

# Adolescent Sex Offenders

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# Age of Onset of Serious Violence

85% of those involved in serious violence by age 27 report that their 1<sup>st</sup> act occurred between 12 & 20

Peak age of onset 16

Almost no serious violence starts

< age 10 & > age 23

(Prentky 2002)

# Two Onset “Trajectories”

## Childhood Onset

strong link between childhood factors  
and persistent violence into adulthood

## Juvenile Onset:

most violence begins in adolescence,  
ends with the transition into adulthood

(Prentky, 2002)

# Onset of Sexual Offending

Incarcerated adolescents	N
Onset < 12	48
Onset > 12	130
Offending < and > age 12	65

Seriousness & complexity of sexual acts  
more severe for the continuous offenders

(Burton, 2000)

# Chronic Juvenile Offenders

% of Offenders

% of Crime

6.3%

52%

7.5%

61%

(Wolfgang's 1958)

# Juvenile Crime

Offenders

Crimes

8%

70%

(Beuhring, 2002; Howell, 1995;  
Kelley et al., 1997)

# Genetic Contribution to Violent Behavior

$\frac{1}{2}$  Variance in antisocial behavior

Due to genetic factors

( Beaver, 2008; Mason & Frick, 1994; Miles & Carey, 1997; Rhee & Wald, 2002)

# Interaction of Genes and Environment

Males with low MAOA activity allele  
(specific gene)

+

Childhood maltreatment

Increased antisocial behavior

(Beaver, 2008)



# Genetics & Environment

## Interactive

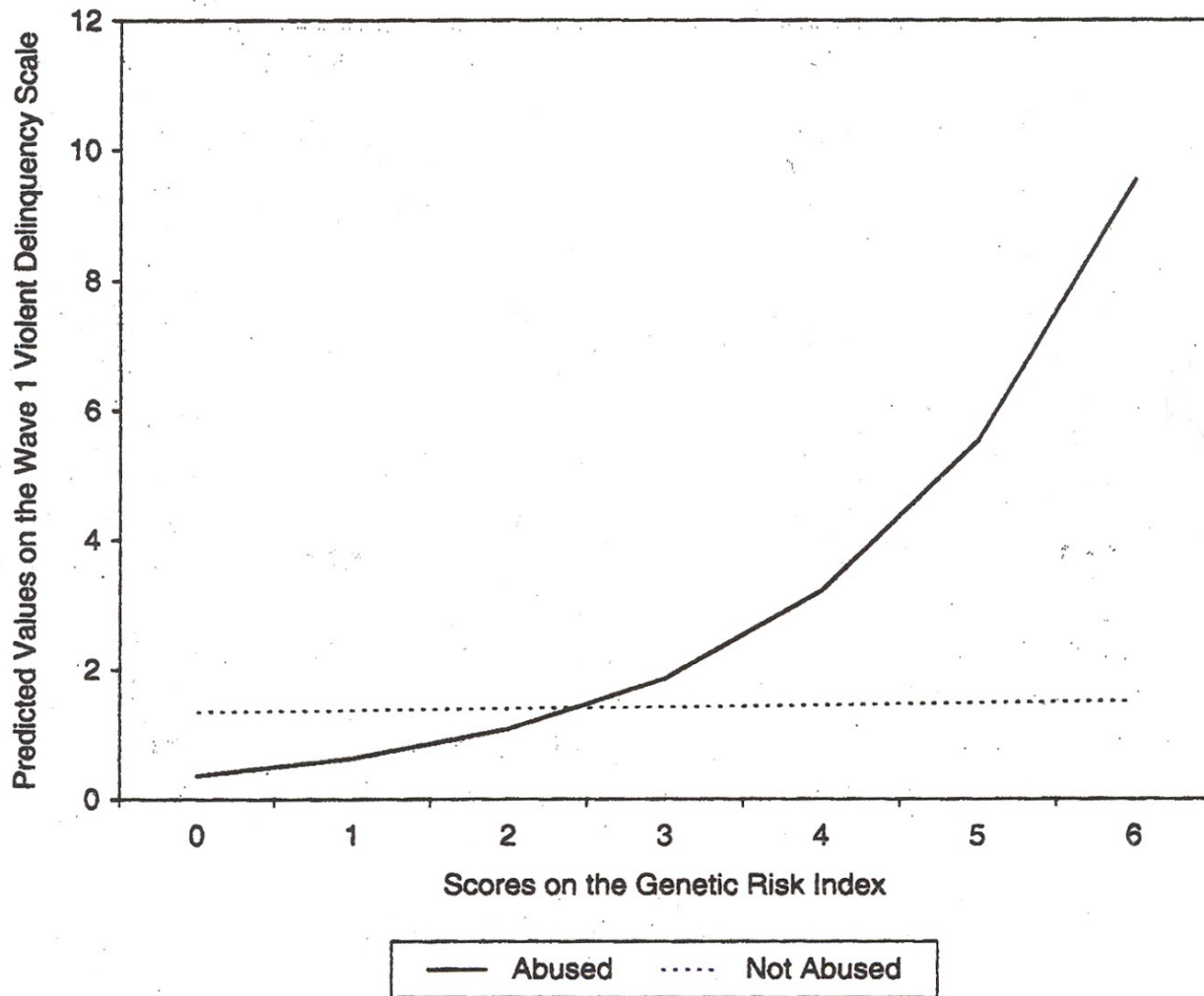
(Rowe, 2002; Rutter, 2006; Walsh, 2002)

