

Early positive parenting behavior and maternal depression history predicts episodic memory ability in middle childhood

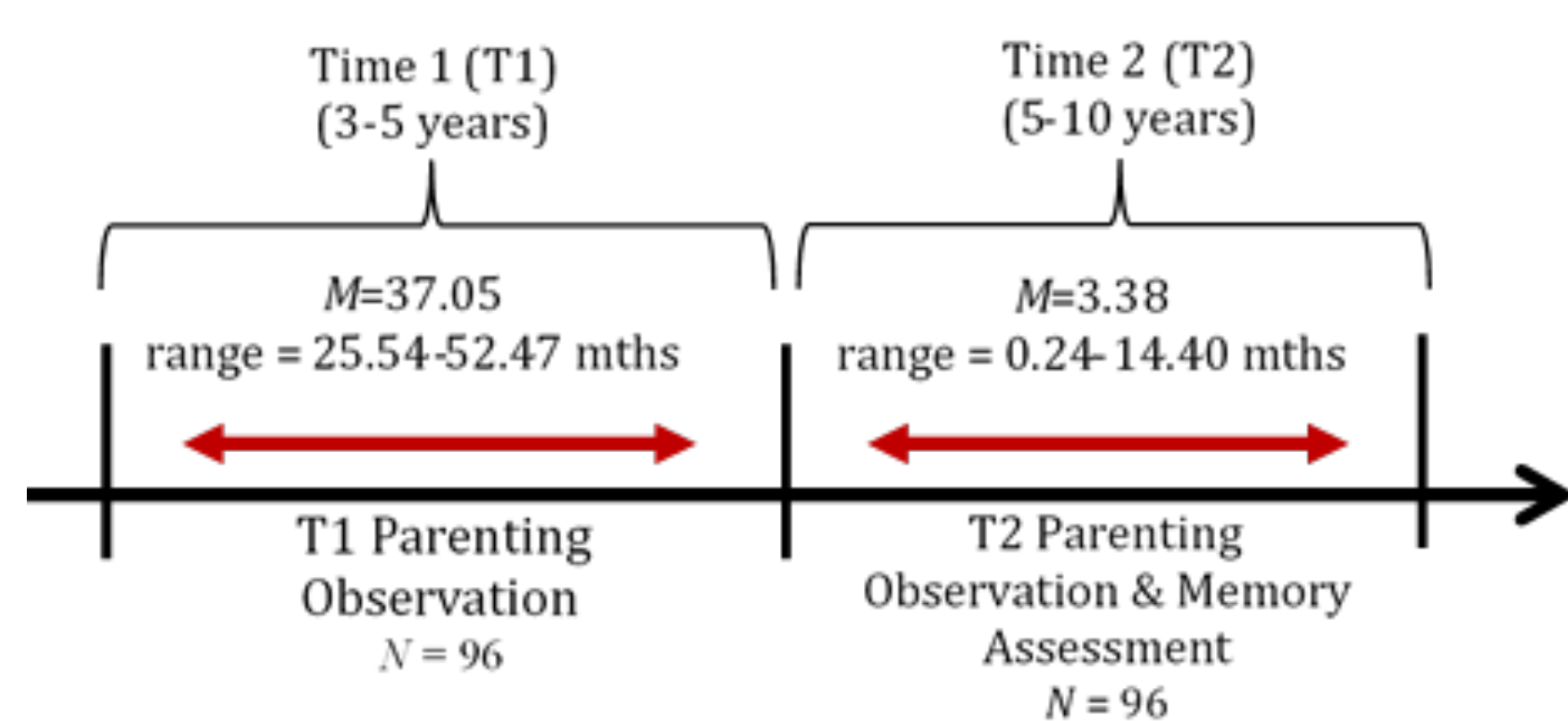
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Introduction

- Age-related differences in episodic memory have been established in early childhood¹.
- However, individual differences are also important to memory development, yet are relatively under investigated.
- Both parenting and maternal depression have been shown to impact cognitive abilities, including language and executive function^{2,3}.
- Little research has investigated how these factors impact episodic memory, an ability that is critical to learning in early childhood.
- **The present study seeks to investigate implications of early parenting and maternal depression on episodic memory ability in young children.**

Methods



Participants

- 96 children (47 females) from a longitudinal dataset overselected for a history of maternal depression were included in the study.

