

### Introduction

- Romantic relationships have unique developmental significance in adolescence (Collins, 2003; Collins, Welsh, & Fruman, 2009; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992)
- Adolescents who struggle to maintain positive dating relationships are at elevated risk for internalizing psychopathology (e.g. La Greca & Harrison, 2005)
- In adolescence, family relationships help set the stage for more positive dating experiences that have long-term implications into adulthood (e.g., Roisman, Madsen, Hennighausen, Sroufe, & Collins, 2001; Seiffge-Krenke, Overbeek, & Vermulst, 2010)
- The mechanisms through which family experiences in adolescence shape adolescent romantic relationship functioning are not well understood

### The Present Study

#### Aim:

- To examine adolescents' self-esteem as a pathway through which parent-adolescent closeness impacts their romantic attachment

#### Hypotheses:

- Mother-adolescent closeness and father-adolescent closeness will be positively associated with adolescent self-esteem
- Higher self-esteem will predict decreases in avoidant attachment in 6 months
- Higher self-esteem will predict decreases in anxious attachment in 6 months

### Method

#### Participants and Procedure

- 326 ninth- to twelfth-grade students aged between 14 and 19 ( $M_{age} = 16.32$ ;  $SD = 1.17$ )
- From a large, ethnically diverse urban public high school in the United States
- Adolescents completed surveys during social studies class periods
- Time 2 data collection happened approximately 6 months later ( $N = 171$ )

#### Demographic Information

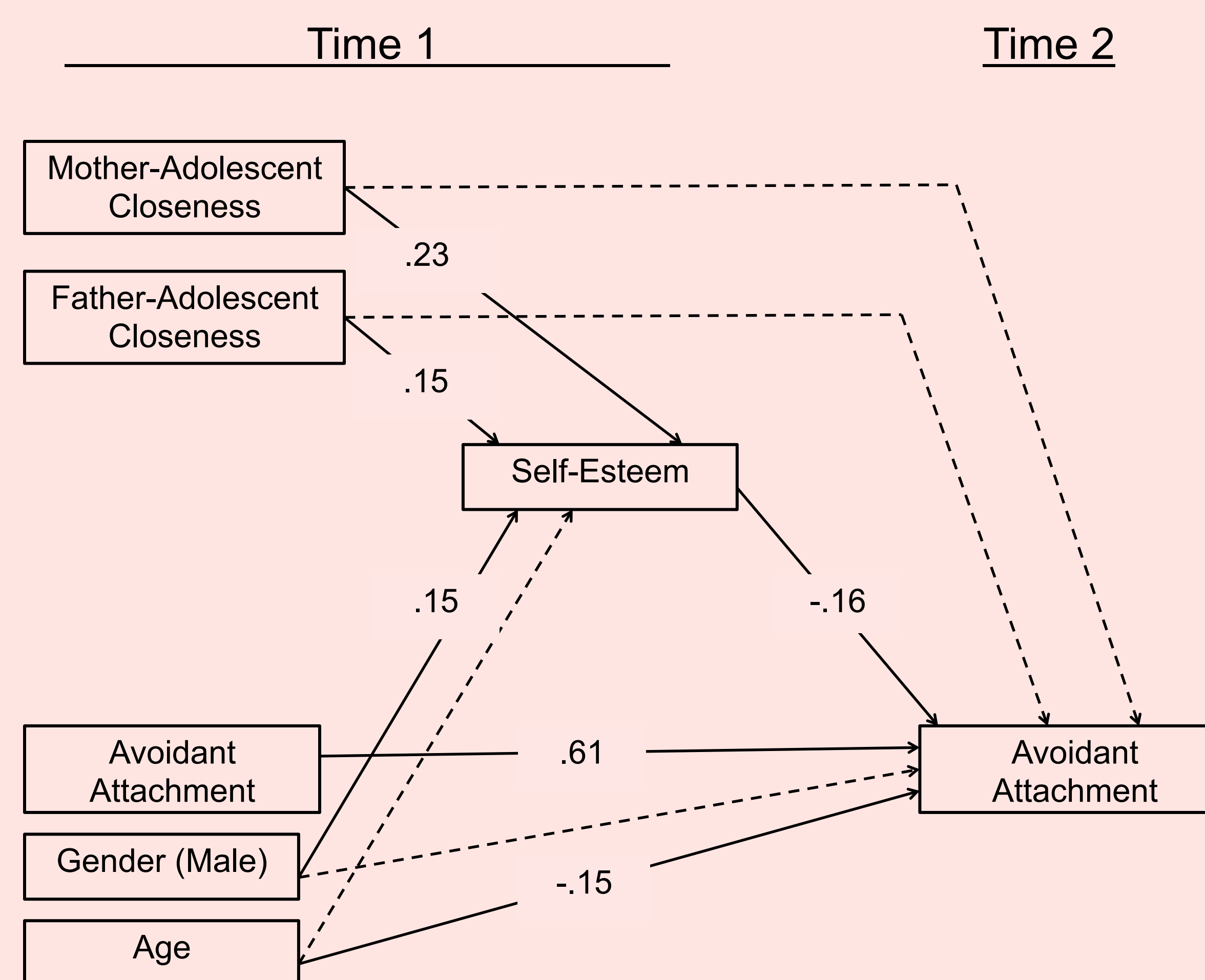
	N	326
Male	129	
Female	197	
<b>Ethnicity:</b>		
White	56.7%	
Latino/Hispanic	19.6%	
African American	12.3%	
Asian/Pacific	4.3%	
Native American	1.8%	
Biracial	2.1%	
Other	3.1%	

