

# Are Girls Biologically Prepared for Socialisation?

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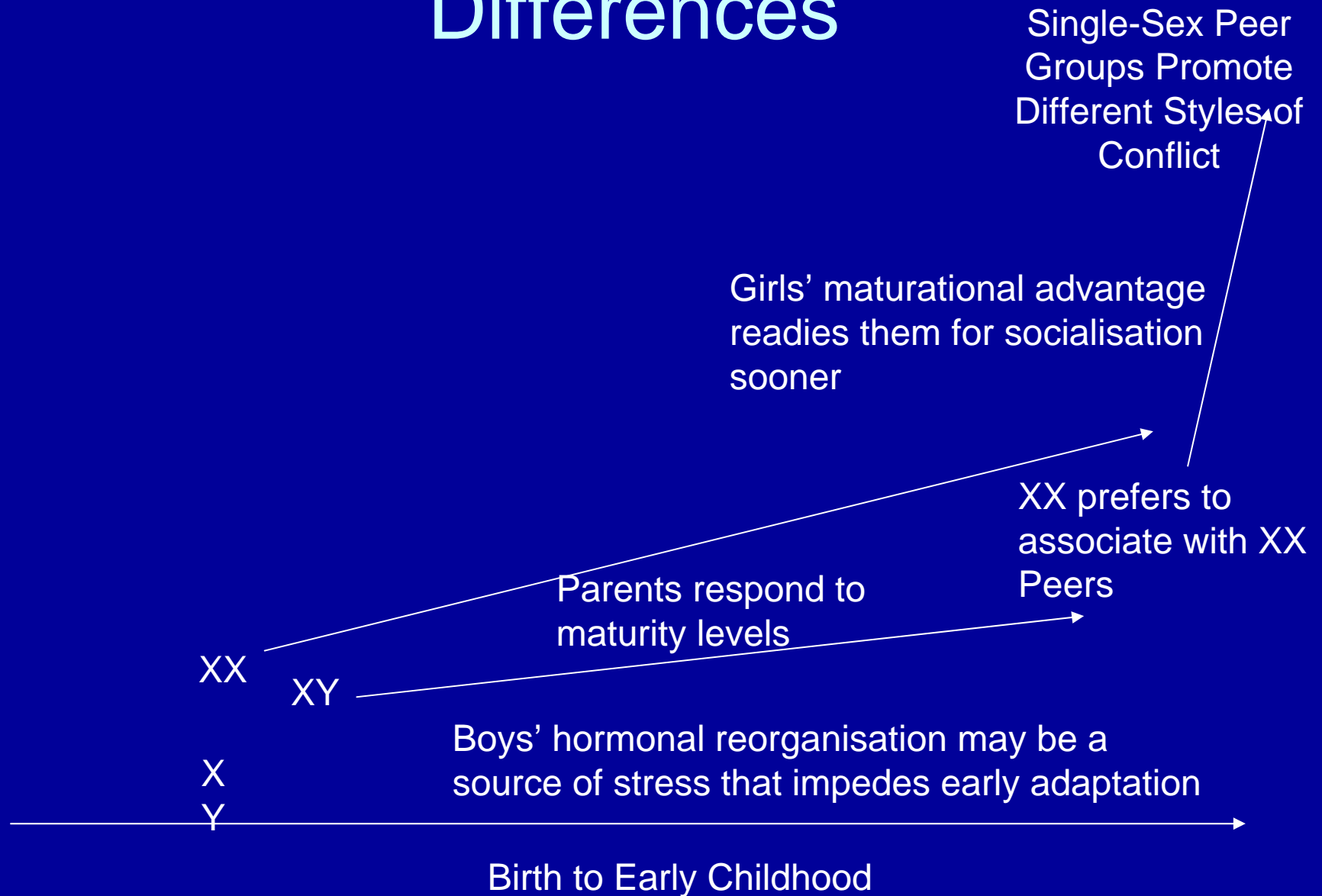
# Girls' and Boys' Diverging Pathways through Childhood

- In infancy, there is little evidence for sex differences in social behaviour
- By preschool age, sex differences are evident in prosocial behaviour and aggression
- Why do girls and boys become so different?

# Why Do the Sexes Become So Different?

- Boys escalate in the use of aggression but girls desist
- Girls' use of aggression becomes covert
- Girls' use of aggression becomes confined to close, personal relationships
- Boys' active play promotes conflict and aggression
- Boys are more sensitive to situations and experiences that promote aggression

