



Maternal Alcohol Dependence and Harsh Parenting: Differential Susceptibility To Child Temperament Across Caregiving Contexts

Debrielle T. Jacques^a, Melissa L. Sturge-Apple^a, Patrick T. Davies & Dante Cicchetti^b
^a University of Rochester, ^b University of Minnesota



Background and Significance

- Problematic alcohol abuse among mothers is associated with maladaptive caregiving practices, such as harsh parenting. However, less is known about how maternal alcohol dependence affects parenting across different childrearing contexts.
- Further, child factors, such as child temperament help determine caregiving behaviors, and children of alcohol-dependent mothers may present with temperament traits that may elicit harsh parenting behaviors.
- Evolutionary models of temperament posit two broad temperament profiles that children may display in response to environmental stimuli.
- The 'hawk' profile is defined by frustration and boldness; the 'dove' profile is characterized by fear and withdrawal.
- Little research examined whether alcohol-dependent mothers may differentially be influenced by their child's temperament profile.

Study Aims:

- Longitudinally examine the relationship between maternal alcohol dependence and harsh parenting in two distinct childrearing contexts.
- Assess the potential moderating effect of two evolutionary-based temperament profiles in the association between maternal alcohol dependence and harsh parenting across parenting contexts.

Method

Participants:

- 201 mothers and their 2-year-old child (M child age = 2.14 years; 44% female)
- 67% African American and Latino
 - 95% of sample receiving Public Assistance
 - 99.5% living below US Poverty Line

Procedures & Measures:

- Mother-child dyads visited a University of Rochester laboratory when the child was 2-years-old (Wave 1) and 3-years-old (Wave 2) as part of a 3-Wave longitudinal study; each wave was spaced 1 year apart.

Construct	Method	Measure
Maternal Alcohol Dependence	Maternal self-report (Wave 1)	Diagnostic Interview Schedule-IV (DIS-IV; Robins et al., 1995)
Maternal Harsh Caregiving	Free-play (reciprocity) and clean up (control) tasks (Obs. at Waves 1 and 2)	Iowa Family Interaction Rating Scale (IFIRS; Melby & Conger, 2001)
Child 'Hawk' and 'Dove' Temperament	Behavioral observation (Wave 1)	Five point rating scale (Davies, Sturge-Apple, Cicchetti, 2011; Sturge-Apple et al., 2012)

Data Analytic Plan

- To capture change in harsh parenting over time while controlling for baseline levels, data were entered into a latent difference score (LDS) structural equation model (SEM). See Figure 1 for parameterization of LDS model predicting change in maternal harsh caregiving from Wave 1 to Wave 2.
- LDS model was later entered into an SEM path model to test the study's primary hypotheses. (See Figure 2).
- Simple slope analyses will be conducted to determine the nature and locus of the interaction between child 'hawk' and 'dove' temperament and maternal alcohol dependence.

