Published in final edited form as:

J Child Fam Stud. 2015 October 1; 24(10): 2874–2880. doi:10.1007/s10826-014-0091-5.

Male Cohabiting Partners as Primary Coparents in Low-Income Black Stepfamilies

Rex Forehand,

Department of Psychological Science, University of Vermont, Burlington VT

Justin Parent,

Department of Psychological Science, University of Vermont, Burlington VT

Andrew Golub, and

National Development and Research Institute, New York, NY

Megan Reid

National Development and Research Institute, New York, NY

Rex Forehand: rex.forehand@uvm.edu

Abstract

Male cohabiting partners in low-income urban Black single mother families may represent an extreme case of stepfathers who have been characterized as “polite strangers” in the household. The purpose of this study was twofold: To examine who serves as a coparent in these families; and to determine if identification of a coparent in addition to or instead of the MCP would be associated with the level of MCP involvement in the family. Participants were 121 mothers and adolescents from cohabiting families. The MCP was identified as a coparent in 75% of the families, an additional coparent was identified in only 30% of the families, and, when the MCP did not serve as a coparent, another individual was identified in this role in only 24% of the families. The identification of an MCP as a coparent was associated with higher levels of MCP childrearing activities, coparenting support provided by the MCP, and relationship quality with the mother relative to no coparent being identified. The identification of another coparent in addition to the MCP was not associated with changes in the higher levels of family involvement found when the MCP was a coparent. The importance of a male cohabiting partner for coparenting of an adolescent is emphasized in the discussion of the findings.

Keywords

Coparenting; cohabiting families; childrearing activities

Almost three quarters of Black children are born out of wedlock (Martin et al., 2013) and raised in what has traditionally been identified as mother custodial single-parent families (Jones & Lindahl, 2011). However, there are often biologically unrelated male cohabiting partners (MCPs) residing in these “single mother” families (Dunlap, Golub, & Benoit, 2010;

Lichter, Turner, & Sassler, 2010). For example, Kreider (2008) found that for Black children living in poverty, almost 10% had an MCP, and Bumpass and Lu (2000) reported that 40% of children will spend some time before age 16 in a cohabiting stepfamily. Furthermore, the number of cohabiting stepfamilies is rapidly increasing (see Bianchi, 2014; Dunifon & Kowaleski-Jones, 2002; Huang, Smock, Manning, & Bergstrom-Lynch, 2011), making the study of this family structure critical for understanding and enhancing the psychosocial adjustment of children and adolescents (Manning & Lamb, 2003).

An MCP can serve an important role in cohabiting families in terms of not only his romantic relationship with the mother (e.g., Carlson & Berger, 2013; Dunifon & Kowaleski-Jones, 2002) and potential financial contributions but his coparenting of children in the family (Forehand, Parent, Golub, & Reid, 2014; Parent, Clifton, Forehand, Golub, Reid, & Pichler, 2014; Reid, Golub, & Forehand, 2014). Coparenting has been defined as two adults who “take on the care and the upbringing of children for whom they share responsibility” (McHale & Lindahl, 2011, p. 3). Of importance, coparenting by an MCP has been linked to better child outcomes (Bzostek, 2008; Forehand, Parent, Golub, Reid, & Lafko, 2014). However, not all MCPs are actively involved in coparenting for a number of reasons: Family roles may not be clearly defined in these families (e.g., Manning & Lamb, 2003; Thomson & McLanahan, 2012); uneducated men may not have role models for how to become involved parents (Roy, 2014); and the investment in the family by MCPs may be limited (e.g., Carlson & Berger, 2013). Stepfathers in second marriage families have been characterized as “polite strangers” (e.g., DeGarmo & Forgatch, 2007) and, for the reasons just noted, MCPs may represent an extreme case of this characterization. Nevertheless, quantitative and qualitative research suggests that many, *but not all*, MCPs are actively involved in coparenting (Forehand, Parent, Golub, & Reid, 2014; Reid et al., 2014). This raises the question of who else coparents in cohabiting families and whether this person influences the MCP’s involvement in the family, specifically his parenting and relationship with the mother. The current study examines these questions.