# A Theory: Pathways to Sex Differences



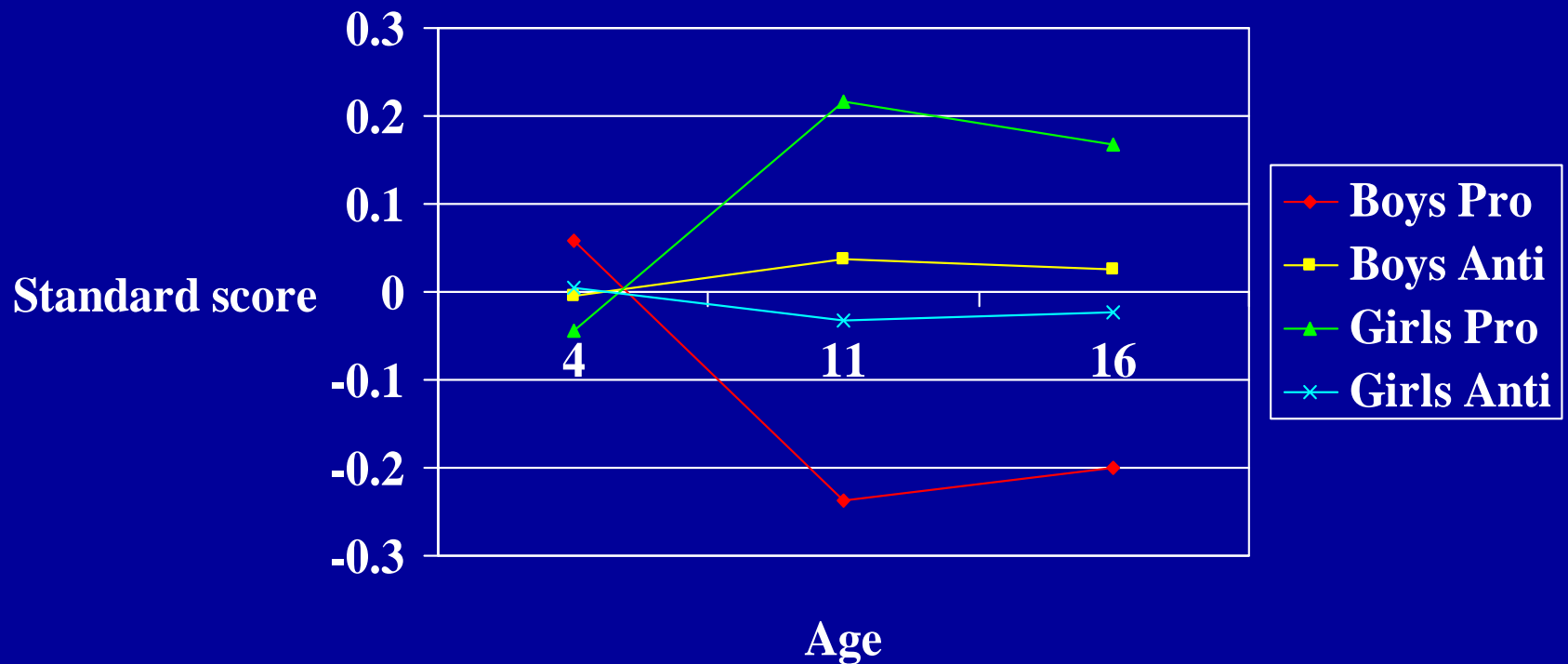
# Growing Up in South London: The SLCDS

- All children born in 1986
- Mothers were registered as antenatal patients in two areas in South London



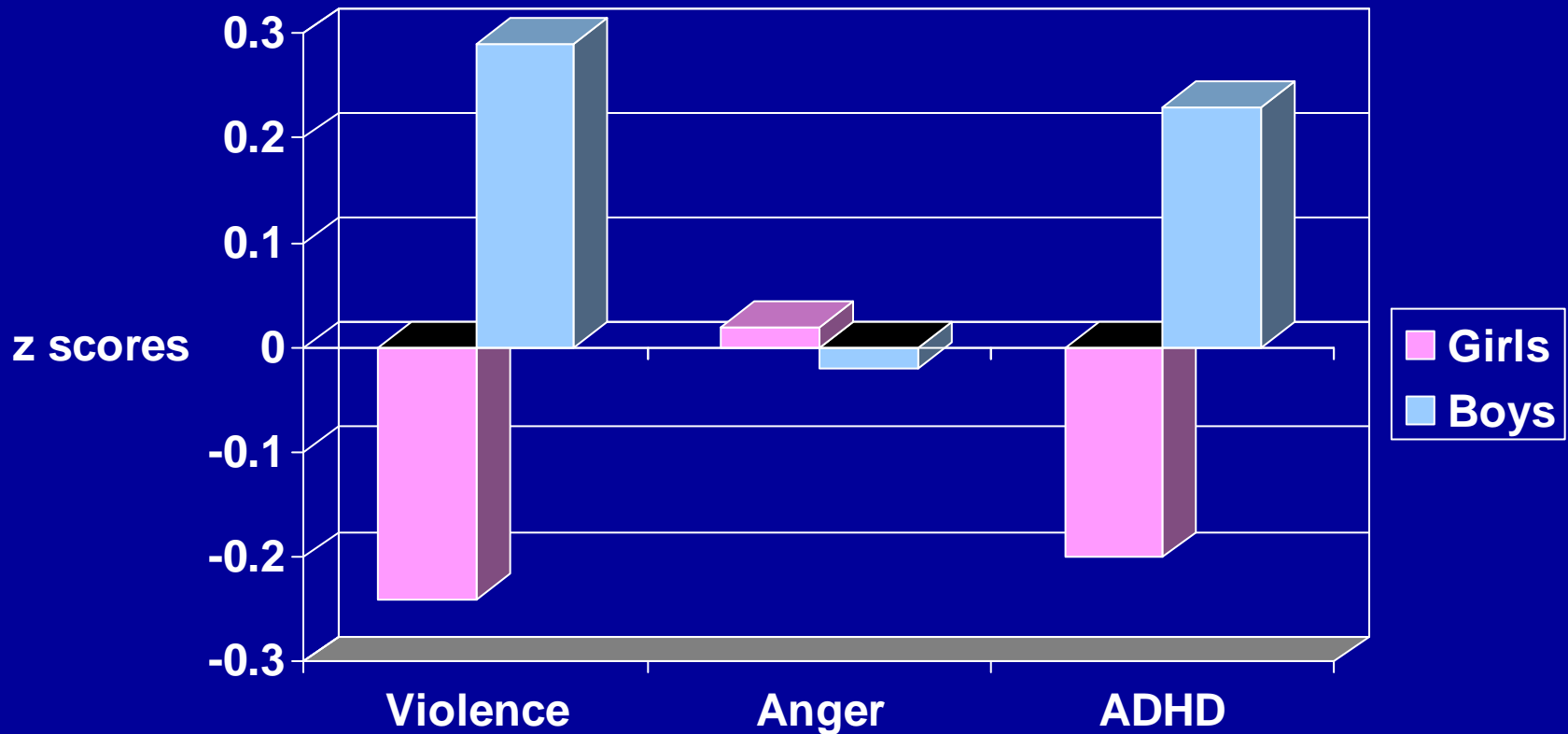
# Gender Differences in Social Behaviour Emerge in Early Childhood and Widen Over Time