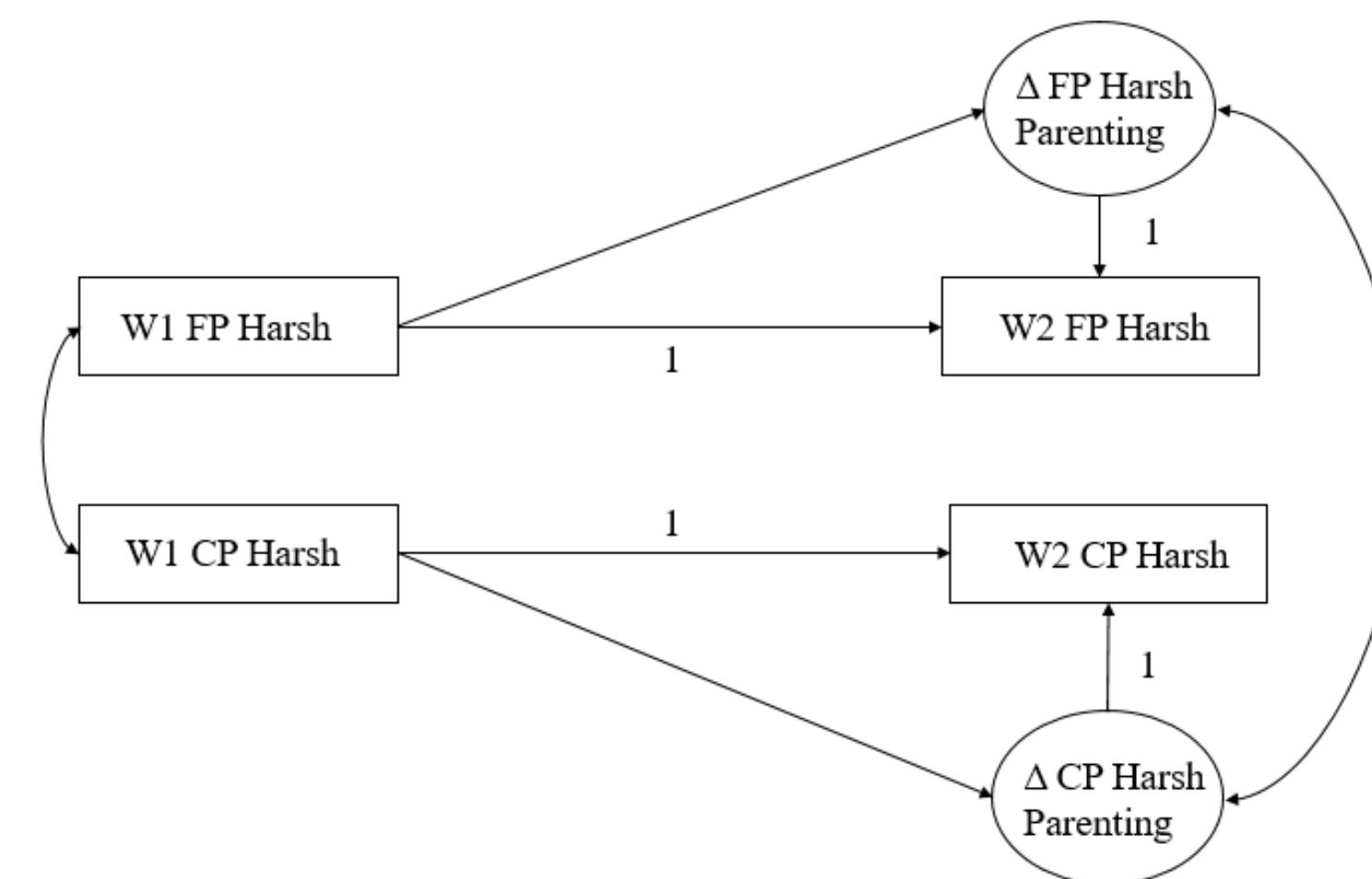


Figure 1. Parameterization of latent difference score (LDS) model for baseline level and change in maternal harsh caregiving in the free play and compliance tasks. W1 = Wave 1; W2 = Wave 2. FP = Free Play; CP = Clean-up

Results – Main Effects

A) Maternal Alcohol Dependence and Harsh Caregiving Across Contexts

- Mothers endorsing greater impairment from alcohol dependence were more harsh over time in the clean up task (control domain), but not in the free play task (reciprocity domain) (see Figure 2).
- This association between maternal alcohol dependence and increases in harsh parenting in the clean-up task was moderated by child 'hawk' temperament, but not 'dove' temperamental traits.

