



DADS' ROLE IN FERTILITY OUTCOMES

Kathryn Edin
Johns Hopkins
University

WHAT DOES DEMOGRAPHY TELL US?

1. Most participate in the birth of their child.
2. Most voluntarily claim paternity.
3. ~80 percent of fathers (and mothers) say they are together in a romantic relationship by the time the child is born.
4. 75-90% say there is at least a 50-50 chance they'll marry the child's other parent, with most putting the chances at good or certain.
5. Almost all, 98 percent, say they want to be involved in their child's life.

▪ Results from the 1998-2000 baseline wave of the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Survey



THE STORY OF ANDRE GREEN

Raised two critical
questions



**“THINK BACK TO WHEN YOU FIRST
LEARNED SHE WAS PREGNANT. WHAT
WAS YOUR FIRST REACTION TO THE
NEWS?”**

**How do men
respond to
pregnancy?**

AFRICAN AMERICAN

- Darryl "I lit up!"
- Stan "I wanted a kid real bad."
- Paul "I said, 'You know that I am getting ready to go away [to prison] and really it is your choice, but I want you to have the baby because I don't have any kids and I would like a child.'"
- Steve "Deep inside I wanted to have a child."
- Bernie "I had wanted a child for years."
- Byron "Shoot, I was happy, man!"
- Amin "Even though I was not in love, I wanted a son."
- Wilbert "I was so happy, even though in the back of my mind I wondered, 'Is it mines?'"
- Lacey "I was going to have a baby! I was happy!"
- O "I was happy! All the other girls killed my babies. I said, 'She's my first, I'm gonna give her everything.'"
- Seven "My first son, I really looked forward to having him."
- David "I was happy! She was having a boy."
- Steven "I was glad! It was no major obstacle."

WHITE

- Joe "I wanted a son and I had a son."
- James "I [planned] it. I said I want to have a kid. I wanted to get my girlfriend pregnant and have a baby. Nobody made me that way, that is me, how I came up.... I didn't really think about the financial. I just wanted a kid."
- Roger "I always wanted one."
- Little E. "I just wanted to be a dad."
- James "When I found out she was pregnant everything changed I was like 'I don't care if she is cheating' and at first I was so happy."
- Monte "I was ready to have a kid."
- George "I said, 'I love you,' you know, 'I'd love to have a child with you.'"
- Kevin "I loved it, I love kids."
- Giovani "I thought, aw, sweetie, I'm going to be a daddy. That was my feeling.... if I could [have] bottled it and keep it, I would have."



**“WHAT WOULD YOUR LIFE BE
LIKE WITHOUT YOUR CHILD?”**

**What meaning
does fatherhood
hold for
disadvantaged
men?**

AA FATHERS

Kevin, 21	"I'd probably be in jail."
Q, 24	"[I'd be] Dead, because of the simple fact that it wasn't until Brianna was born that I actually started to chill out...."
Mike, 27	"I'd probably be dead somewhere, or back in jail, in and out of rehabs. It's given me something to fight for, something like a destination. I got to BE somewhere."
Apple, 27	"I guess after I got caught up in the bad life, as far as jail, the kids helped me keep my head up, look forward. I got something to live for. Kids give you something to live for."
John A., 34	"I don't think I would be as happy as I am now. Cause my kids make me feel totally different.... I feel more like a man."
Lee, 42	"Without the kids I'd probably be a dog. I hope not with Aids."
Seven, 37.	"I couldn't imagine being without them because when I am spending time with my kids it is like, now that is love. That is unconditional love.... It is like a drug that you got to have."

WHITE FATHERS

- Michael, 21 "Basically like drugs, and robbing cars. I didn't want my son to look at me and think that's okay."
- Alex, 22 "I would be out getting high because I would not have [anything]. I would have my girlfriend but my baby is the most important thing in my life right now."
- Wil, 24 "I think I'd probably be in jail. My little brother is in jail and I figure without kids, whatever he was doing I'm sure I would have been doing it with him."
- Tony, 26 "I'm saying dead because I think she's the only thing that make me stop [using.]"
- Walt, 37 "I would be dead. I would have killed myself a long time ago.... I already tried suicide twice...."
- Joe, 45 "Man I wouldn't even know how to answer that, they are such a big part of my life....I would probably be a bum down on 8th and Race or in jail at 8th and Race."
- Bill, 38 "I'd still be out there.... I'd still be fucking off, drugs and Ill. I think about my kids and there's just this HOPE [I have now] of getting a good relationship with them."



