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Parental Incarceration and Juvenile Delinquency: The Role of Gender

Kirstie S. Weyland

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

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ABSTRACT

Parental Incarceration and Juvenile Delinquency: The Role of Gender

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Master of Science

Parental incarceration is connected to many negative outcomes for children including negative externalizing behaviors. Most studies are not conclusive in determining whether maternal incarceration or paternal incarceration has a more detrimental impact on children. This study looks at a sample of 2,458 youth from the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study (FFCWS) and their parents and compares the gender of the incarcerated parent and that of the child to determine if there are differences in the risk of delinquent behavior among adolescent children. Results found that parental incarceration overall increased the risk of juvenile delinquency and that female children are at greater risk of delinquency if their mothers were incarcerated. Overall, the empirical results suggest that the gender of the parent and child matter in influencing delinquent behavior. Because maternal incarceration appears to be more consequential for female daughters' participation in delinquent acts, there may be a need to have more gendered research when studying juvenile delinquency and parental incarceration.

Keywords: parental incarceration, juvenile delinquency, gendered studies, Fragile Families

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Parental Incarceration and Juvenile Delinquency: The Role of Gender

INTRODUCTION

In the United States, mass incarceration has resulted in many negative consequences not only for those who are imprisoned, but also for their children. Today an estimated 1.7 to 2.7 million U.S. children, or 4%, have at least one parent serving time in prison (Raeder 2012). These children are more likely than others to face hardships such as limited social resources (Swisher and Shaw-Smith 2015), diminished family support (Turney and Wildeman 2018), weak social integration in their community (Leibbrand et al. 2019), and unstable neighborhood environments (Braman 2004). These hardships may be due to the absence of an incarcerated parent, which strains their economic and social situations. Children with an incarcerated parent are also at risk for mental health problems and unhealthy behaviors that often result from these strains (Davis and Shlafer 2016; Haskins and McCauley 2018; Hiolski, Eisenberg, and Shlafer 2019). Parental incarceration is also associated with an increased likelihood of children becoming involved in criminal behaviors (Kjellstrand and Eddy 2011), including illegal drug use (Roettger et al. 2011), physical violence, theft, and other risky and illegal acts (Antle, Gibson and Krohn 2019). Recognizing that parents' past or current incarceration affects whether offspring are involved in delinquent behavior is crucial to understanding the intergenerational transmission of criminality.

As more research has addressed the effects of parental incarceration on delinquent behaviors, researchers have also begun comparing the influences of incarcerated fathers versus incarcerated mothers. Between 1980 and 2010, male incarceration increased 419%, while female incarceration increased 646% (Glaze and Kaeble 2014). Thus, whereas earlier studies focused on paternal incarceration because of the higher rates of male incarceration, recent studies have

begun to address maternal incarceration and its effects on children's outcomes (Foster 2012; Burgess-Proctor, Huebner and Durso 2016; Sobba, Prochaska and Berthelot 2017; Turney and Wildeman 2018). In many contemporary homes the mother is the primary caregiver, thus, when a mother is incarcerated children experience substantial disruption to their lives (Raeder 2012). In addition, many families that experience parental incarceration are single mother households where children may have a greater attachment with their mothers than their fathers (Foster 2012). The gender of the parent who experiences incarceration can be important for predicting the effects on children (Dallaire 2007; Aaron and Dallaire 2010).

Few studies have examined the gender of the incarcerated parent in conjunction with the gender of the child, even though these differences are likely important (Burgess-Proctor et al. 2016; Swisher and Shaw-Smith 2015). This thesis therefore compares the gender of the incarcerated parent and the gender of the child to determine if there are differences in the risk of delinquent behavior among adolescent children.

BACKGROUND

Parental Incarceration

Approximately 53% of those incarcerated in the U.S. are parents, which suggests that many homes have at least one parent absent due to incarceration (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2010; Leeds et al. 2020). Parental incarceration is related to several risk factors that affect child functioning, including low family income, low parental education, poor health, and parental depression (Kjellstrand and Eddy 2011; Turney and Goodsell 2018). Although a parent's incarceration could be a positive influence if that parent abuses or endangers their children, parental incarceration is usually associated with negative outcomes among children. These range from negative internalizing behaviors such as depression, anxiety, and anger (Davis and Schlafer

2016; Murray, Farrington and Sekol 2012); to externalizing behaviors such as alcohol or drug use, acting out at home or in school, running away from home, and criminal activities (Antle et al. 2019; Haskins, Amorim and Mingo 2018; Kjellstrand and Eddy 2011). These negative experiences and behaviors increase the probability of subsequent problems such as involvement with the criminal justice system, family separation, poverty, low educational attainment, and an increased risk of homelessness (Braman 2004; Poehlmann 2005).

