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The Impact of CPS and Special Education on Adjustment for Male Inmates

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Introduction

- Rates of inmates with special education are high; similar rates are shown for individuals coming from a Child-Protective Services (CPS) background (Wolfe-Harlow, 2003).
- Individuals with a history of special education assistance and placement in foster care as a child are more likely to struggle as adults (National Center on Education and Juvenile Justice, 1997).

- According to the National Center of Education, Disability and Justice (1996)
- 15,930 prisoners with disabilities were served in correctional facilities
- Youth with emotional disturbances and learning disabilities made up the majority of those incarcerated.

Adjustment

- Adjustment involves reaction and subsequent adaptation to a stressor (Ewert & Wildhagen, 2011).
- Adjustment is a necessary and expected process when encountering change, especially incarceration.
- No research has been identified that examines how CPS and Special Education experiences might impact adjustment to incarceration.

Purpose of Study

The study examined how a history of involvement with Special Education and CPS in childhood affected male inmates upon jail incarceration.

Participants and Procedure

- 107 male inmates incarcerated in a metropolitan county jail within the previous week.
- Men voluntarily completed a clinical interview and questionnaire packet, including the Prison Adjustment Questionnaire (Wright, 1985).
- Mean age of the population was 29.48 years ($SD = 0.70$).
- 94% of participants were White, non-Hispanic.
- 63% of men were incarcerated on a felony charge.

Prison Adjustment Questionnaire (PAQ)

- 30-item measure of an inmate's adjustment to prison (Wright, 1985).
 - Measures the frequency of 9 prison problems on a scale of 0 (never) to 4 (most of the time).
 - Overall composite and 3 subscales:
 - internal (e.g., insomnia and anger)
 - external (e.g., conflicts with inmates and staff)
 - physical (e.g., illness, injury, feeling of being taken advantage of)