#### Variables

Variables	$\alpha$	Mean	SD
<b>Mother-Adolescent Closeness</b> (IPPA; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) – 20 items	T1 = .95	3.52	0.94
<b>Father-Adolescent Closeness</b> (IPPA; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) – 20 items	T1 = .95	3.14	0.99
<b>Self-Esteem</b> (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965) – 10 items	T1 = .90	3.07	0.60
<b>Avoidant Romantic Attachment</b> (ECRS; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) – 18 items	T1 = .91	2.95	1.07
<b>Anxious Romantic Attachment</b> (ECRS; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) – 18 items	T1 = .91	3.45	1.12
Control variables: Adolescents' gender; adolescents' age			

### Results

**Fig. 1.** The Influence of Parent-Adolescent Closeness on Adolescents' **Avoidant Romantic Attachment** via Self-Esteem



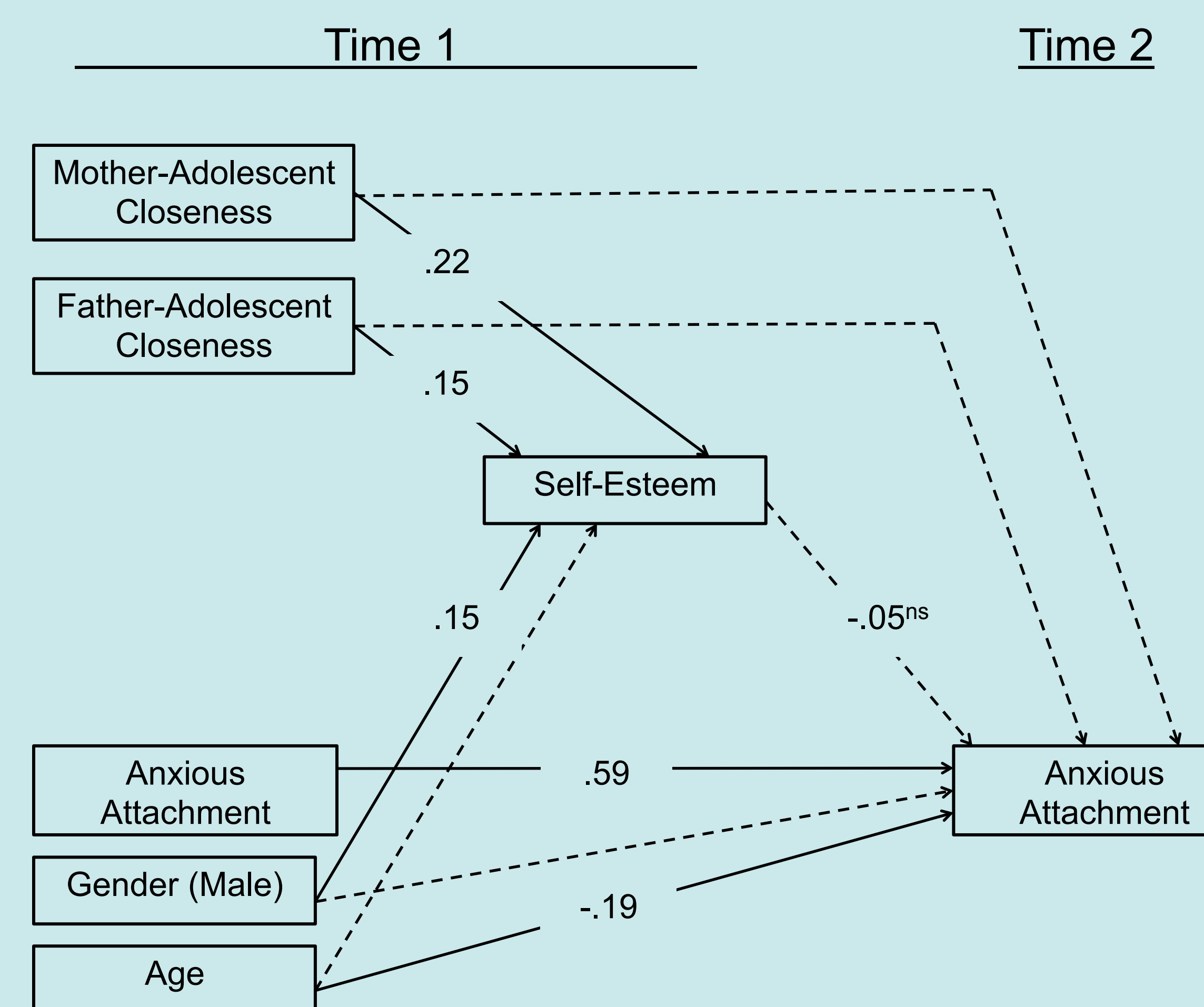
#### Indirect effects using bootstrapping (R = 1000)

Mother-adolescent closeness to avoidant attachment: 95% CI = [-.095, -.005]  
 Father-adolescent closeness to avoidant attachment: 95% CI = [-.066, -.001]

Note. Path coefficients reflect standardized betas; solid lines reflect statistically significant paths ( $p < .05$ ). Dotted lines are not statistically significant.

**Model fit:**  $\chi^2(2) = 3.89, p = .143$ ; CFI = .991;  
 RMSEA = .05 (90% CI = .00 - .13), SRMR = .017.

