



Youth in criminal justice processes

Taking development and children's rights into
consideration

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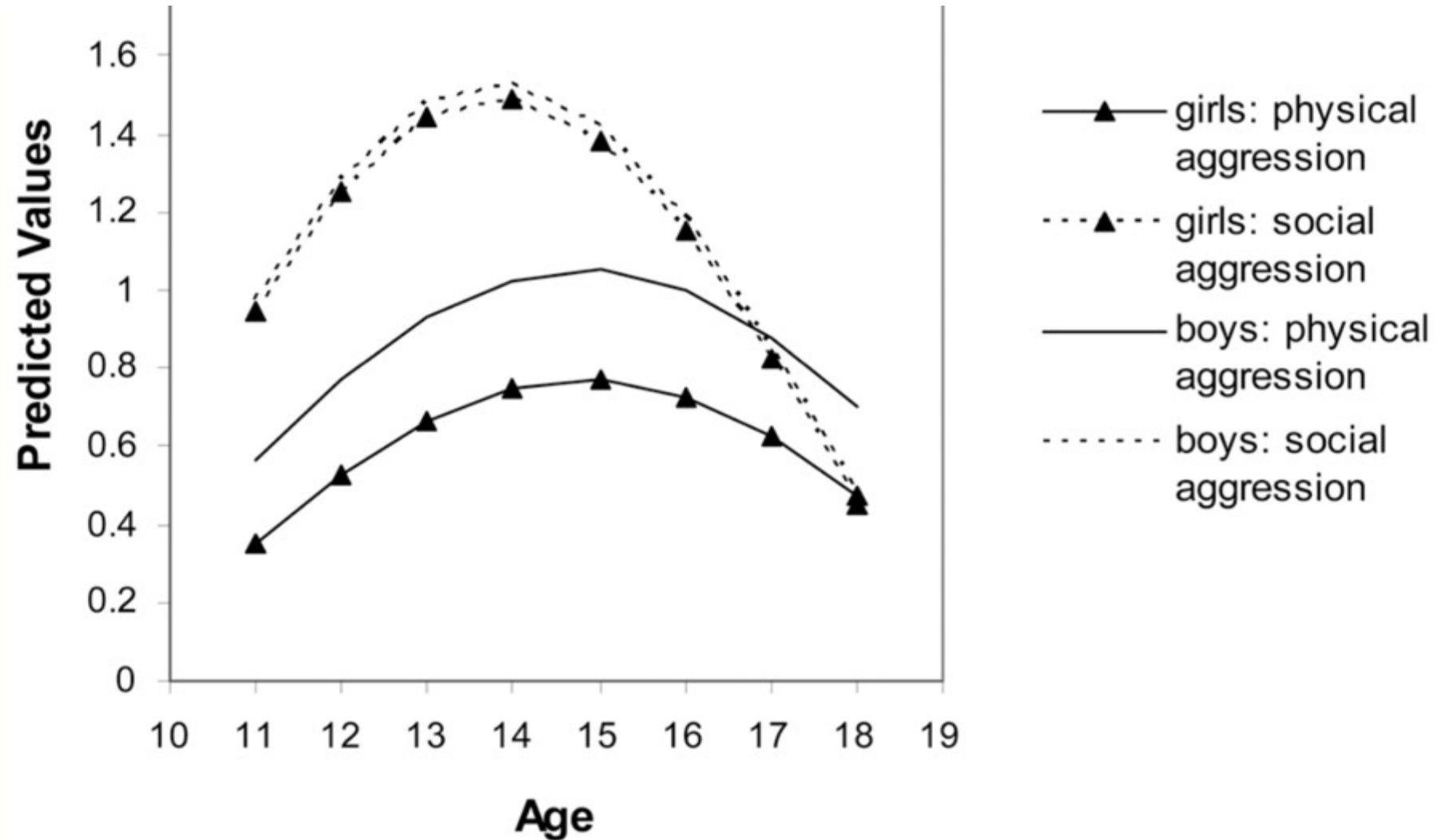
Central findings (FRA 2022)

- Information is often not given in an accessible manner
- Lacks in interpretation
- Interviews are often not recorded
- Children do not always get a legal defence lawyer and there are reports of maltreatment by the police
- Individual assessments of the child's situation may be lacking
- Training for professionals is urgently needed
- Children frequently expressed negative experiences with the encounters in the legal processes

