The Impact of Partner Incarceration on Women’s School Completion

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Abstract

A growing body of literature documents the spillover effects of mass incarceration on families as well as the implications of this experience for social stratification. We have learned that, for young people, having an incarcerated parent is negatively associated with graduating from high school and college. However, little research has considered the impact of having an incarcerated romantic partner on adult women’s education. This paper uses data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study and event history analysis to examine 1) the relationship between partner incarceration and women’s completion of education and training programs and 2) mediators and moderators of this relationship (e.g., health, systems of support). The data provide detailed information about school and training program completion at every survey wave and thus an opportunity to explore different types of educational outcomes among an already disadvantaged group at a similar stage in the life course. This project sheds light on how involvement with the penal system via the fathers of their children may contribute to racial and class inequality in women’s educational access and achievement and long term economic outcomes.