# Violence Delinquency Scale

- How many times past 12 months hurt someone badly enough to require medical attention
- Used a weapon to get something from someone
- Took part in a group fight

(Beaver, 2008)

**Figure 1**  
**The Interaction Between Childhood Sexual Abuse and Genetic Risk on Wave 1 Violent Delinquency for Males**



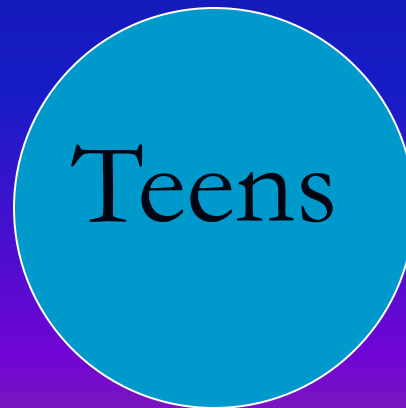
Note: Predicted values were calculated with all other variables at their mean.

# The Role of Developmental Immaturity

# The Ever Swinging Pendulum

Leniency

Harsher  
Punishment



# Adolescents & Violent/Sexual Crime

- Rehabilitation Only

Harsher & Harsher  
Punishment



Teens

# Adolescents & Violent/Sexual Crime

■ Rehabilitation Only

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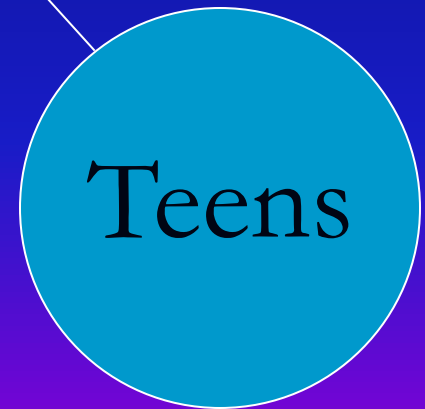
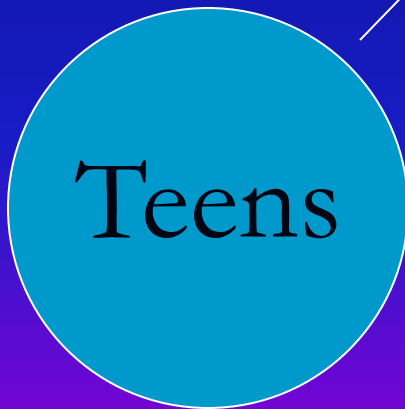


Teens

# WAR

■ Rehabilitation Only

Harsher & Harsher  
Punishment





# Polarized Debate 1990's

- Treat adolescents as children in juvenile court?
- Treat adolescents as adults in adult court?

# Polarized Debates

- Much of the public

Lawmakers

Treat as adults

- Many therapists

Some public

Treat as children

Where to stand?

What to stand on?

