Parental Protection and Guidance Related to Early Adolescents' Stressful Peer Experiences

By

Kalyn E. Warren

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Approved by

Stephen A. Erath, Chair, Professor, Human Development and Family Science
Scott A. Ketring, Associate Professor, Director of Marriage and Family Therapy Program
Cynthia A. Frosch, Associate Professor, Human Development and Family Science

Abstract

Peer-related parenting has been connected to young adolescents' social and emotional wellbeing, yet largely missing from the literature are attempts to understand how parents respond to youths' social and emotional difficulties in peer stress situations. In the present study, links between adolescents' social anxiety and social skills and parents' efforts to provide advice (guidance) and comfort (protection) were examined in the context of a lab-based peer-evaluative stress protocol and parent-adolescent discussion about peer stress (N = 80, *Mage* = 11.92 years, SD = 1.27). General social anxiety was assessed using the Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents, context-specific anxiety was measured based on adolescent reports during the lab protocol, and observed social anxiety during the lab protocol was coded by researchers. Observed social skills were measured via researchers' coding of adolescents' sensitive responding during a peer-evaluative stress task. Parent-reported prosocial skills were measured via the Social Behavior Rating Scale. Parental guidance was measured via observed cognitive framing and advice-giving about peer stress during the parent-adolescent discussion (observed guidance) and based on parent reflections during a video playback of the parent-adolescent discussion (reported guidance). Protection was measured via observed sensitivity and warm responding during the parent-adolescent discussion (observed protection) and based on parent reflections during a video playback of the parent-adolescent discussion (reported protection). It was hypothesized that higher social anxiety and lower social skills would be related to lower guidance and lower protection, and this was confirmed with varying levels of consistency. Significant negative associations emerged between context-specific anxiety and observed protection and between context-specific anxiety and observed guidance. Interactions emerged when predicting reported guidance such that each measure of anxiety moderated the relationship between parent-reported social skills and reported guidance. Higher parent-reported social skills were associated with higher reported guidance at lower levels of observed and context-specific anxiety (but not at higher levels of observed and context-specific anxiety) and at higher levels of general social anxiety (but not at lower levels of general social anxiety). The results, strengths, limitations, and possible applied implications are discussed.

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"I believe in the human touch, which cultivates sympathy with my fellow men and mutual helpfulness and brings happiness for all."

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Significance of peer experiences

Peer experiences impact young adolescents' wellbeing, including social and mental health outcomes. Experiences of peer rejection, for example, can amplify aggressive and anti-social behaviors (Miller-Johnson et al., 2002; Tung & Lee, 2018), increase depressive symptoms (He et al., 2018), and even raise the threat of substance use (Prinstein & Giletta, 2020). As children transition into young adolescence, they spend more time with peers and further develop capacities for intimacy and social comparison, raising the importance of peer relationships (Parker et al., 2006).

Social anxiety and social skills deficits may interfere with the development of peer relationships in early adolescence. Socially anxious youth are likely to have more negative peer experiences (Kingery, 2010; Miers et al., 2010), and social skills are primary determinants of peer responses (Bierman, 2004). Thus, it is critical to develop strategies for addressing youth anxiety and social skills in the context of peer relations. Though we understand much about the prevalence and consequences of youth anxiety (Rapee & Heimburg, 1997) and social skills difficulties (Bierman, 2004), the question of how parents respond when young adolescents experience anxiety or demonstrate lower social skills in the context of peer stress remains poorly understood. Gaining understanding of this issue could illuminate new paths towards interventions for families in which parents' responses to their young adolescents with anxiety or social skills difficulties may be mismatched with the young adolescent's needs.

Significance of peer-related parenting

Peer-related parenting encompasses all parenting related to youths' peer experiences. Direct forms of parental involvement with peer relationships in early adolescence include parental facilitation or restriction of interactions with other youths (e.g., driving kids to the movies) and parental social coaching about peer challenges (Tu et al., 2017).

Peer-related parenting has different impacts on children depending on its quality. Poor-quality peer-related parenting includes parents' dismissive attitudes towards their children, or parents' demonstrations

of low sensitivity in response to their child's peer problems (Oppenheimer et al., 2016). Many studies have pointed to the impacts of poor-quality peer-related parenting on peer relationships, such as higher levels of peer rejection (Su et al., 2016), maladaptive responses to peer stress (Abaeid & Rudolph, 2011), and lower physiological regulation (Perry et al., 2020). On the other hand, many positive effects of high-quality peer-related parenting have been found, including higher levels of peer acceptance (Gregson et al., 2017), higher receptivity to parental advice (Gregson et al., 2016), and higher friendship quality (Tu et al., 2017).

Whereas studies have improved our understanding of outcomes of peer-related parenting, very few studies have examined the predictors of peer-related parenting. To provide insight about possible determinants of peer-related parenting, the present study examines how children's social anxiety and social skill difficulties are related to parental efforts to ease discomfort (i.e., provide protection) and share advice (i.e., provide guidance) when young adolescents face social challenges.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Theoretical framework: Belsky's determinants of parenting and Grusec's domains of socialization

Parenting is important to youths' development, including their peer relationships (Collins et al., 2001). However, parenting does not occur in a vacuum, which raises the question of what the determinants of parenting might be. Belsky (1984) identified three overarching determinants of parenting: parent characteristics, context, and child characteristics. This original model was updated by Taraban and Shaw (2018) and expanded to capture contributions towards determinants of parenting research over the last three decades. According to Belsky, parents' own personality and development show up in the way that they parent; for example, older mothers compared to younger mothers of infants tend to show more highly attuned and engaged parenting styles (Camberis et al., 2016), possibly accounted for by greater emotional maturity and more advanced development. Parents' own mental health also comes into play when determining parenting; for example, depressed mothers have been found to be more hostile and rejecting than non-depressed mothers (Bernard et al., 2018). Parents' personality may undermine their ability to parent in positive ways as well; studies have indicated that traits such as high neuroticism and

low conscientiousness may interfere with parenting ability (Jonassaint et al., 2011; Taraban & Shaw, 2018).

The context in which a family lives is also a key determinant of parenting (Belsky, 1984). Belsky summarized research showing that across SES, lack of support from others is associated with negative parental characteristics like punitiveness and restrictiveness. Taraban and Shaw (2018) expanded on the role of context to highlight the impacts of SES on access to important resources such as high-quality food, childcare, age-appropriate toys, and educational material. Low SES is also consistently associated with higher stress (Baum, Garofalo, & Yali, 1999). The marital or co-parenting relationship is particularly important, as parenting alongside a supportive partner raises feelings of parental competence and expressions of warmth and positivity towards children. Alongside the support of others, parents' work environments and social networks also add to the formula for determinants of parenting. Factors that keep stress at bay and increase feelings of collaboration and acceptance in parents' lives feed into their ability to parent in positive ways.

Belsky (1984) also addressed the child's influence on parenting, conveying that temperament is youths' main contribution to the determinants of parenting. Temperament and other youth characteristics (e.g., gender, positive versus negative emotionality, age) contribute to parents' and youths' relationships. Though the lion's share of literature on parenting aims to observe parent effects, there has been some work in recent decades aiming to emphasize child effects (Ganiban et al., 2011; Karreman et al., 2008). Other authors (Hastings et al. 2019; Kaufman et al., 2020; Ma & Bellmore, 2012; Robichaud, 2019) have found youths' characteristics such as social competence, peer victimization, peer acceptance, competence in tasks, and anxiety are predictors of peer-related parenting.