Research in recent years has focused on who helps single mothers parent. This research, while informative, has not assessed or controlled for the presence of an MCP. Among those identified as contributing to coparenting in these families are the mother’s mother and her sister, the biological father, and family friends (e.g., Gonzalez, Jones, & Parent, 2014; Parent, Jones, Forehand, Cuellar, & Shoulberg, 2013; see Jones & Lindahl, 2011, for a review). Furthermore, more than one of these individuals, as well as the MCP, may serve as a coparent for a child, potentially reducing the parenting burden on any one individual. This may be particularly important when a child is in the adolescent years as these have long been characterized as the most difficult to parent (Montemayor, 1986).

The current study extends our knowledge by asking the mother to identify who serves as a coparent for her adolescent age child. We were particularly interested in who, if anyone, serves as a coparent when an MCP is not identified as a coparent and, when he is identified as a coparent, whether other individuals *also* serve in this role. Our second set of questions focused on whether the identification of a coparent in addition to or instead of the MCP would be associated with different levels of family involvement by the MCP (i.e., parenting, provision of coparenting support, & relationship quality with the mother) than when only the

MCP was a coparent. We tested these questions by not only comparing the two groups just noted (i.e., the MCP identified as the only coparent & the MCP plus an additional coparent being identified) but by comparing them to two additional groups: (1) No coparent was identified; and (2) only a coparent other than the MCP was identified.

Our previous research has indicated that MCPs are identified as coparents by the majority of mothers (Forehand et al., 2014). We build on this research and our work with other samples (e.g., Jones, Forehand, Dorsey, Foster, Brody, & Armistead, 2005; Parent et al., 2013) in the development of our hypotheses. First, we hypothesized that, when an MCP is not identified as a coparent, another individual (e.g., mother's mother or sister) will be identified. Furthermore, we expected other individuals to be identified as a coparent when an MCP is identified as a coparent. In the second set of questions, we hypothesized an additional coparent beyond the MCP will be associated with a lower level of coparenting support between mother and MCP and less involvement by the MCP in child rearing. However, we expect both of these groups (MCP only coparent & MCP plus another coparent) to be associated with more coparenting support and involvement in childrearing than when no coparent is identified and when only a person other than the MCP is identified as the coparent. Finally, we tested two competing hypotheses about the mother-MCP dyadic relationship quality: Does the addition of a coparent weaken or strengthen dyadic relationship quality between the mother and the MCP. An additional coparent may weaken the relationship quality by the MCP being less involved in the family. Alternately, the relationship quality may be strengthened by an additional coparent by reducing the burden of an MCP being the sole coparent.

We included reports of both mother and adolescent when examining MCP involvement in two areas of childrearing: Daily childrearing tasks (e.g., helping the adolescent with homework) and limit-setting (e.g., monitoring with whom the adolescent spends time). Congruence in reporting across these two individuals can strengthen our confidence in the findings. Finally, research suggests that fathers may be more involved with sons than daughters (e.g., Leavell, Tamis-LeMonda, Ruble, Zosuls, & Cabrera, 2012; Russell & Russell, 1987). Therefore, in exploratory analyses, we examined if gender of adolescent qualified any of our findings in the second set of questions we posed about mother-MCP dyadic relationship quality, MCP coparenting support, and MCP childrearing involvement.

Method

Participants

Participants were 121 Black single-mother families with a male cohabiting partner and an adolescent in the 10 to 17 year age range living in New York City. In all families the MCP was not biologically related to the adolescent. The mean ages of participating youth, mothers, and MCPs were 13.17 years ($SD = 1.97$; 56.2% girls), 38.5 years ($S.D. = 7.86$), and 40.66 ($S.D. = 10.74$), respectively. Of the mothers, 38%, 33%, and 29% did not complete high school, completed high school/GED, and some college/vocational school after high school, respectively. Of the MCPs, 29%, 57%, and 14% did not complete high school, completed high school/GED, and had some college/vocational school after high school, respectively. Household incomes averaged \$22,726 per year ($SD = \$18,442$). In all families

at least one of the two adults (mother or MCP) identified as Black with the mother identifying as Black in 98% of the families. The mean number of children per family was 2.09 (SD = 1.30). Sixty-two percent of the mother-MCP relationships were “established” (13 months or greater) and 38% were “new” (12 months or less). Data were missing on the coparenting measures for four families, reducing the sample for analysis to 117.