# What Do We Need?

Less politics

More science

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Offenders

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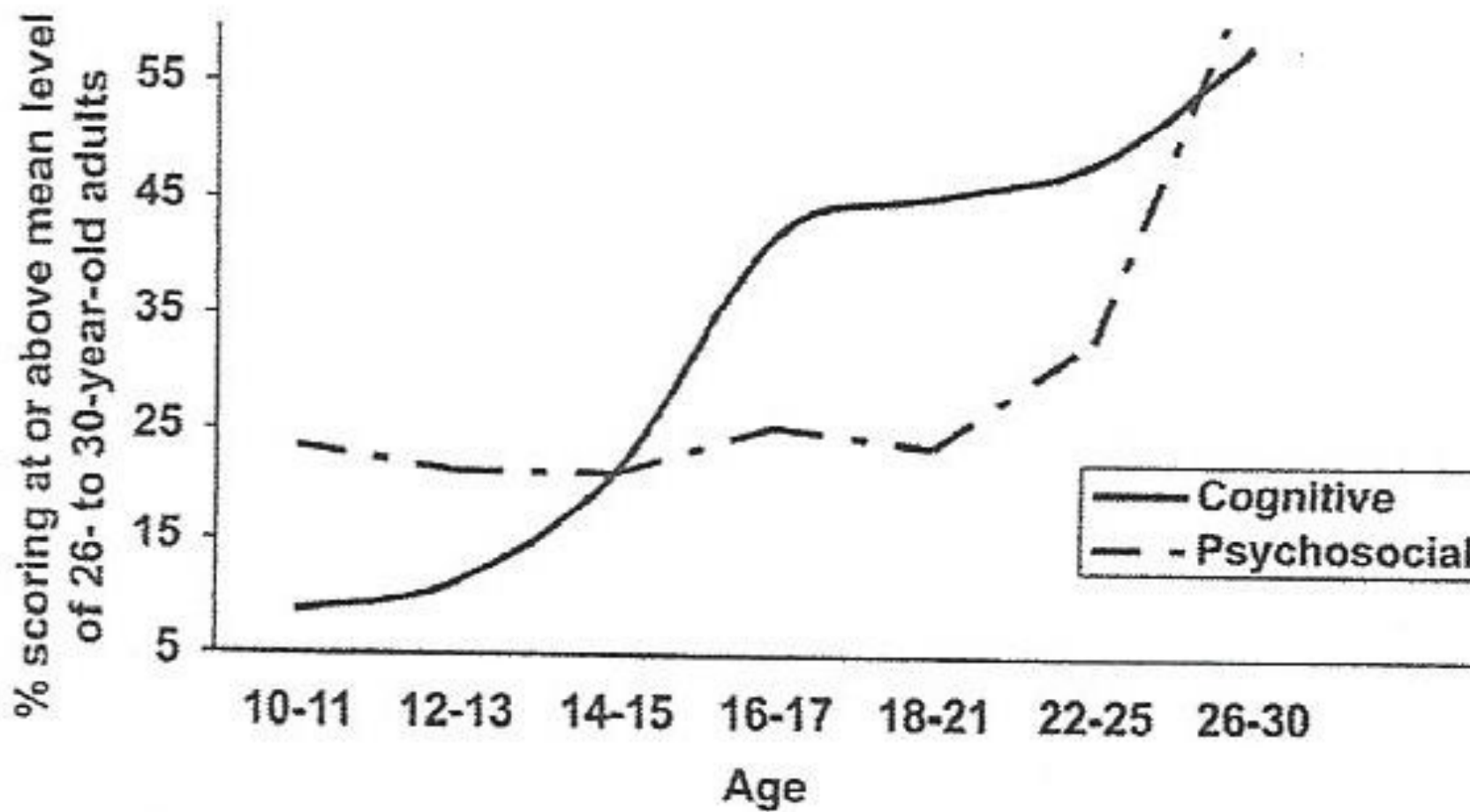
70%

(Beuhring, 2002; Howell, 1995; Kelley  
et al., 1997)

# The Role of Developmental Factors

MacArthur Foundation Research Network on  
Adolescent Development and Juvenile  
Justice

(Scott and Steinberg, 2008)