## South London Child Development Study



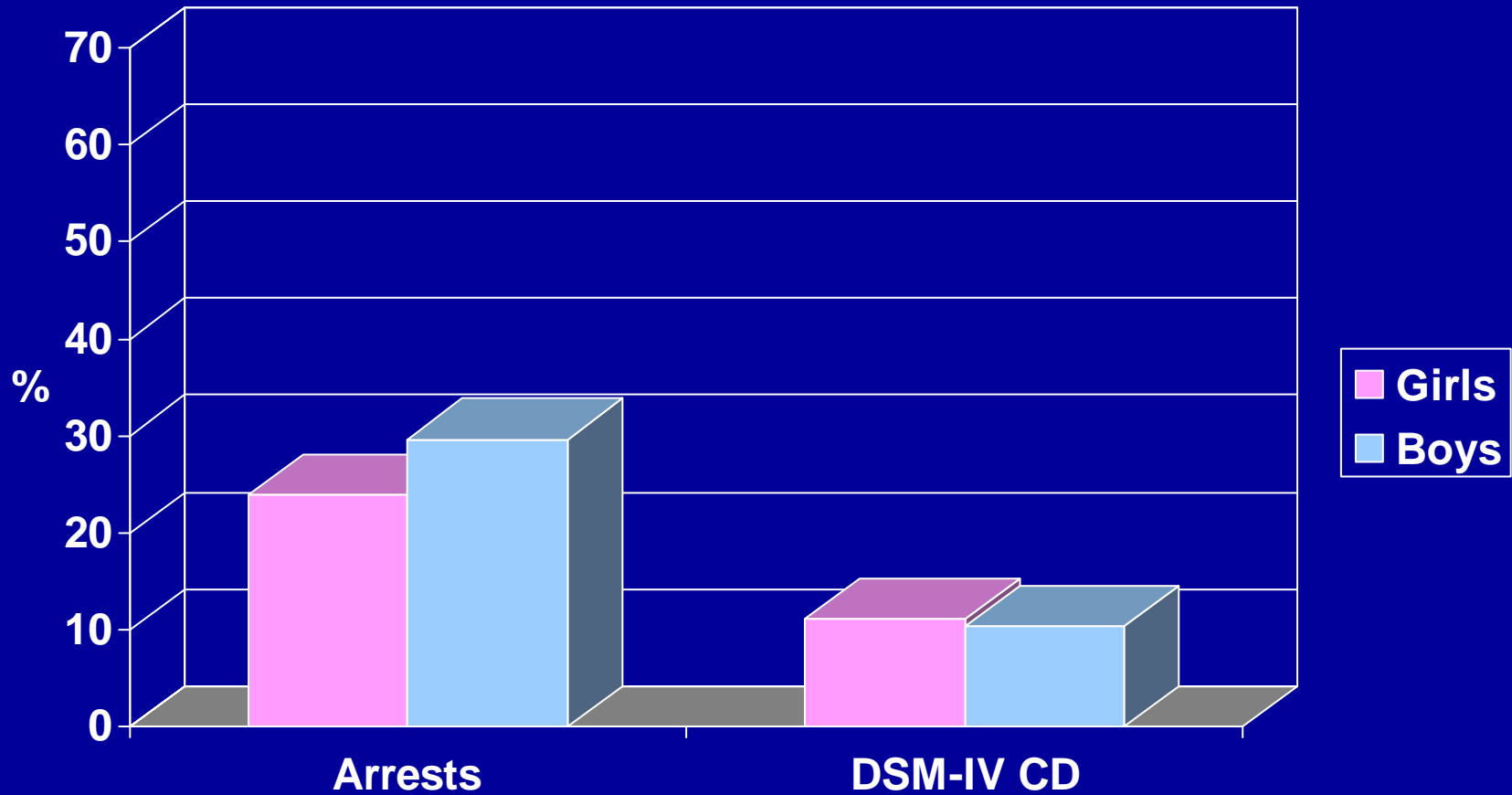
Composite scores based on observation (prosocial) and parents' ratings (CBCL externalising) at 4; parents', teachers', and children's ratings on SDQ at 11; parents' and adolescents' ratings on SDQ at 16

# Significant Sex Differences in Disruptive Behaviour by Age 11



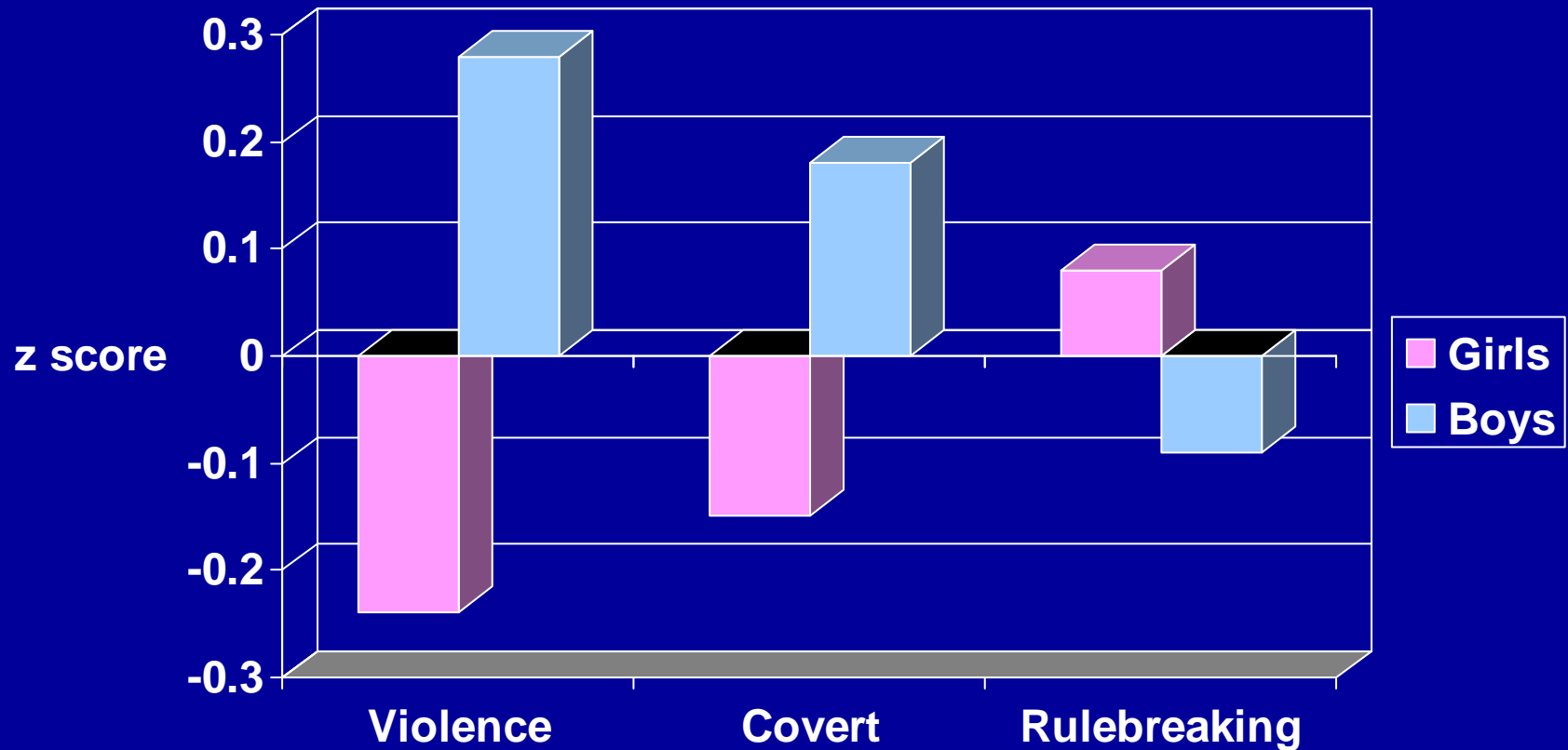
Weighted symptom scales from CAPA interview, from child and parent reports

