

## Background

- Adolescents with ASD tend to report higher social competence than their parents, although previous research has not uncovered the reasons for these discrepancies. Possible reasons for perceptual discrepancies may include poor adolescent self-awareness and insight, poor social cognition, and less social competence exhibited in the family environment as opposed to the social world. Moreover, parenting stress caused by adolescent externalizing behaviors may also contribute to perceptual differences regarding social functioning (Foley-Nicpon et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2009).
- The Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills (PEERS®) is an evidence based, social skills training intervention for adolescents with ASD, ADHD, anxiety, depression, and other socioemotional problems (Laugeson & Frankel, 2010). Previous research suggests significant improvement in adolescent social functioning (Laugeson et al., 2009; 2012); however, the extent to which adolescent- and parent-reports of social functioning following treatment has yet to be investigated.

## Research Objective

The purpose of this study was to examine the distinct perceptual differences of social functioning and treatment outcome across parent- and adolescent-reports following the PEERS® intervention.

## Methods

### PARTICIPANTS:

- 333 adolescents and their parents participated in the study
- Adolescent gender: 76% male ( $n=254$ ); 24% female ( $n=79$ )
- Adolescent age:  $M=13.9$ ,  $SD=1.8$ ; range of 11-18 years

### PROCEDURES:

Adolescents and parents attended weekly 90-minute PEERS® social skills groups over a 14-week period. Treatment sessions focused on making and keeping friends and handling peer conflict and rejection. Skills were taught using didactic instruction in a small group format which included role-playing demonstrations, behavioral rehearsal activities, weekly homework assignments.

## Measures

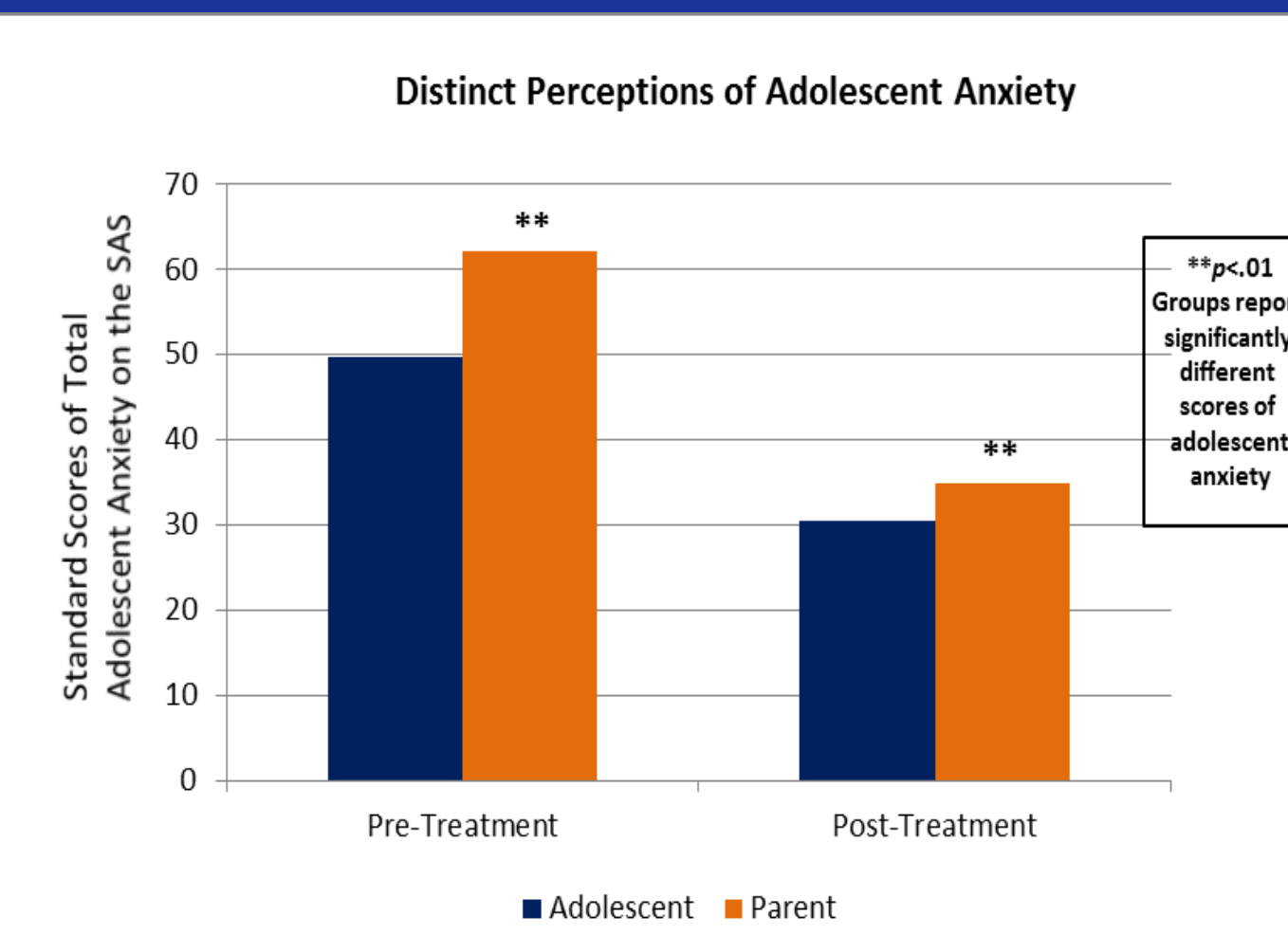
Social functioning was assessed through parent and adolescent self-report at pre- and post-treatment using:

- Social Anxiety Scale (SAS; La Greca, 1999) to assess adolescent anxiety
- Quality of Socialization Questionnaire (QSQ; Frankel & Mintz, 2008) to assess adolescent social engagement
- Empathy Quotient (EQ; Baron-Cohen, 2004) to assess adolescent empathic abilities

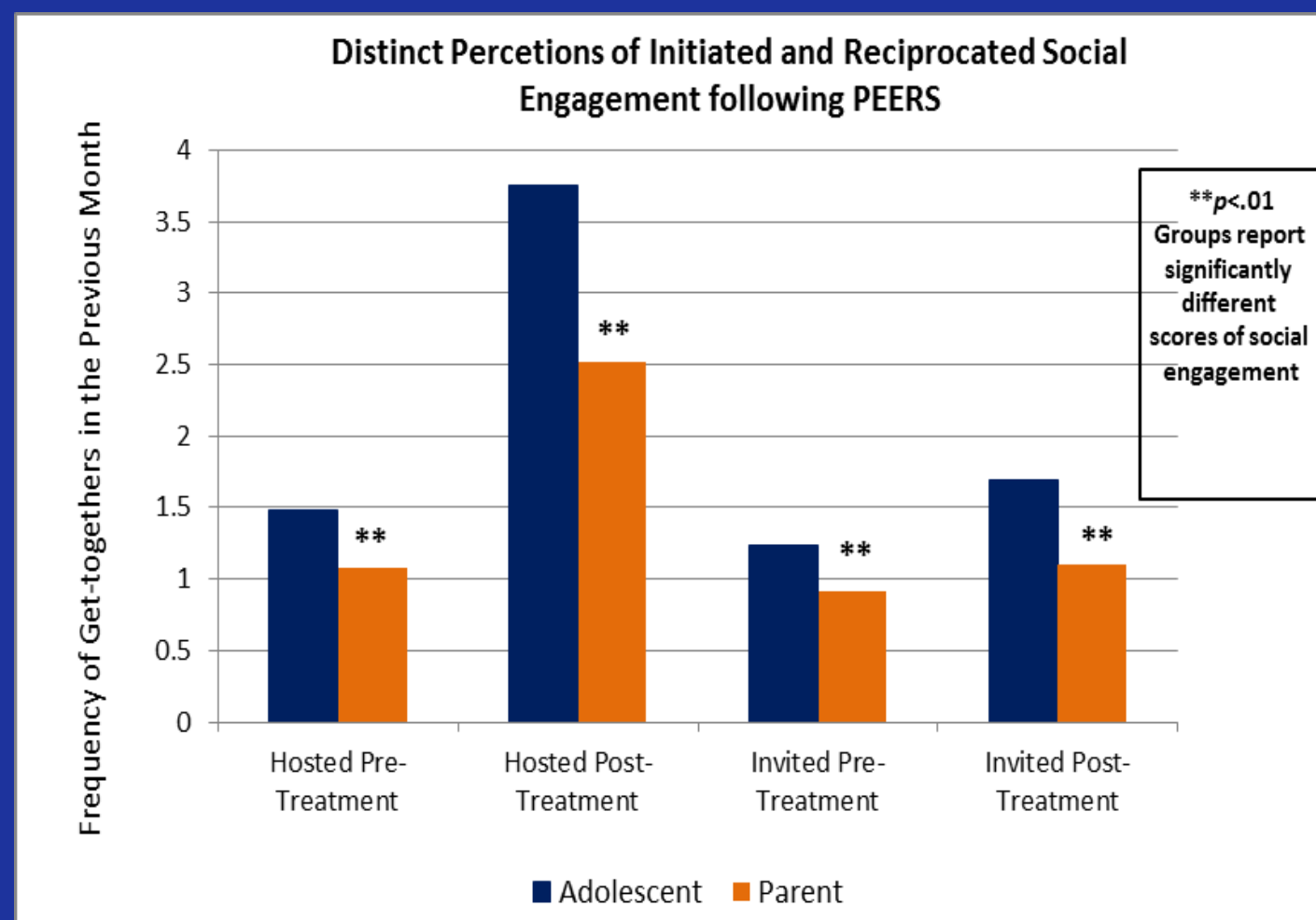