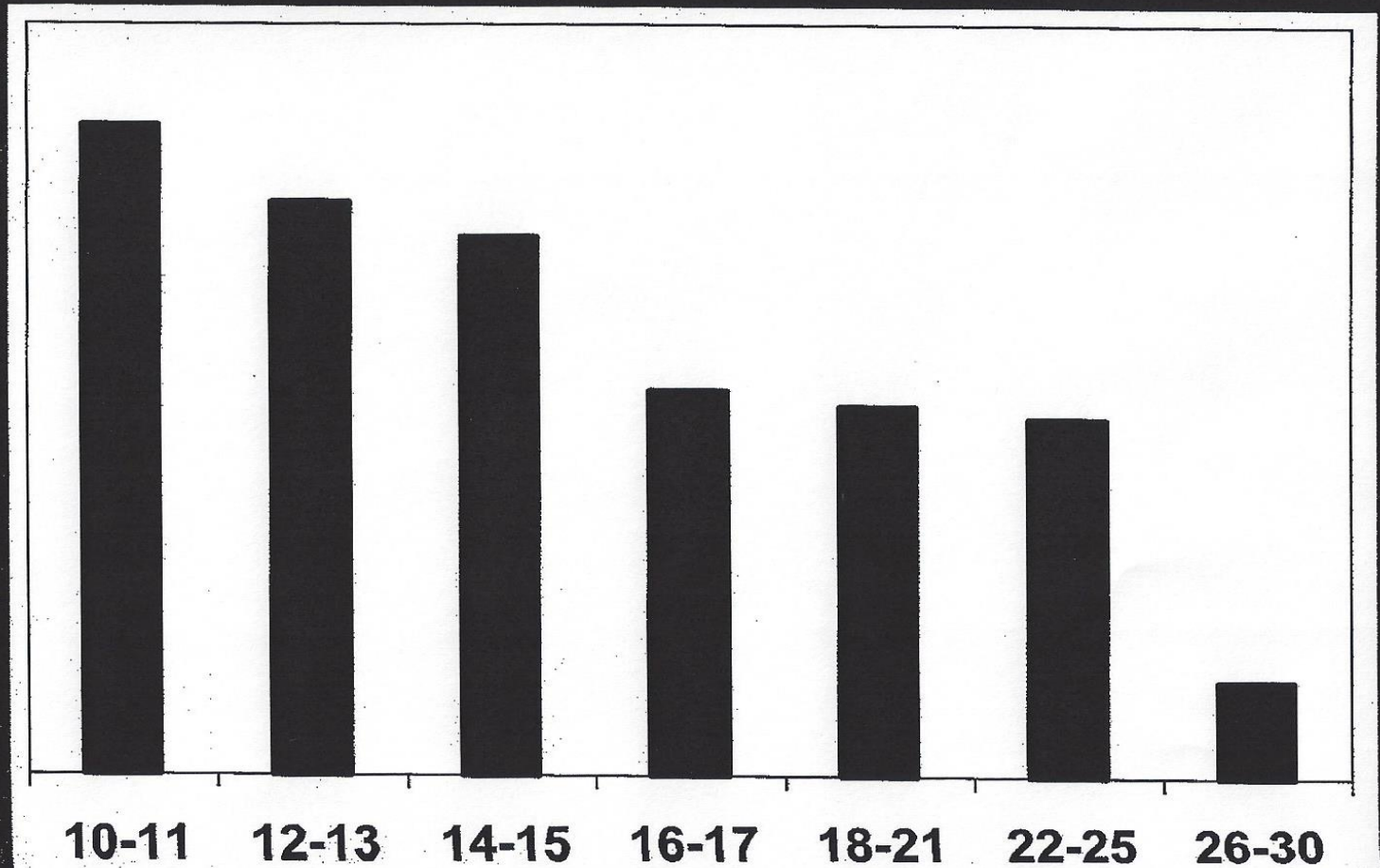


“Although gains in hypothetical thinking level off in mid-adolescence, the consideration of the future consequences of choices continues to improve through late adolescence.”

(Scott and Steinberg, 2008)