**Fig. 2.** The Influence of Parent-Adolescent Closeness on Adolescents' **Anxious Romantic Attachment** via Self-Esteem



**Model fit:**  $\chi^2(2) = 4.18, p = .124$ ; CFI = .990;  
 RMSEA = .06 (90% CI = .00 - .14), SRMR = .017.

### Discussion

- Having close relationships with parents allows adolescents to develop higher self-esteem
- Higher self-esteem predicts decreases in avoidant attachment in romantic relationships, an indication of discomfort in being close to romantic partner
- Having close relationship with parents predict comfort in closeness with romantic partner indirectly through higher self-esteem
- Adolescent boys have higher self-esteem than adolescent girls
- Older adolescents predict decrease in both discomfort in being close in romantic relationships and anxiety in romantic relationships
- Romantic attachment is plastic to a certain extent, depending on adolescents' self-esteem and age

### Implications

- Interventions on relationship closeness with parents may yield multiple benefits
- Interventions targeting adolescents' self-esteem can potentially benefit adolescents' romantic relationships

### Future Research

- Examine other pathways that may contribute to anxious attachment
- Examine the relationship among parental closeness, self-esteem and romantic relationship quality and satisfaction

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For more information on similar studies, visit the Family POWER Lab website: <http://gregfosco.weebly.com>