

PRESCHOOLERS' ENDOGENOUSLY TRIGGERED SELF-REGULATION

Christina Squires

Dr. Louis Manfra, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Common laboratory tasks that assess self-regulation in early childhood use a protocol in which regulatory demands are generated by the experimenter (i.e., exogenously triggered) and not generated by the participant. It was the goal of this study to examine preschool children's ability to regulate between competing response options that were endogenously triggered (i.e., generated by the preschoolers) in a controlled laboratory setting. To do so, a new self-regulation task, the *Pour Task*, was utilized. Data were collected from 48 children attending a university-affiliated preschool. Forty of these children met task requirements and were tested for their ability to regulate two endogenously triggered and two exogenously triggered response options. Seventy-two percent ($N = 29$) of children in this sample demonstrated endogenously triggered regulation. Similarly, seventy percent ($N = 28$) of the sample demonstrated exogenously triggered regulation. An intriguing finding emerged when comparing performance across the endogenous and exogenous test trials: nineteen children (47.5%) demonstrated one form of regulation, but not the other (i.e., either endogenously or exogenously triggered but not both). Thus, while the majority of the participants' demonstrated regulation on at least one test trial, regulatory competency of almost half of the children in this study depended on response option genesis.

Keywords: Self-regulation, Early childhood, Endogenous, Exogenous, Delay of gratification