Child outcomes: Maternal vs. paternal effects

Although several studies have shown that parental incarceration affects the aforementioned outcomes, as well as others, research has not sufficiently addressed whether paternal or maternal incarceration is more consequential. Some studies, though, suggest that maternal incarceration has a more detrimental impact (Arditti 2012). Dallaire (2007) found that children of incarcerated mothers were two-and-half-times more likely to be incarcerated as adults than children with incarcerated fathers. Yet, Burgess-Proctor et al. (2016) noted that rates of criminal involvement were higher when the adult child was the same gender as the incarcerated parent. Other studies that focus on youthful discretions have determined that if a father is incarcerated for a nonviolent crime, boys tend to act more physically aggressive in their social relationships (Murray et al. 2012). Wildeman (2010) found that boys exhibited more aggressive behavior when their father was incarcerated whereas girls did not. Antle et al. (2019) determined that girls often felt more distressed and turned to internalizing behaviors when their mother went to prison, but fathers' incarceration had little effect. These studies suggest that the effects of parental incarceration on child externalizing and internalizing outcomes are gendered.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PARENTAL INCARCERATION

To understand why parental incarceration has detrimental effects on children, as well as whether the effects are gendered, I utilize general strain theory (GST) and a feminist pathways approach. GST addresses three sources of strain in the lives of youth: (1) the presence of negative stimuli, (2) the loss of positive stimuli, and (3) the failure to achieve positive goals (Agnew 1992; Agnew and Brezina 2019). The presence of these types of strains in one's life does not uniformly lead to delinquent behavior; rather, it often is a consequence of the negative emotions caused by strain. Even though all three sources of strain might affect delinquency, this study focuses on the second source by conceptualizing parental incarceration as the loss of positive stimuli (Agnew 1992). Along with the loss of the absent parent, parental incarceration may also lead to loss of family income, loss of a home or school if the child moves, loss of trust and closeness to a parent, and loss of family relationships and dynamics (Haskins 2015). This strain often leads to negative emotions, including anger, depression, fear, anxiety, and frustration, which can lead to criminal coping behaviors (Agnew 1992; Agnew and Brezina 2019).

GST researchers have also examined whether the strain-delinquency association is conditioned by gender. In an extension of GST that considered gender, Broidy and Agnew (1997) suggested that females experience more strains related to discrimination and oppression, childhood abuse, and interpersonal relationships, which lead to depression, anger, fear, guilt, and shame. These negative emotions are presumed to lead to coping behaviors such as drug and alcohol use. In contrast, Broidy and Agnew (1997) proposed that males are affected more by strains that involve material success, facing conflict with peers, and victimization. Because parental incarceration is associated with lower family income, many males with an incarcerated

parent may lack access to material possessions or may be crime victims due to family or neighborhood instability (Kjellstrand and Eddy 2011; Haskins 2015). In addition, males are more likely to show negative emotions such as anger or moral outrage, which then affect the likelihood of criminal behavior. Research on the gendered version of GST has yielded mixed results. Indeed, some research suggests that strain affects behaviors such as delinquency and drug use similarly among male and female adolescents (Hoffmann and Su 1997; Lee and Kim 2018). Other studies have found that males tend to react to strain with aggressive behaviors, whereas females tend to develop internalizing issues such as depression and anxiety, which may then lead to behaviors such as substance use and running away (e.g., Francis 2014; Jennings et al. 2009; Piquero and Sealock 2004).

The feminist pathways approach considers the unique experiences of the abuse and oppression of women and girls and how their coping mechanisms can place them on a path leading to delinquent and criminal behavior (Belknap 2001; Jones et al. 2018). Because females experience more abuse and oppression than males, they often suffer more lifelong trauma and abuse (Belknap 2001; Daly 1992). Victimization can start in early childhood and lead to juvenile and adult criminality later in life. Daly (1992) outlined five pathways to offending for women that involve earlier experiences and behaviors: abuse in the home, poverty, drug use, violent relationships with men, and the need for money. Both incarcerated mothers and female children who have an incarcerated parent are disproportionately likely to have victimization experiences (DeHart et al. 2014; McDaniels-Wilson & Belknap, 2008). These experiences can place women and girls on a trajectory of criminal behavior and, in some cases, to incarceration. Thus, based on both the gendered GST perspective and the feminist pathways approach, males and females

likely experience different pathways to crime because of the strain and trauma of having a parent incarcerated.

