When Parents are INCARCERATED

INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN

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1

THE DEMOGRAPHIC LANDSCAPE AND SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PARENTAL INCARCERATION AND CHILDHOOD INEQUALITY

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One of the most shocking phenomena in the last century has been the unprecedented rise in mass incarceration in the United States. Currently, nearly one in 36 adults is under some form of correctional supervision, whether in prison or jail, on probation or parole (Kaeble, Glaze, Tsoutis, & Minton, 2015). Understanding and documenting the consequences of this uniquely American phenomenon has become increasingly important to practitioners, policymakers, and scholars across an array of disciplines. Efforts to date have identified myriad deleterious consequences of mass incarceration for the labor market and political and health outcomes of currently and formerly incarcerated individuals, alongside a growing literature that explores the broader fallout for families and communities (for a review, see Travis, Western, & Redburn, 2014).

Parental incarceration—which was once a rare event—is now experienced by a substantial number of American children (Sykes & Pettit, 2014;

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Wildeman, 2009). Alongside the sheer increase in the number of children with incarcerated or formerly incarcerated parents, research documents its demographic footprint and accounts for a range of collateral intergenerational consequences.

In this chapter, we provide an overview of research on parental incarceration in the United States. First, we describe the current demographic landscape of parental incarceration. We discuss how exposure to parental incarceration varies across race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geography. We also describe frequencies of exposure to paternal and maternal incarceration and frequencies of exposure to jail and prison incarceration. Second, we review existing theoretical insights from sociology and summarize the sociological literature on the implications of parental incarceration for children. We pay special attention to intergenerational transmissions of disadvantage in infancy, childhood, and adolescence, the presence of heterogeneous consequences, and the potential for parental incarceration to have spillover effects. Third, by combining the demographic perspective (which suggests that exposure to parental incarceration is concentrated among minorities and the poor) and the sociological perspective (which suggests that social patterning of parental incarceration is consequential for well-being across the life course and for institutional interactions), we examine sociological perspectives on effective interventions. We conclude by suggesting that mass incarceration is one of America's most powerful stratifying institutions that has fundamentally altered the landscape of childhood inequality in the United States.

DEMOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES ON PARENTAL INCARCERATION

Between 5 million and 8 million children nationwide have been exposed to parental incarceration (Murphey & Mae Cooper, 2015; Sykes & Pettit, 2015; Travis, McBride, & Solomon, 2005). Although children can experience parental incarceration throughout their lives, estimates consistently indicate that most of those who experience parental incarceration are young school-age children between the ages of 5 years and 14 years (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Murphey & Cooper, 2015; Travis et al., 2005). Counts of children with currently incarcerated parents, which offer more precision than broad estimates of overall exposure, suggest that 2.6 million (one in 25) children have a parent presently in jail or prison (Sykes & Pettit, 2014).

Yet, calculating up-to-date and precise estimates of the reach of parental incarceration is quite difficult given the complexity, depth, and constant churning of individuals through the criminal justice system. Parents, at various

points in time, can be confined in local jails, state and federal prisons, juvenile facilities, and immigration detention centers. However, many national counts, often drawn from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) or other correctional surveys, often only accurately account for parents in state and federal prisons who are currently incarcerated at the time of survey administration, and cannot simultaneously account for the various types of confinement. Though BJS surveys of imprisoned individuals are reliable information sources, these surveys are only conducted annually and early in the year and, accordingly, they underestimate the number of children experiencing parental incarceration by year's end. Therefore, these limited point-in-time reports undoubtedly produce underestimates of the full extent of parental incarceration in the United States.

Exposure to Parental Incarceration by Race/Ethnicity

Not all children have similar risks of exposure to parental incarceration. There are racial/ethnic differences in exposure—the racial disparities in broader incarceration rates (e.g., Western & Pettit, 2010) are also reflected in parental incarceration rates. Children of color represent the population most at risk of experiencing parental incarceration. Nationally, one in four African American children and one in 10 Latino children can expect to experience parental incarceration by their teens, compared with one in 25 non-Hispanic Caucasian children (Sykes & Pettit, 2014; Wildeman, 2009). National demographic estimates of parental incarceration for Native American, Asian American, and Pacific Islander children have never been officially calculated, but estimates drawn from 2007 BJS reports suggest that, when combined, these groups comprise around 5.5% of American children with currently incarcerated parents (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Trends within particular states (e.g., North Dakota, South Dakota, Oklahoma) highlight additional racial/ethnic disparities, suggesting that Native American children are 2 to 5 times more likely than their non-Hispanic Caucasian peers to have an incarcerated parent (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016).