Observed Parenting

- Children and their parents completed tasks modified from the Teaching Tasks Battery⁴.
- Tasks were rated on Maternal Intrusiveness, Hostility, Support, Negative Affect, and Positive Affect.
 - **Negative Parenting Composite:** Average of Maternal Intrusiveness, Hostility, and Negative Affect
 - **Positive Parenting Composite:** Average of Maternal Support and Positive Affect

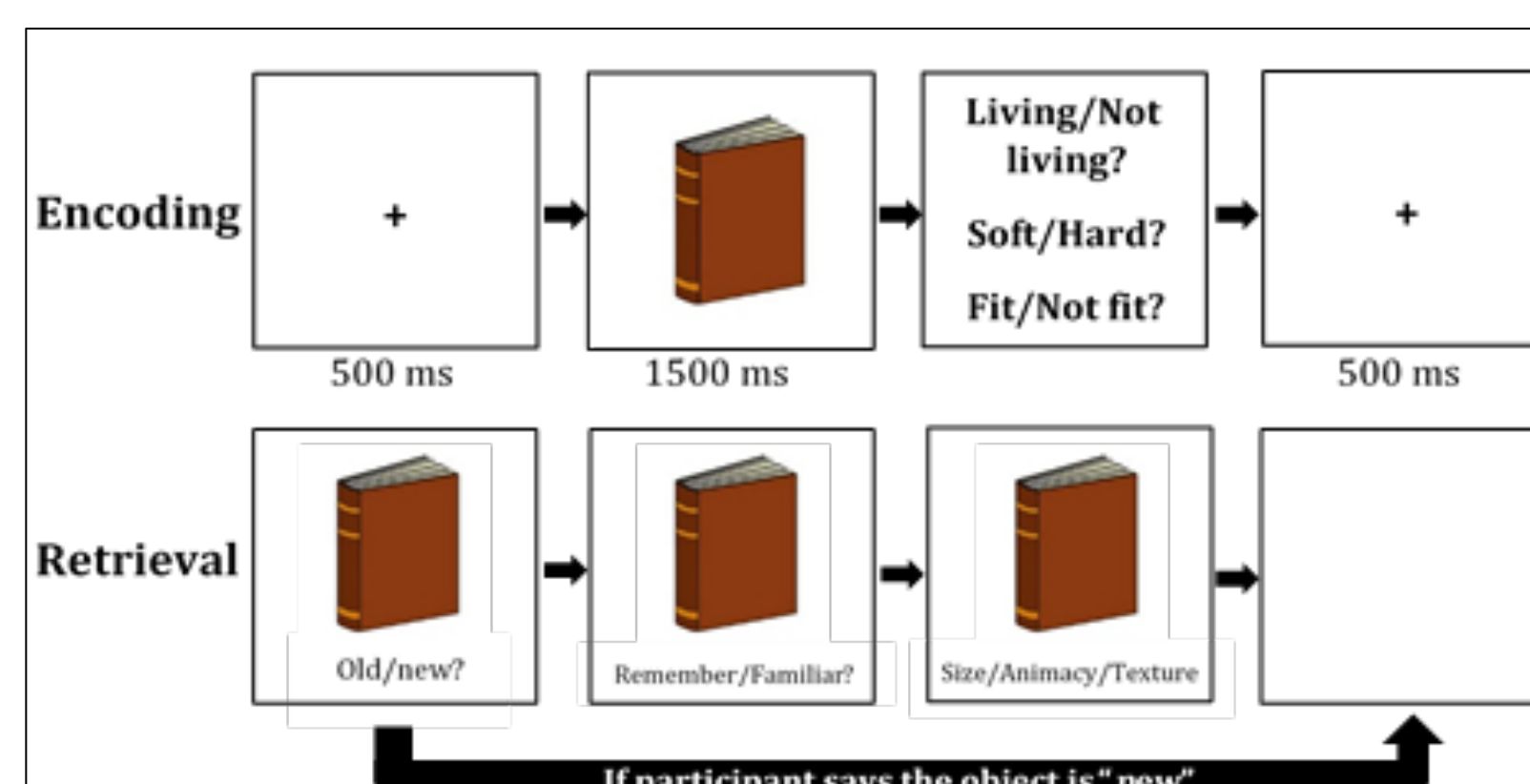
Maternal Depression

- SCID for DSM-IV⁵ was administered at T1 and T2 to children's biological mothers.
- Fifty-seven (59%) mothers had a lifetime history of depressive disorder.

