

Confining Fatherhood: Incarceration and Paternal Involvement among Non-resident White,
African American and Latino Fathers

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Abstract

We examine the consequences of incarceration for non-resident White, Latino, and African American fathers' contact with children and their formal and informal child support agreements. Using data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, we found that fathers' current incarceration presented serious obstacles to maintaining contact with children and interfered with the establishment of informal financial support agreements with mothers. Recent and past incarceration were strongly and negatively associated with how often non-Latino White fathers saw their children, while having a considerably smaller effect for African American and Latino fathers. A similar pattern of racial and ethnic differences was observed with respect to mothers' trust of fathers to take care of their children. Findings suggest the continued need for fathering programs in prisons and for re-entry programs for fathers in communities following their release.

African American and Latino fathers and their families have been disproportionately affected by developments in two areas of federal and state policy. The first is a striking increase in the prison population (Garland, 2001). Over the past three decades, the per capita rate of imprisonment has increased by more than 400 percent, from 110 per 100,000 in 1973 to 470 per 100,000 in 2000 (Visher & Travis, 2003). Of particular concern for vulnerable families is that more than half of those imprisoned are parents and around 1.5 million children have a parent in prison (Mumola, 2002). The likelihood of fathers' imprisonment differs dramatically by race and ethnicity. In fact, incarceration is so prevalent among men of color at lower educational levels that it has become a modal stage in the early life course (Pettit & Western, 2004).

In a second policy development, federal and state initiatives have been aimed at increasing fathers' emotional and economic involvement with their children. With increasing rates of births occurring outside of marriage, these policies have been targeted toward families headed by unmarried parents, a disproportionate number of whom are African American or Latino and living in poverty. Although the consequences of incarceration appear to be at odds with policies encouraging father involvement, few studies have examined the implications of incarceration for unmarried fathers' contact with and agreements to support their children. This analysis uses data from the Fragile Families Study, an important new source of information about the experiences of unmarried parents, to examine racial and ethnic differences in associations between nonresident fathers' past and recent incarcerations and involvement with their three year old children. It also considers whether these differences are associated with fathers' relationships with mothers and mothers' trust of fathers as caretakers.

Background

The Age of Mass Incarceration

A variety of federal and state policy changes have made incarceration an increasing presence within the lives of men of color at low educational levels.¹ From the Nixon administration's "War on Crime," and Reagan's "War on Drugs," to the Bush and Clinton Administrations' more punitive stances on violent crimes, the federal government has led efforts to "get tougher" on crime. Some outcomes of these efforts have included mandatory minimum sentencing for federal drug charges and increased federal funding of prisons (Garland, 2001; Western, 2006). Similarly at the state level, judicial discretion in determining the length and conditions of sentencing has been replaced in many states by a variety of "three strikes," "mandatory minimum," "truth-in-sentencing" policies, and sentencing boards that apply rigid guidelines that mandate sentences of longer lengths. For instance, Proposition 184 in California requires mandatory long-term sentences (i.e., 25 years to life) for persons convicted of any felony if they have previously been convicted of two serious or violent felonies. Many states and local governments have also transformed the parole process, in some cases abolishing it altogether, or imposing stricter conditions and monitoring of parolees (Garland, 2001; Travis, 2005). In other instances, states and localities have placed restrictions on individuals once out of prison, including limitations on the receipt of welfare, public housing, and voting rights (Uggen & Manza, 2002). The collective result of these policies has been longer sentences, fewer opportunities for parole, a more difficult re-entry processes, increased recidivism, and burgeoning rates of incarceration (Garland, 2001; Travis, 2005; Western, 2006).

Child Support and Father Involvement

During the 1980's and 1990's, federal legislation and increased state expenditures on child support enforcement appear to have worked together to substantially increase the proportion of unmarried mothers receiving child support (Freeman & Waldfogel, 2001; Sorensen & Hill, 2004). However, unmarried mothers remain less likely than divorced mothers to have

child support awards (Grall, 2006).² Although higher income fathers are more likely to pay child support (Graham & Beller, 2002), Sorensen and Zibman (2001) estimated that more than one third of fathers who do not pay child support are poor themselves and that there are about twice as many non-poor fathers who do not pay child support as poor fathers. Studies focusing on unmarried fathers have shown African American men are just as likely as White men to have child support orders, but somewhat more likely to make informal contributions and less likely to make formal payments (Mincy & Nepomnyaschy, 2005; Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2006). This is consistent with qualitative studies in low-income African American communities which have found unmarried fathers often have informal agreements with mothers to provide direct cash or in-kind contributions (Edin, 1995; Furstenberg, 1995; Sullivan, 1992; Waller, 2002).