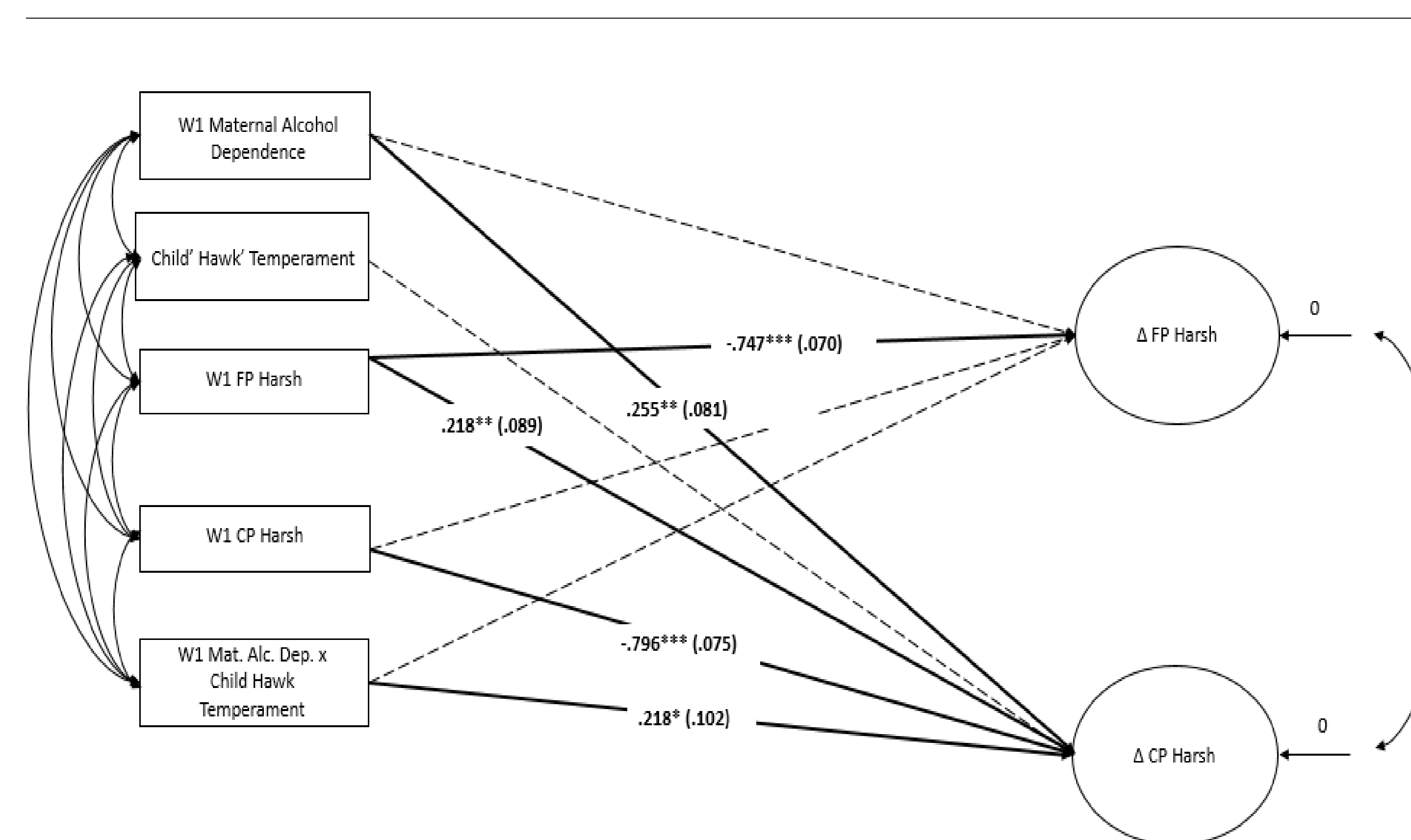


Figure 2. Structural equation model examining associations between maternal alcohol dependence, child 'hawk' temperament, the interaction between maternal alcohol dependence and child 'hawk' temperament, and changes in maternal harsh caregiving in the free play and clean-up tasks. FP = Free Play; CP = Clean-up.

Results – Simple Slope Analyses

B) Moderating Effect of Child 'Hawk' Temperament

- Alcohol-dependent mothers with children displaying more 'hawk' temperamental traits had greater increases in harsh parenting during the clean-up task (control domain) (see Figure 3).

