

news release

Child and Family Center/University of Oregon

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Self-Regulation, Attention Processes, and Psychopathology in Children

The National Institutes of Health has granted University of Oregon research associate Dr. Kristi Racer five years of career development funding to support a research program based at the UO Child and Family Center (CFC).

The broad, long-term goal of the program, Attention, Self-Regulation, and Psychopathology in Children and Young Adolescents, is to identify barriers to self-regulation and develop methods to tailor intervention and prevention to individual self-regulatory strengths and weaknesses. Although selective attention is believed to be critical to self-regulation and psychological adjustment, few systematic investigations of selective attention failure have been conducted. Dr. Racer's research specifically seeks to characterize the development of both automatic (stimulus-driven) and voluntary (goal-driven) attention processes in children age 7–14 years, develop a task to assess individual differences in the balance between the two processes, and determine if individual differences are associated with self-regulation skills and with risk of psychopathology in children.

Dr. Racer's research will rely principally on event-related potential (ERP) indices of attentional processing. Scalp-recorded ERPs provide a precise measure of the time course of mental operations and can reveal attention effects that are completely masked in overt behavioral response measures. ERPs can also measure the processing of stimuli even when there is no behavioral response.

Dr. Racer has participated in research at the CFC for more than three years. Her general research focus is individual differences in attention and emotion processing and how they interact with contextual factors such as parenting and peers to promote or prevent the development of psychopathology. She oversees the Brain and Behavior Lab at CFC, where research has been examining individual differences in brain processing related to self-regulation.

For more information about Dr. Racer's research or other research projects at Child and Family Center, contact Dr. Racer or CFC codirector Tom Dishion at 346-4805.

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