As more fathers live apart from their children, policies promoting “responsible fatherhood” have sought not only to encourage fathers to financially support their children but also to maintain a presence in their lives. Evidence from large-scale surveys has shown that most unmarried, nonresident fathers are in contact with their young children, with unmarried White fathers having somewhat less contact with their children than nonwhite fathers (Argys, Peters, Cook, Garasky, Nepomnyaschy, & Sorensen, 2006). Previous studies have not shown consistent differences in involvement by fathers’ race or ethnic status (Pleck, 1997), but some researchers have suggested that African American and Latino fathers may be involved in different ways than White fathers or that this involvement may have different meanings for families (Coltrane, Parke, & Adams, 2004; Hofferth, 2003; McAdoo, 1988).

The Effects of Incarceration on Paternal Support Agreements and Involvement

There are a variety of ways that imprisonment could affect fathers’ economic and emotional relationships with their children. Incarceration could influence whether unmarried parents have formal or informal agreements for child support. Previous research suggests that

child support orders often exceed fathers' ability to pay (Mincy & Sorensen, 1998; Sorensen & Zibman, 2001). Because incarceration creates financial hardships during the prison sentence, as well diminished earnings and employment after release (Holzer, Offner, & Sorensen, 2005), fathers' past and present incarceration may further decrease their ability to provide financial support. Many states do not consider incarceration a justifiable condition for suspending or modifying a child support order (May, 2004; Pearson, 2004).³ As a result, fathers who have been incarcerated are likely to accrue large arrearages (i.e., child support debts), and federal law prohibits child support arrearages from being forgiven in most cases (Committee on Ways and Means, 2000). Nonpayment of support is also treated as a parole violation in some states and may lead to re-imprisonment (May, 2004; Pearson, 2004). For these and other reasons, fathers who have been incarcerated may have a greater incentive to evade the formal child support system and to prefer informal support agreements with mothers (Waller, 2002). Other researchers, though, have found unmarried fathers with a history of incarceration no less likely to have legal support orders (Mincy & Nepomnyaschy, 2005; Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2006).

The prison experience may also undermine fathers' ability to remain in contact with their children. While in prison, the geographic distance of fathers from their children, problems with visitation scheduling and procedures, and inhospitable visiting rooms make visitation traumatic for prisoners and their children (Arditti, Lambert-Shute, & Joest, 2003). Given these barriers, many incarcerated fathers forego visits altogether out of concern for children's well-being (Genty, 2003; Hairston, 1998). Other researchers have suggested that incarcerated fathers' contact with children is dependent on mothers' willingness to facilitate access (Arditti, Smock, & Parkman, 2005; Nurse, 2004; Roy & Dyson, 2005). The effect of past incarceration on men's economic resources and the tremendous strain on romantic relationships during imprisonment may undermine the chances fathers will live with or marry the mother (Hagan & Dinovitzer,

1999; Western, Lopoo, & McLanahan, 2004) and fathers' ties to children often become more tenuous after their relationships with mothers dissolve (Furstenberg, 1995). Given these barriers, we expect incarceration will be negatively related to fathers' contact with their young children, and that this association will be partly explained by their relationship status with mothers.

Differences in the Effects of Incarceration by Race and Ethnicity

Several areas of research lead us to suspect that associations between incarceration and father involvement may vary by race and ethnicity. According to the life course perspective, lives are composed of sequences of role transitions over time (Elder, 1974). For example, a typical middle-class transition to adulthood involves moving out of the parental home, entering and completing higher education, entering the labor force, getting married, and having children. Incarceration is not part of the script. Moreover, violations of norms regarding the timing and sequencing of transitions may have negative consequences (Rindfuss, Swicegood, & Rosenfeld, 1987), though recent research stresses variations in these transitions by socioeconomic status, gender, and race and ethnicity (Marini, 1984; Shanahan, 2000). If norms regarding life course transitions vary across sub-groups, the meaning of a particular transition such as incarceration is thus also likely to vary. We follow Western (2006) in speculating that the pervasiveness of incarceration within disadvantaged African American and Latino communities has made incarceration an almost expected stage in the life course, perhaps lessening its stigma.⁴

Researchers have also found differences by race and ethnicity in attitudes toward the criminal justice system. Though no more tolerant of crime or violence (Sampson & Bartusch, 1998), African Americans and Latinos have been found to be more likely than Whites to perceive the criminal justice system as unjust (Hagan, Shedd, & Payne, 2005). These differences appear to be associated with disproportionate exposure to the police in low income communities (Hagan, Shedd, & Payne, 2005). Varying attitudes also likely reflect perceptions of differential

treatment within the trial and sentencing system (e.g., Demuth, 2003). Just as African Americans and Latinos are more likely to endorse “structural” explanations for poverty (Hunt, 1996; Kluegel & Smith, 1986), distrust of the criminal justice system may make them more likely to attribute a father’s incarceration to external factors beyond his control.

