

Parental incarceration and child outcomes: Those at risk, evidence of impacts, methodological insights, and areas of future work

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Abstract

The past 15 years of sociological scholarship assessing the intergenerational consequences of parental incarceration has produced a large body of work suggesting, on the aggregate, detrimental impacts on behavioral, educational, and health outcomes for American children. In this review, we briefly outline who is most at risk for experiencing parental incarceration, before providing an overview of recent multidisciplinary research on the impacts of parental incarceration for American children, ages 0–17. While our review centers on research within the discipline of sociology, we also highlight the interdisciplinary nature and methodological range of work in this subfield in order to provide a more holistic picture of the breadth and variation in impacts of this uniquely American phenomenon. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of the gaps in current literature and areas ripe for further development. In particular, we note future sociological work aimed at exploring mechanisms, addressing heterogeneity in effects, and highlighting pathways for resilience in children of the incarcerated is much needed in order to further develop our understanding of the broader intergenerational consequences of America's experiment in mass incarceration.

1 | INTRODUCTION

With nearly one in every 36 adults under some form of correctional supervision (whether in prison or jail, on probation or parole; Kaebler, Glaze, Tsoutsis, & Minton, 2015), parental incarceration—which just a few decades ago was considered a rare event—is now experienced by a sizeable number of American children. As such, understanding and documenting the intergenerational consequences of mass incarceration have become increasingly important to practitioners, policymakers, and academic researchers alike. The past 15 years has seen a boom in research assessing the potential consequences that a parent's incarceration has on their children. In this review, we briefly outline who is most at risk for experiencing parental incarceration, before providing an overview of recent multidisciplinary research

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on the behavioral, educational, and health impacts of parental incarceration for American children, ages 0–17. Our review centers on research within the discipline of sociology, while also highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of this subfield and placing special emphasis on insights gained from qualitative and quantitative studies in order to provide a more holistic picture of the range and variation in impacts of this uniquely American phenomenon. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of the gaps in the current literature and the areas ripe for further development.

2 | THOSE AT RISK

Estimates suggest that parental incarceration has now touched at least five million, and possibly upwards of eight million, children nationwide. These numbers imply that around one in every 14 minors has had a parent at some point in their lives under one form of correctional supervision or another (Murdhey & Mae Cooper, 2015; Sykes & Pettit, 2014; Travis, McBride, & Solomon, 2005). Although children can experience parental incarceration throughout their lives, estimates consistently indicate that the majority of those who experience parental incarceration are young school-aged children between the ages of 5 and 14 (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Murdhey & Mae Cooper, 2015; Travis et al., 2005). Fathers are overwhelmingly the parent incarcerated; however, the rising female imprisonment rate has led to an increase in the number of children now exposed to maternal incarceration (Carson, 2015; Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Racial disparities also exist in the risk of exposure to 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 to one in 25 White children (Sykes & Pettit, 2014; Wildeman, 2009). Moreover, parental incarceration is most common among children from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Compared to their more economically advantaged peers, poor children are three times more likely to experience parental incarceration (Murdhey & Mae Cooper, 2015). And children whose parents did not graduate from high school are nearly six times more likely to experience parental incarceration when compared to peers of parents who had some college education (Sykes & Pettit, 2014). In all, the descriptive portrait of those most vulnerable suggests it is the young, minority, and most socioeconomically disadvantaged of children.

2.1 | Why does this matter for society?

