

Co-parenting Relationships and Adolescent Fathers

Jay Fagan, PhD
Temple University

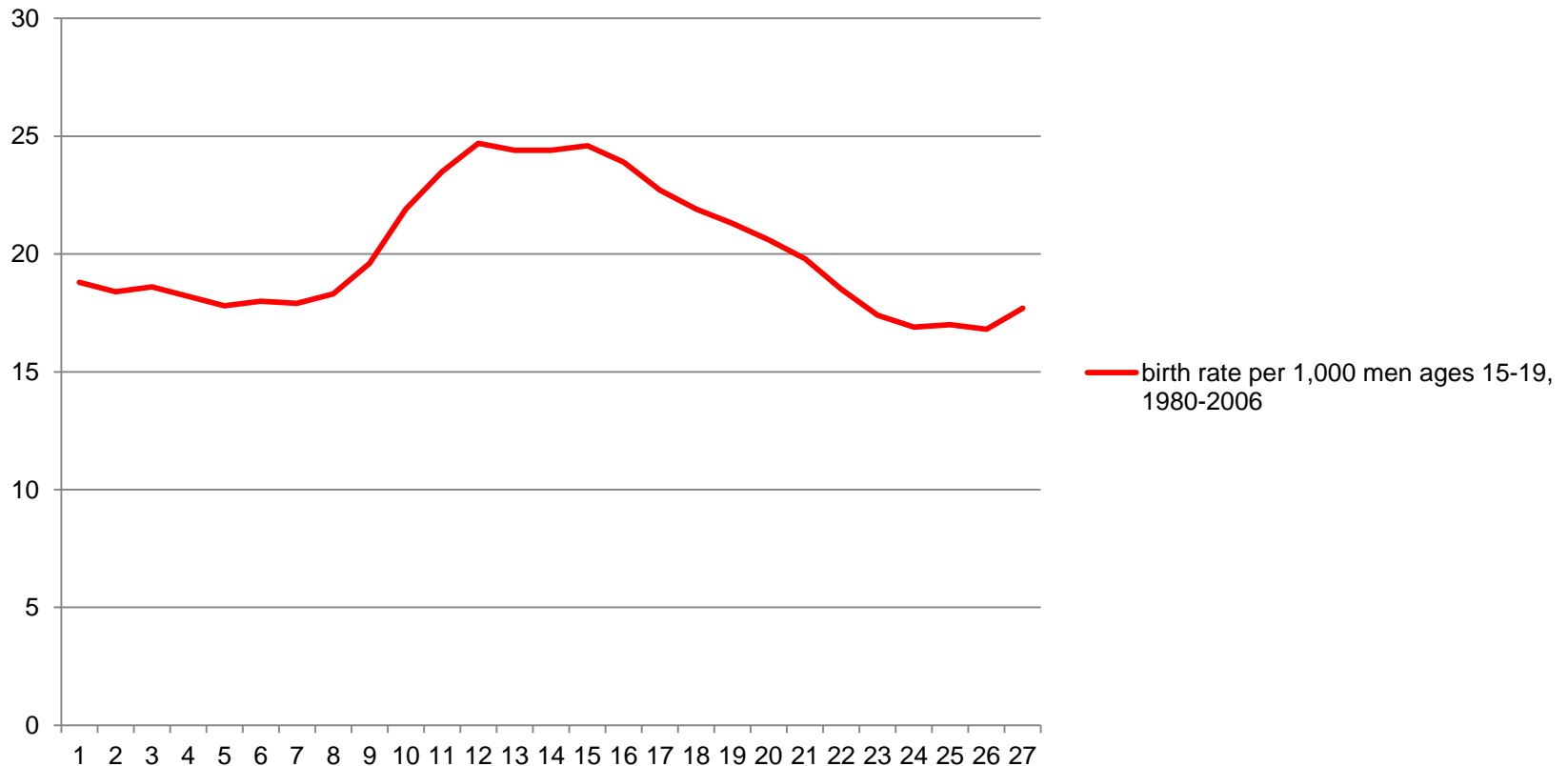
A decorative graphic consisting of several horizontal lines of varying lengths and colors (teal, light blue, white) extending from the right side of the slide towards the center.

Incidence of Adolescent Fatherhood

- Incidence data are incomplete because the birth certificates of children often do not include the age of the father.
- Age of newborn's father missing on 25% of all birth certificates among mothers < 25.