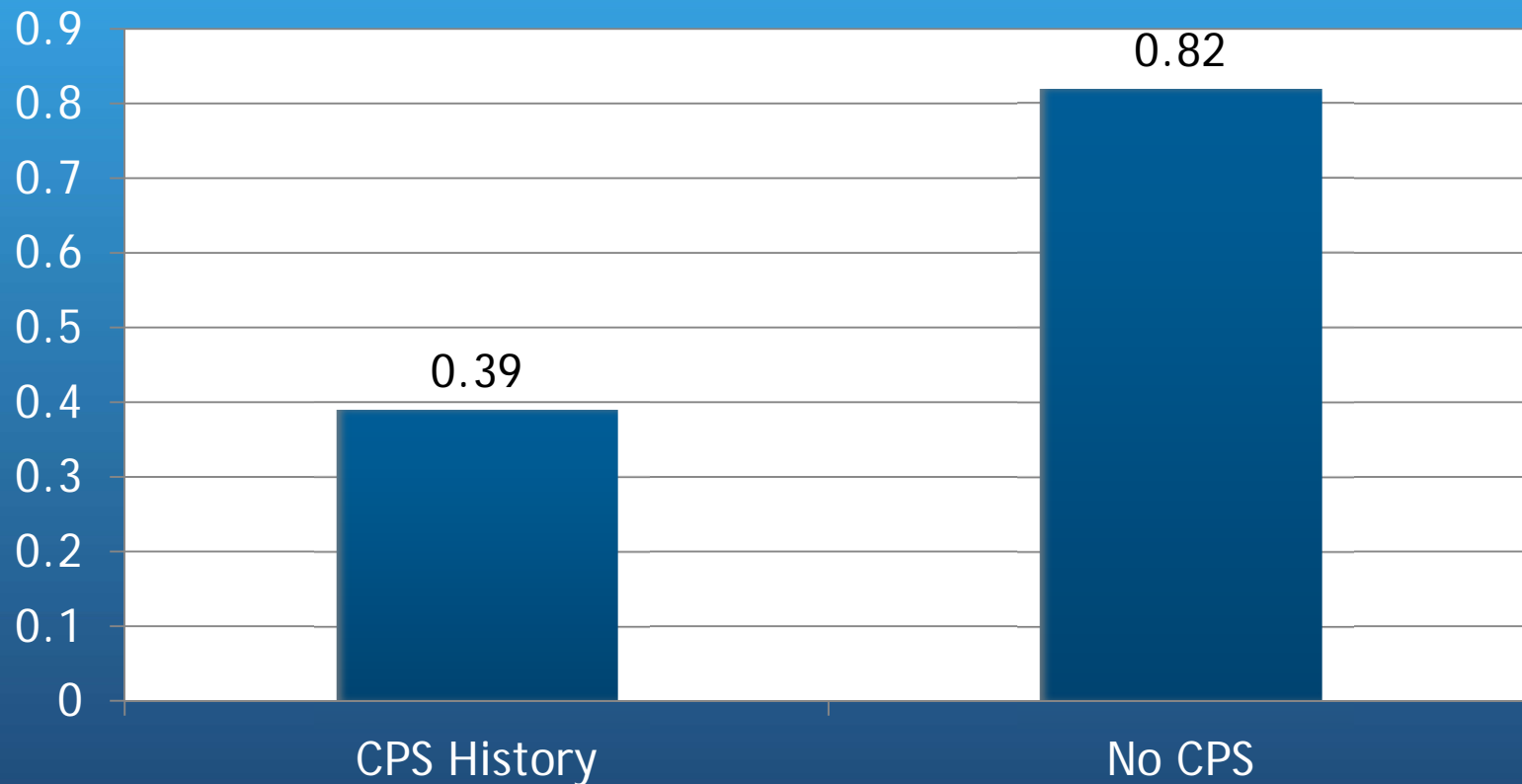
Hypotheses

It was expected that individuals with a history of CPS involvement and/or a history with Special Education assistance would show poorer adjustment reaction to jail than those without.

