ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Executive Functioning Skills of Children with Suspected Auditory Processing Disorder

STUDENT: Melissa A. McGrath

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Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) is a controversial disorder across the fields of psychology, audiology, speech-language pathology, and education. However, due to narrow diagnostic criteria as well as frequent co-morbid diagnoses, the majority of children referred for assessment for APD are left without a diagnosis. Oftentimes these children then return back to school, with continued listening and learning difficulties, without specific recommendations for intervention. Complicating diagnosis is the similarities to other neurodevelopmental disorders, especially ADHD. Due to well documented deficits in executive functioning (EF) in children with ADHD, the current study investigated the executive functioning skills of children with suspected APD with and without ADHD. Findings point towards compelling differences in the groups of children with and without ADHD referred for APD testing: Children without ADHD scored lower on measures of inhibitory control compared to children with ADHD. Conclusions indicate that decreased EF skills exhibited in children with suspected APD, even those without a diagnosis of ADHD, support the notion that top-down processing plays an important role in the receiving and comprehension of auditory information. Future research to guide EF intervention for all children with suspected APD is discussed.