Procedure

The National Development and Research Institute (NDRI) Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the study. All participants initially signed consent (mother/MCP) and assent (adolescent) forms. Study participants were recruited by field staff members experienced in working with low-income Black residents of New York City. Field staff used existing networks of research study participants, field informants, street recruiting, and social services agency contacts to recruit potential participants. Both the mother and adolescent had to agree to participate. Families completed the assessment either at a community site or in their home, according to the preferences of each family. Family members completed the assessments separately and privately with interviewers, who entered the responses into a computer database. The mothers and adolescents completed measures assessing a range of variables related to family psychosocial functioning, including the variables of focus in the current study. Each interview took approximately 60 minutes to complete; adults were compensated \$40 and adolescents were compensated \$20 for their participation.

Measures

Demographic—Mothers responded to demographic questions about themselves (e.g., age, race, education) and their families (e.g., family income). Youth reported on their gender and age.

MCP Identity as a Coparent—The mother responded to the following question: “Do you consider your current partner to be a coparent to (the focal adolescent’s name)?” A coparent was defined for mothers as “another person who currently helps parent (the focal adolescent’s name).” Responses were coded as 0 (*no*) or 1 (*yes*).

Other Coparents—The mother was then asked the following question: “Is there anyone else, not including your partner, who also serves as a coparent to (the focal adolescent’s name)?” If the mother responded “yes,” then she was asked how many people were coparents, how each person was related to her (mother’s mother, daughter, sister, or aunt; adolescent’s biological father; friend; other) and if the person lived with her.

MCP’s Childrearing Activities—The MCP’s engagement in childrearing with the adolescent was assessed by the “Who Does What?” questionnaire (WDW). The original WDW measure (Cowan & Cowan, 1988, 1990) was designed to examine domestic tasks each member of a couple performed before and after having a child. It consisted of three scales of 12 items each that ask partners to describe the couple’s division of tasks in three areas: (1) household tasks; (2) family decision-making; and (3) the caring for and rearing of children. Items were rated on a 1–9 scale for “How it is now,” with 1 indicating that the

woman does it all, 9 indicating that the man does it all, and 5 showing that partners share the task about equally (Cowan & Cowan, 1988). The WDW was later revised for children of different ages (Cowan & Cowan, 1990) and involved additions and modification of the caring for and rearing of children subscale with age appropriate items. There are a total of 19 items about child care and rearing for adolescent age children.

The WDW was adapted for the current study in the following ways: (a) questions were adapted for verbal administration; (b) three separate prompts were used for the three different areas of involvement; and (c) two versions of the measure were created – one for the mother and one for the adolescent. Both of these individuals responded on a 5-point Likert scale rating the MCP's involvement. Specifically, for household tasks questions, the responder was asked, "Please tell me how often your partner (your mother's partner) does the following house chores?" and responses were rated on a 5-point scale from 0 [*Almost never* (0–10%)] to 4 [*Almost always* (91–100%)]; for the family decision-making questions, the responder was asked, "Please tell me how much influence your partner (your mother's partner) has in the following decisions?" and responses were rated on a 5-point scale from 0 (*No influence*) to 4 (*All of the influence*); and lastly, for the caring for and rearing of children questions, the responder was asked, "Please tell me how often your partner (your mother's partner) participates in the following parenting activities?" and responses were rated on a 5-point scale from 0 (*Never*) to 4 (*Very often*).

Two subscales from the Who Does What, derived from a previous factor analysis performed on the current sample (see Forehand et al., 2014), were utilized in the current study: Daily Child-related Tasks (DCT: 7 items, e.g., getting up in the morning, go to bed at night) and Limit Setting (LS: 3 items, disciplining, setting limits for child, monitoring with whom the child spends time). Mothers and adolescents each reported on MCP involvement in DCT and LS. Internal consistency was good for the four reports, ranging from .82 to .92. Items were summed for each subscale for mother report and for adolescent report.