Finally, other research on racial and ethnic differences in family structure, solidarity, and resilience might lead to similar predictions that African American and Latino mothers would be more willing to trust fathers who have been incarcerated. For example, ethnographic studies of the adaptive strategies (Jarrett, 1997) and dynamic nature of family structures within disadvantaged African American families (Jarrett & Burton, 1999) might predict a greater adaptability of families to the challenges of incarceration. To date, we know of no studies which have examined racial and ethnic differences in associations between incarceration and paternal support and contact among unmarried men. We thus tentatively hypothesize that incarceration will be less strongly associated with father involvement among nonresident men of color, particularly African American men. Similarly, we hypothesize that incarceration will less strongly diminish mothers’ trust of fathers to take care of children.

Method

This analysis uses three waves of data the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, which began in 1998 to follow a new birth cohort of children in 20 U.S. cities. New mothers were interviewed at the hospital at the time of their child’s birth. Fathers were interviewed at the hospital or someplace else as soon as possible. Parents were also surveyed when their child was one and three years old. The response rate at baseline was about 87 percent for unmarried mothers and 75 percent for eligible fathers. By Year 3, 88 percent of baseline mothers and 68 percent of fathers continued to participate. We restricted analysis to cases with mothers participating at baseline and Year 3, and to those 16 cities that make up the nationally

representative sample of nonmarital births in cities with populations over 200,000 (see Reichman, Teitler, Garfinkel, & McLanahan, 2001). Limiting the focus to nonresident fathers and to Whites, African Americans, and Latinos yielded an analysis sample of 1,002. All analyses were weighted using the three-year probability weights.

Dependent variables were measured at the second follow-up survey, approximately three years after the child's birth. We used mothers' reports because they were more likely to participate at baseline and less likely to drop out than fathers. Compared to other fathers, those dropping out by three years (36.0 percent) were less likely to be in relationships with the mother and more likely to have been recently incarcerated. Retaining these cases through the use of mothers' reports thus likely provides a more representative sample.

Presence of a *legal child support order* is assessed by mothers' responses to the question "Do you have a legal agreement or child support order that requires the father to provide financial support to the child" (27.9 percent had such orders). In the absence of a legal agreement, mothers were asked "Do you have an informal agreement, or an understanding, not spelled out in a legal document that the father will provide financial support to you?" (27.8 percent of nonresident fathers). Non-resident fathers' *contact* with children is assessed by mothers' reports of the number of days during the past month that the father has seen the child (mean = 6.42 days). To measure mother's distrust of fathers, we draw upon two questions: "You can trust the father to take good care of the child" ($1 = \text{always true to } 4 = \text{never true}$) and "If you had to go away for one week and could not take your child with you, how much would you trust the father to take care of the child?" ($1 = \text{very much to } 3 = \text{not at all}$). Standardized items are averaged to create a scale of *mother's distrust of father* ($\alpha = 0.84$).

Measures of incarceration status were created by the Fragile Families project. If either mother or father reports the father has spent time in jail, he is coded as having been

incarcerated.⁵ We distinguish incarceration by its recency. *Past incarceration* captures fathers who were in a correctional facility prior to the child's birth (26.7 percent) but have not been incarcerated since. *Recent incarceration* indicates fathers who were incarcerated at some time since the birth, but not currently (19.5 percent). *Current incarceration* identifies fathers who were incarcerated at the time of the three year survey (7.3 percent). This group would also include fathers who were incarcerated at the time of the 3 year survey and at previous times. *Never incarcerated* is the reference category.

