

Father Incarceration and its role on Coparenting Support and Parenting Stress

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Abstract

The literature regarding incarceration fails to include the profound effects that incarceration has on parenting relationships and behavior. The literature tends to focus on how incarceration influences marital/romantic relationships, parent-child relationships, and child development. The overarching research goal is to investigate how incarceration influences coparenting support and parenting stress. The data was drawn from The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing (FFCW) Study, a national longitudinal study that follows a disadvantaged urban cohort of 4,898 parents and their children. The analysis focused on how incarceration influences coparenting support and parental stress among four subsamples of parents (n=2008): parents where the father had no incarceration experience (n=1868), parents where the father had experienced incarceration (n=140), parents where the father had experienced incarceration once (n=100), and parents where the father has experienced incarceration two or more times (n=40). The analyses consisted of conducting means and standard deviations on coparenting support and parenting stress from the sample of fathers and mothers. Two-sample, mean comparison t-tests were used to estimate the mean differences in coparenting support (and parenting stress) between father and mother reports. In addition, one-way ANOVAs were used to estimate the mean differences in coparenting support and parenting stress among subsamples of father reports (and subsamples of mother reports). The results indicate that among a subsample of fathers, fathers who had experienced incarceration reported less coparenting support and more parenting stress compared to fathers who never experienced incarceration. Among mothers, mothers whose spouse/partner had experienced incarceration reported less coparenting support compared to mothers whose spouse/partner had never experienced incarceration. Interventions should focus on assisting families when the father is incarcerated and when he reunites with his family.

Introduction

The rate of incarceration has drastically increased over the past few years. As of 2003, more than 2 million people were in federal and state prisons in the United States (Arditti, Smock, & Parkman, 2005). In 1991 there were half a million children with an incarcerated parent. In 2000 that number had risen to 1.5 million children (Day, Acock, Bahr, & Arditti, 2005; Hanlon, Carswell, & Rose, 2006). Sixty percent of males that are incarcerated are fathers (Arditti, Smock,

& Parkman, 2005), and 75 percent of women in prison have children (84% in federal prisons and 64% in state prison; Tuerk & Loper, 2006). Ninety percent of incarcerated fathers report that their children remain with their mother (Tuerk & Loper, 2006). Most research focuses on how father (or male) incarceration influences marital/romantic relationships (Hairston, 1998; Maccoby, Dephner, & Mookin, 1990), parent-child relationships (Hairston, 1998) and child development (Day, Acock, Bahr, & Arditti, 2005; Hanlon, Carswell, & Rose, 2006). Less research focuses on how father incarceration influences parenting relationships, such as coparenting support, and parenting behavior, such as parenting stress. Focusing on coparenting support and parenting stress is extremely important because 40-69 percent of men that are in jail have an average of two children (Hairston, 1998).

Coparenting is the relationship that parents negotiate roles, responsibilities, and contributions to their child (Margolin, Gordis, & John, 2001). Research on coparenting emerged from the divorce literature and its focus on parents' abilities to maintain cooperative parenting after marital dissolution (Ahrns, 1981; Hoffman, 1995; Maccoby, 1990). Divorced parents may find it difficult to agree on custodial arrangement. This lack of agreement may result in coparenting conflict over arrangement, visitation, and household rules. If parents hold hostility towards one another it is highly unlikely that an arrangement will be made (Maccoby, Dephner, & Mookin, 1990). Further, parents who engage in competitive parenting usually results in one parent having a less secure attachment with their child since the parenting style results in an alliance being formed with the child and other parent (Caldera & Lindsey, 2006). On the other hand, parents who engage in cooperative parenting and are able to agree on a residential arrangement for the child show higher levels of parental satisfaction. On average divorced fathers perceived their coparenting relationship as supportive and are satisfied with the quality of their coparental relationship when compared to mothers (Ahrns, 1981). Despite obtaining the satisfaction of being in control of their child's life and being able to interact daily with the child, custodial parents may experience resentful feelings as a result of being left to raise the child on their own and being left with all the parental responsibilities (Maccoby, Dephner, & Mookin, 1990). This can be especially true in situations where one of the parents is incarcerated. Coparenting conflict and support can also have a profound influence on the child's development, with conflict placing children at risk of developing behavioral or psychological problems.

Parenting stress is defined as aversive psychological reaction to the demands of being a parent (Deater-Deckard, 1998). A major contribution to parenting stress is finances. When a parent is incarcerated the other parent struggles to fulfill their obligations and finds it difficult to maintain a steady income. As a result, a number of incarcerated families depend highly on public assistance (e.g., welfare or food stamps) (Arditti, Lambert-Shute, & Joest, 2003). The parenting strain that is experienced by the single parent can be minimized through a support system (Arditti, Lambert-Shute, & Joest, 2003).

The goals of this study were to examine how incarceration status influences coparenting support and parenting stress. The three overarching aims were: (1) to investigate whether fathers or mothers report greater coparenting support, (2) to investigate whether fathers or mothers experience greater parenting stress, (3) to investigate whether father incarceration status influences the amount of coparenting support received and parenting stress experienced among four subpopulations of parents. The specific research questions and hypotheses are as follows:

Research Question 1a: Among a sample of fathers and mothers who reported on coparenting support, which group reported receiving greater coparenting support?

