



The Association between Parental Alcohol Abuse and the Presence and Severity of Social Phobia

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Introduction

- Individuals in the US with social phobia often experience symptoms that are debilitating to everyday life. With 29.9% experiencing serious impairment, 38.8% experiencing moderate impairment, and 31.3% experiencing mild impairment (National Institute of Mental Health, 2003)
- Alcohol abuse and social phobia are comorbidities. Those with social phobia tend to drink to self-medicate and reduce symptoms, and those with alcohol abuse issues are more susceptible to developing social phobias (Abrams et al., 2001; Stein et al., 2008; Ronchi & Serretti, 2007).
- A parent with a history of alcohol abuse increases the risk of a child developing a mental or behavioral disorder by the age of 15 (Raitasalo et al., 2018) and can impact the likelihood and severity of a child developing the same alcohol disorder (Kosty et al., 2019).

Research Question

How does parental alcohol abuse affect the presence and severity of social phobia in their children?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents (40,374) from the NESARC dataset include: 3.1% with both parents with an alcohol abuse history, 16.8% had a father only, 2.1% had a mother only, and 77.9% had neither parent.
- 57% were female, and 13% presented with social phobia.

Measures

- Parental alcohol history:** Based on a binary question about a biological parent being a problem drinker.
- Social phobia presence:** Based on 3 binary questions about experiencing social phobia. Respondents must have answered yes to all three questions to be classified as experiencing social phobia.
- Social phobia severity:** A score based on a series of 21 questions describing different symptoms of social phobia.

Social Phobia Presence

- The presence of social phobia differed significantly across parental alcohol groups. $\chi^2=326.55$, 3 df, $p<.0001$
- Post hoc comparisons of the levels of Parental Alcohol history showed significant differences between all groups except between father-only and mother-only affected groups.