Fathers' race and ethnicity is based on fathers' and mothers' reports of race and Hispanic origin, with fathers' reports taking precedence. We create mutually exclusive categories of *Latino* (34.2 percent), *non-Latino African American* (52.2 percent), and *non-Latino White* (13.7 percent).⁶ We also control for mothers' *nativity* status (16.3 percent were born outside the United States). Nativity is unknown for a large number of fathers. Although this sample was not selected to be low-income, unmarried parents tend to be a relatively disadvantaged group. About 44.1 percent of mothers reported having received Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (*TANF*) at any wave of the survey (1 = *if received TANF*; 0 = *if not*). Father's education is based on father's reports, with mother's reports used in cases of missing data. About 39.1 percent of fathers have not received a high school degree (all indicators coded: 1 = *yes*; 0 = *no*), 35.1 percent have a high school degree or GED, 18.0 percent have some college or technical school, and another 7.8 percent have a college or more advanced degree. Mothers reported that 34.1 percent of fathers were unemployed the week before the child's birth. Mean age of mothers was 23 years at the time of the birth. Some models control for parents' relationship status (*non-cohabiting romantic relationship* and *no relationship*).

Results

We begin by examining factors associated with nonresident fathers establishing legal or informal child support agreements with the mother within about three years of their child's birth. Table 1 presents odds ratios from multinomial logistic regressions. Confidence intervals, constructed using probability adjusted robust standard errors, appear in parentheses. In columns 1 and 2 the odds of having an informal agreement with the mother to financially support the child versus not having any agreement are modeled. Columns 3 and 4 contain the legal support order versus no agreement contrast. All models include controls for mother's age, father's education and employment status, and couple's relationship status at baseline.

<< Table 1 About Here >>

Beginning in column 1, results indicated that African American fathers had 3.77 times greater odds of an informal agreement to financially support their child, versus no agreement, than did White fathers. Fathers who were currently incarcerated had 91.1 percent lower odds (i.e., $1 - 0.087$) of an informal agreement, versus no agreement, than did fathers who had never been incarcerated. Past incarceration was not found to be associated with having informal agreements. With respect to formal support orders (see column 3), both African American and Latino fathers were found to have higher odds of a legal support order, versus no agreement, than White fathers. None of the incarceration variables were significantly associated with odds of a legal support order. Note also that foreign born mothers had significantly lower odds, and mothers receiving TANF had significantly higher odds, of having a legal support order in place.

Models 2 and 4 include interaction terms of incarceration status with each racial and ethnic group indicator. These interactions capture group differences in strengths of associations between incarceration and informal and legal support agreements. The main effect coefficients for each incarceration variable represent the effects of incarceration for White fathers (i.e., the excluded category). Main effect coefficients for race and ethnicity represent effects for never-

incarcerated African American and Latino fathers. Beginning in column 2, current incarceration and incarceration since the birth of the child were strong negative predictors of having had an informal agreement with the mother for White fathers, compared to no agreement. Among African American and Latino fathers, current incarceration maintained a negative association with odds of an informal support agreement, as neither interaction term was statistically significant. Also note that among Latinos, the negative direct effect of incarceration since the birth was offset by a large and statistically significant odds ratio. It is not the case, however, that incarceration promoted informal agreements among Latino fathers.⁷ Rather, the large odds ratio was due to the very low odds of informal agreements among White fathers incarcerated since the birth. In column 4, no differences in associations with legal support orders were observed.

Table 2 presents coefficients from least squares regressions of the number of days fathers had contact with their children in the past month. No statistically significant differences in days of contact were observed by race or ethnicity (column 1). Mothers born outside the U.S., however, reported fathers as having had 4.2 fewer days of contact in the past month, perhaps due to fathers' immigration status, although this is not observed. Not surprising given the severe visitation restrictions associated with incarceration, fathers currently in jail at Year 3 were much less likely (7.8 fewer days per month) to have seen their children. Past incarceration was not associated with nonresident fathers' contact with children.

<< Table 2 About Here >>

When interactions by race and ethnicity were introduced (see column 2), a different pattern of associations emerged. Current incarceration among White fathers was associated with about 13.1 fewer days of contact (compared to non-incarcerated White fathers), controlling for other factors. Moreover, both indicators of past incarceration were negatively associated with days of contact for White fathers (-8.5 and -8.8 fewer days, respectively). Consistent with

hypotheses, these negative associations were partly offset for African American fathers, as indicated by interaction terms that were either statistically significant or approached ($p < 0.10$) statistical significance.⁸ Currently incarcerated African American fathers, for example, saw their children 7.2 (i.e., $-13.1 + 5.9$) fewer days in the last month than had never incarcerated African American fathers. Past incarceration presented even less of a barrier to African American fathers' contact with children. For example, African American fathers incarcerated prior to the birth were reported to have seen their child only 1 fewer day ($-8.5 + 7.5$) than were the never incarcerated. A similar pattern was observed for Latino fathers, though only the interaction of Latino with past incarceration was statistically significant. Latino fathers incarcerated prior to the birth saw their child only 0.1 fewer days than those who were never incarcerated.