Birth rate per 1,000 men ages 15-19, 1980-2006

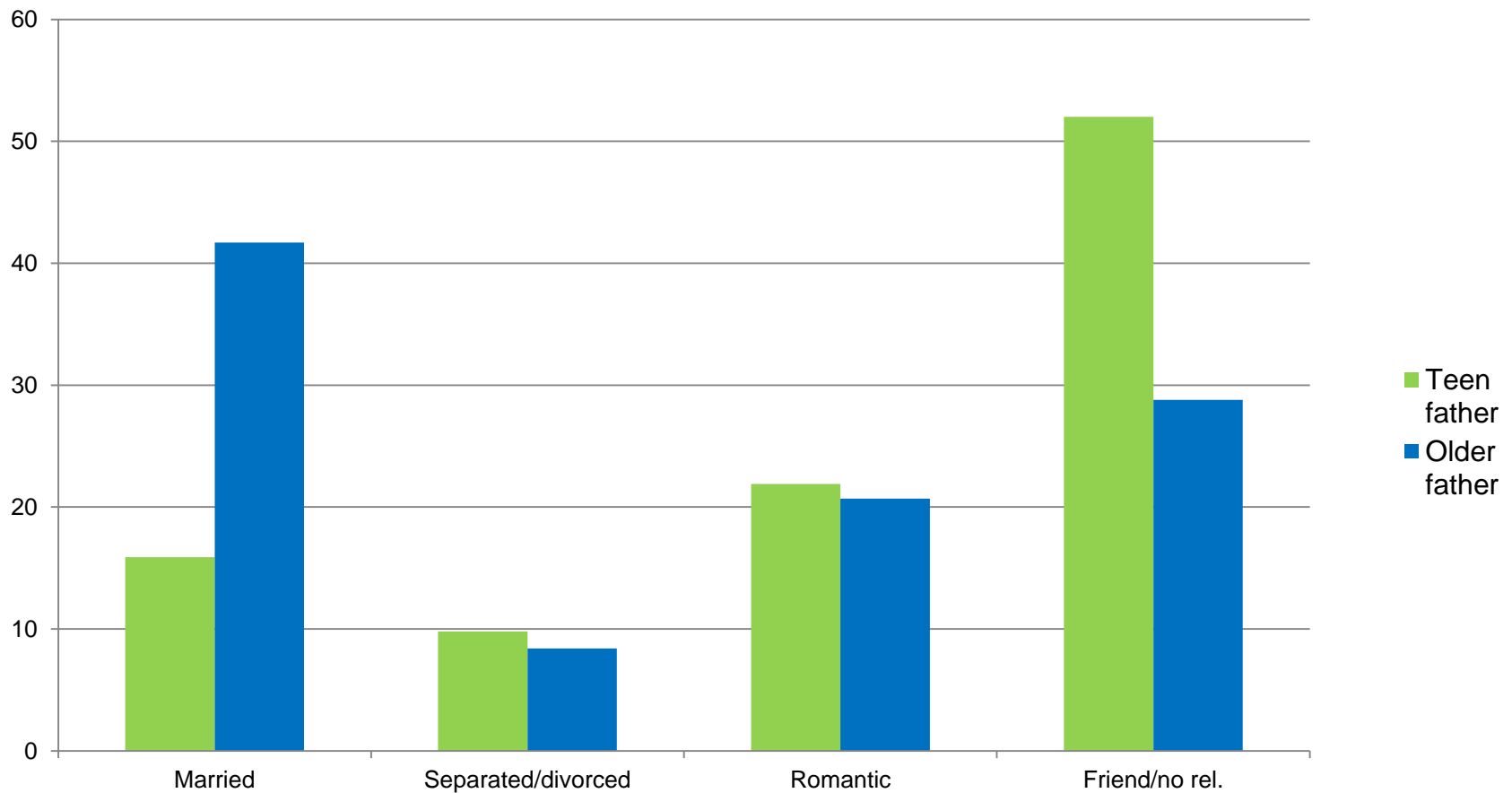
birth rate per 1,000 men ages 15-19, 1980-2006



Introduction

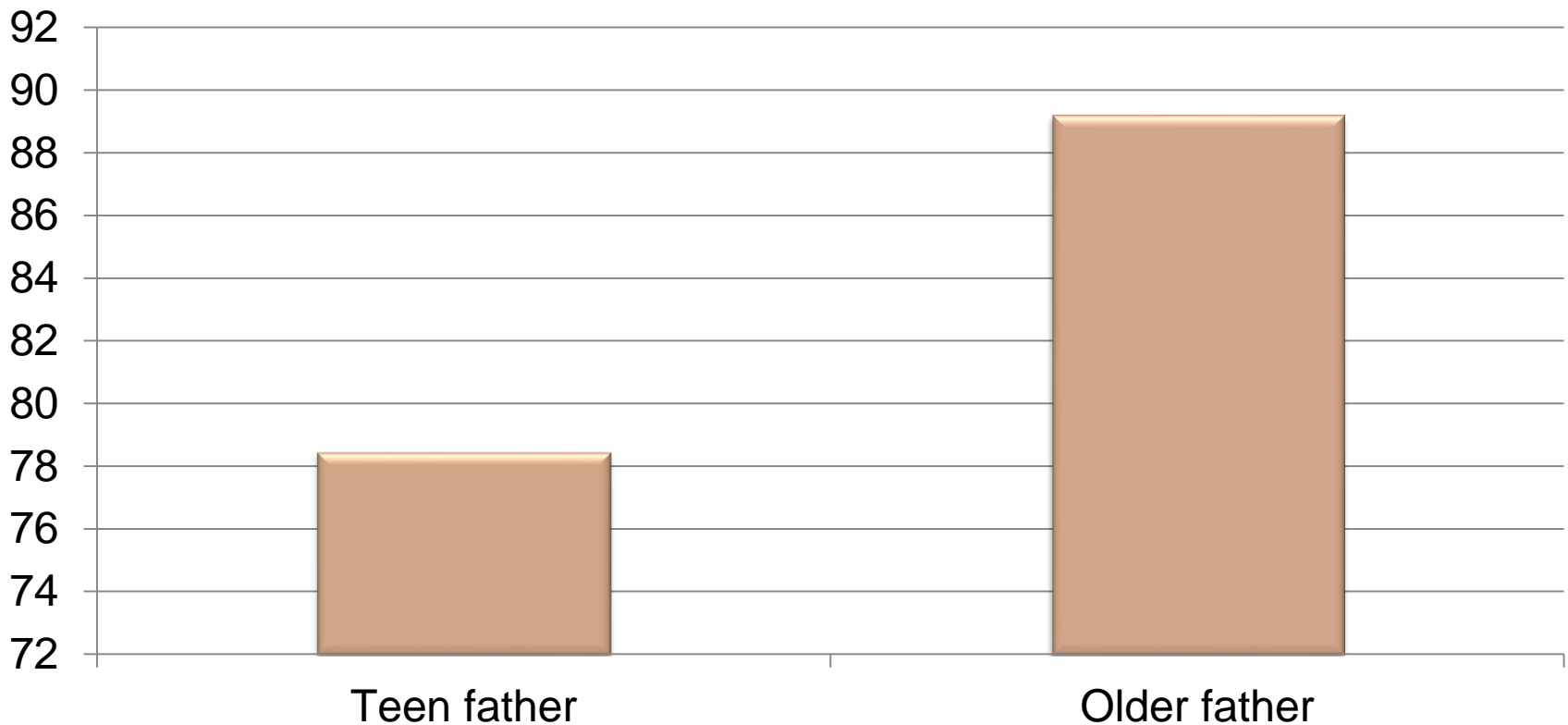
- Adolescent fathers are at greater risk than adult fathers of lowered engagement with their children as time passes (Farrie, Lee, & Fagan, 2009).
- Studies often allude to risk factors such as mother-father relationship dissolution, antisocial behavior, and lack of employment as reasons for their decreasing involvement with children (Herzog, Umana-Taylor, Madden-Derdich, & Leonard, 2007).

