

Aggressive and prosocial behaviors during the early years:

Developmental trends and family antecedents

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Social behaviors in the early years

Importance of the preschool years for the development of key competencies

- The inhibition/control of aggression
- Acquiring emotional regulation skills
- Acquiring prosocial skills

Entering kindergarten without having acquired these competencies may lead to continued aggression, peer rejection, academic difficulties and stacking of problems

What we know

About preschool aggression

Disruptive and aggressive behaviors are frequent among toddlers (e.g.:pushing, biting, hitting)

Substantial variation in frequency and intensity

About middle childhood aggression

High levels are not frequent in kindergarten

- There is discontinuity
- There is continuity
- The earlier the onset - the more likely to persist

What we know

About prosociality:

- Preschool prosociality predicts externalizing behaviors in middle childhood (even controlling for prior bhv.)
- Prosociality is a distinct protective factor
- Empathy and prosociality are key components to a successful social development and are impaired in persistent and violent antisocial individuals

We need to know more about....

How to distinguish (the majority of) preschoolers who will be socialized successfully from the minority who will not

- The preschool developmental trajectories considered “normative” versus “atypical”
- Family influences on the development of social behaviors during the preschool years
- Magnitude of sex differences

Research Questions I: Developmental trends in physical aggression and prosociality

- What are the developmental patterns over the first 4 years?
- How stable/changing are they?
- Are there sex differences
- Normative versus atypical patterns

Group-based developmental Trajectories

Allows to identify distinct developmental trajectories

– normative pattern(s) versus atypical ?

Estimate individual differences in the context of normal development

Research Questions II

Family predictors of physical aggression and prosociality

- Do family characteristics influence their early development?
- Are predictors similar or different

Method

Sample:

2008 families with 5 months old children
Representative sample (French Canada)

Assessed 4 times:

05 months; parent interview and questionnaires

17 months; Mother questionnaire

30 months; Mother questionnaire

42 months; Mother questionnaire

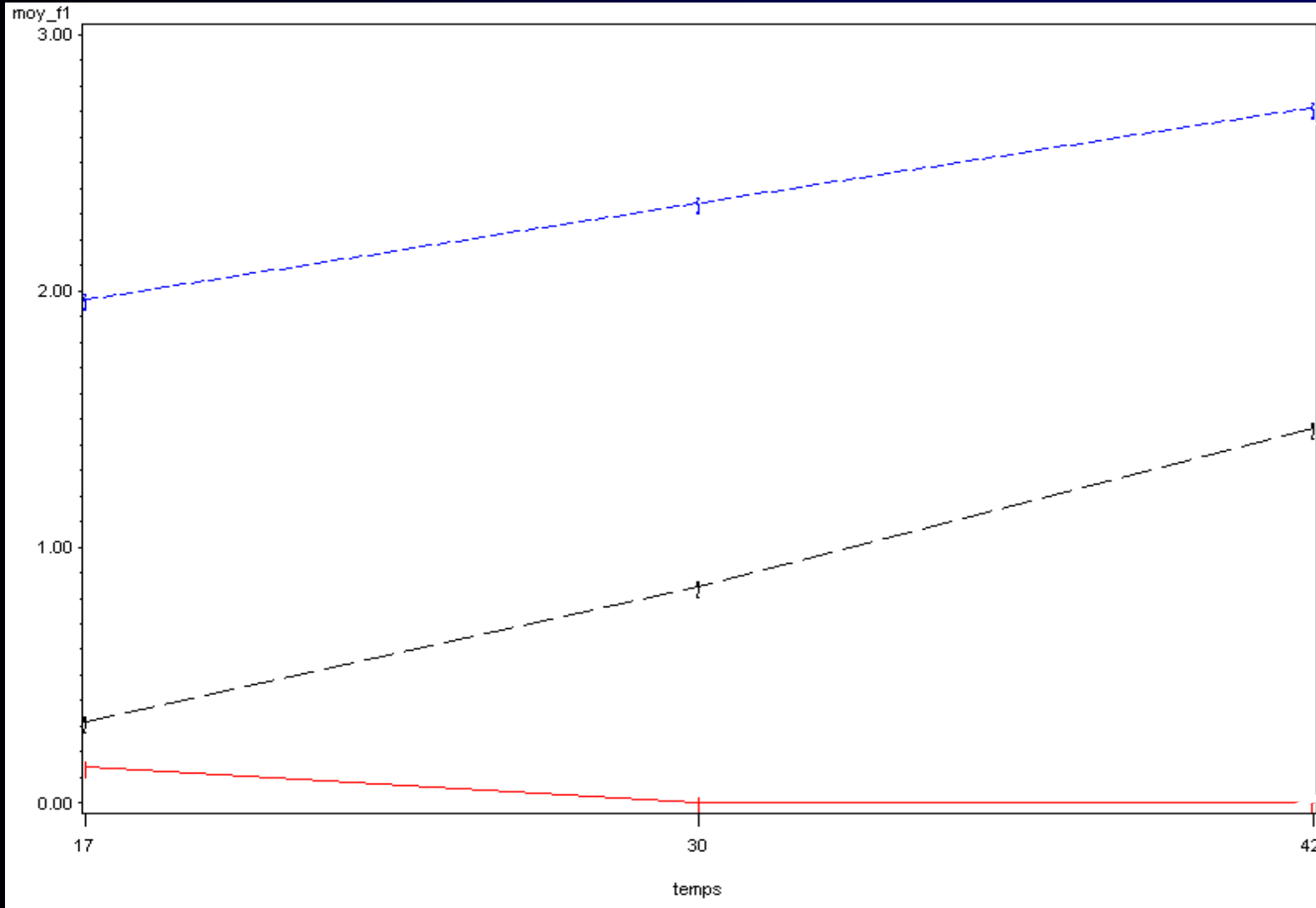
Measures

1. Child behaviors:

Mother ratings at 17, 30 and 42 months

- Physical aggression: bullies other children; hits, kicks, bits; fights
- Prosociality: comforts other children, helps other children, assists children in need

