

## **Parental Incarceration and Social Status Attainment of Hispanic Young Adults**

### **Abstract**

The fact that parental incarceration has become a common event in the life course of many children is troubling. Using structural equation modeling, the present study investigates how immigrant generational status, family socio-economic background interact with parental incarceration to influence status attainment for Hispanic young adults. Three indicators of status attainment in young adulthood are used as outcome variables — educational attainment, wage and job quality. Results indicate that parental incarceration has a strong and negative influence on all three indicators of attained status. Likewise, family socio-economic background is strongly predictive of Hispanic young adults' status attainment. The effect of immigrant generational status, however, varies depending on the outcome variable. Most importantly, we found that parental incarceration mediates influence of immigrant generational status and family socio-economic background on status attainment of Hispanic young adults.

## **Introduction**

Because of immigration and relatively high birth rates, the Hispanic population of the United States is growing rapidly (Van Hook et al., 2014). Hispanics are the fastest growing panethnic group in the United States, and children of Hispanic origin comprise nearly a quarter of the U.S. population under eighteen years of age 18 (Murphey, Guzman, & Torres, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Given the size of this population and its future growth, the transition to adulthood, labor market trajectories and status attainment of Hispanic children of immigrants are constantly in the focus of current sociological research.

More generally, since the 1980s, the United States has witnessed consistently increasing levels of immigration (Passel & Cohn, 2008). It is also worth noting that the new wave of mass immigration in the U.S. has coincided with the steep rise of incarceration rate, an era of mass imprisonment (Ewig, Martinez, & Rumbaut, 2015; Rumbaut, 2005). The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world, and the number of adults incarcerated in state and federal prisons more than tripled between 1980 and 2000 (Ousey & Kubrin, 2018). Since the majority of adults confined to jails and prisons are parents, the number of children who experienced parental incarceration has grown, too (Menjívar, 2016; Ousey & Kubrin, 2018). This experience can have profound implications for the life course of many children. Thus, the influence of parental incarceration on children has emerged as an important area of research.

Against this backdrop, the present study examines the impact of parental incarceration on status attainment of Hispanic young adults with a specific focus on immigrant generational status and SES. We examine status attainment as three different

outcomes: hourly wage, educational attainment and job quality. This is done because some Hispanics experience status inconsistency, meaning that their educational attainment does not correspond with the occupations they occupy or the income they earn (Portes & Rumbaut. 2001, 2014). Although a substantial literature (Johnson & Easterling, 2012; Murray et al., 2009; Turney, & Wildeman, 2013; Wildeman, 2010) have examined the implications of paternal incarceration on children's outcomes, the effect of parental incarceration across immigrant generation groups remains to be elucidated. Specifically, we use the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health), to examine the following questions:

- (1) Does parental incarceration in adolescence have an effect on attained status in young adulthood for Hispanics?
- (2) Does parental incarceration mediate the relationship between immigrant generational status and Hispanic status attainment in young adulthood, and, if so, how?
- (3) Does parental incarceration mediate the relationship between family SES and status attainment, and, if so, how?

This paper adds to the literature by using longitudinal data from Add Health to examine the effects of parental incarceration on young adult status attainment. Our study bridges literatures on intergenerational effects of incarceration, immigration and social stratification to explore different scenarios that could potentially cause spurious associations between immigrant generational status and status attainment in young adulthood.

## **Intergenerational Implications of Mass Incarceration**

With the dramatic and historically unprecedented increase of the U.S. prison population at the turn of the millennium, a large and growing literature on the implications of the prison boom has emerged. One strand of work highlights the consequences of mass incarceration for the lives of prisoners' children. Up to now, research has identified several pathways by which paternal incarceration may affect child wellbeing. Perhaps the most important of them is diminished financial contribution from the incarcerated parent which leads to decreases in household resources available to children. Children of prisoners suffer from the loss of financial support and are at greater risk for material hardship (Geller, Garfinkel & Western, 2011; Schwartz-Soicher, Geller, & Garfinkel, 2011; Swisher & Waller, 2008). The wages paid to the penal population are meager, and ex-prisoners are often unable to find work or demoted to lower-level jobs or the informal economy (Lewis, Garfinkel & Gao, 2007; Western, 2002; Western, Kling, & Weiman 2001). Because incarceration adversely affects returning offender's employment prospects, the financial impact of parental incarceration is likely to be long lasting (Kling, 2006). Resource deprivation elevates risks of family instability, placing couples at risk, which may thereby compromise child well-being (Amato, & Afifi, 2006; Amato & Anthony, 2014; Turney, 2015).