Youths' peer victimization experiences have been shown to predict general parenting styles. For example, Kaufman (2020) found that across two years, peer victimization predicted decreased warmth and increased rejection by parents. Parental rejection following peer victimization was mediated by conduct problems. These results suggest that the stress of peer victimization elicits conduct problems which, in turn, contribute to negative parenting. Similarly, Ma and Bellmore (2011) found that youths'

peer victimization experiences predicted parental psychological control over a three-year time period, again indicating that youths who are having difficulties socially or internally might, in turn, be more difficult to parent well. Psychological control may be a way that parents attempt to diminish their children's difficulties (e.g., invalidating negative feelings about peer victimization), despite the significant body of research indicating that these behaviors are harmful to youth in the long run (Soenens et al., 2010).

Youths' competencies are also well-documented determinants of general parenting styles. For example, Hastings et al. (2019) showed that parents whose children engage anxiously with peers, indicating low social competence, increase their controlling parenting behaviors across one year. Robichaud (2019) found that parents whose children demonstrate low competence in a cognitive-challenge task tend to be considerably more controlling when coaching the child on a similar task. Although increased parental control in response to child difficulties may be well-intended, controlling parenting has negative effects on development and outcomes for children (Baumrind, 2013).

Taken together, these studies suggest that parents most often take a "capitalization" approach to parenting (Gregson et al., 2017). That is, whether to the child's detriment or benefit, children's strengths appear to elicit parents' positive behaviors and attitudes towards them; conversely, parents tend to respond to children's difficulties with more negative behaviors and attitudes. In theory, it is possible that some parents may "remediate" child needs and difficulties, for example offering emotional support and warmth to an anxious youth rather than increasing control or decreasing warmth.

Grusec and Davidov (2010) explored various theories on socialization and integrated these theories into a domain-specific approach. Of particular interest to the present study are Grusec and Davidov's domains of guided learning and protection. According to Grusec and Davidov, protection aligns most closely with attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969). Protection is a byproduct of the evolutionary need of our young to be protected from harm and nourished by a capable other in order to survive. In terms of peer relations, a parent may be acting in the protection domain if their child has a negative peer experience at school and upon returning home, the parent sensitively supports their emotional state

through validating and comforting the child. This example reflects the child's use of the parent as a secure base, but also highlights parental sensitivity, an antecedent to the secure base parent-child relationship (Ainsworth al., 1974; Allen et al., 2003; Bowlby, 1969). It follows, then, that parents' tendency to offer protection to their child may be elicited by the child's *need* for protection. In the current study, protection is conceptualized as parents' tendency to offer encouragement, validation, and psychological comfort to children when they are distressed.

Guidance, on the other hand, is the domain of socialization that deals with a caregivers' position in their child's life as a teacher or guide. The parent, in this case, acts on the child's need to learn new information or skills to help them adapt to their situation. This domain of socialization aligns most closely with sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which posits that children learn through social interaction. In terms of peer relations, guidance may take the shape of a parent offering advice to a child on how to interact with their peers. In the current study, guidance is conceptualized as parents' efforts to provide behavioral advice or cognitive framing about a social challenge that children face.

Children's states and needs should impact how parents respond to them. Unlike some models of socialization which emphasize parents' effects on children, Grusec and Davidov's (2010) model acknowledges both parent and child effects. Ideally, guidance is elicited by the child's need and readiness to learn from the parent and is responded to with developmentally appropriate and timely guidance. Likewise, protection of the child's emotional state may be the ideal response to a child in need of psychological support or encouragement. In other words, domain matching (i.e., guidance when the child needs or wants to learn and protection when the child is distressed) is thought by Grusec and Davidov to be the best approach to parenting. Both instances of domain-matching represent remediation, rather than capitalization; the parent is responding to the child's need to grow or their need to be comforted. This study aims to observe parents' responses to young adolescents' operation in these domains, as few studies have examined the extent to which parents respond with protection or guidance when children experience social distress or social skill difficulties.

Review of key studies

What follows is an examination of key studies which lay the foundation for the importance of this study. In this examination, the terms “capitalization” and “remediation” are employed to describe parents’ efforts towards improving upon their child’s existing competencies or compensating for their difficulties, respectively. “Within- or cross-domain” refers to whether parents are operating in matching domains; for example, parents responding to their child’s high social competence (guidance domain) with prosocial behavioral advice (guidance domain) are applying “within-domain capitalization”. A parent responding to their child’s anxiety (protection domain) using prosocial behavioral advice (guidance domain) would be applying “cross-domain remediation”.

Several studies have examined associations between children’s social or psychological adjustment and parental guidance in the form of social coaching. McDowell et al. (2003), for example, examined the relationship between children’s social competence and psychological functioning and parents’ advice-giving style and amount of specific advice. Children’s social competence was measured via peer- and teacher-reports, child psychological functioning was measured via child self-report, and parental advice and interactional style were assessed via coding of a family discussion about peer challenges. Children’s lower social competence and greater internalizing symptoms (loneliness and depressive symptoms) were related to a more controlling style of parental advice (e.g., commands without justification) and a higher amount of specific advice (e.g., number of specific solutions offered). The style results are consistent with a capitalization model in which children’s social difficulties and psychological distress are related to more negative parenting (and better child functioning is related to more positive parenting). The results for amount of specific advice could be interpreted in terms of remediation or capitalization. On the one hand, offering a higher quantity of specific advice to children with lower social competence and more internalizing distress is consistent with a remediation model in which children’s difficulties elicit more supportive parenting. On the other hand, if the higher amount of specific advice is considered in conjunction with the controlling style of advice, results are more consistent with a capitalization model in that children’s difficulties elicit less supportive (i.e., more controlling) parenting.

Another study by Su et al. (2016) investigated the associations between youth anxiety and parental guidance, using the same dataset as the current study. Young adolescents engaged in a short conversation while under the impression that they were being evaluated by peer judges, then discussed with a parent whether or not they should take the opportunity to re-visit with the peer judges should they be evaluated as having performed poorly. Adolescents with the lowest levels of general social anxiety and context-specific social anxiety (i.e., anxiety measured during the lab protocol) had parents who provided more benign cognitive framing (e.g., telling their child that the peer judges are probably very much like them, thus framing the situation in non-threatening terms) and prosocial behavioral advice (e.g., encouraging their child to ask about the peer judge's interests). More parental social coaching in response to lower social anxiety reflects cross-domain capitalizing guidance. Interestingly, Su et al. (2016) also found that higher levels of peer victimization were associated with greater parental prosocial advice. This suggests that parents may interpret their child's peer problems as indicative of a need for higher levels of guidance in social situations.

Social anxiety in young adolescents is not the only difficulty that parents appear to respond to from a capitalization stance. Gregson et al. (2017) explored associations between youths' peer acceptance and social skills and parents' behavioral advice and cognitive framing. Social-behavioral skills were significantly positively associated with parents' benign cognitive framing, representing within-domain capitalizing guidance, but not with parent prosocial behavioral advice. Peer acceptance was significantly positively associated with both parent prosocial behavioral advice and benign cognitive framing. These results indicate that parents may capitalize on their children's existing social competencies by providing better guidance (i.e., within-domain capitalizing guidance).

Thus, across studies of parental social coaching, at higher levels of social skill problems or peer problems, results provide somewhat stronger evidence for within-domain capitalizing parental guidance, and some evidence for within-domain remedial parental guidance (Gregson et al., 2017; McDowell et al, 2003; Su et al., 2016). At higher levels of psychological distress, parental social coaching studies provide

more consistent evidence for cross-domain capitalizing parental guidance (McDowell et al., 2003; Su et al., 2016).