We proposed two related explanations for why African American and Latino fathers' incarceration may be less consequential for their contact with children. One possibility is that mothers are more likely to preserve relationships with African American and Latino men despite recent or past histories of incarceration. Model 3 considers this hypothesis by introducing a control variable for whether parents were in a romantic relationship at Year 3. Being in a romantic relationship was significantly associated with 9.0 additional days of contact. The degree to which relationship status mediates the race and ethnic differences observed is indicated by how much the interaction terms are attenuated between models 2 and 3. Comparing these coefficients suggests only modest support for this interpretation.

Another reason incarceration may be less detrimental for African American and Latino fathers' contact is that mothers may be more likely to retain a sense of trust of fathers despite incarceration. As mothers were only asked questions about trust when the father had some contact with the child (i.e. more than 1 day in past month), the trust scale can not be introduced as a mediator of days of contact. Instead, we examine mothers' distrust of fathers as a dependent

variable. Table 3 presents coefficients from regressions modeling mothers' reports of whether they distrust the father to care for their child at Year 3. Model 1 shows that all three measures of incarceration were associated with greater distrust of fathers. The magnitudes of coefficients increased slightly with recency of incarceration, with mothers of currently incarcerated fathers most likely to distrust the father ($b = 0.506$). Note also that African American fathers were less likely ($b = -0.541$) to be distrusted by mothers, controlling for other variables.

<< Table 3 About Here >>

Model 2 illustrates the importance of considering differences by race and ethnicity. In this model, the direct effects of incarceration were even stronger, indicating a considerable level of distrust of White fathers who were currently incarcerated or incarcerated prior to the child's birth. Currently incarcerated White fathers, for example, scored 1.48 standard deviations higher on mother's distrust than did never incarcerated Whites, controlling for other variables. The interaction terms indicated, however, that the effect of incarceration on distrust was considerably weaker for African American and Latino men. Among African American fathers, for example, current incarceration was associated with only 0.46 standard deviations ($1.483 - 1.028$) higher distrust by mothers, and there was no effect of current incarceration for Latino fathers ($1.483 - 1.516 = -0.04$)⁹. A similar pattern was observed in the case of incarceration prior to the birth of the child for African Americans. Note finally that there were no racial differences in levels of distrust of never incarcerated fathers, as indicated by the statistically insignificant race and ethnicity indicators. The results of model 2 are consistent with our expectation that the effects of incarceration would be less severe among African American and Latino families.

Discussion

Incarceration presents significant obstacles to nonresident fathers' ability to maintain contact with their children, resonating strongly with research on the collateral consequences of

incarceration for families and communities (Gabel & Johnston, 1997; Genty, 2002; Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999; Visher & Travis, 2003). Previous qualitative researchers suggested that nonresidential fathers often support their children through informal agreements with their child's mother (Edin, 1995; Furstenberg, 1995; Sullivan, 1992; Waller, 2002). For those nonresident fathers at risk of incarceration, however, we find current incarceration significantly interferes with establishment of informal agreements. Consistent with the work of Mincy and Nepomnyaschy (2005), incarceration is not associated with having a legal child support order.

The analyses also reveal significant differences across White, African American, and Latino fathers. For example, associations between past incarceration and contact with children were much larger for White fathers than for African American and Latino fathers. We have speculated that this pattern may be explained by several inter-related factors, including: racial and ethnic differences in the degree of stigma associated with incarceration, differences in interpretations of the criminal justice system, or differences in the ways families adapt to incarceration. For lower socioeconomic status African American and Latino families, who are disproportionately affected by incarceration (Blumstein, 1993; Pettit & Western, 2004) and more likely to distrust the criminal justice system (Hagan, Shedd, & Payne, 2005; Sampson & Bartusch, 1998), incarceration may be perceived as one of many externally imposed challenges. Our interpretation was supported by analysis of mothers' trust of fathers to take care of the child. Whereas incarceration was strongly associated with mothers' distrust of White fathers, African American and Latino mothers were no less likely to trust fathers with a history of incarceration.