# At 16: Girls and Boys Show Antisocial Behaviour at Similar Rates



Conduct Symptoms and Arrests/Police Cautions  
Reported by Parents and/or Adolescents at 16 years

# Sex Differences in Types of Conduct Symptoms



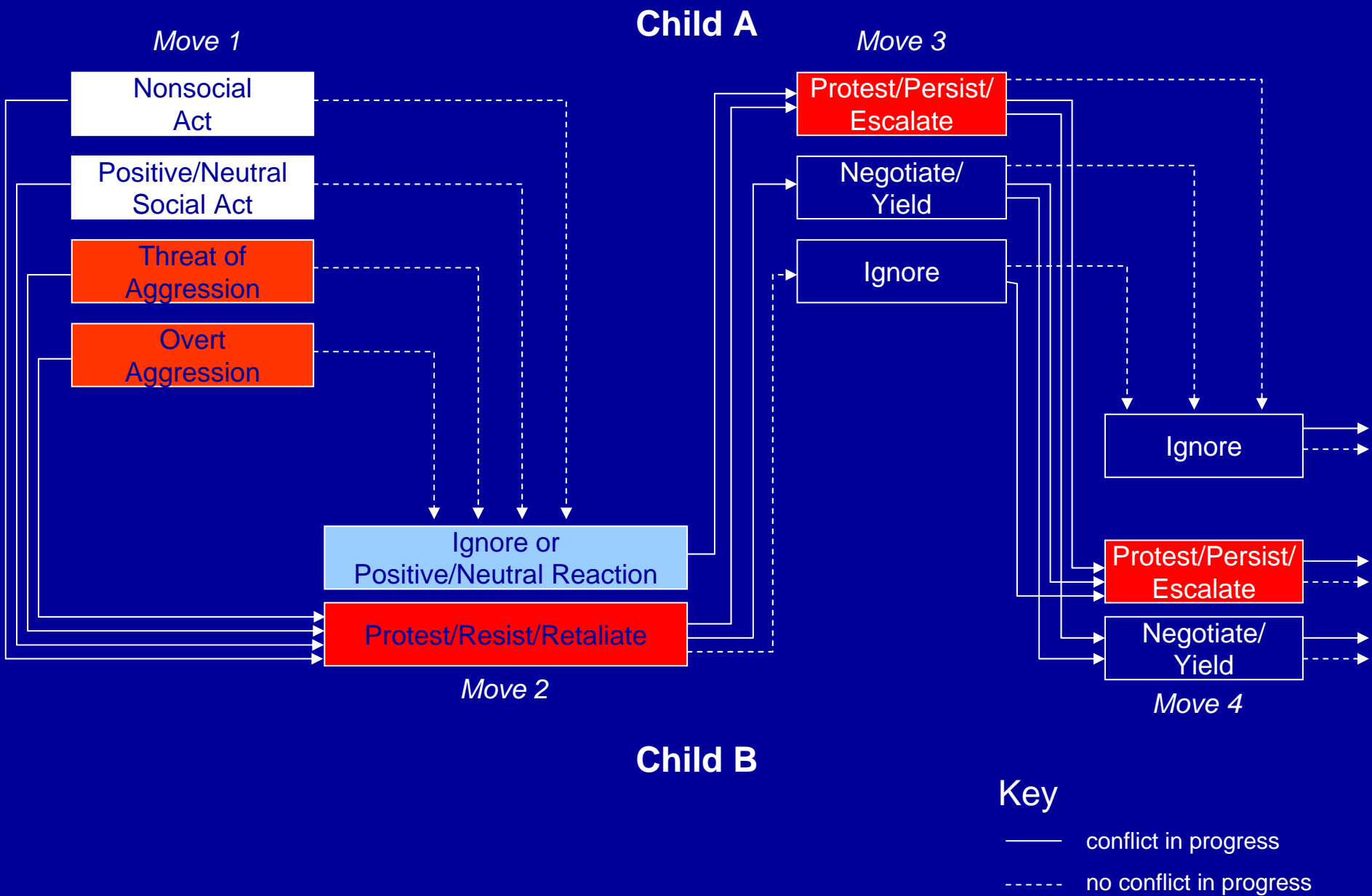
Boys are reported to have significantly more violent conduct symptoms; other differences not significant

# How Do Girls Control their Violence?

- In the SLCDS, at 4, there were no differences on the CBCL aggression scale
- At 11, girls were just as angry as boys are
- At 16, girls were just as likely to break rules as boys are
- But by the end of childhood, girls were significantly less likely than boys are to show overt violence