ELVIS

What did you think your future was going to be before you had him?

I wasn't going to live past the age of 30.

And then once you had him?

I can't even picture my life without Elvis in it.... I had already make a promise to myself. I had told my friends, "I don't want to live past the age of 30. If I make it to 30, I'm going to take myself out.... He came into the picture when I was like 27, and that all changed. Everything changed. My whole life changed.



LACEY

What would your life be like if you hadn't had your children?

I can't image that one. I really can't.... Because my life without them, it would be empty. It would be empty. Because that's what kept me going, knowing that I had to come out [of jail] and be there for them.

How did you see your future before you became a father?

I didn't have no future.... I didn't care. I lived for the moment.

Did you think you would live to see 42?

Nope. Nobody expected me to be there to see 17 . . .

Did you imagine that you'd be doing something career wise?

No career. I'd be a big gangster.



“IT’S LIKE A DRUG
YOU’VE GOT TO
HAVE.”



THE GOOD NEWS

Children have a tremendous power to transform young disadvantaged men's lives!

THE BAD NEWS

The process of **relationship formation**, described next, makes the odds long that a father will remain closely connected to his child throughout the life course.

Men end up slaking their father thirst through **serial, selective fathering**, a highly uneven pattern of fathering that involves intensive investments in some children, with little or no investments in others.



PROCESS OF RELATIONSHIP FORMATION



AMIN JENKINS

Well my [youngest] son's...mother, I met her at the University of Pennsylvania hospital. She was attracted to me when I first saw her and I made my approach. We begin to socialize and communicate and then from there we began to affiliate and at some point in time we became intimate and my son was born.

JOHN CARR

Actually she was dating a friend of mine and somehow...she wanted me. But it was my friend's girl, so I didn't want to have nothing to do with it. But then [my friend] heard some shit [and] started talking shit saying he would kick my ass. So I was like "Whatever. Then I will be with your girl." Eventually, I just got stuck with her for a little while.



TIM O'BRIEN

I was hanging at a friend of mine's house, and her and a couple of her friends were there, and she used to go out with my friend. My friend was trying to get back with her, and I ended up getting with her.... We were only together for about two months, and she was getting pregnant.... I didn't mind at all.

WILL DONNELLY

I had just come out of a juvenile institution. I think I just turned 17...and I started going with her friend. And then one day she came around and we started talking, then I went with her and left her friend, and me and her got together and started having kids together and then we got closer and closer. Then we started living together.

DAVID WILLIAMS BEFORE.....

[When I was first with Deborah] I had a girlfriend on the side too, Kathy. She's somebody that I met at a [Narcotics Anonymous] meeting. We got close and we were helping each other [with our addictions]. One thing led to another and we got intimate.... Me and Deborah would get into an argument, she'd tell me to leave, I'd go stay with Kathy. (So how did you end it with Kathy?) Deborah got pregnant, and I had to do what was right.

DAVID WILLIAMS AFTER....

Each month [of the pregnancy], you know, we got closer and closer. I wanted to be with her more.... And then like 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, she had me running to a Pathmark [grocery store] buying different foods. So that brought us a lot closer too. And then, watching [him] born [brought us even closer]. On her last push he came spinning out like a bullet! Nothing was more beautiful than Julian. The way he came out of his mother..., that was amazing. And I held him, I didn't want to let him go.

PROCESS OF RELATIONSHIP FORMATION IN *DOING THE BEST I CAN*

Most conceptions leading to a live birth....

