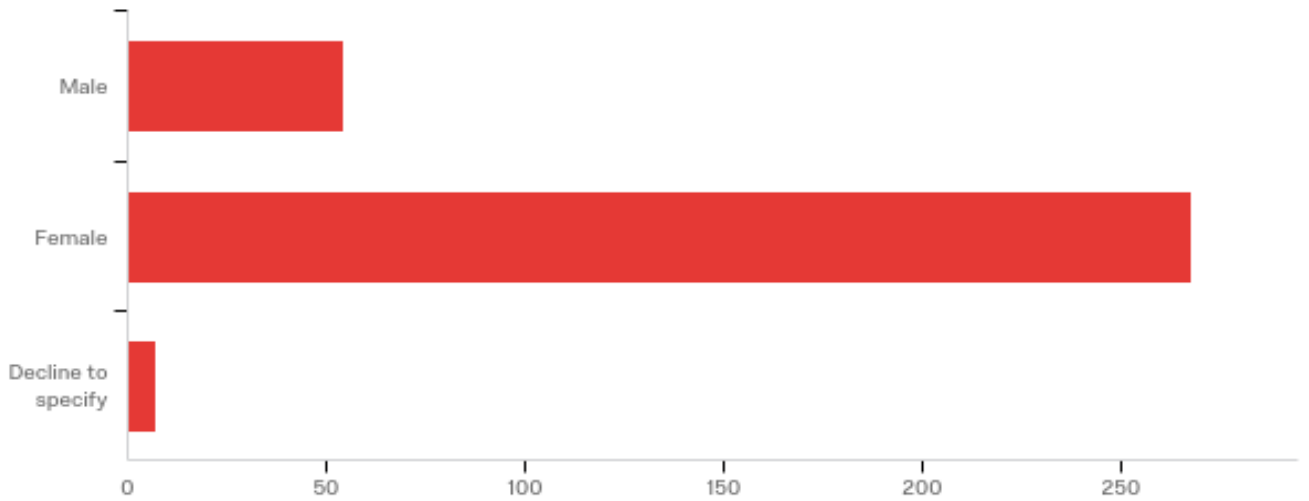
#	Answer	%	Count
1	YES	100.00%	339
2	NO	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	339

Q2 - Please select age



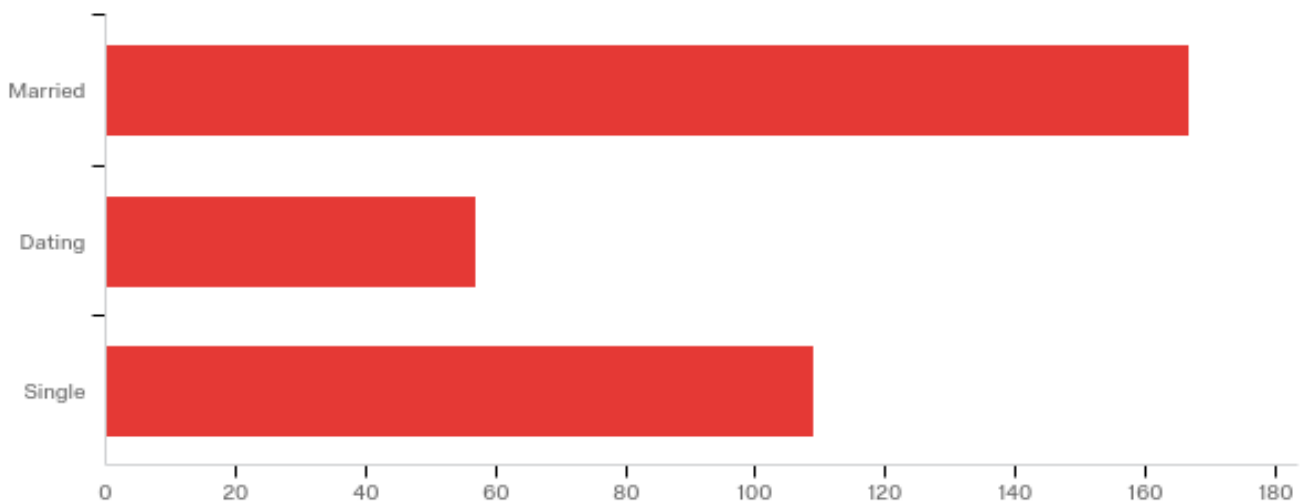
#	Answer	%	Count
1	18–24	17.27%	57
2	25–34	35.76%	118
3	35–44	19.09%	63
4	45–54	13.03%	43
5	55–64	10.61%	35
6	65–74	2.73%	9
7	75–84	1.52%	5
8	85 or older	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	330

Q3 - Please select gender



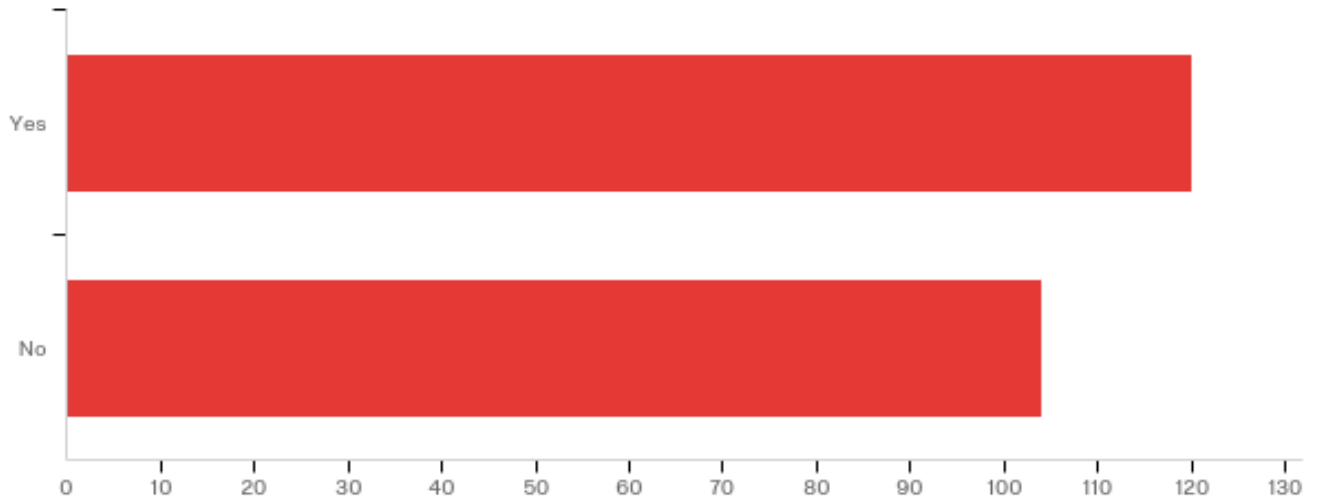
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Male	16.41%	54
2	Female	81.46%	268
3	Decline to specify	2.13%	7
	Total	100%	329

Q4 - Please select relationship status



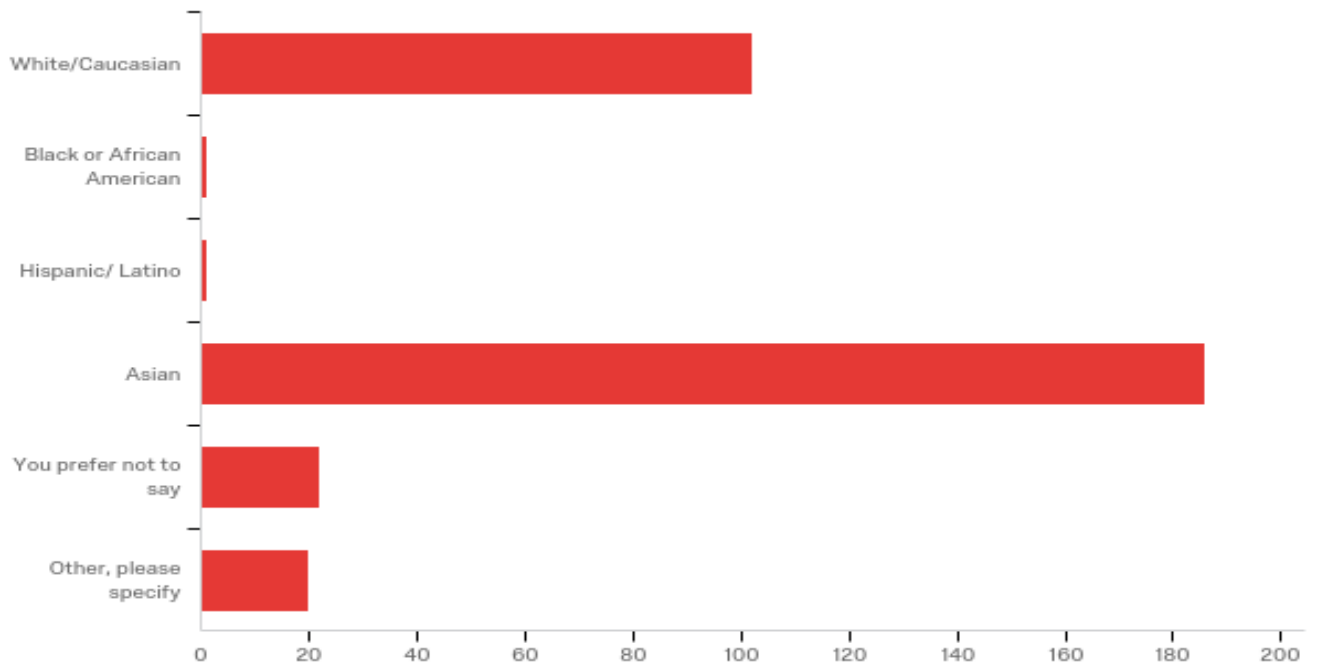
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Married	50.15%	167
2	Dating	17.12%	57
3	Single	32.73%	109
	Total	100%	333

Q5 - Do you have children



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	53.57%	120
2	No	46.43%	104
	Total	100%	224

Q6 - Please select ethnicity



#	Answer	%	Count
1	White/Caucasian	30.72%	102
2	Black or African American	0.30%	1
3	Hispanic/Latino	0.30%	1
4	Asian	56.02%	186
5	Prefer not to say	6.63%	22
6	Other, please specify	6.02%	20
	Total	100%	332

