

Promoting the Development of Prosocial Emotions Via a Home-Based Intervention

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COL 2021

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Introduction

- ❖ **Prosocial emotions** include empathy, guilt, & emotion recognition & promote helping & caring
- ❖ Children with **conduct problems (CP)** and **callous-unemotional (CU) traits** are defined by a lack of prosocial emotions & long-term negative outcomes
- ❖ Treatments for CP are less effective when children have CU traits.
- ❖ Treatments need to target specific deficits in prosocial emotions associated with CU traits
- ❖ Other limitations include time/resource commitments that deter families
- ❖ The current study addresses these limitations by testing an at-home intervention

Methods

- ❖ **N=40**; mean age=6.26 years, 62.5% female, 57.8% non-white
- ❖ Parent-reported questionnaires were used to assess child's level of CU traits, empathy, prosocial behavior, and CP at **Time 1 (baseline) & Time 2 (after intervention)**
- ❖ Intervention included random assignment to **prosocial emotions board game group** or control group (no board game)



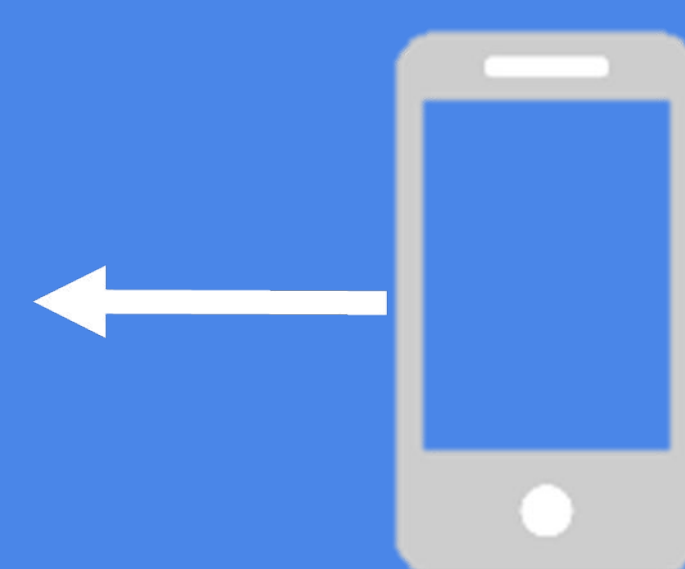
Figure 1: Friendship & Empathy games



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Promoting prosocial emotions in children via home-based play could provide an accessible way for families to reduce risk for conduct problems



Take a picture to download more information and references

Methods (cont)

- ❖ The board game had 4 distinct games to promote empathy, manners, friendship, & emotion recognition (**Figure 1**)
- ❖ Parents & children played each board once, for a total of four times, between Time 1 and Time 2

Hypotheses

- ❖ Relative to children in the control condition (no game), children who played the board game 4 times over a 6-8 week period will show **reductions in CP and CU traits, & increases in empathy & prosocial behavior**

Results

- ❖ A comparison of demographics (child age, income, gender, race) across the control and board game condition found no significant differences
- ❖ At Time 1, no significant differences in CU traits, CP, empathy, or prosocial behaviors were found across the two conditions
- ❖ Regression models on CU traits at Time 2; with condition as a fixed factor and child age, gender, income, and CU traits at Time 1 as covariates; did not find a significant effect of condition on CU traits
 - This result was repeated with empathy, prosocial behavior, and CP
- ❖ A two-way ANOVA replicated these results (**Figure 2**)