While incarceration has historically been viewed as a means to remove small segments of dangerous or non-law-abiding individuals from society, the past 50 years has witnessed phenomenal growth in the prison system such that it has widened its scope beyond just the most dangerous members of society to now include the systematic imprisonment of whole groups of the population (Garland, 2001). Therefore, the assumed gains in public safety may be overshadowed by incarceration's far-reaching consequences. For those who experience it directly, incarceration reduces economic opportunity and labor market participation (e.g., Pager, Western, & Sugie, 2009; Visher, Debus-Sherrill, & Yahner, 2011). It impacts physical and mental health, including hypertension (Wang et al., 2009), infectious and stress-related diseases (Massoglia, 2008), asthma (Wang & Green, 2010), and depression (Cooper & Berwick, 2001). Finally, it hinders access to institutional supports such as subsidized housing, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and federal student loans (Petersilia, 2003; Uggen & McElrath, 2014) and may lead individuals to avoid engaging with meaningful institutions such as hospitals, banks, formal employers, or schools out of fear of apprehension or stigma (Brayne, 2014; Goffman, 2016; Haskins & Jacobsen, 2017; Lageson, 2016).

Moreover, incarceration not only affects the individuals who have experienced confinement directly but also has consequences for their families and communities. Incarceration in prison or jail threatens family stability and well-being through disrupting the economic security of families (Schwartz-Soicher, Geller, & Garfinkel, 2011; Turney, 2015), altering relationships between coparents (Comfort, 2008; Massoglia, Remster, & King, 2011; Turney & Wildeman, 2013), creating residential instability, including homelessness (Geller & Franklin, 2014; Tasca, Rodriguez, & Zatz, 2011; Wildeman, 2014), reducing the physical and mental health of remaining caregivers (Turney, 2014;

Wildeman, Schnittker, & Turney, 2012), and diminishing sources of communal, emotional, and economic support through the transference of stigma and shame, which can impede the social integration of already detached families and children (Braman, 2004; Siegel, 2011). Additionally, given the local concentration of incarceration in predominantly urban, impoverished, minority neighborhoods (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010), communities with disproportionately high incarceration rates experience negative spillover effects that can impact educational, mental, and physical health outcomes of even nonincarcerated residents (Hagan & Foster, 2012a; Frank, Hong, Subramanian, & Wang, 2013; Hatzenbuehler, Keyes, Hamilton, Uddin, & Galea, 2015). Together, this work suggests that due to the lasting effects of incarceration among individuals and within families and communities, even if mass incarceration ended tomorrow, we would still have intergenerational cycles of behavioral, educational, and health disadvantage to contend with.

3 | EVIDENCE OF IMPACTS: A REVIEW OF RECENT RESEARCH

The breadth, pace, and methodological range of research produced on the impacts of parental incarceration for children has ballooned over the past 15 years, producing an incredible amount of insight into the behavioral, educational, and health consequences of parental incarceration for American children. Multidisciplinarity and methodological range are characteristic aspects of this subfield, as parental incarceration has become an area of social scientific interest across the disciplines of criminology, demography, developmental psychology, economics, family science, social work, and sociology. Within and across these disciplines, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research has been designed and carried out, all with the goal of better understanding the experiences and consequences of parental incarceration for children. Our review centers on research within the discipline of sociology, while also highlighting insights gained when disciplinary boundaries are crossed.

3.1 | Parental incarceration and child behavioral outcomes

The behavioral consequences of experiencing a parent's incarceration across the course of childhood have received possibly the most attention. Researchers have explored a range of externalizing behaviors (e.g., disruption, hyperactivity, and aggression), internalizing behaviors (e.g., anxiety, inhibition, and depression), and prosocial behaviors (e.g., task completion, empathy, and emotional regulation) among children of incarcerated parents. Given the sheer range of these behavioral outcomes, potential differences between which parent is incarcerated, and variation across qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methodologies, it is not surprising that some inconsistencies in findings arise. While this makes it difficult to draw strong conclusions about the effects of parental incarceration on children's broad behavioral well-being, our review suggests that in the aggregate, parental incarceration is associated with greater risk of experiencing externalizing and internalizing behavior problems at various points across childhood.