Research Question 1b: When comparing father and mother reports of coparenting support received, is there a significant difference?

Hypothesis 1: It is hypothesized that fathers will report significantly higher coparenting support than mothers.

Research Question 2a: Among a sample of father and mothers who reported on parenting stress, which group reported experiencing greater parenting stress?

Research Question 2b: When comparing father and mother reports of experiencing parenting stress, is there a significant difference?

Hypothesis 2: It is hypothesized that mothers will report significantly higher scores on parenting stress than fathers.

Research Question 3a: When comparing fathers who report that they have never been incarcerated to those who have experienced incarceration, which group of fathers report greater coparenting support received?

Research Question 3b: When comparing father reports of coparenting support received, is there a significant difference between fathers who have never been incarcerated to those that have?

Hypothesis 3: It is hypothesized that fathers who have never been incarcerated will report significantly higher levels of coparenting support received.

Research Question 4a: When comparing fathers who report that they have been incarcerated once to those who have been incarcerated two or more times, which group of fathers report greater coparenting support received?

Research Question 4b: When comparing father reports of coparenting support received, is there a significant difference between fathers who have been incarcerated once to those who have been incarcerated two or more times?

Hypothesis 4: It is hypothesized that there is no significant difference on the amount of coparenting support received between fathers who were incarcerated once and those who were two or more times.

Research Question 5a: Among mothers whose spouse/partner has never been incarcerated compared to those whose spouse/partner have been incarcerated, which group of mothers report greater coparenting support received?

Research Question 5b: When comparing mother reports of coparenting support received, is there a significant difference between mothers whose spouse/partner has never been incarcerated to those whose spouse/partner has been incarcerated?

Hypothesis 5: It is hypothesized that mothers who have never had a spouse/partner incarcerated report significantly higher coparenting support received.

Research Question 6a: Among mothers whose spouse/partner have been incarcerated once compared to mothers whose spouse/partner has been two or more times, which group of mothers report greater coparenting support received?

Research Question 6b: When comparing mother reports of coparenting support received, is there a significant difference between mothers whose spouse/partner has been incarcerated once to those mothers whose spouse/partner has been incarcerated two or more times?

Hypothesis 6: It is hypothesized that there is no significant difference on the amount of coparenting support received between mothers whose spouse/partner have been incarcerated once compared to mothers whose spouse/partner have been incarcerated two or more times.

Research Question 7a: Among a sample of fathers and mothers who report that the father has never been incarcerated, which parent reports greater coparenting support received?

Research Question 7b: When comparing father and mother reports of coparenting support received, is there a significant difference between the two reports when the father has never experienced incarceration?

Hypothesis 7: It is hypothesized that fathers experience significantly greater coparenting support compared to mothers when the father has never experienced incarceration.

Research Question 8a: Among father and mothers who report that the father has been incarcerated, which parent reports greater coparenting support received?

Research Question 8b: When comparing father and mother reports of coparenting support received, is there a significant difference between the two reports when the father has experienced incarceration?

Hypothesis 8: It is hypothesized that fathers experience significantly greater coparenting support received compared to mothers when the father has experienced incarceration.

Research Question 9a: Among a sample of fathers and mothers who report that the father has been incarcerated once, which parent reports greater coparenting support received?

Research Question 9b: When comparing father and mother reports of coparenting support received, is there a significant difference between the two reports when the father has experienced incarceration once?

Hypothesis 9: It is hypothesized that fathers experience significantly greater coparenting support received compared to mothers when the father has experienced incarceration once.

Research Question 10a: Among father and mother reports who report that the father has been incarcerated two or more times, which parent reports greater coparenting support received?

Research Question 10b: When comparing father and mother reports of coparenting support received, is there a significant difference between the two reports when the father has experienced incarceration two or more times?

Hypothesis 10: It is hypothesized that fathers experience greater coparenting support received compared to mothers when the father has experienced incarceration two or more times.

Research Question 11a: When comparing fathers who report that they have never been incarcerated to those who have experienced incarceration, which group of fathers report greater parenting stress?

Research Question 11b: When comparing father reports of parenting stress, is there a significant difference between fathers who have never been incarcerated to those that have?

Hypothesis 11: It is hypothesized that fathers who have been incarcerated will report significantly higher levels of parenting stress.

Research Question 12a: When comparing fathers who report that they have been incarcerated once to those who have been incarcerated two or more times, which group of fathers report greater parenting stress?

Research Question 12b: When comparing father reports of parenting stress, is there a significant difference between fathers who have been incarcerated once to those who have been incarcerated two or more times?

Hypothesis 12: It is hypothesized that there is no significant difference on the amount of parenting stress between fathers who were incarcerated once and those who were two or more times.

Research Question 13a: Among mothers whose spouse/partner has never been incarcerated compared to those whose spouse/partner have been incarcerated, which group of mothers report greater parenting stress?

Research Question 13b: When comparing mother reports of parenting stress, is there a significant difference between mothers whose spouse/partner has never been incarcerated to those whose spouse/partner has been incarcerated?