- “I just wasn’t thinking at the time”

Childbearing occurs when men are in highly tenuous relationships

- Short courtship, little selectivity
- Shotgun relationships
- It’s all about the baby—family a la carte

Childbearing occurs when men are in highly tenuous circumstances

- Unstable employment
- Still in a pattern of “rippin’ and running the streets” so in and out of prison and jail
- Substance abuse problems
- Unstable housing

CONSEQUENCES

Frequent breakup

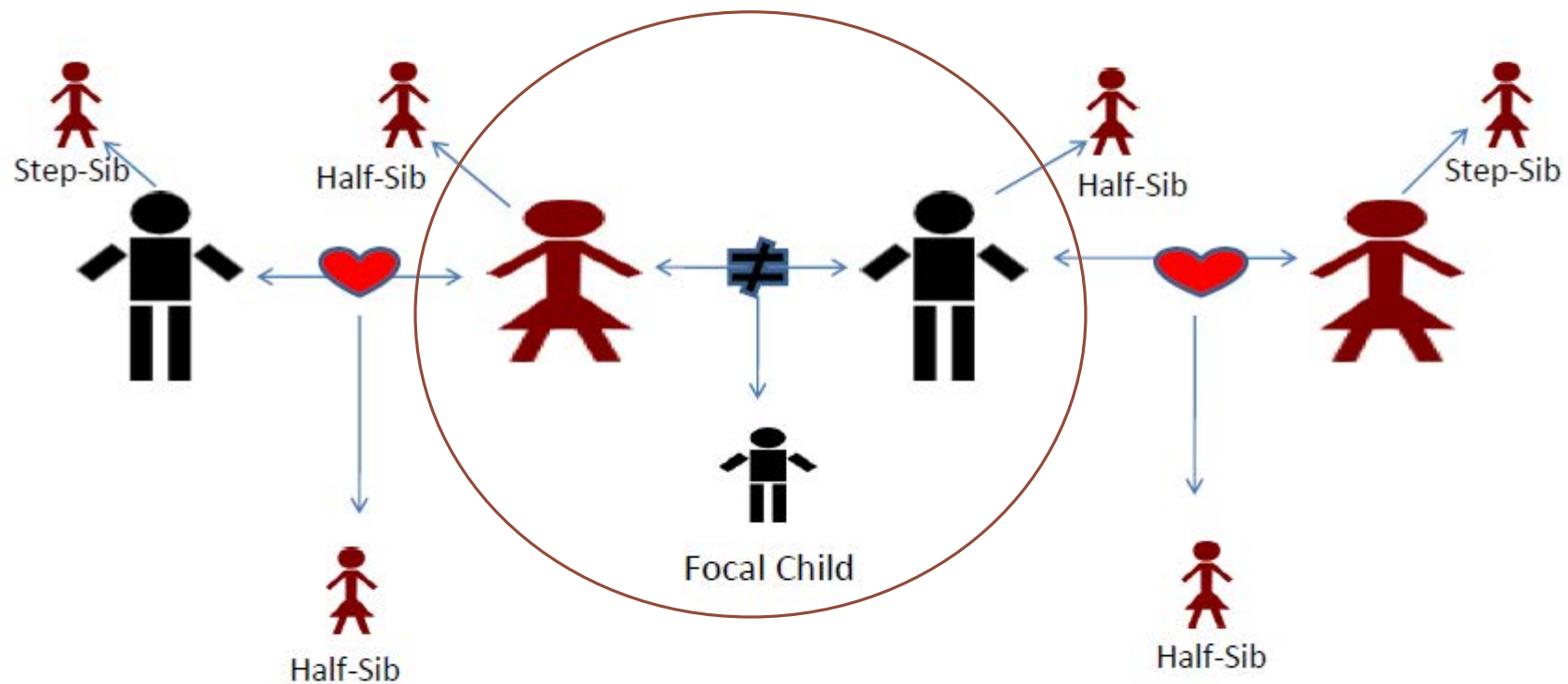
- 1/2 in the first year
- More than two thirds by the child's fifth birthday

