

# Sex Differences in Antisocial Behaviors from Adolescence to Early Adulthood: A Test of the General Theory of Crime

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## Introduction

In *A General Theory of Crime*, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) proposed that self-control (SC) is the main risk factor predicting individual differences in criminal behavior, and between males and females.

To date:

- It is mainly accepted that **women commit fewer crimes** than men;
- There is **strong empirical support** for the association linking SC and antisocial behaviors (AB) over time and on a variety of outcomes.

However:

- Few studies have tested whether this association is **sexually dimorphic**, most showing that SC exerts a similar influence on males' and females' AB;
- The **sex gap** in AB persists after controlling for SC, and **vary** according to developmental periods, nature of the behaviors and type of measures.

## Objectives

- 1) Test whether SC is similarly associated with AB in males and females;
- 2) Test if SC explains the entirety of differences between these two groups.

## Method

### Participants

N = 3007 (1587 males and 1420 females) from the *Quebec longitudinal study of kindergarten children*.

### Self-Reported Measures and Clinical Interviews

	6 – 12 years	13 years	15 years	20 – 23 years
Informants	Mother, Teachers	Participant	Participant	Participant
Instruments	Social Behavior Questionnaire (SBQ)	Self-Reported Delinquency Questionnaire (SRDQ)	Diagnostic Interview Schedule (DIS) for Children	Calendar approach DIS R-Conflict Tactics Scale
Measures	Poor self-control	Overall offending Violent behaviors Against property Vandalism	Conduct disorder	Overall offending Violent behaviors Against property Antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) Intimate partner violence (IPV)

### Official measures

Juvenile (12 – 17 y.) and adult (18 – 26 y.) criminal records.

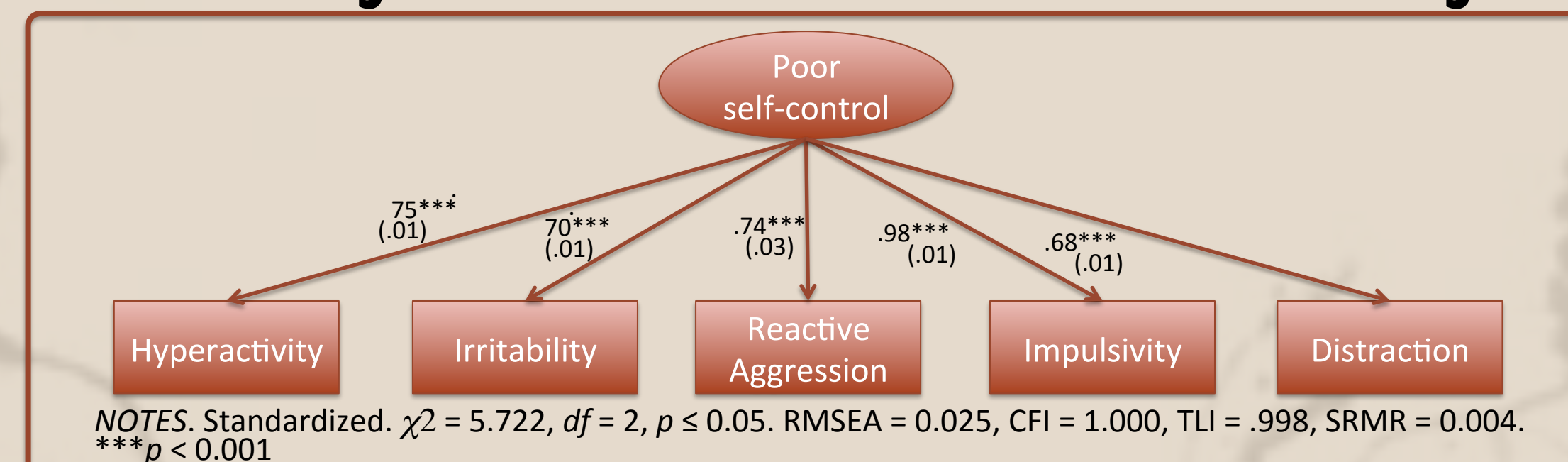
### Analyses

Confirmatory Factorial Analysis (CFA)