Several methodological limitations suggest caution when interpreting the results. The measure of mother's distrust of the father may be a poor proxy for stigma and does not measure the more general stigma and discrimination faced by previously incarcerated African American and Latino men in the community. Moreover, the effects of incarceration observed here may be

due to unobserved differences in the severity of problems that led to incarceration or other characteristics. This remains a possibility, though exploratory analyses (not shown) adding controls for fathers' substance use, domestic violence, duration of incarceration, and type of offenses did little to the magnitude or statistical significance of the results presented.

Further research into racial and ethnic differences in the familial and parental experiences of incarcerated fathers is clearly required. In particular, researchers should examine the conditions under which incarceration is associated with mothers trust, paternal involvement, as well as children's outcomes. For example, the benefit to the child of an incarcerated father's involvement likely varies with offense severity and other risk factors (Jaffee, Moffitt, Caspi, & Taylor, 2003). Similarly, mothers' willingness to trust fathers may be greatly undermined, regardless of race or ethnicity, in cases of domestic violence (Waller & Swisher, 2006).

Policy Implications

The full implications of this research for policies, programs, and practitioners within the criminal justice and human services systems will depend on future research. Nevertheless, practitioners are encouraged to recognize the barriers to paternal involvement that incarceration imposes. The detrimental consequences of current incarceration for all men in the study suggest a continued need for improving fathers' access to children during incarceration. Previous studies have found that contacts between fathers and children minimize separation and reunification problems and lower men's rates of recidivism (Travis, McBride, & Solomon, 2005; Hairston, 1998). Several states and individual prison facilities have developed innovative programs to facilitate contact between prisoners and their children, to enhance fathers' parenting skills, and to help them overcome personal barriers to maintaining family relationships. In a recent survey of fatherhood programs within prisons, Shannon, Wakefield, & Uggen (2007) observed that these programs typically involve one or more of the following: parenting skills, support groups,

literacy/reading, special visitation arrangements, and re-entry/pre-release programs. They note, however, an absence of systematic evaluations of fatherhood programs.

One exception, as described by Pearson (2004), is an innovative re-entry program in Denver, Colorado that takes a comprehensive approach to dealing with the employment, child support, and family integration needs of paroled and previously incarcerated fathers. A six-month evaluation of 350 parents who voluntarily received services from the Work Family Center (WFC) showed the employment and earnings of parents increased, and increases in employment and wage withholding helped parents make higher child support payments. The results of the WTC evaluation also showed that the majority of parents wanted assistance with child support and felt they benefited from this assistance, particularly in receiving more information about their child support situation. Furthermore, parents expressed a desire for family integration services and to spend more time with their children. Shortly after beginning the program, some parents began taking advantage of legal and mental health services to reconnect with their children and negotiate their relationship with the child's other parent. Pearson suggests that a longer intervention would better assist parents in re-establishing bonds with their families.

Given the importance of re-establishing stable commitments after prison for reducing recidivism (Laub, Nagin, & Sampson, 1998), more widespread access to these types of comprehensive re-entry and re-unification programs offers the potential for improving outcomes for previously incarcerated fathers and their families (Travis, 2004). At minimum, policies should not increase barriers to incarcerated fathers' contact with their children or impose greater child support penalties for incarcerated men. Perhaps even more fundamentally, policy makers interested in promoting paternal involvement should also consider supporting programs that help fathers overcome economic and personal challenges that might otherwise lead to incarceration, as well as other alternatives to incarceration.

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Table 1. Informal and Legal Support Orders Regressed on Race/Ethnicity, Incarceration and Control Variables