Second, the forced separation from a parent is known to disrupt parent-child bonds and to cause deep psychological distress (Geller, et al., 2012; Dallaire, & Wilson, 2010; Koepke, & Denissen, 2012). Children's contact with incarcerated parents is limited in both quantity and quality, which likely negatively impact their development (Foster, & Hagan, 2007; Swisher and Waller 2008). Seeing a parent arrested and visiting them in prison can

further exacerbate the emotional trauma for children (Arditti, Lambert-Shute, & Joest, 2003; Wildeman, Wakefield, & Turney, 2013). If the cycle of imprisonment and release is repeated, which is, unfortunately, often the case in practice, parental incarceration may be even more disruptive for the child emotional well-being (Comfort, 2007; Wildeman, 2010).

Related to this is the fact that incarceration of one parent puts an enormous strain on the remaining, nonincarcerated parent or caregiver (e.g., Arditti, 2012; Cochran, Siennick, & Mears, 2018; Dallaire, & Wilson, 2010; Turanovic, Rodriguez, & Pratt, 2012). This stress can disrupt caregiving relationships and adversely affect parenting practices of the remaining parent (Turanovic, Rodriguez, & Pratt, 2012; Turney & Wildeman, 2013). Changes in the quality of parental involvement may also be crucial, because, as a result of parental incarceration, a child may have less quality time with the remaining parent or caregiver (Foster & Hagan, 2007; Turanovic, Rodriguez, & Pratt, 2012).

It is also worth mentioning that imprisonment alters behavior of inmates in ways that make them more violent and impulsive, thus making them less apt for child care upon their return (Cochran, Siennick, & Mears, 2018; Mustaine & Tewksbury, 2015; Visher & Travis, 2003). Concomitant to this is the fact that parental incarceration diminishes a child's exposure to an adult figure who may embody an important role model that a child may strive to emulate. Although parents who commit crimes do not seem to be the ones who can project a positive role model, literature suggests that the majority of parents with criminal records do not expose their children to their criminal activity and, even if they do, they denounce it (Dallaire & Wilson, 2010; Murray et al., 2009).

Collectively, the studies indicate that parental incarceration may adversely affect children along multiple outcomes (Geller, Garfinkel, & Western, 2011; Murray et al., 2009; Schwartz-Soicher, Geller, & Garfinkel, 2011; Swisher & Waller, 2008). When diminished household resources are coupled with the trauma of parental absence and detrimental parenting behaviors as a result, the intragenerational effects of parental incarceration on children may be dire and long-lasting. However, there is also evidence showing that parental incarceration may exert a limited effect, if any, on children (e.g., Cho, 2009; Johnson & Easterling, 2012; Porter & King, 2015; Turney, & Wildeman, 2013). Specifically, the weak intergenerational effect of parental incarceration can be attributed to the fact that the removal of a negligent, abusive and/or violent parent from the household may benefit children (e.g., Johnson & Easterling, 2012; Murray et al., 2009; Turney, & Wildeman, 2013).

One possible reason for the inconclusive findings concerning the intergenerational effects of parental imprisonment is that understanding these can be problematic from a methodological point of view. Specifically, it difficult to isolate the causal effects of parental incarceration from the confounding effects of family disadvantage. Little evidence is available to determine whether the poor outcomes observed among children who experience parental incarceration are due to the parent's incarceration or to other factors, such as a child's disadvantaged background, problems with family or others. Children whose parents are imprisoned may have suffered from negligence and abuse, poverty or other adversities (Cho, 2009; Barnard & McKeganey, 2004; Johnson & Waldfogel, 2002; Phillips & Gates, 2011). Each of these conditions may either partially or fully explain the

negative outcomes in young adulthood occurring to individuals whose parents have been incarcerated (Dallaire & Wilson, 2010; Johnson & Easterling, 2012; Porter & King, 2015).

### **Immigrant Generation Status and Parental Incarceration**

A sizable body of literature has shown that immigrant generation plays an important role in academic achievement and professional attainment (Haller, Portes, & Lynch, 2011; Jiménez, 2018; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2014; Rumbaut, 2004; Tran & Valdez, 2017). However, neither theoretical nor empirical research has ever addressed the issue of whether and to what extent parental incarceration may impact children of different generations differently. Unfortunately, assimilation theory is silent on this problem. The major paradigm in the field of immigrant incorporation today — the segmented assimilation theory (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1997) — predicts different outcomes across generations, while considering the interaction effects of immigrant generation with ethnicity and other factors (but not parental incarceration).