## Results

Paired sample T-tests were conducted to examine differences in perceptions of adolescent social functioning across parent- and adolescent self-report both before and after treatment.

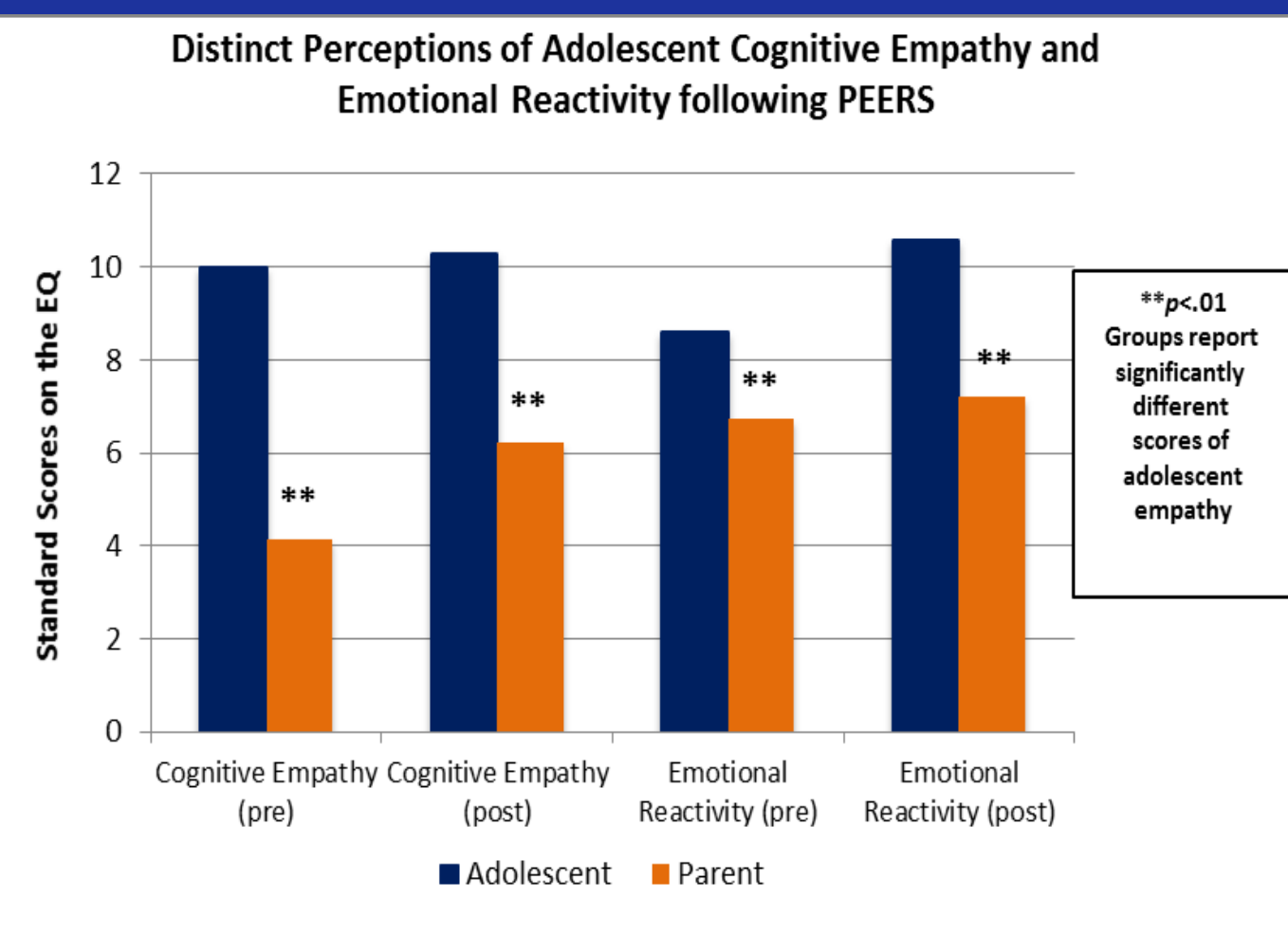
### Social Anxiety Scale (SAS)