# Girls and Boys Develop Different Approaches to Social Conflict

- In infancy, girls and boys engage in conflict, and use physical force at similar rates
- But girls' maturational advantage promotes other ways of promoting their self-interest and coping with conflict
- Differential treatment by parents and gender segregation in peer groups amplify sex differences



The course of conflict between children and their companions

# Early Infancy: Sociability, Not Conflict



# Conflict with Peers Emerges in the Last Quarter of the First Year

**On average, 40%  
of episodes of  
interaction  
contain conflict**

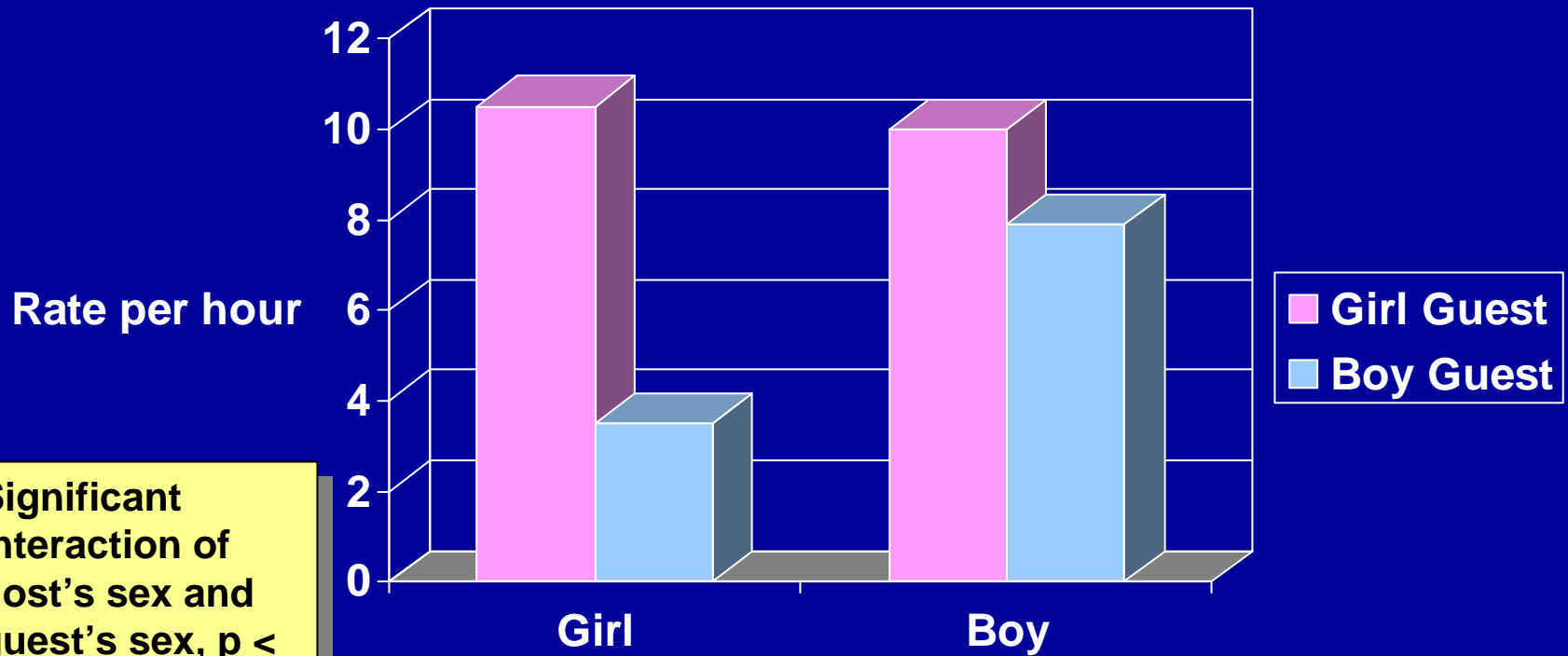
First Friends Study: Hay et al., under review