Gendered GST and feminist pathways may not be as helpful for understanding whether girls and boys are affected differently by the incarceration of a mother or a father. As mentioned earlier, some studies have discovered that boys exhibit more aggressive behavior when their father is incarcerated whereas girls tend to experience internalizing behaviors when their mother is in prison or jail. Yet, the incarceration of an opposite sex parent tends to have little effect on child outcomes (Antle et al. 2019; Murray et al. 2012; Wildeman 2010). Although GST and feminist pathways do not explain these differences well, research on parent-child attachment is useful. Meta-analyses have concluded, for instance, that weakened parent-child attachment, which can be caused by parental incarceration, tends to be more strongly associated with delinquent behavior when the parent and child are of the same gender (e.g., mother-daughter) (Hoeve et al. 2012; Johnson et al. 2017). Thus, examining the differential effects of parental incarceration on delinquent behavior as conditioned by the child's and the parents' gender is important.

SUMMARY AND HYPOTHESES

Research on parental incarceration and delinquent behavior among adolescent offspring shows a consistent pattern, with a heightened risk of these behaviors among youth whose parents are in prison or jail. What has not been revealed as clearly, however, is whether parental incarceration has stronger implications for male or female delinquency, or whether same gender vs. different gender parent-youth configurations matter. Research on GST and feminist pathways, as well as studies of parent-child relations and delinquent behavior, suggest the following hypotheses:

- H1: Parental incarceration is associated with more involvement in delinquent behaviors.
- H2: Parental incarceration is associated more strongly with delinquent behaviors among same gender parent-child pairings than among different gender parent-child pairings.

DATA AND MEASURES

Data

The data used to examine the hypotheses are from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS). The FFCWS is a population-based longitudinal study comprising six waves of data collection, starting with roughly 4,700 children born between 1998 and 2000 in 20 large U.S. cities. Baseline interviews were conducted primarily in the hospital shortly after the focal child's birth, with follow-ups after 1, 3, 5, 9 and 15 years. The 15-year follow-up took place between 2014-2017 (Reichman et al. 2001). The follow up interviews were conducted over the phone and utilized a variety of in-home assessments. The study design utilized a three-to-one sample of nonmarital to marital births, resulting in 3,600 unwed couples and 1,100 married couples. The goal of this study design was to learn more about the nature of relationships within "fragile families" in the United States. These families are generally made up of unmarried, poor, and/or minority families, often encapsulating multiple risk factors associated with the intersections of these statuses that signify vulnerability of family relationships. Thus, compared to the U.S. population, parents in the FFCWS are more likely to have reduced educational attainment, low income, minority race/ethnicity, and consist of unmarried couples (for a more thorough description of the sampling design and interview protocol, see Reichman et al. 2001).

To understand the effects of parental incarceration on delinquent behavior by gender, I combined baseline data with the core mother and father surveys at years 1, 3, and 5; primary caregiver surveys from years 3, 5, and 9; and child surveys from year 9 and 15. I used list-wise

deletion to remove entire cases that had missing values that included “refuse”, “don’t know” “missing”, “not asked” and “not in wave.” The final analytic sample includes 2,458 respondents of which 51.06% are male and 48.94% are female.

Measures

Parental Incarceration

Parental incarceration was measured separately for fathers and mothers. Maternal incarceration was coded 1 if the mother had spent any time in jail or prison in years 1, 3, 5, or 9. Paternal incarceration was denoted if the biological father of the child had spent any time in prison or jail in years 1, 3, 5, or 9.

Delinquent Behavior

I used adolescent self-reports of certain acts to determine involvement in delinquent behavior. At year 15, adolescent respondents were asked whether they had “never,” “1-2 times,” “3-4 times,” or “5 or more times” participated in 14 different delinquent acts in the past 12 months. I recoded each act into a dichotomous variable (0 = never, 1 = 1-5+ times) and then summed these variables to create a measure of cumulative delinquency, where 0 = no participation in any delinquent act and 14 = participation in all delinquent acts ($\alpha = .912$). The delinquent acts included “painting graffiti or signs on private/public places,” “deliberately damaging property that didn’t belong to you,” “taking something from a store without paying for it,” “getting in a serious physical fight,” “hurting someone badly enough they need bandages or medical care,” “driving a car without the owner’s permission,” “stealing something worth more than \$50,” “going into a house or building to steal something,” “threatening to us a weapon to get something,” “selling marijuana or other drugs,” “stealing something worth less than \$50,” “taking part in a group fight,” “being loud or unruly in a public place,” and “trying illegal drugs.”