# Impulsivity

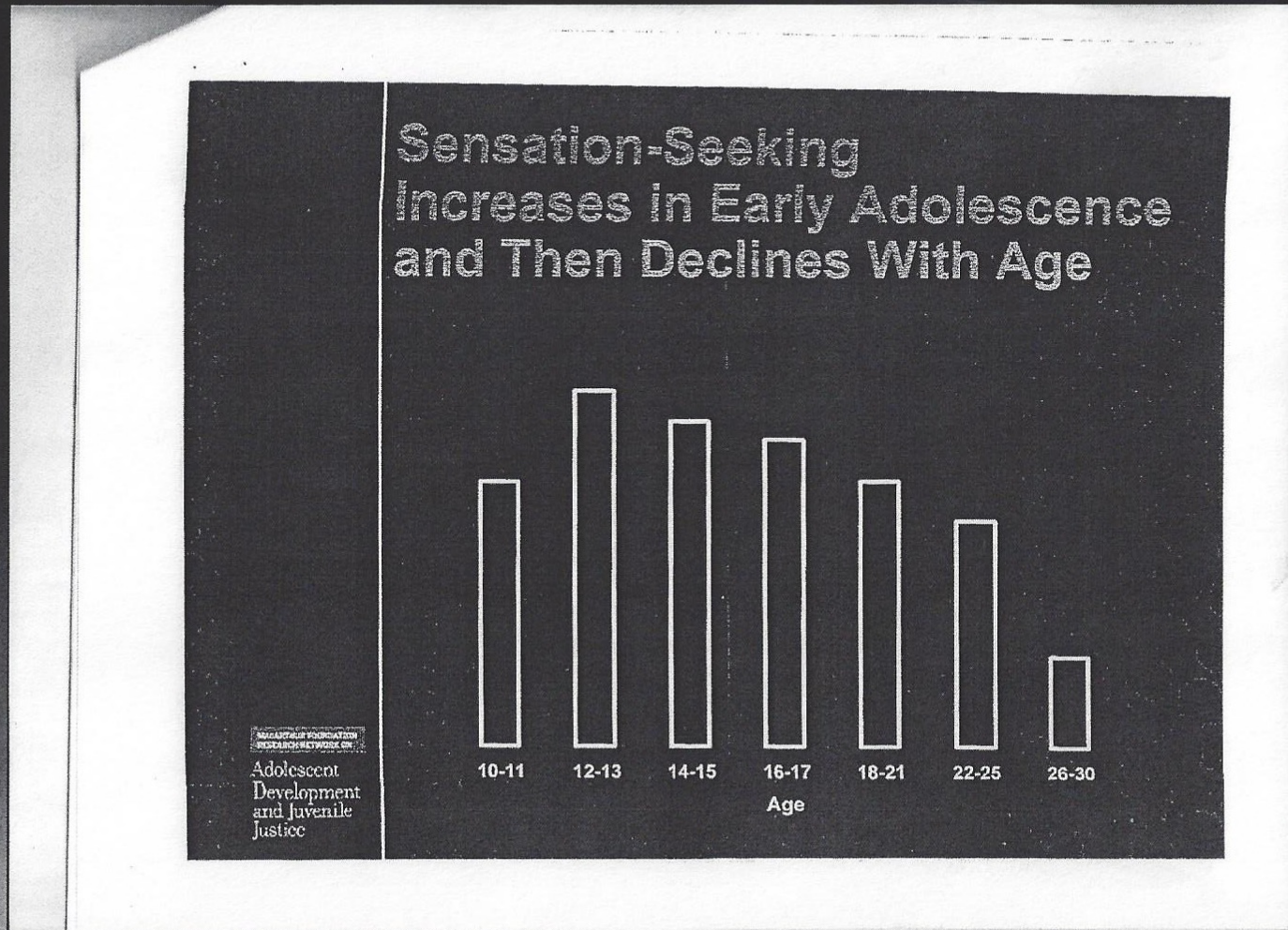
Impulsivity Declines With Age



MACARTHUR FOUNDATION  
RESEARCH NETWORK ON

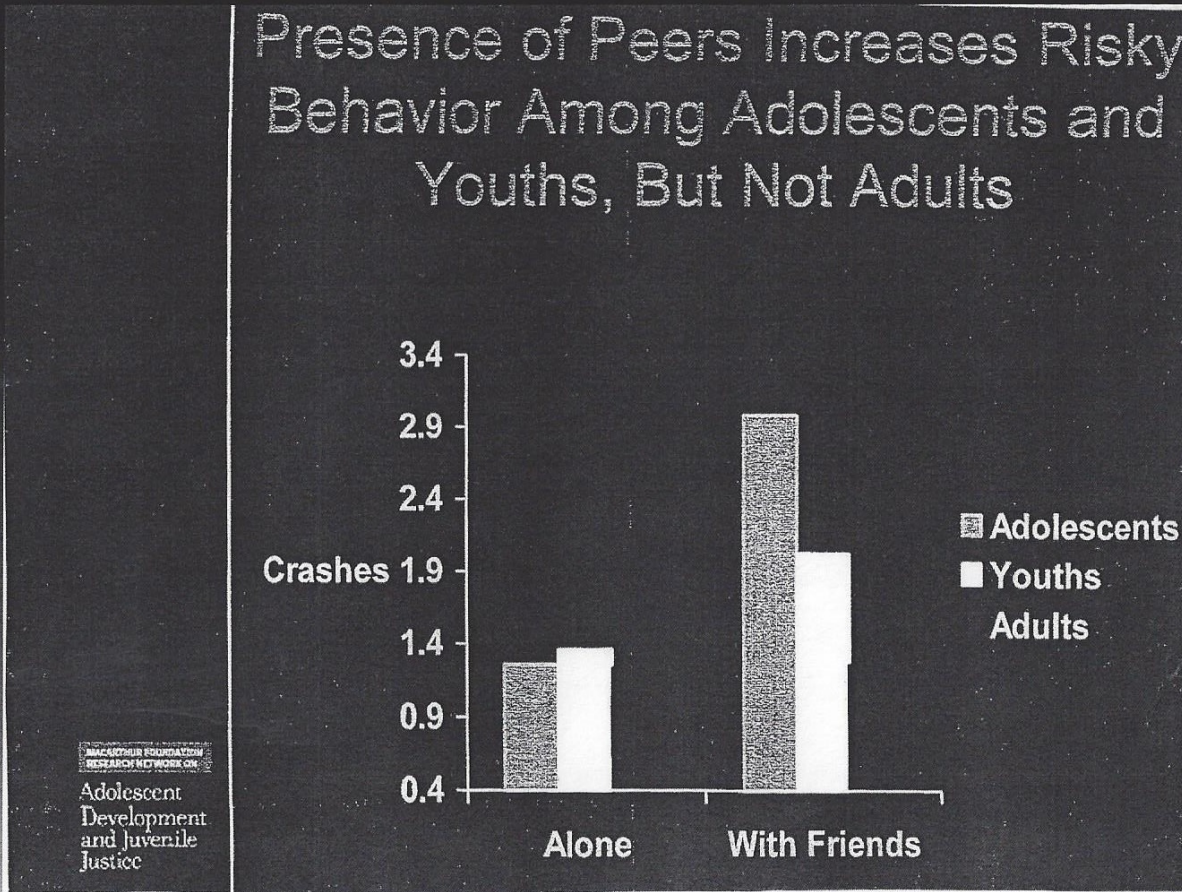
Adolescent  
Development  
and Juvenile

# Sensation-Seeking



(Steinberg et al. 2007)

# Presence of Peers (Steinberg et al., 2007)



(Steinberg et al., 2007)

# Susceptibility to Peer Pressure

Peaks

14 or 15

Adolescents have less experience to compare current situation

Adolescents process information slower under stress

# Which Sex Offenses Are in Part Due to Immaturity

- Peer-induced
- Impulsive
- Sensation-seeking
- Not considering future

# Porn Entrapment

- 2 WI adolescents
- Go to website for sexual chat
- Woman undresses
- Engages in sex acts
- Persuades teen to engage in sex acts



# Porn Entrapment

- Asks, “Any other siblings home?”
- Persuades teen to bring in younger sib and engage in sex acts with him
- She’s filming
- Distributes as child porn

# Porn Entrapment

- Woman in a different country
- She's not on film
- A no risk way to obtain child pornography
- No children on site
- No need to groom families

# Who's Left to Prosecute

- 15-year-old
- No previous record
- Facing adult court
- Felony charges for production of child porn and sexual assault of a child

# Child Porn Entrapment

- Impulsivity
- Peer pressure
- Lack of future orientation
- Sensation-seeking

“This is not to say, however, that youths should never be subject to adult punishment. A policy that treats immaturity as a mitigating condition is viable only if public protection is not seriously compromised.”

(Scott & Steinberg, 2008, p. 142)

# On the Other Hand . . .

17 years & 10 months

- Quit high school to work in a funeral home
- Abducted 10-year-old girl walking to school
- Knew when he got her in the car, she was dead
- Took her to house

- 17 yrs, 10 months male
- Attempted to rape an adult stranger jogging
- She fought him off
- Decided he needed to find someone smaller and weaker

- Raped
- Murdered
- Dismembered body
- Kept body parts under the house



# Characteristics of Offense

## MacArthur Study

- Normal sensation-seeking ?
- No future orientation?

## Sigg Case

- Deviant arousal pattern  
Necrophilia
- Tried to throw off police

# Characteristics of Offense

## MacArthur Study

- Immaturity?
- Future orientation?
- Influenced by peers

## Sigg Study

- Planned offense
- Cruised for victims
- Learned from prev off
- No peers involved
- Not sanctioned by peers
- Not admired by peers

# Was This a Typical Adolescent Sex Offender Mitigated by Developmental Immaturity

Seriously?