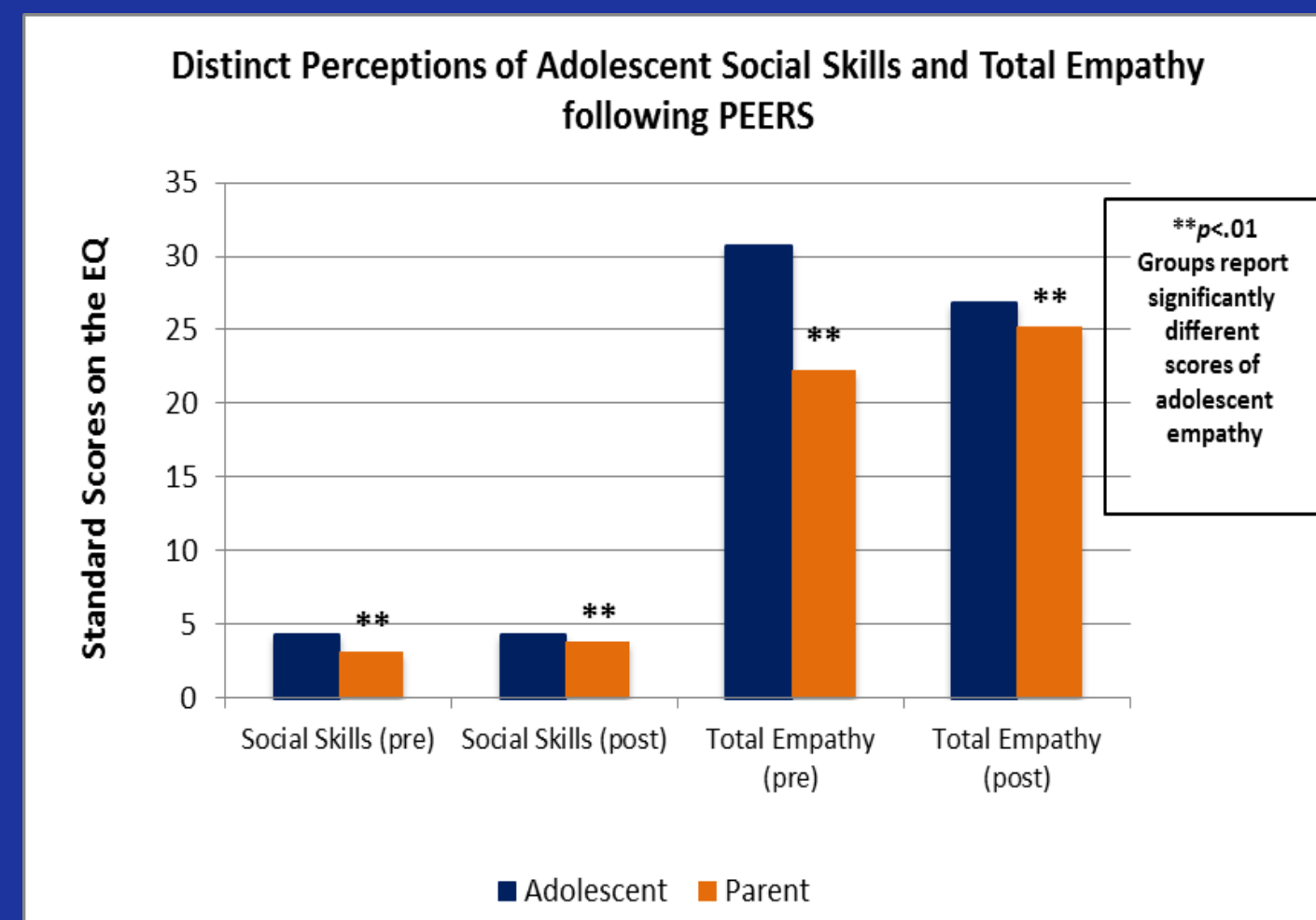
### Quality of Socialization Questionnaire (QSQ)