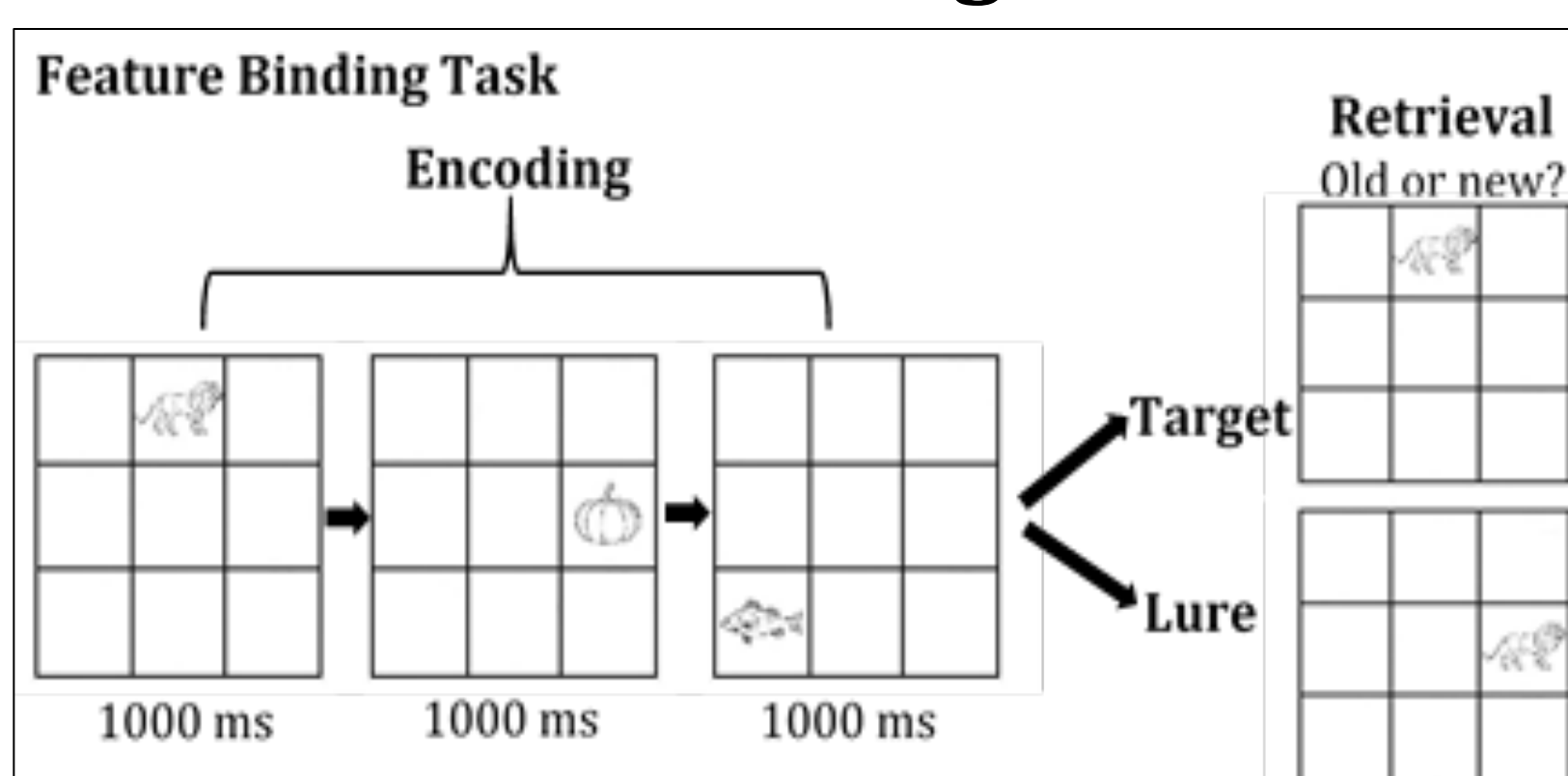
Episodic Memory Assessment

- Scores from the following tasks were standardized and averaged to create a Composite Memory Score.