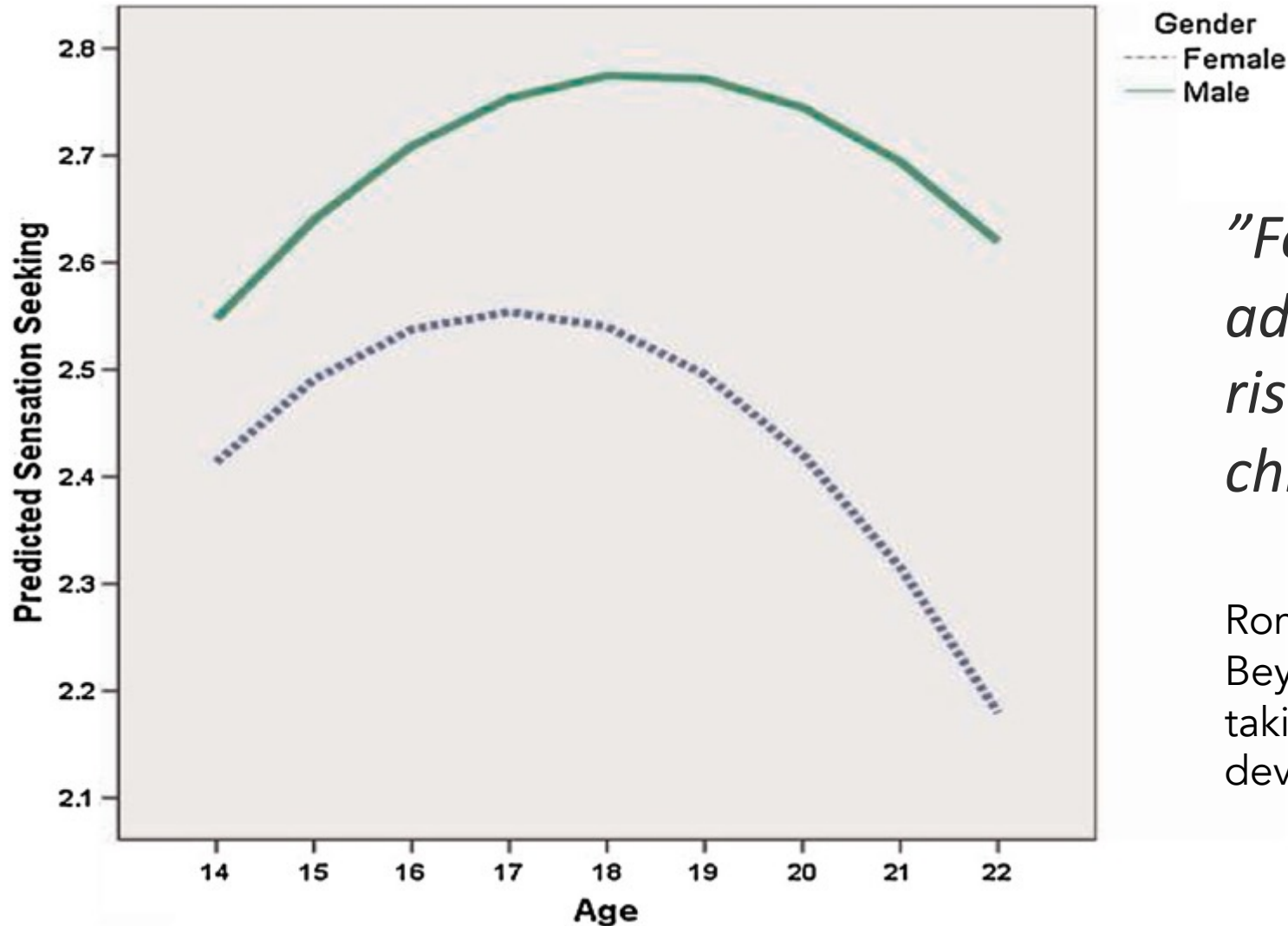




Aggressive behaviour increases in adolescence



Risk taking in adolescence typically fades over time



“For the majority of adolescents, maladaptive risk taking declines from childhood on”

Romer, Reyna & Satterthwaite (2017).
Beyond stereotypes of adolescent risk taking: Placing the adolescent brain in developmental context



The vulnerability of children in interrogations

‘People need to understand that juvenile suspects are especially vulnerable in the interrogation room ...The ways in which we question youth can have potentially devastating consequences in some cases.’

Lindsay Malloy



The quality of question types in Swedish police interviews with young suspects of serious crimes

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Theory, Practice and Principles
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Abstract

This study explores how juvenile offenders in Sweden between the age of 15 and 17 are interviewed by police officers when suspected of homicide crimes. The quality of question types was assessed in 47 authentic interviews. The findings show that the police officers used option-posing and suggestive questions most frequently and social pressure was used in three predominating ways: to confront, to challenge and to appeal for a confession. The conclusion is that the police officers' question style to a large extent

- Children and youth in vulnerable situations may be encountered as perpetrators in cases where they are in fact victims (e.g, human trafficking)
- Psychological coercion likely to be underrecognised by the criminal justice system

Overcoming Disclosure Reluctance in Youth Victims of Sex Trafficking: New Directions for Research, Policy, and Practice

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An alarming number of youth worldwide are victims of commercial sexual exploitation, particularly sex trafficking. Normative developmental processes and motivations across the adolescent period—the age when youth are at greatest risk for trafficking—combined with their history, make them highly likely to be reluctant to disclose their exploitation to police, who often encounter victims because they are suspected of delinquency and crime and who interrogate the victims as suspects. Little scientific and policy attention has been devoted to understanding how to question these victims in a way that reduces their disclosure reluctance and increases their provision of legally relevant information. In the current review, we describe research concerning trafficking victims' histories and exploitative experiences, juvenile suspects' and victims' encounters with the legal system, and best-practice forensic interviewing approaches to elicit disclosures from child victims. We highlight the implications of these areas for understanding the dynamics between how police encounter and interact with adolescent trafficking victims and whether and how the victims disclose trafficking details during these interactions. We close with an agenda for research to test interviewing methods for suspected victims of sex trafficking and with policy and practice recommendations for interviewers.



Key points

- Children must be treated as children – also when suspects
- Youth have developmental vulnerabilities that must be taken into consideration both when investigating suspected offenses and when deciding on consequences
- Every interaction is a possible intervention!
- There is ample possibility to change the course for a young person
- Harsh punitive policies are highly unlikely to have beneficial consequences



Next?

- Investigating youth offences: use the same methodology and expertise as for young victims and witnesses
- Prevention & interventions: Collect good practises – and put them into practise

Thank you!



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Crime Prevention and Control,
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Also see the portal of the legal psych research group at Åbo Akademi University (LePÅ):

www.legalpsy.fi