Hypothesis 13: It is hypothesized that there is no significant difference on the amount of parenting stress between mothers whose spouse/partner have never been incarcerated compared to mothers whose spouse/ partner have been incarcerated.

Research Question 14a: Among mothers whose spouse/partner have been incarcerated once compared to mothers whose spouse/partner has been two or more times, which group of mothers report greater parenting stress?

Research Question 14b: When comparing mother reports of parenting stress, is there a significant difference between mothers whose spouse/partner have been incarcerated once to those mothers whose spouse/partner have been incarcerated two or more times?

Hypothesis 14: It is hypothesized that there is no significant difference regarding parenting stress between mothers whose spouse/partner have been incarcerated once compared to mothers whose spouse/partner have been incarcerated two or more times.

Research Question 15a: Among a sample of fathers and mothers who report that the father has never been incarcerated, which parent reports greater parenting stress?

Research Question 15b: When comparing father and mother reports of parenting stress, is there a significant difference between the two reports when the father has never experienced incarceration?

Hypothesis 15: It is hypothesized that mothers experience significantly greater parenting stress compared to fathers when the father has never experienced incarceration.

Research Question 16a: Among father and mothers who report that the father has been incarcerated, which parent reports greater parenting stress?

Research Question 16b: When comparing father and mother reports of parenting stress, is there a significant difference between the two reports when the father has experienced incarceration?

Hypothesis 16: It is hypothesized that there is no significant difference regarding parenting stress between fathers and mothers when the father has experienced incarceration.

Research Question 17a: Among a sample of fathers and mothers who report that the father has been incarcerated once, which parent reports greater parenting stress?

Research Question 17b: When comparing father and mother reports of parenting stress, is there a significant difference between the two reports when the father has experienced incarceration once?

Hypothesis 17: It is hypothesized that there is no significant difference regarding parenting stress between mothers and fathers when the father has experienced incarceration once.

Research Question 18a: Among father and mother reports who report that the father has been incarcerated two or more times, which parent reports greater parenting stress?

Research Question 18b: When comparing father and mother reports of parenting stress, is there a significant difference between the two reports when the father has experienced incarceration two or more times?

Hypothesis 18: It is hypothesized that there is no significant difference regarding parenting stress between mothers and fathers when the father has experienced incarceration two or more times.

Methods

Data Set. The data was drawn from The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing (FFCW) Study. FFCW is a national longitudinal study, which follows a disadvantaged urban cohort of 4,898 parents and their children. This study takes place in twenty U.S. cities with populations exceeding 200,000. The baseline data in this study was collected between 1998 and 2000. Mothers and fathers were interviewed separately within 24 hours of their child's birth (1,186 marital births and 3,712 nonmarital births) and again at ages 1, 3, and 5 years from the child's birth. For further information on sample and design of the study please see Reichman, Teitler, Garfinkel, and McLanahan (Reichman, Teitler, Garfinkel, & McLanahan, 2001).

The analysis sample was selected based on families who had complete data on father's incarceration at all four waves of data collection (1400 cases excluded). Of this subsample, we excluded fathers or mothers who did not have complete information on the independent variables ($n=1152$) and the covariates ($n=338$). The analyses sample consists of 2008 families.

Dependent Variables

Coparenting Support. Fathers and mothers responded individually to the extent in which they felt supported in the parenting role by the other parent using a 1 = *always* to 3 = *never* scale (e.g., "How often does [your partner] support you in the way you want to raise your child?"). Items were reverse coded and summed to create a composite score representing higher coparenting support at the fourth data collection point (i.e. Year 5 of the child) data collection point ($\alpha_F = .80$, $\alpha_M = .89$).

Parenting Stress. Fathers and mothers reported individually on 4 items describing parenting stress on a 1 = *strongly agree* to 4 = *strongly disagree* scale (e.g., "I feel trapped by my responsibilities as a parent to the focal child"). Items were reverse coded and summed to create a composite score to represent greater parenting stress ($\alpha_F = .65$, $\alpha_M = .66$).

Independent Variable

Incarceration History. To offset the possibility of underreporting and under sampling father's incarceration status, I employed measures created by the FFCW project. At each wave of data collection, a father is coded as experiencing incarceration if either the father or mother reported that the father had spent time in jail. Based on this information, items were sum to create a composite measure indicating the number of times a father was incarcerated during the data collection. The use of both parents' reports of incarceration has been used by others (Swisher & Waller, 2008; Western, Lopoo, & McLanahan, 2004).

Covariates. Variables capturing father, mother, and household characteristics that relates to incarceration and coparenting support and parenting stress were included for descriptive purposes (Appendix Table 1). Father's and mother's reported their age (in years), education (1=High School degree or more; 0=Less than high school diploma), employment (number of weeks employed in the past year), and race (1=Non-Hispanic White; 2=Non-Hispanic Black; 3=Hispanic; 4=Other race). Household characteristics were reported by the mother and consisted of marital status at birth (1=Mother is married to biological father; 2=Mother is cohabitating with biological father; 3=Mother is not living with the biological father, but is in a relationship with the biological father; 4=Mother has no relationship with the biological father), family structure over the first 5 years of the child's life (1=Stable married to biological father; 2=Stable cohabitating with biological father; 3=Stable single; 4=Union formation with biological father; 5=Union dissolve with biological father; 6=Unstable relationship with biological father), poverty status (1=less than 100% of Federal Poverty Line (FPL); 2=100-299% of FPL; 3=300% of FPL), number of children in the household, grandparent residing is in the household(1=yes; 0=no), father has nonresident children(1=yes; 0= no), and mother has nonresident children(1= yes; 0= no).