Remember/Know Task⁶



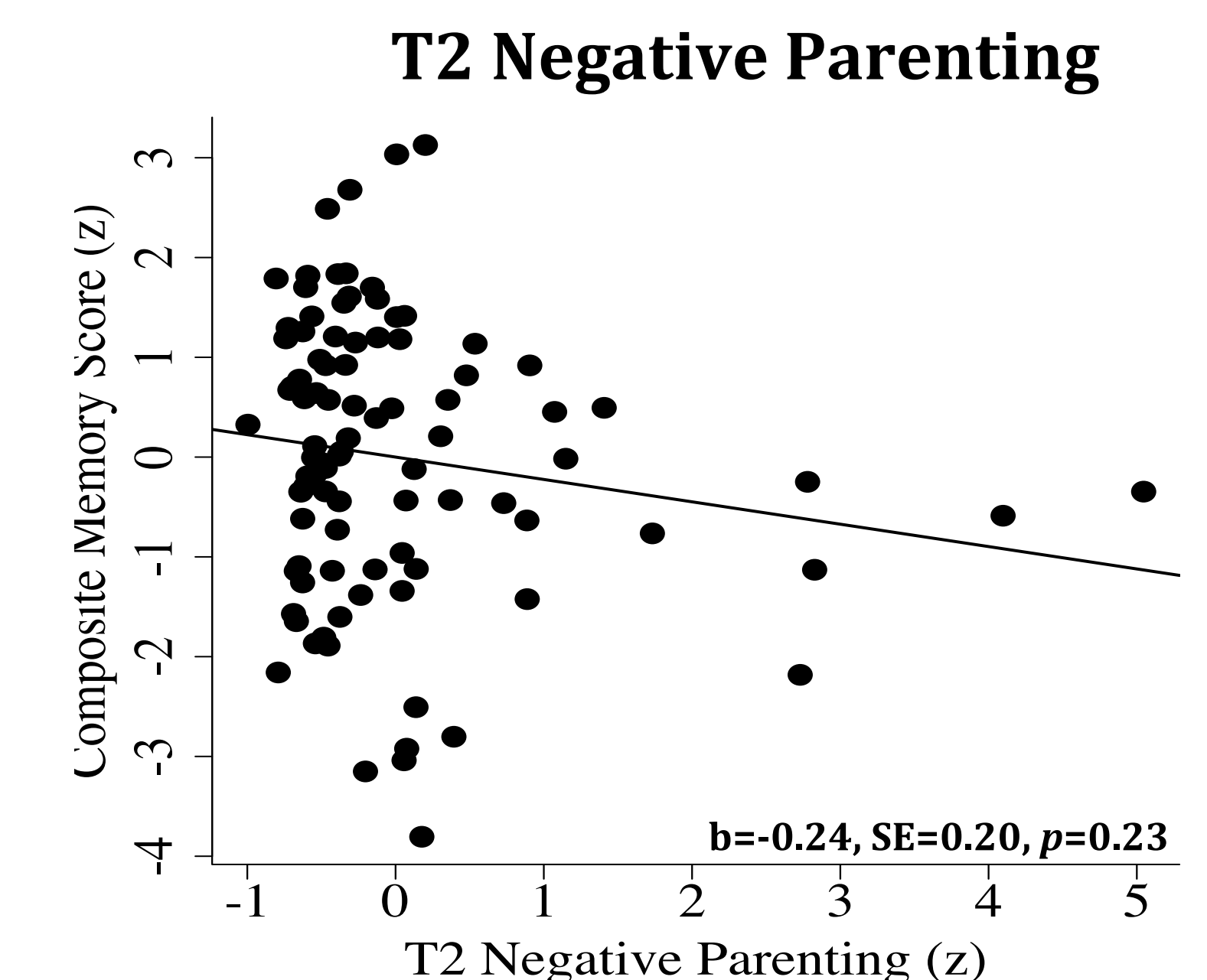