Exposure to Parental Incarceration by Socioeconomic Status

Parental incarceration is also more common among children from low socioeconomic backgrounds (measured in terms of household income and parental education) than among children from high socioeconomic backgrounds. Nationally, children living in poverty are 3 times more likely to experience the incarceration of a resident parent than children not living in poverty (Murphey & Cooper, 2015). And the cumulative risk of parental incarceration among children of high school dropouts indicates that nearly

15% of non-Hispanic Caucasian children and 62% of African American children will experience parental incarceration before their 17th birthday compared with less than 2% and 10%, respectively, of children with parents who had some college education (Sykes & Pettit, 2014).

Exposure to Parental Incarceration by Geography

Additionally, recent research documents the geographic variation of parental incarceration across the United States. Research that examines the average cumulative risk of experiencing parental imprisonment (in state prisons) finds the highest risks for children living in the South (7.9%), followed by children living in the Midwest and West (both 7.1%), with children living in the Northeast having the lowest risk (5.4%; Muller & Wildeman, 2016). However, within regions, we know less concretely about whether there are differences in distributions of parental incarceration by residential area type (e.g., rural, urban, suburban, exurban). Most sociological research examining the scope of parental incarceration has either relied on urban samples of children (e.g., the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods) or used correctional surveys that do not consistently include geographic information. Some research suggests that most children experiencing parental incarceration live in urban, low-income communities of color (Braman & Wood, 2003; Sampson & Loeffler, 2010; Western & Wildeman, 2009). However, a recent study exploring exposure to a resident parent's incarceration suggests that this event is slightly more common among children living in rural, nonmetropolitan areas (Murphey & Cooper, 2015).

Exposure to Paternal and Maternal Incarceration

Over half of all imprisoned individuals have minor children, but there are stark disparities in the gender of the parent incarcerated. Incarcerated parents housed in state and federal facilities are most likely to be fathers (93%; Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). However, the incidence of maternal imprisonment has increased dramatically over the last few decades—jumping from 29,500 in 1991 to 120,000 by 2009—and at a rate faster than the growth in paternal incarceration (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010; The Sentencing Project, 2009; see also Chapter 4, this volume). Estimates from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health) show that 11% and 3% of children report experiencing paternal and maternal incarceration, respectively, by young adulthood (Foster & Hagan, 2013). Recent data from a sample of young urban children suggests that nearly 33% experience the incarceration of a father and 9% experience the incarceration of a

mother by age 9 (Turney, 2017; Wildeman & Turney, 2014). Of the children who experience maternal incarceration, about half experience the incarceration of both parents (Wildeman & Turney, 2014). Nationally, among parents in state prisons, 64% of mothers and 47% of fathers reported living with their children in the month before arrest or just prior to their incarceration (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Similar statistics are not available for parents in jail.

Exposure by Offense and Incarceration Type

Finally, incarcerated parents are not only confined in various types of correctional facilities, as noted previously, but there is a heterogeneity in the types of offenses that lead to incarceration. The three main facility types are state prisons, federal prisons, and local jails. However, parents are also among the incarcerated individuals housed in immigration detention centers and juvenile facilities, and estimates from these locations, in addition to estimates from local jails, are not included in the oft-used national counts reported by the BJS. About 52% of those incarcerated in state prisons and 63% of those incarcerated in federal prisons report having at least one minor child (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Among these parents, 66% are serving time for nonviolent offenses, with 25% of all convictions coming from nonviolent drug crimes. The remaining 34% of parents incarcerated in state and federal prisons are serving time for violent crimes (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010). Generating national estimates of parental incarceration in local jails is more difficult as data collection efforts have been less frequent among these incredibly heterogeneous facilities, and empirical work to date has been somewhat unsuccessful at aggregating small-scale evidence up to the national level (Wildeman, Turney, & Yi, 2016). Nonetheless, some now-dated calculations suggest that parents of children younger than age 15 account for around 36% of local jail populations (Kemper & Rivara, 1993).

SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PARENTAL INCARCERATION

Sociological perspectives can explain how paternal incarceration may affect the well-being of children throughout the life course. Sociologists generally invoke one of three perspectives to understand the collateral consequences of parental incarceration: trauma, stigma, and/or strain. Further, a recent review of existing research on the intergenerational consequences of parental incarceration suggests the importance of a multilevel framework that includes interinstitutional factors (e.g., states, schools) and intersectional lenses (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender; Foster & Hagan, 2015). Given

the comprehensive nature of this recent review article (Foster & Hagan, 2015), we focus most of our attention on the trauma, stigma, and strain perspectives.

First, parental incarceration may lead to deleterious outcomes for children because of the trauma associated with it. Children may experience trauma resulting from the removal of fathers from households (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). They may also experience trauma surrounding events leading up to incarceration (e.g., witnessing the arrest of a parent). This trauma, as well as the corresponding ambiguous loss, where incarcerated parents are physically and emotionally absent, may hinder children's behavioral and cognitive development (Boss, 2007; Sharkey, 2010).

Second, children of incarcerated parents may experience resultant stigma and shame. Seminal sociological research discusses the stigma experienced by individuals with a criminal record (Pager, 2003) and it is follows that this stigma may spill over to families and children connected to those with a criminal record (Braman, 2004). This stigma and shame may impede children's social interactions and learning (McKown & Weinstein, 2003).

Finally, paternal incarceration generates massive strain on many aspects of family life that have cascading consequences for children. It increases measures of economic insecurity, including material hardship, severe deprivation, and food insecurity (e.g., Schwartz-Soicher, Geller, & Garfinkel, 2011; Turney, 2015c), as well as increases residential instability, housing insecurity, and homelessness (e.g., Geller & Franklin, 2014; Wildeman, 2014). Parental incarceration also facilitates relationship dissolution and conflict and less contact with grandparents (e.g., Turney, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b). It impairs mothers' and fathers' parenting (e.g., Turney & Wildeman, 2013) and increases parental mental and physical health problems (e.g., Turney, 2014a; Wildeman, Schnittker, & Turney, 2012). These aspects of strain—economic hardship, relationship difficulties, parenting stress, and health problems, which rarely occur in isolation from one another—have been linked to various indicators of children's well-being, including academic, behavioral, and health outcomes (e.g., Carlson & Corcoran, 2001).

Considering these theoretical perspectives, as well as the demographic landscape discussed previously, we review existing data sources commonly used by sociologists to consider the relationship between parental incarceration and children's well-being. We then review extant literature that considers this relationship across three periods of the life course: (a) infancy, toddlerhood, and preschool; (b) childhood; and (c) adolescence and early adulthood. We also review existing sociological research that is attuned to the potential for heterogeneous consequences, and we draw attention to the ways consequences of parental incarceration can cluster in space and compound over time.

Data Sources Commonly Used to Examine Intergenerational Consequences of Parental Incarceration

Sociologists have extensively used two data sources to quantitatively examine the intergenerational consequences of parental incarceration: the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (Fragile Families), which studied effects on children in early and middle childhood, and the Add Health, which studied effects on adolescents and young adults. Of course, other data sources have also been used—the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, the Pittsburgh Youth Study, the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development, and the 2011–2012 National Survey of Children's Health—but we focus our attention on the two data sources most commonly used by sociologists. We briefly describe the strengths and limitations of these two studies before reviewing the existing literature.