Results

Figure 1: Social Phobia Presence by Parental Alcohol Abuse History

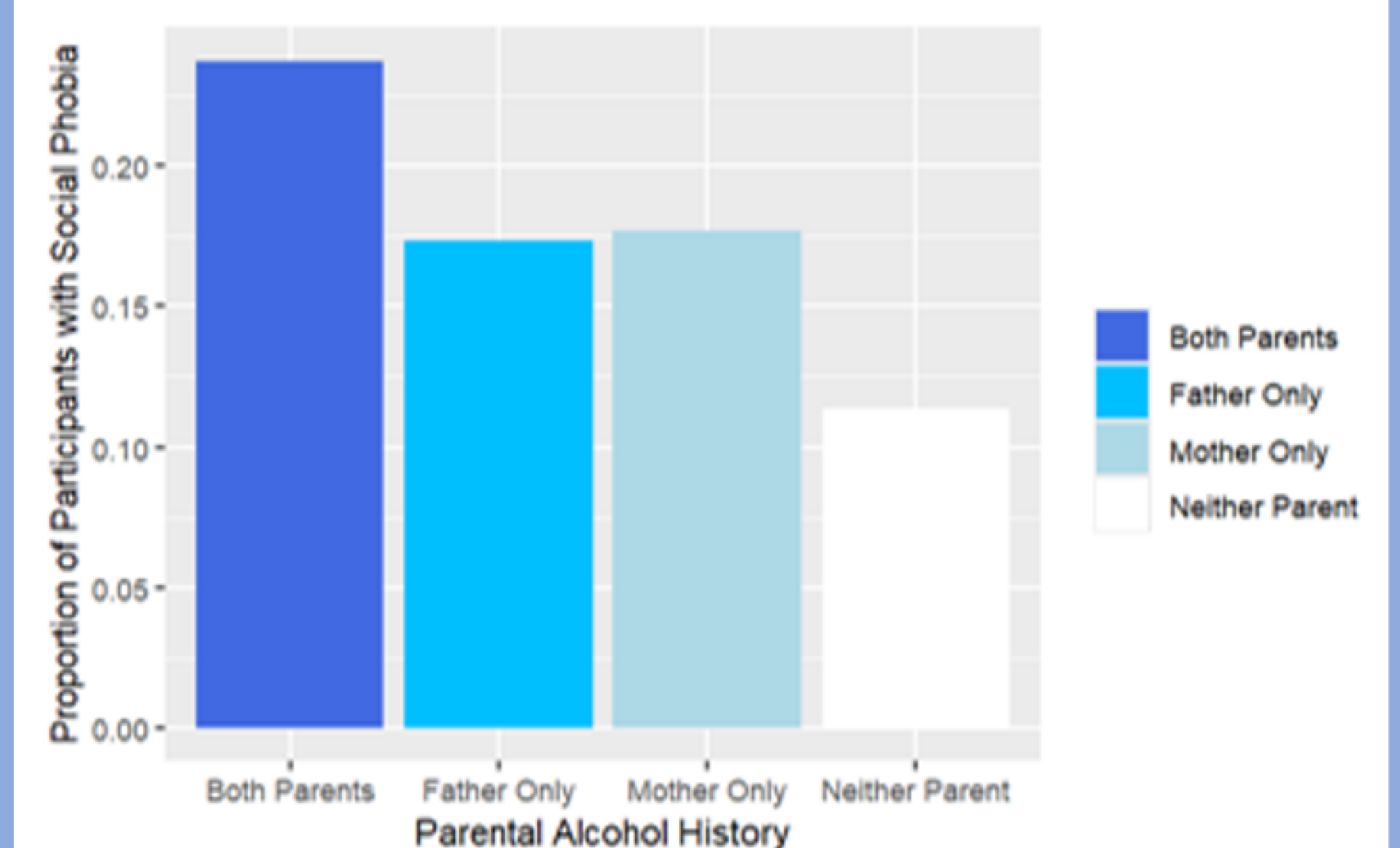
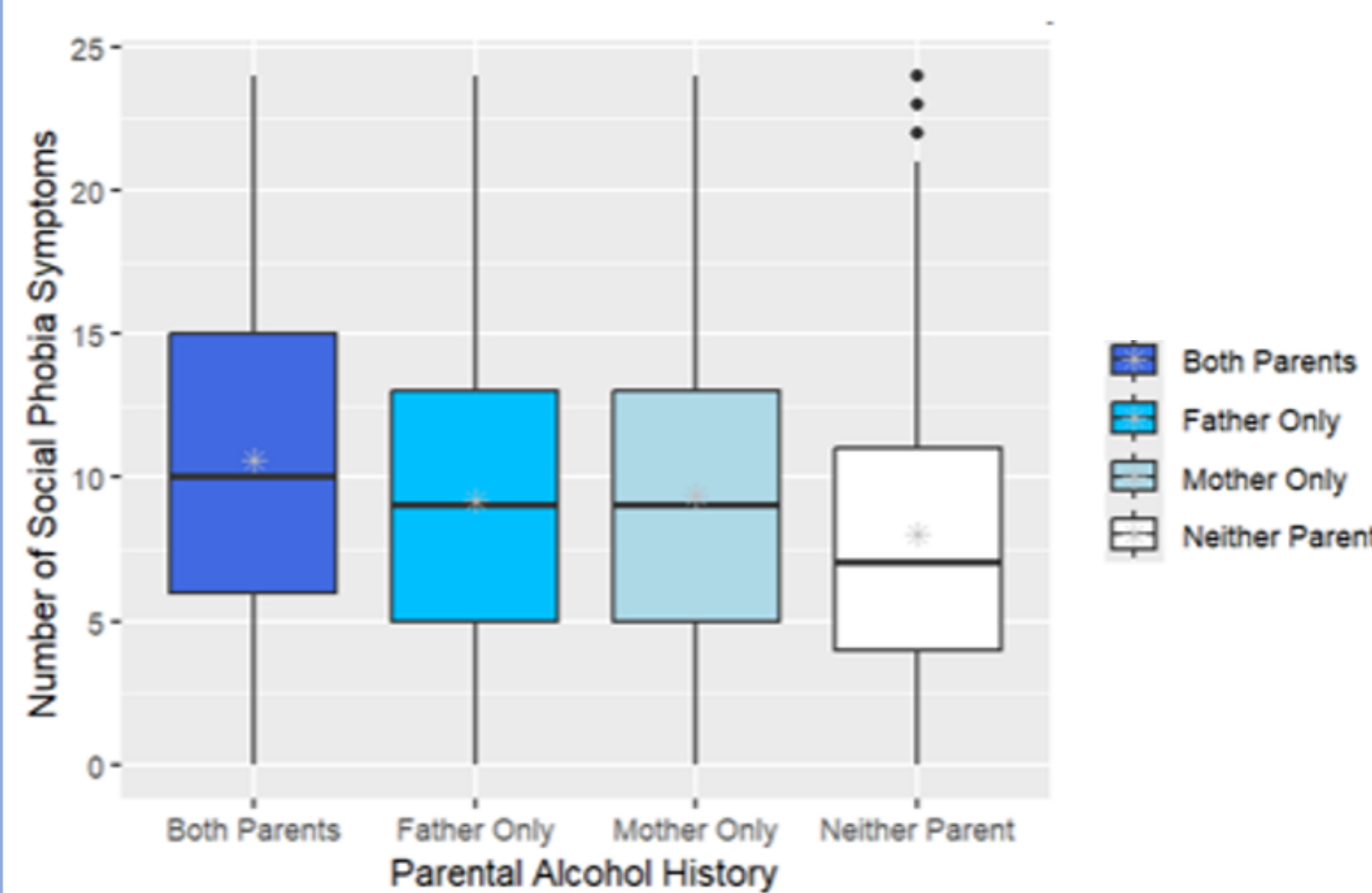


