

The role of mother and father attachment in children's socioemotional adjustment: A Bayesian model comparison approach

Claudio Zandonella Callegher, Tatiana Marci & Gianmanrico Altoè
Department of Developmental and Social Psychology, University of Padua

The Present Study

Theoretical background:

- **Attachment relationships** play a key role in children's socioemotional adjustment (Cassidy & Shaver, 2016; Madigan, et al., 2016).
- Both **mother** and **father attachment** are considered important. However, research to date has largely focused on mother-child attachment.

Objectives:

- Evaluate the contribution of mother and father attachment to children's socioemotional-adjustment in middle childhood.
- Simultaneously compare different theoretical perspectives within a Bayesian model comparison approach.

Method

Participants: 166 children (54% girls) were recruited from Italian primary schools (45% 3rd grade, 55% 4th grade).

Instruments:

- **Security Scale** (SS; Kerns et al., 2001); Self-report measuring attachment towards mother and father separately.
- **Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire** (SDQ; Goodman, 2001); School teachers evaluated children's internalizing and externalizing problems.
- **Family Affluence Scale** (FAS; Boyce, et al., 2006); Self-report for measuring socioeconomic status.

Results

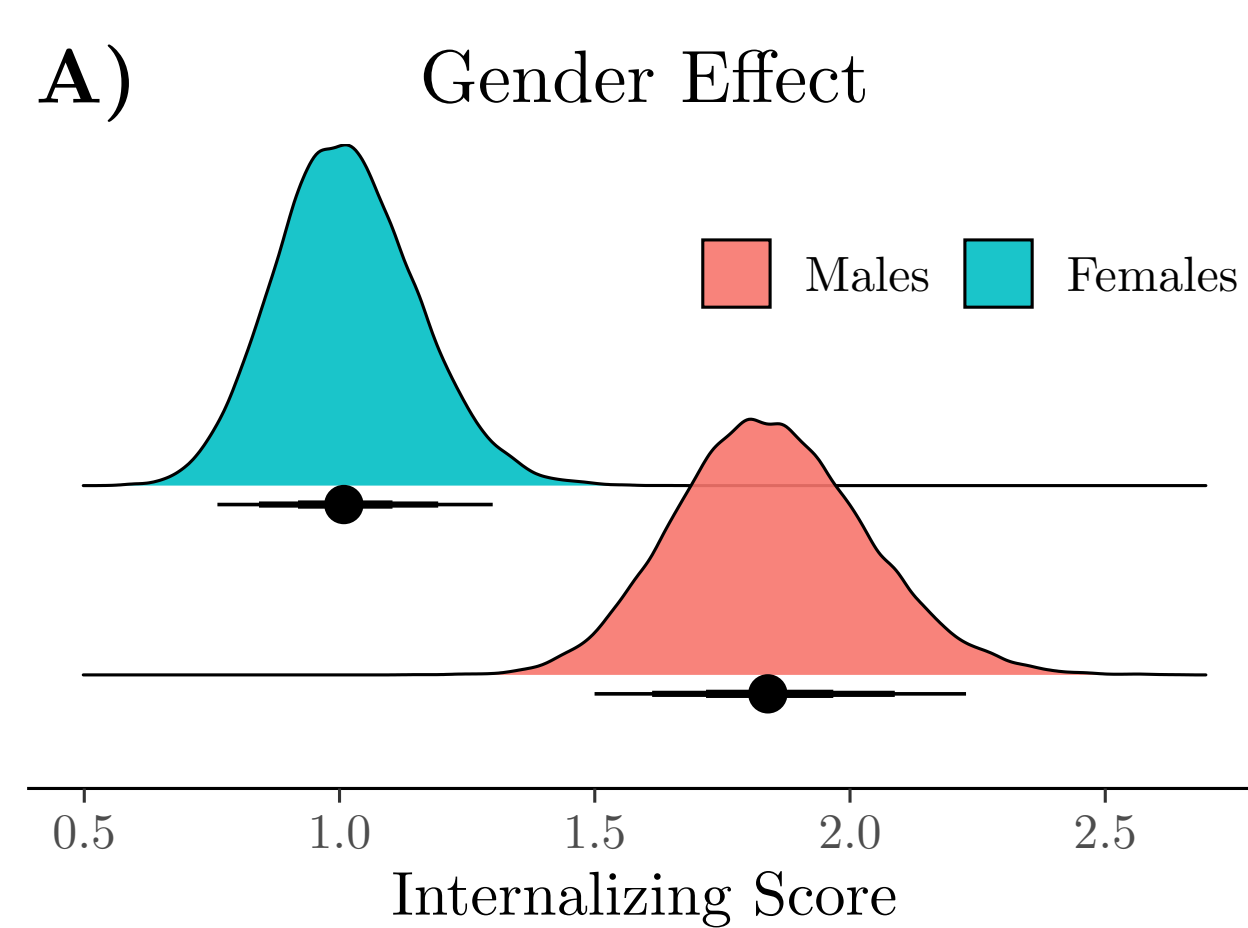
• Model comparison

Weights for internalizing and externalizing problems

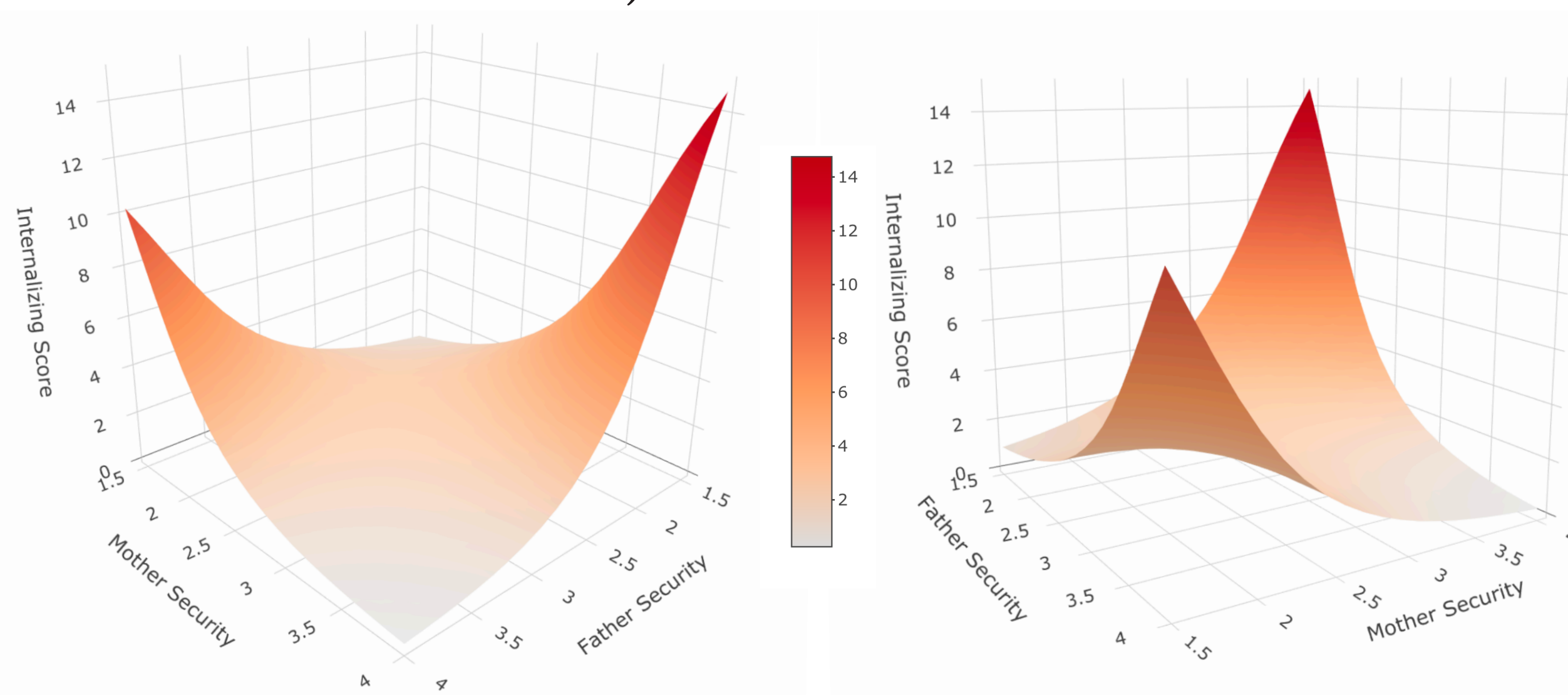
Model	Variables	Int_w	Ext_w	Int	Ext
Base	Gender+Grade+FAS	0.00	0.00	○	○
Mother	Base+SS mother	0.00	0.90	○	●
Father	Base+SS father	0.34	0.00	●	○
Additive	Base+SS mother+SS father	0.03	0.10	○	○
Interaction	Base+(SS mother*SS father)	0.63	0.00	●	○