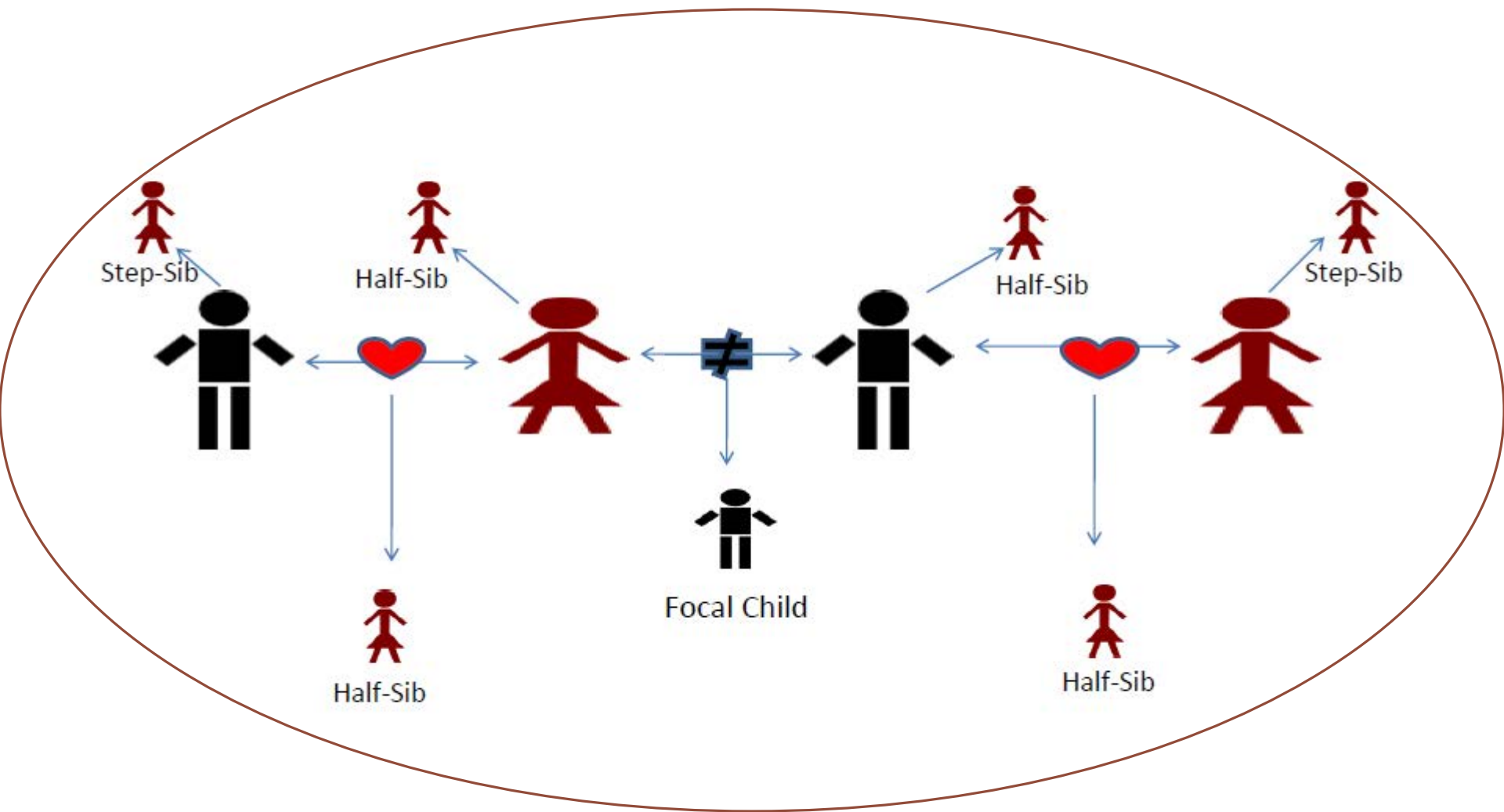
Highly contentious co-parenting relationships

New competing obligations to new romantic partners, social children, new biological children