Specifically, the segmented assimilation predicts three paths of assimilation: (1) the classical path of upward mobility to the middle class, (2) downward assimilation to an underclass, and (3) “selective acculturation”, which leads to economic integration to mainstream society but allows for maintenance of ethnic ties and solidarity (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Portes & Rivas, 2011). The choice of the path depends on a variety of factors, among which the context of reception plays an important role. The context of reception includes host society government policies, system of racial/ethnic stratification, labor market conditions, public attitudes towards immigration, and the availability and characteristics of co-ethnic communities (Portes & Rivas, 2011; Portes & Zhou, 1993).

Recent empirical research tends to support the segmented assimilation model, suggesting that, overall, native Hispanics fare worse economically than their immigrant counterparts (South, Crowder, & Chavez, 2005; Valdez, 2006; Waldinger & Feliciano, 2004). Although proponents of the segmented assimilation forecast downward mobility for many Hispanics, they also give critical consideration to socio-demographic background variables, and primarily, to family SES (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014; Portes & Rivas, 2011).

### **Family Socio-Economic Disadvantage and Parental Incarceration**

It is well-known that non-white and non-native populations tend to be more socio-economically disadvantaged (Hernandez, 2004; Portes & Rivas, 2011). This creates this disadvantage impedes upward social-mobility of racial/ethnic minority children, especially immigrants, thus creating a vicious circle. Research on social mobility and status attainment unequivocally indicates that parents pass their socioeconomic status onto their children, and, therefore, socio-economic background of parents predicts one's attained status (Nielsen, Roos, & Combs, 2015; Rauscher, 2016; Sirin, 2005; Sykes & Maroto, 2016). Thus, adolescents from socio-economically disadvantaged families may face unique challenges in their transition to adulthood due to fewer family resources that would facilitate access to higher education (Carvalho, 2012; Faas, Benson, & Kaestle, 2013; Pfeffer, 2018).

At the same time, criminal justice research also shows that incarceration can worsen the financial situation of families through the loss of income, attorney fees and other costs associated with the incarceration (Geller, Garfinkel, & Western, 2011; Western, 2002; Western, Kling, & Weiman, 2001). Moreover, family's financial difficulties are



likely to continue after the inmate parent's release from prison because of the declining employment possibilities for the returning parent (Emmert, forthcoming; Schwartz-Soicher, Geller, & Garfinkel, 2011; Pettit & Western, 2004; Western, 2002). What is not clear is if low SES increases the likelihood of parental incarceration, or if low SES is a result of the parent's incarceration. On the one hand, research has identified low SES as a risk factor for incarceration (Pager, 2003; Pettit & Western, 2004; Turney, 2015; Wakefield & Uggen, 2010). On the other hand, parental incarceration can exacerbate an existing socioeconomic disadvantage of children (Arditti, Lambert-Shute, & Joest, 2003; Western, 2002; Western et al., 2015; Western, Kling, & Weiman, 2001). There is evidence to support both points of view (Pattillo, Weiman & Western, 2003; Wakefield & Uggen, 2010). Only if parental incarceration occurs after family SES is measured, one can look into a causal relationship between family SES and parental incarceration.

### **Present Study**

We know that risk of experiencing parental incarceration is not uniformly distributed across racial/ethnic groups (Pettit & Western, 2004; Wakefield & Uggen, 2010; Western & Wildeman, 2009). Because imprisonment disproportionately affects U.S.-born minority men, children whose parents have been incarcerated are significantly more likely to be racial and ethnic minorities (although less likely to have immigrant parents). African American children are most likely to have a parent in prison, followed by Hispanic children (Pattillo, Weiman & Western, 2003). Our focus on Hispanic children is warranted because they are twice as likely to experience parental incarceration than non-Hispanic white children (Pattillo, Weiman & Western, 2003).

Literature suggests that children with incarcerated parents often struggle with mental health and behavioral issues (Foster & Hagan, 2007; Giordano & Copp, 2015; Murray et al., 2009; Phillips, & Gates, 2011; Wildeman, 2010). However, there is less agreement on socio-economic effects of parental incarceration for the wellbeing of children (Johnson & Easterling, 2012; Wildeman, Wakefield, & Turney, 2013). Numerous studies have studied variation in the effects of parental imprisonment on children's development and well-being but our analysis departs from earlier research in two ways: (1) we focus on Hispanics, an ethnic group which is overrepresented among recent immigrants, while being simultaneously disadvantaged in the criminal justice system (Pattillo, Weiman & Western, 2003); 2) and we estimate indirect effects of immigrant generation and SES in childhood on status attainment in young adulthood through parental imprisonment. In doing so, we advance the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1:* Given that parental incarceration is a negative event in the lives of children and often leads to negative youth outcomes (Giordano & Copp, 2015; Johnson & Waldfogel, 2002; Murray et al., 2009), we believe that parental incarceration will have a negative effect on Hispanic status attainment in young adulthood. Put differently, those Hispanics who experienced parental incarceration in childhood will have lower educational attainment, wages and quality jobs than their counterparts who did not.