Analytic Strategy. STATA 11.0 was used to conduct (1) descriptive statistics and (2) mean differences. To estimate the answers to research questions 1a -18a means and standard deviations were calculated from a sample of fathers and mothers. A two-sample, mean comparison t-test was used to estimate the mean differences in research questions 1b, 2b, 7b, 8b, 9b, 10b, 15b, 16b, 17b, and 18b (Aim 1, 2, and 3). A one-way ANOVA was used to estimate the mean differences in research questions 3b, 4b, 5b, 6b, 11b, 12b, 13b, and 14b (Aim 3).

Results

Table 1, 2, 3, and Appendix Table 1 presents means and standard deviations of independent and dependent variables, and covariates. The independent variable included incarceration (Table 1). Fathers who have never experienced incarceration accounted for 93 percent of the full sample and fathers who have experienced incarceration accounted for 7 percent of the full sample.

The covariates included father, mothers, and household characteristics (Appendix Table 1). On average fathers' were 28 years of age ($sd= 7.12$) mothers were three years younger (mean= 25.96 with a $sd= 6.07$). Approximately three quarters of the fathers (73 percent) and mothers (72 percent) obtained a high school education or more. Fathers reported 43 weeks of employment in the past year. Forty-four percent of fathers are Non-Hispanic Black, 26 percent

Hispanic, 25 percent Non-Hispanic White, and 3 percent other race. Forty-two percent of mothers are Non-Hispanic Black, 27 percent Non-Hispanic White, 25 percent Hispanic, and 4 percent other race. At the time of the child's birth, 38 percent of mothers were cohabitating with the biological father, 35 percent were married to the biological father, 20 percent were in a relationship with the biological father but not living together, and 4 percent had no relationship with the biological father. Over the first five years of the child's life, 31 percent of mothers were in a stable marriage with the biological father, 18 percent formed a union with biological father (i.e. formed a marriage or cohabiting relationship with the biological father), 15 percent dissolved a union with biological father, 14 percent had an unstable relationship with the biological father, 10 percent were stably single, and 9 percent were stably cohabitating with the biological father. Twenty-eight percent of families were below the Federal Poverty Line (FPL), 40 percent ranged from 100-299 percent of the FPL, and 31 percent were at 300 percent FPL. On average there were 2.49 children in the household and 9 percent of mothers reported that a grandparent lived in the household. Thirty percent of fathers reported having nonresident children, while 31 percent of mothers reported having nonresident children.

To address aim one, a paired sample T-test was conducted to determine whether a mean difference exists in father and mother reports of coparenting support (Table 2). The mean of father reports is 2.68 ($sd=.36$) and the mean for mother's reports is 2.57 ($sd=.45$). A significant difference was found in father reports of coparenting support when compared to mothers ($t(2007) = 10.8, p < .001$), indicating that fathers report higher levels of coparenting support.

To address aim two, a paired sample T-test was calculated to determine whether a mean difference in father and mother reports of parenting stress exists (Table 3). The mean of father reports is 2.01 ($sd=.69$) and the mean for mother reports is 2.15 ($sd=.65$). A significant difference was found in mother reports of parenting stress when compared to fathers ($t(2007) = -7.29, p < .001$). This indicates that mothers report higher levels of parenting stress.

To address aim three, a series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted to make comparisons among fathers (Tables 4a and 5a) and to make comparisons among mothers (Tables 4b and 5b). The first comparison consisted of comparing levels of coparenting support among fathers. In Table 4a, a significant mean difference was found between fathers who have never been incarcerated compared to those who have experienced incarceration ($F(1, 2006) = 8.43, p < .01$). Fathers who had never been incarcerated ($m= 2.69, sd=.36$) reported higher rates of coparenting support than fathers who had experienced incarceration ($m= 2.61, sd=.36$). When comparing coparenting support between fathers who experienced incarceration once to those who experienced incarceration two or more times, no significant difference was found ($F(1, 138) = 0.22, p > .05$) on the amount of coparenting support received.

Table 4b focuses on mother reports of coparenting support. A significant difference was found when comparing levels of coparenting support between mothers who have never had a spouse/partner incarcerated to those whose spouse/partner have been incarcerated ($F(1, 2006) = 8.70, p < .01$). Mothers whose spouse/partner have never been incarcerated ($m= 2.59, sd=.44$) reported higher rates of coparenting support than mothers whose spouse/partner experienced incarceration ($m= 2.36, sd=.55$). No significant difference was found on the amount of coparenting support between mothers whose spouse/partner have been incarcerated once compared to those mothers whose spouse/partner had been incarcerated two or more times ($F(1, 138) = 0.12, p > .05$).