Figure 2: Social Phobia Scores by Parental Alcohol Abuse History



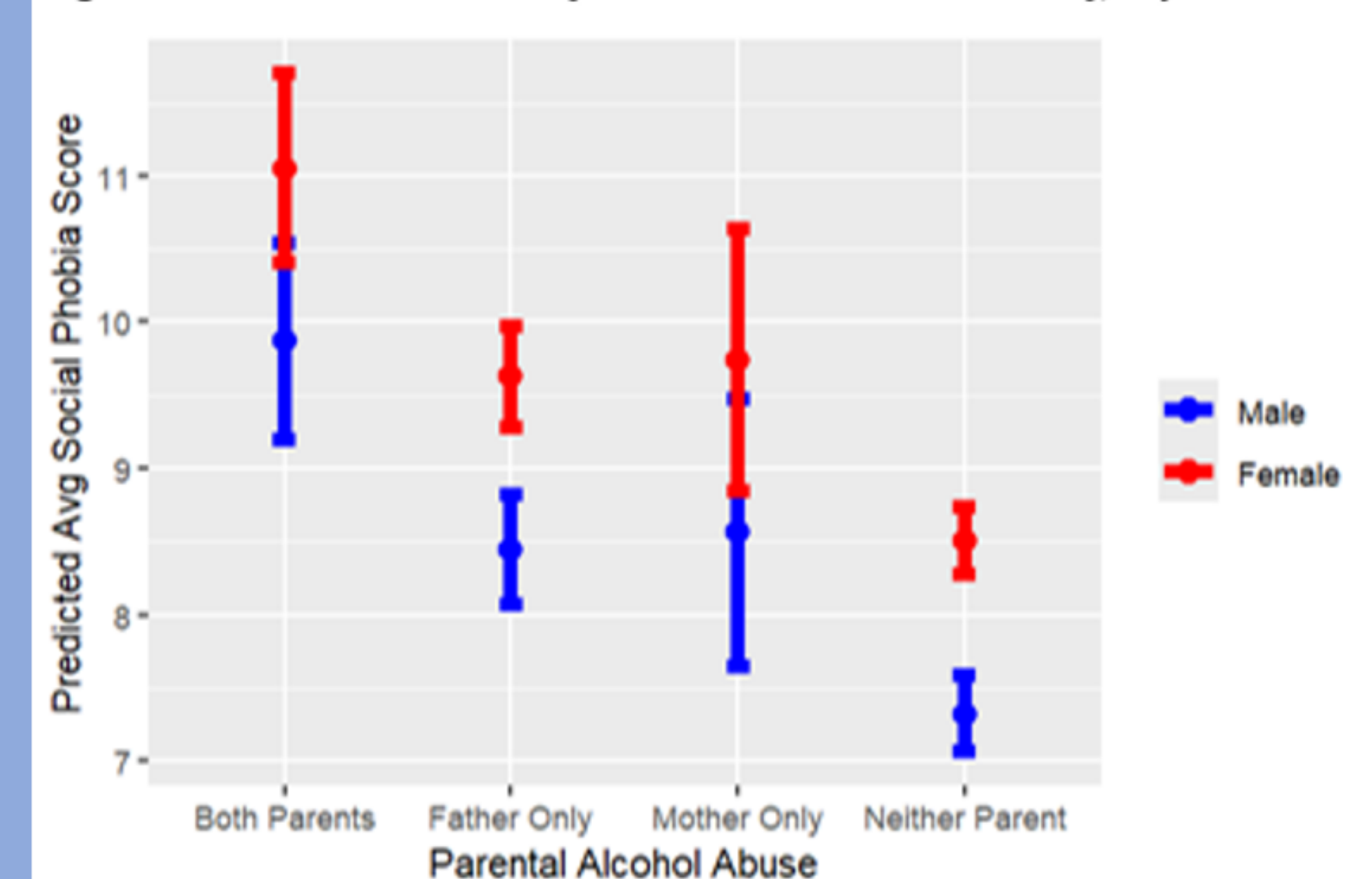
Social Phobia Severity

- Social phobia scores differed significantly by parental alcohol abuse history among those with social phobia, $F(3, 4744)=29.75$, $p<.001$.
- Post hoc Tukey comparisons indicated the following:
 - “Both Parents” > “Father Only” $p=.0004$
 - “Both Parents” > “Neither Parent” $p<.0001$
 - “Father Only” $p<.0001$ and “Mother Only” $p=.017$ > “Neither Parent”
 - No significant difference between “Father Only” and “Mother Only” $p=.119$

Parental Alcohol Abuse as a Predictor & Gender Impacts

- Parental alcohol abuse history was significantly associated with social phobia scores when controlled for gender.
- Compared to “Both Parents” :
 - “Father Only” scored lower (Beta=-1.42, CI [-2.14, -0.17], $p<.001$)
 - “Mother Only” scored lower (Beta=-1.31, CI [-2.40, -0.21], $p=0.20$)
 - “Neither Parent” scored lowest (Beta = -2.54, CI [-3.21, -1.88], $p<.001$)
- Gender was also a significant predictor: males scored lower on social phobia than females (Beta = -1.18, CI [-1.50, -0.87], $p<.001$).

Figure 3: Social Phobia Scores by Parental Alcohol Abuse History, Adjusted for Gender



Discussion

- Parental alcohol abuse is significantly associated with a higher presence and greater severity of social phobia symptoms in their children.
- There is an increased risk when both parents have alcohol abuse histories compared to one parent or no parent with an alcohol abuse history.
- Parental effects are consistent across genders; however, the increased presence and severity in females show additional risk factors for females
- Implications: Screening children of parents with alcohol abuse and providing early intervention may reduce social phobia severity and long-term impairment.