Moderating Variables

The proposed moderating variables are the gender of the adolescent respondent and the gender of the incarcerated parent. Each is based on information from the baseline interviews and is coded as 0 = male and 1 = female.

Control Variables

Low Self-Control. Self-control is re-defined by Hirschi (2004) as “the tendency to consider the full range of potential costs of a particular act,” which means that low self-control is the tendency to be impulsive. The FFCWS utilizes Dickman’s (1990) scale to identify dysfunctional impulsivity among adolescent respondents. The adolescents were asked to respond to a series of six statements including: “I don't spend enough time thinking over a situation before I act,” “I often say and do things without considering the consequences,” “the plans I make don't work out because I haven't gone over them,” “I often make up my mind without taking the time to consider,” “I often say whatever comes into my head without thinking first,” and “I often get into trouble because I don't think before I act.” The possible responses were “strongly agree,” “somewhat agree,” “somewhat disagree,” and “strongly disagree.” Items were reverse coded so that higher scores reflected a lower level of self-control. Scores were then summed together into an additive index ranging from 0 to 18 ($\alpha = .81$).

Prior Delinquency. In the year 9 survey, children were asked if they were ever involved in seventeen delinquent acts with the response options coded as 0 = no and 1 = yes. Participants were asked if they had ever done any of the following: “purposely damaged or destroyed property,” “taken or stolen something,” “taken money at home,” “cheated on a school test,” “had a fist fight with another person,” “hurt an animal on purpose,” “gone into somebody's garden/yard/house/garage when not supposed to,” “ran away from home,” “skipped school

without an excuse,” “secretly taken a sip of wine, beer, or liquor,” “smoked marijuana, grass, pot, weed,” “smoked a cigarette or used tobacco,” “been suspended or expelled from school,” “written things or sprayed paint on walls or sidewalks or cars,” “purposely set fire to building, car, or other or tried to do so,” “avoided paying for things such as movies, bus or subway, or food,” and “thrown rocks or bottles at people or cars.” Responses to each question were added such that 0 = participation in no delinquent acts and 16 = participation in all delinquent acts (alpha = .99).

Parental Closeness. Poor attachment to one or both parents is considered a predictor of delinquency in adolescents while stronger attachments are associated with lower rates of delinquency (Hoeve et al. 2012). To measure parental closeness, I divided the variables available by the gender of the parent into two control variables: closeness to biological mother and closeness to biological father. Closeness to mother was measured by the following two questions: “How close do you feel with biological mother? (coded 1 = not very close, 2 = fairly close, 3 = quite close, 4 = extremely close)” and “How well do you and your mom share ideas/talk? (coded 1 = not very well, 2 = fairly well, 3 = quite well, 4 = extremely well).” These items were added up so the range was from 0 to 3, with higher scores indicating more closeness to biological mother. I followed the same pattern for closeness to biological father with the questions, “How close do you feel with biological father?” and “How well do you and biological father share ideas/talk?”. These items were added up together ranging from 0 to 3, with higher scores indicating more closeness to biological father.

Parental Monitoring. Better supervision by a parent has a negative association with delinquent behavior (Williams and Smalls 2015; Keijsers 2015; Schroeder, Osgood, and Oghia 2010). Parental monitoring was measured with the following three questions: “How often do you

spend time alone in the home without an adult present (coded 0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 2 = often),” Does your primary caregiver know what you do in your free time (coded 0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 2 = often),” and “Does your primary caregiver know what you spend your money on (coded 0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 2 = often).” These items were summed together ranging from 0 to 6, with higher scores indicating more supervision (alpha score = .52).