Q6_6_TEXT - Other, please specify

Other, please specify

Indian

indian

Indian

Mixed-white/asian

Asian American

Mixed Middle Eastern and Australian

Indian

islander

Indian

Pakistani

Indian

Hinduism

Indian

Indian

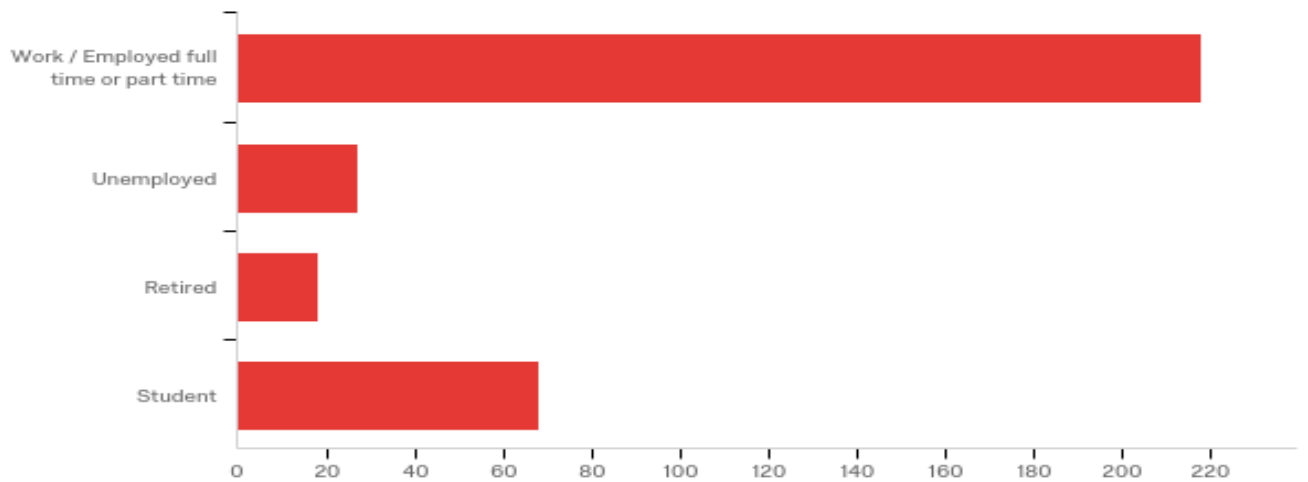
South Asian (Indian)

Indian

Indian

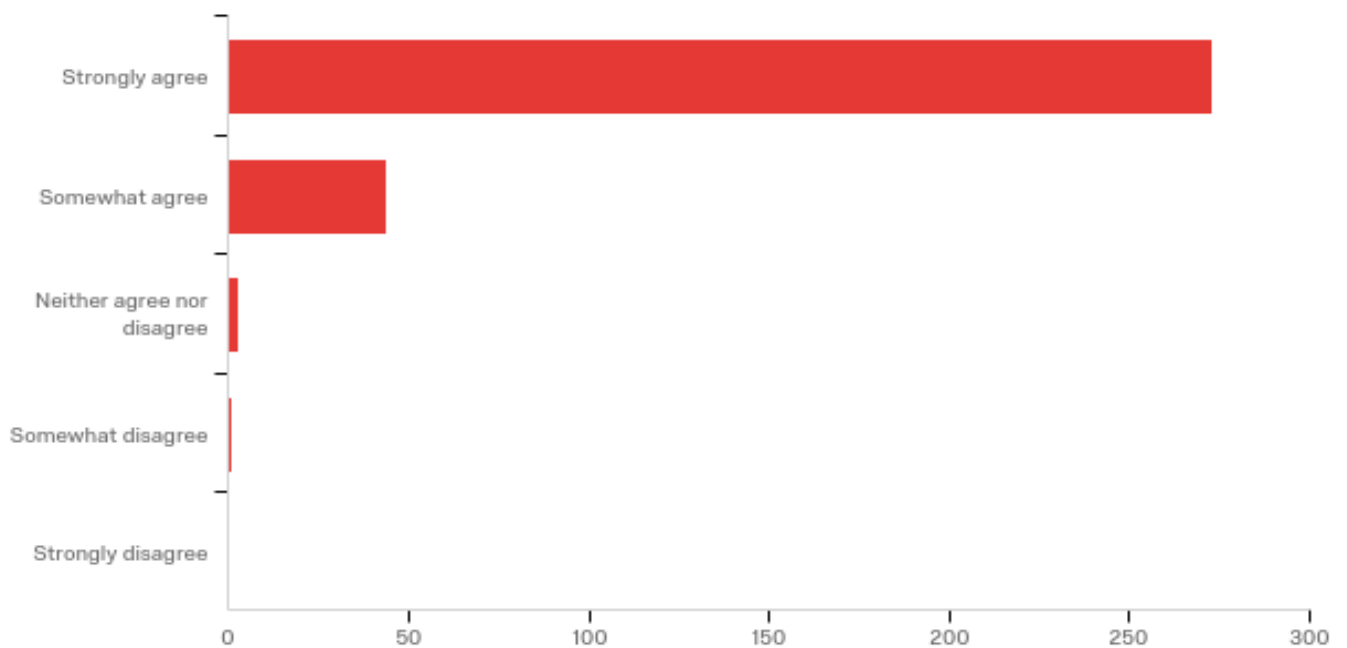
Indian

Q7 - Please select employment status



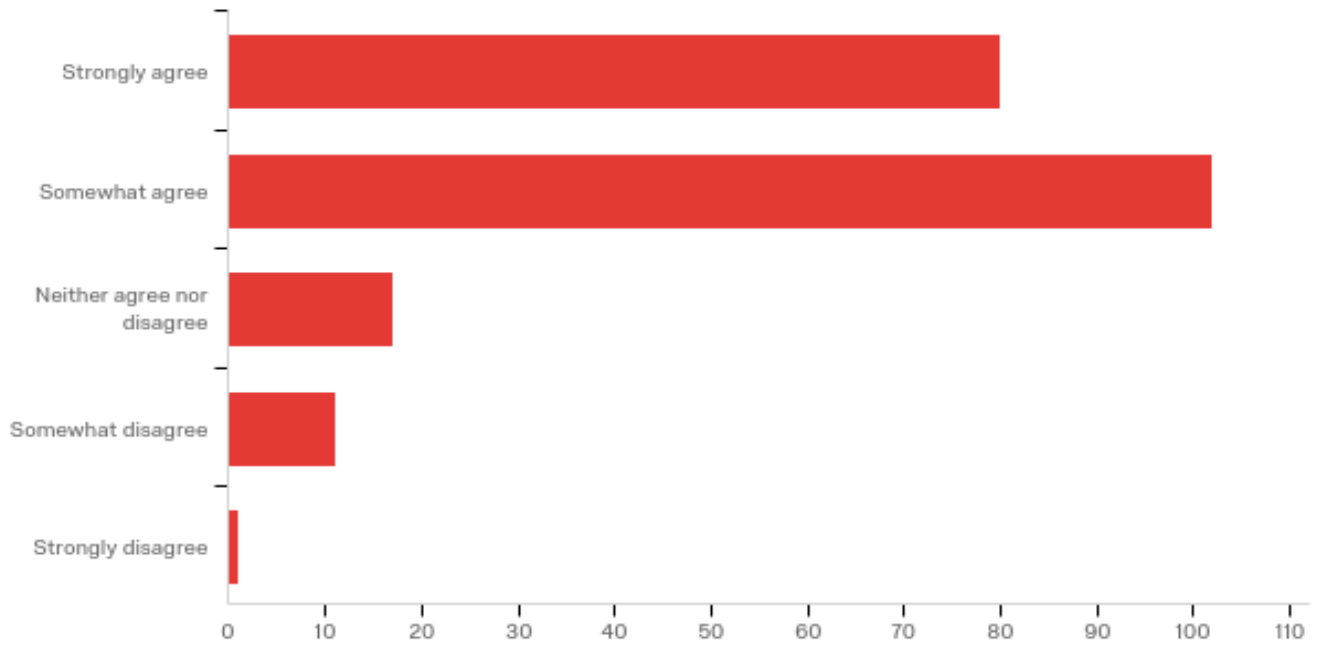
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Work/Employed full time or part time	65.86%	218
2	Unemployed	8.16%	27
3	Retired	5.44%	18
4	Student	20.54%	68
	Total	100%	331

Q8 - Receiving appreciation in form of compliments, praise, gifts or positive gestures (like hugs, kisses, smiles, thumbs-up, etc.) makes you feel good



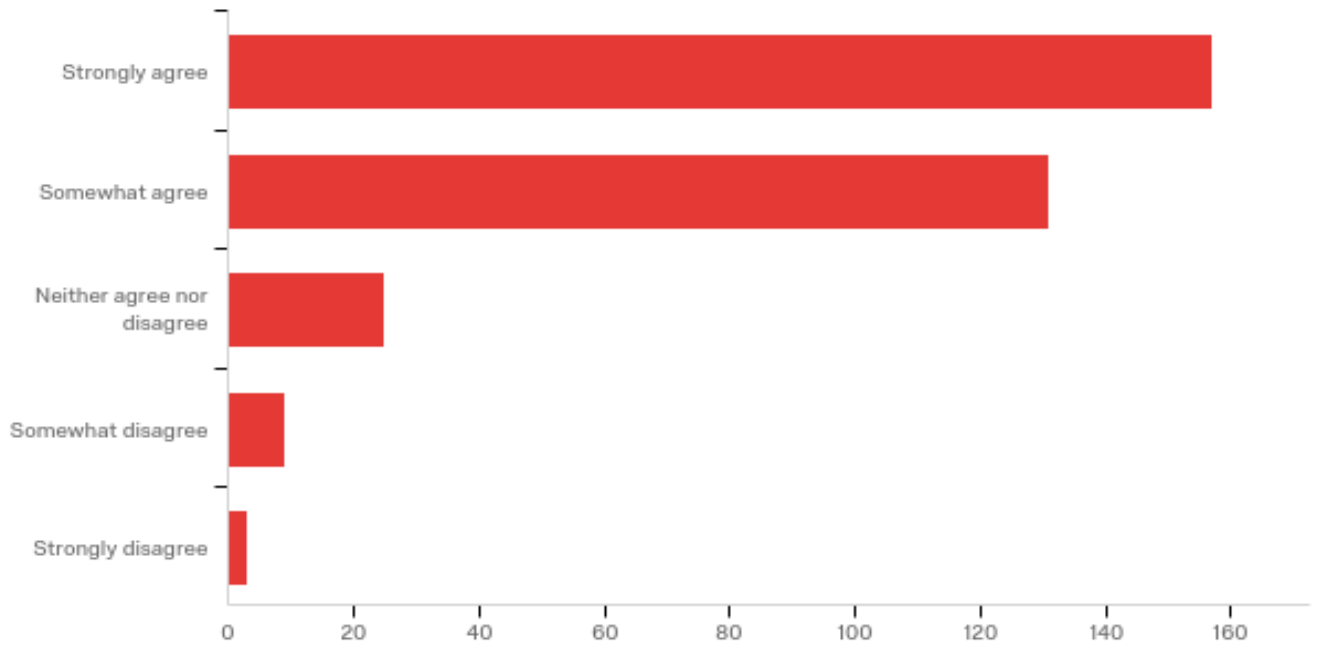
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly agree	85.05%	273
2	Somewhat agree	13.71%	44
3	Neither agree nor disagree	0.93%	3
4	Somewhat disagree	0.31%	1
5	Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	321