In keeping with the theme of children's social-emotional characteristics guiding parental intervention, O'Connor et al. (2020) investigated the phenomena of parental accommodation towards young adolescents with anxiety. Parental accommodation can be viewed as parents' attempts to reduce their child's anxiety through allowing or encouraging them to avoid anxiety-provoking stimuli. This response to child anxiety may negatively reinforce anxiety symptoms through allowing the child to avoid the stimuli they perceived as threatening, however non-threatening the stimuli might have actually been. The study included 64 treatment-seeking youth with an anxiety diagnosis and their parents. Each dyad reported on parental accommodation and child psychopathology including anxiety and depression. Results indicated that higher levels of accommodation were in fact predicted by child factors such as anxiety and externalizing symptoms. This indicates that parents may accommodate for their child based on their perception of their child's level of distress, representing a maladaptive form of guidance (i.e., avoidance guidance).

Accommodation, allowing or encouraging avoidance, could be labeled as a construct related to protection; however, accommodation may be more accurately described as guidance because it constitutes negative advice or negative framing, allowing or encouraging their child's avoidance of a situation (Barrett et al., 1996). That is, in order to accommodate in this way, parents must suggest or allow that their child avoid the situation. Accommodation is viewed here as guidance rather than protection because it does not offer encouragement or psychological comfort, but rather encourages the child away from a situation by emphasizing the threat that the situation presents; accommodation indicates that the parents guided their child towards avoidance.

Barrett et al. (1996), too, found connections between parents' tendency to accommodate when their children are anxious. Youths interpreted and responded to ambiguous situations (e.g., "You see a group of students from another class playing a great game. As you walk over and want to join in, you notice that they are laughing. What do you think is happening?") and then engaged in a brief family

discussion about those situations. Barrett et al. found support for their hypothesis that the parents of anxious children would increase their children's avoidance and decrease their benign interpretations of the ambiguous stimuli.

Indeed, children without an anxiety disorder had parents who tended not to support avoidant tactics or threatening interpretations to these ambiguous situations, yet anxious children reported more avoidant solutions to social challenges following consultation with their parents. This could indicate that parents of anxious children are more likely to guide their children in potentially threatening situations by preparing them for the worst and encouraging avoidance, whereas non-anxious children are more likely to elicit a guiding approach that encourages prosocial behavior. These studies on parental responses to children's anxiety suggest that parents may sometimes offer guidance when children experience psychological distress, though the guidance is consistent with capitalization because greater distress seems to elicit more maladaptive parental responses.

Parental protection as a domain is under-studied in the area of adolescent peer relations, social skills, and social anxiety. However, it is helpful to consider connections between protection and young adolescent anxiety. Muris et al. (2003) observed relationships amongst attachment style, parenting behaviors, and internalizing and externalizing problems in young people averaging 14 years of age (*SD* = 1.39, range 12-18 years). Their findings indicated that insecurely attached adolescents reported higher internalizing problems as well as lower positive parenting behaviors, including sensitivity and warmth. Sensitivity and warmth, characterized by providing children with supportive feedback and an encouraging environment, were more often provided to children with lower internalizing issues. These results suggest that parents whose children are more highly anxious may offer less protection in the form of sensitive responding and warmth. This study relied solely on adolescents' reports of their attachment style, their parents' behaviors, and their internalizing and externalizing problems.

The emotion socialization literature also concerns parental protection. Emotion socialization refers to parents' awareness of their own and their child's emotions, as well as their responses to their child's emotionality (Gottman et al., 1996). For example, a parent with an emotion-coaching philosophy

of parenting will assist their child in labeling a negative emotion and will engage with the child in a problem-solving process. Parents with an emotion-dismissing philosophy, on the other hand, might respond to their child's negative emotions by minimizing, dismissing, or criticizing their child for having the negative emotion. In this mode of emotion socialization, negative emotions are viewed by the parent as toxic and are to be avoided; through emotion-coaching, on the other hand, parents view their child's emotionality as an opportunity to connect and build intimacy in the parent-child relationship.

Thus, emotion-coaching and emotion-dismissing are related to high and low protection, respectively. Similar to a parent operating as an emotion-coach, a parent offering their child high protection will offer validation of the child's negative emotion. Conversely, a parent offering their child low levels of protection might resemble an emotion-dismissing parent, who avoids the acknowledgement of negative emotions and dismissing negative emotions. Emotion-coaching has been shown to buffer the effects of poor peer relations, acting as a moderator in the relationship between poor peer relationships and loneliness in fourth through sixth graders (Buckholdt et al., 2016), and there is evidence that children with higher anxiety and lower social competence may receive lower emotion coaching from parents (Baker et al., 2010; Stocker, 2007), again representing a capitalization approach.

In summary, existing research suggests that parents tend to rely on a capitalization approach, for better or worse. Children who demonstrate low social anxiety and strong social competence tend to receive the highest levels of prosocial advice and benign cognitive framing, and the highest quality coaching. Youths with lower social competence and higher social anxiety, on the other hand, receive lower levels of prosocial advice and benign cognitive framing, and lower quality coaching. Finally, youths with higher internalizing problems may be less likely to receive high levels of warm and sensitive parenting, and vice versa. This tendency towards a capitalization approach may reflect a bleak outlook for young adolescents who are low in social competence or high in internalizing symptoms, at least regarding the parenting they are likely to receive. Existing studies on parenting as related to social skills or social anxiety are limited in that none have examined parental protection and guidance along with children's social distress and social skill difficulties. Given that peer-related parenting is related to a wide range of

outcomes for young adolescents, studies identifying parental responses to the factors which challenge young adolescents socially are of great importance.

Chapter 3: The Present Study

Aims and Hypotheses

The present study examined whether youths' social anxiety and social skills are related to more protection or guidance from parents. The study was cross-sectional and non-experimental; thus, we can only suggest, but not conclude, that associations between youth and parent variables may reflect how parents respond to youths' social anxiety and social skills. Youths engaged in a peer-evaluative conversation task in which they were told that peer judges (actually fictitious) were evaluating their performance in a conversation with a graduate research assistant (RA). Social anxiety was measured with observations of child emotional expressions during the peer-evaluative conversation task (observed anxiety), child reports of in-the-moment feelings of anxiety before and after the conversation task (context-specific anxiety), and child reports of general social anxiety (general social anxiety). Social skills were measured with observations during the peer-evaluative conversation task (observed social skills) and parent report of their child's social skills (parent-reported social skills).

After the peer-evaluation lab task, parents and children discussed whether and how the child should make another attempt to win approval from the peer judges if the outcome of their first attempt was unfavorable. Following the parent-child discussion, a subsample of parents participated in a debriefing interview in which they watched a recording of the parent-child discussion and explained what strategies they employed in the parent-child discussion. Protection and guidance, based on Grusec and Davidov's (2010) domains of socialization, were measured in the debriefing interview (reported protection and guidance) and the parent-child discussion (observed protection and guidance). In this study, protection is defined as attempts to help the child feel comfortable or confident independent of guidance about social challenges, and guidance is defined as behavioral advice or cognitive framing about social challenges. Reported protection and guidance were coded based on the parent debriefing interview. Constructs that are similar to protection (i.e., sensitivity) and guidance (i.e., prosocial behavioral advice) were coded

during the parent-child discussion and used as additional measures of observed protection and guidance in the present study.

Four hypotheses emerged through examining the existing literature. First, we predicted that social skills would have a positive relationship with guidance, representing within-domain capitalization. Previous research shows that children with higher social skills and more high-quality friendships have parents who offer better peer-related social coaching (Tu et al., 2017; Gregson et al., 2017). Parents may offer more peer-related guidance to their socially savvy youths as they are likely to feel more confident that their guidance will be useful.

