

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

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## 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% 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 55% 4<sup>th</sup> grade).

### Instruments:


- **Security Scale (SS;** Kerns et al., 2001); Self-report measuring attachment towards mother and father separately.
- **Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ;** Goodman & Goodman, 2009); School teachers evaluated children's internalizing and externalizing problems.
- **Family Affluence Scale (FAS;** Boyce, et al., 2006); Self-report for measuring socioeconomic status.

## Results

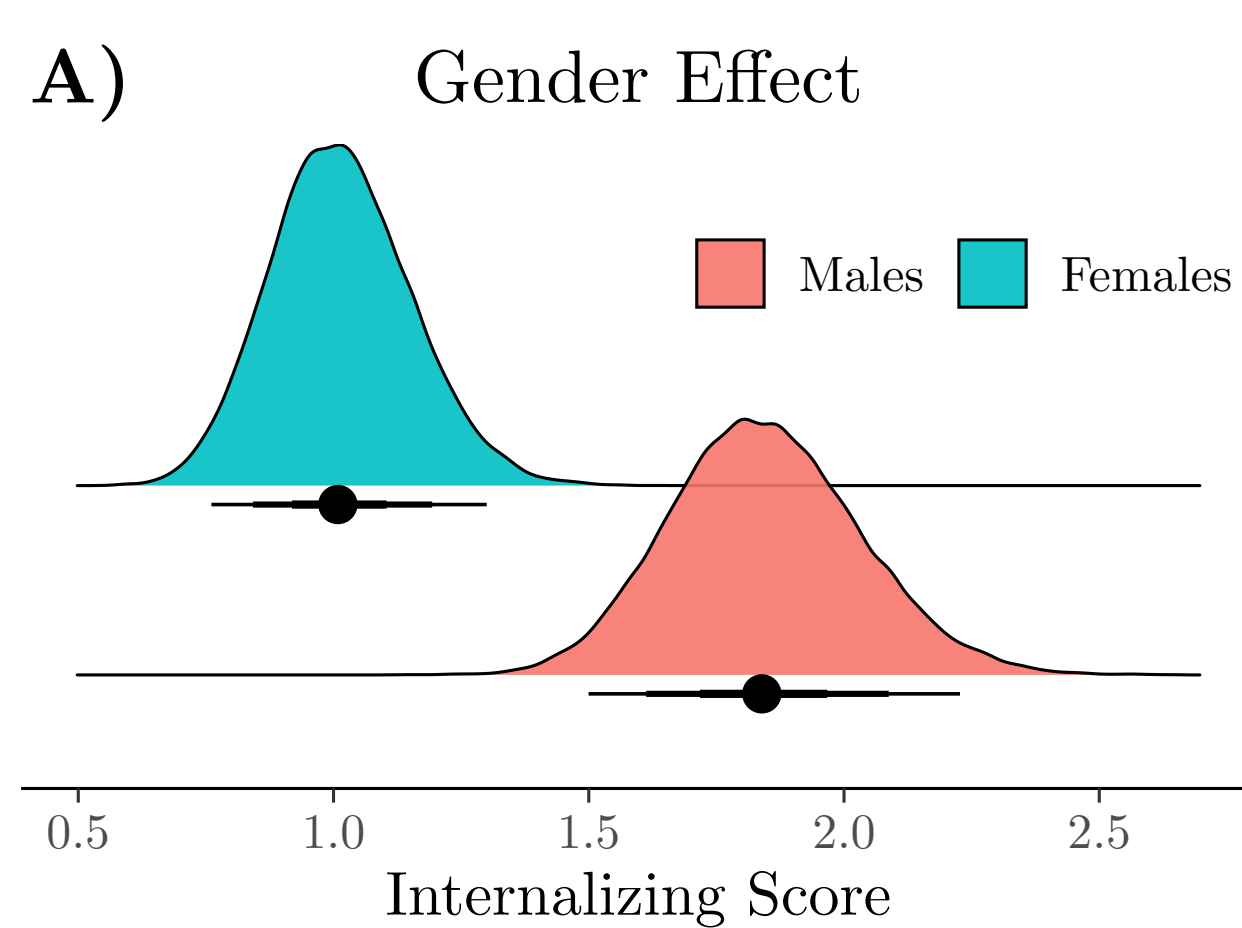
### • Model comparison

#### Weights for internalizing and externalizing problems

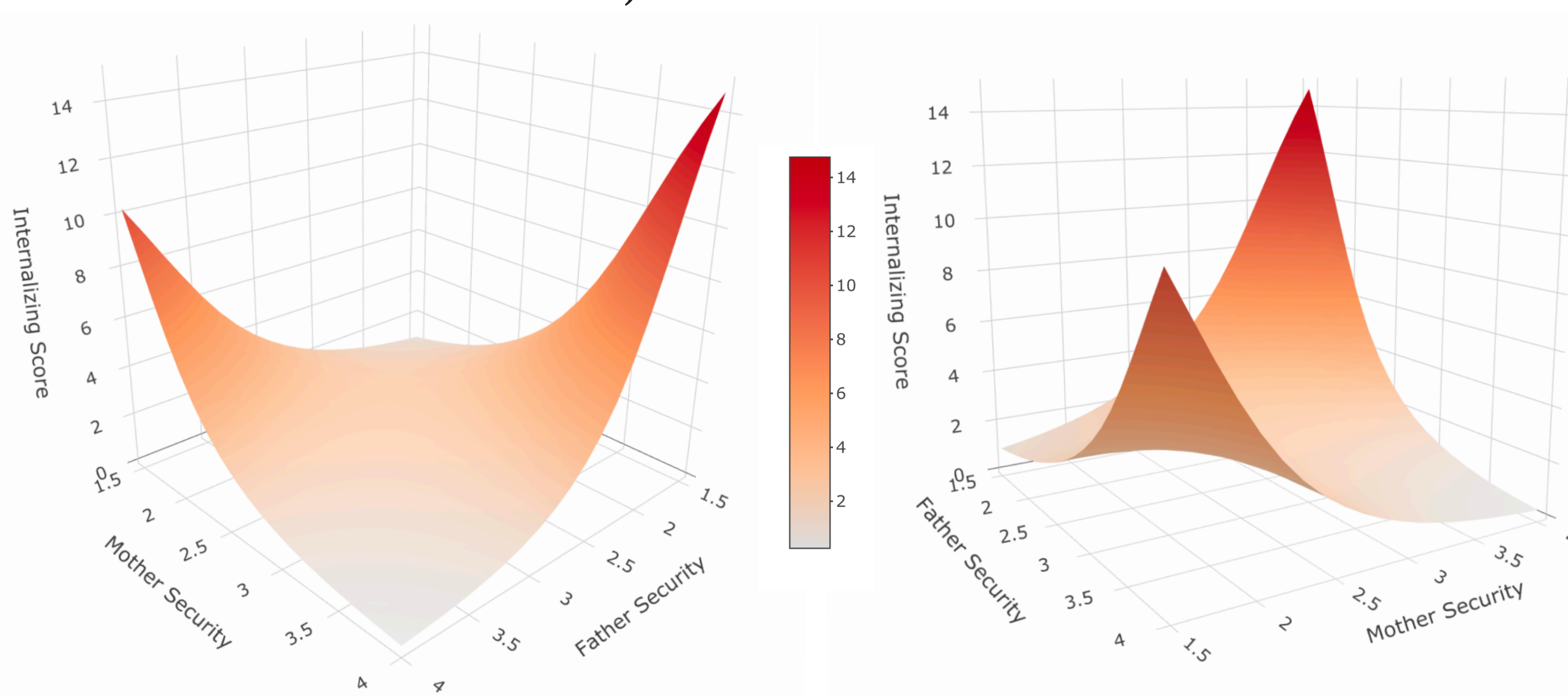
Model	Variables	$Int_w$	$Ext_w$	Int	Ext
Base	Gender+Grade+FAS	0.00	0.00	○	○
Mother	Base+SS mother	0.00	0.90	○	●
Father	Base+SS father	0.34	0.00	●	○
Additive	Base+SS mother+SS father	0.03	0.10	○	○
Interaction	Base+(SS mother*SS father)	0.63	0.00	●	○