Coparenting Support Provided by the MCP—Coparenting support provided by the MCP was assessed by the mother on the communication and support subscales of the Parenting Convergence Scale (PCS; Ahrons, 1981). The Support subscale consists of two items ["When you need help with (target adolescent), how often do you go to your partner for help?" and "How often would you say that your partner is a help to you in raising this adolescent?"] rated on a (1) "*none/very little*" to (5) "*a lot*" Likert scale with higher scores indicating more coparenting support. The Communication subscale consists of two items ["How often do you and your partner make major decisions together about (target adolescent's) life?" and "How often do you and your partner talk to each other about (target adolescent's) achievements and how well she/he is doing?"] rated on the same 5-point Likert scale with higher scores indicating more coparenting communication. As only two items constitute each of these scales, a correlation coefficient was calculated for each scale. The two items on the Support subscale and on the Communication subscale were highly correlated for mother ($r = .59$ & $r = .80$, $p < .001$ in each case). The support subscale and the communication subscale were summed to form a measure of coparent support.

Dyadic Relationship Quality—The Quality of Marriage Index (QMI) was used to assess relationship satisfaction (Norton, 1983). The QMI is a six-item measure of global marital satisfaction that was adapted for the current study to assess relationship satisfaction as opposed to marital satisfaction. In the current study, respondents indicated their agreement with each of five items on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*) and rated one global item, “Everything considered, how would you rate the quality of your partnership” on a 10-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*being very poor*) to 10 (*being very good*). For the current study, only the five items on the 5-point Likert scale were used. The QMI has well-established psychometric properties across studies (for a meta-analysis, see Graham, Diebels, & Barnow, 2011) as well as specifically with African American couples (e.g., $\alpha = .94-.96$; Fincham, Ajayi, & Beach, 2011). Internal consistency for the mother report on the five-item QMI for the current sample was excellent ($\alpha = .95$).

Data Analytic Plan

To address the questions of whether other individuals serve as coparents when MCPs are and are not identified as a coparent, we classified families into one of four types: (1) no one coparents with the mother; (2) another person, but not the MCP, coparents; (3) only the MCP coparents; and (4) the MCP plus another person coparents. Percentages were compared across these four combinations of coparenting.

To address if who coparents in a cohabiting family was associated with MCP involvement in daily childrearing tasks (i.e., limit setting, coparenting support, & relationship quality with the mother), we conducted a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) on each dependent variable. The first factor was who coparents and, to determine if adolescent gender qualified the findings, gender of adolescent was the second factor.

Results

In only 33 families (28%), an individual in addition to the MCP (26 families) or instead of the MCP (7 families) served as a coparent. These included 14 biological fathers, 13 mother’s mother, three mother’s sister, and three classified as “other.” Only five (15%) of these 33 individuals lived in the home with the mother, MCP, and adolescent. In four of these 33 families, there was also a second person listed as a coparent. In one family this person was the mother’s mother and in three families the person was classified as “other.” One (25%) of these four individuals lived in the home with the mother, MCP, and adolescent.

Table 1 presents the number of families in each of four combinations of coparenting. As expected based on prior analyses of this dataset (Forehand et al., 2014), the MCP was identified by mother as a coparent in 75% (88 of 117) of the families (columns 3 plus 4 in Table 1). Regarding the first question, in only 7 of 29 families (24%) (see columns 1 and 2 in Table 1) was another person identified as a coparent when the MCP did not serve in this role. Regarding the second question, in only 26 of 88 families (30%) (see columns 3 & 4 in Table 1) was another person identified as a coparent when the MCP did serve in this role.

Table 2 presents the means for each combination of coparenting for the following dependent variables: MCP involvement in daily childrearing tasks and in limit setting; coparenting

support provided by the MCP; and mother-MCP dyadic relationship quality. Three of the four combinations of coparenting (see Table 2) were examined in the ANOVAs. The fourth combination (other person only served as a coparent) was not included in the analyses because of the small sample size ($n = 7$; see Table 1). The means, results of the first factor in the two-way ANOVA (who coparents: No one; MCP only; MCP plus another person), and mean differences tests are presented in Table 2. The second factor in the ANOVA, gender of adolescent, did not interact with who coparents in any of the ANOVAs and, therefore, is not considered further.

Based on both mother and adolescent report, the MCP was more involved in daily childrearing tasks and in limit setting if he was identified as a coparent, and the addition of another person identified as a coparent did not change the level of involvement. The mother reported more coparenting support was provided by the MCP when he was identified as a coparent, and the addition of another person identified as a coparent did not change the level of support. Finally, the mother reported the mother-MCP relationship quality was higher when the MCP was identified as a coparent, and the addition of another person identified as a coparent did not change the relationship quality.