Variables	Relative Risk Ratios from Multinomial Contrasts			
	Informal versus No Agreement		Legal versus No Agreement	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Race/Ethnicity^a</i>				
African American (non-Latino)	3.768 *	1.529	2.239 *	1.164
	(1.319, 10.755)	(0.316, 7.401)	(1.027, 4.881)	(0.334, 4.060)
Latino	2.162	0.651	2.379 *	1.130
	(0.719, 6.502)	(0.125, 3.389)	(1.031, 5.489)	(0.299, 4.280)
<i>Nativity/TANF receipt</i>				
Mother Born outside U.S.	0.477	0.454	0.207 **	0.210 **
	(0.159, 1.424)	(0.156, 1.320)	(0.064, 0.673)	(0.066, 0.670)
Mother Received TANF Since or at Birth	0.914	0.869	1.758 *	1.716
	(0.484, 1.724)	(0.471, 1.603)	(1.008, 3.068)	(0.992, 2.968)
<i>Incarceration History^b</i>				
Currently Incarcerated	0.087 ***	0.044 *	0.522	0.164
	(0.033, 0.227)	(0.002, 0.972)	(0.185, 1.467)	(0.020, 1.344)
Incarcerated Since or at Birth of Child	0.478	0.046 **	0.785	0.334
	(0.214, 1.067)	(0.005, 0.429)	(0.361, 1.707)	(0.054, 2.065)
Incarcerated Prior to Birth of Child	1.068	0.330	1.314	0.673
	(0.471, 2.422)	(0.039, 2.793)	(0.660, 2.614)	(0.148, 3.060)
<i>Relationship Status at Child's Birth^c</i>				
Cohabiting	3.307 *	3.555 *	1.983	1.972
	(1.178, 9.278)	(1.309, 9.649)	(0.879, 4.470)	(0.883, 4.406)
Non-Cohabiting Romantic Relationship	1.234	1.190	1.245	1.215
	(0.465, 3.267)	(0.467, 3.034)	(0.604, 2.566)	(0.589, 2.504)
<i>Incarceration X Race Interactions</i>				
African American X Currently Incarcerated		1.925		3.917
		(0.067, 55.280)		(0.329, 46.680)
Latino X Currently Incarcerated		1.849		2.709
		(0.051, 66.864)		(0.230, 31.858)
African American X Incarcerated Since or at Birth		6.163		2.469
		(0.539, 70.472)		(0.318, 19.188)
Latino X Incarcerated Since or at Birth		36.487 **		2.745
		(2.893, 460.153)		(0.261, 28.920)
African American X Incarcerated Prior to Birth		3.935		1.762
		(0.356, 43.466)		(0.314, 9.862)
Latino X Incarcerated Prior to Birth		2.827		2.426
		(0.203, 39.427)		(0.351, 16.773)
Pseudo Log-Likelihood	-930.470	-915.51	-930.470	-915.510
Pseudo R-squared	0.139	0.153	0.139	0.153

Note. N is 1002 in both models. Confidence intervals (95 %) in parentheses. Models control for mothers' age, fathers' education, fathers' employment, and relationship status at baseline.

^a White fathers are the reference category. ^b Never incarcerated is the reference category.

^c No romantic relationship is the reference category.

Table 2. Days of Contact Month Regressed on Race/Ethnicity, Incarceration and Demographic Controls

Variables	Regression Models		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Constant	9.089 ** (2.416, 15.763)	14.054 *** (6.895, 21.212)	12.405 *** (5.687, 19.123)
<i>Race/Ethnicity^a</i>			
African American (Non-Latino)	2.335 (-0.366, 5.036)	-3.089 (-8.382, 2.202)	-2.548 (-6.939, 1.842)
Latino	1.871 (-1.187, 4.930)	-3.769 (-9.914, 2.376)	-3.138 (-8.052, 1.776)
<i>Nativity</i>			
Mother Born outside U.S.	-4.201 * (-7.636, -0.767)	-3.905 * (-7.496, -0.313)	-3.88 * (-7.531, -0.230)
<i>Incarceration History^b</i>			
Currently Incarcerated	-7.814 *** (-10.234, -5.395)	-13.089 *** (-18.524, -7.655)	-12.201 *** (-16.369, -8.033)
Incarcerated Since or at Birth of Child	-2.357 (-5.617, 0.902)	-8.468 ** (-14.053, -3.419)	-7.209 ** (-11.889, -2.530)
Incarcerated Prior to Birth of Child	-1.583 (-4.339, 1.173)	-8.752 ** (-14.087, -3.419)	-7.585 ** (-12.030, -3.141)
<i>Incarceration X Race Interactions</i>			
African American X Currently Incarcerated		5.901 + (-0.152, 11.956)	4.199 (-1.114, 9.513)
Latino X Currently Incarcerated		5.114 (-1.627, 11.855)	4.085 (-1.378, 9.549)
African American X Incarcerated Since or at Birth		6.737 + (-0.571, 14.046)	5.971 + (-0.729, 12.672)
Latino X Incarcerated Since or at Birth		6.611 (-1.374, 14.598)	5.804 (-1.213, 12.820)
African American X Incarcerated Prior to Birth		7.538 * (1.363, 13.714)	6.831 * (1.392, 12.270)
Latino X Incarcerated Prior to Birth		8.712 * (1.380, 16.046)	7.451 * (0.765, 14.136)
<i>Relationship Status with Mother</i>			
Romantic Relationship at Year 3			8.977 ** (3.072, 14.882)
R-squared	0.154	0.165	0.209

Note. N is 993 in all models. Confidence intervals (95%) in parentheses. All models control for mothers' age, fathers' education, fathers' employment, and relationship status at baseline.