Second, we predicted that social skills would have a positive relationship with protection, representing cross-domain capitalization. When youths demonstrate low social competence, parents are less likely to intervene with heightened sensitivity, and youths who struggle with peers are less likely to elicit high-quality psychological support from their parents (Erath et al., 2020; McDowell et al., 2002; O'Connor et al., 2020). We anticipated that youths with lower social skills would elicit less or lower-quality protection from their parents, who may recognize their children's distress but often respond in maladaptive ways.

Third, we predicted that social anxiety would have a negative relationship with guidance, representing cross-domain capitalization. Previous research has indicated that though socially anxious youths' parents attempt to help, their efforts may be unhelpful. For example, socially anxious youths may receive low-quality social coaching, higher negative accommodation, or negative interpretations of neutral stimuli from parents (Barrett, 1996; O'Connor et al., 2020; Su et al., 2016). It is also helpful to remember that children who are easier to parent tend to receive higher quality parenting (Belsky, 1984) and vice versa. Parents may be likely to capitalize on their youths' low anxiety and provide more guidance when they perceive the child is primed to receive it.

Fourth, we predicted that social anxiety would have a negative relationship with protection, representing within-domain capitalization. This prediction was based on others' findings that lower sensitivity from parents may be related to youths' social anxiety (McDowell et al., 2002). Again,

emphasizing previous research on the determinants of parenting, youths who are more difficult to parent or whose negative emotions induce stress in parents tend to receive poorer quality parenting (de Haan et al., 2012).

We also conducted an exploratory analysis to determine whether interactions between youths' social skills and social anxiety are related to guidance and protection. No hypotheses were formed about these associations because there is, to the authors' knowledge, no prior research on these interactions.

Methods

Sample

The present study included a total of 80 youths (*Mage* = 11.92, *SD* 1.27) and their parents (79% biological mothers). The sample included 55% male and 55% African American youths, 43% European American youths, and 2% of other races/ethnicities. Race and ethnicity were coded as 0 = White, 1 = Black or other ethnic minority in order to allow testing correlations amongst race and study variables. In this sample, the mean family income was between $20,001 and $35,000, with 24% reporting an income of less than $20,000 and 22% reporting an income higher than $75,000. A subsample of parents completed an additional parent debriefing interview through which additional measures of protection and guidance were collected. This subsample (*N* = 53) consisted of parents of youths (*Mage* = 11.74 years, *SD* = 1.21) whose household income was, on average, between $20,001 and $35,000. The adolescents were 54% males, 43% African American, 53% European American, and 4% other races/ethnicities.

Procedure

Participants for this study were recruited via flyers distributed throughout community locations and sent home with fifth and sixth grade public school students in the southeastern United States. Parents who responded to the study were given more information about the study, including the lab protocol, and were invited to schedule a lab visit over the phone. The lab visit lasted two hours and both parents and youths were compensated monetarily. At the lab visit, young adolescents and parents both completed questionnaires and participated in lab activities, including the *peer evaluation* and *parent-adolescent*

activities. A subset of parents participated in a *parent debriefing interview*. The tasks, described below, occurred in sequence for each parent-child dyad.

The *peer evaluation* period refers to the conversation activity, in which a same-sex research assistant (RA) asked the adolescent to lead a three-minute conversation with the RA as if they were meeting for the first time. Youths were told to lead this conversation by talking about themselves, asking questions about the RA, or discussing anything that they wished. They were told that the conversation would be viewed by three same-age, same-sex peer judges, who were actually fictional, through a one-way video chat. Participants were told that the peer judges would decide how well they performed in the conversation compared to two other participants. The RA then told the youth that they may have the opportunity to try and change the peer judges' opinions by speaking directly to them in the event that they were not chosen by the peer judges as one of the top conversationalists. RAs adhered to standardization guidelines, such as number of follow-up questions, to ensure that variability stemmed from individual differences in participants rather than variability in the demands of the task. Participants were informed that they could stop at any time. All procedures and methods were approved by Auburn University's IRB.

The *peer evaluation* task was followed by the *parent-adolescent discussion*, in which parents were directed to have a three-minute conversation with their child about what they would do if they were not selected by the peer judges as one of the top conversationalists. Before this, parents were instructed to prepare their child for the event that they may not be selected as the best conversationalist. Parents were given the freedom to approach the conversation however they wished, though example topics were given, including potentially discussing reasons the child might not be chosen, whether he or she should speak directly with the peer judges, and what they might talk about in the case that they chose to do so. Following this *parent-adolescent discussion*, the task ended, and participants were carefully debriefed and led to their own conclusion that the peer judges did not truly exist.

A subset of parents also participated in a "debriefing" session where they viewed and were interviewed about a recording of themselves during the parent-adolescent discussion. Parents were asked

at several points throughout the video to describe their strategy for helping their child through the challenge at hand.

After finishing the lab tasks, both parents and adolescents completed questionnaires. All study procedures were approved by the Auburn University Institutional Review Board.

Measures

Adolescent Social Anxiety. Social anxiety was assessed in several ways. The Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SAS-A; La Greca & Lopez, 1998) is an 18-item self-report measure (e.g., "I feel that others make fun of me"; "I feel shy even with my peers I know very well"), with items rated on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all, 5 = all the time). Items were averaged for analyses ($\alpha = .93$) and referred to as *general social anxiety.* Anxiety was also assessed with a composite of two items from the peer evaluation period. Before and after the peer evaluation period (before the parent-adolescent discussion), interviewers asked participants to rate on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very much) "how anxious are you/were you?" The two items were moderately correlated ($r = .52$, $p < .001$) and averaged to create a lab-based, *context-specific social anxiety* measure. Finally, *observed anxiety* was also assessed through observations of youths' confidence (reversed to approximate anxiety) during the peer evaluation task. Confidence, as reflected in body language, voice animation, facial expression, and statement content during the conversation, was rated on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very) by trained undergraduate and graduate students (intraclass correlation = .83), with discrepant scores resolved by consensus.

Adolescent Social Skills. Social skills were assessed via observation of the youths' navigation of the peer evaluation task, as well as parent reports of prosocial skills. *Observed social skills* were captured by coding sensitive verbal responding throughout the conversation, referring to the youth's attentiveness to, demonstration of interest in, and flexibility of responses to the other conversation participant. Sensitive responding during the conversation was rated on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very) by trained undergraduate and graduate students (intraclass correlation = .76), with discrepant scores resolved by consensus. To measure *parent-reported social skills,* parents completed six prosocial skill items from the Social Behavior Rating Scale (SBRS; e.g., "Friendly toward other children," "Good leader"; Schwartz et

al. 2002), rated on a 5-point scale (1=Almost never true of my child to 5=Almost always true of my child). Internal consistency was strong ($\alpha = .91$).

Parental Protection. Protection provided to youths by their parent was measured in two ways. *Reported protection* was coded for in the Parent Debriefing Interview by two graduate students (0 = *Absence of protection;* 2 = *Strong evidence of protection*; intraclass correlation = .83). Reported protection refers to attempts to help the child feel comfortable or confident, independent of guidance about social challenges. *Observed protection* was measured through ratings of parental sensitivity to their child during the parent-child discussion task. Coders rated the level of attunement displayed by the parent towards their child's feelings and point of view (1 = *disregarding the child's feelings, comments, or plan* to 5 = *responsive and considerate of the child's perspective; positive*). Inter-rater reliability was high (intraclass correlation = .83).