Discussion

One purpose of the present study was to examine who serves as a coparent in low-income urban Black single mother households with a male cohabiting partner. A second purpose was to examine if different combinations of coparents (e.g., no one coparents, MCP only coparents, MCP plus another individual coparents) were associated with differences in level of MCP childrearing activities, coparenting support provided by the MCP, and mother-MCP dyadic relationship quality. The findings indicated that the MCP is an individual identified as a coparent in three-quarters of these families and is the *only* coparent identified in over one-half of the families. Relative to *not* being identified as a coparent, MCPs who were perceived as the only coparent were more involved in childrearing, provided more coparenting support, and had a better relationship quality with the mother. Relative to the MCP being perceived as the only coparent, the mother's identification of a second coparent (i.e., MCP plus another coparent) was not associated with changes in the level of any of these family processes.

Our findings regarding the low frequency of individuals other than the MCP serving as a coparent were unexpected. An MCP is the primary, and often only, person serving as a coparent. If he does not fulfill this role, in the great majority of families there was no one to assist the mother in parenting. Furthermore, when the MCP did fulfill the role of a coparent, in most families he was the only individual who assisted with parenting. As we noted earlier, research with second marriage families suggests stepfathers may be "polite strangers" (e.g., DeGamo & Forgatch, 2007) in that they are not engaged with the mother's children. We considered that a cohabiting stepfather could be an extreme case of the "polite stranger" as his investment in the family may be limited (Carlson & Berger, 2013) and/or mothers may limit his involvement in childrearing (see Puhlman & Pasley, 2013, for a review). However, our findings indicate that this is not the case: Mothers identify MCPs as playing an important and necessary role in coparenting their adolescent age child.

Our findings suggest that involvement of others as coparents in addition to the MCP does not change the MCP's involvement in childrearing activities, the level of coparenting support provided by the MCP, or the mother-MCP relationship quality. We had proposed that an additional coparent would be associated with lower levels of support and involvement and would either weaken or strengthen the dyadic relationship quality. The lack of support for these hypotheses may have resulted from the great majority of individuals identified by the mother as coparents living outside the home. As a consequence, they may have less opportunity to coparent and to change the MCP's involvement in the family. Another potential explanation for our findings is that multiple individuals (e.g., biological fathers, mother's mother or sister) served as a coparent across families. Our prior research with another sample suggests that these individuals are perceived by mothers as playing different roles in the coparenting process (Parent et al., 2013). This heterogeneity may have reduced the possibility of detecting how an additional coparent influences an MCP's involvement in the family. One implication of our findings is that additional coparents, who predominantly live outside the family and vary in their identity, are not detrimental to relationships within cohabiting families and, therefore, could be encouraged. However, it is important to note that having this additional coparent also was not beneficial for the mother-MCP dyadic relationship quality.

Several additional findings are noteworthy. First, gender of adolescent did not qualify any of the findings. This is surprising given the literature that fathers are more involved with sons than daughters (e.g., Leavell et al., 2012; Russell & Russell, 1987). Second, when there is a coparent other than the MCP, it is likely to be either the biological father of the adolescent or the mother's mother. These findings are congruent with research from other samples (e.g., Jones et al., 2003; Parent et al., 2013) and suggest the importance of both biological fathers and social fathers (i.e., MCPs), as well as extended family members (particularly an adolescent's grandmother), serving as coparents with the mother (also see Bzostek, 2008). However, it is important to stress that a coparent other than/instead of the MCP was identified in only 30% of the families and this individual in almost all cases lived outside the home. Therefore, the extent of contributions of coparents other than the MCP to childrearing in cohabiting families is questionable.

Our findings should be considered in the context of its weaknesses and strengths. In terms of weaknesses, the data are cross-sectional and, in part, descriptive. As such, causal interpretations should be avoided. In addition, one informant (i.e., the mother) served as the reporter of the independent variable (i.e., identification of coparent) and the dependent variables (e.g., relationships in the family), potentially resulting in the findings emerging from a common reporter bias. However, this concern is tempered to some extent by similar findings emerging for MCP involvement in childrearing when the reporter was the mother and adolescent. The primary strength of the study was that this is the first investigation of coparents beyond the MCP in cohabiting families. It is important to identify who parents children in this growing type of family. Finally, it is important to not generalize our findings beyond Black, low income cohabiting families living in urban environments.