Physical Aggression Trajectories

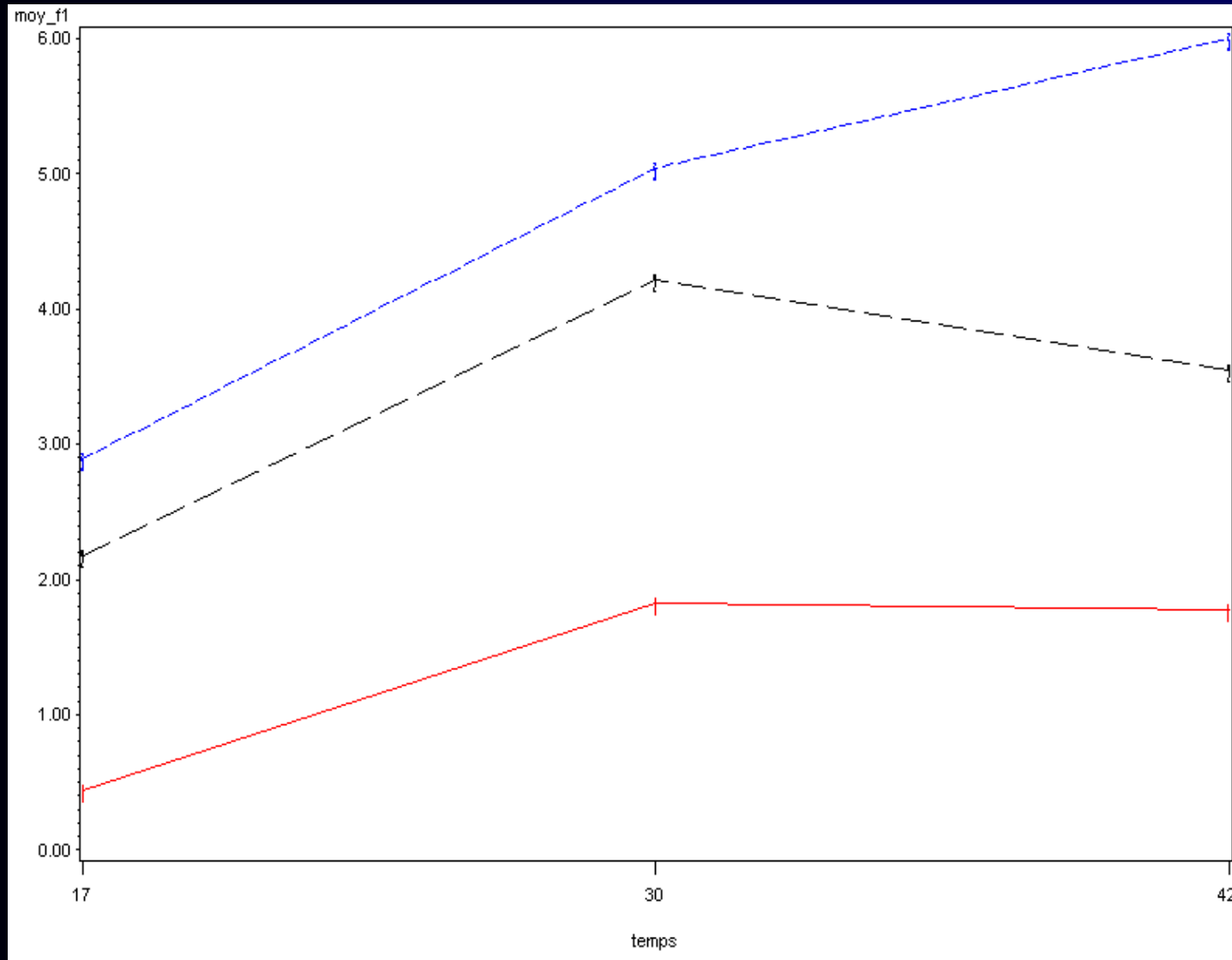


21.9%

53.4%

24.9%

Prosociality Trajectories



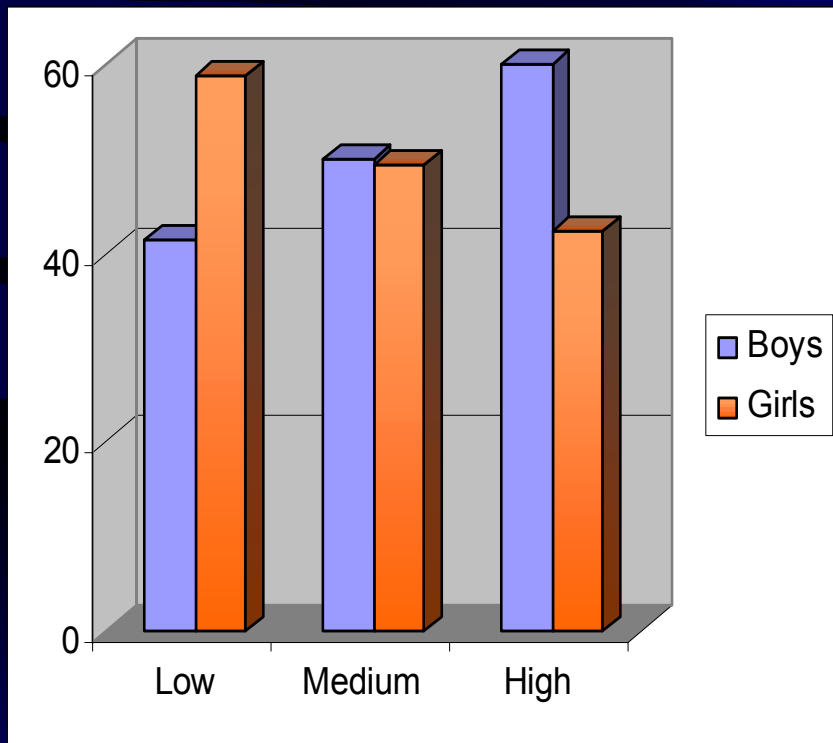
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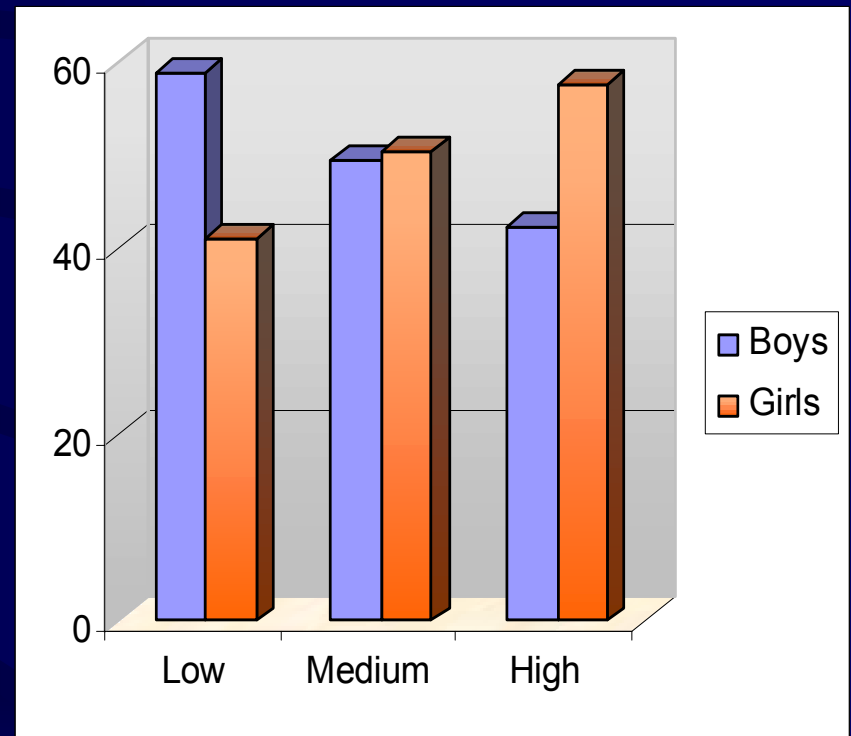
23.7%

Sex differences

Aggression



Prosociality



Predicting membership in trajectories

Proportion of children in trajectory groups

	N	%
High Aggressive	439	21.8
Low Prosocial	476	23.7
Aggressive-Low-Prosocial	75	3.4

2. Family variables: assessed at 5 months

Before birth:

Mothers' education (Not finished high school)

Mother's age at birth of the child (younger than 21)

Mother's smoking and use of alcohol during pregnancy

Mother's and father's CD problem prior to end of High School

At 5 months:

Low family income (30th perc.)

Parents separated (both not living w child)

Having siblings (0 vs 1 or more)

High Family dysfunction (30th perc.)

Mother's coercive parenting practices (30th perc.)

Mother's feeling ineffective as a parent (30th perc.)

Child' difficult temperament (7 items from Bates' ICQ)

Significant predictors of high aggression trajectory group

Predictors	Odds	95% CI
Boy	1.78	1.34-2.28
Siblings	5.01	3.67-6.8
Mother no HS	1.6	1.13-2.28
Mother smoke pregnancy	1.4	1.04-1.87
Early motherhood - intact families	1.7	-

Logistic regression with forward step procedure.