First, the Fragile Families is a birth cohort study of nearly 5,000 children born to mostly unmarried parents in urban areas between 1998 and 2000 (Reichman, Teitler, Garfinkel, & McLanahan, 2001). Mothers and fathers are interviewed at six points in time: when their child was born and then again when their child was 1, 3, 5, and 9 years old. The survey was designed, among other things, to examine the effects of family structure and instability for the well-being of children. Several parents—about 33% of fathers and nearly 10% of mothers—experienced jail or prison incarceration by the time their child was 9 years old; therefore, these data, unlike many other data, allow for comparisons between children who do and do not experience parental incarceration. These data are also advantageous because they include measures that tap into family functioning, assess children on various outcomes at multiple points in time, and include an array of individual- and family-level characteristics associated with parental incarceration. The Fragile Families is limited, though, in that it does not consistently collect full details about the timing, duration, or frequency of parental incarceration or about the severity of the crime (e.g., violent vs. nonviolent offenses) or the facility type (e.g., jail vs. prison). Moreover, the large sample size means trade-offs with regard to including some of the detailed measures often used in smaller scale studies. For example, the Fragile Families does not include direct measures of criminal behavior, making it difficult to tease apart the effects of incarceration compared with the effects of criminality. Finally, though the sample includes economically disadvantaged children most likely to struggle academically or behaviorally, these data do not include a nationally representative sample of children, and therefore the results might not apply to all children.

Second, the Add Health data are a longitudinal nationally representative sample of about 20,000 adolescents in Grades 7 to 12 collected in the mid-1990s (Harris et al., 2009). These adolescents were surveyed at baseline and at

three additional points in time: 1 year after baseline, when they were still in school; 7 years after baseline; and 13 years after baseline. In this last wave of data collection, respondents were asked to retrospectively report on whether their mother or father ever experienced incarceration and, if so, when this was first experienced and how many times it was experienced. These data were designed to understand how social contexts affect health from adolescence through adulthood and, as such, include rich measures of physical and mental health at all waves. Therefore, these data are advantageous because of their nationally representative nature, especially important for estimates of subgroup effects, and measures of health. They are limited, though, by the retrospective measurement of parental incarceration and the fact that most respondents who did experience parental incarceration did so before the baseline data collection (leading to posttreatment stratification in estimates). And, similar to Fragile Families, the large-scale nature of the survey precludes the inclusion of lengthy scales and the data do not measure parental criminality.

Existing Research on Outcomes in Infancy, Toddlerhood, and Preschool

Research on the role parental incarceration plays in the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage during the earliest stages of the life course—infancy, toddlerhood, and preschool—highlights inequalities along various indicators of socioemotional well-being and physical health. At the most extreme, parental incarceration is associated with an increase in early infant mortality—infants of recently incarcerated fathers exhibit double the mortality risk (Wildeman, 2012). Additionally, this early period in the life course is integral to understanding how parental incarceration impacts children as they age, and work by sociologists studying children toward the end of this developmental range have found paternal incarceration increases aggressive and externalizing behaviors in 3-year-olds (Geller, Garfinkel, Cooper, & Mincy, 2009) and decreases their school readiness (Haskins, 2014), setting them on a path apart from their peers.

Despite the usefulness of these sociological studies and the integral nature of this developmental period within the life course, most parental incarceration research exploring outcomes in infancy, toddlerhood and preschool has been spearheaded within the developmental psychology and family studies perspectives. These studies suggest that parental incarceration hinders healthy parent–child attachment in infancy, disrupts bonding during toddlerhood, and restricts the opportunities for physical and emotional connections among preschool-age children, therefore creating the potential for insecure attachment and increased behavioral problems among affected children (Poehlmann, 2010). Future sociological research should incorporate these important developmental perspectives.

Existing Research on Outcomes in Childhood

Parental incarceration for school-age children produces unique risk factors related to the stable development of strong academic abilities and healthy school ties. Increases in behavioral problems and attention difficulties due to paternal incarceration (Geller, Cooper, Garfinkel, Schwartz-Soicher, & Mincy, 2012; Haskins, 2014; Wildeman, 2010) reduce children's readiness for formal schooling. Moreover, once in elementary school, paternal incarceration contributes to decreases in children's assessed cognitive skills (Haskins, 2016) and behavioral functioning (Haskins, 2015), alongside increases in their likelihood of special education placement (Haskins, 2014), grade retention (Turney & Haskins, 2014), and school disciplinary action (Jacobsen, 2016; R. C. Johnson, 2009).