Q9 - In your professional life, you feel appreciated by coworkers



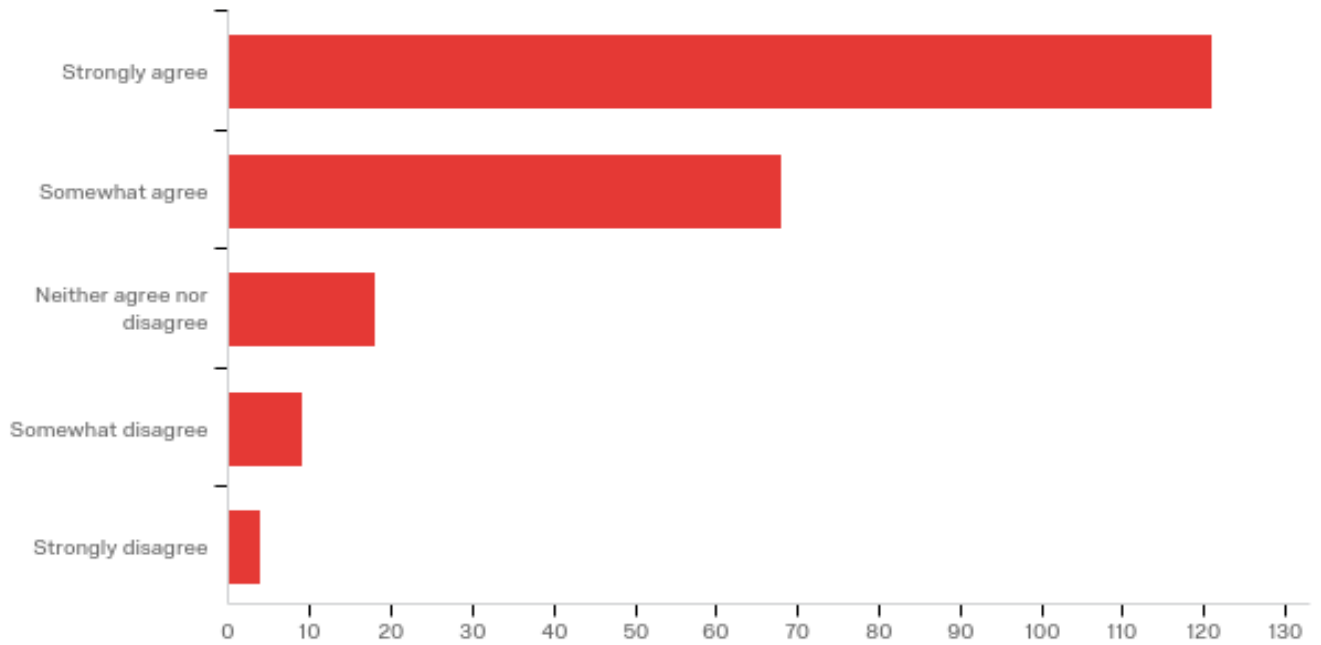
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly agree	37.91%	80
2	Somewhat agree	48.34%	102
3	Neither agree nor disagree	8.06%	17
4	Somewhat disagree	5.21%	11
5	Strongly disagree	0.47%	1
	Total	100%	211

Q10 - In your personal life, you feel appreciated by your friends and family members



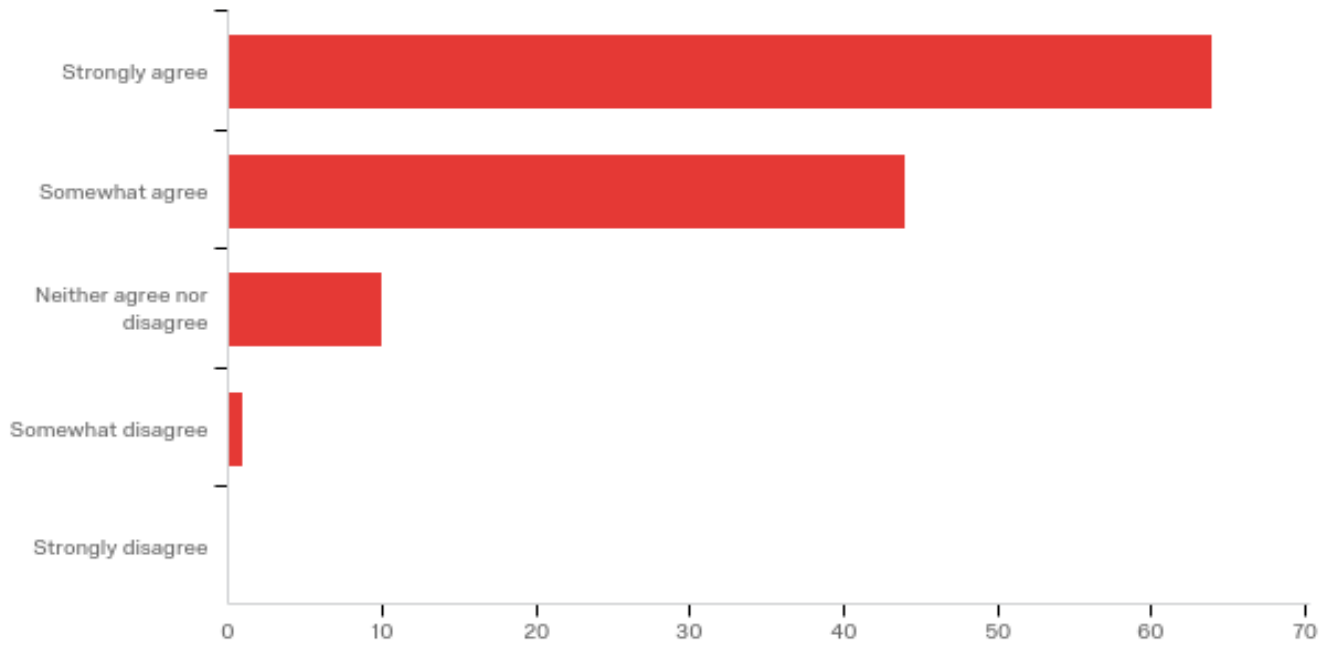
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly agree	48.31%	157
2	Somewhat agree	40.31%	131
3	Neither agree nor disagree	7.69%	25
4	Somewhat disagree	2.77%	9
5	Strongly disagree	0.92%	3
	Total	100%	325

Q11 - In your relationship, you feel appreciated by your partner



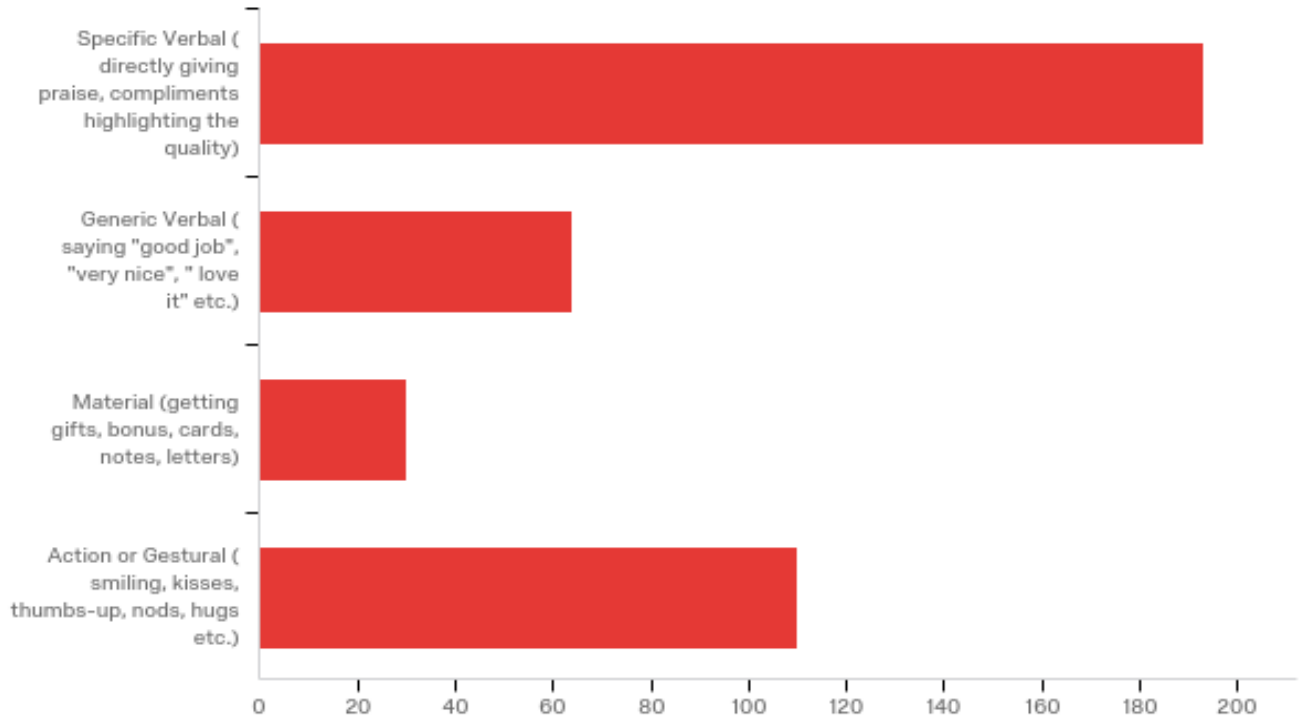
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly agree	55.00%	121
2	Somewhat agree	30.91%	68
3	Neither agree nor disagree	8.18%	18
4	Somewhat disagree	4.09%	9
5	Strongly disagree	1.82%	4
	Total	100%	220