In addition to conducting one-way ANOVAs to address aim three, paired sample T-tests were performed to compare subgroups of fathers and mothers on coparenting support (Table 4c)

and parenting stress (Table 5c). In Table 4c, among families where the father had never experienced incarceration, fathers reported greater levels of coparenting support ($m = 2.69, sd = .36$) compared to mothers ($m = 2.59, sd = .44$) ($t(1867) = 9.66, p < .001$). A significant difference in coparenting support was found among families where the father had never experienced incarceration. Results indicate that fathers reported greater levels of coparenting support ($m = 2.61, sd = .36$) compared to mothers ($m = 2.36, sd = .55$) ($t(139) = 5.46, p < .001$). Coparenting mean differences were conducted among fathers and mothers where fathers had experienced incarceration once. A significant difference was found in father reports of coparenting support ($m = 2.61, sd = .35$) compared to mothers ($m = 2.41, sd = .55$) ($t(99) = 3.64, p < .001$). This suggests that fathers report higher levels of coparenting support compared to mothers. Last, among families where the father had experienced incarceration two or more times, mean differences were conducted between father and mother reports of coparenting support. Fathers reported significantly high levels of coparenting support ($m = 2.62, sd = .39$) compared to mothers ($m = 2.23, sd = .54$) ($t(39) = 4.51, p < .001$).

Table 5a focuses on comparing reports of parenting stress among fathers. A one-way ANOVA was used to compare levels of parenting stress between fathers who have never been incarcerated to those who have experienced incarceration. The analysis revealed that fathers who have experienced incarceration reported significant higher levels of parenting stress ($m = 2.21, sd = .68$) compared to fathers who have never been incarcerated ($m = 2.0, sd = .68$) ($F(1, 2006) = 12.08, p < .001$). No significant difference in reports of parenting stress was found between fathers who had experienced incarceration once to those who had experienced incarceration two or more times ($F(1, 138) = 1.05, p > .05$).

Table 5b focuses on mother reports of parenting stress. A one-way ANOVA was used to compare levels of parenting stress between mothers whose spouse/partner have never been incarcerated compared to those mothers whose spouse/partner have experienced incarceration. No significant difference was found ($F(1, 2006) = 3.15, p > .05$) on the amount of parenting stress experienced between the two subgroup of mothers. Further, no significant difference was found ($F(1, 138) = 0.81, p > .05$) on the amount of parenting stress received between mothers whose spouse/partner have been incarcerated once compared to those mothers whose spouse/partner had been incarcerated two or more times.

A series of paired sample T-test were calculated to compare subgroups of fathers and mothers on parenting stress (Table 5c). Among families where the father has not experienced incarceration, fathers reported significantly less parenting stress ($m = 1.99, sd = .68$) compared to mothers ($m = 2.15, sd = .65$) ($t(1867) = -7.48, p < .05$). Among families where the father has experienced incarceration, no significant difference was found in father reports of parenting stress ($m = 2.20, sd = .68$) compared to mothers ($m = 2.25, sd = .67$) ($t(139) = -0.52, p > .05$). Among families where the father has been incarcerated, once, no significant difference was found in father reports of parenting stress ($m = 2.17, sd = .68$) compared to mothers ($m = 2.28, sd = .71$) ($t(99) = -1.10, p > .05$). Last, no significant difference was found in father reports of parenting stress ($m = 2.30, sd = .66$) compared to mothers ($m = 2.16, sd = .57$) ($t(39) = 1.00, p > .05$) among families where the father has been incarcerated two or more times.

Conclusion

The results from this study illustrated how father incarceration is associated with how fathers and mothers rate the coparenting support they receive and the amount of parenting stress they experience. Overall, fathers reported higher levels of coparenting support and lower levels of parenting stress compared to mothers. Among the four subsamples of parents, fathers reported greater coparenting support compared to mothers regardless of incarceration status. Among parents where the father has not experienced incarceration, mothers reported greater parenting stress compared to fathers. However, incarceration status influenced the amount of coparenting support received and parental stress experienced when comparing reports among a sample of fathers and reports among a sample of mothers. Among fathers, fathers who had experienced incarceration reported less coparenting support and more parenting stress compared to fathers who never experienced incarceration. Among mothers, mothers whose spouse/partner had experienced incarceration reported less coparenting support compared to mothers whose spouse/partner had never experienced incarceration.

Parenting programs are offered in many prisons with the goal of enhancing the relationship between the parent and child during and after incarceration. Current interventions focus on providing the incarcerated parent with education programs to assist them in gaining healthy interactions with their children. Although education programs differ among institutions many include parenting classes, programs allowing the inmate and child to live together, relationship-building activities, parent counseling, and post-release assistance (Loper & Tuerk, 2006). Future interventions should continue to focus on assisting fathers to assume parenting roles thereby increasing the mother's levels of coparenting support and decreasing their levels of stress. In order for future interventions to be proficient, trained professionals should assist fathers in parenting skills and role-playing to gain hands on experience in child-rearing through weekly sessions throughout their sentence. After the father is released, weekly sessions should continue with both parents.