*Hypothesis 2:* We expect to find an indirect effect of immigrant generational status on status attainment through parental incarceration among Hispanic young adults, net of family SES and other controls. Thus, we consider parental incarceration as a potential mediator of the relationship between immigrant generational status and three indicators of attained status in young adulthood (educational attainment, hourly wage and job quality).

Particularly, we expect that the negative effect of parental incarceration will be stronger for the first- and second-generation Hispanic young adults, because immigrants lack resources that are culturally sensitive and have insufficient knowledge to deal with the U.S. criminal justice system (Ewig, Martinez, & Rumbaut, 2015; Ousey & Kubrin, 2018).

*Hypothesis 3.* We consider parental incarceration as a mediator of the relationship between family SES and status attainment and examine the extent to which parental incarceration amplifies the effect of SES on status attainment for Hispanic young adults. Hence, the strength of the relationships between family SES and status attainment in young adulthood is likely to vary as a function of parental incarceration.

## **Method**

A detailed description of all study variables is presented in Table 1. The dependent variables are three indicators of social status: (1) educational attainment; (2) hourly wages; and (3) job quality. They were all recorded at Wave 4. Educational attainment has five categories ranging from “less than high school” to “more than a 4-year degree”. As our descriptive analyses show (see Table 2), the mean for educational attainment is 2.27 and the standard deviation is 0.66. Hourly wages were constructed using information on the rate of pay and weekly hours of work. In order to account for skewness, hourly wage was transformed using the Box-Cox family of log-linear transformations (for more information see Osborn 2010), carried out according to the following formula:

$$New\ Hourly\ Wage = \frac{(Hourly\ Wage + 1)^{-0.6} - 1}{-0.6}.$$

[Table 1 is about here]

The measure of job quality was adapted from Wickrama et al. (2012). It was constructed by averaging responses to three items: decision-making autonomy, repetitiveness of tasks and supervisory responsibilities. For detailed description of this indicator, see Table 1. Cronbach's alpha for this scale is 0.71. The mean for this variable is 1.30 and the standard deviation is 0.45 (see Table 2).

[Table 2 is about here]

Our primary independent variable is parental incarceration. At Wave 4, the respondents were asked whether either of their parents had spent time in a jail or prison and how old they were when that first occurred. If parental incarceration occurred prior to Wave 4 data collection period, we coded these cases as 1="parental incarceration," else="no parental incarceration". Thus, only those respondents who had a parent incarcerated before Wave 4 were coded as having experienced parental incarceration. This approach allowed us to the causal order of the relationship between parental incarceration and status attainment in adulthood, while controlling for confounding effects of individual socio-demographic characteristics.

Children's immigrant generational status has usually been conceptualized based on the child's and parents' nativity in a three-group generational framework (Portes & Rumbaut. 2001, 2014; Rumbaut, 2004). Following the commonly accepted conceptualization, we distinguish three generational statuses. Foreign-born Hispanic young adults are coded as immigrant generation one. U.S.-born children of at least one foreign-born parent are distinguished as generation two, and generation three plus is composed of the native born Hispanics. For all of our analysis, the third immigrant generation is the reference group.

This study also employs the composite measure of family SES which was created by combining three parental characteristics. Specifically, family SES was calculated as the mean of standardized scores of parental income, education and occupational prestige, with higher values representing higher levels of SES (Cronbach  $\alpha = 0.69$ ). Control variables also include ethnic origin (Mexican-American, Puerto-Rican and other Hispanic), family structure (being raised in a two-parent household=0; else=1), gender (male=0; female=1), age (as of Wave 4).

### **Analytic Strategy**

We use Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to estimate the strength of relationships between immigrant generational status, SES, parental incarceration and status attainment, while controlling for a range of demographic variables (ethnic origin, family structure, age and gender). In contrast to multiple regression, SEM is not limited to a single outcome and can be used to evaluate relations among multiple dependent variables and. Moreover, whereas regression may be prone to errors of misspecification, SEM directly accounts for measurement errors by putting the error terms in the structural equation. Even more importantly, SEM is ideal technique to model mediating and moderating effects.

The descriptive statistics were obtained using STATA, while MPlus was utilized for SEM. Models with robust standard errors were used to account for clustering of participants within schools. The final model is compared to the alternative model in which the hypothesized effect is set to zero. The alternative model provides a baseline against which to compare the final model. We report three indices to determine the goodness-of-fit of the final model: the chi-square  $\chi^2$  (large and significant values indicate a poor fit, while

small and insignificant values indicate a good fit); the Comparative Fit Index (CFI; with values exceeding .90 indicating that the model fits the data well); and the Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA, where values above .05 indicate good fit) (for more detail see Schermelleh-Engel et al. 2003). Path diagrams are used to visualize structural equation models. Below we present the path diagrams per each outcome.