Our findings have important implications for men cohabiting in families with mothers of adolescents. As they are identified as a primary, and in many cases only, coparent, they

should be encouraged to participate with mothers in prevention and intervention programs for adolescents. However, as cohabiting relationships have been found to be more transitory than marriages (e.g., Manning, Smock, & Majundar, 2004), mothers should be encouraged to involve other individuals as coparents.

In conclusion, MCPs are reported by the majority of mothers as serving as coparents of adolescents in cohabiting families. Whether they do or do not serve as a coparent, in most families there is not another individual who is identified by the mother as playing this role. These findings emphasize the importance of parenting by MCPs in cohabiting families and suggest that focusing only on their romantic relationship with the mother and their potential financial contributions will underestimate their role in the family (see Marsiglio & Roy, 2012).

Acknowledgments

Funding for this project was provided by a National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Grant (R01HD064723), (PI: Andrew Golub) and a NICHD Research Supplement to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research (R01HD064723-02S1).

References

- Ahrons C. The continuing coparental relationship between divorced spouses. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. 1981; 51:415–428. [PubMed: 7258307]
- Bianchi SM. A demographic perspective on family change. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*. 2014; 6:35–44. [PubMed: 26078785]
- Bumpass L, Lu H. Trends in cohabitation and implications for children's family contexts. *Population Studies*. 2000; 54:29–41.
- Bzostek SH. Social fathers and child well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 2008; 70:950–961.
- Carlson MJ, Berger LM. What kids get from parents: Packages of parental involvement across complex family forms. *Social Service Review*. 2013; 87:213–249. [PubMed: 24644373]
- Cowan CP, Cowan PA. Who does what when partners become parents: Implications for men, women and marriage. *Marriage and Family Review*. 1988; 12:105–131.
- Cowan, CP.; Cowan, PA. The "Who Does What?". In: Touliatos, J.; Perlmutter, BF.; Straus, MA., editors. *Handbook of family measurement techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage; 1990. p. 447-448.
- DeGarmo DS, Forgatch MS. Efficacy of parent training for stepfathers: From playful spectator and polite stranger to effective stepfathering. *Parenting: Science and Practice*. 2007; 7:331–355.
- Dunifon R, Kowaleski-Jones L. Who's in the house? Race differences in cohabitation, single parenthood, and child development. *Child Development*. 2002; 73:1249–1264. [PubMed: 12146746]
- Dunlap, E.; Golub, A.; Benoit, E. The invisible partners: Cohabiting males as 'caring daddies' in inner-city 'mother only' households. In: Columbus, F., editor. *Family life: Roles, bonds and impact*. Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers; 2010. p. 33-54.
- Fincham FD, Ajayi C, Beach SRH. Spirituality and marital satisfaction in African American couples. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*. 2011; 3:259–268.
- Forehand R, Parent J, Golub A, Reid M. Correlates of male cohabiting partner's involvement in child-rearing tasks in low-income urban black stepfamilies. *Journal of Family Psychology*. 2014; 28:336–345. [PubMed: 24749653]
- Forehand, R.; Parent, J.; Golub, A.; Reid, M.; Lafko, N. Involvement in childrearing and firm control parenting by male cohabiting partners in Black low-income stepfamilies: Forecasting adolescent problem behaviors. 2014. Manuscript submitted for publication