Parental Guidance. Guidance provided to youths by their parent was measured in two ways. First, *reported guidance* was coded for in the Parent Debriefing Interview by two graduate students (0 = *Absence of guidance;* 2 = *Strong evidence of guidance*; intraclass correlation = .67). Guidance included prosocial behavioral advice or benign cognitive framing about the peer challenge. *Observed guidance* was coded based on prosocial behavioral advice during the parent-adolescent discussion. Prosocial behavioral advice (1 = *a sense of any prosocial advice*, 5 = *multiple prosocial topics that can be elaborated*) referred to advice that parents gave youths encouraging them to reconnect with the peer judges in a friendly manner to potentially result in a more positive outcome for the youth (e.g., "be friendly/ nice"; "find out if you like the same sports and see what their favorite teams are"). Ratings were based on the prosocial quality and specificity of advice given to the adolescents (interclass correlation = .83).

Chapter 4: Results

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics and distributions of all study variables were checked, and no transformations were needed. Correlations between demographic variables (age, race, gender, income), parental protection and guidance, and child social anxiety and social skills were computed to determine which demographic

control variables were needed. No demographic variables were correlated with both predictors and outcomes; therefore, demographic controls were not included. Correlations between parenting variables and between child variables were computed to understand within-construct (e.g., observed and general social anxiety) and cross-construct (e.g., protection and guidance) associations. No measures were highly correlated enough to justify compositing for main analyses.

Correlations were conducted for all study variables (Tables 2 and 3). Among demographic variables, age and parent-reported social skills were each significantly negatively correlated with general social anxiety (r = -.379, p < .05, r = -.255, p < .05). Gender was significantly positively correlated with reported guidance (r = .422, p < .01), such that parents reported more guidance for girls than boys.

Among outcome variables, positive trends were identified between reported guidance and observed guidance (r = .267, p < 0.1), and between reported protection and observed social skills (r = .246, p < 0.1). A negative trend between general social anxiety and observed protection was also identified (r = -.220, p < 0.1). Observed social skills and observed anxiety were significantly negatively correlated (r = -.621, p < .001). Context-specific anxiety and observed protection were significantly negatively correlated (r = -.421, p < .001). There was also a significant negative correlation between context-specific anxiety and observed guidance (r = -.242, p < .05; Note that this correlation was previously reported in Su et al., 2016). Finally, there was a significant negative correlation between observed anxiety and reported guidance (r = -.320, p < .05).

Main Analyses

In main regression analyses, we tested social anxiety and social skill variables as independent statistical predictors of each measure of protection and guidance. Social anxiety and social skill variables were entered simultaneously in the main analyses, and simpler follow-up analyses with pairs of social anxiety and social skills variables were conducted to evaluate whether associations were affected by complexity of analyses or multicollinearity among predictor variables. Main effect results did not change in simpler analyses; thus, models with all predictors entered simultaneously are presented and interpreted below. Interactions between social anxiety and social skills were also tested through stepped regression

analyses (social anxiety and social skill variables on the first step, and interactions between social anxiety and social skills on the second step). Because interaction analyses were exploratory, we used conservative criteria for simple slopes analyses and interpretation. Significant interactions were plotted and interpreted only if they were found across observed and reported measures of protection or guidance and if they remained significant in simpler analyses with only the variables that comprised the respective interaction term. Correlations analyses were conducted in SPSS, and regression analyses were conducted in AMOS, which provides full information maximum likelihood estimates with missing data.

Predicting Observed Parental Protection

On Step 1 (main effects), context-specific anxiety emerged as the only significant predictor of protection measured during the parent-adolescent discussion task (β = -.393, p < .001), such that young adolescents who reported higher levels of context-specific anxiety received lower levels of parental sensitivity (Table 4). This main effect was interpreted because the interactions described below were not replicated in simpler tests. The set of main effects explained 18% of the variance in observed protection.

Three significant interactions predicted observed protection. First, observed anxiety moderated the association between social skills and observed protection (β = .298, p = <.01). Second, observed anxiety moderated the association between parent-reported prosocial skills and observed protection (β = -.212, p = <.05). Finally, general social anxiety moderated the association between observed social skills and observed protection (β = .186, p = <.05). Again, these interactions were not interpreted because they were not replicated in analyses with reported protection, described below.

Predicting Reported Parental Protection

A trend towards a positive association between observed social skills and reported protection emerged, representing the possibility that young adolescents whose social skills were lower in the peer evaluation task received less protection during the parent-adolescent discussion task (β = .306, p < 0.1) (Table 6). This association is a non-significant trend; thus, it is interpreted with caution. This set of main effects explained approximately 9% of the variance in reported protection. No significant interactions were detected.

Predicting Observed Parental Guidance

A significant negative association was found between context-specific anxiety and observed guidance, indicating that the higher an adolescent's reported context-specific anxiety was, the less guidance they received in the parent-adolescent discussion (β = -.261, p < .05) (Table 5). The set of main effects explained 12% of the variance in observed guidance.

The following interactions were not replicated in simpler analyses with only the variables that comprised the interaction terms, so the main effect above was interpreted. Both general and observed anxiety moderated the associations between parent-reported prosocial skills and observed guidance (β = -.441, p < .001, β = .293, p = <.001, respectively).

Predicting Reported Parental Guidance

On Step 1, only observed anxiety was (negatively) associated with reported guidance (β = -.362, p < .05), such that parents reported lower guidance for early adolescents who displayed more anxiety. This main effect was qualified by a significant interaction, described below. The full set of main-effect predictors explained 11% of the variance in reported guidance (see Table 7).

In addition, on step 2, three significant interactions emerged: Each measure of anxiety moderated the association between parent-reported prosocial skills and reported guidance, explaining an additional 41% of the variance in reported guidance (see Table 7). First, observed anxiety moderated the association between prosocial skills and reported guidance (β = -.304, p < .01). Simple slopes analyses revealed a positive association between prosocial skills and reported guidance at lower levels of observed anxiety (B = .37, p < .001) but no association between prosocial skills and guidance at higher levels of observed anxiety (B = 0.00, *ns*), such that parents reported the highest level of guidance at high levels of prosocial skills and low levels of observed anxiety (see Figure 1).

Second, context-specific anxiety moderated the association between parent-reported prosocial skills and guidance (β = -.437, p < .001). Simple slopes analyses revealed a positive association between prosocial skills and reported guidance at lower levels of context-specific anxiety (B = .50, p = <.001), but there was no association between prosocial skills and reported guidance at higher levels of context-

specific anxiety (B = -.12, *ns*). Parents reported the highest levels of guidance at high levels of prosocial skills and low levels of context-specific anxiety (See Figure 2).

Finally, general social anxiety moderated the association between parent-reported prosocial skills and reported guidance (β = .190, $p < .05$). Simple slopes analyses revealed a positive association between prosocial skills and guidance at higher levels of general social anxiety (B = .30, $p < .001$), but there was no significant association at lower levels of general social anxiety (B = .07, *ns*), such the lowest levels of guidance were reported at the highest levels of general anxiety and lowest levels of prosocial skills (See Figure 3).

Chapter 5: Discussion

Young adolescents' experiences with their peers have lasting impacts (Parker et al., 2006), and parents' responses to and involvement in these experiences are an important part of young adolescents' development (Ladd & Pettit, 2002). This study aimed to examine whether young adolescents' social anxiety and social skills are related to more or less protection and guidance from parents, as described by Grusec & Davidov (2010), in a peer-evaluative situation. It was hypothesized based on existing research that parents would offer higher levels of protection and guidance to their children who were already faring well socially, and that children who struggled socially or with higher levels of anxiety would receive lower levels of protection and guidance.