Q12 - You feel appreciated by your children



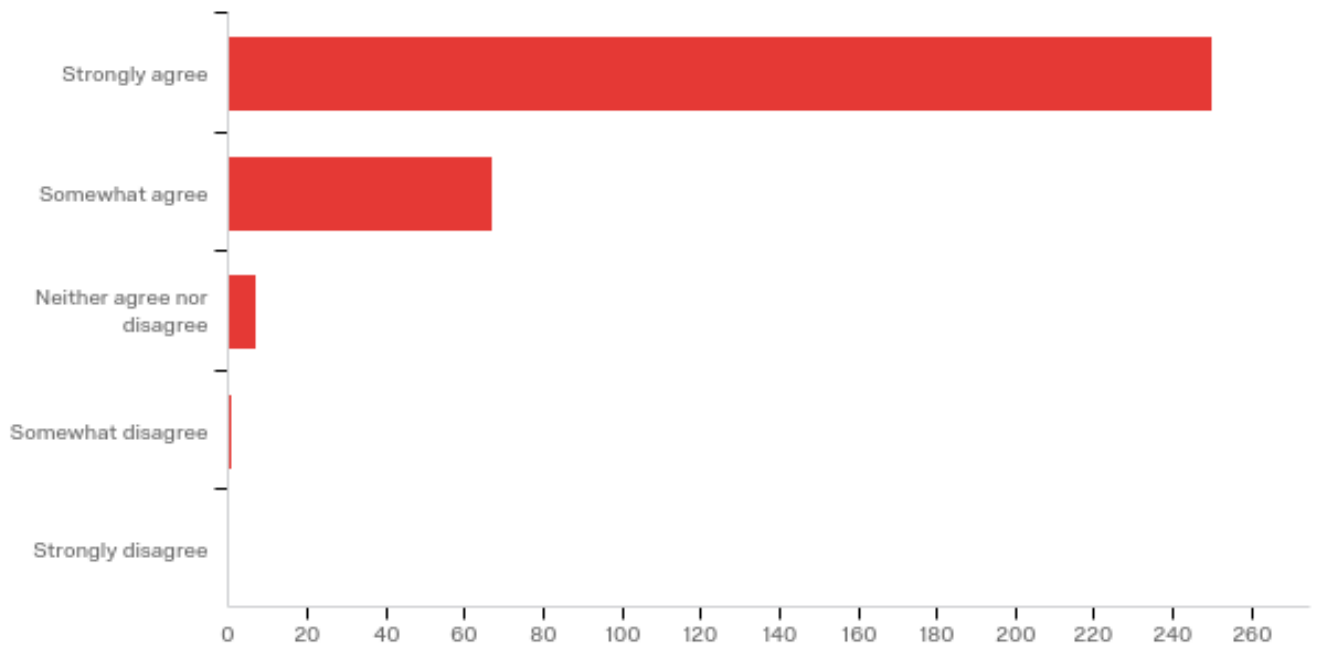
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly agree	53.78%	64
2	Somewhat agree	36.97%	44
3	Neither agree nor disagree	8.40%	10
4	Somewhat disagree	0.84%	1
5	Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	119

Q13 - Your preferred style to receive appreciation is:



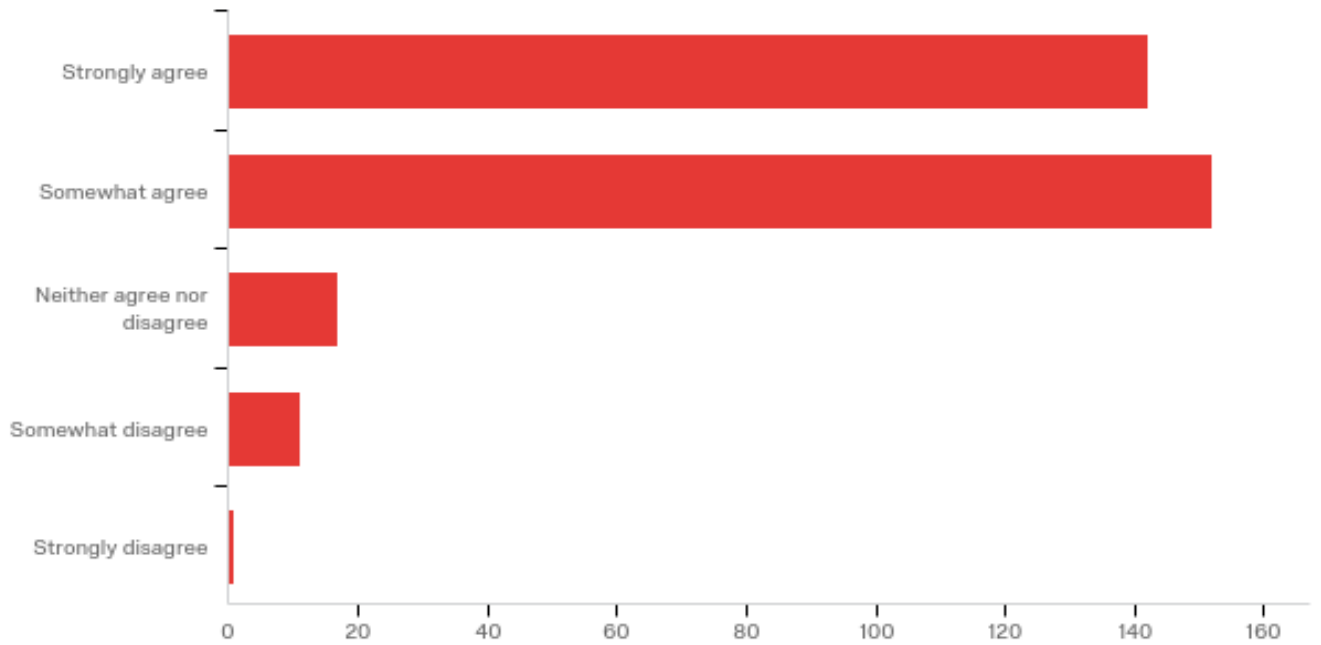
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Specific verbal (directly giving praise, compliments highlighting the quality)	48.61%	193
2	Generic verbal (saying "good job," "very nice," "love it," etc.)	16.12%	64
3	Material (getting gifts, bonus, cards, notes, letters)	7.56%	30
4	Action or gestural (smiling, kisses, thumbs-up, nods, hugs, etc.)	27.71%	110
	Total	100%	397

Q14 - Appreciating others by giving compliments, praise, gifts or through actions and gestures (like a hug, smile, thumbs-up etc.) makes you feel good



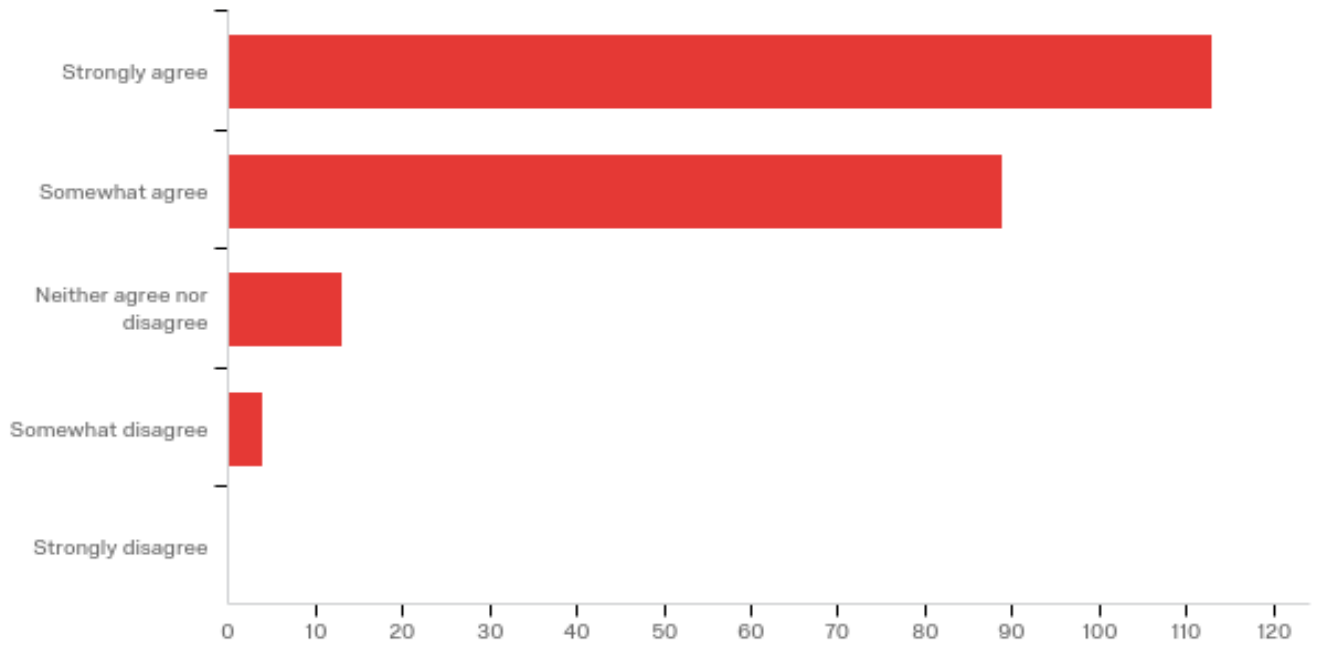
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly agree	76.92%	250
2	Somewhat agree	20.62%	67
3	Neither agree nor disagree	2.15%	7
4	Somewhat disagree	0.31%	1
5	Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	325