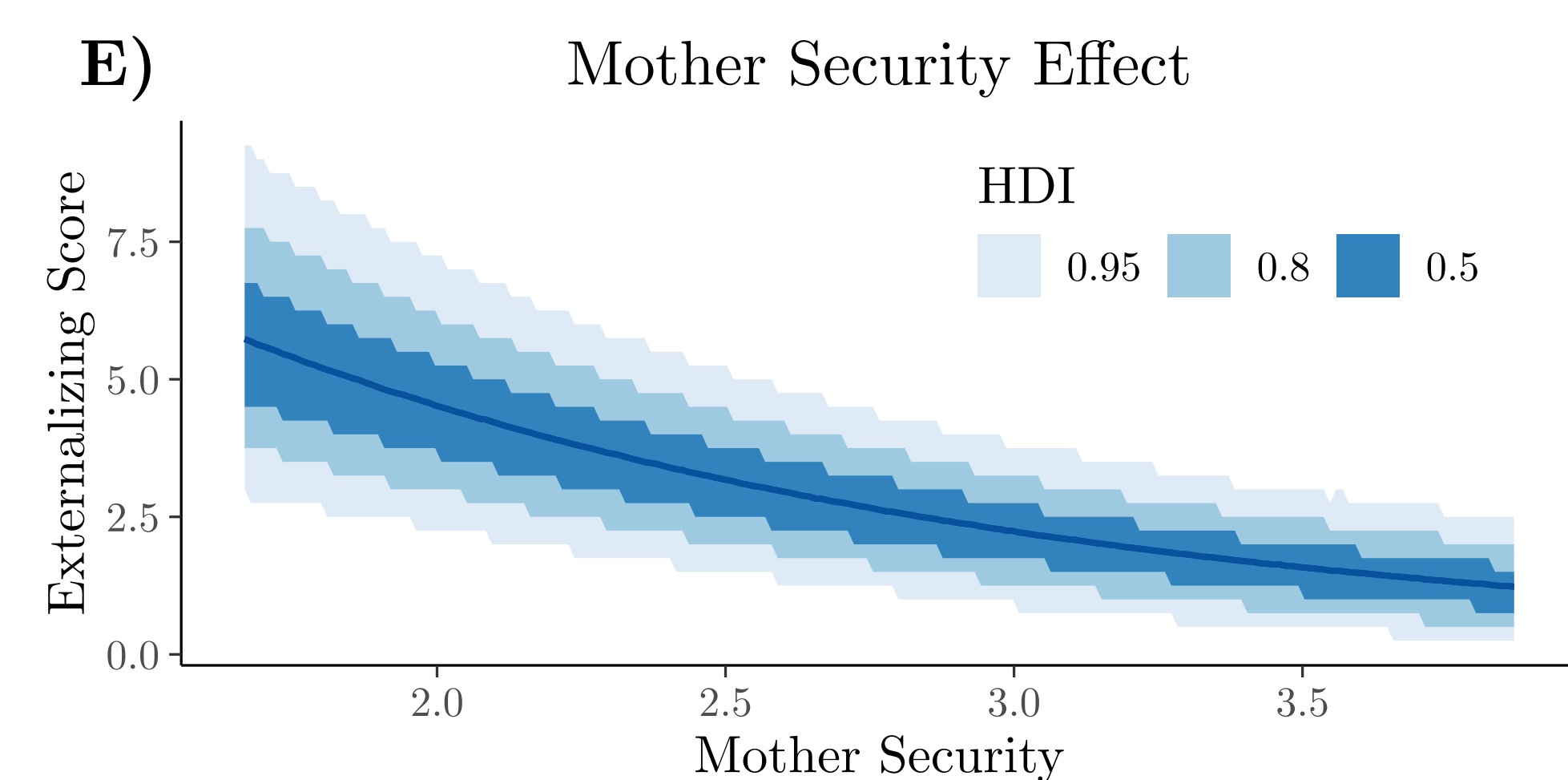
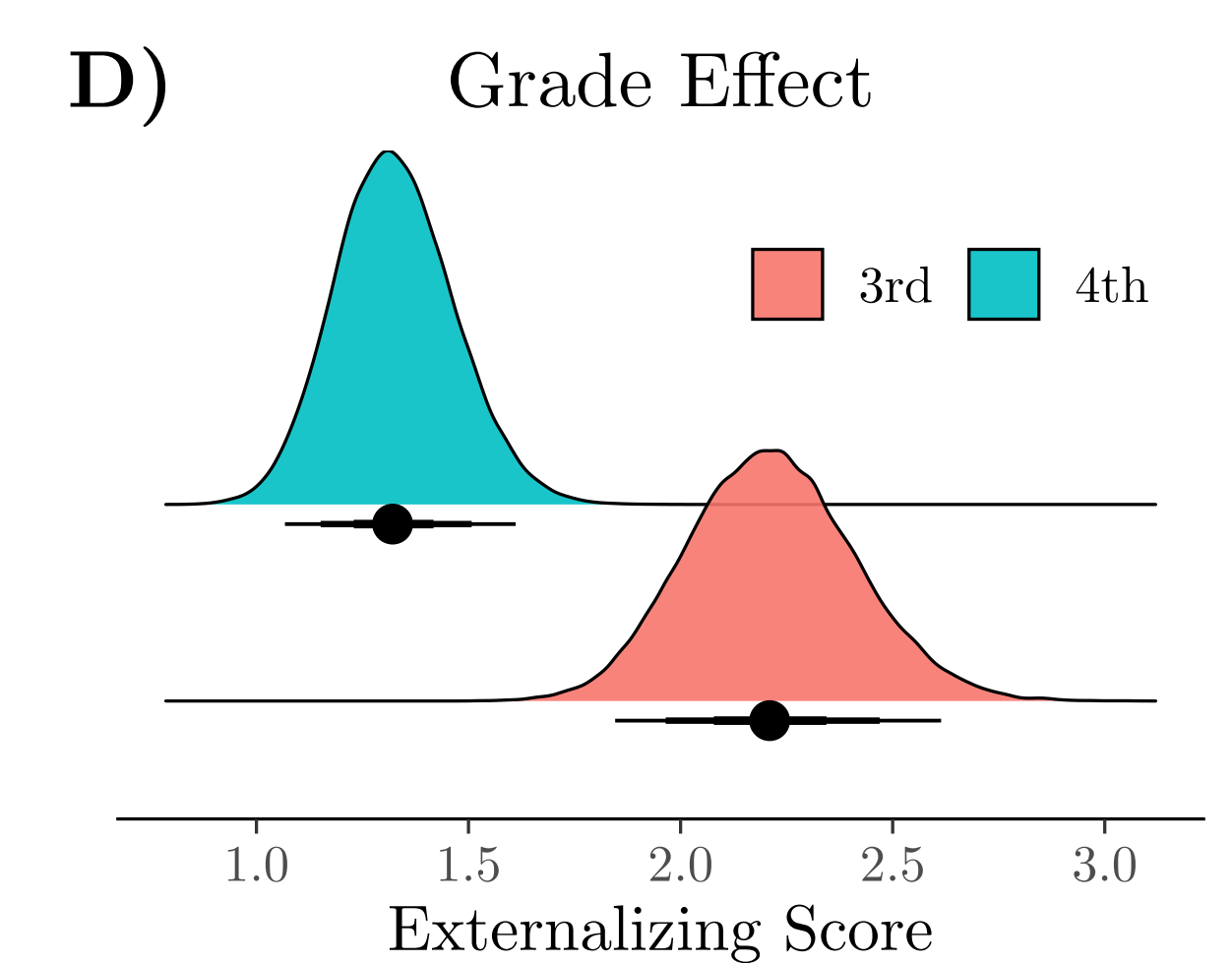