Analyses confirmed hypotheses with varying levels of consistency. When predicting observed protection, we found some support for capitalization hypotheses in that higher context-specific anxiety predicted lower levels of observed protection, representing a within-domain capitalization approach by parents (see Table 8 for a summary of parenting approaches). The positive trend identified between observed social skills and reported protection represents a possibility that young adolescents whose social skills were lower in the peer evaluation task received less protection, and though this trend is cautiously interpreted, this finding would support the capitalization hypothesis across domains. That is, parents offered lower levels of protection to their less socially skilled children. Likewise, capitalization

hypotheses were supported by a negative association indicating that higher context-specific anxiety predicted lower observed guidance, representing cross-domain capitalization.

The only significant association that emerged when predicting reported guidance was a negative association between observed anxiety and reported guidance, which on its own would confirm hypotheses and represent cross-domain capitalization; however, the interaction analyses demonstrated that each measure of anxiety moderated associations between parent-reported social skills and reported guidance. Interactions indicated that at lower levels of lab-based measures of anxiety (but not at higher levels), including observed anxiety and context-specific anxiety, there were positive associations between parent-reported social skills and reported guidance. In contrast, parent-reported social skills and reported guidance were significantly positively associated at higher levels of general social anxiety (but not at lower levels).

Parental Protection

Some results related to protection were consistent with the hypotheses. First, higher levels of context-specific anxiety were associated with lower levels of observed protection, representing within-domain capitalization. Second, a non-significant trend emerged demonstrating a negative relationship between observed social skills and reported protection. These results, in line with existing literature, suggest that parents whose children demonstrated lower social skill levels or higher levels of anxiety offered lower levels of protection (Festa et al., 2011; Warren & Simmens, 2005). Though there were some interactions when predicting observed protection, captured through measuring parental sensitivity in the parent-adolescent discussion task, these interactions were not interpreted due to lack of corroborating evidence in analyses predicting reported protection. Variables which were not associated with protection included parent-reported prosocial skills, general social anxiety, and observed anxiety.

Parents' actions in response to child characteristics in peer-related contexts are under-studied and not well understood. However, some literature supports the possibility that child characteristics contribute to differences across parenting strategies. For example, Kok et al. (2013) found a consistent modest negative association between youth internalizing symptoms and maternal sensitivity in two large

longitudinal studies and identified evidence to support both parent and child effects. The present study identified higher context-specific anxiety as predictive of lower observed protection, representing within-domain capitalization and supporting this hypothesis. This measure of observed protection is most closely connected to the literature on parental sensitivity, often defined as parents' ability to appropriately and promptly respond to their child's behavioral, emotional, and verbal cues, based on the work of Mary Ainsworth (Ainsworth et al., 1974). Our findings indicate that parents may struggle to respond sensitively in contexts in which young adolescents feel anxiety.

This finding is reminiscent of other results which suggest that children facing internalizing or externalizing difficulties are more challenging to parent with sensitivity (Eisenberg et al.,1998; de Haan et al., 2012; Ma & Bellmore, 2011; Muris et al., 2003). On the one hand, parents may experience their child's anxiety as anxiety-provoking and therefore become dysregulated themselves, rendering their responses less sensitive. This interpretation is resonant with emotion socialization research, which is increasingly engaging with a reciprocal conceptualization of parent-child interactions, showing that children's dysregulated emotions influence parents' emotions and actions (Morelen & Suveg 2012). On the other hand, parents may choose to respond with less protection because they fear that such sensitive responding (e.g., attention to anxiety) may reinforce the child's anxiety.

In their theoretical model of parental meta-emotion, Gottman and Katz (1996) identified two types of meta-emotion stances related to parenting: dismissing meta-emotion philosophy and emotion-coaching philosophy. An emotion-dismissing philosophy perceives negative emotions as inherently threatening and prompts dismissal of these emotions though actions such as distracting the child or impatiently consoling the child (Gottman & Katz, 1996). Perhaps for these parents, soothing and sensitive responding are conflated with over-protection and accommodation, and therefore withheld in hopes of terminating children's anxiety. An emotion-coaching parenting philosophy, in contrast, views children's negative emotions as fertilizer for the parent-child connection and emotional development, and prompts attention to children's feelings, discussion of emotions, and problem-solving for negative emotions (Kehoe et al., 2014).

The non-significant trend connecting observed social skills to reported protection is also worth noting. Previous research has indicated that young adolescents with lower prosocial skills (Waslin et al., 2022) and higher conduct problems (Johnson et al., 2017) are likely to elicit less positive and more negative responses from parents. Specifically, these studies have indicated that children who display lower social skills and higher conduct problems (a proximal determinant of interpersonal success for children; see Rubin et al., 2013) are less likely to receive sensitive, emotion-coaching responses from their parents. That this finding was only a non-significant interaction was surprising given the evidence in the literature; however, possible explanations for the limited evidence discovered are explored below.

Differing results across observed and reported measures of protection and limited prediction of reported protection (i.e., only one non-significant trend) may be explained in a few ways. Observed protection, captured through coding of parental sensitivity and attunement towards the young adolescent in the parent-child discussion task, was the more robust measure. Specifically, observed protection was a measure of parents' sensitivity to their child during the parent-child discussion task and referred to the level of attunement displayed by the parent towards their child's feelings and point of view, a definition more in line with the existing body of literature on sensitivity and attachment (De Wolff & Ijzendoorn, 1997), and with established measures of parental warmth and sensitivity (e.g., PDI-S; Power et al., 1992). The reported protection variable used in the present study was more loosely defined as "attempts to help the child feel comfortable or confident, independent of guidance about social challenges."

Furthermore, the debriefing interview task was designed to elicit information from parents about the strategy they used to help their child decide what to do regarding the social challenge, and the task elicited higher reports of guidance than reports of protection. An approach that would have expanded the breadth of protection (and therefore increased the amount of protection detected) would have been to conceptualize benign cognitive framing as an element of protection. Benign cognitive framing, or the parents' attempts to frame a situation in non-threatening terms, was conceptualized in this study as guidance because it was connected to the social challenge (i.e., suggesting the child view the situation differently). However, facilitating more positive reappraisals of upsetting events is a key mechanism

through which support providers relieve the distress of support recipients (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; MacGeorge et al., 2011), consistent with protection.

A third possible explanation for weak findings when predicting reported protection is that parents may reflect on their actions in a different light compared to their observable actions in real time. During the debriefing interview, parents may have indicated that they offered a higher or lower amount of protection than they actually provided, based on how they wanted to parent or believed they should have parented. In other words, parents' reflections on their parenting may not line up with what happened in the moment, consistent with extensive research on the discrepancy between immediate, automatic and delayed, reflective responses to stressful situations (Strack & Deustch, 2004). This issue requires further exploration in future studies; it is noted here to explain why results may differ between observed and self-reported parenting.

Parental Guidance

Guidance was better predicted than protection. We found support for capitalization hypotheses in predicting observed guidance based on a negative relationship with context-specific anxiety, such that young adolescents with higher context-specific anxiety received lower observed guidance. In addition, each measure of anxiety moderated the association between parent-reported social skills and reported guidance.

There was a positive association between parent-reported social skills and reported guidance at lower levels of observed anxiety and no association between social skills and guidance at higher levels of observed anxiety, such that parents reported the highest levels of guidance for young adolescents with low observed anxiety and high parent-reported social skills. Young adolescents with high observed anxiety, on the other hand, received low levels of reported guidance at *both* low and high levels of parent-reported social skills (Figure 1). Several other studies have provided evidence that the highest quality and quantity of guidance is afforded to children who have low internalizing symptoms and who are socially skilled (Gregson et al., 2016; Perry et al., 2020; Su et al., 2016).