Relationship outcomes at age 5 (FFCW)

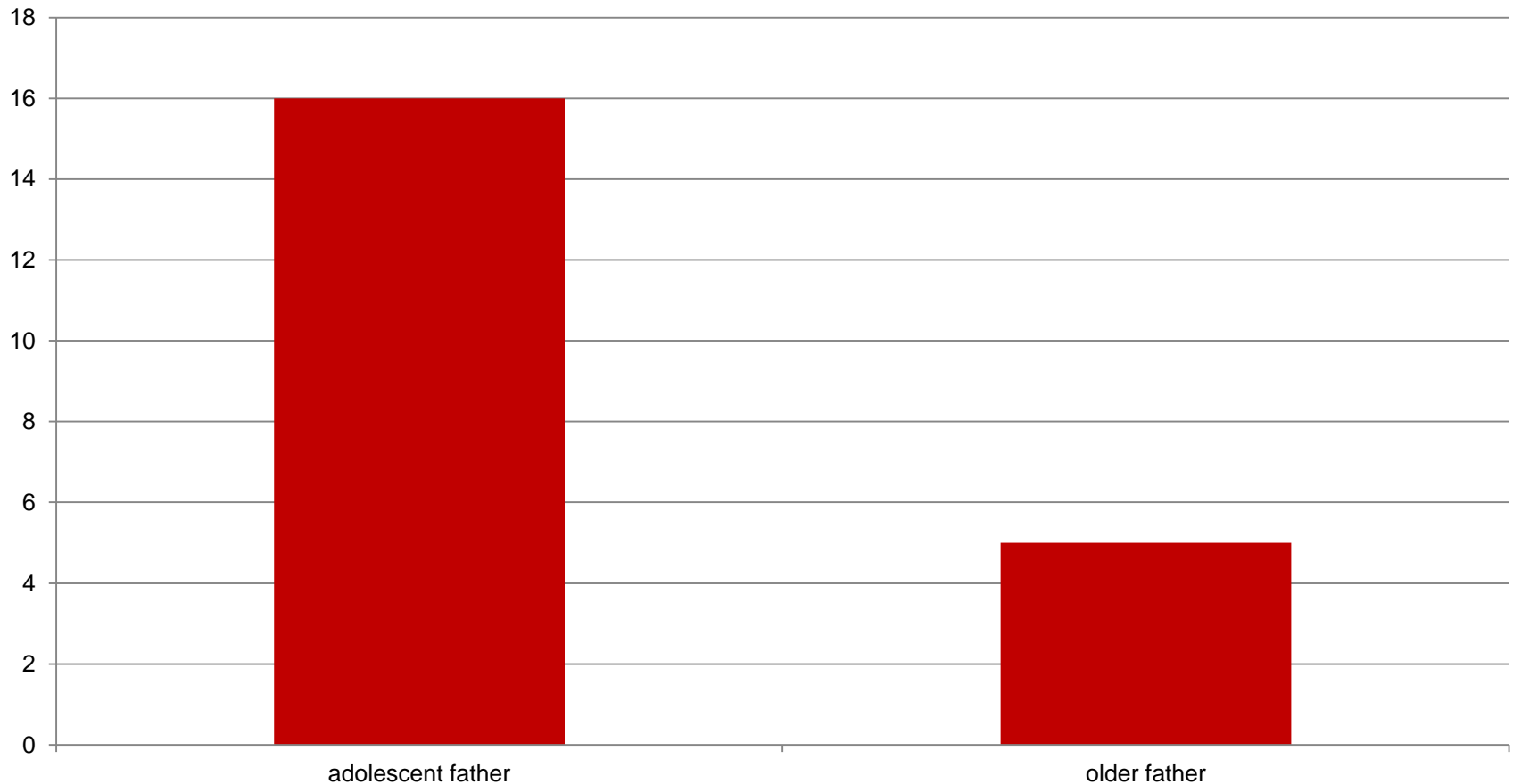


Percent of teen fathers with some relationship with mother at age 5 (FFCW)