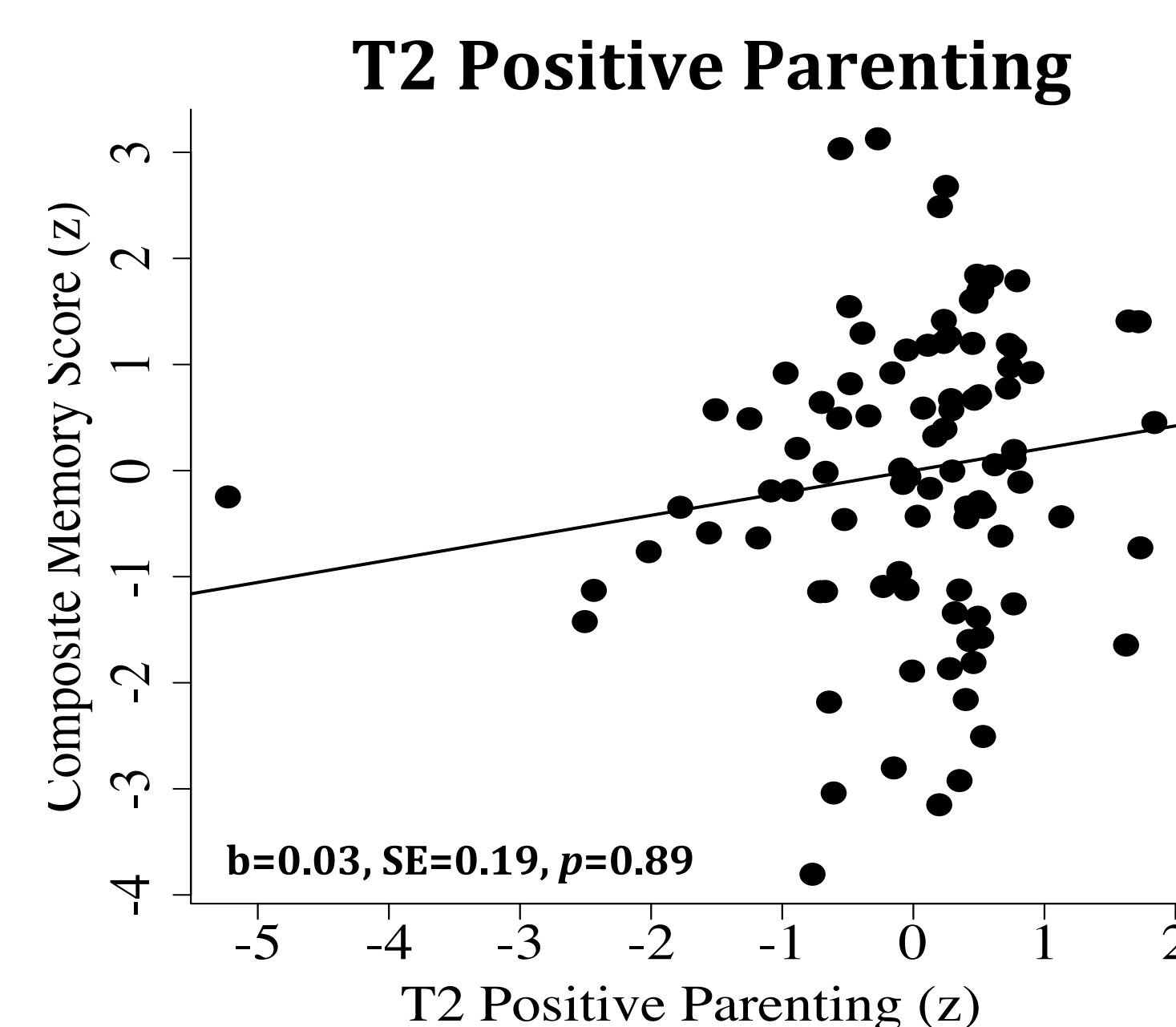
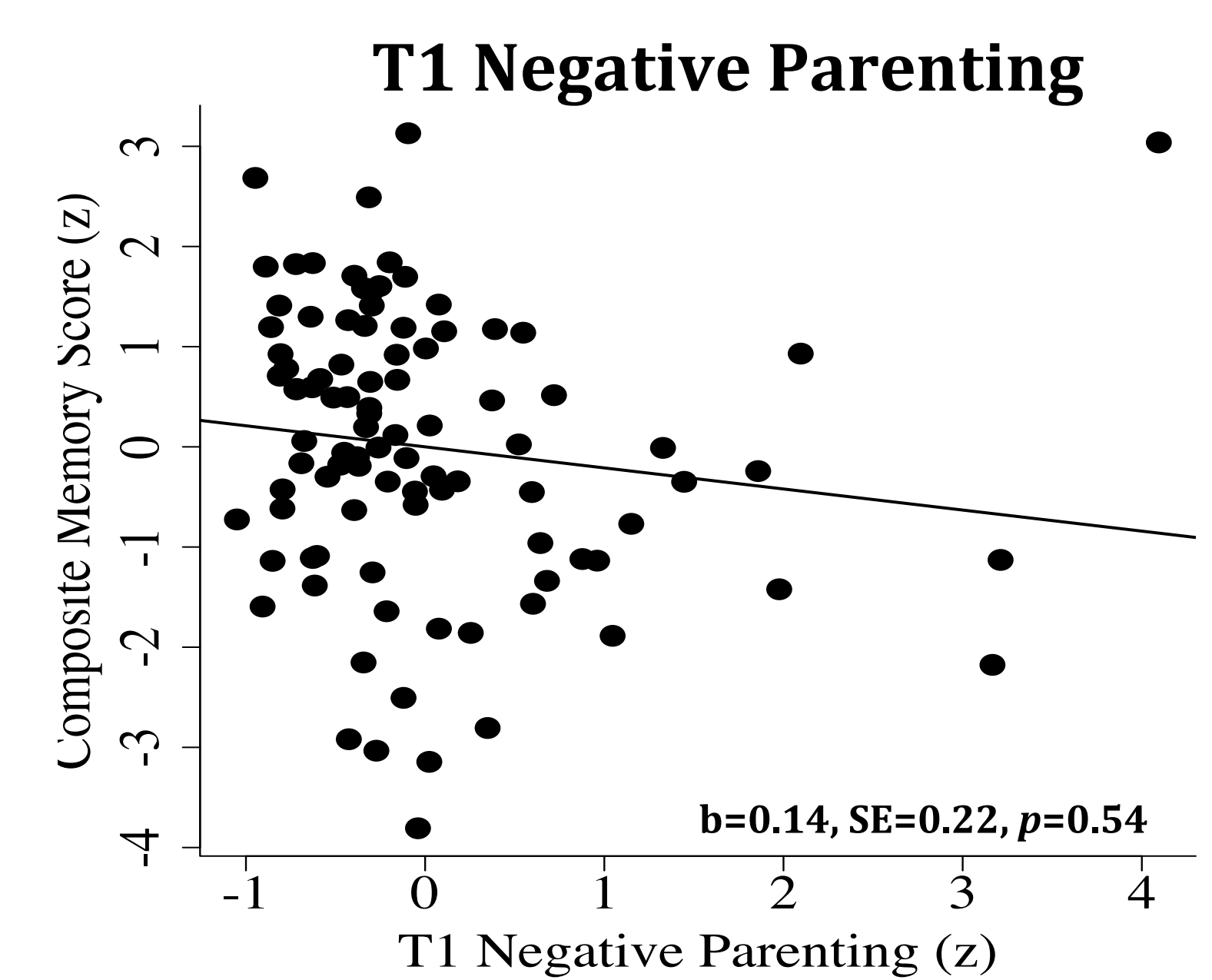