Results

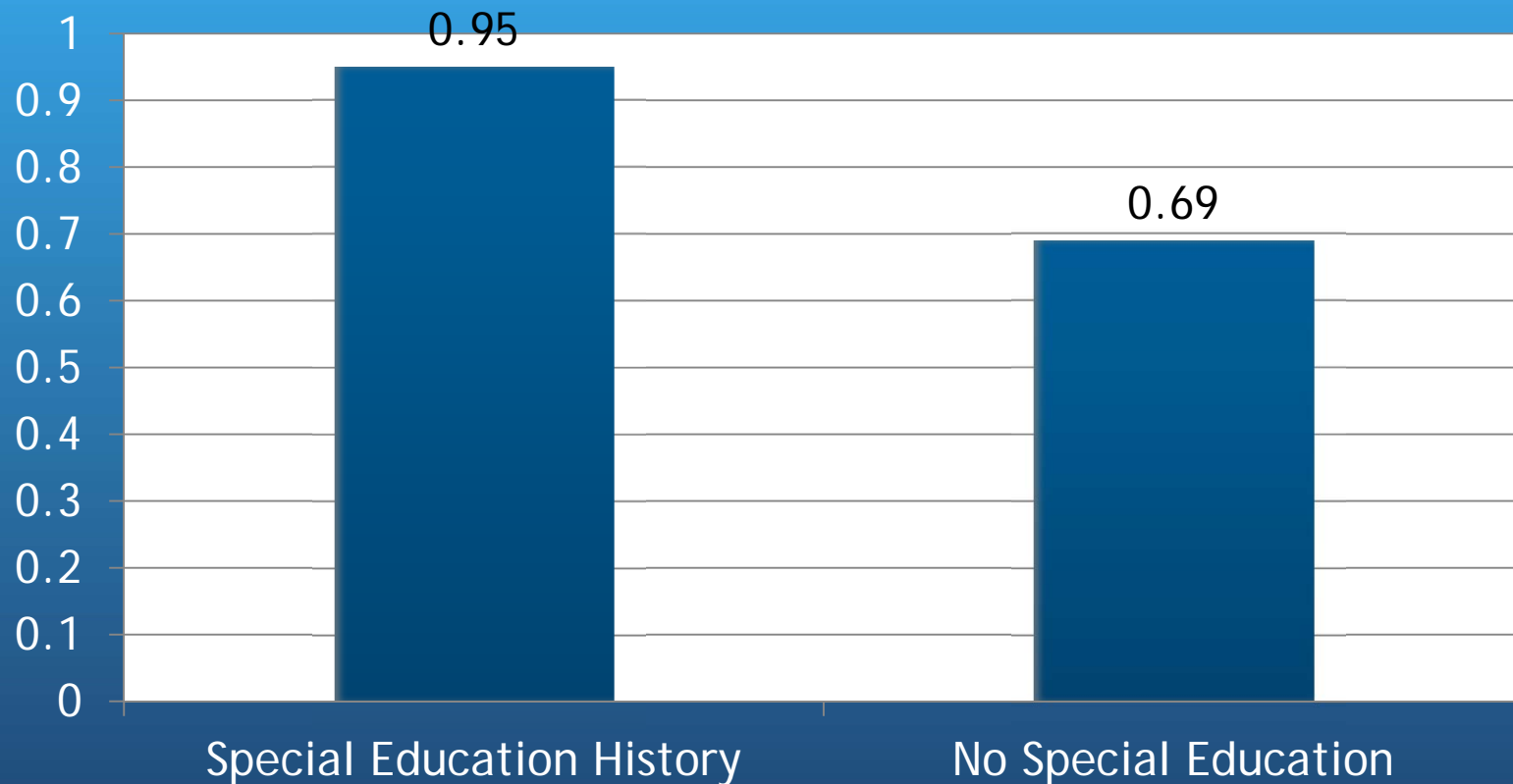
A 2 (CPS involvement as a child vs. Not) X 2 (Special Education Assistance vs. Not) Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) revealed significant difference in overall adjustment reaction as a result of CPS involvement as a child, but not for Special Education.