Quantitative work by Geller and colleagues (Geller, Garfinkel, Cooper, & Mincy, 2009; Geller, Cooper, Garfinkel, Schwartz-Soicher, & Mincy, 2012) using a large contemporary urban sample of children and focusing on early childhood find a positive association between a father's incarceration and aggressive behaviors that is unique and stronger than associations resulting from other forms of paternal absence. Similarly, Wildeman (2010) and Wakefield and Wildeman (2011) suggest that paternal incarceration yields substantively large increases in physical aggression and externalizing behavior problems among boys at age 5. Likewise, mixed-methods studies of children (of various ages) document externalizing problems such as aggression, fighting with siblings and classmates, engaging in risky behaviors, and expressing defiance (Dallaire, Ciccone, & Wilson, 2010; Shlafer & Poehlmann, 2010). And qualitative work has shown that children with incarcerated parents experience externalizing behavioral difficulties in school including low tolerance for frustration, trouble sitting still, fighting, defiance, and failure to do homework (Arditti, Lambert-Shute, & Joest, 2003; Braman, 2004; Golden, 2005; Siegel, 2011).

With regard to paternal incarceration and internalizing behaviors, sociologists have found no association among reports in early childhood (Geller et al., 2012) but positive associations later on. Various quantitative studies suggest that paternal incarceration increases the likelihood of depression, withdrawal, and anxiety in middle childhood (Haskins, 2015; Murray & Farrington, 2008; Murray, Farrington, Sekol, Olsen, & Murray, 2009; Turney, 2017a; Wakefield & Wildeman, 2011; Wilbur et al., 2007), as well as boys' internalizing problems and antisocial behaviors during teenage years and beyond (Murray & Farrington, 2008). Studies looking broadly at parental incarceration find it can be harmful, increasing the incidence of depression, substance abuse, and delinquent behaviors among teens (Aaron & Dallaire, 2010; Hagan & Foster, 2012a, 2012b; Foster & Hagan, 2013; Roettger & Swisher, 2011). Mixed-methods studies find children exhibit symptoms of post-traumatic stress, hypervigilance, and avoidance of one's feelings (Bocknek, Sanderson, & Britner, 2009), as well as borderline or clinically significant internalizing behavior issues (Shlafer & Poehlmann, 2010). And qualitative studies from developmental psychology, anthropology, and family studies perspectives find sadness, depression, irritability, grief, low self-esteem, and feelings of isolation among children and adolescents of both incarcerated mothers and fathers (Arditti et al., 2003; Braman, 2004; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008; Siegel, 2011).

However, it is important to note that not all studies assessing the impacts of parental incarceration on child behavioral outcomes find negative associations or can attribute poor child behavioral outcomes directly to the parent's incarceration. For example, Wildeman and Turney (2014), focusing exclusively on maternal incarceration, investigate a wide set of externalizing and internalizing behaviors in middle childhood (age 9) and conclude that while children of incarcerated mothers experience higher levels of behavioral problems, this is due to selection rather than effects of incarceration (a finding corroborated by other rigorous studies e.g., Cho, 2009a, 2009b, and Giordano, 2010).

In an effort to reconcile divergent findings, Turney (2014) and Turney and Wildeman (2015) estimate heterogeneous effects of paternal and maternal incarceration for children's behavior outcomes in middle childhood. Their results reveal that consequences of paternal or maternal incarceration for internalizing and externalizing behaviors are more deleterious for children with relatively low risk of exposure to this event than for those whose risks are higher. Other studies have also investigated heterogeneity by gender and race. Whereas parental incarceration is most strongly associated with externalizing behaviors for boys (Geller et al., 2012; Haskins, 2015; Wildeman, 2010), studies found null or weak evidence of differential individual-level effects on behavioral outcomes by race (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2011).

