

# 'Golden Age' serial murderers experienced more childhood trauma and had a higher percentage of absent fathers than those active in prior time periods.

## Bad Seeds in Bad Soil

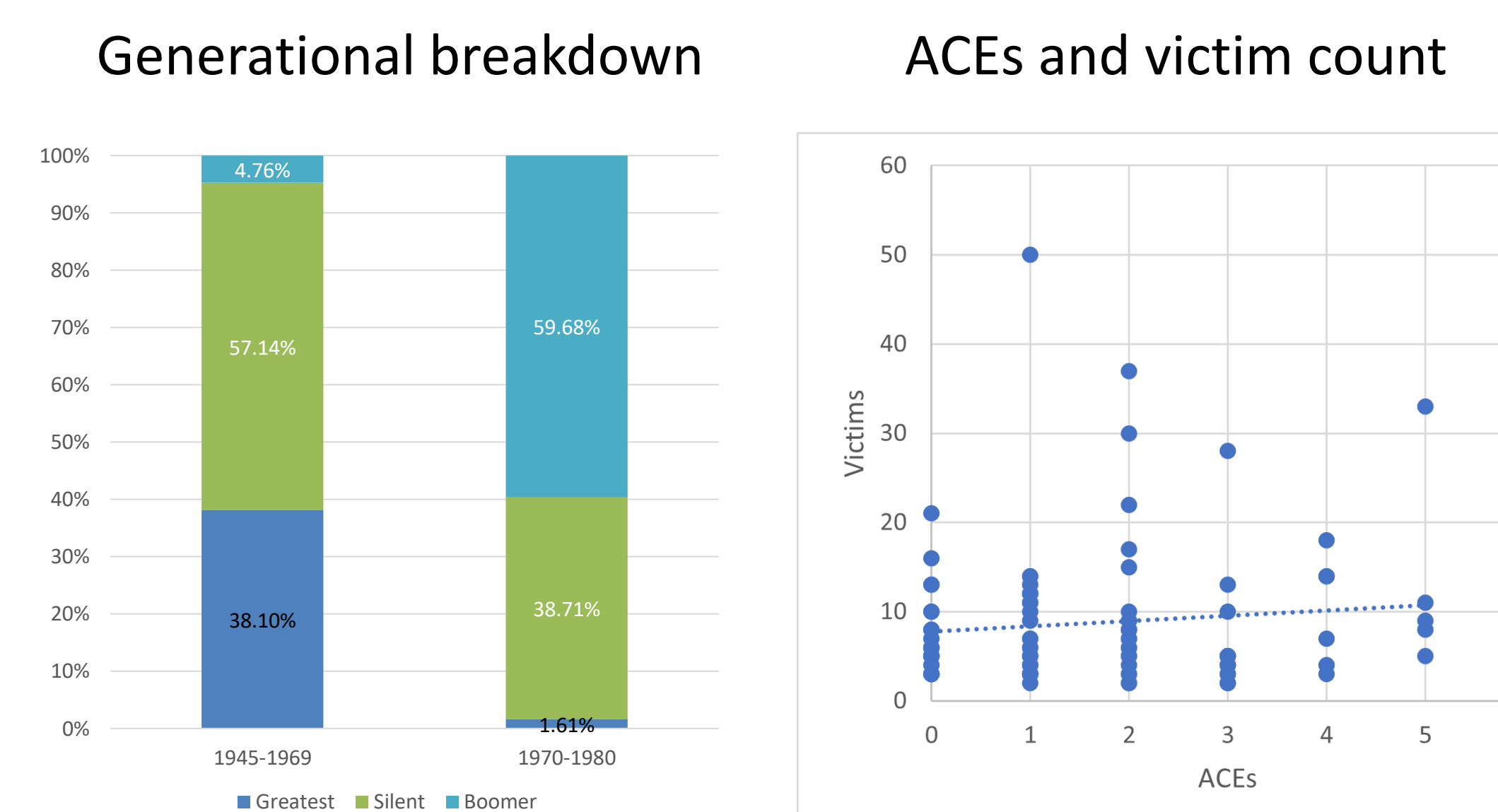