Early conflict rarely contains signs of anger

# As Toddlers, Girls Use Force as Well as Prosocial Behaviour

Hay et al., 2000

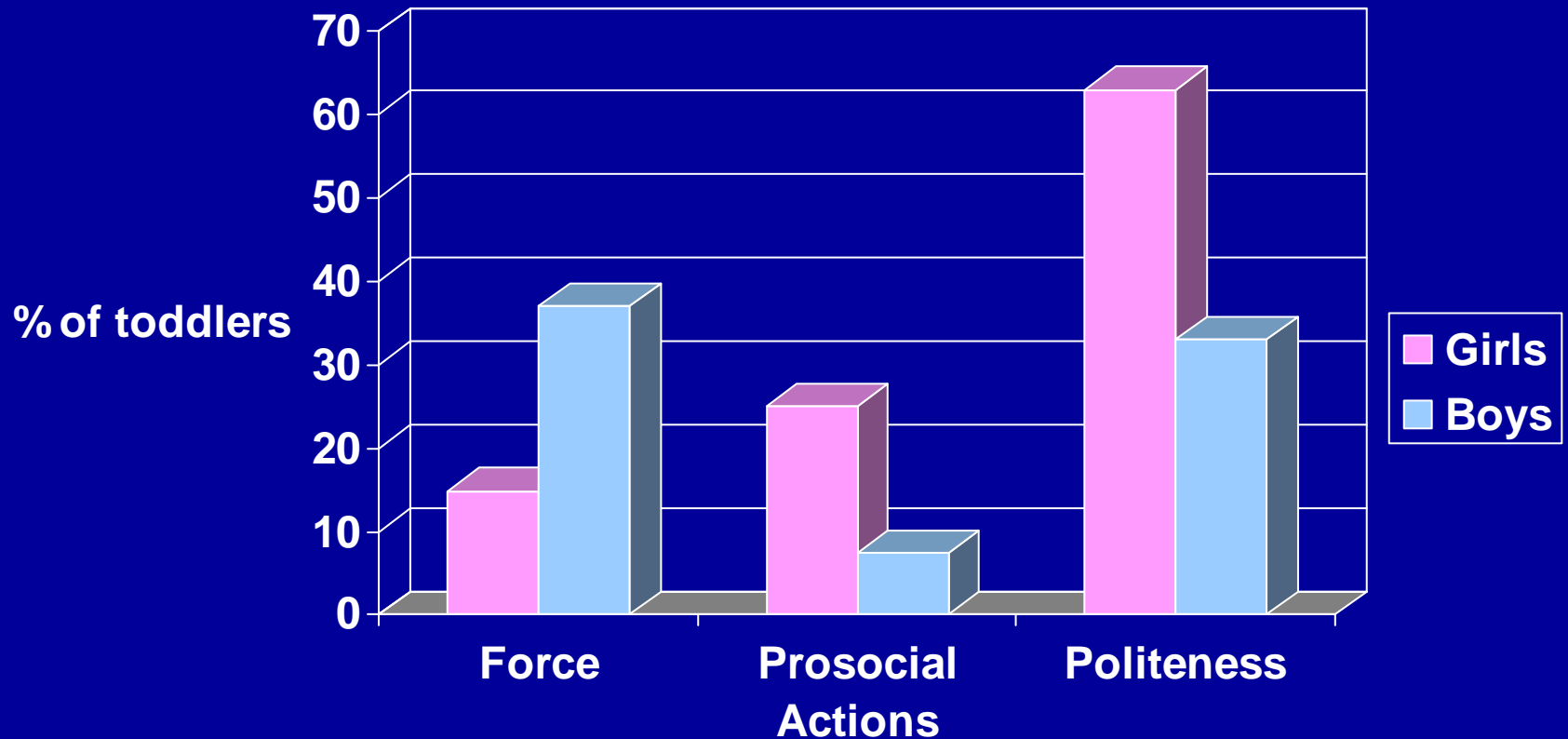
# But Girls Begin to Ignore Boys' Demands



**Significant interaction of host's sex and guest's sex,  $p < .005$ ; girls react passively to boys' provocations**

SLPS: Hay et al., under review

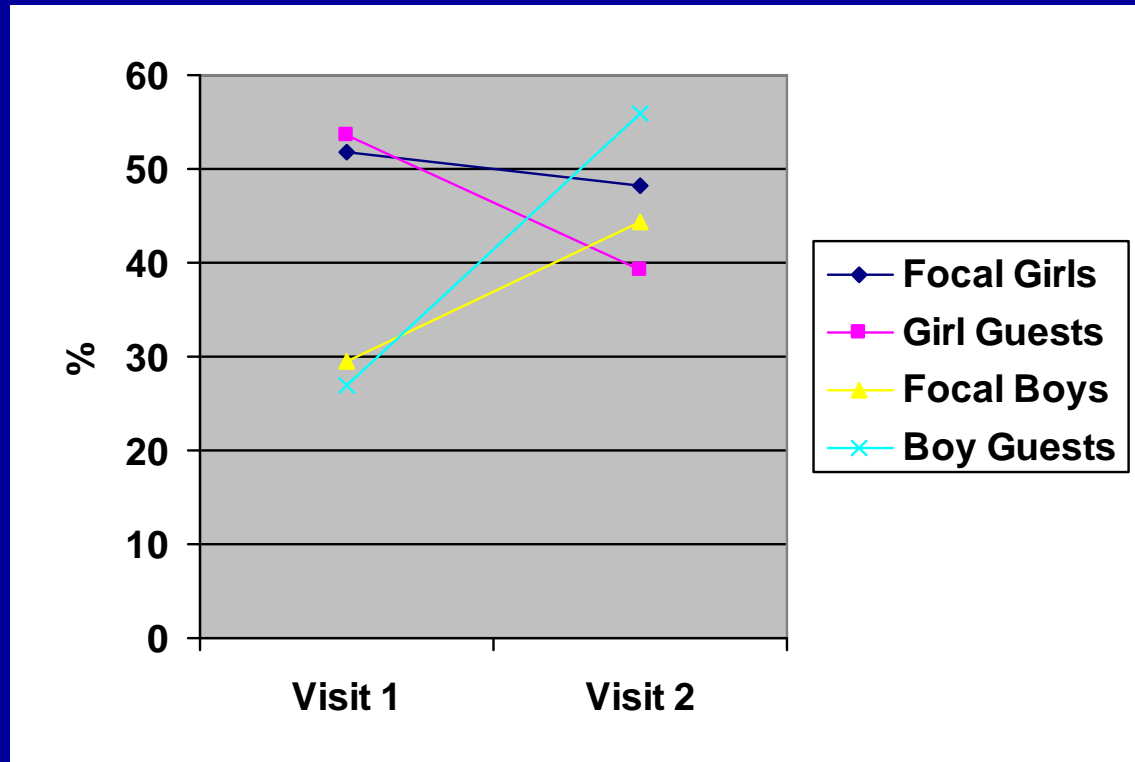
# Girl Toddlers React More Constructively to Provocation