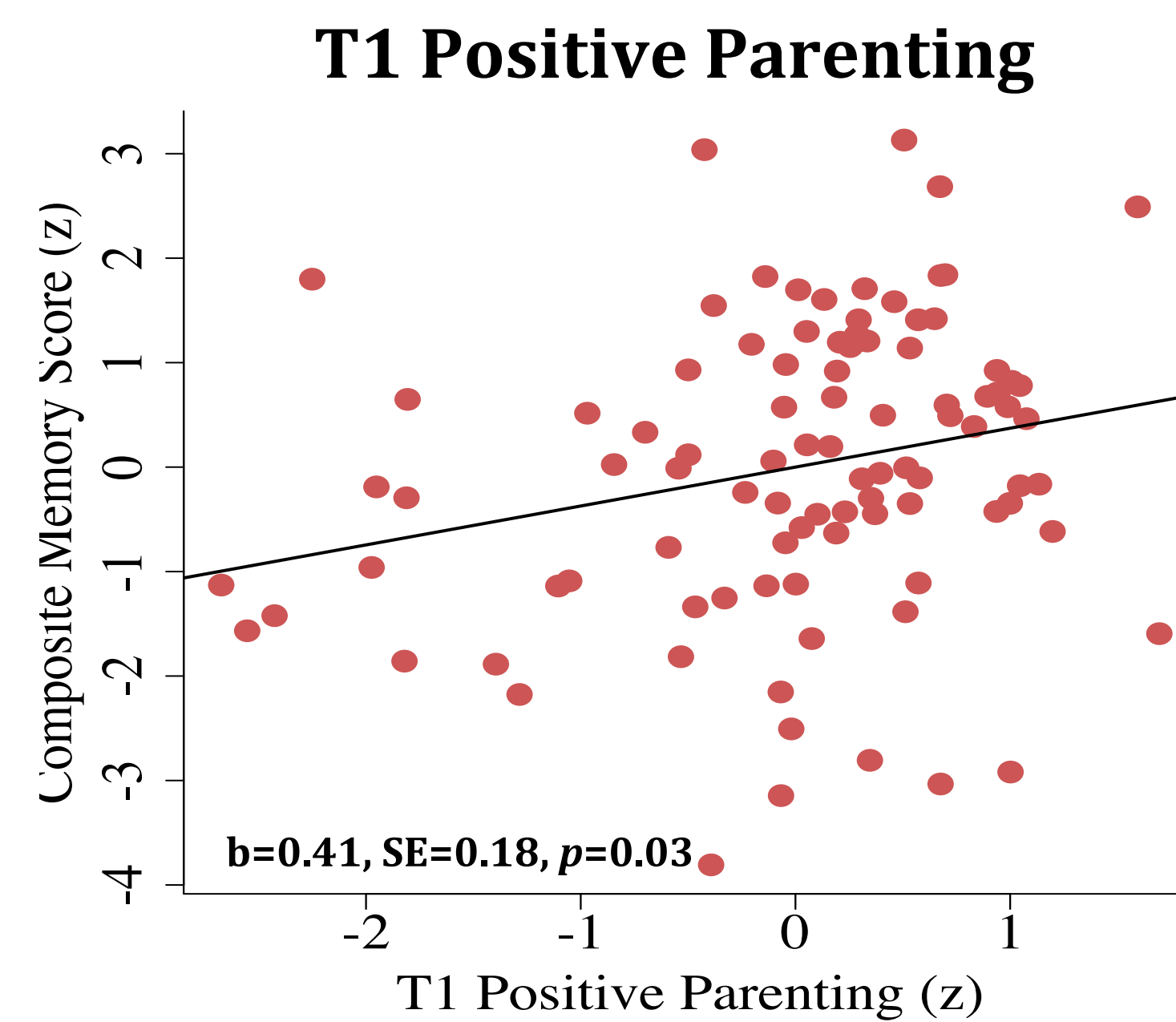
Feature Binding Task⁷