There were several limitations to this study. The first limitation was the location from which the sample was selected. Being that the majority of the sample is urban, there was a lack of information on those who live in rural areas. Individuals who live in rural areas also need assistance; however, they may be unable to receive adequate assistance as a result of limited (or a lack of) parenting support programs in rural areas. Second, participants in the survey self-reported the father's incarceration history. Thus, self-reporting bias may be present as participants in surveys have a tendency to present themselves as favorable as possible, and therefore, are less likely to state that they have experienced incarceration. The use of administrative data may present more accurate reports of incarceration history. The third limitation to this study was self-selection into the study. Because the data is taken from a longitudinal study, attrition is present. Thus, families who have faced significant hardships, such as fathers experiencing multiple incidents of incarceration, probably have dropped out of the study. The results are more biased towards families who have not experienced incarceration and it is likely that the results are also biased towards families who have more financial and emotional resources.

Future research should explore how mother's incarceration influences coparenting support and parenting stress among both parents and grandparents. This is important to observe since grandparents are usually the caretakers of children when the mother is incarcerated. Future research should also focus on other families that experience separation from a family member,

such as military families. Being separated is the biggest dissatisfaction spouse/partners have with military life. Separation can cause coparenting conflict because the deployed parent is forced to place their military career ahead of quality family time. This also results in the civilian partner being responsible for all parental duties, which can result in experiencing parenting stress. Thus, research focused on military families could influence the research on families who experience incarceration and vice versa.

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Table 1: Percentage of Fathers With and Without Incarceration History (N = 2008)

Never In Incarcerated	93%
Incarcerated during the lifetime of the focal child in the study	7%
Incarcerated during 1 Data Collection Point	5.00%
Incarcerated during 2 Data Collection Point	1.50%
Incarcerated during 3 Data Collection Point	0.50%
Incarcerated during 4 Data Collection Point	0.00%

Table 2: Means and (Standard Deviations) of Father and Mother Reports of Coparenting Support for the Full Sample (N= 2008)

	Father Report _a	Mother Report _b	Range
“When M/F is with the child, she/he acts like the M/F you want”	2.70 (.52)	2.55 *** (.62)	1-3
“You can trust M/F to take care of the child”	2.90 (.35)	2.80 *** (.48)	1-3
“She/He respects the rules and schedules you make”	2.70 (.55)	2.58 *** (.63)	1-3
“She/He supports way you want to raise child”	2.68 (.57)	2.59 *** (.61)	1-3
“You can talk with M/F about problems with raising child”	2.75 (.54)	2.63 *** (.63)	1-3
“You can count on M/F to look after child for a few hours”	2.84 (.47)	2.58 *** (.70)	1-3
“You respect M’s/ F’s wishes about how child should be raised”	2.76 (.49)	2.55 *** (.64)	1-3
“You are critical of the things M/F does”	2.13 (.84)	2.27 *** (.78)	1-3
TOTAL Items	2.68 (.36)	2.57 *** (.45)	1-3
All 8 Items (Cronbach’s alpha)	0.80	0.89	---

^a Father report= Father reports on mother’s supportive role (i.e. M) as a parent

^b Mother report= Mother reports on father’s supportive role (i.e. F) as a parent

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

Table 3: Means and (Standard Deviations) of Father and Mother Reports of Parenting Stress for the Full Sample (N=2008)

	Father Report ^a	Mother Report ^b	Range
“Being a parent is harder than I thought it would be.”	2.69 (1.04)	2.86 *** (.98)	1-4
“I feel trapped by my responsibilities as a parent.”	1.50 (.82)	1.54 *** (.82)	1-4
“I find that taking care of my child(ren) is much more work than pleasure.”	1.75 (1.00)	1.67 *** (.92)	1-4
“I often feel tired, worn out, or exhausted from raising a family.”	2.09 (1.03)	2.54 *** (1.00)	1-4
TOTAL Items	2.01 (.69)	2.15 *** (.65)	1-4
All 4 Items (Cronbach’s alpha)	0.64	0.65	---

^a Father report= Father reports on his own behavior

^b Mother report= Mother reports on her own behavior

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

Table 4a: Means and (Standard Deviations) of Father's Report of Coparenting Support in Relation to his Experience with Incarceration

	Mean of Coparenting Support			
	Father Report ^a			
	Father Never Incarcerated (n = 1868)	Father has Incarceration History (n = 140)	Father Incarcerated Once (n=100)	Father Incarcerated Two or More Times (n = 40)
When M is with the child, she acts like the M you want for your child	2.71 (.52)	2.58** (.57)	2.60 (.57)	2.55 (.55)
“You can trust M to take care of the child”	2.90 (.35)	2.87 (.40)	2.87 (.40)	2.90 (.44)
“M respects the rules and schedules you make”	2.70 (.55)	2.63 (.62)	2.64 (.63)	2.62 (.63)
“M supports way you want to raise child”	2.68 (.57)	2.59 (.64)	2.62 (.63)	2.52 (.68)
“You can talk with M about problems with raising child”	2.75 (.54)	2.71 (.52)	2.70 (.50)	2.75 (.59)
“You can count on M to look after child for a few hours”	2.84 (.47)	2.85 (.44)	2.87 (.42)	2.80 (.52)
“Respect M's wishes about how child should be raised”	2.76 (.49)	2.69 (.50)	2.69 (.51)	2.70 (.52)
“You are critical of the things M does”	2.14 (.84)	1.95* (.86)	1.88 (.88)	2.15 (.80)
All 8 Items (Composite Score)	2.69 (.36)	2.61* (.36)	2.60 (.35)	2.62 (.40)

