Paternal Incarceration and Child Wellbeing

Dr. Kristin Turney, Ph.D., SSRC Emerging Scholar

Dr. Joyce Arditti, Ph.D., Discussant

Emerging Scholars Webinar #7

Thursday, June 12, 2014
2:00PM EDT
Overview of the SSRC

- Virtual library with over 3200 items
- Includes several features:
  - Library
    - Custom Search
    - Browse Topics
    - Our Librarian Recommends
    - Federal Laws and Regulations

Our Librarian Recommends

Healthy marriage and relationship and responsible fatherhood programs provide relationship and parenting education to low-income couples and fathers. Numerous research projects examine the implementation of such programs as well as their impact on child well-being and economic self-sufficiency. Click the phrases below to view selected research and resources relevant to each topic and self-sufficiency.

- Marriage and Healthy Relationships
- Responsible Fatherhood

Federal Laws and Regulations

Research on Income and Poverty, Services, and Benefits
• Includes several features (continued):
  – Events Calendar
  – Data sets and data sources
  – Partners Gallery
## Selection Criteria

- Graduate student or degree recipient
- No more than 10 years of experience
- Currently doing research on self-sufficiency issues related to SSRC topic areas
- Conducting high quality research that fills a knowledge gap or addresses a self-sufficiency issue that warrants greater visibility
- Working in academic, program, think-tank, or agency setting

To nominate someone for SSRC’s Emerging Scholars Initiative, email her/his name and CV to the SSRC: [ssrc@opressrc.org](mailto:ssrc@opressrc.org)
Kristin Turney, Ph.D.
Emerging Scholar April–June 2014

Assistant Professor of Sociology, University of California, Irvine

Education
• Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania, Sociology (with distinction), 2009
• M.A., University of Pennsylvania, Sociology (with distinction), 2006
• B.S., Northwestern University, Journalism and Sociology, 2003

Research interests and current research:
• Social inequality and child wellbeing
• Family demography
• Population health
• Incarceration and punishment
• Intergenerational transmission of disadvantage

Recent Work
Joyce A. Arditti, Ph.D.

Discussant

Professor of Human Development and Family Studies, Virginia Tech

Education
• Ph.D. in Family Studies, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1988
• M.A. in Human Development and Family Relations, The University of Connecticut, 1982
• B.S. in Child and Family Development, Magna Cum Laude, The University of Georgia, 1980

Research Interests
• Parental incarceration and families
• Cumulative disadvantage, maternal distress
• Family policy

Recent Publications
Ask a Question

• Submit questions any time through the Question and Answer feature (bottom right of screen).

• Questions will be answered:
  – after the presentations; or
  – if we run out of time, via responses posted on the SSRC with other Webinar materials after the event.
Paternal Incarceration and Child Wellbeing

Kristin Turney
University of California, Irvine
June 12, 2014
Overview

• Document rising incarceration rates
• Discuss how transformation of penal system affects children and families
• Talk specifically about my ongoing research on the effects of paternal incarceration on children
• Offer some suggestions to ameliorate disadvantages experienced by children of incarcerated fathers
Prisoners Under State and Federal Jurisdiction, 1925-2012

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics
Prisoners Under State and Federal Jurisdiction, 1925-2012

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics
Cumulative Risk of Paternal Incarceration for Children Born in 1990, by Age 14

Paternal Incarceration and Child Wellbeing

- May be deleterious for children
- May be beneficial for children
- May be inconsequential for children

- Or, paternal incarceration may differentially affect children
Data: Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study

- Cohort of children born to mostly unmarried parents in urban areas (1998-1999)
- Ideal for a number of reasons
  - Broadly representative, longitudinal
  - Information about both paternal incarceration and child wellbeing
  - Large number of ever-incarcerated men who have demographic characteristics similar to fathers incarcerated in local jails, state prisons, and federal prisons
  - Extensive information about parents and children
# Sample Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>% or Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age at first birth (mean)</td>
<td>21.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic Black</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic other race</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma or GED</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary education</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship status</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabiting</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonresidential</td>
<td>44%</td>
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Note: Data are unweighted.
Study #1

What are the effects of paternal incarceration on food insecurity among children?
Measures: Food Insecurity, Individual Questions

- Child did not eat whole day
- Child skipped meals in three or more months
- Child skipped meals
- Child hungry
- Cut size of child's meals
- Child not eating enough
- Could not feed children balanced meals
- Few kinds of low-cost foods for children

Restricted to households with food insecure children
Measures: Paternal Incarceration

• Any incarceration after three-year survey and up to and including five-year survey
• Rely on maternal and paternal reports of fathers’ incarceration
• Caveats
  • Cannot distinguish between prison and jail
  • Cannot precisely estimate length
  • Prevalence likely underestimated