### Empathy Quotient (EQ)



### Empathy Quotient (EQ)



### Perceptual Differences of Treatment Outcome

PAIRED SAMPLES	MEAN (difference between adolescent and parent reports following PEERS)	SD	T (df)	p
SAS Total Anxiety (Parent Report vs. Adolescent Report)	5.96	14.07	5.74(183)	.000 (adolescents report greater decreased social anxiety than parents)
QSQ Hosted Get-togethers (Parent Report vs. Adolescent Report)	1.10	3.22	5.6(271)	.000 (adolescents report higher gains in social engagement than parents)
QSQ Invited Get-togethers (Parent Report vs. Adolescent Report)	0.71	2.76	4.23(271)	.000 (adolescents report greater gains in social engagement than parents)
EQ Cognitive Empathy (Parent Report vs. Adolescent Report)	-5.86	7.34	-6.89(81)	.000 (adolescents report higher gains in cognitive empathy than parents)
EQ Emotional Reactivity (Parent Report vs. Adolescent Report)	-2.22	5.18	-3.87(81)	.000 (adolescents report higher gains in emotional reactivity than parents)
EQ Social Skills (Parent Report vs. Adolescent Report)	-1.22	3.13	-3.53(81)	.001 (adolescents report higher gains in social skills than parents)
EQ Total Score (Parent Report vs. Adolescent Report)	-10.29	15.10	-6.17(81)	.000 (adolescents report higher gains in total empathy than parents)

- Results suggest that parents report significantly different adolescent profiles of social functioning as compared to the adolescents' self-report both prior to and following treatment.
- In comparison to adolescents, parents report less change in treatment outcome related to social anxiety, social engagement, and empathy following the PEERS® intervention, although both see improvements.

## Discussion

- These findings reveal significant differences in perceptions of adolescent social functioning among parent- and adolescent self-reports.
- Both parents and adolescents observed improvements in social functioning following treatment, but at different rates.
- This suggests the need for multiple informants in the assessment of social skills and treatment outcome.
- The gap between parent and adolescent perceptions of adolescent social functioning appears to lessen over time and treatment, suggesting a trend toward better mutual understanding of social functioning post treatment.

## References

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