## **Results**

The path model predicting educational attainment is shown as Figure 1. Here, the analysis validates the all the hypotheses and, as expected, all path coefficients are significant ( $p < .05$ ) and are in predicted directions. In line with *Hypothesis 1*, parental effect has a negative impact on educational attainment ( $\beta = -.42$ ;  $p < .01$ ), meaning that Hispanics who has experienced parental incarceration in adolescence attain a lower educational level in young adulthood than those who had not. The path coefficients from first and second generations to educational attainment are both positive and significant ( $p < .01$ ), thus indicating that first and second generation immigrants tend to outperform native-parentage Hispanics (reference) academically. This finding lends substantial support to the segmented assimilation theory.

The relationship between immigrant generation and educational attainment is mediated by parental incarceration. As Figure 1 illustrates, the path coefficient from the first immigrant generation to parental incarceration is negative ( $\beta = -.20$ ) and statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ), as is the path coefficient between parental incarceration and educational attainment ( $\beta = -.42$ ;  $p < .01$ ). The standardized indirect effect is  $(-.20)(-.42) = .08$ . Likewise, the indirect effect of second generation through parental incarceration to

educational attainment is  $(-.20)(-.42) = .10$ . Overall, the indirect effects on the first and second generations are congruent with our expectations (*Hypothesis 2*). It is also worth mentioning that the direct and indirect effects of first and second immigrant generations on educational attainment are additive, that is, native Hispanics whose parent/s was/were imprisoned are doubly disadvantaged in comparison to their first- and second-generation immigrant co-ethnics.

Family SES appears to have a strong and positive effect on educational attainment. This is not a surprising finding, given that contemporary society displays a high level of intergenerational transmission of social status from parents to their children (Carvalho, 2012; Rauscher, 2016; Sirin, 2005). The interaction effect of SES and parental incarceration on educational attainment is also consistent with our *Hypothesis 3*. The negative path coefficient from SES to parental incarceration ( $\beta = -.53$ ;  $p < .01$ ) indicates that Hispanics who were raised in low-SES families are more likely to experience parental incarceration than those who were not. The final model explains 29% of the variance in parental incarceration and 38% of educational attainment.

[Figure 1 is about here]

In Figure 2, we present the SEM results predicting hourly wage. Before turning to a discussion of results, we note the model fit statistics indicate an excellent fit to the data. Specifically, in accordance with empirical standards the chi-square test statistic is non-significant ( $\chi^2 = 725$ ); the value of CFI (.98) exceeds .95; and RMSEA value (.04) is below the threshold of .5. The main effect of second immigrant generations on wages is

negative ( $\beta = -.19$ ;  $p < .01$ ), while that of second generation is nonsignificant. This indicates that, net of family SES and other controls, wages of native Hispanics are predicted to be 19% higher than those of first-generation immigrants. Consequently, our results point to a discrepancy between the educational assimilation and wage assimilation models — whereas immigrant Hispanics tend to perform better educationally, their wages are lower than those of their native co-ethnics.

Although the path linking the second generation and parental incarceration is nonsignificant, the path from the first generation to parental incarceration is significant and negative ( $\beta = -.19$ ;  $p < .01$ ). This implies that immigrant Hispanics are less likely to experience parental incarceration than their native counterparts, a result corroborating earlier studies (Bersani, 2014a, 2014b; Peguero, 2013; Peguero & Jiang, 2014). Moreover, the path from first immigrant generation to hourly wage is mediated by parental incarceration. The indirect effect of the first generation on wage through parental incarceration is  $(-.28)(-.44) = .12$ . Observe that the direct and indirect effects of the first generation on wage are in the opposite directions, canceling each other out.

The results from the path analysis also suggest a strong and positive association between family SES and wage, given that the direct path from SES to wage is positive ( $\beta = .49$ ;  $p < .01$ ). In contrast, the direct effect of family SES on parental incarceration is negative ( $\beta = -.46$ ;  $p < .01$ ), a finding which is hardly surprising given that children from low-SES families are more likely to experience parental incarceration (Wakefield & Uggen, 2010; Turney, 2015). The indirect path from SES to wage via parental attractiveness is also significant ( $p < .01$ ) and equals  $(-.46)(-.44) = .20$ . Consequently, the results confirm the mediating effect of parental incarceration on the relationship between family SES and



wage (*Hypothesis 3*). Specifically, parental incarceration amplifies the impact of family SES on wage, meaning that Hispanic adolescents from lower-SES families are expected to earn as young adults even less than their counterparts from more affluent families if they experienced parental incarceration.