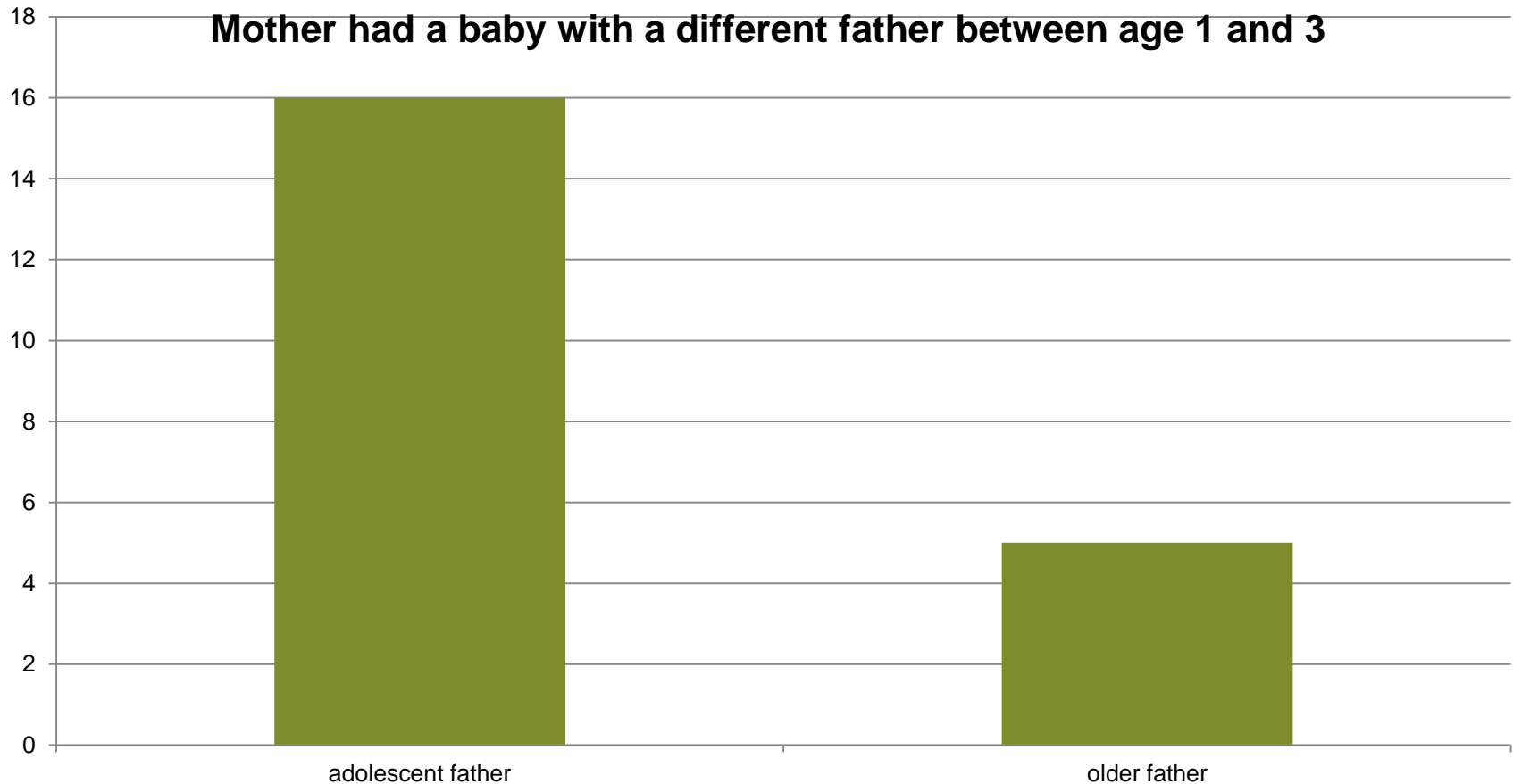
Some relationship with mother



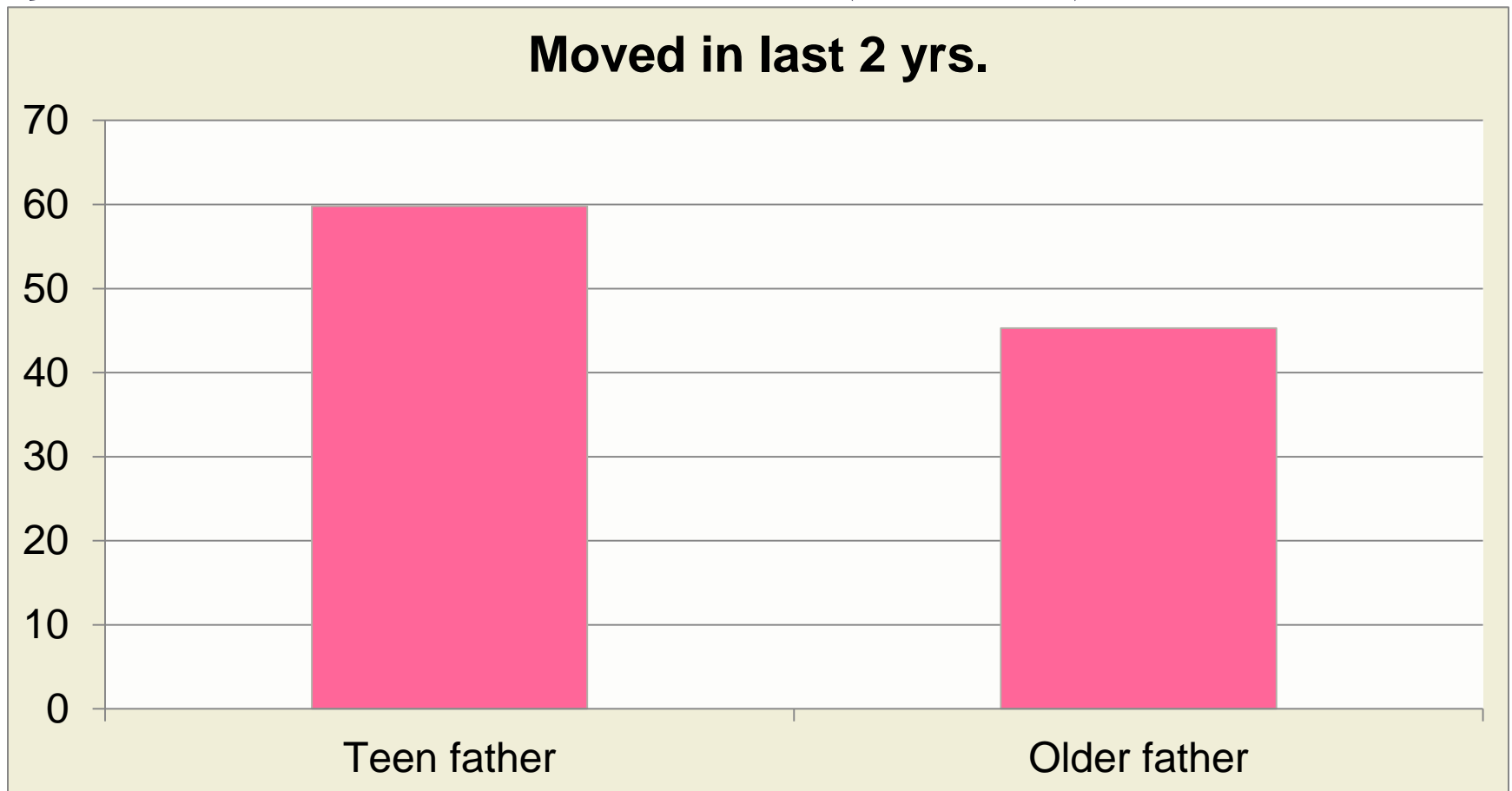
Father started a new romantic relationship between ages 1 - 3 (FFCW)



Multi-partner fertility (FFCW)

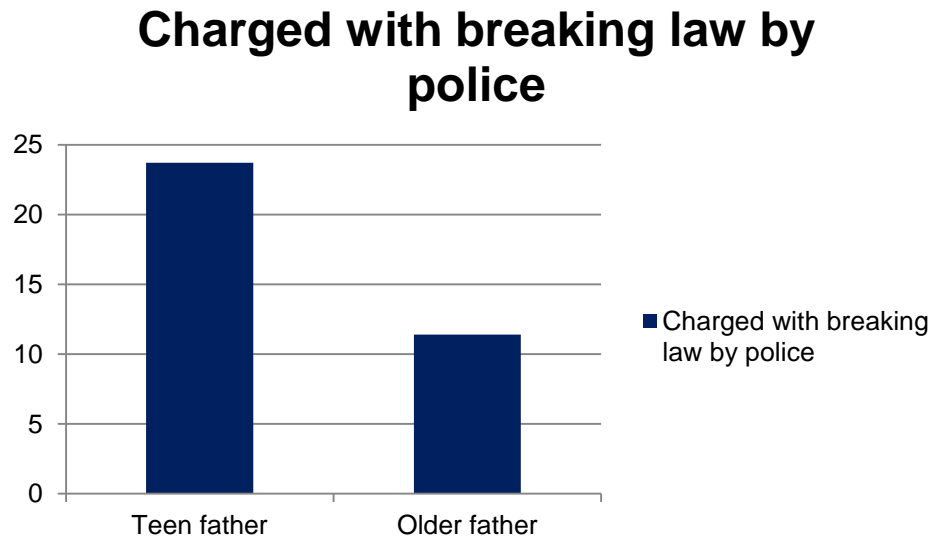


Percent of fathers who moved in last 2 years when child is 5 (FFCW)



Risk behavior (FFCW)

- Adolescent fathers are likely to be involved in anti-social activities and drug use



Significance of co-parenting

- Some adolescent fathers are able to maintain positive relationships with their partners, and therefore, stay actively engaged with their children (Young & Holcomb, 2007).
- Researchers have suggested that positive mother-father co-parenting relationships may be associated with higher levels of fathers' engagement with children (Florsheim et al., 2003; Futris & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2007).