Q15 - You adequately appreciate your family and friends



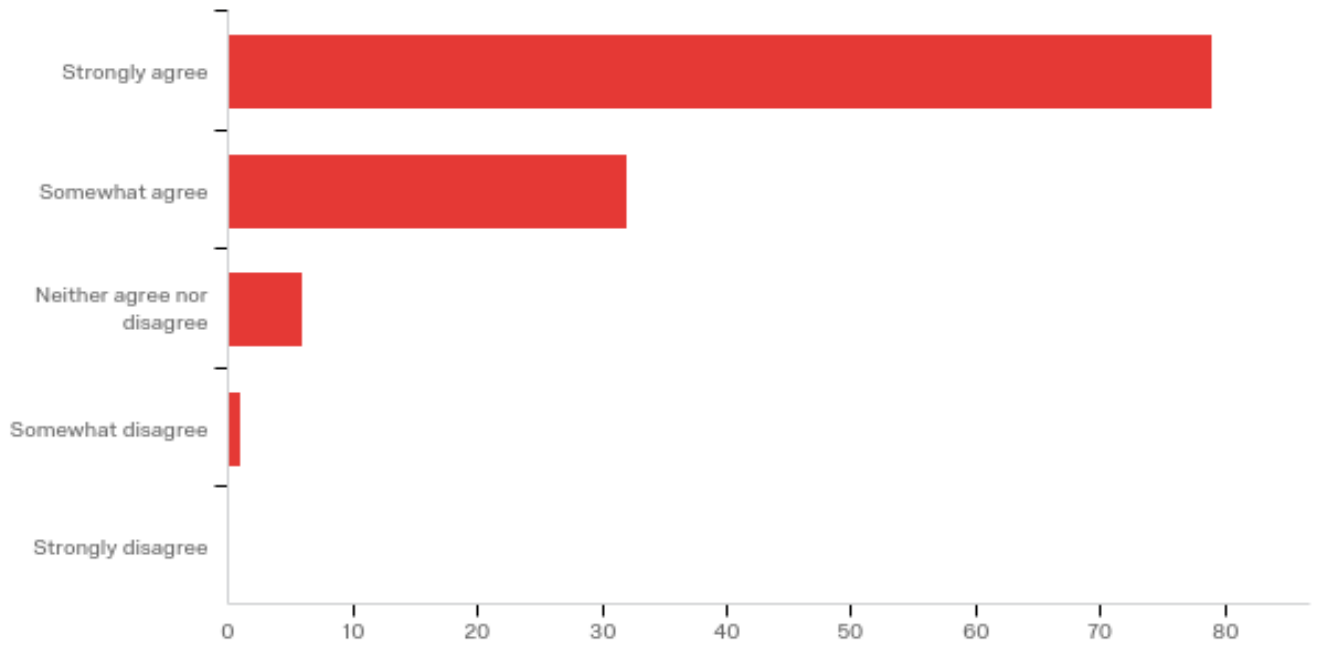
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly agree	43.96%	142
2	Somewhat agree	47.06%	152
3	Neither agree nor disagree	5.26%	17
4	Somewhat disagree	3.41%	11
5	Strongly disagree	0.31%	1
	Total	100%	323

Q16 - In your relationship, you adequately appreciate your partner



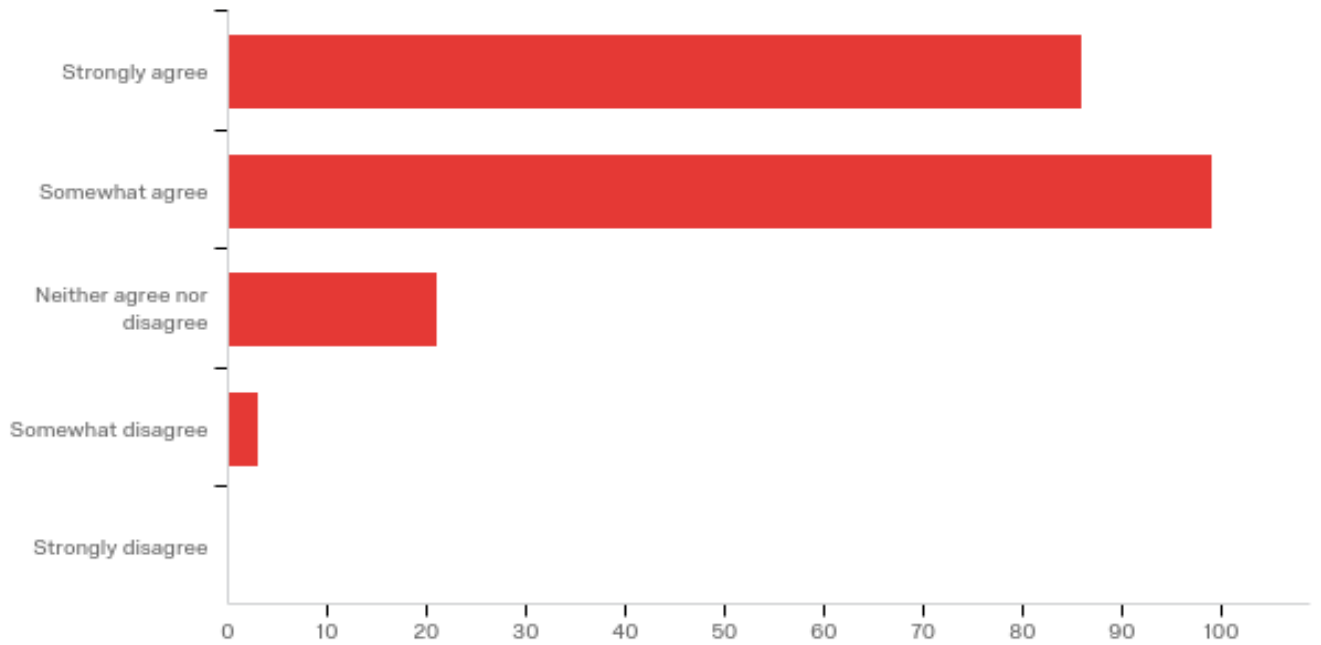
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly agree	51.60%	113
2	Somewhat agree	40.64%	89
3	Neither agree nor disagree	5.94%	13
4	Somewhat disagree	1.83%	4
5	Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	219

Q17 - You adequately appreciate your children



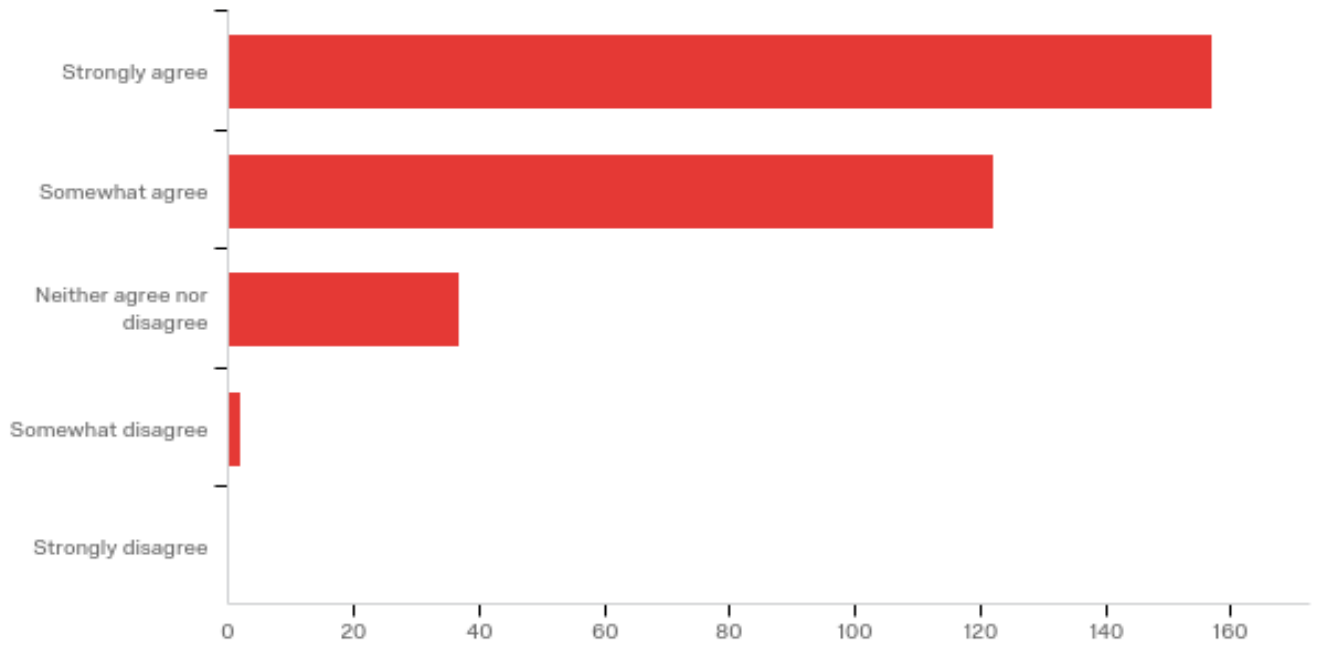
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly agree	66.95%	79
2	Somewhat agree	27.12%	32
3	Neither agree nor disagree	5.08%	6
4	Somewhat disagree	0.85%	1
5	Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	118