Similarly, there was a strong positive association between parent-reported social skills and reported guidance at lower levels of context-specific anxiety and no significant association at higher levels of context-specific anxiety, such that parents reported the highest levels of guidance for young adolescents with low context-specific anxiety and high parent-reported social skills. However, in partial contrast to the results for observed anxiety, parents reported the lowest levels of guidance for young adolescents with low context-specific anxiety and low parent-reported social skills.

Results of interactions with observed and context-specific anxiety suggest that parents are more inclined to offer guidance when they believe that adolescents possess the social skills that would enable them to enact the guidance successfully. However, both interactions suggest a limit on this apparent tendency of parents to capitalize on adolescents' social skills with more guidance: contexts in which adolescents display or report heightened anxiety. Interactions revealed no association between parent-reported social skills and guidance when adolescents appeared anxious based on rater observations (high observed anxiety) or reported anxiety during the lab tasks (high context-specific anxiety). When adolescents display context-specific anxiety, parents may reserve their guidance, even when they believe that their child is socially skilled, in order to not overwhelm their child, suggesting a responsive approach to dealing with more anxious children (Wood et al., 2003). It will be important for future research to examine the positive or negative effects of reserving guidance when adolescents appear anxious.

Finally, there was a positive association between parent-reported social skills and reported guidance at higher levels of general social anxiety and no association between social skills and guidance at lower levels of general social anxiety. Although these results of analyses with general social anxiety differ from analyses with lab-based anxiety in that social skills and guidance were associated at higher (rather than lower) levels of anxiety, these results were similar in that parents reported the lowest levels of guidance for adolescents with high general social anxiety and low parent-reported social skills (Figure 3). Thus, these results are also partially consistent with capitalization hypotheses.

Considering the existing body of literature on parents' expectations and behaviors towards their anxious children, parents who experience their child as anxious and as demonstrating lower social skills

tend to offer lower levels of guidance to their children (Creswell et al., 2008; Barret et al., 2005). However, that social skills were related to guidance when general social anxiety was high suggests that parents may seize the opportunity to offer guidance when their socially skilled children are generally anxious but not displaying anxiety in the current context. Perhaps general social anxiety does not cause parents to "hit the brakes" on their guidance as much as context-specific anxiety, which would explain why social skills are not associated with guidance at high levels of lab-based anxiety.

Implications

It is well known that peer-related parenting impacts young adolescents' development, especially at this critical period in which young people are navigating greater capacities for relationships and are beginning to have more agency in the direction of their lives. Yet, it seems that young adolescents who are struggling the most may be less likely to receive time-sensitive and potentially important guidance and protection from their parents. However, parents' abilities to guide and protect their children may be skills that can be improved even during this critical period.

Through interventions such as family therapy and family education, parents' responses to their children's anxiety or social skills deficits may be amenable to change. Results of the present study represent how parents naturally respond to their children in the moment. It is difficult for parents to provide advice and respond sensitively to children who are less confident or less competent socially. Parents of children with social skills deficits or social anxiety likely benefit from education or intervention to help them respond sensitively even when their child is anxious and to help them respond with prosocial advice even when their child struggles socially. Though the responses that parents give naturally are not necessarily "wrong," as guidance and protection are not powerful predictors of social outcomes, the weight of the evidence suggests that guidance and protection may be helpful when children have social skill difficulties or feel socially anxious.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

While the results from the current study provide insight about parental responses to young adolescents' social anxiety and social skills, especially by providing new information about parents' protecting and guiding behaviors, there were several limitations.

As described above, the conceptualization of protection was narrow in the present study. Future studies should consider new ways to collect and code data on parents' protective practices with early adolescents. For example, the present study excluded constructs such as benign cognitive framing (Gregson et al., 2017; Su et al., 2016) and accommodation (Barrett et al., 1996; O'Connor et al., 2020) from protection, as these constructs also aligned with the conceptualization of guidance.

It is also important to note the relatively small sample size that this study analyzed, as well as that the measures of reported guidance and reported protection were used with an even smaller subsample of the overall sample (Table 1). The sample was relatively diverse, but a larger sample would allow for better tests of differences across groups such as socio-economic status, gender, and ethnicity. Furthermore, a larger sample size would increase power to detect significant interactions; though interactions did emerge in this study, many were not suitable for interpretation due to lack of confirmation in other tests. Finally, despite the relative diversity in the sample, there were few associations between demographic and study variables; a larger sample may allow for further exploration of differences in guidance and protection across cultures.

Although previous research supports the possible influence of child anxiety and social skills on parental responses, the cross-sectional design of the study precludes directional and causal conclusions. This study suggests that the quality of parental responses reflects adolescents' behavioral and emotional strengths and difficulties, but a longitudinal study observing the same behaviors over time may tell a different story. Furthermore, it is possible that the associations observed could be explained by genetics or another third variable rather than a reflection of parent or child effects. One hopeful outlook comes from the findings of a longitudinal study indicating that positive parenting behaviors may increase over time when children have internalizing symptoms (Serben et al., 2015). Furthermore, it is important to note that if the present study were to be interpreted in terms of parent effects, it would be consistent with the

majority of parenting literature. That is, our findings would provide some evidence that more protection contributes to less anxiety and that more guidance contributes to better social skills. However, a contribution of this study is the child-effects interpretation, which is critical to consider when operating from a cross-sectional framework in parenting research. In addition to longitudinal and experimental research that examines direction of associations, future studies should investigate combinations of guiding and protecting behaviors. Though the present study examined guidance and protection independently, parents likely engage in both approaches. Studying combinations of guidance and protection may shed additional light on associations between adolescent attributes and parenting approaches.

Several strengths of the study are also noteworthy. This study is the first to explore guidance and protection in peer-evaluative situations as related to young adolescents' anxiety and social skills. The study included multiple measures of each construct, including more objective observations as well as subjective reports of parenting, anxiety, and social skills. Furthermore, the lab design was a strength in that it involved a parent-adolescent discussion about an anxiety-inducing social situation and parent reflections on video-playback of these interactions. Finally, the consideration of parenting being partially a response to child behaviors and emotions, while not novel, is often overlooked. This study provided evidence for possible parent responses to child behaviors and emotions.

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Appendix 1

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Skewness
Observed anxiety	79	2.54	1.11	-.77
General social anxiety	80	2.28	.86	.82
Context-specific anxiety	80	2.95	1.13	.20
Observed social skills	79	3.22	1.29	-.16
Parent-reported prosocial skills	80	4.11	.75	-1.04
Observed guidance	77	1.53	1.11	1.99
Observed protection	77	3.45	1.18	-.08
Reported guidance	53	1.13	.60	-.41
Reported protection	53	.80	.67	.25

Table 2

Correlations for Demographic Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Child's sex	—			
2. Child's age	-.07	—		
3. Ethnicity	-.04	-.03	—	
4. Annual income	-.24*	.12	-.55***	—

$^{+}$ $p<.10$, *$p<.05$, **$p<.01$, ***$p<.001$.

Table 3
Correlations for Main Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. General social Anxiety	—								
2. Context-specific anxiety	.30**	—							
3. Observed anxiety	.12	-.00	—						
4. Parent report of social skills	-.25*	-.11	-.14	—					
5. Observed social skills	-.13	-.09	-.62**	.13	—				
6. Parental sensitivity (parent/child discussion)	-.22	-.42**	-.02	.10	-.03	—			
7. Parental pro-social behavioral advice (parent/child discussion)	-.09	-.24*	-.14	-.08	.11	.09	—		
8. Guidance (debriefing interview)	-.11	-.00	-.32*	.04	.13	-.15	.26	—	
9. Protection (debriefing interview)	-.01	.03	-.07	.16	.24	-.05	-.01	-.09	—

$^{+}$ $p<.10$, *$p<.05$, **$p<.01$, ***$p<.001$.