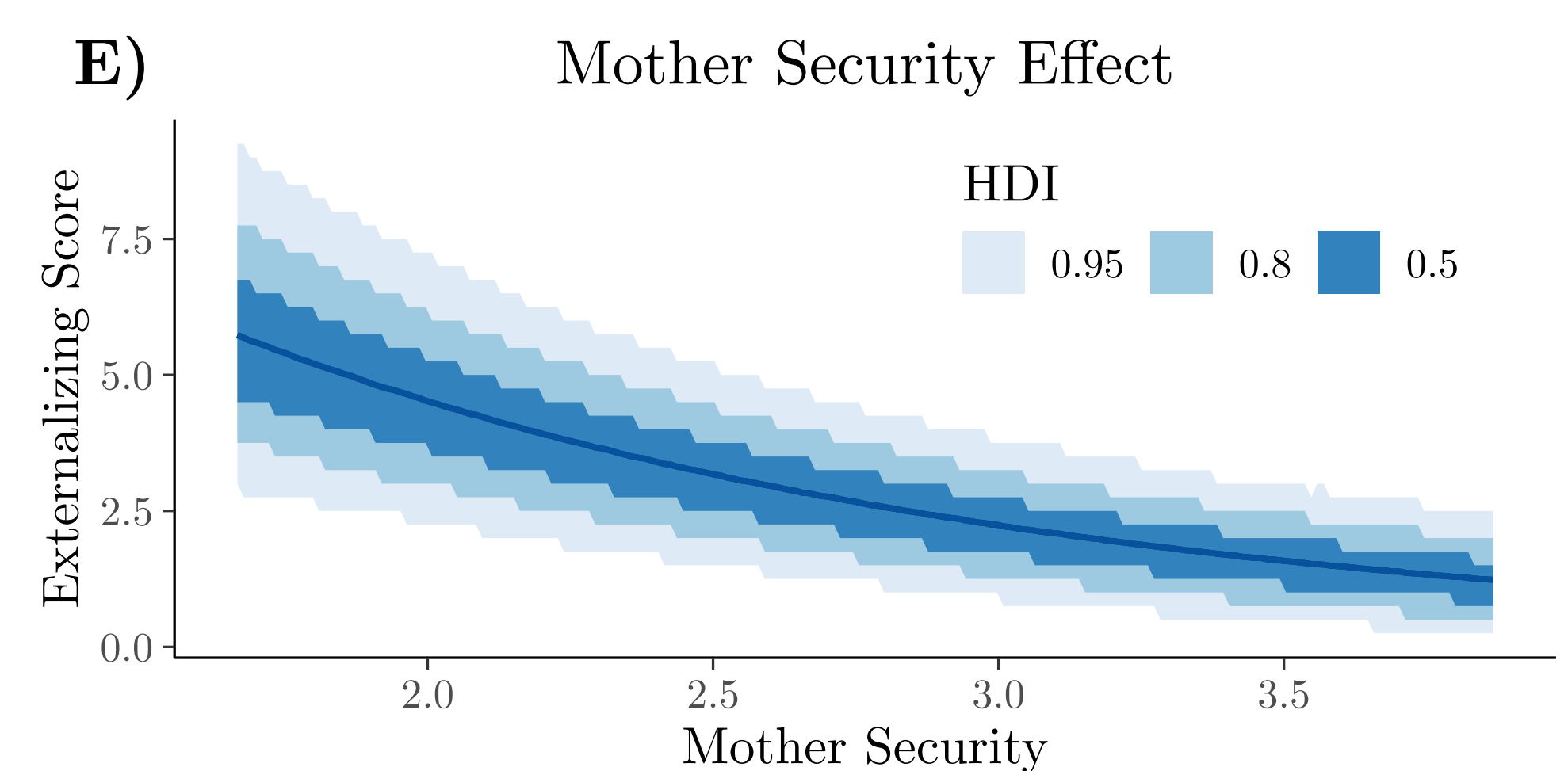
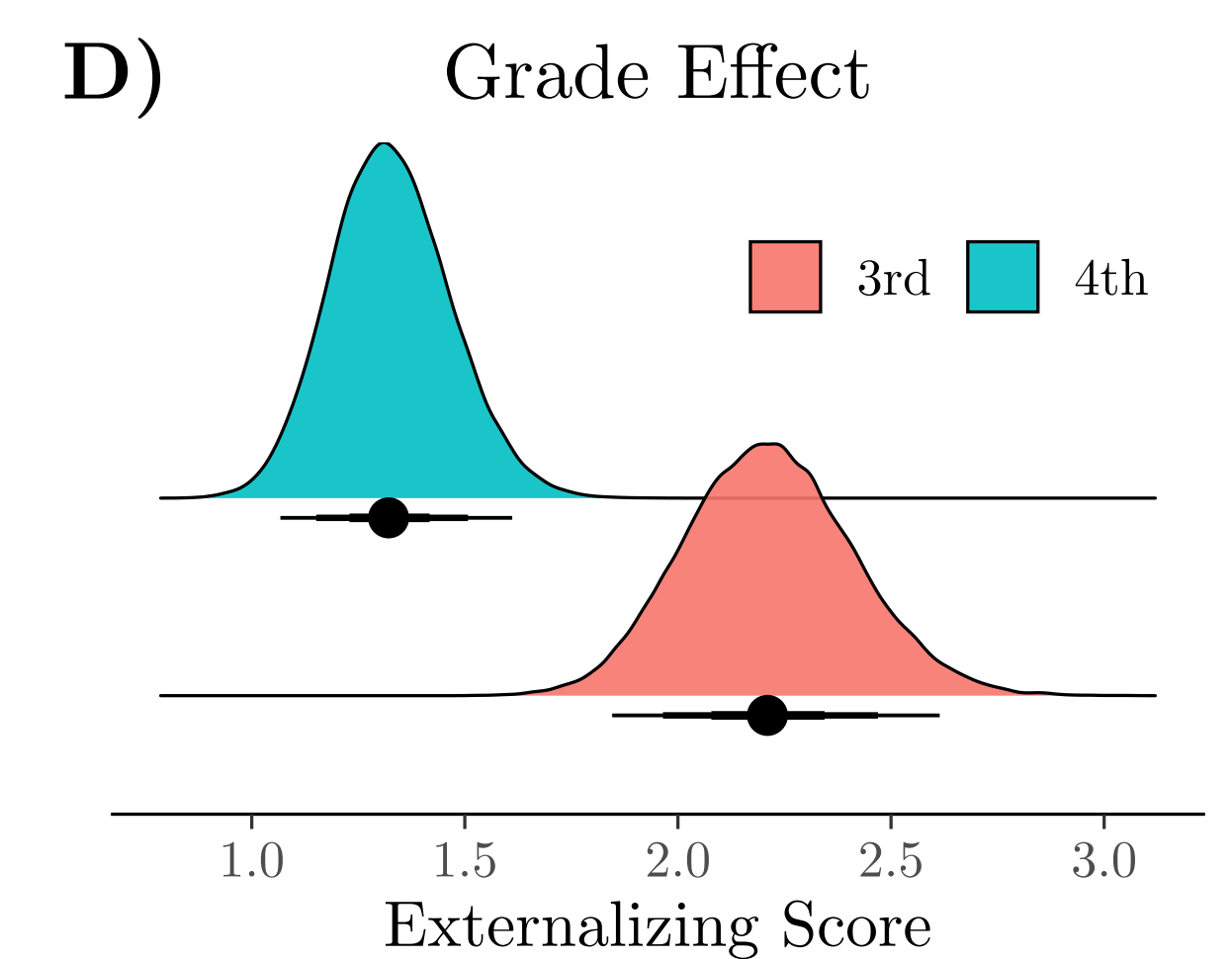
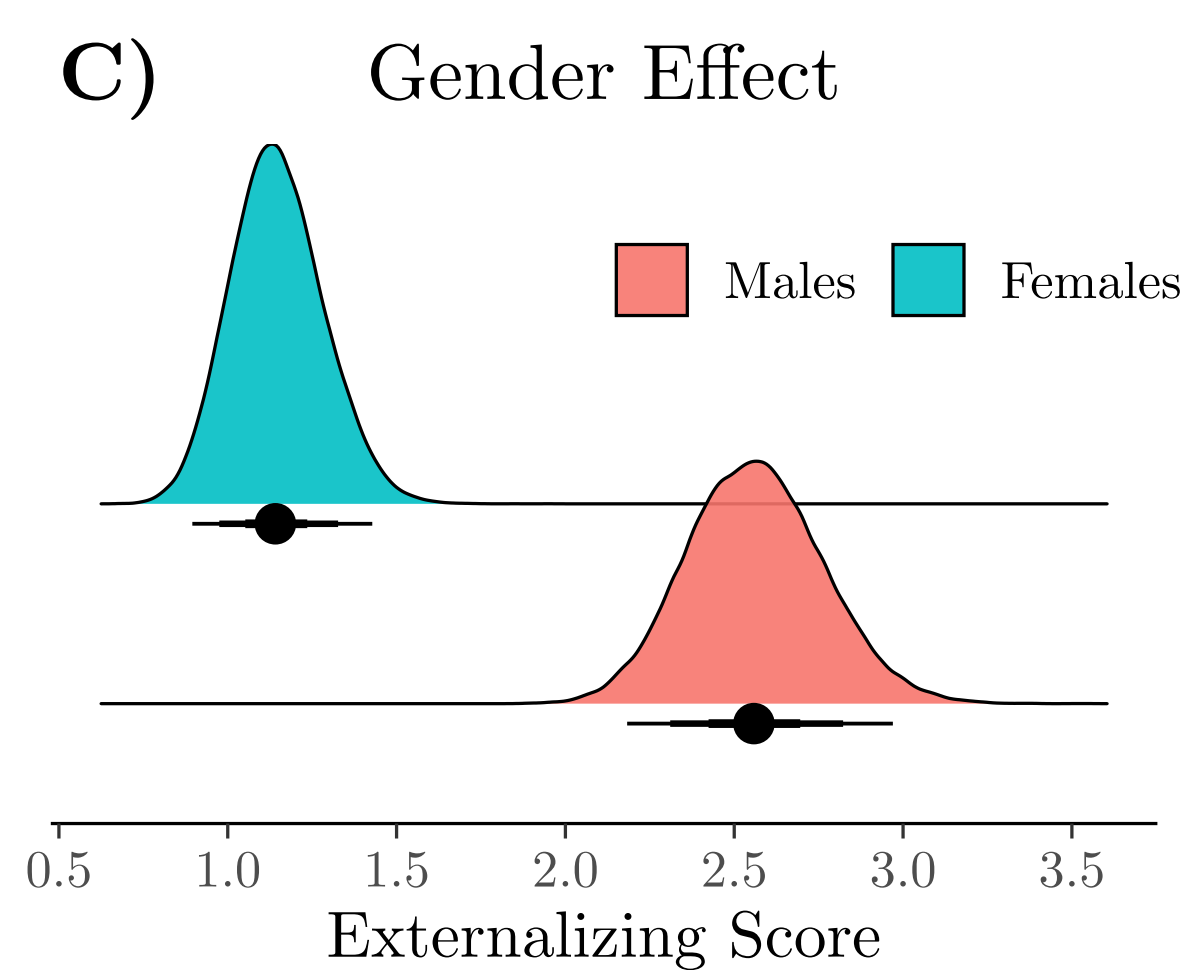
• Internalizing



B) Interaction Effect



• Externalizing



Conclusions

Father and mother attachment play a complementary role in children's socioemotional adjustment.

- **Internalizing Problems:** boys have more problems than girls. Greater discrepancy between maternal and paternal levels of security are associated with more problems.

- **Externalizing Problems:** boys have more problems than girls. Younger children have more problems than older children. Low levels of maternal security are associated with more problems.