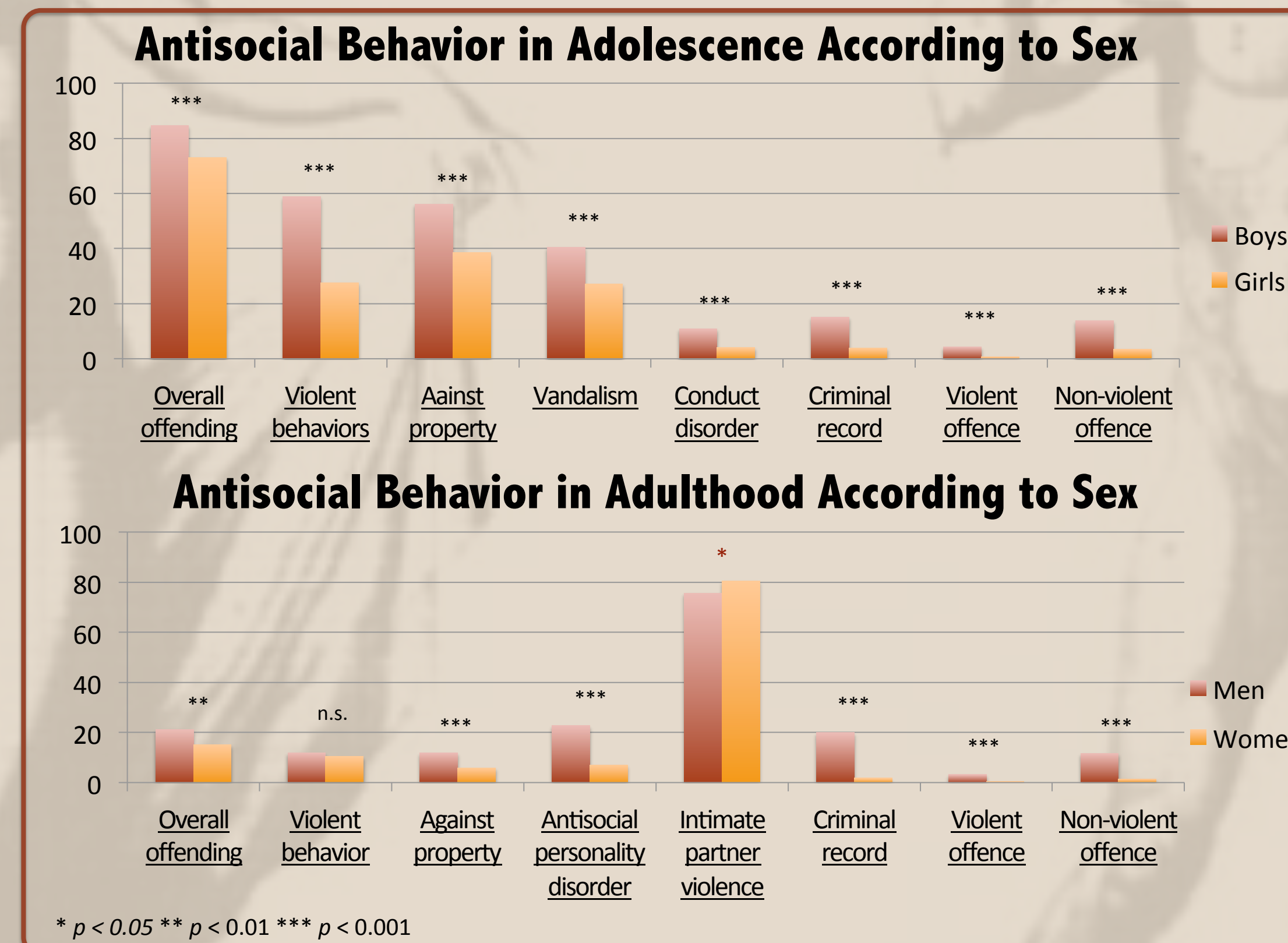
Hierarchical and Zero Inflated Negative Binomial (ZINB) regressions

Logistic regressions and General Linear Models (GLM)

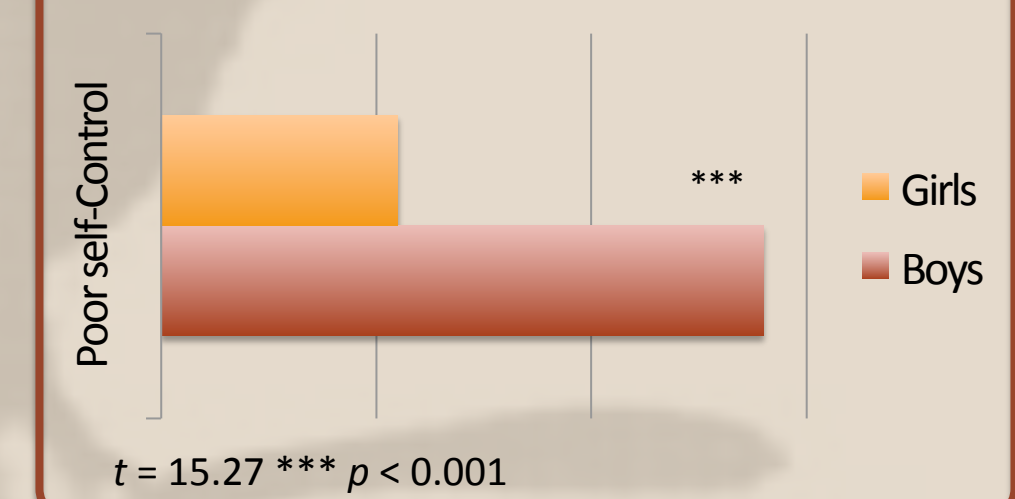
## Factor Loading to the Estimation of Poor Self-Control using CFA