Significant predictors of low prosociality trajectory group

Predictors	Odds ratio	95% CI
Boy	1.53	1.24-1.9
Siblings	0.7	0.57-0.87
Mother coercive parenting	1.28	1.0-1.62
Mother feels ineffective	1.33	1.05-1.68

Significant predictors of high aggression-low prosocial profile

Predictors	Odds ratio	95% CI
Boy	2.25	1.35-3.76
Siblings	3.65	1.95-6.84
Early motherhood	1.76	1.07-2.9

Comment: Trajectories

3 distinct trajectory groups (17-42 months):

- Trajectories followed by most children were increasing
- Middle childhood: physical aggression=declined and prosociality=stable

Normative versus atypical?

Further tests with other informants

Comment

Sex differences:

- More boys with high aggression
- More girls with high prosociality
- No sex differences in the average developmental patterns

Predictors

Differences and similarities between predictors of aggression and prosociality

Aggression:

Boy, siblings, mother' behavior prior to birth (smoked, ed)

Early motherhood * intact

Prosociality:

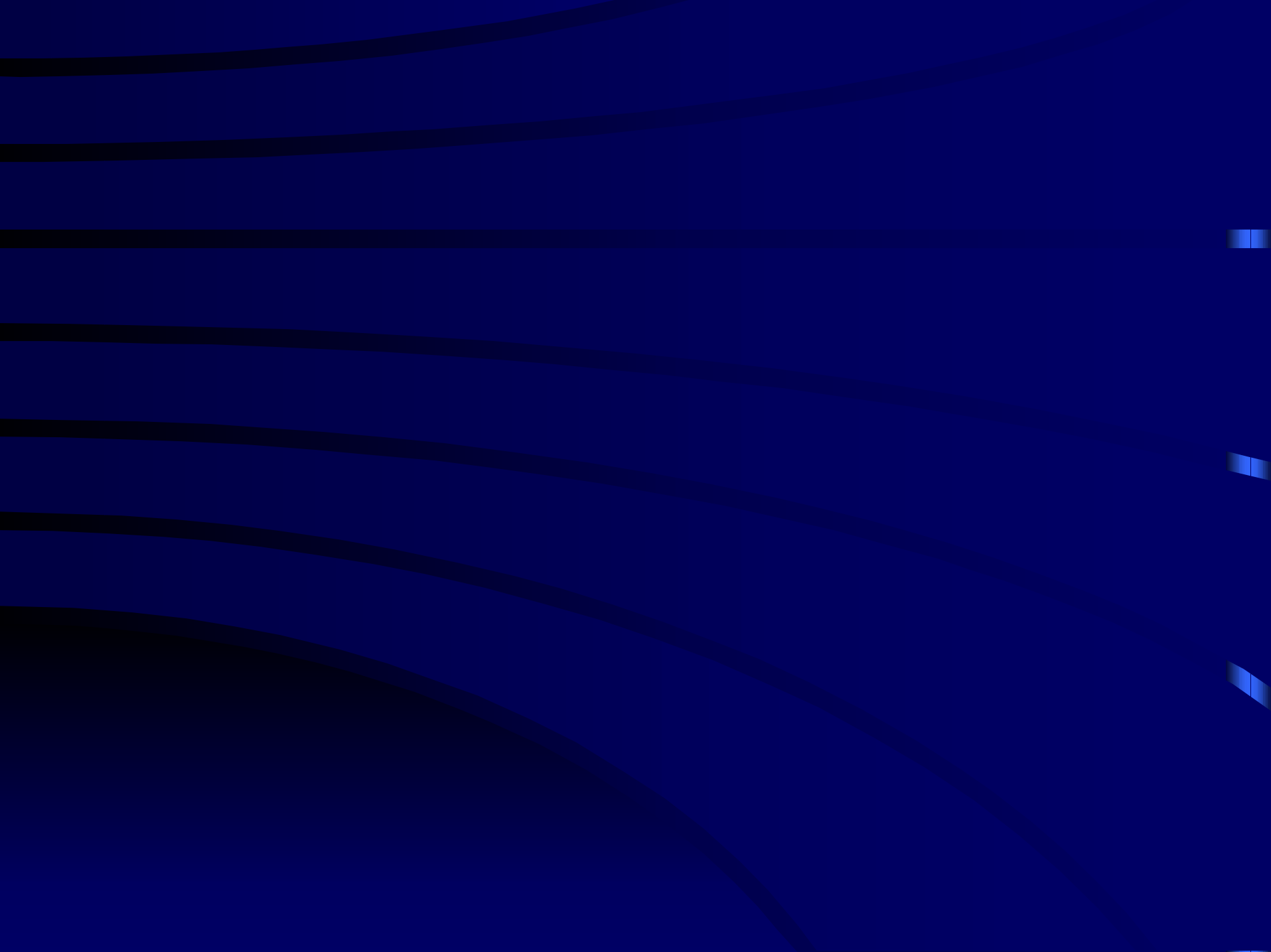
Boy, mother's parenting at 5 months (coercive, efficient), Siblings