Q18 - You adequately appreciate your coworkers



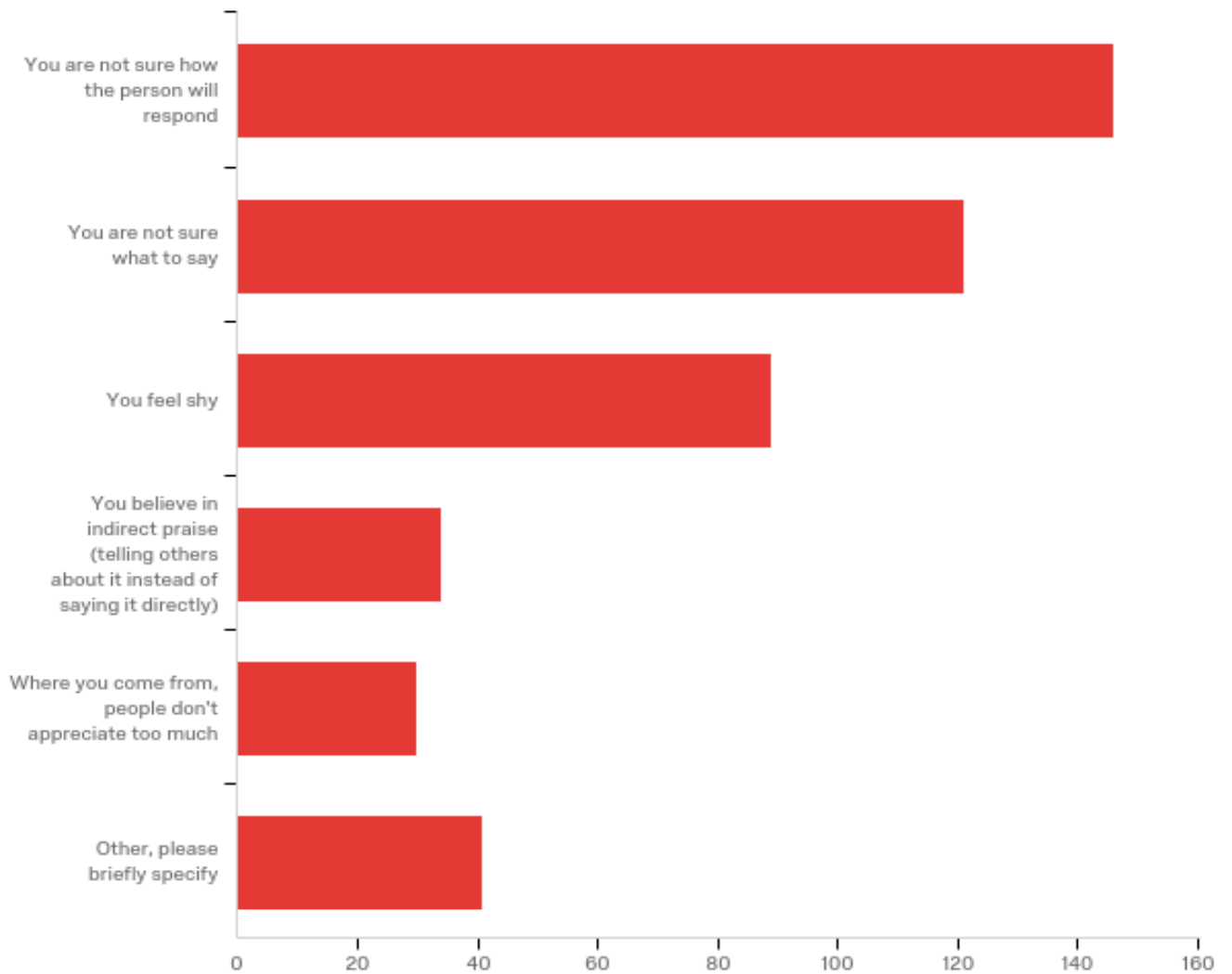
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly agree	41.15%	86
2	Somewhat agree	47.37%	99
3	Neither agree nor disagree	10.05%	21
4	Somewhat disagree	1.44%	3
5	Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	209

Q19 - You show appreciation to strangers who display a quality you value



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly agree	49.37%	157
2	Somewhat agree	38.36%	122
3	Neither agree nor disagree	11.64%	37
4	Somewhat disagree	0.63%	2
5	Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	318

Q20 - (Select all that apply) You sometimes hold back appreciation (compliments, praise, gifts, gestures) for others because:



#	Answer	%	Count
1	You are not sure how the person will respond	31.67%	146
2	You are not sure what to say	26.25%	121
3	You feel shy	19.31%	89
4	You believe in indirect praise (telling others about it instead of saying it directly)	7.38%	34
5	Where you come from, people don't appreciate too much	6.51%	30

6	Other, please briefly specify	8.89%	41
	Total	100%	461

Q20_6_TEXT - Other, please briefly specify

Other, please briefly specify

Worried that the gift may not be of use to the recipient

i cannot hold back appreciation

I'm focused on a goal/outcome, and fail to show appreciation until I'm no longer in the moment (e.g., in a work meeting)

I work with autistic children who react to compliments differently. They feel embarrassed to be complimented so I have to be very specific in order to convince them it is genuine. Also they prefer private than public praise

I believe that it is appreciated when I inform a supervisor/manager about excellent service by an particular individual. I want the person to get the credit they deserve.

Actually I usually say

I just don't make the time - but I should.

I never hold back

Sometimes I just miss the opportunity

I don't usually hold back the appreciation.

I do not hold back in giving compliments/thanks

I don't fully realize the compliment at the time

It depends like behaviour and the work should go hand in hand

I simply appreciate without any hesitation.

I rarely hold back appreciation!

Sometimes I mean to then forget in the hecticness of life

I never hold back.

I am sometimes too distracted or busy to notice

I never hold back on showing appreciation to others

I don't withhold praise

While appreciation is beneficial, too much will, likely, come off as insincere. Appreciation must be sincere and timely.

feel awkward, afraid to sound superficial

I think about it but then forget to say it.

I don't hold back

Most of the times I don't hold back

I praise and show appreciation

When unsure of cultural context - sometimes it might be precieved as intruding one's privacy

I feel the praise might make the person uncomfortable

I admire them secretly.

Dont hold back

There never has been a need to hold back an appreciation fir good workdone

I don't hold back

the time and place just does not feel right when the thought occurs

I generally do not hold back

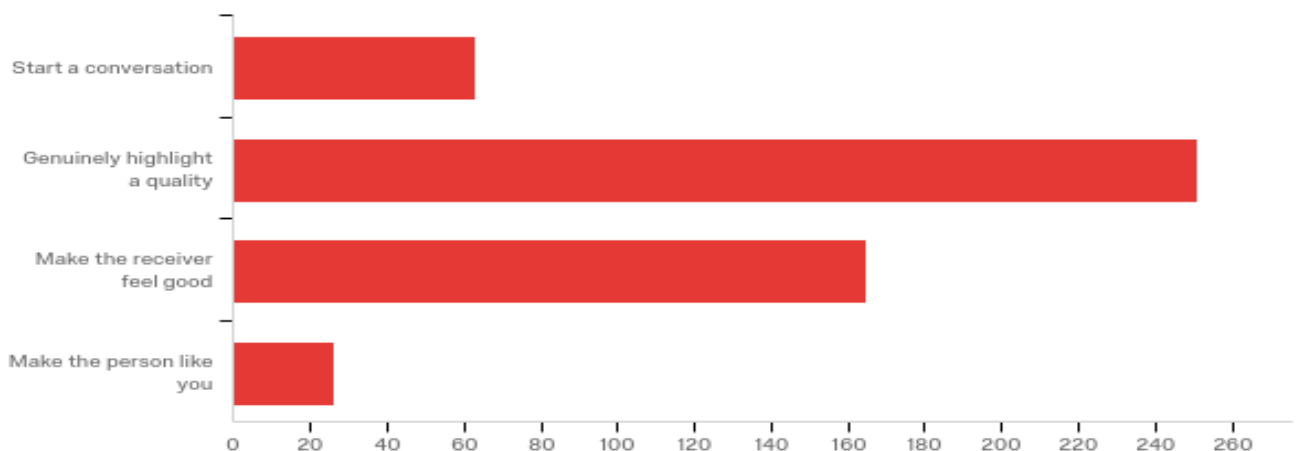
I dont hold back

I'm generally quite free with praise/compliments, but I'm wary of complimenting men because so many have taken that as sign of romantic interest and proceeded to hit on me. So for male strangers, I hold back now unless there is no conceivable way they could hit on me afterwards.

I always appreciate.. No matters who ever it is

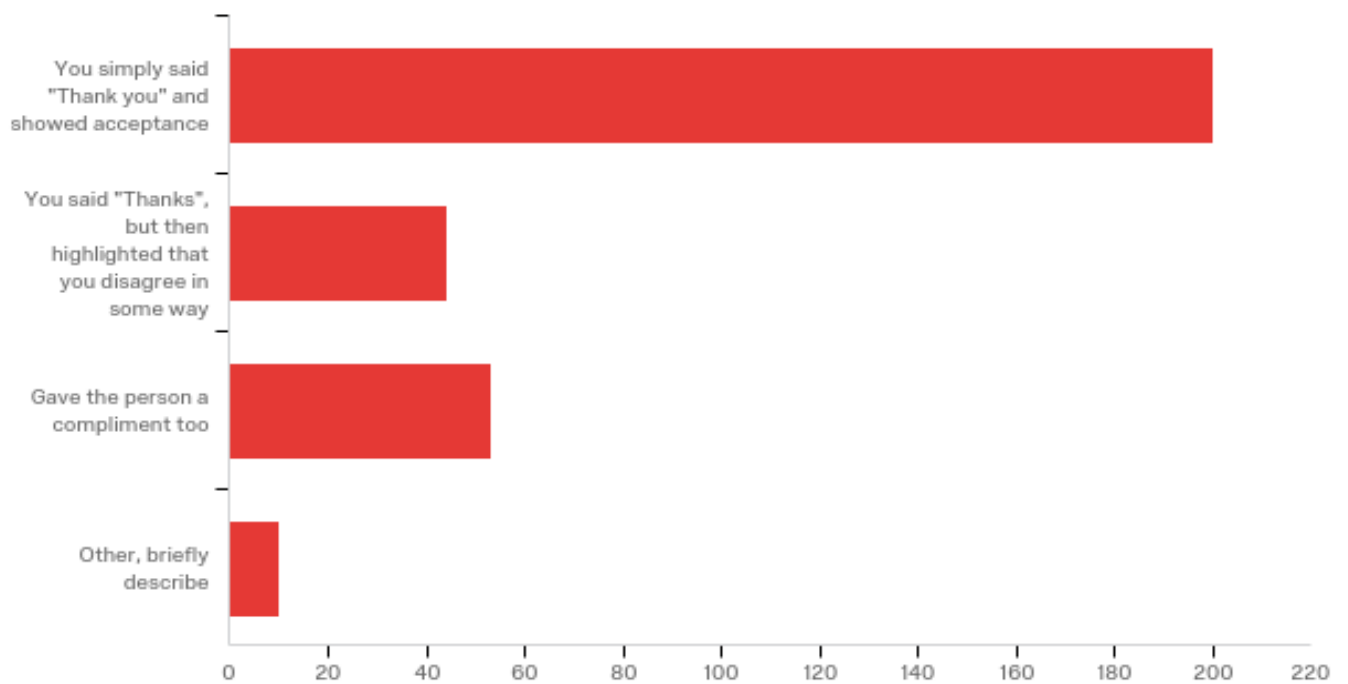
I never hold back a compliment

Q21 - (Select all that apply) You use appreciation (compliments, praise, gifts, positive gestures) mostly to:



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Start a conversation	12.48%	63
2	Genuinely highlight a quality	49.70%	251
3	Make the receiver feel good	32.67%	165
4	Make the person like you	5.15%	26
	Total	100%	505

Q22 - Think of a recent time when someone gave you a compliment. What was your response?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	You simply said "Thank you" and showed acceptance	65.15%	200
2	You said "Thanks," but then highlighted that you disagree in some way	14.33%	44
3	Gave the person a compliment too	17.26%	53
4	Other, briefly describe	3.26%	10
	Total	100%	307

Q22_4_TEXT - Other, briefly describe

Other, briefly describe

Say thank you and move the conversation on quickly

Accepted with thanking and also highlighted people involved with my project

Give them a hug, handshake, kiss

Acknowledge the compliment, then redirect the conversation to them.

said thanks and also thanked them for their kind words

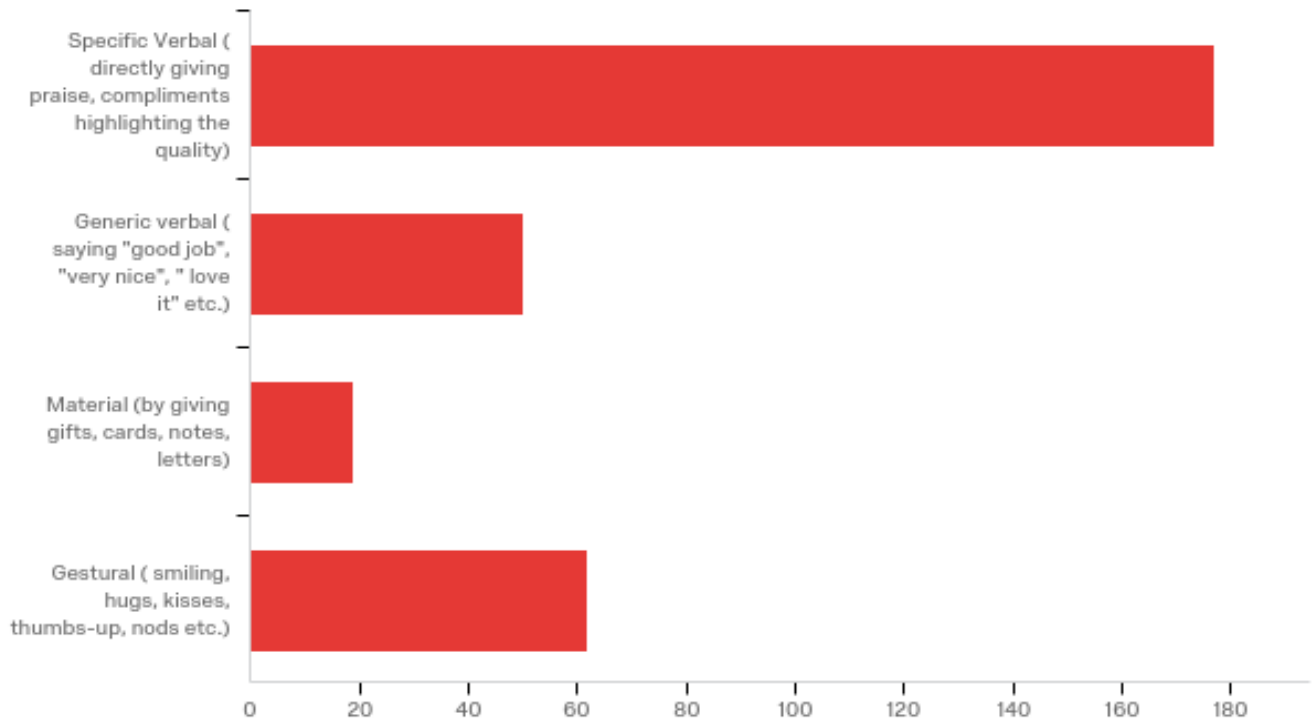
I don't remember

I do thank but add I am very poor in accepting with right manner

I will usually thank people, but then also talk about whatever they complimented conversationally. As in, "Thank you! I love this coat so much too! Actually, funny story about how I got it...." Separately, I think I also I also often respond to compliments with a joke.

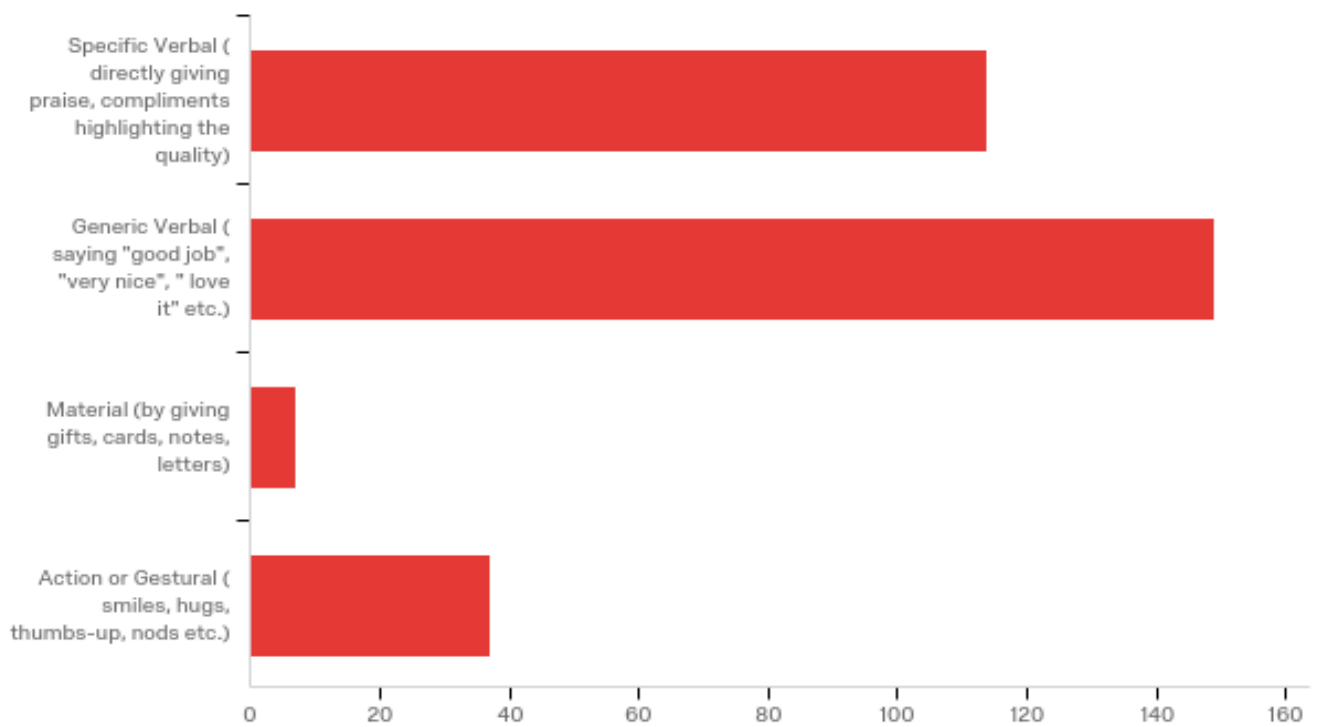
Made a joke

Q23 - With people you closely know, like immediate family and close friends, your style of appreciating them is mostly:



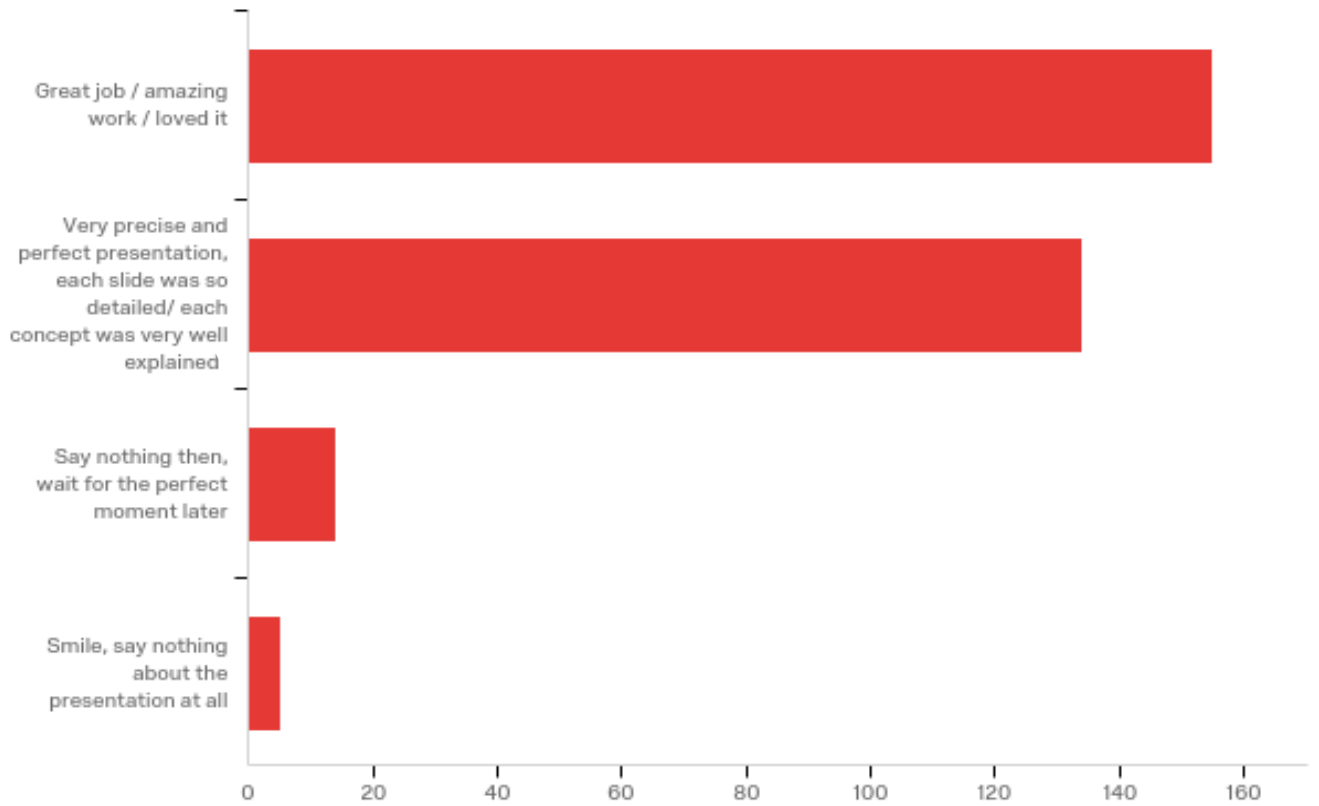
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Specific verbal (directly giving praise, compliments highlighting the quality)	57.47%	177
2	Generic verbal (saying “good job,” “very nice,” “love it,” etc.)	16.23%	50
3	Material (giving gifts, cards, notes, letters)	6.17%	19
4	Gestural (smiling, hugs, kisses, thumbs-up, nods, etc.)	20.13%	62
	Total	100%	308