^a Father report= Father reports on mother's supportive role (i.e. M) as a parent

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

Table 4b: Means and (Standard Deviations) of Mother's Report of Coparenting Support in Relation to Father's Experience with Incarceration

	Mean of Coparenting Support			
	Mother Report			
	Father Never Incarcerated (n = 1868)	Father has Incarceration History (n = 140)	Father Incarcerated Once (n=100)	Father Incarcerated Two or More times (n = 40)
When F is with the child, he acts like the F you want for your child	2.56 (.62)	2.40** (.69)	2.42 (.70)	2.37 (.67)
“You can trust F to take care of the child”	2.82 (.46)	2.66*** (.65)	2.69 (.63)	2.60 (.71)
“F respects the rules and schedules you make”	2.60 (.63)	2.41** (.74)	2.48 (.73)	2.25 (.74)
“F supports way you want to raise child”	2.61 (.60)	2.35*** (.75)	2.40 (.74)	2.22 (.77)
“You can talk with F about problems with raising child”	2.65 (.62)	2.38*** (.80)	2.44 (.78)	2.25 (.81)
“You can count on F to look after child for a few hours”	2.60 (.69)	2.30*** (.84)	2.45 (.78)	1.95** (.87)
“Respect F's wishes about how child should be raised”	2.57 (.63)	2.30*** (.81)	2.36 (.80)	2.15 (.83)
“You are critical of the things F does”	2.29 (.77)	2.07** (.83)	2.08 (.84)	2.07 (.83)
All 8 Items (Composite Score)	2.59 (.44)	2.36*** (.55)	2.41 (.55)	2.23 (.54)

^a Mother report= Mother reports on father's supportive role (i.e. F) as a parent

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

Table 4c: Means and (Standard Deviations) of Father and Mother’s Report of Coparenting Support in Relation to Father’s Experience with Incarceration

	Mean of Coparenting Support							
	Father Never Incarcerated (n=1868)		Father has Incarceration History (n=140)		Father Incarcerated Once (n=100)		Father Incarcerated 2 or More Time (n=40)	
	Father Report ^a	Mother Report ^b	Father Report ^a	Mother Report ^b	Father Report ^a	Mother Report ^b	Father Report ^a	Mother Report ^b
When M/F is with the child, she/he acts like the M/F you want for your child	2.71 (.52)	2.56*** (.62)	2.58 (.56)	2.40* (.69)	2.60 (.57)	2.42* (.70)	2.55 (.55)	2.37 (.67)
“You can trust M/F to take care of the child”	2.90 (.35)	2.82*** (.46)	2.87 (.41)	2.66*** (.65)	2.87 (.39)	2.69** (.63)	2.90 (.44)	2.60 * (.71)
“M/F respects the rules and schedules you make”	2.70 (.55)	2.60*** (.63)	2.63 (.62)	2.41** (.74)	2.64 (.63)	2.48 (.73)	2.62 (.63)	2.25** (.74)
“M/F supports way you want to raise child”	2.68 (.56)	2.61*** (.60)	2.59 (.64)	2.35 *** (.75)	2.62 (.63)	2.40* (.74)	2.52 (.68)	2.22 * (.77)
“You can talk with M/F about problems with raising child”	2.75 (.54)	2.65*** (.62)	2.71 (.53)	2.38*** (.79)	2.70 (.50)	2.44** (.78)	2.75 (.59)	2.25 *** (.81)
“You can count on M/F to look after child for a few hours”	2.84 (.47)	2.60*** (.69)	2.85 (.45)	2.30*** (.84)	2.87 (.42)	2.45*** (.78)	2.80 (.52)	1.95*** (.87)
“Respect M’s/F’s wishes about how child should be raised”	2.76 (.48)	2.57*** (.63)	2.69 (.51)	2.30*** (.81)	2.69 (.51)	2.36*** (.80)	2.70 (.52)	2.15*** (.83)

“You are critical of the things M/F does”	2.14 (.84)	2.29*** (.77)	1.95 (.86)	2.07 (.83)	1.88 (.88)	2.08 (.84)	2.15 (.80)	2.07 (.83)
All 8 Items (Composite Score)	2.69 (.36)	2.59*** (.44)	2.61 (.36)	2.36*** (.55)	2.61 (.35)	2.41*** (.55)	2.62 (.39)	2.23*** (.54)

^a Father report= Father reports on mother’s supportive role (i.e. M) as a parent

^b Mother report= Mother reports on father’s supportive role (i.e. F) as a parent

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

Table 5a: Means and (Standard Deviations) of Father's Report of Parenting Stress in Relation to his Experience with Incarceration