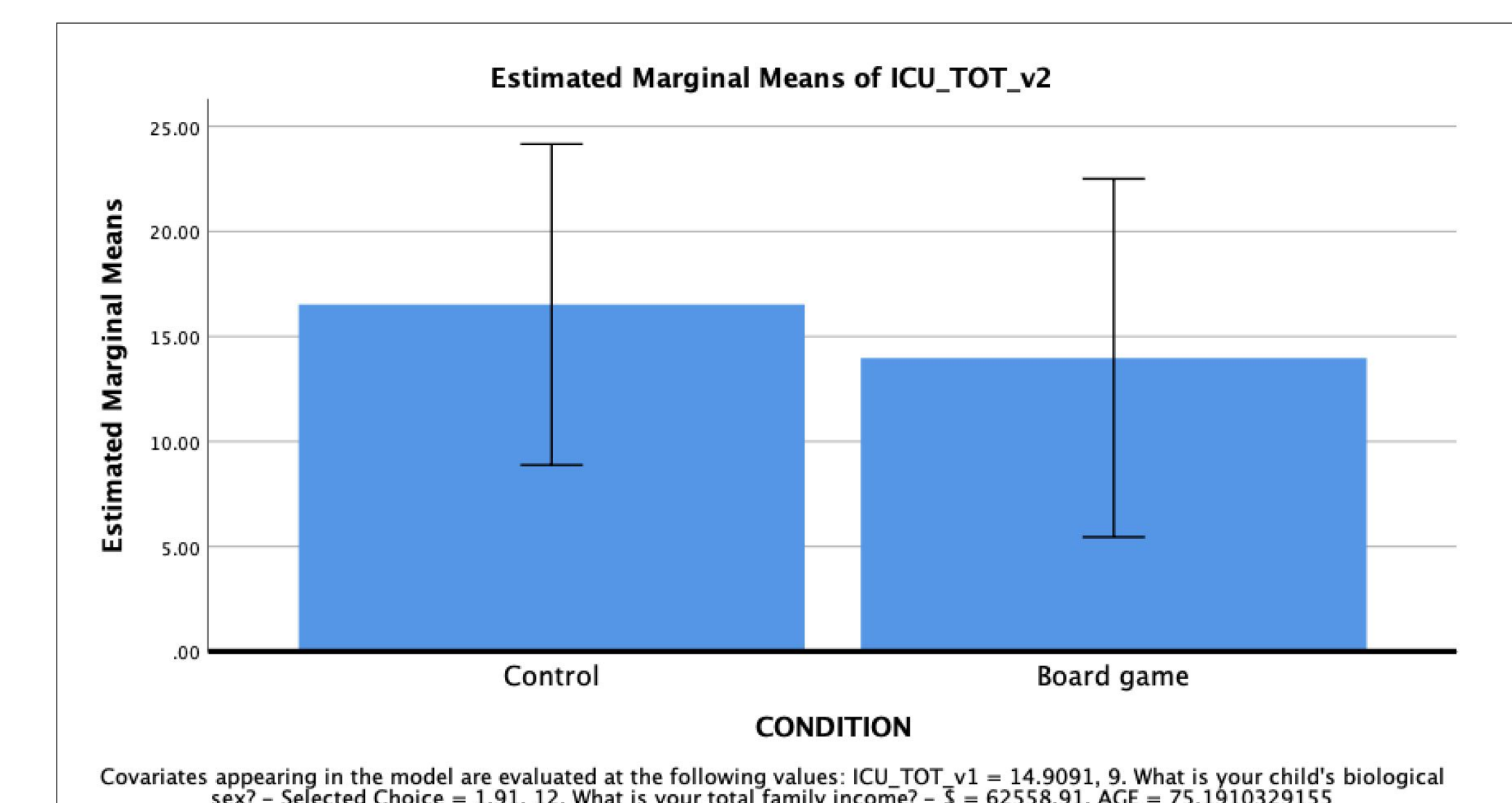


Figure 2: No significant differences between conditions on ICU score

Discussion

- ❖ While the samples were similar in terms of demographics and initial empathy/CU trait levels, no improvement on any measure was seen at Time 2
- ❖ Study limited by small sample size and a lack of individual variability in levels of CU traits in this community sample
- ❖ **Future research is being planned** to address these two limitations
- ❖ This research is important because it **increases accessibility** to interventions for children who might not exhibit clinically significant CU traits, but still show impairment in everyday life