Table 4
Regression Model Predicting Observed Protection

Predictors	β	B	SE	R^2
Step 1: Main Effects				.18
Parent prosocial	.03	.06	.16	
Observed social skill	-.03	-.03	.12	
General social anxiety	-.08	-.11	.15	
Observed anxiety	-.03	-.03	.14	
Lab anxiety	-.39***	-.41	.11	
Step 2: Interactions				.36
Lab anxiety x observed social skill	.03	.03	.07	
Observed Anxiety x observed social skill	.29**	.24	.07	
Observed anxiety x parent prosocial	-.21*	-.22	.09	
General social anxiety x observed social skill	.18*	.21	.10	
Context-specific anxiety x parent prosocial	.06	.08	.12	
Context-specific anxiety x parent prosocial	.12	.14	.10	

$^{+}$ $p<.10$,*$p<.05$,**$p<.01$,***$p<.001$.

Table 5

Regression Model Predicting Observed Guidance

Predictors	β	B	SE	R^2
Step 1: Main Effects				.12
Parental prosocial	-.14	-.21	.16	
Observed social skills	.07	.06	.12	
General social anxiety	-.02	-.02	.15	
Observed anxiety	-.11	-.12	.13	
Lab anxiety	-.26*	-.25	.11	
Step 2: Interactions				.41
Context-specific anxiety x observed social skill	-.05	-.04	.07	
Observed anxiety x observed social skill	-.02	-.01	.07	
Observed anxiety x parent prosocial	.29***	.33	.09	
General social anxiety x observed social skill	-.03	-.04	.10	
General social anxiety x parent prosocial	-.44***	-.61	.12	
Context-specific anxiety x parent prosocial	.18*	.22	.10	

$^{+}$ $p<.10$,*$p<.05$,**$p<.01$,***$p<.001$.

Table 6

Regression Model Predicting Reported Protection

Predictors	β	B	SE	R^2
Step 1: Main Effects				.08
Parental prosocial advice	.16	.14	.12	
Observed social skills	.30^{+}	.16	.08	
General social anxiety	.06	.05	.11	
Observed anxiety	.12	.07	.10	
Context-specific anxiety	-.00	-.00	.08	
Step 2: Interactions				.18
Context-specific anxiety x observed social skill	.07	.03	.06	
Observed anxiety x observed social skill	-.02	-.01	.05	
Observed anxiety x parent prosocial	.14	.09	.07	
General social anxiety x observed social skill	-.16	-.10	.08	
General social anxiety x parent prosocial	-.10	-.07	.09	
Context-specific anxiety x parent prosocial	.23^{+}	.15	.08	

$^{+}$ $p<.10$,*$p<.05$,**$p<.01$,***$p<.001$.

Table 7

Regression Model Predicting Reported Guidance

Predictors	β	B	SE	R^2
Step 1: Main Effects				
Parental prosocial	-.02	-.02	.10	.10
Observed social skills	-.09	-.04	.07	
General social anxiety	-.10	-.07	.09	
Observed anxiety	-.36*	-.19	.08	
Context-specific anxiety	.04	.02	.07	
Step 2: Interactions				.52
Context-specific anxiety x observed social skills	.05	.02	.04	
Observed anxiety x observed social skills	.09	.04	.04	
Observed anxiety x parent prosocial	-.30**	-.18	.05	
General social anxiety x observed social skills	.03	.02	.06	
General social anxiety x parent prosocial	.19*	.14	.07	
Context-specific anxiety x parent prosocial	-.43***	-.28	.06	

$^{+}$ $p<.10$,*$p<.05$,**$p<.01$,***$p<.001$.

Table 8

Description of Within-and Cross- Domain Guidance and Protection

Child Characteristic	**More Guidance**	**More Protection**
High Social Skills	Capitalizing within-domain guidance	Capitalizing cross-domain guidance
Low Anxiety	Capitalizing cross-domain guidance	Capitalizing cross-domain protection
High Anxiety	Remediating cross-domain guidance	Remediating within-domain protection
Low Social Skills	Remediating within-domain guidance	Remediating cross-domain protection

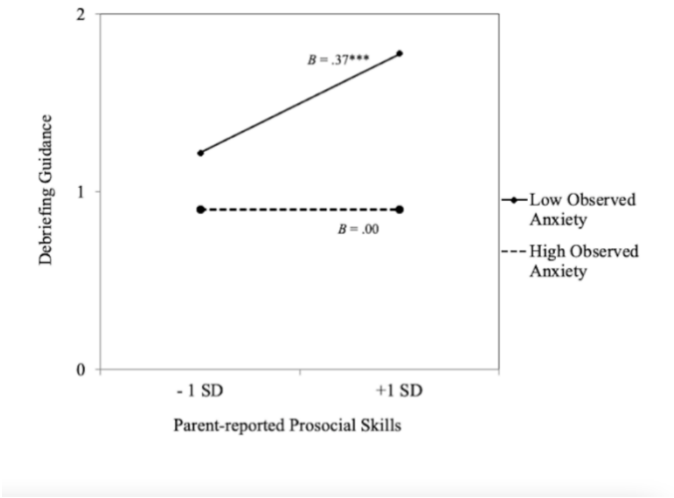

Figure 1
The Relationship between Parent-Reported Social Skills and Debriefing Guidance, with Observed Anxiety as a Moderator

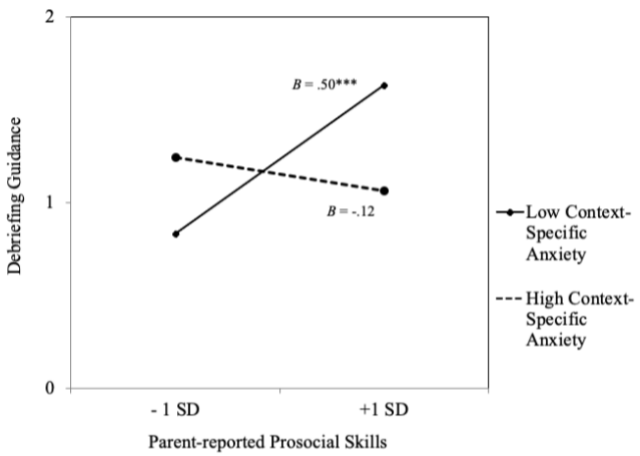

Figure 2
The Relationship between Parent-Reported Social Skills and Debriefing Guidance, with Context-Specific Anxiety as a Moderator

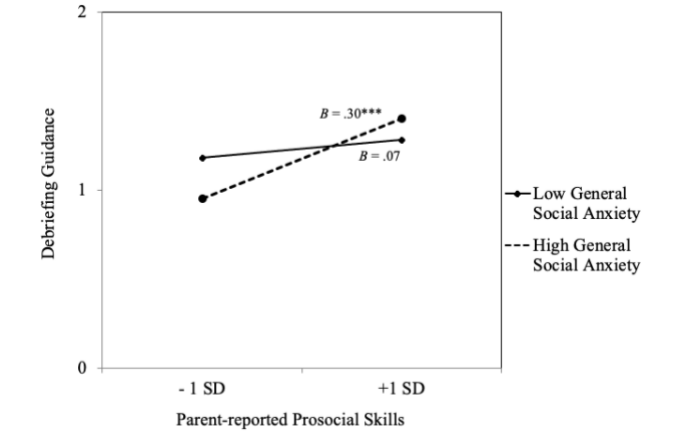

Figure 3
The Relationship between Parent-Reported Social Skills and Debriefing Guidance, with General Social Anxiety as a Moderator