Aggressive-low-prosocial profile:

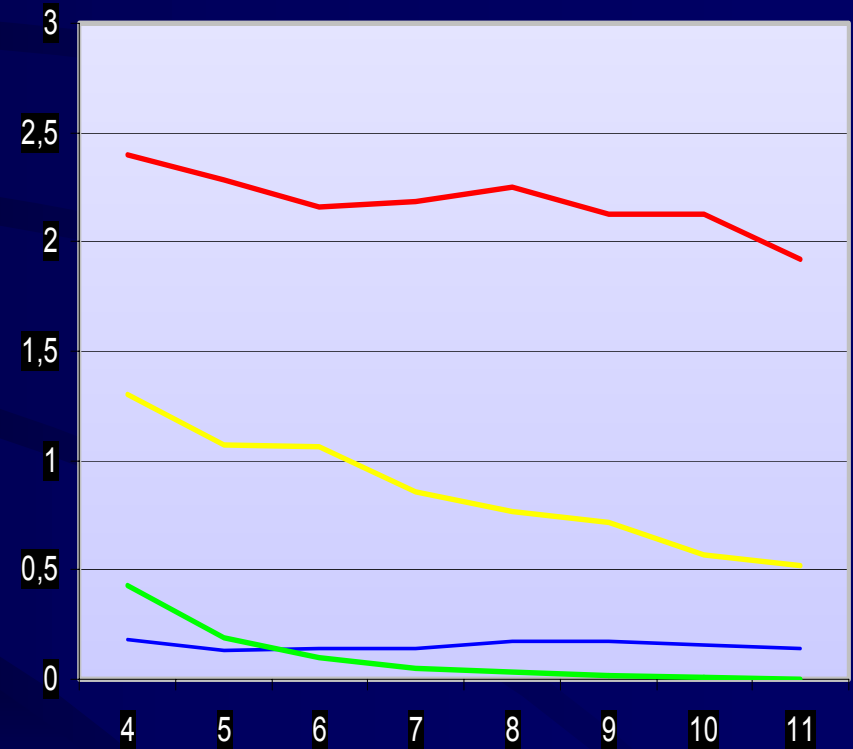
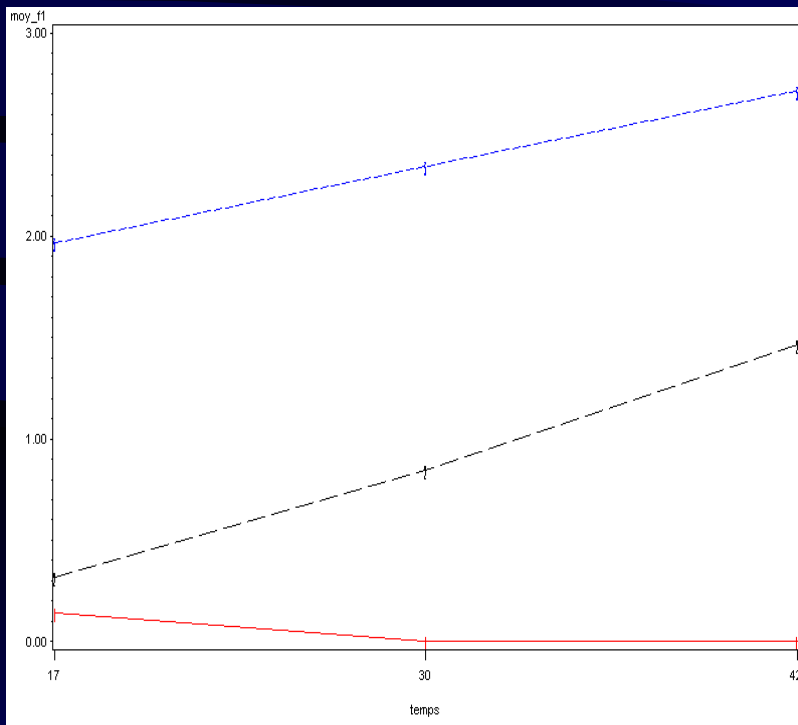
Boy, siblings, early motherhood