Peer Delinquency. Studies have shown that peers’ delinquency is often closely related to a youth’s own involvement in delinquent behavior (Reynolds and Crea 2015; Vitulano, Fite, and Rathert 2010). The focal child was asked in year 15 if their friends “often,” “sometimes,” or “never” participate in the following eight delinquent acts: “deliberately damaged property that did not belong to them,” “stealing something worth more than \$50,” “threatening to use a weapon to get something,” “selling marijuana or other drugs,” “stealing something worth less than \$50,” “drinking alcohol more than two times without parents,” and “trying illegal drugs. I recoded these responses into eight dichotomous variables (0 = never; sometimes and often = 1) and then added the acts together to create cumulative peer delinquency ranging from 0 (no participation in any delinquent act) to 7 (participation in all delinquent acts) (alpha = .91).

Neighborhood Collective Efficacy. Neighborhood collective efficacy was measured in year 15 by asking the focal child the following eight questions: 1) “People around here are willing to help their neighbors.” (2) “This is a close-knit neighborhood.” (3) “People in this neighborhood generally don’t get along with each other.” (4) “People in this neighborhood do not share the same values.” (5) “Neighbors would get involved if children skip school.” (6) “Neighbors would get involved if children spray paint buildings.” (7) “Neighbors would get involved if children show disrespect to adults.” (8) “Neighbors would get involved if fight broke out in front of the house.” The possible responses for each question ranged from strongly agree

to strongly disagree as well as very unlikely to very likely. Responses to the 8-items were summed together into an additive index ($\alpha = .75$) with higher scores indicating more neighborhood collective efficacy.

Neighborhood Social Cohesion. Neighborhood social cohesion was measured by asking the primary caregiver in year 15 the following four questions: 1) “People around here are willing to help their neighbors.” 2) “This is a close-knit neighborhood.” 3) “People in this neighborhood generally don’t get along with each other.” 4) “People in this neighborhood do not share the same values.” The possible responses for each question were “strongly agree,” “somewhat agree,” “somewhat disagree,” and “strongly disagree.” Responses to the 4-items were summed together into an additive index ($\alpha = .71$) with higher scores indicating more neighborhood cohesion.

Neighborhood Safety. To understand perceptions of neighborhood safety, the adolescent’s primary caregiver (PCG) was asked in year 15: “Have you ever been afraid to let your child outside because of neighborhood violence?” Affirmative responses were set equal to 1 with negative responses set equal to 0.

Neighborhood Mobility. Neighborhood mobility was measured by asking the adolescent’s primary caregiver in year 15 whether they had moved in the past four years. Affirmative responses were set equal to 1 with negative responses set equal to zero.

Demographic Controls. Child’s race was reported by the child and is made up of three dichotomous variables “non-Hispanic Black,” “Hispanic,” and “Other” race, with “non-Hispanic White” as the reference category. Child’s age is self-reported age in years. Mother’s marital status to the child’s biological father at baseline coded 1= married to child’s father; 0 = not

married. Mother's education at baseline was coded 0 = less than high school; 1 = high school or equivalent; 2 = some college/technical; 3 college or graduate.

Analytic Model

Delinquent behavior is a count variable that is over dispersed with a variance of 2.81 exceeding the mean of 1.07. I opted to use a negative binomial (NB) regression model to assess its association with the explanatory and control variables. A NB regression model estimates the association between the explanatory variables and the relative rate (RR) of the outcome variable, while adjusting for overdispersion in the residual distribution (Hoffmann 2016). For instance, a RR greater than one indicates that the rate of delinquent behavior is expected to increase with each one-unit increase in the explanatory variable. Yet an RR between zero and one suggests that the rate of delinquent behavior is expected to decrease with each one-unit increase in the explanatory variable. Stata 16's nbreg command is used to estimate the NB regression models.

RESULTS

Table 1 provides summary statistics for each of the variables used in the analysis. Forty-four percent of youth had an incarcerated father and six percent had an incarcerated mother. The mean rate of delinquent behavior was 1.07, with a range of 0-12. Youth on average scored about 8.7 on the self-control scale and reported a mean rate of 1.03 prior delinquent acts. Closeness to mother had a mean of 4.32, whereas closeness to father had a mean of 2.65 (ranges 0 – 6). Mean parental monitoring was 4.42 and peer delinquency was 0.93. Youth reported an average of 13.4 for neighborhood efficacy and 5.92 for neighborhood cohesion (mothers' reports). Finally, only 17.3% of adolescent's primary caregivers reported feeling safe in their neighborhood and 59.2% reported having moved in the past four years.