**Girls' lives: The most effective intervention study ever accomplished**

SLPS: Hay et al., under review

# Girls Begin to Use Verbal Tactics Sooner than Boys Do

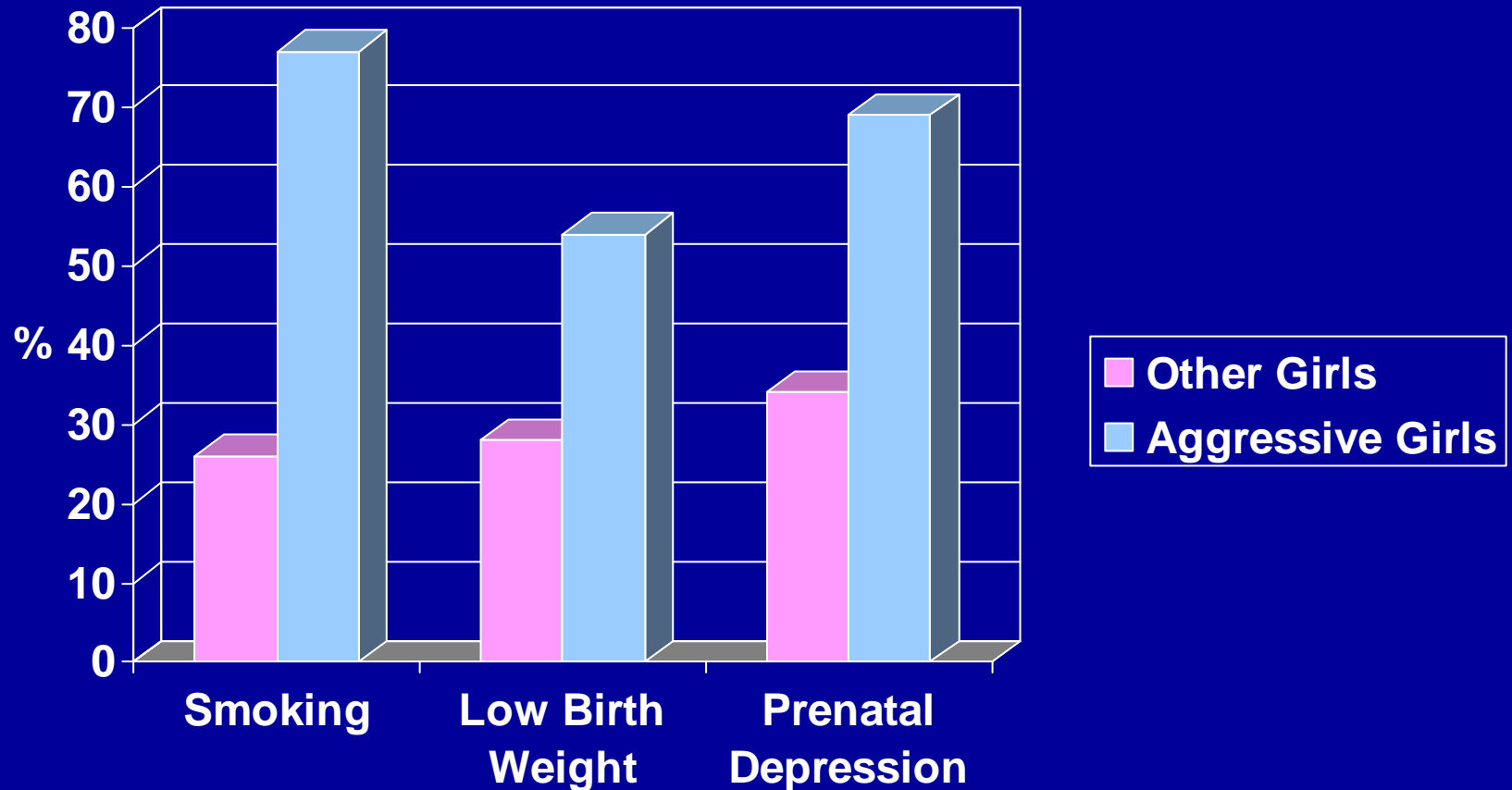


Girls' and boys' growing incompatibility promotes gender segregation and gender-typed input from parents and other adults

# Which Girls Will Become Most Aggressive?

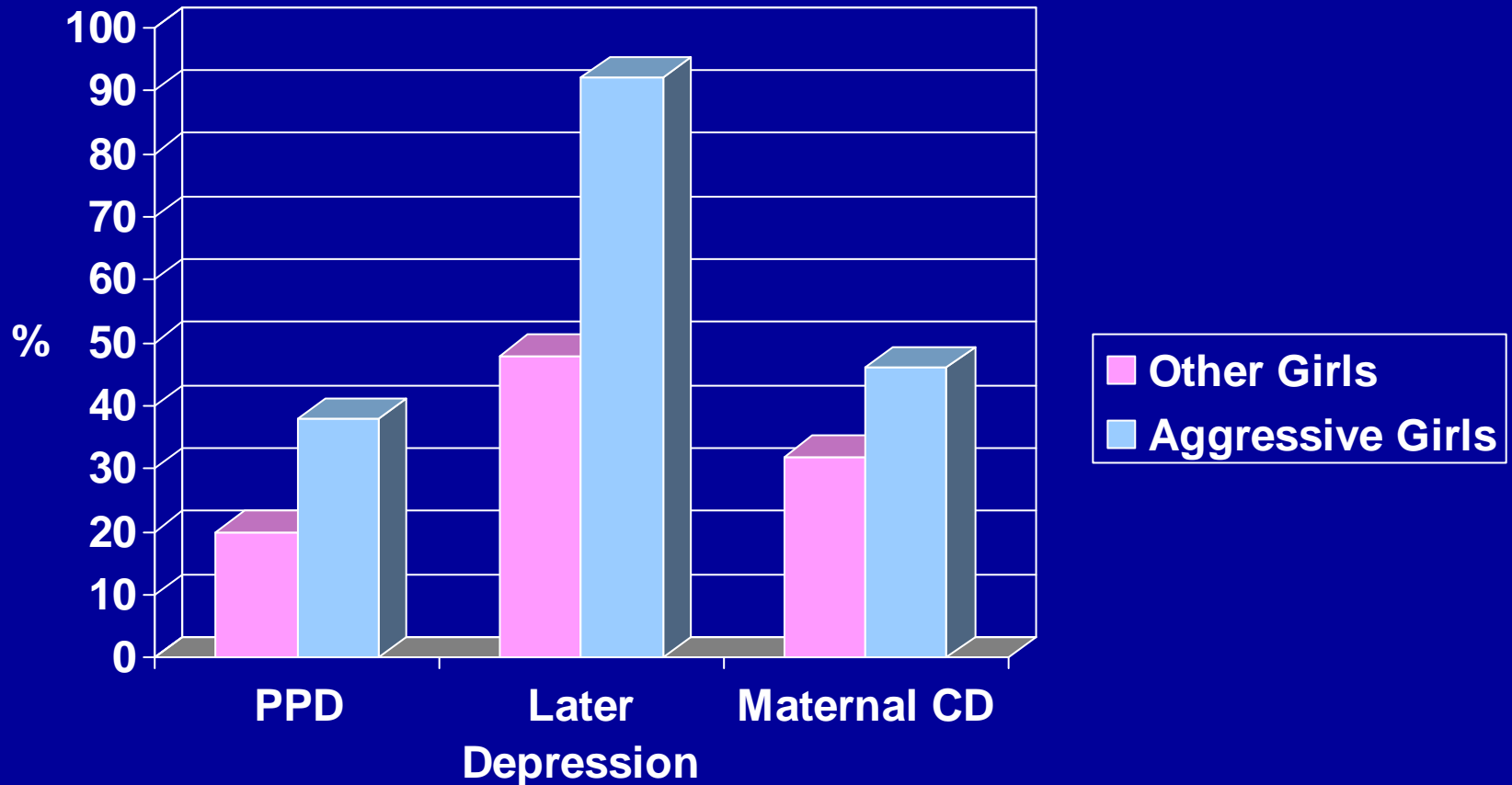
- Girls who cannot regulate their attention and emotion due to early insults
- Girls who mature more slowly
- Girls who have not developed gender-normative prosocial behaviour or verbal skill
- Girls who have not experienced adequate socialisation from adults
- Girls who are rejected by their same-sex peers