Although negative behavior problems might not always manifest, multiple qualitative studies highlight the role that stigma plays in creating socio-emotional isolation for children of incarcerated parents. Children are often conflicted over the decision to tell peers and teachers about their incarcerated parent, which may result in bullying, rumors, or judgment. Many children and adolescents who experience this stigma and isolation have difficulty connecting with peers and establishing relationships with others (Bocknek et al., 2009; Braman, 2004; Luther, 2016; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008; Siegel, 2011). Further findings suggest that stigma may challenge children's ability to form trusted and secure relationships with adults (Bocknek et al., 2009; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008).

The sheer variation in the relationship between a parent's incarceration and their child's behavioral outcomes suggests that children do not react to parental incarceration in a uniform manner, that maternal and paternal incarceration are potentially experienced differently, and that the conditions under which children successfully adapt to family disruptions need to be further investigated (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Turanovic, Rodriguez, & Pratt, 2012). To date, the few studies that have investigated resiliency among children with incarcerated parents with regard to behavioral outcomes have promising results. For example, Haskins' (2015) findings suggest that paternal incarceration may not be detrimental for task completion, an indicator of children's prosocial development, and that there may be potential protective functions of prosocial behaviors for children of the incarcerated. Among qualitative researchers, Nesmith and Ruhland (2008) find that children of incarcerated parents found healthy outlets for feelings of isolation, anger, anxiety, or disappointment, suggesting that some impacted children are able to adapt and utilize prosocial behaviors as a protective mechanism to buffer negative effects of parental incarceration. Further, other researchers note that there are compensatory and protective factors that

can help to guard against the development of internalizing and externalizing behaviors, which are present in varying levels among children experiencing parental incarceration, such as emotional regulation skills (Lotze, Ravindran, & Myers, 2010; Myers et al., 2013), hope (Hagen, Myers, & Mackintosh, 2005), empathy (Dallaire & Zeman, 2013), and social support (Hagen & Myers, 2003).

3.2 | Educational outcomes across childhood

Sociological research on the effects of parental incarceration on children's educational outcomes over the past 10 years has grown richer, more rigorous, and addresses critical educational outcomes including test scores, skills, progress, retention, and placement across various stages of childhood. Overall, this body of research suggests negative associations, particularly in middle childhood and beyond.

While quantitative studies of children during early childhood find weak to null associations between paternal incarceration and cognitive skill development (Geller et al., 2009, 2012; Haskins, 2014), null impacts on cognitive ability early on do not preclude the potential for detrimental impacts later in the educational life course. Indeed, quantitative and qualitative research investigating the influence of paternal incarceration on children's cognitive and educational outcomes in middle childhood has found negative impacts across a large range of outcomes. For example, work on children in elementary school demonstrates the aggregate negative associations between paternal incarceration and children's learning abilities, skill development in reading and math comprehension, verbal ability, memory/attention competencies, and speech or language problems (Haskins, 2016; Turney, 2014; Turney, 2017b).

During middle childhood and into adolescence, children of incarcerated fathers experience higher risks of being placed in special education (Haskins, 2014), being held back a grade (Bocknek et al., 2009; Turney & Haskins, 2014), and experiencing exclusionary discipline (Jacobsen, 2016). Qualitative scholars also record cases in which teenagers with incarcerated parents display truant behavior or drop out of school (Braman, 2004; Golden, 2005; Siegel, 2011). Results from studies focusing on outcomes in late adolescence and young adulthood suggest that the deleterious consequences of paternal and maternal incarceration for educational attainment persist even further in the life course (Foster & Hagan, 2009; Hagan & Foster, 2012b).

In addition to estimating the average effect of parental incarceration on child educational outcomes, many studies have also addressed heterogeneous responses to incarceration. Studies have generally found weak or null evidence of differential individual-level effects on educational outcomes by race (Haskins, 2014, 2016; Turney & Haskins, 2014) and by father's residential status prior to incarceration (Turney & Haskins, 2014). Studies on differences by gender indicate that paternal incarceration affects the cognitive skill development of both boys and girls (Haskins, 2016; Turney & Haskins, 2014). Haskins (2016) suggests that girls' and boys' educational outcomes might be influenced by paternal incarceration in different ways, with girls presenting lower reading comprehension and math problem-solving skills and boys presenting reduced attentional capacities. Importantly, while most studies suggest a negative association between paternal incarceration and educational outcomes in middle and late childhood, rigorous studies investigating the consequences of maternal incarceration find that children whose mothers are confined are less likely to experience grade retention and that maternal imprisonment is not associated with declines in children's reading or math standardized test scores (Cho, 2009a, 2009b).