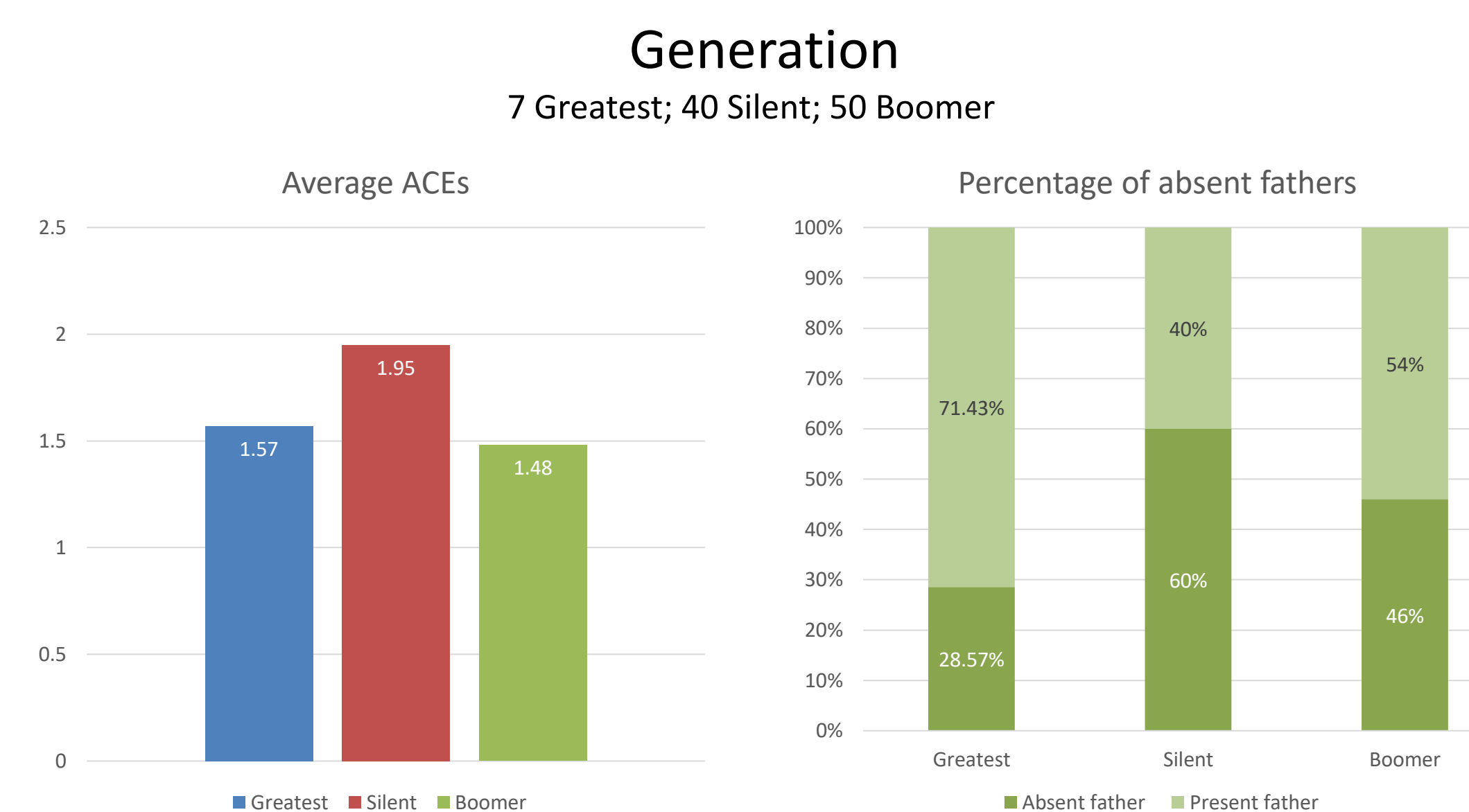
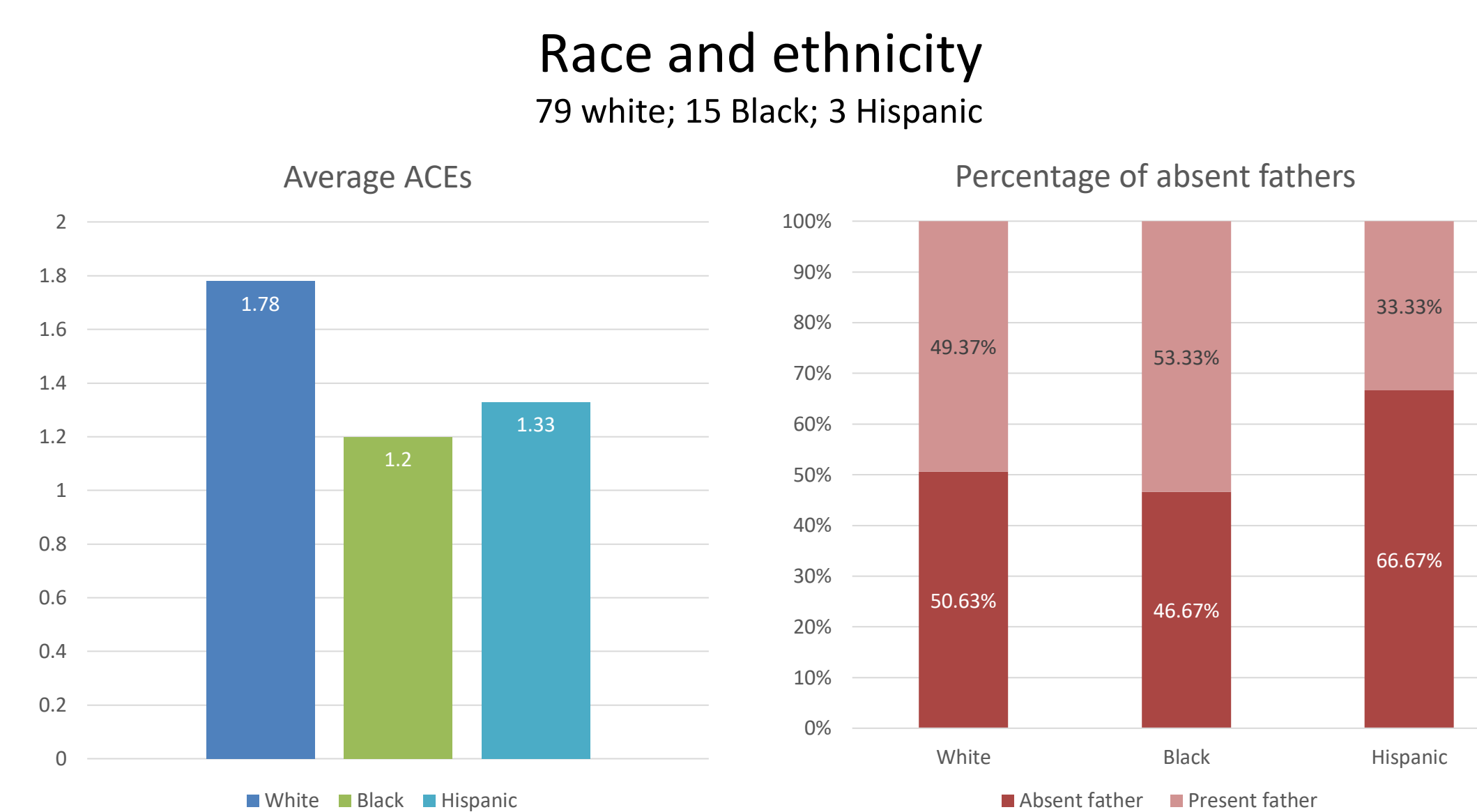
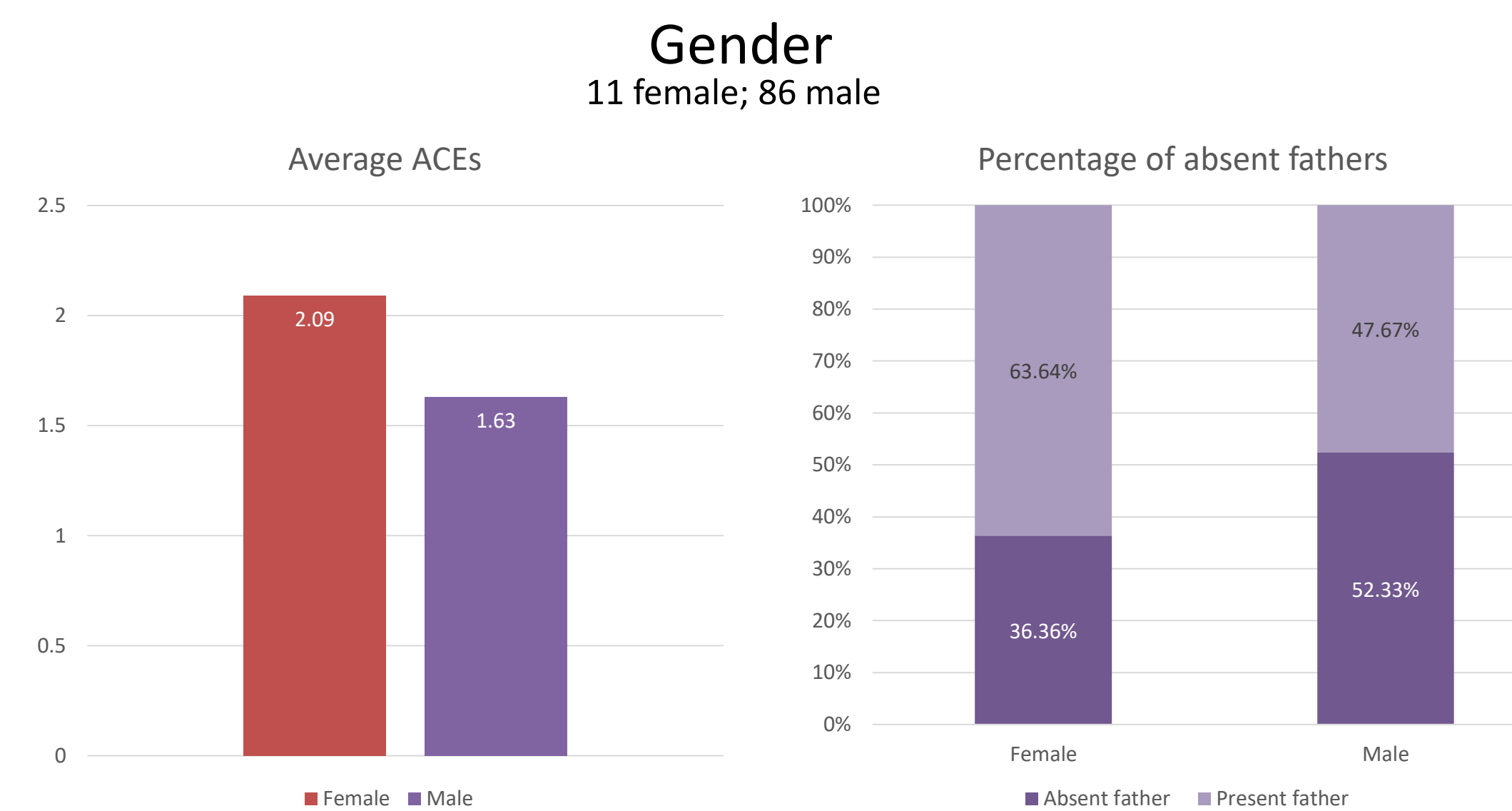
