

# **MEASURING DELAY OF GRATIFICATION CREATION OF A SELF-REPORT MEASURE: INTERIM FINDINGS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study uses elements of Block's [7] California Q-set (CQS) to develop a self-report measure assessing an individual's disposition to delay gratification (DG). Forty items were generated using elements of the CQS related to DG behavior demonstrated in experimental situations. Cronbach's alpha scores for the entire scale and two sub-sets, ego control (EC) and ego resiliency (ER), were .80, .71 and .70 respectively. To maximize person-job fit, this measure would identify those able to forgo organizationally undesirable behavior bringing a readily available but lesser reward, and engage in desirable behavior requiring a significant passage of time before receipt of a larger reward.

## **DISPOSITIONAL INFLUENCES IN THE WORKPLACE**

Person-job fit [11] [27] [49] [48] in organizational literature has demonstrated that certain occupations or job categories require specific behaviors on the part of jobholders. Technical skills, specialized training, personality traits [21] or physical strengths, among other requirements, must be present for successful completion of the position's demands and responsibilities [17] [29] [56]. Some people have a better mix than others of the traits and abilities required to meet demands of specific job roles. Person-job fit generally states that individuals are more productive and satisfied the closer their personality traits "fit" requirements of the workplace environment.

As it relates to DG, in organizational environments, workers are continually faced with choices to delay choices which may have an impact on behavior directly related to the level at which the individual functions in his or her organizational role. Identification of those whose behavior is influenced by DG may allow matching of such individuals to jobs or contexts which require waiting for some period of time before the outcome connected to the job behavior may be experienced, enhancing person-job fit.

The difficulty with use of DG as a trait of interest lies in its assessment. Traditionally, the primary method of assessment of preference for deferred reward involves the creation of a laboratory setting where participants are offered choices between deferred or immediate reward, as used by delay of gratification researchers [18] [19] [43] [45]. In assessment settings in the workplace however, this general method would be at best time-consuming and expensive for organizations to administer. Use of a self-report measure of DG, as with the use of self-report measures of other traits, would allow DG to be readily assessed during the selection process. Existing self-report measures of DG have been too narrow in scope [5] [24] [43] [50] [51] to provide accurate assessments of an individual's willingness to delay gratification in a number of contexts. To provide a more robust perspective of an individual's propensity to delay, the self-report measure of DG constructed here utilizes elements of factors [8] which have demonstrated a significant relationship believed to influence DG behavior.

## **EGO CONTROL AND EGO RESILIENCY**

As defined by Block [8], the construct of EC refers to a personality structure which influences the individual's level of control over impulsive behavior, especially those behaviors which may be socially proscribed. EC generally influences DG behavior by assisting the individual in resisting an impulse to engage in immediate reward.

ER's influence on DG behavior is that of behavior flexibility, the general propensity of the individual to adapt behavior in order to address contextual demands. ER is a cognitive structure which assists the individual in overriding the effects of ego control on behavior when it is situationally appropriate to do so. It assists the individual in adapting behavior to contextual demands in a socially appropriate manner.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF-REPORT CQS**

To assess individuals' propensity to defer reward for use in organizational applications, the current study was conducted in order to develop a self-report measure of DG based on Block's notion of EC and ER. One hundred seventy nine self-report items were initially generated utilizing behavioral statements from Block's original CQS representing the constructs of EC and ER; those 40 statements that were found to be strongly and significantly correlated with delay behavior in four studies [18] [19] [43] [50]. Several items were generated for each separate CQS description. The generated items were given to a panel of five independent judges familiar with the constructs of EC and ER. Each judge was terminally degreed in some aspect of the behavioral sciences. Judges were asked to rate each item in terms of its representativeness of the construct. Suggestions were considered, changes made, and the corrected items returned to the panel for final rating.

The final version of the 40-item survey was then completed by 200 undergraduate business administration students at a 4-year degree-granting university in order to assess initial reliability of the measure. Forty-two percent of the participants identified as male and 58% identified as female. Ages ranged 18 to 31 years of age, however, 98% of the subjects were in the range of 18-24 years.

The initial analysis of reliability, or internal consistency, of the 40-item measure was performed using Cronbach's alpha test [13]. Alpha values, ranging from 0.70 to 0.95, indicate that the items are measuring the same underlying concept [55]. The Cronbach alpha value was 0.80 for the complete 40 item scale, 0.71 for the subset of the 21 EC items; and 0.70 for the subset of the 19 ER items, therefore, the respective sets of items reliably measure EC and ER.

### **Future directions**

As noted above, as the internal consistency of the measure has now been established, an experimental study designed to assess the predictive validity of the measure is planned. Participants will complete the measure, and then be exposed to a situation where the participants can choose between being provided with a fairly immediate but lesser reward, one which has broad appeal to the participant cohort, or waiting a significantly length of time in order to obtain a significantly larger reward. Once validated, the measure can be used in organizational selection to increase person-job fit for occupations where waiting to achieve desired organizational outcomes and their respective rewards is an integral part of job requirements, or similar situations where the need to defer reward is related desired behaviors.

**References available upon request from John Urbanski [urbanskj@sonoma.edu](mailto:urbanskj@sonoma.edu).**