Qualitative, experimental, and mixed-methods studies have identified possible mechanisms behind detrimental educational outcomes and poor schooling experiences for children of incarcerated parents. Most consistent across methodologies and disciplines is evidence that stigma from peers and teachers negatively impacts children's educational outcomes (Dallaire et al., 2010; Shlafer & Poehlmann, 2010; Wildeman, Scardamalia, Walsh, O'Brien, & Brew, 2017). Financial and family hardships resulting from parental incarceration might also negatively influence children's decisions to persist in school (Braman, 2004). And there is some suggestive evidence that paternal incarceration lowers parental involvement in their child's schooling, which may also represent a powerful mechanism through which the detrimental consequences of parental incarceration accrue (Haskins & Jacobsen, 2017). Finally, at least one qualitative study contends that home and school connectedness matter for outcomes among adolescents of

incarcerated parents in much the same way they do for other students, and could therefore serve as a compensatory factor and source of resilience (Nichols, Loper, & Meyer, 2016).

3.3 | Physical health outcomes across childhood

Despite the boom in research on mass incarceration and its impacts on children, comparatively few studies have considered the consequences of parental incarceration for children's physical health. Studies that focus on children in utero or early infancy find that the incarceration of a woman or her partner in the year before birth is associated with poorer perinatal health behaviors, including smoking in the first trimester of the pregnancy (Dumont et al., 2014; Dumont, Parker, Viner-Brown, & Clarke, 2015) and that parental incarceration is associated with elevated early infant mortality risk, particularly for boys (Wildeman, Andersen, Lee, & Karlson, 2014) and for Black children (Wildeman, 2012). However, other studies' findings are more inconclusive suggesting that parental incarceration is not associated with children's overall health, as reported by caregivers, at least during early childhood (Geller et al., 2009, 2012).

Regarding older children, Turney (2017a) finds that children exposed to parental incarceration are more prone to having unmet health care needs. Other scholars find that exposure to parental incarceration in childhood is associated with health problems such as high cholesterol, asthma, migraines, serious injuries, and HIV in late childhood and young adulthood (Lee, Fang, & Luo, 2013; Miller & Barnes, 2015). Using data that expanded from adolescence to young adulthood, Roettger and Boardman (2012) find that parental incarceration is associated with higher body mass index for women, and that obesity status moderates the association between depression and parental incarceration. Furthermore, in what is likely one of only a few qualitative studies assessing child health outcomes, Arditti et al. (2003), interviewing 56 caregivers visiting an incarcerated family member during children's hours at a local jail, finds that nearly 27% of the caregivers indicated that their children's health was worse following the incarceration.

4 | METHODOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

The above review highlights the range and heterogeneous nature of parental incarceration's collateral consequences, as well as sheds light on the potential for resiliency and the identification of mechanisms among impacted children. Included studies demonstrate the ways outcomes related to parental incarceration differ along the various stages of childhood (e.g., Geller et al., 2012), how a mother's incarceration may impact children differently than a father's (e.g., Cho, 2009a), and how mediating factors may influence child outcomes, including stigma (e.g., Dallaire et al., 2010; Shlafer & Poehlmann, 2010) and coping mechanisms (e.g., Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008). The breadth and nuance of findings are possible, not in small part, to the multiple methodologies employed in current scholarship, highlighting the importance and continued need for a broad documenting of parental incarceration's impact on children's behavioral, educational, and health outcomes. In this section, we explore the unique contributions that qualitative and quantitative methodologies make to this subfield, as well as highlight particular strengths a mixed-methods approach to research on children of the incarcerated can contribute.