• 18% of fathers experienced incarceration
Timing of Variable Measurement

Controls

Wave I
Baseline

Wave 2
1-year

Wave 3
3-year

Wave 4
5-year

Wave 5
9-year

Paternal incarceration

Food insecurity

Study #1: Food insecurity (age 5)
Food Insecurity, by Paternal Incarceration

Study #1: Food insecurity (age 5)
Analytic Plan: Propensity Score Matching

• Generate propensity score
• Common support and balance
• Matching (and doubly robust estimates)

Study #1: Food insecurity (age 5)
Findings: Food Insecurity among Children

• Paternal incarceration associated with increases in food insecurity

• But striking variation
  • Associations concentrated among children whose fathers lived with them prior to paternal incarceration
  • And no associations among children whose fathers did not live with them prior to paternal incarceration
Study #2

What are the average and unequal effects of paternal incarceration on children’s behavior problems and test scores in middle childhood?
Measures: Child Wellbeing

• Behavior problems
  • Internalizing problem behaviors (such as, child cries a lot, child feels worthless or inferior)
  • Externalizing problem behaviors (such as, child destroys his or her own things, child is impulsive or acts without thinking)

• Test scores
  • Reading comprehension
  • Math comprehension
  • Verbal ability
Timing of Variable Measurement

Controls

Paternal incarceration

Wave I
Baseline

Wave 2
1-year

Wave 3
3-year

Wave 4
5-year

Wave 5
9-year

Child wellbeing

Study #2: Behavior problems and test scores (age 9)
Children’s Behavior Problems, by Paternal Incarceration

Study #2: Behavior problems and test scores (age 9)
Children’s Test Scores, by Paternal Incarceration

Study #2: Behavior problems and test scores (age 9)
Propensity Score Matching Estimates of the Average Effects of Paternal Incarceration on Child Wellbeing

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<td>(0.04) ***</td>
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<td>Verbal ability</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
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Treatment N                      | 966       |
Control N                        | 2,180     |

Notes: All dependent variables are standardized (mean = 0, standard deviation = 1). Propensity scores are estimated with a logistic regression model estimating paternal incarceration (between the one- and nine-year surveys) as a function of pre-incarceration covariates. Matched estimates are based on kernel matching. Standard errors are in parentheses. ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).
## Propensity Score Matching Estimates of the Average Effects of Paternal Incarceration on Child Wellbeing

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Treatment N: 958  
Control N: 2,180

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Study #2: Behavior problems and test scores (age 9)
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Internalizing Problem Behaviors among Children, by Risk of Paternal Incarceration

Study #2: Behavior problems and test scores (age 9)
Externalizing Problem Behaviors among Children, by Risk of Paternal Incarceration

Study #2: Behavior problems and test scores (age 9)
Reading Comprehension among Children, by Risk of Paternal Incarceration

Study #2: Behavior problems and test scores (age 9)
Math Comprehension among Children, by Risk of Paternal Incarceration

Study #2: Behavior problems and test scores (age 9)
Verbal Ability among Children, by Risk of Paternal Incarceration

Percentage likelihood of experiencing paternal incarceration

0% to 20% 20% to 40% 40% to 80%

Study #2: Behavior problems and test scores (age 9)
Summary of Findings

- Broadly representative evidence estimating the average effects of paternal incarceration in middle childhood, a pivotal life course stage
  - Negative effects on children’s food insecurity
  - Negative effects on behavior problems
  - No effects on test scores
- But consequences of paternal incarceration are not the same for everyone
  - Considering average effects masks considerable heterogeneity
Why Might Paternal Incarceration Negatively Affect Some Children?

Paternal incarceration → Child wellbeing
Why Might Paternal Incarceration Negatively Affect Some Children?

- Reductions in family income
- Strains on parental relationship
- Impediments to effective parenting
- Decreased mental health

Child wellbeing
Policy Implications

• **Spillover effects of paternal incarceration**
  • Schools may consider having programs in place
  • Sentencing decisions may take into account these spillover effects

• **Unequal effects of paternal incarceration**
  • Target those most at-risk of negative effects
Additional Resources


Thank you!

Questions?
kristin.turney@uci.edu

Direct correspondence to Kristin Turney, University of California, Irvine, 3151 Social Science Plaza, Irvine, CA 92697-5100. Direct email to kristin.turney@uci.edu. This research was supported by a fellowship from the National Academy of Education (NAEd)/Spencer Foundation and by a grant from the University of Kentucky Center for Poverty Research through funding by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, contract number AG-3198-B-10-0028. Funding for the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study was provided by the NICHD through grants R01HD36916, R01HD39135, and R01HD40421, as well as a consortium of private foundations (see http://www.fragilefamilies.princeton.edu/funders.asp for the complete list).
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