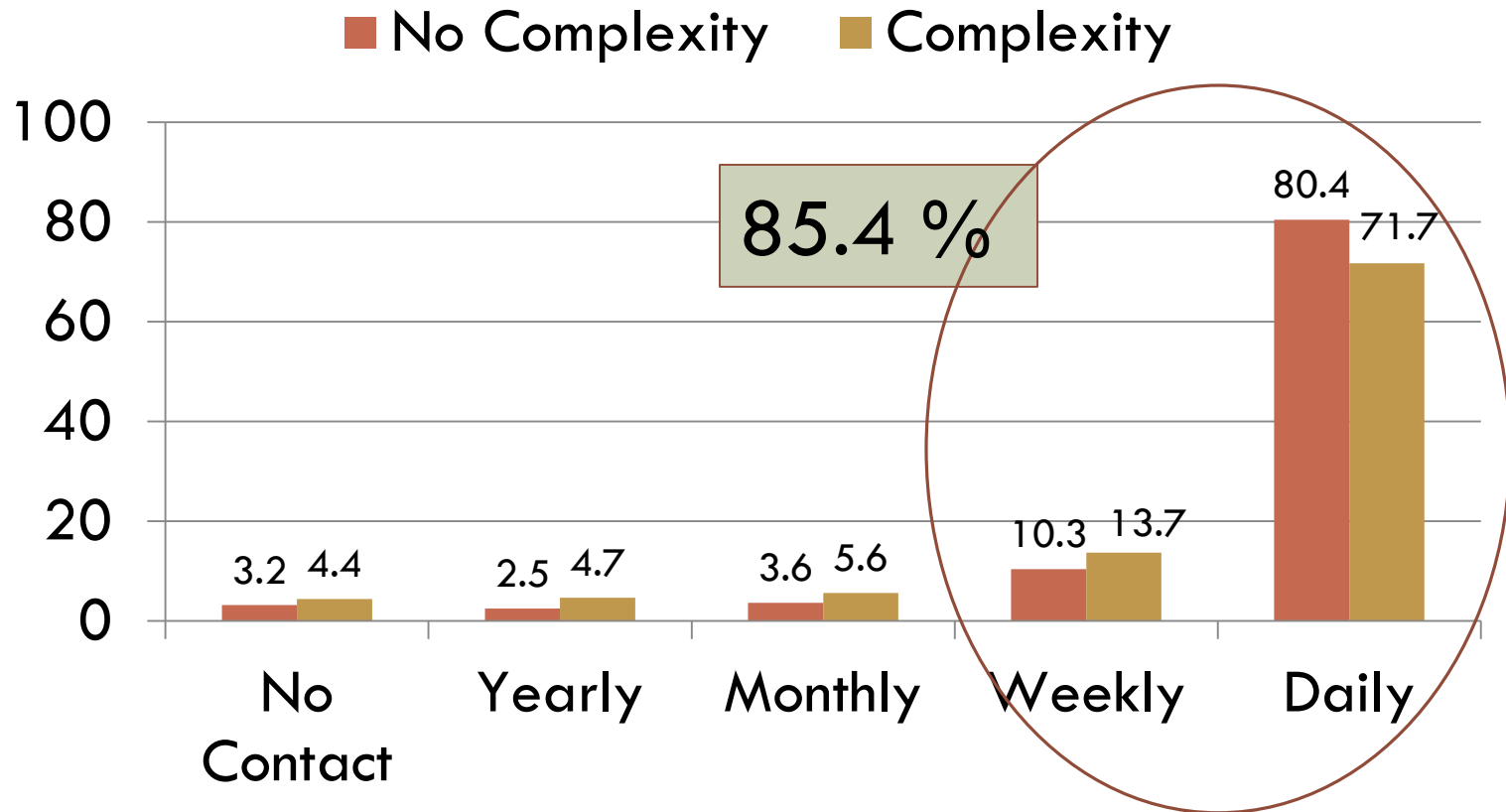
- Obligation overload?