Next steps

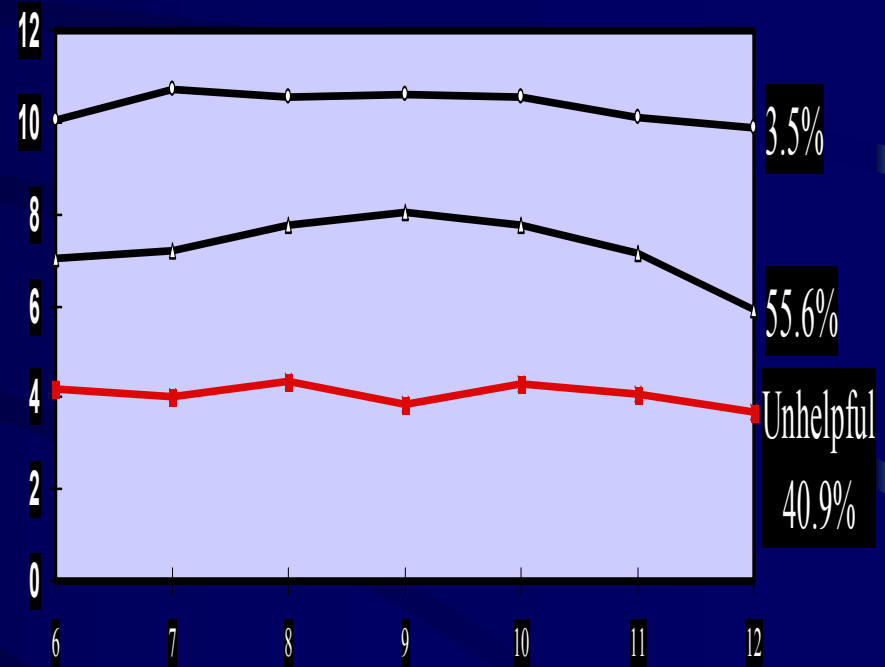
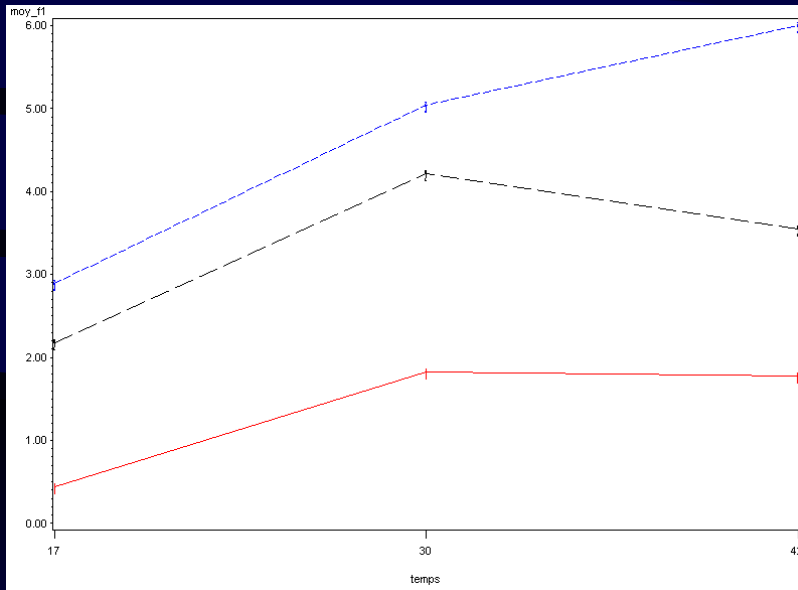
- Closer look at sibling effects and interactions between predictors
- Examining potential mediating or moderating processes



Physical aggression between 1.5 to 11 years



Prosociality between 1.5 and 12 years



Objectives

1. Examine the development of aggressiveness and helpfulness between 17 and 42 months

Describe the developmental trajectories
Examine consistency and change

2. Identify the family antecedents of aggressiveness and helpfulness

Are the predictors the same for both dimensions?

- Predict distinct trajectories

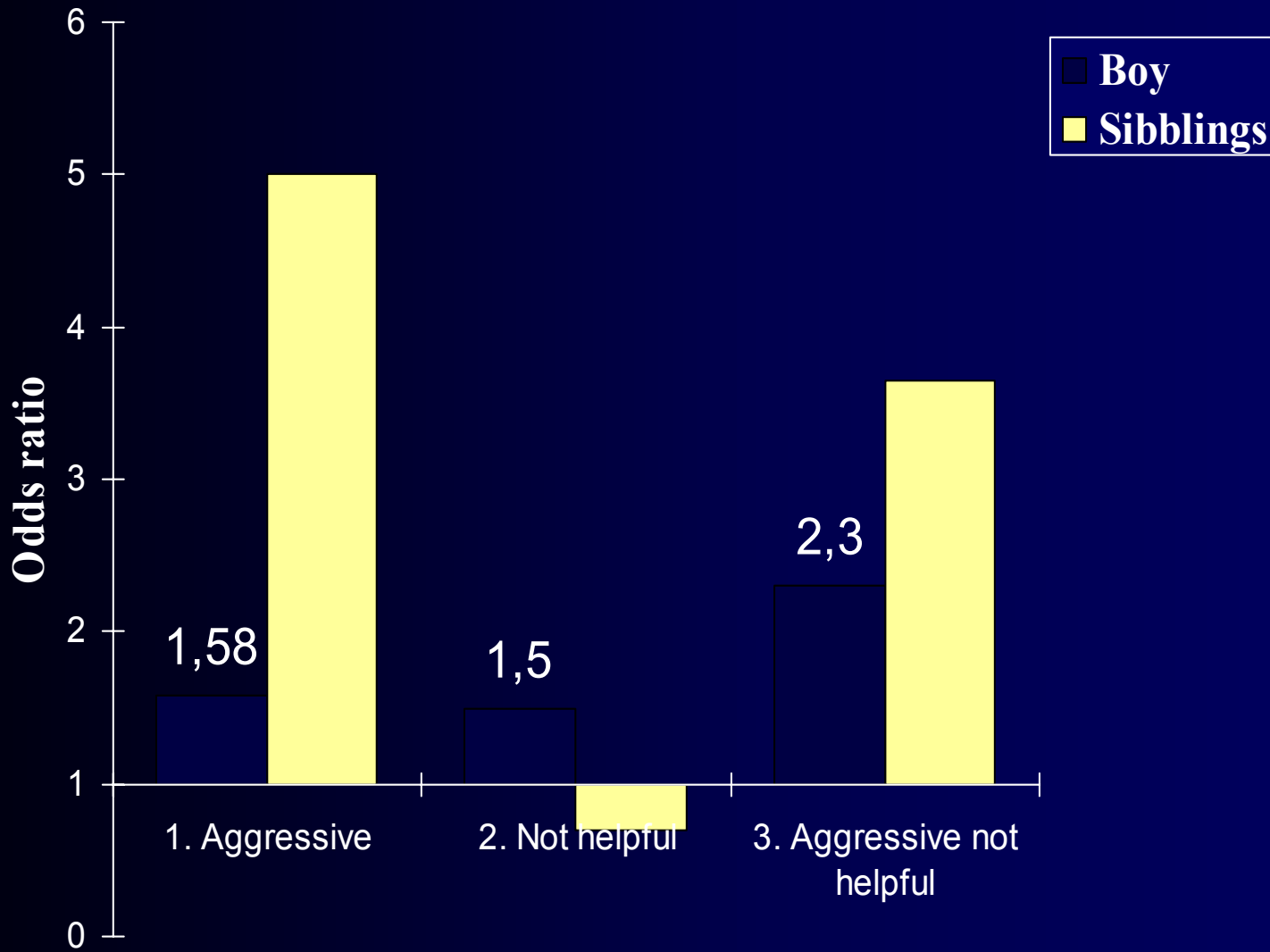
- Logistic regressions with profiles created with memberships in trajectories (17 to 42 months):
 - 1) High aggressiveness
 - 2) Low prosociality
 - 3) high aggressive-low prosocial