	Mean of Parenting Stress			
	Father Report ^a			
	Father Never Incarcerated (n = 1868)	Father has Incarceration History (n = 140)	Father Incarcerated Once (n=100)	Father Incarcerated Two or More Times (n = 40)
“Being a parent is harder than I thought it would be.”	2.67 (1.05)	3.00*** (.96)	2.98 (.94)	3.07 (1.02)
“I feel trapped by my responsibilities as a parent.”	1.49 (.82)	1.68** (.93)	1.68 (.95)	1.70 (.88)
“I find that taking care of my child(ren) is much more work than pleasure.”	1.74 (1.00)	1.96* (1.09)	1.87 (1.05)	2.17 (1.17)
“I often feel tired, worn out, or exhausted from raising a family.”	2.08 (1.03)	2.18 (1.05)	2.15 (1.04)	2.25 (1.08)
All 4 Items (Composite Score)	2.00 (.68)	2.21** (.68)	2.17 (.68)	2.30 (.66)

^a Father report= Father reports on his own behavior

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

Table 5b: Means and (Standard Deviations) of Mother's Report of Parenting Stress in Relation to Father's Experience with Incarceration

	Mean of Parenting Stress			
	Mother Report ^a			
	Father Never Incarcerated (n = 1868)	Father has Incarceration History (n = 140)	Father Incarcerated Once (n=100)	Father Incarcerated Two or More Times (n = 40)
“Being a parent is harder than I thought it would be.”	2.85 (.97)	2.95 (1.02)	2.93 (1.03)	3.02 (1.02)
“I feel trapped by my responsibilities as a parent.”	1.54 (.83)	1.52 (.77)	1.59 (.80)	1.37 (.67)
“I find that taking care of my child(ren) is much more work than pleasure.”	1.66 (.92)	1.80 (1.06)	1.87 (1.11)	1.65 (.95)
“I often feel tired, worn out, or exhausted from raising a family.”	2.52 (1.00)	2.70* (1.06)	2.74 (1.08)	2.62 (1.03)
All 4 Items (Composite Score)	2.14 (.65)	2.25 (.67)	2.28 (.71)	2.16 (.57)

^a Mother report= Mother reports on her own behavior

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

Table 5c: Means and (Standard Deviations) of Father and Mother’s Report of Parenting Stress in Relation to Father’s Experience with Incarceration

	Mean of Parenting Stress							
	Father Never Incarcerated (n=1868)		Father has Incarceration History (n = 140)		Father Incarcerated Once (n=100)		Father Incarcerated 2 or More Time (n=40)	
	Father Report ^a	Mother Report ^b	Father Report ^a	Mother Report ^b	Father Report ^a	Mother Report ^b	Father Report ^a	Mother Report ^b
“Being a parent is harder than I thought it would be.”	2.67 (1.05)	2.85*** (.97)	3.00 (.96)	2.95 (1.02)	2.98 (.94)	2.93 (1.03)	3.07 (1.02)	3.02 (1.02)
“I feel trapped by my responsibilities as a parent.”	1.49 (.82)	1.54 (.83)	1.68 (.93)	1.52 (.77)	1.68 (.95)	1.59 (.80)	1.70 (.88)	1.37* (.67)
“I find that taking care of my child(ren) is much more work than pleasure.”	1.74 (1.00)	1.66** (.92)	1.95 (1.09)	1.80 (1.06)	1.87 (1.05)	1.87 (1.11)	2.17 (1.17)	1.65 (.95)
“I often feel tired, worn out, or exhausted from raising a family.”	2.08 (1.03)	2.52*** (1.00)	2.17 (1.05)	2.70*** (1.06)	2.15 (1.04)	2.74*** (1.08)	2.25 (1.08)	2.62 (1.03)
All 4 Items (Composite Score)	1.99 (.68)	2.15*** (.68)	2.20 (.68)	2.25 (.67)	2.17 (.68)	2.28 (.71)	2.30 (.66)	2.16 (.57)

^a Father report= Father reports on his own behavior

^b Mother report= Mother reports on her own behavior

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

Appendix Table 1 Percentage or Mean and (Standard Deviation) of the Characteristics of the Study Sample (n = 2008)

Father Characteristics	
Age	28.46 (7.12)
High School Education	73 %
Employment (weeks)	42.73 (14.78)
Race	
Non-Hispanic White	26%
Non-Hispanic Black	45%
Hispanic	26%
Other Race	4%
Mother and Household Characteristics	
Age	25.96 (6.07)
High School Education	72%
Employment	25.46 (21.70)
Race	
Non-Hispanic White	27%
Non-Hispanic Black	43%
Hispanic	26%
Other Race	4%
Marital Status at Birth	
Married to Biological Father	36%
Cohabiting with Biological Father	38%
Mother in a Relationship with Biological Father (not cohab)	21%
No Relationship with Biological Father	5%
Family Structure -first 5 years of the child's life	
Stable Married to Biological Father	32%
Stable Cohabitation with Biological Father	9%
Stable single	11%
Union Formation with Biological Father	19%
Union Dissolve with Biological Father	15%
Unstable Relationship with Biological Father	14%
Poverty Status	
< 100% of FPL	29%
100 – 299% of FPL	40%
300% of FPL	31%
# of Children in the Household	2.49 (1.27)
Grandparents in the Household	10%
Father has Nonresident Children	30%
Mother has Nonresident Children	31%