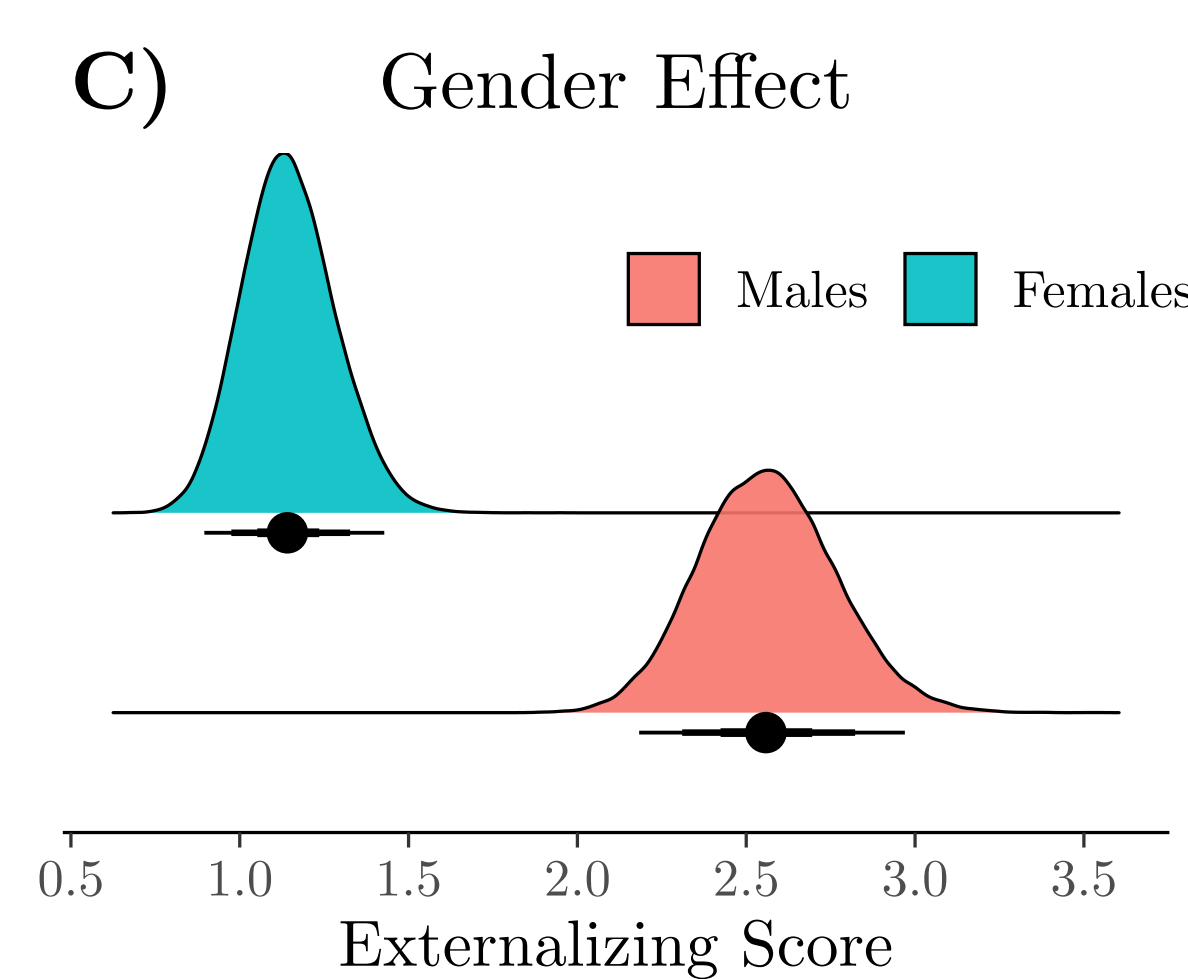

### • Internalizing



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.