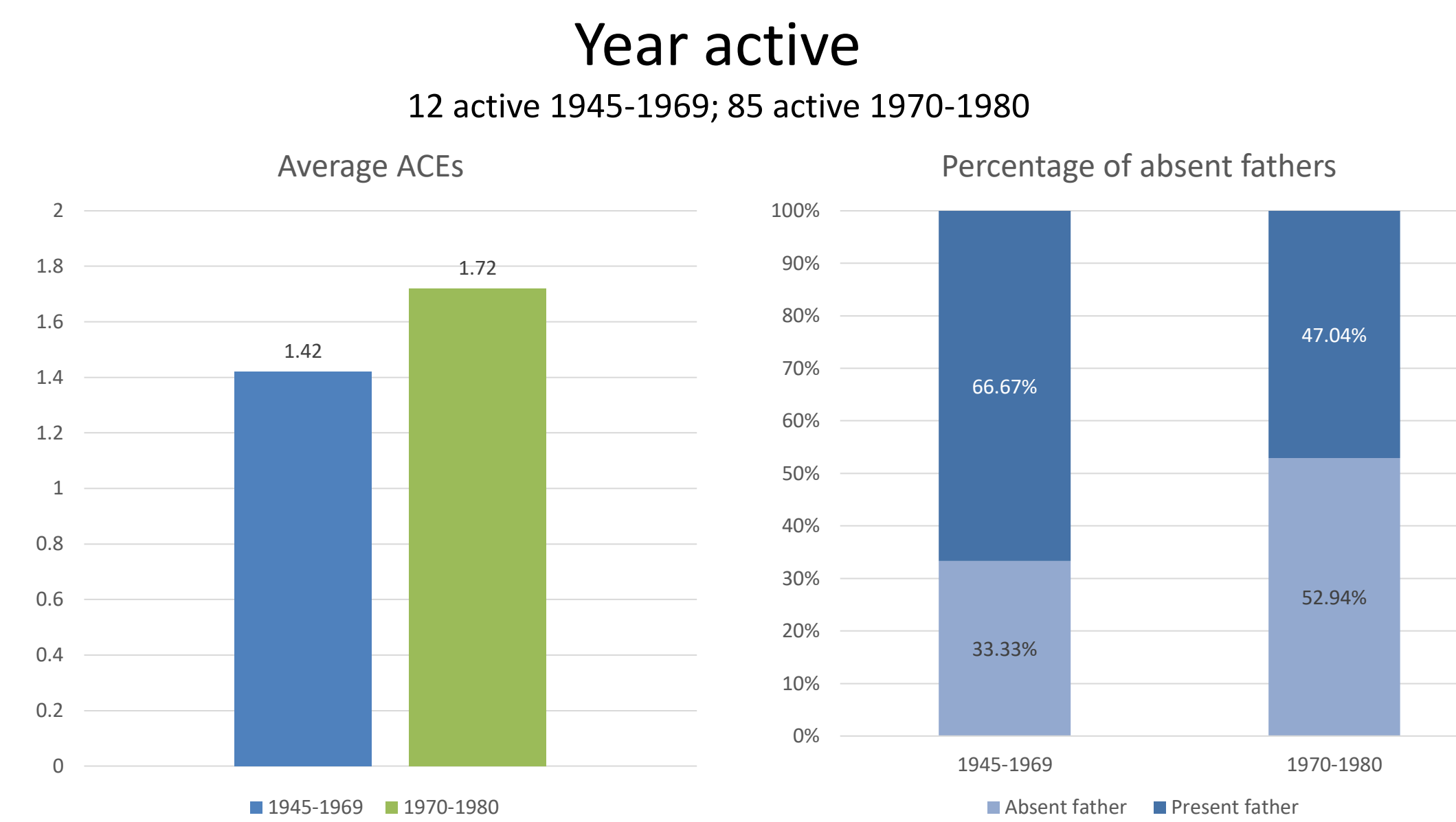
A comparative study of childhood trauma experienced by serial murderers