Results

Parenting & Memory

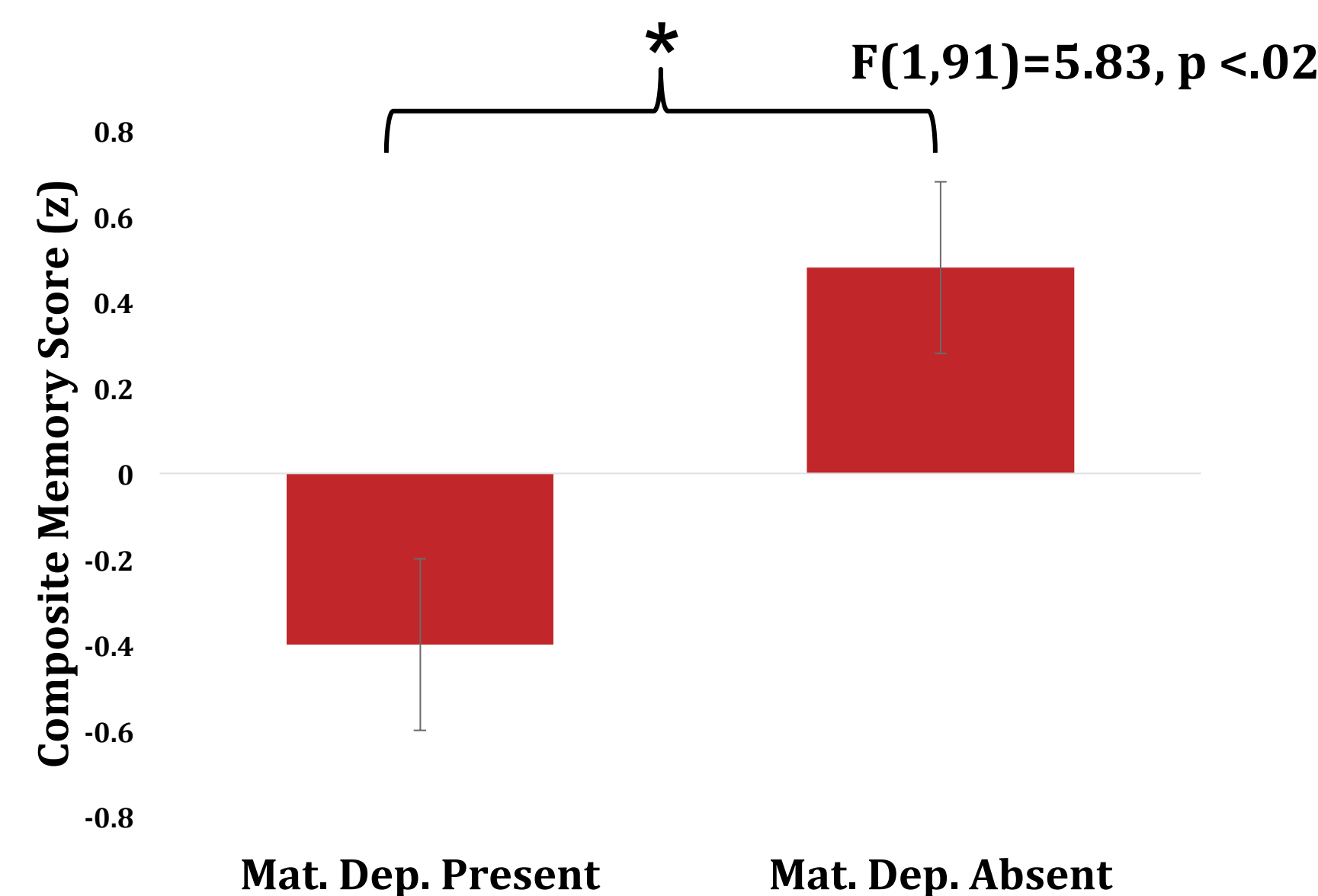
- T1/T2 Positive and Negative Parenting were entered as predictors in a multiple regression to test associations between parenting and composite memory scores.
 - Covariates: T1 general cognitive ability, T2 child age
 - T1 Positive Parenting was the only significant predictor of memory performance.



