**Rischard, Mollie (PS5-A)**

**Does Executive Function Training Transfer? Examination of the Smart Moves Program with Kindergarteners from a Title I Tulsa School**

Mollie E. Rischard, M.Ed. (University of Tulsa), Lisa D. Cromer, Ph.D. (University of Tulsa), Courtney D. Stevens, Ph.D. (Willamette University)

Important tasks of early childhood cognitive development include learning to pay attention, manage emotions, persist on tasks, and control impulses; this set of behaviors involves a set of higher-order cognitive abilities known as executive function. Executive function (EF) is a multi-faceted construct that permits the engagement of goal-directed behavior (Karr et al., 2018). EF develops rapidly in preschool years (Best et al., 2009) and is considered critical for school success (Blair & Razza, 2007). Children who exhibit low EF have more difficulty in school (Calkins & Hoswe, 2004); unfortunately, EF difficulties are more common in low income areas (Blair & Raver, 2015). EF training is a novel concept that appears to improve school readiness in preschoolers (Thorell, Lindqvist, Bergman, Bohlin, & Klingberg, 2009). The current study sought to examine whether EF skill training could improve dysregulation in identified kindergarten-age children from low socioeconomic backgrounds. We examined the efficacy of the Smart Moves (Cromer, Louie, Jean-Vertus & Kaier, unpublished manuscript) EF training program, an 8-week, game-focused curriculum designed to improve emotion regulation, and several domains of EF in children aged four to five. Fifty-three kindergarten children from a Title I school, identified as dysregulated by their teachers, participated in this study and were assigned to either the treatment or waitlist-control condition. Results from multiple regression analyses indicated no treatment effect across multiple EF indices, except for Grass/Snow, in which the experimental group showed improvement (β = -.31, p = .01). A variation of this task was included as one of the training games, which suggests that EF can be trained, however, not transferred when an 8-week, group-based intervention is applied in a school-setting. Implications for future research related to EF facilitation will be discussed.

Keywords*:* Executive function, training, child development

Primary author: Mollie E. Rischard Kimrey, M.Ed.

Clinical Psychology Doctoral Student

Albert Schweitzer Fellow

The University of Tulsa

Mer597@utulsa.edu