[Figure 2 is about here]

Figure 3 depicts the final structural model of job quality with standardized coefficients shown for each path. This followed the same analytical logic as Figures 1 and 2 above. In judging the hypothesized relationships between the key study variables, it is worth noting that the direct paths from the first and second immigrant generations to job quality are statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) and negative. That is, the first- and second-generation Hispanics tend to be employed in lower quality jobs than their native co-ethnics. Further, the relationship between being a first- or second-generation immigrant and parental incarceration is negative and significant ( $p < .05$ ). This finding corroborated our earlier results (see Figures 1 and 2), showing that Hispanic adolescents belonging to first and second immigrant generations are less likely to experience parental incarceration. There is also an indirect path (through parental incarceration) from first and second immigrant generations to job quality. The standardized indirect effect for the first generation is  $(-.17)(-.38) = .06$ , and for the second generation  $(-.17)(-.38) = .08$ . Observe that the direct and indirect effects of immigrant generations on job quality are in the opposite directions.

Finally, our data support the view that parental incarceration mediates the relationships between skin tone and job quality and between attractiveness and job quality. This is consistent with our prediction (*Hypothesis 3*) that parental incarceration amplifies the effect of SES on Hispanic status attainment. The indirect effect of SES via parental incarceration on job quality is  $(-.54)(-.38) = .31$ . Overall, approximately 26 and 34% of the variance in parental incarceration and job quality, respectively, is explained by the predictors in the final model.

[Figure 3 is about here]

## **Discussion**

Much of the existing empirical literature points to a complex relationship between Hispanic children's immigrant generational status and their social mobility as adults (Haller, Portes, & Lynch, 2011; Jiménez, 2018; Portes & Rumbaut, 2014; Rumbaut, 2005; Tran & Valdez, 2017). Moreover, little is known whether imprisonment of one or both parents has any effect on the relationship between generational status and status attainment. Although it has been shown that children of immigrant parents are less likely to experience parental incarceration (Bersani, 2014a, 2014b; Peguero, 2013), we need to have a deeper understanding of the way in which immigration status interacts with parental incarceration. This study extends our knowledge base on the relationship between immigrant generational status and three indicators of attained status (educational attainment, wage and job quality) for Hispanic young adults by illustrating how parental imprisonment mediates this relationship.

This study is also motivated by the fact that, despite an impressive research base, the evidence concerning the intergenerational effects of parental incarceration is mixed (Cho, 2009; Johnson & Easterling, 2012; Johnson & Waldfogel, 2002). That is, it remains unclear whether parental incarceration has negative or null effects on the well-being of Hispanic children. This is due in part to inability of prior research to disintegrate of causal order of family SES and parental incarceration. The present study attempts to correct this bias by treating family SES as an antecedent with parental incarceration mediating the relationship between SES in adolescence and status attainment in young adulthood.

Using the longitudinal data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (the Add Health), the current study bridges literatures on criminal justice, social stratification and immigrant incorporation and examines the roles of immigrant generational status, family SES and parental incarceration on three indicators of attained social status for Hispanic young adults, while controlling for ethnic origin and other factors. The purpose of this study was to test: (1) the strength of the relationship between parental incarceration and social status attainment among Hispanic young adults; (2) whether parental incarceration mediates the relationship between generational status and status attainment; and (3) whether parental incarceration mediates the relationship between family SES and measures of the attained status (educational attainment, hourly wage and job quality).

All in all, we found that parental imprisonment, net of immigrant generational status, family SES, ethnicity and other controls, hinders social mobility of Hispanic young adults. Particularly, Hispanics who experienced parental incarceration as children or adolescents are predicted to have lower educational attainment, lower wages and lower-

quality jobs that their peers who did not. Furthermore, the results of this study do not support the minority view (e.g., Johnson & Easterling, 2012; Porter & King, 2015) that parental incarceration does not have a significant effect on well-being of children. On the contrary, the Add Health data strongly support the dominant view that parental incarceration remains a significant determinant of status attainment among Hispanic young adults (e.g., Geller, Garfinkel, & Western, 2011; Schwartz-Soicher, Geller, & Garfinkel, 2011; Turney & Wildeman, 2013).

At the outset we hypothesized that, although Hispanic children of immigrants (generations 1 and 2) are much less likely to experience parental incarceration, the effects of parental incarceration on status attainment in young adulthood are more severe for them than for their native-parentage co-ethnics. However, our results are mixed. The main effects of first and second immigrant generations and their interaction effects with parental incarceration vary considerably depending on the particular outcome variable that we used to capture status attainment.