Qualitative studies on incarceration provide richness, detail, and insight into the processes and functioning of individuals' and families' lives. They allow for purposeful sampling of information-rich cases, from which researchers can further develop theory, obtain in-depth understandings of how parental incarceration influences children, and inspire innovation and responsive research practices when studying marginalized and vulnerable populations (Arditti, 2012, 2015; Patton, 2002). As a result, qualitative studies may be especially useful for identifying potential mechanisms and outcomes that researchers have not anticipated. Indeed, recent work has illuminated the trauma of witnessing an arrest (Giordano, 2010; Siegel, 2011), the role that preincarceration relationships with parents and alternative support systems play in children's responses to parental incarceration (Turanovic et al., 2012), and how coparent relationships, including "gatekeeping," influence child-parent relationships during and after incarceration

(Comfort, 2008; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008; Nurse, 2002; Roy & Dyson, 2005). Thus, qualitative work helps to illustrate why some children with seemingly similar experiences have different outcomes during and after parental incarceration through understanding the broader family context and experience.

Furthermore, qualitative studies offer important opportunities to hear the “voices” of affected individuals—in particular, the voices of children, whose accounts may differ from those of their caregivers. For example, studies that include interviews with children find that some know about their parent's incarceration despite a caregiver withholding this information (Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008), communicate “secretly” with the incarcerated parent via extended family members (Shlafer & Poehlmann, 2010), and are able to describe in greater detail the reasons or emotions behind behavior that caregivers or teachers have observed (Turney, Adams, Conner, Goodsell, & Muñiz, 2017).

Quantitative studies, on the other hand, offer the opportunity to generalize results, explore heterogeneous responses to incarceration, and quantify outcomes. In addition to identifying associations between parental incarceration and child outcomes, current quantitative scholarship has been concerned with disentangling the unique effects of incarceration. This is a difficult task, given that children who experience parental incarceration are also more likely to experience other forms of disadvantage, such as parental absence, criminality, substance abuse, and mental health problems (Travis, Redburn, & Western, 2014). Even though selection bias is pervasive in incarceration scholarship, quantitative researchers concerned with causal effects have been able to utilize sophisticated quasi-experimental techniques such as extensive regression adjustment, longitudinal designs that account for fixed effects, appropriate or multiple comparison groups, matching techniques, placebo regressions, instrumental variables, and difference-in-difference approaches. Advancements in quantitative techniques together with a number of comprehensive longitudinal survey datasets¹ have facilitated these efforts.

Over the last 15 years, quantitative sociological research assessing the impact of parental incarceration on child outcomes has been plentiful, particularly juxtaposed to the relative dearth of qualitative studies within the discipline of sociology (exceptions include Giordano, 2010; Giordano & Copp, 2015; Luther, 2015). This is problematic given that, while quantitative research has been exceptionally apt to test and validate existing theories about when and how parental incarceration might affect children's outcomes, it is less able to explain why and through what mechanisms children are affected, and to account for the nuances of individuals' experiences. With this in mind, we hold that studying parental incarceration requires a recognition of the value of using multiple methodologies, across disciplines, to explore different aspects of this phenomenon, from experimental studies to ethnographies.

In fact, mixed-methods studies show special promise for contributing to our understanding of the breadth and depth of experiences associated with parental incarceration. Whether confirmatory or complementary in design, mixed-methods approaches have the potential to employ both in-depth observational data and statistical analyses to yield a more complete and comprehensive understanding of social phenomena than do either quantitative or qualitative approaches alone (Bergman, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002; Small, 2011). For example, complementary designs (also known as triangulation) are useful for interpreting unexpected findings, uncovering multiple aspects of a phenomenon, or explicitly testing hypotheses that are directly informed by small-sample, in-depth work (Small, 2011). Confirmatory designs are most useful when alternative types of data produce conflicting results (Small, 2011). Given the, at times, conflicting findings regarding children's outcomes detailed earlier, confirmatory approaches may be especially useful for assessing to what extent impacts of parental incarceration are under- or overestimated.