Figure 1: Mean Adjustment Scores as a Function of CPS Involvement



CPS involvement, $F(1, 103) = 6.73, p = .01$ eta squared = .061

Figure 2: Mean Adjustment Score as a Function of Special Education History



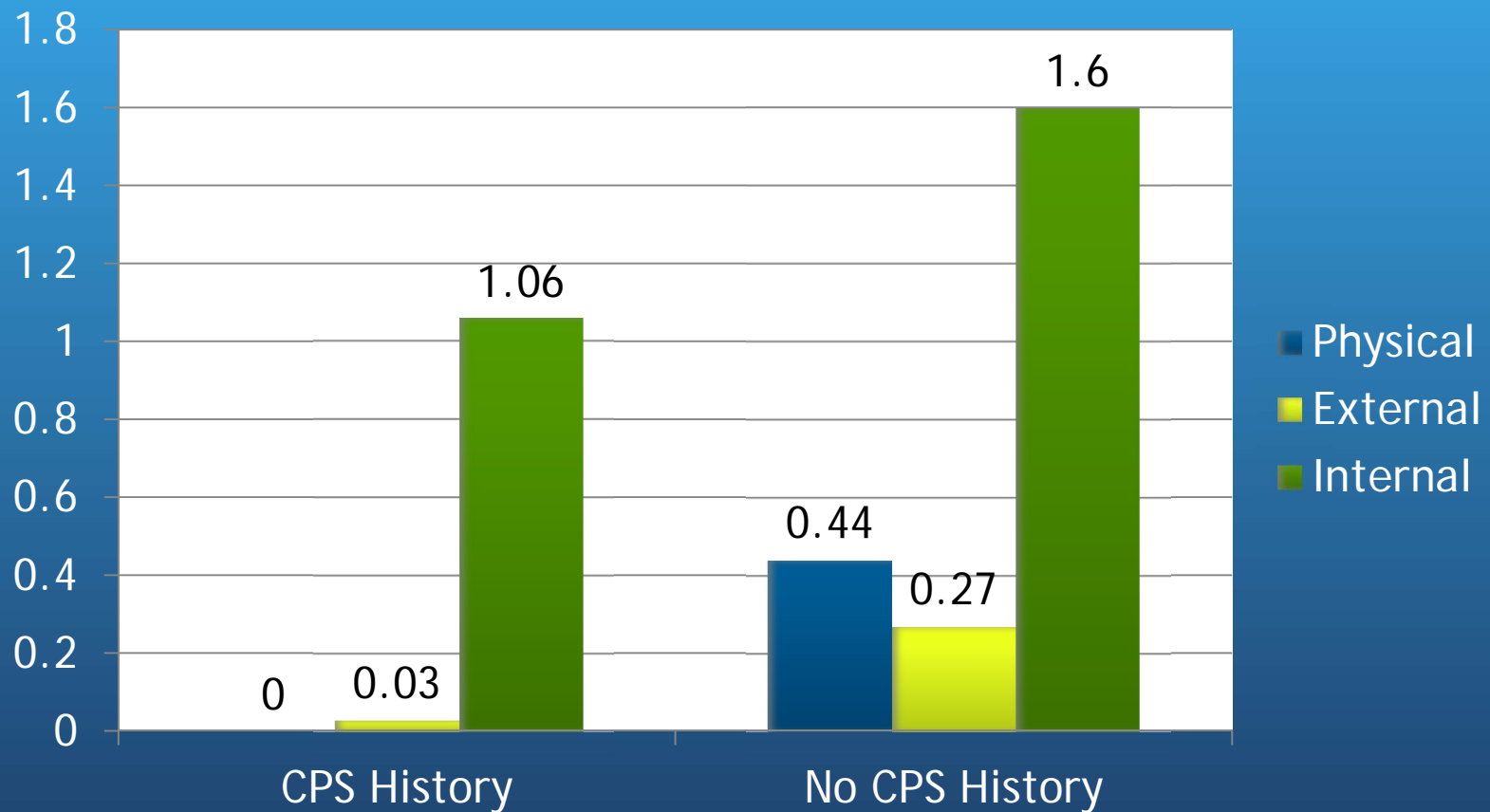
Special Education, $F(1,103) = .77, p = .38$

Prison Adjustment Questionnaire Subscales

Looking specifically at CPS and the three
Prison Adjustment Questionnaire
subscales

- Approached significance for the External, $F(1, 106) = 0.66, p = .08$, and Internal, $F(1, 104) = 0.21, p = .65$, Subscales
- Resulted in a significant differences for the Physical Adjustment Scale, $F(1, 103) = 5.92, p = .02$, eta squared = .054

Figure 3: Mean Adjustment Subscale Scores as a Function of CPS History



Discussion

In contrast to that hypothesized, males with no history of CPS involvement as children reported significantly more adjustment problems than men with CPS involvement.

Discussion (continued)

- One possible explanation for this result is that individuals with a history of CPS involvement are used to transition and short-term placement.
 - They do not see jail incarceration as a significantly new experience.
- Alternately, the lack of reaction could be a result of limited social attachments outside of jail.

Discussion (continued)

- The impact of these results have implications for understanding the importance of early childhood interventions.
- The process of adaptation to jail incarceration for adult males needs to be addressed.

Limitations and Future Directions

- Male prisoners are more likely to have a GED instead of a high school diploma. Research indicates that the GED doesn't allow for the same financial benefits as a high school diploma. Greatest difference was for younger males incarcerated. (Ewert & Wildhagen, 2011)
- Providing education in prisons is an essential piece to reform. One such program the Cornell University Prison Education program provides professors and graduate students to teach college level liberal arts programs in which the prisoners whom participate will obtain an associates degree from a neighboring community college. (Cornell Prison Education Program, 2014)

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