The first and second generations have most the consistently strong relationships with educational attainment. In comparison to the third and higher generation co-ethnics, the first two generations of Hispanic adults tend to have a higher educational attainment. Moreover, the interaction effect between immigrant generations and parental incarceration is also positive. Thus, parental incarceration mediates the positive relationship between being a first- or second-generation immigrant and educational attainment so that this relationship is stronger for those Hispanic young adults who experienced parental incarceration as a child or an adolescent.

At the same time, first-generation Hispanics are clearly disadvantaged in terms of wage. The first generation is expected to earn less than the third and higher generation. However, the interaction effect between first immigrant generation and parental incarceration cancels out the negative main effect of first generation on wages. In terms of job quality, the SEM results show that native Hispanics tend to hold better quality jobs than their first- and second-generation co-ethnics. Still, the interaction of immigrant generation and parental incarceration is in the opposite direction to that of the main effect of immigrant generations. That is, the interaction effect attenuates the main effect of immigrant generation on job quality. Nevertheless, the interaction effects are small when compared to the main effects. In other words, the first and second immigrant generations appear outsized in their effects on status attainment—relative to their interactions with parental incarceration.

Finally, we found that parental incarceration acts as the mediator of the relationship between family SES and Hispanic adults' status attainment. It is important to mention that, regardless of what outcome is used (educational attainment, wage or job quality), an indirect effect of family SES on status attainment through parental incarceration is positive and significant. Thus, family SES is a stronger predictor of status attainment for those Hispanic young adults who experienced parental incarceration. This illustrates that family SES has more bearing on the advancement of those Hispanic adolescents who experienced parental incarceration than for those who did not.

All in all, parental incarceration serves as a mediator of the relationships between immigrant generational status and family SES, on the one hand, and attained status for Hispanic young adults. This is a novel contribution because it links scholarship rooted in

criminal justice (e.g., Comfort, 2007; Foster & Hagan, 2007; Giordano & Copp, 2015), social work (e.g., Johnson & Waldfogel, 2002; Schwartz-Soicher, Geller, & Garfinkel, 2011; Shaw, Bright, & Sharpe, 2015) and immigration studies (e.g., Haller, Portes, & Lynch, 2011; Jiménez, 2018; Tran & Valdez, 2017). Unpacking the processes behind these findings is beyond the scope of this work. Future research, especially qualitative in nature, should investigate the mechanisms through which immigrant generation, family socio-economic background and parental incarceration interact to shape educational and professional opportunities for young Hispanics.

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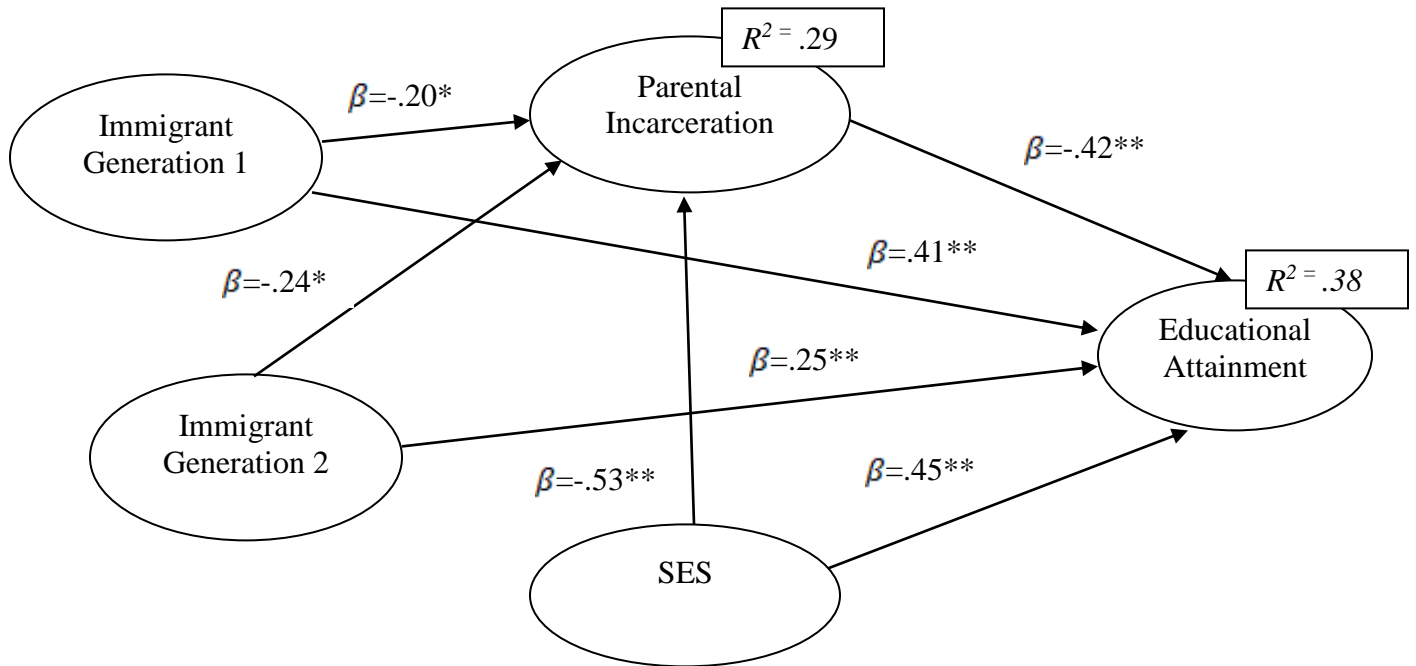