Additionally, parental incarceration has implications for physical and mental health in childhood. For example, recent research using the 2011–2012 National Survey of Children's Health, a nationally representative sample of children ages 0 to 17 in the United States, found that children who experience the incarceration of a resident parent have more health problems, including learning disabilities, ADHD/ADD, behavioral or conduct problems, developmental delays, and speech or language problems (Turney, 2014c). Taken together, childhood experiences can profoundly shape later-life trajectories, and existing empirical research suggests that parental incarceration is deleterious for well-being and educational outcomes in childhood.

Existing Research on Outcomes in Adolescence and Young Adulthood

Research on the link between parental incarceration and well-being in adolescence and young adulthood generally has focused on three outcomes: health, civic participation, and intergenerational involvement in the criminal justice system. To begin, the relationship between parental incarceration and health—including physical health, mental health, and health behaviors—as seen in childhood persists in adolescence. With respect to physical health, parental incarceration is associated with increased body mass index among young women but not among young men (Roettger & Boardman, 2012). With respect to mental health, research comes to conflicting conclusions. For example, though one study found that parental incarceration is not associated with depression (Murray, Loeber, & Pardini, 2012), another study found that maternal incarceration (but not paternal incarceration) is associated with depressive symptoms in young adulthood (Foster & Hagan, 2013). These conflicting patterns appear for health behaviors, too, with some evidence that parental incarceration is not associated with marijuana use (Murray et al., 2012), and other evidence that paternal incarceration (though not maternal

incarceration) is linked to substance role problems in young adulthood (Foster & Hagan, 2013). These inconsistencies across studies may result from variation across sampling frames, measurement of outcomes, or ages when outcome variables are measured.

As children of the incarcerated enter adolescence, their interactions with social institutions expand beyond the family and school and into political and correctional spheres, broadening the potential for experiencing forms of institutional exclusion because of parental incarceration. Regarding the civic participation, Foster and Hagan (2007) used longitudinal data from Add Health to examine the relationship between paternal incarceration and social exclusion (measured as political disengagement, homelessness, and health care uninsured). They found that young adults exposed to paternal incarceration are more likely than their unexposed counterparts to be socially excluded, suggesting that the incarceration of a father impedes political engagement activities like registering to vote, participating in political organizations, voting in the most recent presidential elections, and identifying with a specific political party (cf. Lee, Porter, & Comfort, 2014).

Additionally—moving to the correctional sphere—there is evidence that the experience of criminal justice involvement is transmitted through generations. Though surprisingly little research considers the relationship between parental incarceration and youth incarceration, a good deal of research considers the association between parental incarceration and factors associated with incarceration (e.g., delinquency). For example, Porter and King (2015) found a relationship between paternal incarceration and expressive forms of delinquency, defined as violent, destructive, or aggressive behavior, but no association between paternal incarceration and instrumental forms of delinquency, defined as delinquency for monetary gain (e.g., theft; for evidence of a relationship between parental incarceration and offspring delinquency, see Murray et al., 2012; Roettger & Swisher, 2011).

Heterogeneous Consequences of Parental Incarceration

The life course perspective highlights that the social contexts of children's lives are crucial to development (Elder, 1998; see also Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Although most research on the intergenerational consequences of parental incarceration statistically controls for elements of the social context (e.g., children's developmental stage, family structure, poverty), relatively little research considers the complex and multidimensional ways elements of the social context interact with parental incarceration to influence children's outcomes (Sampson, 2011; see also Arditti, 2016; Chapter 3, this volume).

Indeed, the dominant theoretical model suggests parental incarceration is detrimental for children's outcomes. For example, the family process

perspective, along with theories of resilience, suggests that some children adapt to adversity. However, for some groups of children, parental incarceration may be beneficial or inconsequential. It is possible that this heterogeneity differentially exists across developmental stages (e.g., Travis et al., 2014). As evidenced in some research, parental incarceration can have null or even positive consequences if incarceration removes an abusive or otherwise harmful parent (Turanovic, Rodriguez, & Pratt, 2012; Turney, 2017; Turney & Wildeman, 2015; Wakefield & Wildeman, 2014).