Maternal gatekeeping sparked by her desire to keep a new relationship intact

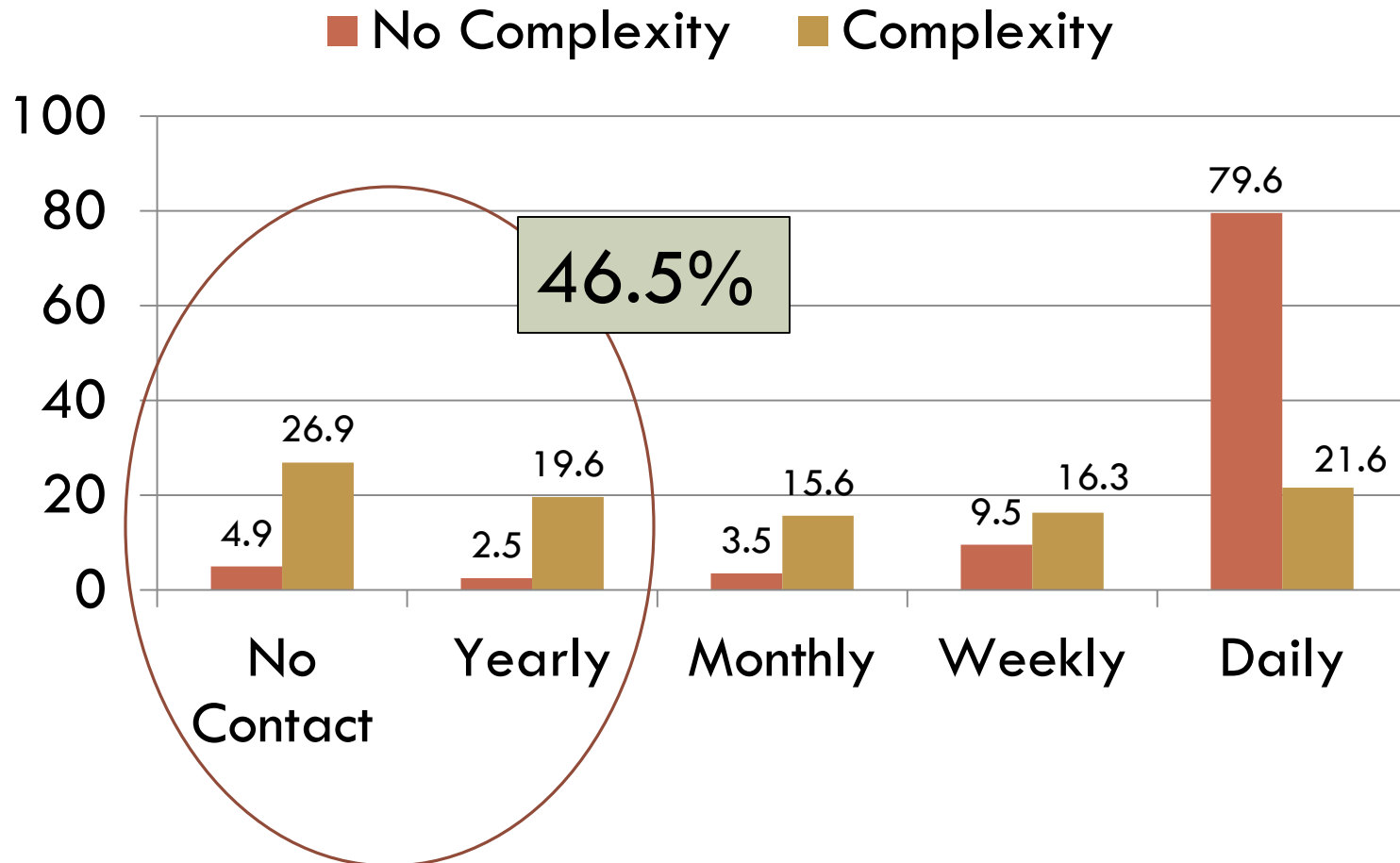




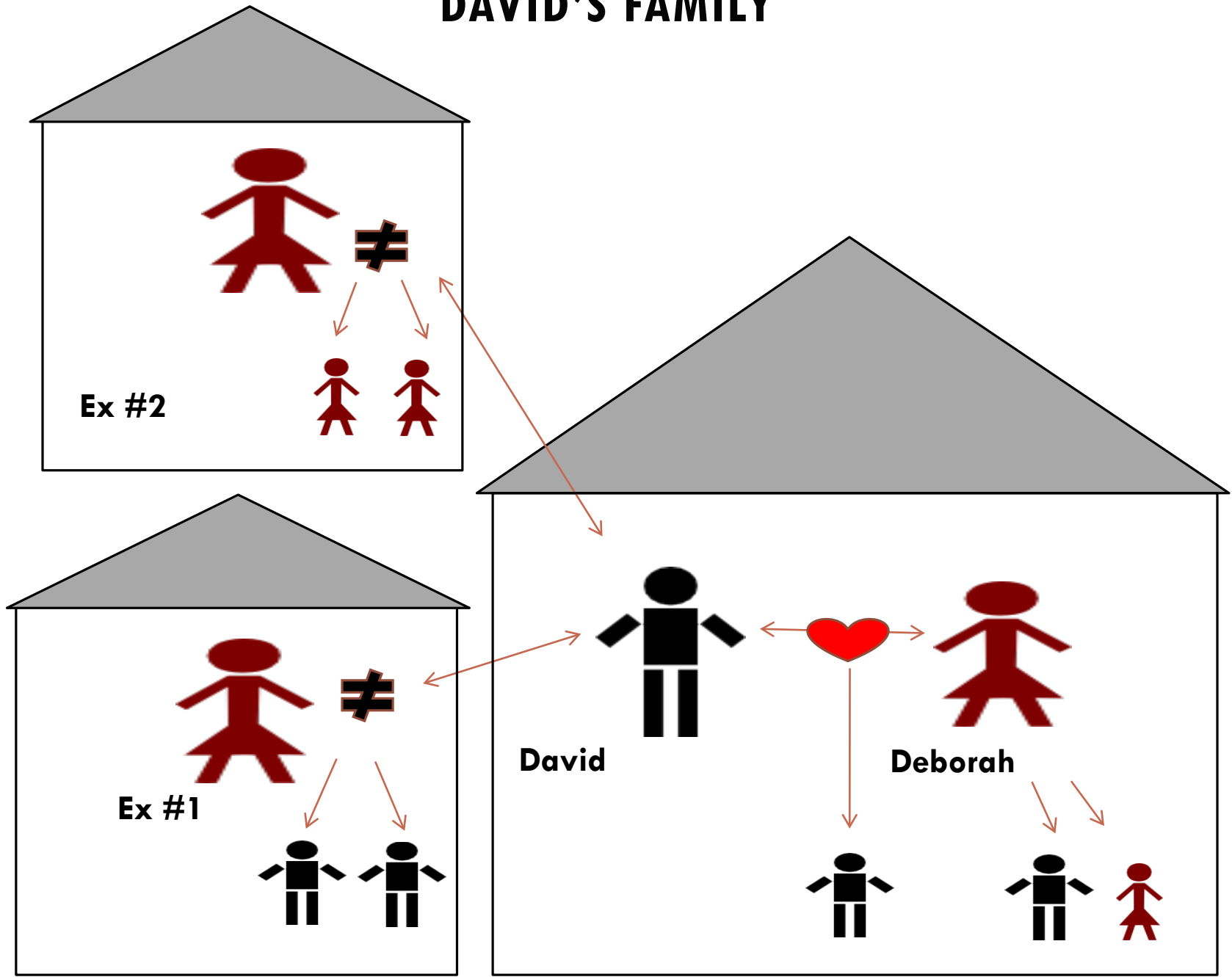
CHILD INVOLVEMENT FROM A FATHER'S PERSPECTIVE: MAXIMUM CHILD INVOLVEMENT (AMONG MEN WITH NON MARITAL BIRTHS)



CHILD INVOLVEMENT FROM A FATHER'S PERSPECTIVE: LEAST CHILD INVOLVEMENT (AMONG MEN WITH NON MARITAL BIRTH)