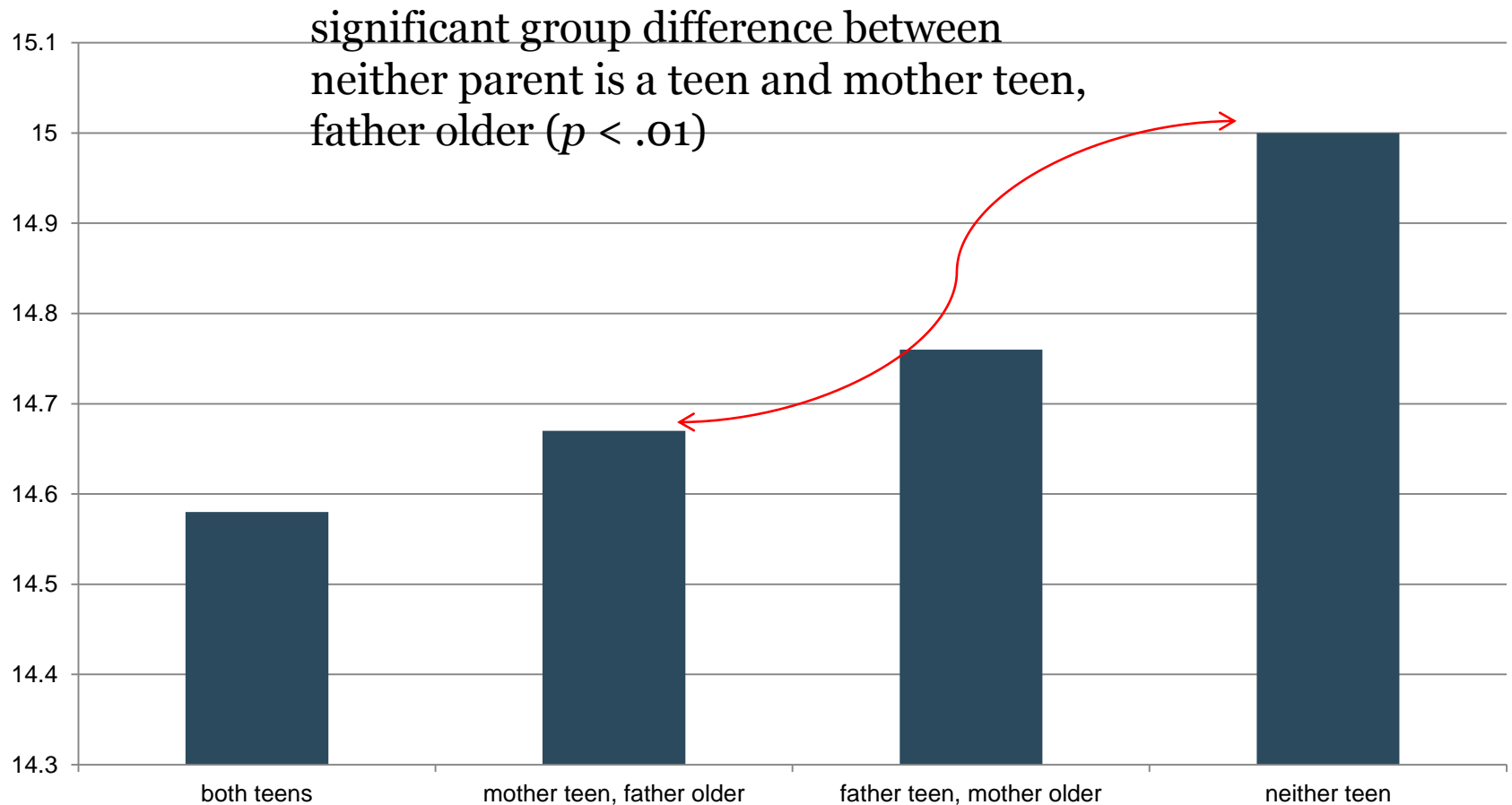
Slide is self-explanatory

Triads:



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Co-parenting support (FFCW)



STUDY1: Co-parenting alliance and father engagement with infants

- Research question
 - Is quality of the mother-father co-parenting alliance associated with higher levels of father engagement with 3-month olds?
 - This study addresses the question:
 - does mother perception of co-parenting predict father perception of his own engagement,
&
 - does father perception of co-parenting predict mother perception of father engagement?

Parenting alliance

- Parenting alliance is defined as the capacity of partners to “acknowledge, respect, and value the parenting roles and tasks of the partner” (Cohen & Weissman, 1984, p. 35).

Sample ($n = 105$ mothers and fathers)

Sample obtained from 3 outpatient OB/GYN clinics in North Philadelphia in 2004-2005

Participant characteristics

- Mothers' average age: 17.3
- Fathers' average age: 18.84
- 39% Black
- 45% Hispanic
- 16% White + others
- 43% nonresidential couples
- Fathers' average work hours/week: 19.3
- 82.4% of mothers expecting first biological child

Measure of parenting alliance

- Fathers and mothers completed Parenting Alliance scale (McBride & Rane, 1998)
- 17 items
- Responses range from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*.
- Sample item includes: “Even if my baby’s mother and I (baby’s father and I) have problems in our relationship, we can work together for our child”
- $\alpha = .81$ for fathers and $.95$ for mothers

Measure of father engagement

- Fathers and mothers completed Parental Childcare Scale (Hossain & Roopnarine, 1994) when the baby was 3 months old.
- 15 items
- Responses range from 1 = *never* to 5 = *always*
- Sample items: holding the baby during play, feeding the baby, and changing the baby's diaper.
- $\alpha = .86$ for fathers and $.91$ for mothers.