Q24 - With people you do not know well, like strangers and acquaintances, your style of appreciation is mostly:



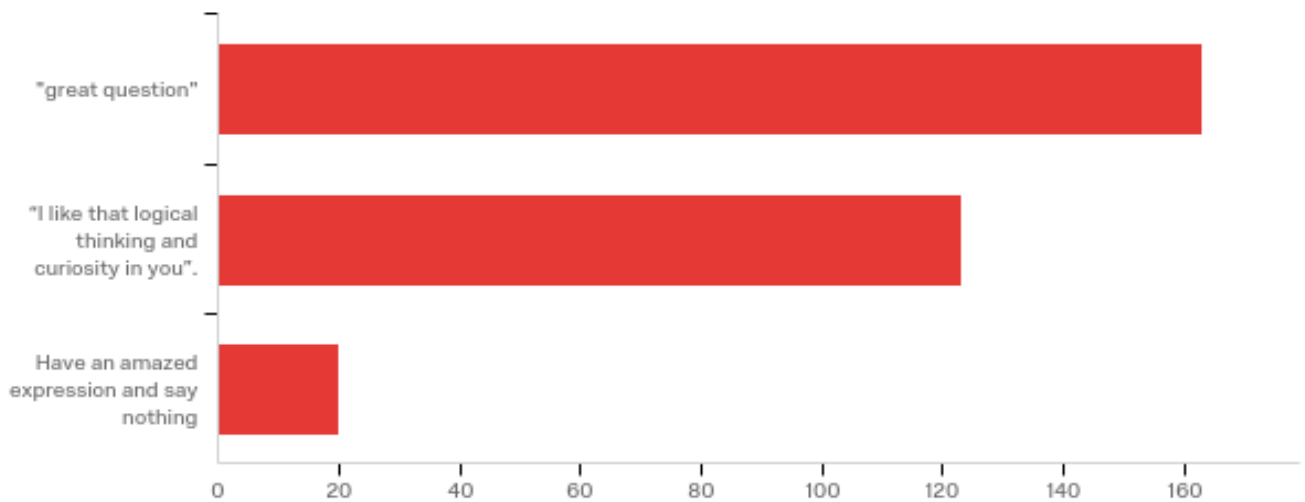
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Specific verbal (directly giving praise, compliments highlighting the quality)	37.13%	114
2	Generic verbal (saying “good job,” “very nice,” “love it,” etc.)	48.53%	149
3	Material (giving gifts, cards, notes, letters)	2.28%	7
4	Action or gestural (smiles, hugs, thumbs-up, nods, etc.)	12.05%	37
	Total	100%	307

Q25 - A colleague gives a truly impressive presentation at work; you are most likely to appreciate him/her by saying:



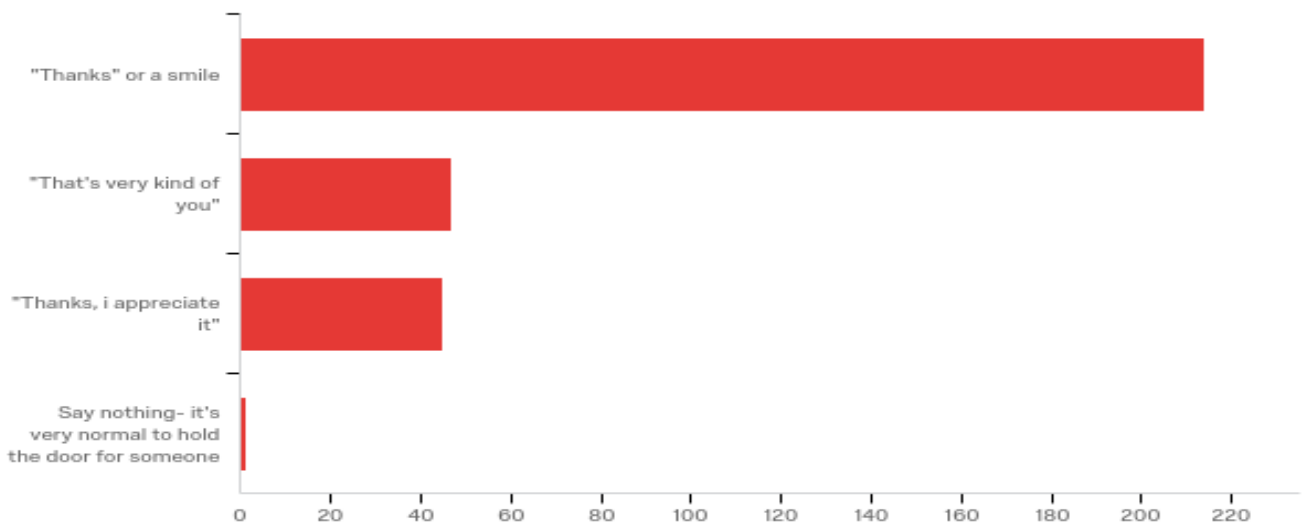
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Great job/amazing work/loved it	50.32%	155
2	Very precise and perfect presentation, each slide was so detailed/each concept was very well explained	43.51%	134
3	Say nothing then; wait for the perfect moment later	4.55%	14
4	Smile, say nothing about the presentation at all	1.62%	5
	Total	100%	308

Q26 - If a child asks an interesting question, you are most likely to respond with:



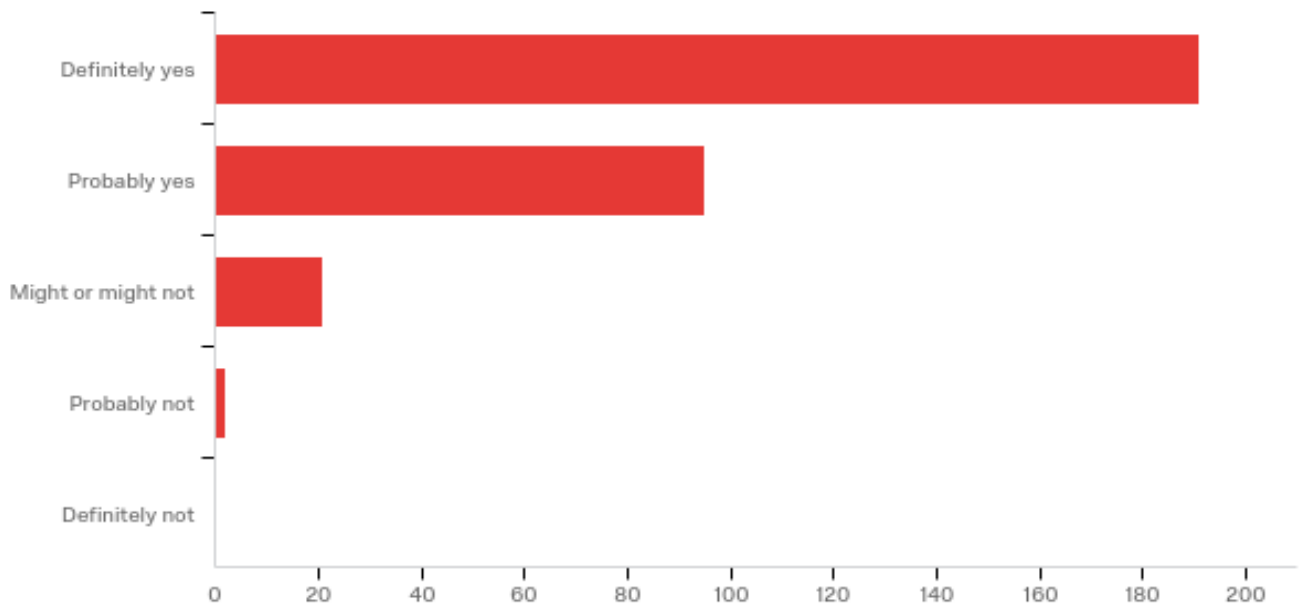
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Great question	53.27%	163
2	I like that logical thinking and curiosity in you	40.20%	123
3	Have an amazed expression and say nothing	6.54%	20
	Total	100%	306

Q27 - If a stranger holds the door for you at the mall, your response will most likely be:



#	Answer	%	Count
1	“Thanks” or a smile	69.71%	214
2	“That’s very kind of you”	15.31%	47
3	“Thanks, i appreciate it”	14.66%	45
4	Say nothing—it’s very normal to hold the door for someone	0.33%	1
	Total	100%	307

Q28 - If you are praised for your display of kindness, for example, will you be more likely to be kind in similar situations in the future?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Definitely yes	61.81%	191
2	Probably yes	30.74%	95
3	Might or might not	6.80%	21
4	Probably not	0.65%	2
5	Definitely not	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	309