Consequences of parental incarceration may also vary across children's race/ethnicity. On one hand, the negative intergenerational consequences of parental incarceration may be heightened among children who are racial/ethnic minorities. Seminal work on stigma has suggested that the stigma of race and incarceration extend to those connected to the stigmatized, and the stigmas of race and parental incarceration may be compounding (Pager, 2003; see also Goffman, 1963). Relatedly, racial/ethnic minority children experience more social and economic disadvantages than their peers, and theories of cumulative disadvantage suggest that the added stressor of parental incarceration could be especially damaging (DiPrete & Eirich, 2006). However, resilience hypotheses suggest that forms of disruption or environmental shocks are less stressful when the experience is more common and alternative support systems are in place (Mineka & Kihlstrom, 1978; Swisher & Waller, 2008), suggesting parental incarceration may be less consequential for minority children. In fact, though most research shows that children across different racial/ethnic groups experience significant and negative educational (Haskins, 2014; Turney & Haskins, 2014) and health (Turney, 2014c) consequences of parental incarceration, the extent of our understanding of heterogeneous consequences by race remains limited because of data, power, and methodological limitations (Haskins & Lee, 2016).

The relationship between parental incarceration and children's outcomes may also vary across children's socioeconomic status, as measured by children's household poverty status and mother's education. On the one hand, parental incarceration may be most detrimental when children experience more disadvantaged social contexts (e.g., live in households with incomes below the poverty line), as these social contexts may make children less resilient to the deleterious consequences of parental incarceration. On the other hand, parental incarceration may be most detrimental when children experience more advantaged social contexts (e.g., live in households with incomes above the poverty line), as parental incarceration may be an unexpected life event for these children (Eaton, 1978; Wheaton, 1982, 1990). Little research considers this directly (for a consideration of disadvantaged contexts more broadly, see Turney, 2017; Turney & Wildeman, 2015).

Additionally, there is good reason to expect the relationship between parental incarceration and children's outcomes to vary by parental interactions with children prior to incarceration (Jaffee, Moffitt, Caspi, & Taylor, 2003; see also Giordano, 2010; Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). Paternal incarceration may be more consequential for children when fathers are physically present, emotionally involved, and economically supportive. There is some evidence that the negative effects of parental incarceration on 5-year-old children's behavioral problems are stronger among children with resident fathers (Geller et al., 2012).

The consequences of parental incarceration may depend on the conditions of incarceration including the facility type, length of confinement, offense type, and quality and frequency of child visitation. For example, we do not know whether incarceration in jail or prison has different consequences for children. Children's contact with parents may differ on the basis of facility type; compared with state (and especially federal prisons), local jails tend to be located closer to children's homes, making visitation easier and potentially more frequent, although the visits are more likely to be noncontact visits (e.g., Christian, 2005; Comfort, 2008). Moreover, when a parent is incarcerated in jail, awaiting charges, trial, or sentencing, there is often greater uncertainty surrounding the time of release relative to parents who have been sentenced in state or federal facilities. As for other potential drivers of heterogeneity, the incarceration of a father convicted of a violent crime may improve—or at least not hinder—children's academic, behavioral, or health outcomes (Wildeman, 2010) and incarceration length may be inversely associated with children's outcomes (E. I. Johnson & Easterling, 2015). And although the relationship between parental visits and child well-being is complex, maintaining positive contact with incarcerated parents through visitation may enhance child well-being (e.g. Arditti, Lambert-Shute, & Joest, 2003; Poehlmann-Tynan, 2015; Shlafer, Loper, & Schillmoeller, 2015).

Lastly, there is emerging evidence of the potential for mass incarceration to produce deleterious contextual or spillover effects that may extend beyond those personally touched by incarceration. Recent public health research suggests that exposure to high-incarceration neighborhoods is associated with reductions in the mental and physical health of nonincarcerated adult residents (Hatzenbuehler, Phelan, & Link, 2013). Research by Hagan and Foster (2012a, 2012b) indicates that attending a school with high levels of parental incarceration rates reduces the overall student likelihood of later college completion. In each of these contexts, spillover effects of incarceration may transform the social structure through exposure to stressful environments, increased policing, or reductions in human and social capital that often accompany the formally incarcerated after reentry. Considering residential segregation, spatial inequality in punishment, and evidence of impacts

on adult outcomes, there are likely to be academic, behavioral, and health consequences for children living in high-incarceration communities.