Youth in the sample were 49.8% female, with a racial/ethnic makeup of 18% White, 48% Black, 25.5% Hispanic/Latino, and 8% other. The average age of youth in year 15 was 15.6. About 25% of youth's biological mothers were married to their biological fathers. Finally, 31% of mothers did not complete high school, 31% graduated from high school or its equivalent, 25% completed some college or technical training, and 11% completed college or attended graduate school.

Table 2 provides mean rates of delinquency by incarcerated parents, non-incarcerated parents, and gender. The results showed that the average rate of delinquency was highest for males whose mothers were incarcerated (1.65) and lowest for females whose fathers were incarcerated (1.11). The mean rate of delinquency was slightly higher among males whose fathers were incarcerated (1.54) than among females whose mothers were incarcerated (1.43). For non-incarcerated parents, the rate of delinquency among males whose mother was incarcerated (1.27) was slightly lower than males whose father was incarcerated (1.10). Finally, among youth who did not have an incarcerated parent, the rate of delinquency among males was 1.08 and among females 0.60. Since these rates are lower compared to youth whose parents had been incarcerated, hypothesis 1 is tentatively supported.

Table 3 shows the results of the NB regression model. The coefficients are represented as incidence rate ratios (IRRs). An asterisk next to an IRR coefficient indicates the variable's coefficient was associated with a p-value less than 0.05, which I use to judge statistical significance. Adjusting for the other variables in the model, mean rate of involvement in delinquency was about 41% lower among females than among males. The IRRs for two key variables, incarcerated mother and incarcerated father, were not statistically significant. However, the interaction effects demonstrated that the rate of delinquency was about 47.5%

higher when female youth had a mother who was incarcerated relative to the comparison group of males whose mother was incarcerated. This was consistent with one of the guiding hypotheses that delinquency was expected to be higher when the gender of the youth matched the gender of the incarcerated parent.

Several of the other variables' IRRs were statistically significant. Each one unit decrease in low self-control was associated with an 8% increase in the rate of delinquency. Youth who reported being close to their mothers tended to be involved in fewer delinquent activities (IRR = 0.95, $p < 0.05$). Closeness to father had a weak association with delinquency, however. Each one unit increase in parental monitoring was associated with a 6.7% decrease in the rate of delinquent activities. Consistent with numerous criminological studies (Reynolds and Crea 2015) peer delinquency was associated with a higher rate of delinquency (IRR = 1.37, $p < 0.05$).

Among the neighborhood variables, youth whose primary caretakers reported that their neighborhoods were not safe were at an increased risk of being involved in delinquent behavior (IRR = 1.17, $p < 0.05$). Neighborhood efficacy and social cohesion had weak associations with delinquent behavior. However, the rate of delinquency among youth who had moved in the past four years was about 1.17 times the rate among youth who had not moved recently.

Three demographic control variables were associated with the rate of delinquency. First, the rate among Black youth was about 18% higher than the rate among White youth. Second, the rate of delinquency among youth whose mother was married to the biological father was about 15.5% lower than among other youth. Third, compared to youth whose mothers did not complete high school, the rate of delinquency among those whose mothers had a high school degree or equivalent was about 11% lower and among those whose mothers attended some college or technical school about 18% lower.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Research has shown consistently that the incarceration of a parent has a significant influence on children's lives, often in negative ways. However, few studies to date have examined whether the gender of the incarcerated parent combined with the gender of the child differentially shape adolescent delinquency. My first aim was to examine whether parental incarceration was associated with more involvement in delinquent behaviors. The empirical results did not support this assertion, at least generally, since neither maternal nor paternal incarceration was related to participation in delinquent behaviors as suggested from prior research (Aaron and Dallaire 2010; Kjellstrand and Eddy 2011; Roettger et al. 2011; Haskins 2015; Burgess-Proctor et al. 2016; Antle et al. 2019). This is somewhat surprising given the strong relationship between parental incarceration and negative life outcomes in adolescence. I speculate that the timing of the parent's incarceration, such as whether it occurred during early or later childhood or adolescence, how long it was, and difference in facilities (jail vs. prison) may play a much larger role than simply whether a parent was incarcerated in whether youth get involved in delinquency (Turney and Wildeman 2018). Future research that explores how the timing and duration of parental incarceration shapes youth delinquency would be beneficial.