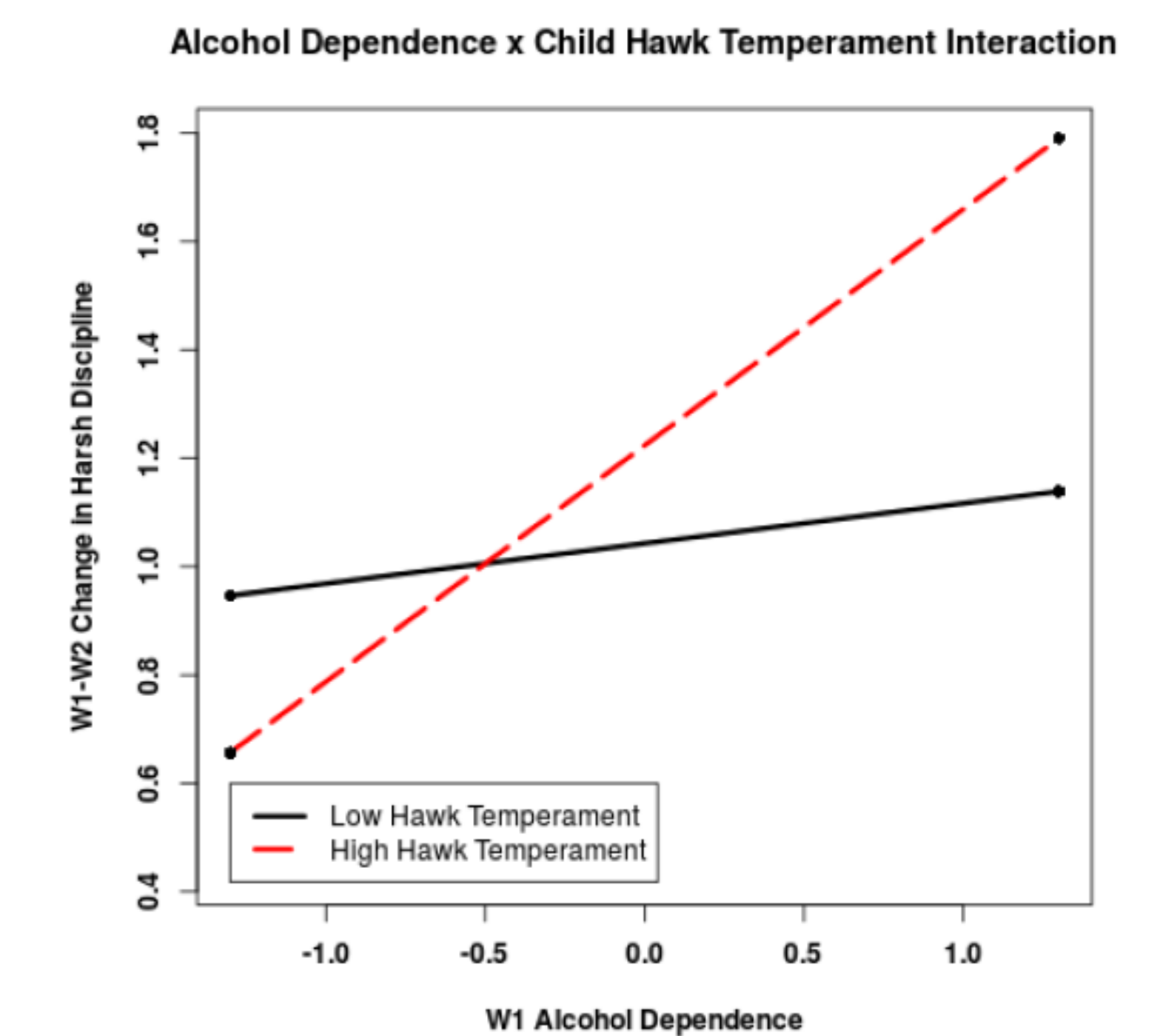


Figure 3. Interaction between maternal alcohol dependence and child 'hawk' temperament in the clean-up task. Dashed line indicates slope significantly different from 0. High and low values for 'Hawk' temperament are displayed at +/- 1 standard deviation.

Discussion

- Findings provide further evidence that mothers with histories of alcohol dependence display maladaptive, coercive caregiving practices but that these behaviors may be more likely to manifest in challenging and demanding childrearing contexts.
- Furthermore, children who display bold, aggressive temperamental traits may exacerbate parenting stressors and elicit more harsh caregiving responses in situations where caregiving demands are increased, such as discipline contexts.
- Findings further highlight the usefulness of parenting domain approaches in understanding determinants of maladaptive parenting among mothers with histories of alcohol dependence.
- Results also underscore the importance of examining parenting in distinct contexts and the influence that child characteristics have on parenting behaviors

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Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to: Debrielle T. Jacques at Debrielle.Jacques@rochester.edu