- Gonzalez M, Jones D, Parent J. Coparenting experiences in African American families: An examination of single mothers and their nonmarital coparents. *Family Process*. 2014; 53(1):33–54. [PubMed: 24479612]
- Graham JM, Diebels KJ, Barnow AB. The reliability of relationship satisfaction: A reliability generalization meta-analysis. *Journal of Family Psychology*. 2011; 25:39–48. [PubMed: 21355645]
- Huang PM, Smock PJ, Manning WD, Bergstrom-Lynch CA. He says, she says: Gender and cohabitation. *Journal of Family Issues*. 2011; 32:876–905. [PubMed: 21643456]
- Jones DJ, Forehand R, Dorsey S, Foster S, Brody G, Armistead L. Coparent support and conflict in African American single mother-headed families: Associations with maternal and child psychosocial functioning. *Journal of Family Violence*. 2005; 20:141–150.
- Jones, DJ.; Lindahl, KM. Coparenting in extended kinship systems: Black, Hispanic, Asian heritage and Native American families. In: McHale, JP.; Lindahl, KM., editors. *Coparenting: A conceptual and clinical examination of family systems*. Washington, D.C: American Psychological Association; 2011. p. 61-80.
- Kreider, RM. Current population reports. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau; 2008. Living arrangements of children: 2004; p. 70-104.
- Leavell AS, Tamis-LeMonda CS, Ruble DN, Zosuls KM, Cabrera NJ. African American, white and Latino fathers' activities with their sons and daughters in early childhood. *Sex Roles*. 2012; 66:53–65.
- Lichter DT, Turner RN, Sassler S. National estimates of the rise in serial cohabitation. *Social Science Research*. 2010; 39:754–755.
- Manning WD, Lamb KA. Adolescent well-being in cohabiting, married, and single parent families. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 2003; 65:876–893.
- Manning WD, Smock PJ, Majundar D. The relative stability of cohabiting and marital unions for children. *Population Research and Policy Review*. 2004; 23:135–159.
- Marsiglio, W.; Roy, K. *Nurturing dads: Social initiatives for contemporary fatherhood*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation; 2012.
- Martin JA, Hamilton BE, Ventura SJ, Osterman MJ, Curtin SC, Matthews TJ. Births: Final data for 2012. *National Vital Statistics Report*. 2013:62.
- McHale, J.; Lindahl, K. *Coparenting: A conceptual and clinical examination of family systems*. Washington, D.C: American Psychological Association; 2011.
- Montemayor R. Family variation in parent-adolescent storm and stress. *Journal of Adolescent Research*. 1986; 1:15–31.
- Norton R. Measuring marital quality: A critical look at the dependent variable. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 1983; 45:141–151.
- Parent J, Clifton J, Forehand R, Golub A, Reid M, Pichler E. Parental mindfulness and dyadic relationship quality in cohabiting Black families: Associations with parenting experienced by adolescents. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*. 2014; 3:67–82. [PubMed: 25544936]
- Parent J, Jones DJ, Forehand R, Cuellar J, Shoulberg E. The role of coparents in Black single-mother families: The indirect effect of coparent identity on youth psychosocial adjustment. *Journal of Family Psychology*. 2013; 27:252–262. [PubMed: 23398615]
- Puhlman DJ, Pasley K. Rethinking maternal gatekeeping. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*. 2013; 5:176–193.
- Reid M, Golub A, Forehand R. Stepfathers, fathers, and “other fathers”: Stepfathering roles in low-income cohabiting. Black families. 2014 Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Roy K. Invited commentary: Fathers on the frontiers of family change. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*. 2014; 6:91–96.
- Russell G, Russell A. Mother-child and father-child relationships in middle childhood. *Child Development*. 1987; 58:1573–1585.
- Thomson E, McLanahan S. Reflections on “Family structure and child well-being economics vs. parental socialization”. *Social Forces*. 2012; 91:45–53.

Table 1

Number and Percent in Each of Four Combinations of Coparenting in Cohabiting Families

	No Coparent	Other Person Only Coparent	MCP Only Coparent	MCP & Other Person Coparents
Number	22	7	62	26
Percent	19%	6%	53%	22%

Table 2

Means for Three Combinations of Coparenting, Results of Analyses of Variance, and Mean Difference Tests.

Dependent Variable	(1) No Coparent	(2) MCP Only Coparent	(3) MCP Plus Another Coparent	ANOVA Results Main Effect	Mean Differences Tests
Daily Childrearing Tasks					
Mother Report	4.27	13.17	12.38	15.08**	1<2&3*; 2=3
Adolescent Report	3.70	9.72	10.57	9.38**	1<2&3**; 2=3
Limit Setting					
Mother Report	2.59	6.83	5.00	9.53**	1<2*; 2=3
Adolescent Report	2.10	5.90	5.88	7.96**	1<2&3**; 2=3
Coparent Support ²	4.95	8.03	7.69	17.26**	1<2&3*; 2=3
Relationship Quality ²	12.50	16.34	16.00	5.41**	1<2&3**; 2=3

*
p < .05;**
p < .01¹ Results for gender and coparent combination by gender interaction are not presented.² Mother Report