It is clear that mixed-methods research will be useful in addressing some of the primary challenges facing solely qualitative or quantitative studies of parental incarceration, similar to what has been done in broader sociological work on criminal justice interactions (e.g., Harris, 2016; Shedd, 2015). Simultaneous use of complementary methods may help researchers document and operationalize families' living and custodial situations, prearrest behavior, and assess children's behavioral, educational, and health outcomes in ways that add greater nuance to existing measurement and analysis. Moreover, mixed-methods research can be conducted in a variety of ways and presents a multitude of prospects for enhancing research, including through generating and testing hypotheses derived from ethnographic

work, discovering and introducing new variables to be explored, and developing creative data triangulation strategies (Arditti, 2015; Lopez et al., 2013).

5 | AREAS OF FUTURE WORK

Quantitative and qualitative research on parental incarceration points to mostly deleterious consequences on children's outcomes. While documenting varied impacts is a necessary first step, future sociological work needs to further address *why* and *how* parental incarceration influences children's outcomes. Sociologists may also further address how nuances in the parental incarceration experience might result in differential consequences for children. Currently, most quantitative research on the consequences of parental incarceration accounts for children's social context, but few studies investigate how social context interacts with parental incarceration to influence children's outcomes. Many quantitative sociologists have openly advocated for studies focusing on heterogeneity of responses to parental incarceration (Turney, 2017b; Turney & Wildeman, 2013, 2015). Understanding how the effects of parental incarceration might vary based not only on children's race and gender but also on the timing, condition, number of incarceration experiences, coresidential status and relationship with the incarcerated parent, propensity to experience parental incarceration, and socioeconomic status, among other characteristics, is crucial. This undoubtedly multimethod interdisciplinary endeavor will allow the identification of children who are likely to be resilient and most vulnerable to negative effects of parental incarceration, and to better target public policies.

While recent sociological work using qualitative methods has documented a broad variety of criminal justice interactions (e.g., Comfort, 2008; Goffman, 2016; McCorkel, 2013; Rios, 2011; Stuart, 2016), there are shockingly few recent qualitative studies specifically focused on parental incarceration within the discipline. In efforts to document the many "stressful circumstances with which these children must cope" (Giordano, 2010, p. 147), qualitative work is especially useful for its ability to place parental incarceration as an event within that context. Moreover, although qualitative research has pointed to the importance of stigma, material hardship, trauma, and isolation as potential mechanisms through which parental incarceration affects children, much of this work has been done outside the discipline of sociology. The qualitative literature and, more specifically, the investigation of mechanisms associated with parental incarceration could benefit from a sociological perspective, which is suited to connecting individuals to larger social structures and relationships, investigating intergenerational transmissions of inequality, and incorporating a multilevel framework that accounts for institutional influences and the intersection of contingencies, such as race and gender (see Foster & Hagan, 2015).

Quantitative sociologists can also contribute to an understanding of mechanisms associated with parental incarceration's impacts, although comparatively few studies have done so. Promising examples include preliminary evidence that teachers' perceptions of children's academic proficiency might act as a mechanism for the association between paternal incarceration and grade retention (Turney & Haskins, 2014), experimental evidence that stigma associated with parental incarceration affects teacher's expectations of children (Wildeman et al., 2017), and findings that suggest formerly incarcerated fathers' evasion of surveilling institutions, such as schools, might be a mechanism for the association between paternal incarceration, parental involvement in schooling, and potentially children's educational outcomes (Haskins & Jacobsen, 2017). More quantitative studies should aim at testing and identifying the importance of these and other mechanisms.