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### Results



### Introduction

The 1970s and 1980s are often referred to as 'the golden age of serial killers.' The high number of serial murderers active during those decades have led many to question why. One potential answer may lie in their early years. The present study focused on the childhoods of serial murderers to answer whether serial murderers active in the 1970s and 1980s experienced higher levels of childhood trauma and are more likely to have absent fathers than serial murderers active during other time periods. Additionally, it sought to determine whether there were differences in levels of childhood trauma across genders or races and whether more trauma was correlated to a higher victim count.

### Methods

- **Subjects:** Serial murderers in the United States who initiated their murder series between 1945 and 1980
- **Materials:** Information gathered from news articles, books, and existing research
- **Procedure**
  1. Childhood trauma measured using the ten-point Adverse Childhood Experiences scale
  2. Microsoft Excel used to record demographics, time period, ACE score, absent fathers, and victim count
  3. Microsoft Excel used to find the average ACE scores and percentage of absent fathers across different groups and to determine the correlation between ACE scores and victim count

### Conclusion

The data show a higher incidence of childhood trauma, including absent fathers, among 'Golden Age' serial murderers. Female serial murderers experienced more childhood trauma than male serial murderers, and male serial murderers had a higher percentage of absent fathers, which suggests that female serial murderers are more impacted by trauma and male serial murderers by the absence of their fathers. Racial differences were also observed, with white serial murderers experiencing the most childhood trauma and Hispanic serial murderers being the most likely to have had an absent father. However, it should be noted that the data on Hispanic serial murderers was drawn from a sample of three, which may skew the results. Silent Generation serial murderers experienced the most childhood trauma and were the most likely to have an absent father, likely influenced by growing up during the Great Depression and Second World War. Baby Boomers, the majority of whom hit their peak offending years during the 'Golden Age,' made up the lion's share of serial murderers active in that time period, while the Silent Generation made up the majority of those active in prior time periods. Finally, there is a very weak positive correlation ( $r=0.10$ ) between ACEs and victim count, which indicates victim count is not influenced by the extent of one's childhood trauma and may instead be an expression of one's agency.