



A Domain Approach to Examining Specificity in Associations Between Parental Sensitivity and Preschool Children's Development

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BACKGROUND

- Parenting sensitivity and child outcomes vary as a function of the domain (or type) of parent-child interaction (Grusec & Davidov, 2010).
- Guided learning and control domains become salient during preschool ages.
- The guided learning domain is activated when parents take a teaching role and is thought to be linked to the acquisition of knowledge and skills.
- The control domain is activated when parents take the role of disciplinarian and is linked to children's behavioral regulation.

PARTICIPANTS

- 235 children and their parents
 - Mage = 2.97 years
 - 55% girls
 - 45% boys
- Mothers
 - Mage = 33.6
 - 62% White
- Fathers
 - Mage = 36.0
 - 55% White
- Median household income reported by fathers
 - \$55,000-\$74,999
 - 22% families with household income below \$23,000

METHOD

Task	Parenting Domain	Wave	Description and Coded Behaviors
Grocery Store Task	Guided Learning	1	•Description: Parents help child complete a shopping trip while following rules. •Codes: Planning/organization, scaffolding.
Forbidden Toy Task	Control	1	•Description: Parents must prevent the child from playing with an attractive toy while the parent is distracted with a video game. •Codes: Disengagement, scaffolding
Task	Child Outcome	Wave	Description and Coded Behaviors
Puzzle Box Task	Problem Solving	2	•Description: Children attempt to retrieve a toy through a jigsaw box. •Codes: Manipulation, strategy use.
Marshmallow Task	Effortful Control	2	•Description: Children can delay eating one marshmallow to later receive a second marshmallow. •Codes: Latency to eat, latency to touch.

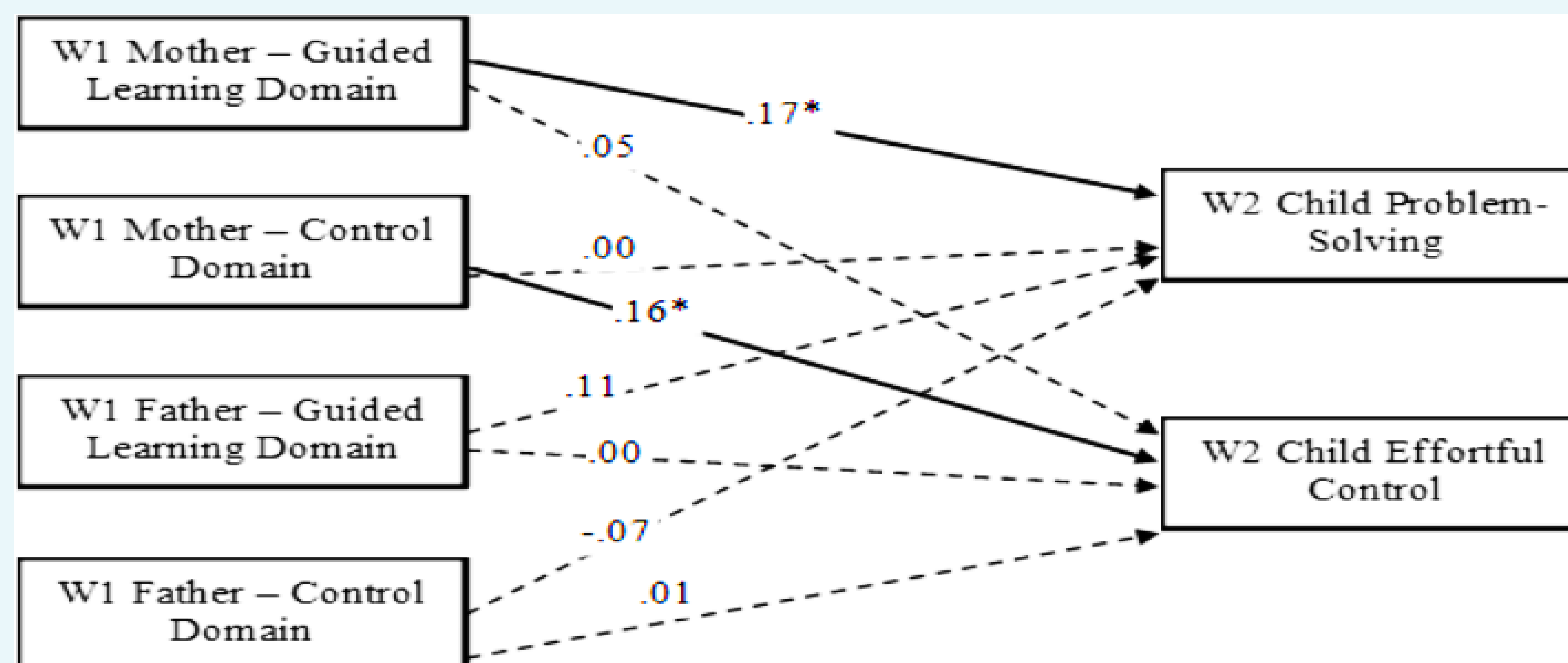
CONCLUSIONS

- Higher levels of maternal sensitivity in the guided learning domain were associated with higher levels of children's problem-solving behavior the following year.
- Higher maternal sensitivity in the control domain was linked to children's effortful control one year later.
- No significant associations emerged for fathers' sensitivity.
- These findings support a domain-specific approach to parent-child socialization in that parental sensitivity within domains is uniquely linked to specific outcomes in children. (Grusec & Davidov, 2010).
- Findings suggest that mothers' sensitivity may be especially important in the preschool years. In contrast, fathers may engage differently with children in ways that promote children's development in other parenting domains (e.g., play, group participation) or child outcomes (e.g., social skills, physiological regulation).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Is parental sensitivity in the guided learning domain linked to children's problem-solving skills one year later?
- Is parental sensitivity in the control domain linked to children's effortful control one year later?
- How might child outcomes vary across maternal and paternal sensitivity in these domains?

RESULTS



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