LINKING DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES: LIMITATIONS, INSIGHTS FOR INTERVENTIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR INEQUALITY

As interest in the children of the incarcerated grows, our knowledge of the scope and composition of this population has improved. Thanks to demographic studies that make use of life tables and correctional data (e.g. Sykes & Pettit, 2014; Wildeman, 2009), we know more about the racial/ethnic, gender, socioeconomic, and geographic profiles of children at risk of experiencing parental incarceration. However, detailed information on racial/ethnic composition beyond the black–white binary is limited, poor data exist on children beyond those concentrated in urban areas, and given the depth of the criminal justice system, any data drawn from correctional surveys that only report statistics for imprisoned parents are sure to be underestimates of the reach of mass incarceration as many more parents are wrapped up in local jails, juvenile facilities, and immigration detention centers.

Quantitative work within the sociological perspective, which analyzes data from household-based surveys, gives insight into the living conditions and household profiles of children with incarcerated parents (e.g., Wakefield & Wildeman, 2014). These qualitative data paint descriptive and nuanced pictures of this growing population of American children (e.g., Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008; Siegel, 2011). However, though the sociological perspective draws on theories of trauma, stigma, and strain, empirical research is rarely able to tease apart the relative importance of each of these mechanisms. Additionally, sociologists studying the intergenerational consequences of incarceration often rely on large-scale and representative data, which is a strength that comes at the cost of using data specifically designed to study parental incarceration. In short, alongside the sociological perspective, criminological perspectives (see Chapter 2, this volume) and developmental and family perspectives (see Chapter 3) are necessary in providing a comprehensive understanding of the impact of parental incarceration for inequality among children.

Despite limitations, several insights on interventions can be drawn from the demographic and sociological perspectives. Parental incarceration is a unique risk factor for children, and any efforts to reduce incarceration rates (e.g. community supervision) could go a long way toward minimizing collateral consequences for children. Demographic evidence suggests that poor children and children of color are most at risk of experiencing parental incarceration. Therefore, interventions focused toward reducing incarceration

rates among these groups may be most effective. Interventions such as reentry programs for formerly incarcerated individuals and their family members that address the needs of these specific groups may also be effective.

Sociological perspectives on trauma, stigma, and strain inform ways interventions could be implemented to make the parental incarceration experience less traumatizing, stigmatizing, and disruptive for children during incarceration and after release. Programs that lessen strain on families, build social networks, and make it easier and more humane to stay in touch during the incarceration could all aid in minimizing the collateral damage of mass incarceration for children. Finally, incorporating families into reentry interventions, via helping the formerly incarcerated parent reintegrate back into family life, could foster healthy parent–child relationships across the life course.

Sociological perspectives that emphasize the structural, intergenerational and interinstitutional reach and impact of parental incarceration also highlight the need for interventions to consider how parental incarceration occurs within a multilevel framework that involves macrolevel state agencies, mesolevel institutions (e.g., schools), and microlevel influences (e.g., family characteristics and individual-level demographics; Foster & Hagan, 2015). Incorporating attention to interactions at and across these various structural levels could potentially broaden the range of interventions targeted for children of incarcerated parents.

Our overview of existing demographic and sociological research suggests that mass incarceration now impacts a large and diverse population and is arguably one of America's most powerful stratifying institutions capable of fundamentally altering the landscape of childhood inequality in the United States. However, even with our growing knowledge base, more systematic efforts to document the vast reach of mass parental incarceration are needed—such as systematic data collection efforts by correctional facilities, more nationally representative data available to researchers, and increased collaboration across disciplinary boundaries—to fully consider the implications for inequality and develop the most effective interventions for this growing, heterogeneous, and vulnerable population of American children.

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