## Results



## Sex Differences in Self-Control



## Self-Control is associated with all Antisocial Behaviors

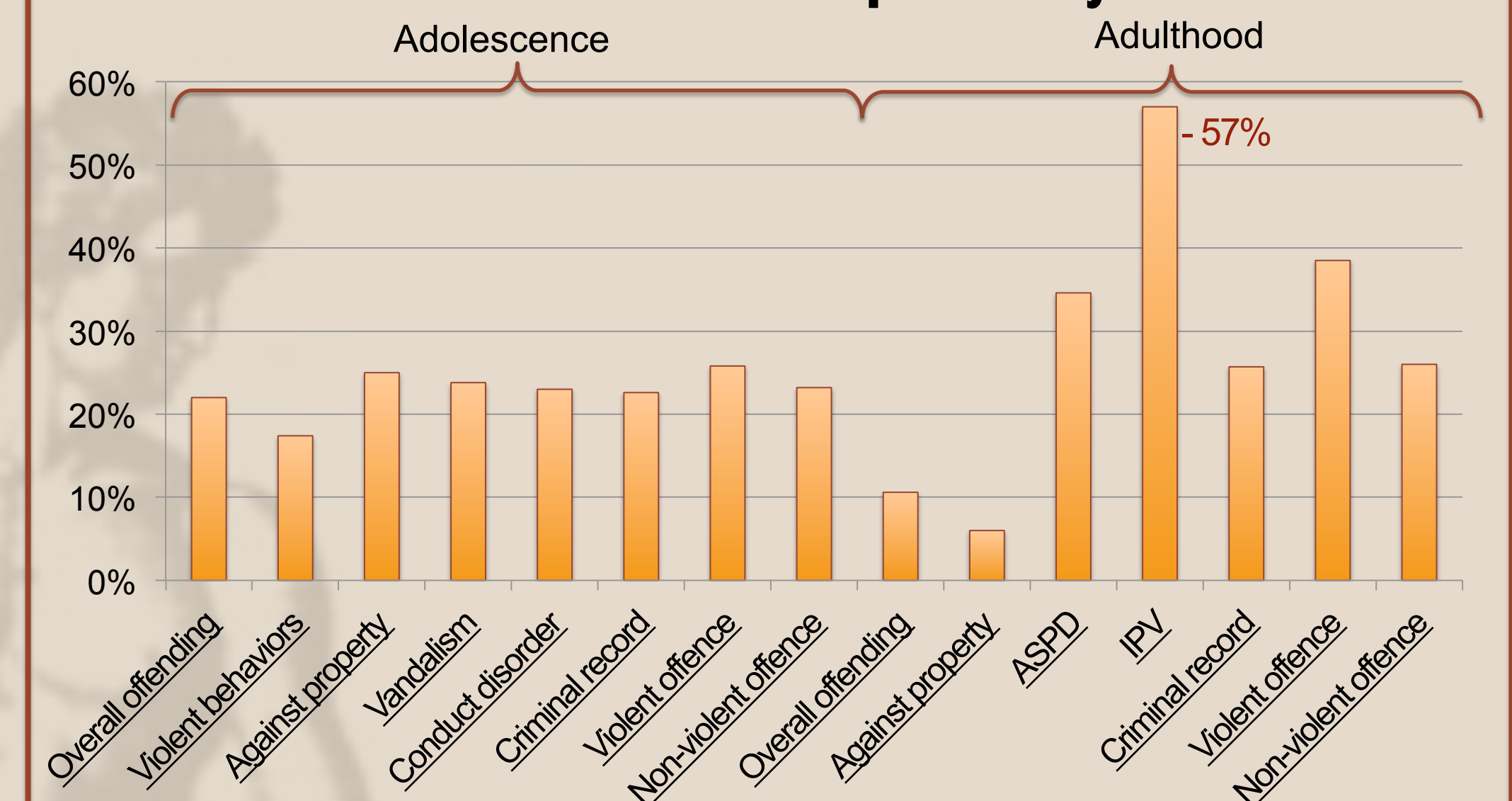
( $r_s = .05$  to  $.21$ ,  $p_s < 0.05$ )  
It persists when sex is controlled for.

**Males and Females do not differ regarding their associations between SC and AB**

## Distinction between the Frequency/Diversity VS Occurrence of AB

SC was only associated with the frequency and/or diversity of antisocial behavior, but not with their simple occurrence (presence/absence).

## Portion of Sex Differences Explained by Self-Control



## The Specific Case of Intimate Partner Violence

- **More women than men** used both psychological and physical IPV;
- At equal levels of SC, women engage in even more IPV than men.

## Conclusions

- **Boys and men engaged in more antisocial behaviors than girls and women**, with the exception of intimate partner violence. This sex difference **varied** according to developmental periods, nature of the behaviors and type of measures;
- The association between self-control and antisocial behaviors was **similar for males and females** in both adolescence and adulthood;
- Results suggest that self-control was mainly associated with the **frequency/diversity** of AB, rather than with its presence/absence;
- Self-control **IS NOT** the sole driving force behind sex differences in antisocial behaviors.

## Implications

- Other factors that **biologically** and **socially** differentiate males and females should be taken into account in order to understand sex differences in antisocial behaviors.
- Self-control is a **risk factor** for both males and females, particularly so in those who are engaged in trajectories depicting more frequent and severe antisocial behaviors.

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GRIP

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