Results: Father's Perception of Father Engagement at 3 mos. Regressed on Mother's Perception of Parenting Alliance + Controls

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE(b)</i>	<i>B</i>	
Mother age	-.62	.64	-.11	
Black	2.20	2.66	.12	
Hispanic	-.54	2.69	-.03	
Father's work hours at 3 mos.	-.03	.05	-.05	
Nonresident couple at 3 mos.	-3.68	2.21	-.19	
Treatment group	.09	1.98	.00	
Mother's perception of parenting alliance at 3 mos.	.44	.17	.30	**
Father's perception of father's prenatal involvement	.27	.17	.17	
Mother's perception of couple conflict at 3 mos.	.03	.07	.05	
Constant	31.04	14.60		
<i>F</i>	2.71	**		
<i>R</i> ²	.228			

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001

Results: Mother's Perception of Father Engagement at 3 mos. Regressed on Father's Perception of Parenting Alliance + Controls

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE(b)</i>	<i>B</i>	
Mother age	-.13	.68	-.02	
Black	-.73	2.86	-.03	
Hispanic	.04	2.92	.00	
Father's work hours at 3 mos.	.02	.05	.03	
Nonresident couple at 3 mos.	-1.09	2.35	-.04	
Treatment group	2.10	2.03	.09	
Father's perception of parenting alliance at 3 mos.	.51	.22	.21	*
Mother's perception of father's prenatal involvement	.72	.17	.38	***
Father's perception of couple conflict at 3 mos.	-.32	.09	-.29	**
Constant	-4.43	16.57		
<i>F</i>	4.28	***		
<i>R</i> ²	.313			

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001

Conclusion

- Effect size of parenting alliance association with father engagement is small to moderate.
- Relationship between these variables holds up across different raters
- Relationship between variables significant after accounting for other relationship factors (partner conflict, support, prenatal involvement)

Study 2: Effects of co-parenting and social support on adolescent fathers? (Fagan & Lee, 2011)

- Research questions:

Compared to adult fathers:

1. Does co-parenting support have a greater positive effect on adolescent fathers' engagement with children?
2. Does social support have a greater positive effect on adolescent fathers' engagement with children?

Background

- Co-parenting support may be more important for adolescent fathers wanting to stay involved with children than for adult fathers (Florsheim, Sumida, et al., 2003; Futris, Nielsen, & Olmstead, 2009).

Rationale

- Adolescent partner relationships tend to be unstable over time (Gee & Rhodes, 2003).
 - Little chance of staying involved with their children over time if they do not maintain at least an adequate co-parenting relationship with the mother.
- Adolescence is a time of rapid and multiple developmental changes.
 - More likely to withdraw from parenting than adult fathers when the stresses associated with parenting are too great (Herzog et al., 2007).
- The combined influence of interpersonal stresses with the mother and the tendency for adolescent fathers to withdraw from parenting may prove to be substantial barriers to fathers' engagement with children.
 - Barriers may be offset when adolescent fathers and their partners agree to engage in supportive co-parenting.

Sample

- FFCW
 - Mothers and fathers interviewed when the child was 1 and 3 years old ($n=1,540$)

Measure of father engagement

- FFCW father questionnaire included 12 items at year 3 addressing paternal childcare and participation in play and oral language.
- Responses ranging from 0 = *no days* to 7 = *seven days per week*.
- Sample items included how often the father sings songs or nursery rhymes, reads stories, tells stories, plays inside with toys
- Composite of fathers' engagement (range = 0 to 84; $\alpha = .91$).

Measure of Co-parenting support

- Four items from the year 3 interview assessing fathers' perceptions of co-parenting support. (Items addressed mothers' support of the father in the parenting role)
- Sample item: “mother supports the way you want to raise your child,”
- Responses ranged from 1 = *always* to 4 = *never*.
- Composite (range = 4 to 16; $\alpha = .76$).