# Growing Up Aggressive in South London: Prenatal Insults



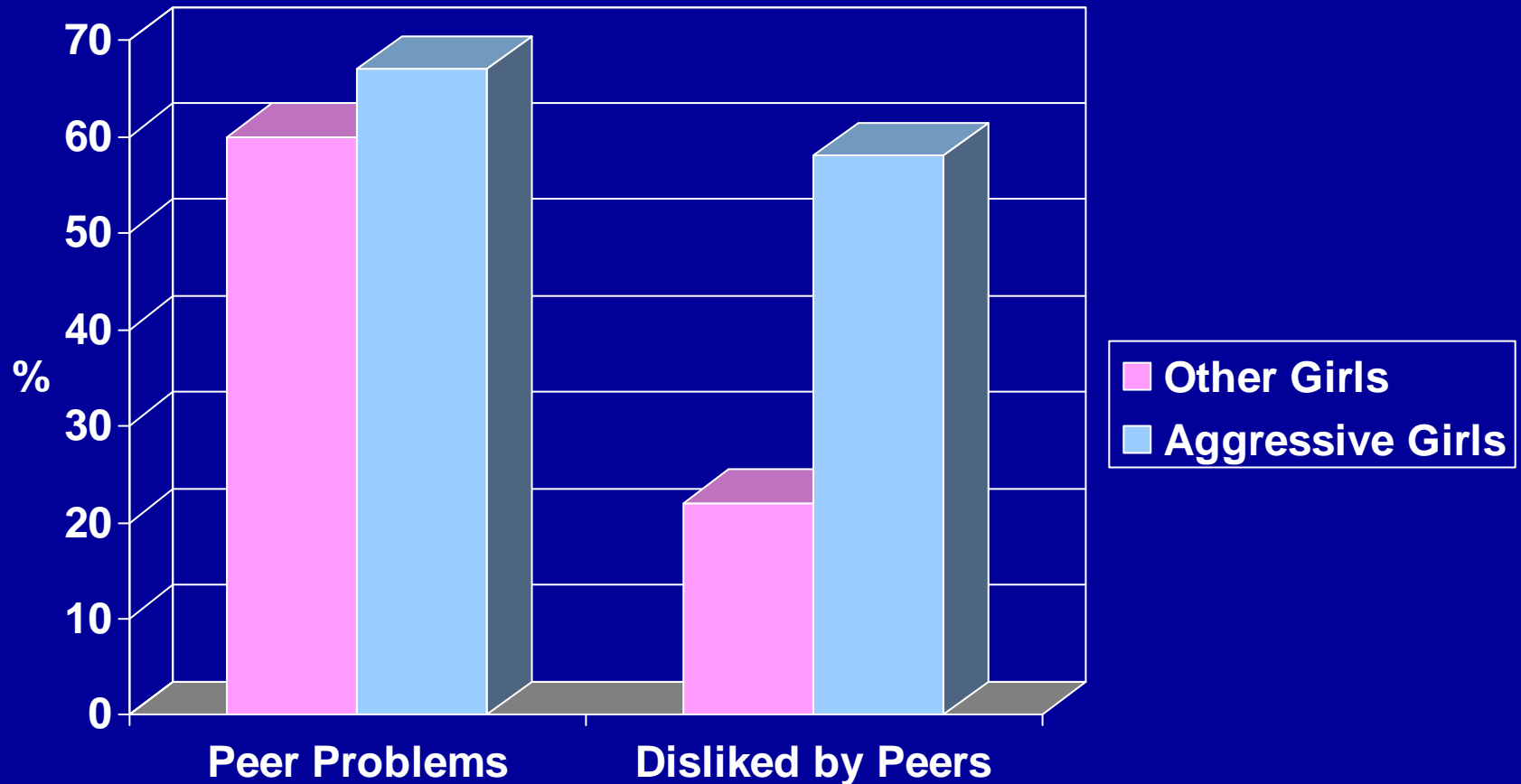
Aggressive girls defined by aggressive conduct symptoms on CAPA or teachers' reports of fighting at age 11 (N = 13)

# Growing Up Aggressive: Socialisation Risks



Aggressive girls defined by aggressive conduct symptoms on CAPA or teachers' reports of fighting at age 11 (N = 13)

# Growing Up Aggressive: Peer Rejection



Aggressive girls defined by aggressive conduct symptoms on CAPA or teachers' reports of fighting at age 11 (N = 13)

# Aggressive Girls Fall Off the Female Pathway

Single-Sex Peer Groups Promote Different Styles of Conflict

Girls' maturational advantage readies them for socialisation sooner

XX prefers to associate with XX Peers

Parents respond to maturity levels

Boys' hormonal reorganisation may be a source of stress that impedes early adaptation

XX

XY

X

Y

Birth to Early Childhood