DAVID'S FAMILY



BOTTOM LINE

This process puts fathers on a ***family-go-round***

And puts children on a ***father-go-round***, often with no adult male that invests in them throughout the early life course, to see them through middle school and high school, much less college

SOLUTIONS

1. All pregnancies should be intended. Focus prevention efforts on men.
 - information (child support, etc.)
 - CBT approaches that get men to “stop, look and listen.”
 - Change the “signal” condoms send
2. Relationship education is vital, before, during, and after conception.
3. Treat the first birth as a potential turning point—a key time for intervention.
 - there are no single mothers
4. Re-envision child support.

SOLUTIONS—ALL POLICY IS FAMILY POLICY

Early Childhood Education

Perry Preschool

More program than no-program males raised their own children (57% vs. 30%)

Meaningful High School Experiences

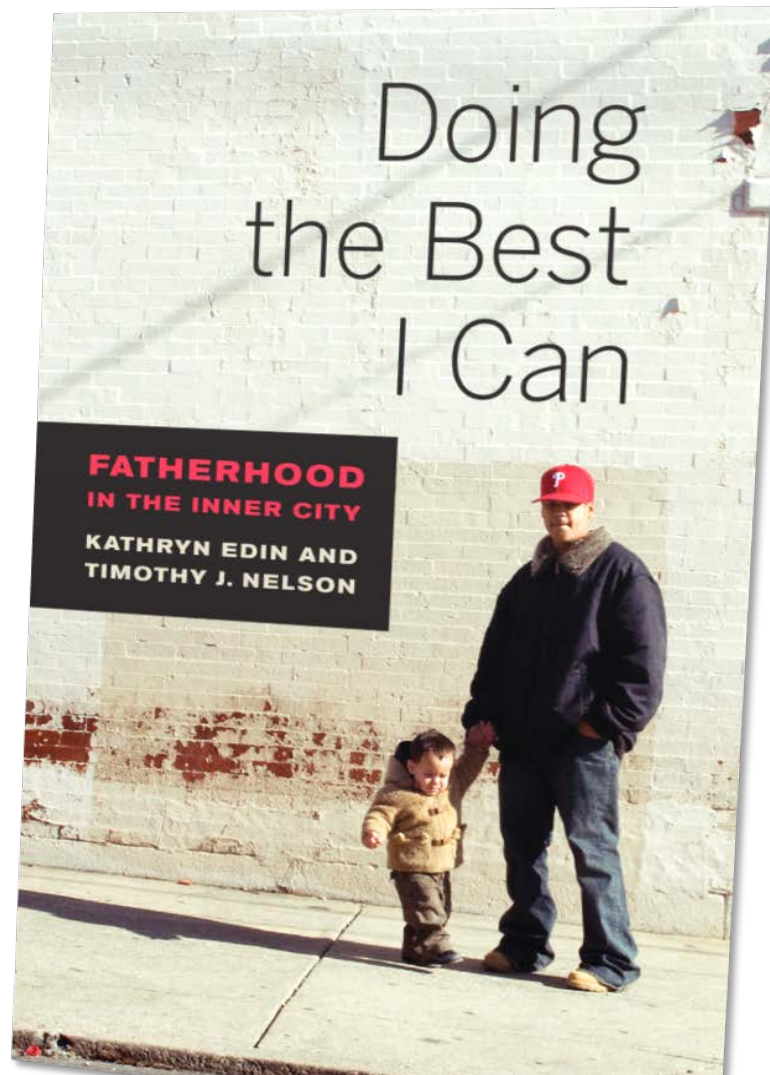
Career Academies

Men and Women living independently with children and spouse/partner	6.3%
Men's marriage rates	4%
Men's custodial parenthood	6.9%

"The Career Academies produced an increase in the percentage of young people living independently with children and a spouse or partner. Young men also experienced positive impacts on marriage and being custodial parents."

Robust Job Creation

Decline in the MMPI doesn't explain much of the time trend but men's economic prospects are closely tied to their relationship stability rates and their father involvement.



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