Future sociological work may be especially useful for understanding pathways for resilience among children and families. Deficit models have dominated much of the work in intergenerational effects of parental incarceration, helping to heighten awareness of the many consequences of parental incarceration, but not providing any information or recognition of resilience processes at play. Multidisciplinary work outside of sociology has been at the forefront of identifying processes that lessen the effects of strain, stigma, and trauma in children's and families lives, such as support networks that help to belay stigma among jail visitors (Arditti, 2003) and activity and church-based healthy outlets and coping mechanisms for emotions (Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008). Within sociology, Giordano (2010) points to the

role of identities, spirituality and religious involvement, long-term goals, and the presence and support of caring adults as protective factors (see also Luther, 2015) in the most resilient children in her sample. Future sociological studies should continue this work, as understanding these factors that influence children's resilience is essential if we are to design programs and policies to best address the needs of impacted children.

The insight provided by quantitative research could also be broadened if more studies attempted to connect microlevel and macrolevel analyses. Very few studies connect the individual-level outcomes with macrolevel processes (for exceptions, Wakefield & Wildeman, 2011; Wildeman, 2012), and more of such studies could help us to identify the groups of children for whom parental incarceration has the strongest consequences on the individual level, from groups of children for whom the experience of parental incarceration is the most consequential on the aggregate level (Turney, 2017b). Macrolevel analyses in the United States, however, are hindered by the lack of systematic data collection efforts by correctional facilities and other administrative data available to researchers, particularly of data that allow incarcerated parents to be linked to their children.

Finally, overreliance by quantitative researchers on only a handful of surveys, such as the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health, the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, and the National Survey of Children's Health (which are subject to bias, attrition, imprecise measures, and not often nationally representative), has limited our ability to extend findings on the impact of parental incarceration on child outcomes beyond particular subpopulations. We know less about associations for children living in nonurban areas, nor do we fully understand the reach of mass parental incarceration as many more parents are wrapped up in local jails, juvenile facilities, and immigration detention centers. Thus, it is important that studies are replicated across different survey populations in order to strengthen the consistency and extend the generalizability of findings.

In this vein, we suggest scholars look for creative opportunities to conduct experimental studies, take advantage of natural experiments resulting from changes in policy contexts, or utilize new datasets such as the "Marriage and Family Strengthening Grants for Incarcerated and Reentering Fathers and their Partners" (MFS-IP). The MFS-IP data come from evaluations of initiatives implemented across 12 states to support marriages and families during and after paternal incarceration. Data evaluating the effectiveness of these programs have been collected longitudinally in multiple sites and can be used to further our understanding of the effects of parental incarceration in different contexts. One example of natural experiment in this body of literature, conducted by Andersen and Wildeman (2014), use a policy change that occurred in Denmark, in 2000, which expanded the use of community service as sentences, in order to study the causal effects of parental incarceration on child foster care placement (Andersen & Wildeman, 2014). Thus, it might be fruitful to explore policy changes in the United States as well, such as the changes in California's policy environment as the state implements a prison downsizing experiment (for more information, see California Public Safety Realignment Law, AB-109).

In conclusion, our review suggests that mass incarceration represents an institution with powerful repercussions for American children. Intergenerational consequences of parental imprisonment, documented across qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods work, are present for young children across measures of behavioral, educational, and physical health. With studies documenting effects numerous, future sociological work aimed at exploring mechanisms, addressing heterogeneity in effects, and highlighting pathways for resilience in children of the incarcerated is essential. Moreover, as recently raised by Wildeman, Haskins, and Poehlmann-Tynan (2018), we encourage sociologists in this subfield to transcend disciplinary and methodological boundaries, as truly interdisciplinary, multimethod, and intersectional research is needed to fully illuminate the broad intergenerational consequences of America's experiment in mass incarceration.

ENDNOTE

¹ The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health, the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, and National Survey of Children's Health 2011–2012.

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