Depression & Memory

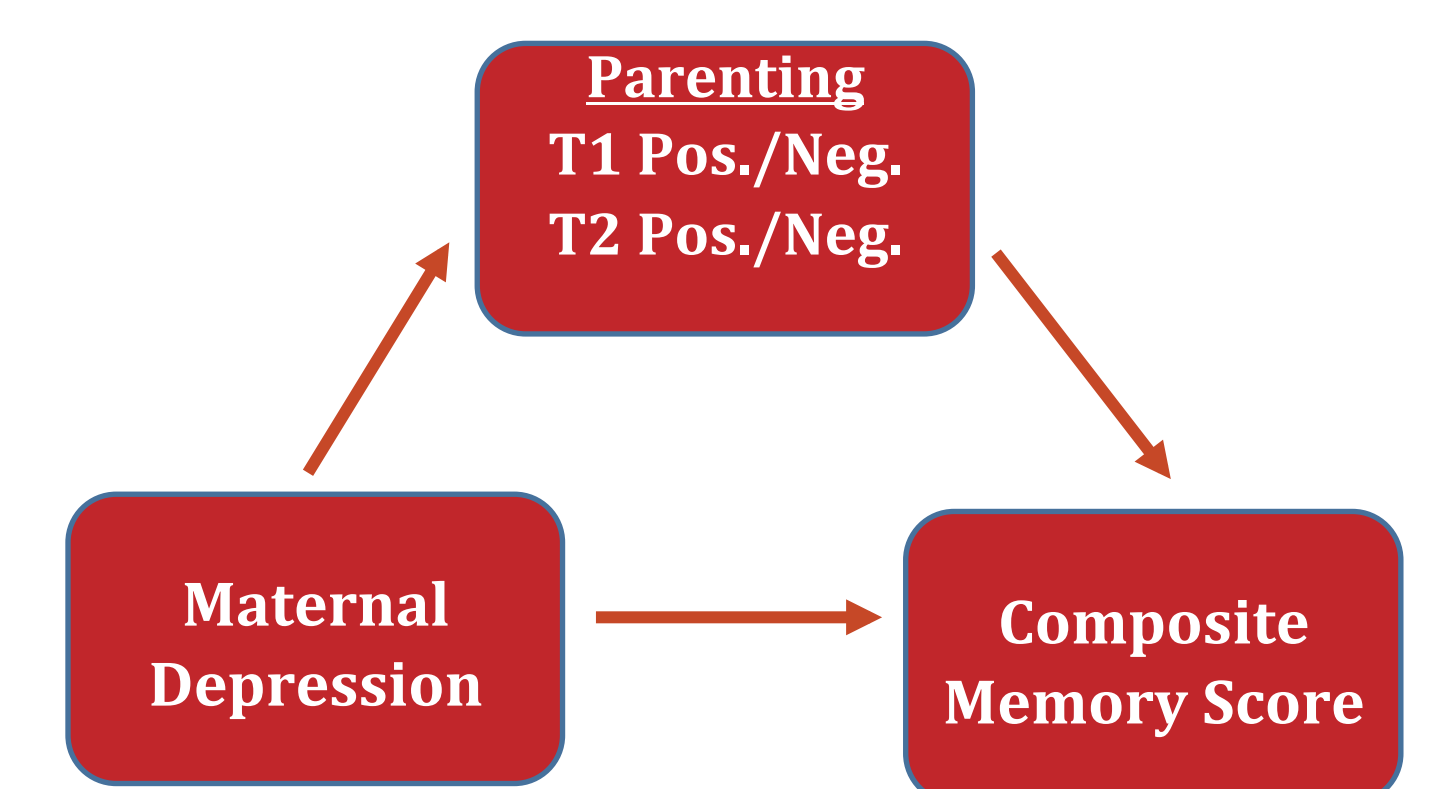
An ANCOVA was run to assess memory differences between children of mothers with and without a history of depression.

- Covariates: T1 general cognitive ability, T2 child age



Mediation & Moderation

No significant mediating or moderating effect between parenting and maternal depression predicting children's memory.



Take-Home Message:

Early positive parenting and maternal depression exert independent influences on children's memory ability. Early positive parenting positively impacts memory while maternal depression negatively impacts memory.

Discussion

- Results suggest that the timing and type of parenting is important for memory development, where early positive parenting exerts a particularly strong influence on memory.
- Future research would benefit from exploring mechanisms that link parenting and maternal depression to memory in children.
- Once this link has been elucidated, research can focus on deriving interventions to target children who may be at an increased risk of memory impairments.

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Acknowledgements

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