Other variables in the study

Hispanic

Non-Hispanic white

Other race/ethnicity

Interracial parents

Father risk index

Nonromantic

Child is a boy

Father engagement, y 1

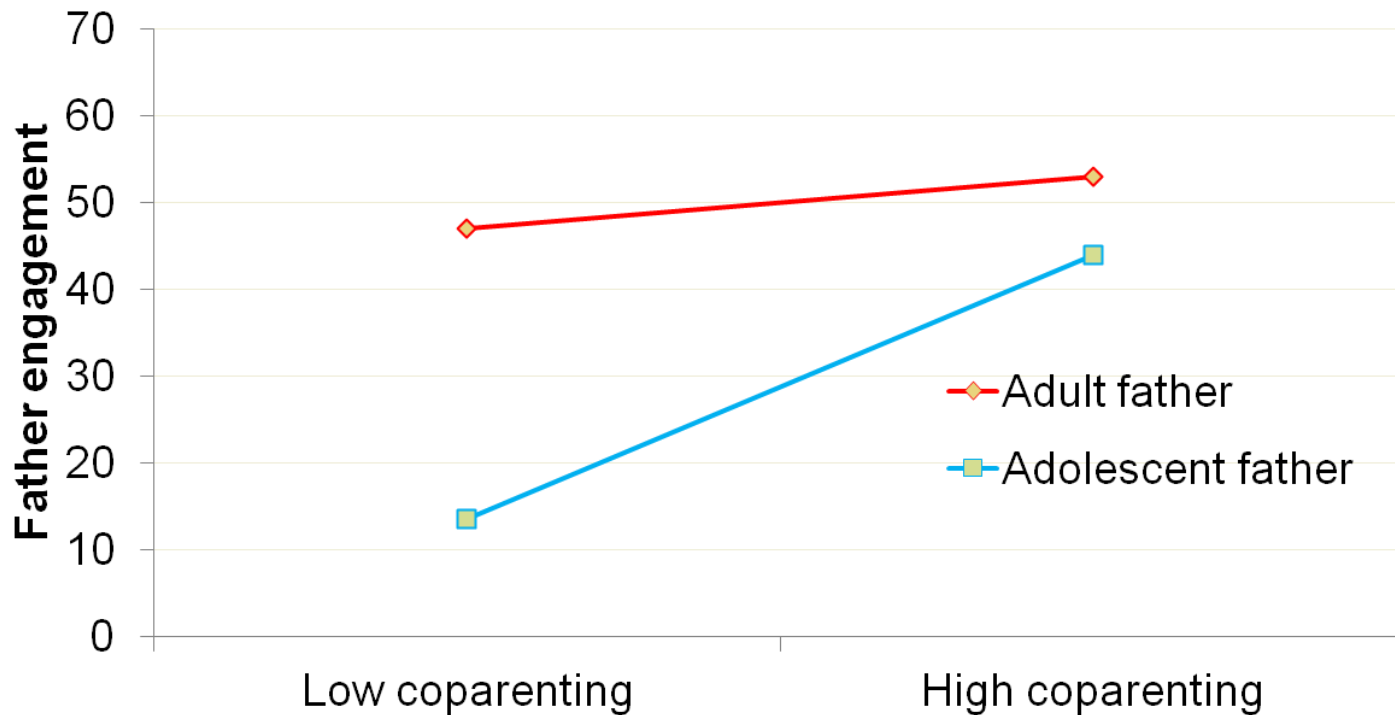
Coparenting support

Father social support

Mother social support

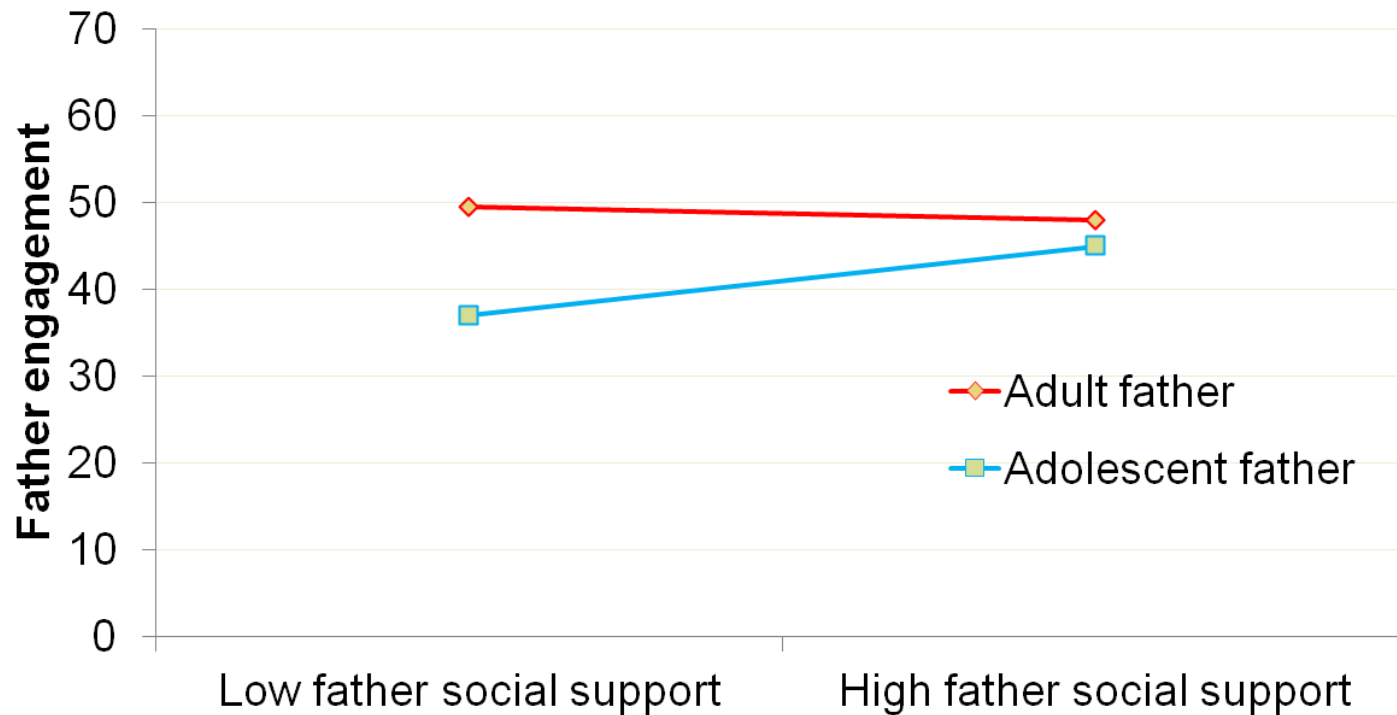
Findings: Co-parenting Support

Two-way interaction between age status of father and coparenting



Findings: Social Support

Two-way interaction between age status of father and fathers' social support



Discussion

- Focusing on adolescent parents' co-parenting relationship and fathers' social support may help young fathers to stay connected with their children.

Discussion

- Co-parenting interventions have been subjected to minimal outcome research.
- One research study revealed positive effects of the MELD curriculum on adolescent fathers' perception of their co-parenting behavior (Fagan, 2008).
- Adolescent mothers whose partner participated in the co-parenting program did not report improvements in the co-parenting relationship.

Discussion

- Unanswered questions about co-parenting interventions:
 - Are they likely to be as effective with non-romantically involved couples as they are with romantically involved couples?
 - Do co-parenting interventions work better when both the adolescent mothers and father are involved together in the program?
 - Should the program be implemented before the birth of the baby, or is it best to wait until after the birth?
 - How many sessions are needed, and what type of curriculum is most effective?

Conclusion

- Co-parenting interventions are a fruitful area for future research and development, especially considering the findings showing that higher levels of co-parenting support have a stronger positive effect on adolescent fathers than adult fathers.