The Essence of Temperament is Consistency

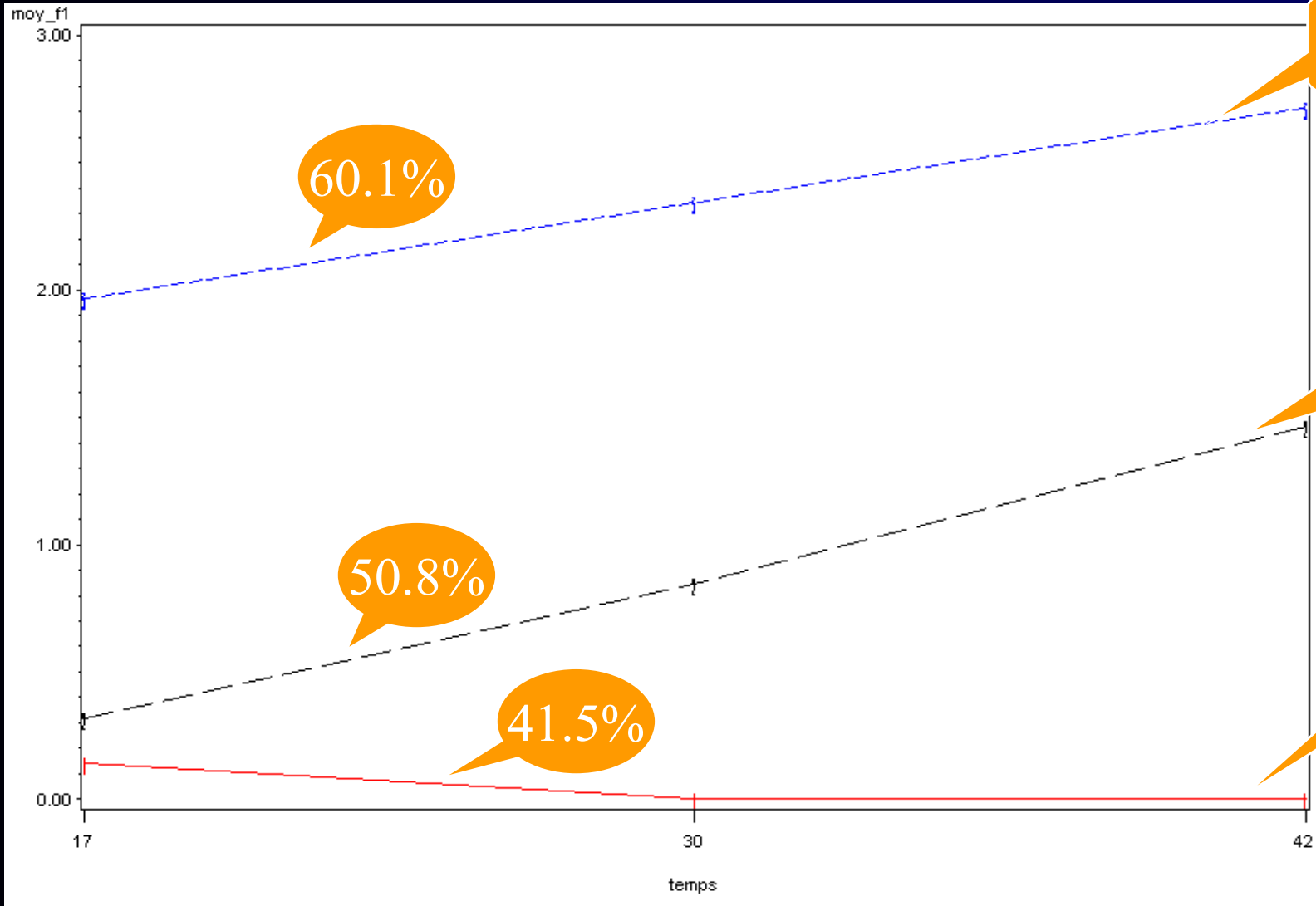
Some theories predict:

- Greater stability with time:
 1. environmental reaction to those with poor impulse control reinforces one's basic tendencies: Moffitt, 1993;
 2. Temperamental reactions: provides basic and consistent pattern of responding to environmental stimuli
- Change toward what is adaptive

Risk for trajectories



Physical Aggression Trajectories

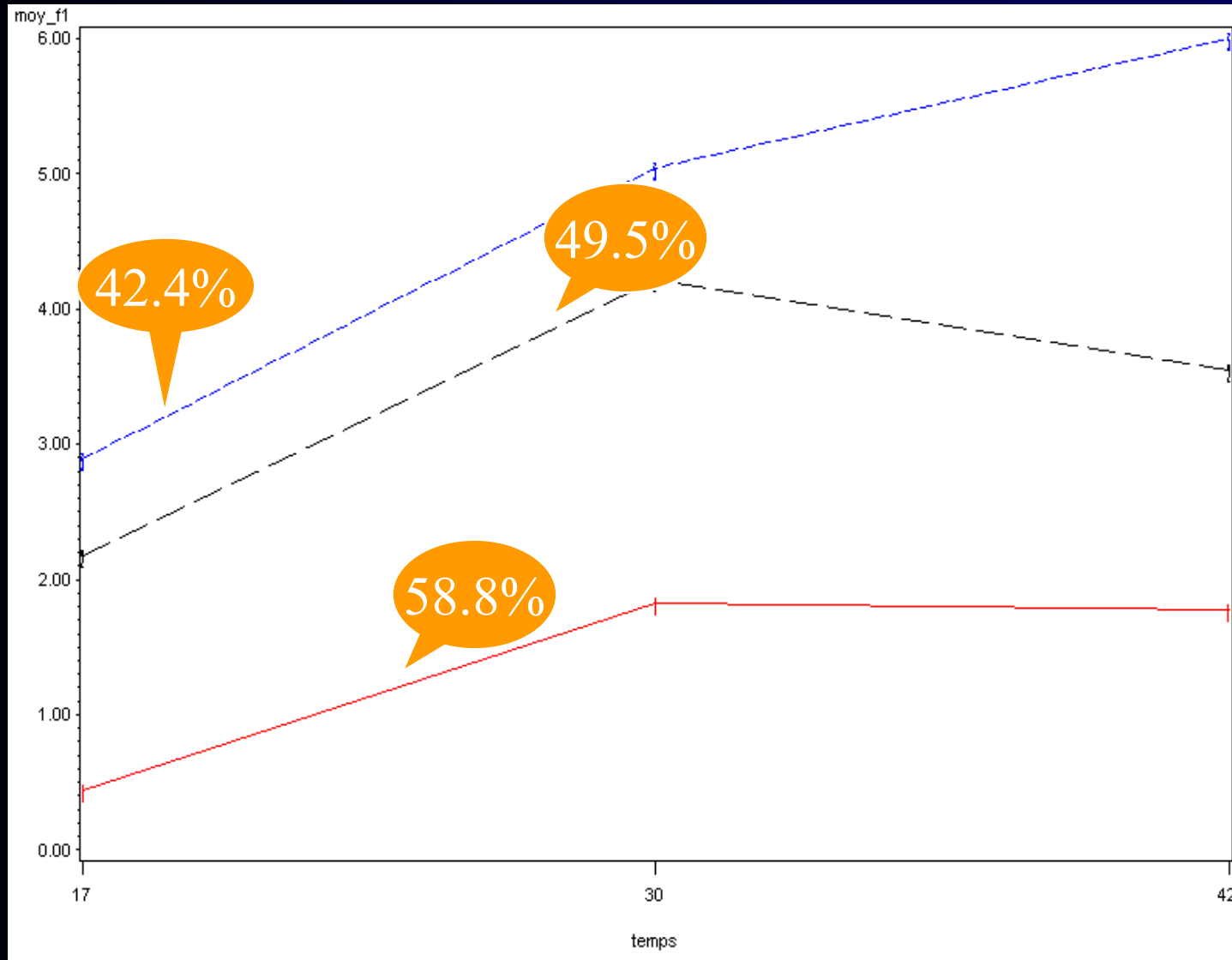


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Prosociality Trajectories



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