The central aim of the current study was to examine whether parental incarceration was associated more strongly with delinquent behaviors among same gender parent-child groups than among different gender parent-child groups. My results found partial support for this assertion in that maternal incarceration was associated with a significantly increased rate of delinquent behaviors for girls. This finding is in line with work by Burgess-Proctor and colleagues (2016), who found that maternal incarceration had a stronger influence on daughters' arrests and convictions than on sons' arrests and convictions. Their study analyzed data from the

National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health), which included a large sample of around 15,000 adults who self-reported whether they had been arrested, convicted, or incarcerated. This is different from the FFCWS used in my analysis, which focused on adolescents ages 14-19 years old and relied on self-reports of delinquent behavior. Thus, the results of these two analyses lend support for the notion that female adolescents are placed at heightened risk of delinquent and criminal behaviors when their mothers are incarcerated.

Moreover, Arditti (2012) and Dallaire (2007) determined that maternal incarceration can be more detrimental and have greater influence in their children's participation in delinquent behavior and future arrest and incarceration. Overall, these results are in line with GST because the strain of parental incarceration might lead children into delinquent behaviors. A feminist pathways approach explains how women's and girls' experiences with abuse, victimization, and trauma can put them on a path of delinquency. Maternal incarceration is an example of a traumatic event for girls which can also lead them to participating in delinquent behaviors. These results show the importance of using a gendered analysis when studying parental incarceration and shows the promising way that researchers can combine GST and feminist pathways (Hoeve et al. 2012; Johnson et al. 2017).

There are other interesting findings worth noting. Youth who reported low self-control or peer delinquency had an increased risk of juvenile delinquency, which supports prior works (Hirschi 2004; Vitulano et al. 2010; Reynolds and Crea 2015). Compared to white youth, black youth were at increased risk of delinquent behavior. Lastly, closeness to mother and parental supervision were associated with a lower rate of delinquency, which is in line with previous research (Hoeve et al. 2012; Williams and Smalls 2015; Keijsers 2015; Schroeder et al. 2010). Closeness to father may have been less significant because the data have a high percentage of

children born to unmarried mothers and these women are often single primary caregivers (Reichman et al. 2001).

When it came to environmental and social factors such as neighborhood safety and neighborhood mobility, results indicated that if the primary caregiver had been afraid to let their child outside because of neighborhood violence and they had moved in the past four years, youth had an increased risk of juvenile delinquency. These findings are consistent with research by Leibbrand et al. (2019), who found that weak social integration in one's community was related to higher rates of crime and delinquent behaviors. Braman (2004) also found that unstable neighborhood environments where safety is an issue can also increase the perception that delinquent acts are acceptable or normal.

Overall, the empirical results suggest that the gender of the parent and child matter in shaping delinquent behavior. In particular, gender is a useful moderating variable that affects the association between parental incarceration and juvenile delinquency. Most importantly, maternal incarceration is consequential in influencing daughters' involvement in delinquent behavior. Utilizing a feminist pathways approach and GST together was beneficial in explaining why daughters may be at greater risk of delinquency because of their mother's incarceration. This current study helps to fill the gap in parental incarceration studies that do not compare both mothers' and fathers' influence on daughters' and sons' delinquency in adolescence.

Limitations and Future Research

The study has several limitations that warrant mention. The researchers used non-probability sampling to oversample children born to unmarried mothers in the FFCWS data set, (Reichman et al. 2001), yet a random sample might yield different results. Because the purpose of the Fragile Families study was to investigate the impact of absent fathers on families,

however, it was an appropriate method of sampling for the purpose and is a strength in studying the effects of parental incarceration. Because of oversampling, minority youth made up 50% of the sample, including a substantial group of non-Hispanic Black/African Americans. Although this is advantageous for studying life circumstances such as parental incarceration that disproportionately affect minority youth, it also makes it difficult to conduct a proper comparison between racial and ethnic groups (Agnew and Brezina 2012). Future research on this topic could study only Black participants or White participants, or when using the FFCWS researchers could use sampling weights to make it more nationally representative.

Finally, geographical identifiers were part of a restricted data set that would have been valuable in controlling for neighborhood effects in the study. Because my study had a limited time frame and resources, the restricted data were not accessed but should be used for additional research on parental incarceration.

Policy Implications

Despite these limitations, the current study has important policy implications, particularly for policies related to parental incarceration and juvenile delinquency prevention and response. Because maternal incarceration appears to be more consequential for female daughters' participation in delinquent acts, there may be a need to have more gendered research. Also, because of the increased rates of female incarceration, there may be a need to develop gender-specific programming in corrections to help address recidivism and mental health conditions of women (Bloom, Owen, and Covington 2003; Burgess-Proctor et al. 2016).