^a Non-Latino whites are the reference category. ^b Never incarcerated is the reference category.

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 3. Mother's Distrust of Fathers Regressed on Race/Ethnicity, Incarceration and Controls

Variables	Regression Models	
	(1)	(2)
Constant	0.889 (-0.053, 1.832)	0.485 (-0.456, 1.426)
<i>Race/Ethnicity^a</i>		
African American (Non-Latino)	-0.541 * (-0.953, -0.128)	-0.054 (-0.466, 0.358)
Latino	-0.358 (-0.797, 0.081)	0.134 (-0.328, 0.596)
<i>Nativity</i>		
Mother Born outside U.S.	-0.087 (-0.576, 0.402)	-0.112 (-0.590, 0.366)
<i>Incarceration History^b</i>		
Currently Incarcerated	0.506 * (0.095, 0.917)	1.483 *** (0.613, 2.352)
Incarcerated Since or at Birth of Child	0.470 * (0.113, 0.826)	0.657 (-0.188, 1.501)
Incarcerated Prior to Birth of Child	0.420 * (0.098, 0.742)	1.129 ** (0.370, 1.888)
<i>Incarceration X Race Interactions</i>		
African American X Currently Incarcerated		-1.028 * (-2.000, -0.056)
Latino X Currently Incarcerated		-1.516 ** (-2.634, -0.398)
African American X Incarcerated Since or at Birth		-0.098 (-1.061, 0.864)
Latino X Incarcerated Since or at Birth		-0.323 (-1.345, 0.700)
African American X Incarcerated Prior to Birth		-0.936 * (-1.779, -0.093)
Latino X Incarcerated Prior to Birth		-0.615 (-1.594, 0.364)
R-squared	0.247	0.270

Note. N is 785 in all models. Standard errors in parentheses. All models control for mothers' age, fathers' education and employment, and relationship status at baseline.

^a White fathers are the reference category. ^b Never incarcerated fathers are the reference category.
+ $p < .10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Endnotes

¹ See <http://www.human.cornell.edu/che/PAM/Outreach/Programs/upload/Rswisher-JFIpubref.pdf> for additional information about policies and programs affecting unmarried fathers with a history of incarceration.

² This disparity between unmarried and divorced mothers may be important for children's well-being because income from child support has been found to have greater benefits for children's educational attainment and cognitive outcomes than income from other sources (Argys, Peters, Brooks-Gunn, & Smith, 1998; Graham & Beller, 2002).

³ Pearson (2004) describes three judicial approaches to reducing or suspending child support awards during incarceration which reflect differences in whether courts regard incarceration as voluntary or involuntary unemployment. Whereas the "no justification approach" taken by courts in some states does not consider incarceration as justifiable condition for modifying a child support order, the "complete justification approach" considers incarceration sufficient justification for modifying a child support obligation, and the "one factor approach" considers incarceration one of several factors that could be considered for modifying a child support order. Even in states with these more flexible approaches, modification is not automatic and may be very difficult in practice (May, 2004).

⁴ Contrary to expectations, Western (2006) observed a larger negative association of incarceration with marriage for unmarried African American fathers, relative to White fathers.

⁵ Use of both parents' reports follows Western, Lopoo, & McLanahan (2004) and may help to offset the underreporting and undersampling of behavior considered to be socially undesirable. In their analysis of mothers' and fathers' agreement in the Fragile Families study, they reported agreement rates on fathers' incarceration status (e.g., he had never been to jail) varying between 76.0 for African American parents to 90.9 percent of White parents.

⁶ Interactions of race and ethnicity by incarceration status are used in some analyses. This results in 12 categories – 3 groups by 4 incarceration statuses. All but one of the categories contains at least 20 respondents. The exception is 6 fathers in the currently incarcerated White category.

⁷ In additional analyses (not shown), recently incarcerated Latinos had no higher odds of an informal support agreement than did never-incarcerated Latinos.

⁸ Our original hypotheses were that associations between incarceration and contact would be smaller for African American and Latino fathers, implying one-sided hypothesis tests. We report p-values more conservatively, however, as based on two-sided tests, and discuss p-values between 0.10 and 0.05 as approaching statistical significance.

⁹ In supplementary analyses, neither currently incarcerated Latinos nor those incarcerated prior to the birth of the child differed from never-incarcerated Latino fathers. Among African Americans, fathers incarcerated prior to the birth of the child did not differ from never incarcerated fathers.