The current study also provides valuable information for social workers and policy makers with an accurate estimate of how many youths in metropolitan cities have an incarcerated parent which can aid in understanding the scope of this problem (Kjellstrand and Eddy 2011).

Aside from juvenile delinquency, this study also found other individual and social risk factors such as low self-control, peer delinquency, neighborhood safety, and neighborhood mobility. Interventions such as after school programs and mentoring programs such as Boys and Girls Club can help mediate some of the individual and social risks that youth face. Early intervention programs in childhood can also be a preventative measure to curb the problem of juvenile delinquency and future incarceration (Murray et al. 2012)

The seriousness of the mass incarceration of parents and its unintended consequences for children has been devastating in its effects on families. The reproduction of incarceration generationally is a serious matter to consider because incarceration is not helping to deter future crime. More investment in research regarding parental incarceration's multifaceted effects on children can aid many organizations and government leaders in preventing future crime from occurring as we identify things we can control. The investment in these children is an investment not only in our communities but in children who can overcome the consequences of their parents' incarceration with better options for their lives.

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TABLES

Table 1. Descriptive of the Sample. (N = 2,458)

Variables	Category (minimum, maximum)	Percent	Mean
Incarcerated Fathers	(0,1)	44.22	
Incarcerated Mothers	(0,1)	06.22	
Cumulative delinquency	(0, 12)		1.07
Gender	Male (ref. category)	51.06	
	Female	49.84	
Low Self-control	(0, 18)		8.70
Prior Delinquency	(0, 17)		1.03
Closeness to Mother	(0, 6)		4.32
Closeness to Father	(0, 6)		2.65
Parental Monitoring	(0, 6)		4.42
Peer Delinquency	(0, 7)		.932
Neighborhood Efficacy	(0, 24)		13.4
Neighborhood Social Cohesion	(0, 12)		5.92
Neighborhood Safety	(0, 1)	17.25	
Neighborhood Mobility	(0, 1)	59.24	
Demographic Controls			
Race/ethnicity	White (ref. category)	18.43	
	Black	48.09	
	Hispanic/Latino	25.47	
	Other	08.01	
Age at year 15			15.58
Mother's marital status	(0,1)	24.74	
Mother's education	Less than high school (ref. category)	31.16	
	High school or equivalent	31.86	
	Some college/technical	25.63	
	College or graduate	11.35	

Note. The data are from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS). For a thorough description of the sampling design and interview protocol see Reichman et al. (2001).

Table 2. Average Delinquency by Parental Incarceration and Gender. ($N = 2,458$)

Gender of the Child	Incarcerated Parents		Neither Parent Incarcerated
	Mother	Father	
Male	1.65	1.54	1.08
Female	1.43	1.11	0.60

Note. Numbers indicate the mean rate of delinquency by the gender of the youth and parents who were incarceration and parents who were not incarcerated.

Table 3. Negative Binomial Incidence Rate Ratios Predicting Juvenile Delinquency with Gender Interacting with Paternal Incarceration and Maternal Incarceration. ($N = 2,458$)

Variables	IRR	SE
Gender		
Female	0.592***	0.047
Incarcerated Mother	0.952	0.131
Incarcerated Father	1.130	0.086
Female and Incarcerated Mother	1.475*	0.298
Female and Incarcerated Father	1.138	0.124
Low Self-control	1.086***	0.007
Prior Delinquency	1.001	0.000
Closeness to Mother	0.954**	0.015
Closeness to Father	0.980	0.012
Parental Monitoring	0.933**	0.022
Peer Delinquency	1.365***	0.022
Neighborhood Efficacy	1.000	0.006
Neighborhood Social Cohesion	1.012	0.016
Neighborhood Safety	1.171*	0.080
Neighborhood Mobility	1.175**	0.068
Demographic Controls		
Race/ethnicity		
Black	1.179*	0.102
Hispanic/Latino	0.997	0.094
Other	1.054	0.127
Age at year 15	1.045	0.034
Mother's marital status	0.846*	0.068
Mother's education		
High school or equivalent	0.894**	0.058
Some college/technical	0.821**	0.061
College or graduate	0.838	0.103

Note. The results are from a negative binomial regression model that regressed delinquency on parental and maternal incarceration using incidence rate ratios. Reference categories: male, White, mother's education < high school; IRR= incidence rate ratio.

†*** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$.