Figure 1. Structural Model Predicting Educational Attainment among Hispanic Young Adults. Note: The Estimation Results for the Control Variables and Errors Are Not Shown for Reasons of Space.  $\chi^2 = 694.32$ ; CFI = .98, RMSEA=0.03; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

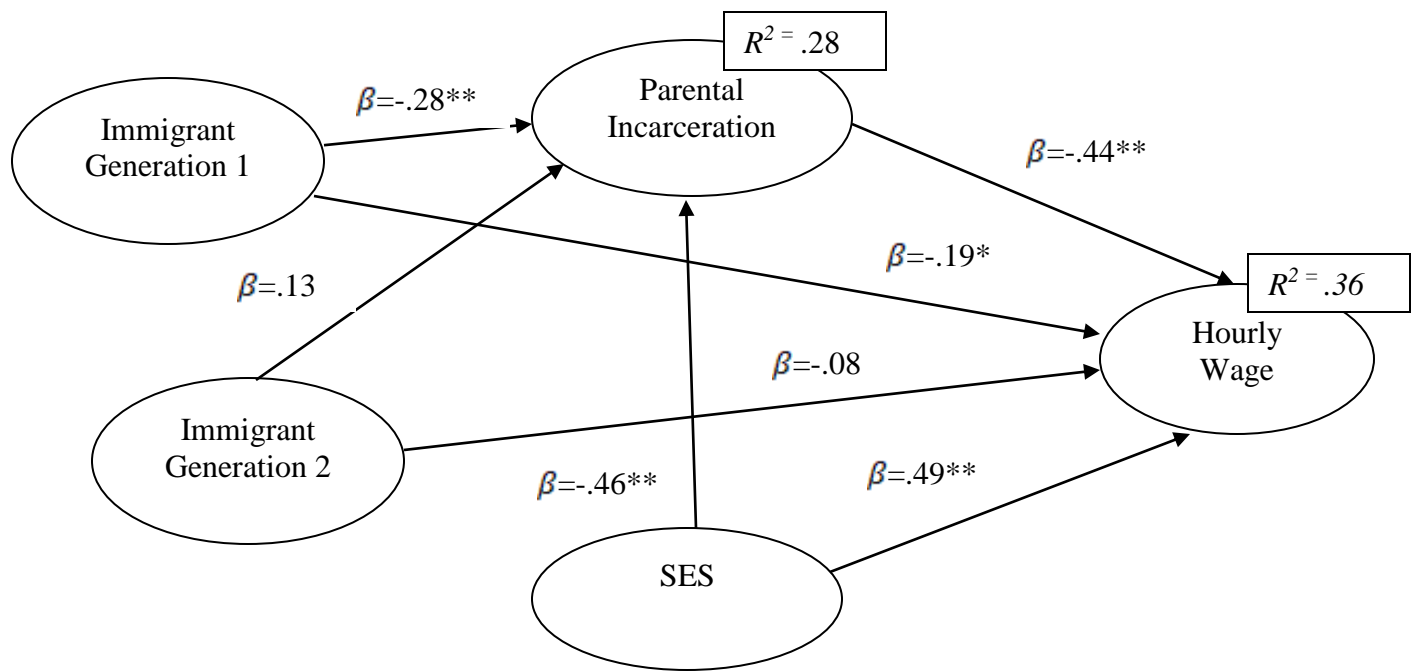


Figure 2. Structural Model Predicting Hourly Wage among Hispanic Young Adults. The Note: The Estimation Results for the Control Variables and Errors Are Not Shown for Reasons of Space.  $\chi^2 = 725.29$ ; CFI = .98, RMSEA=.04; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .



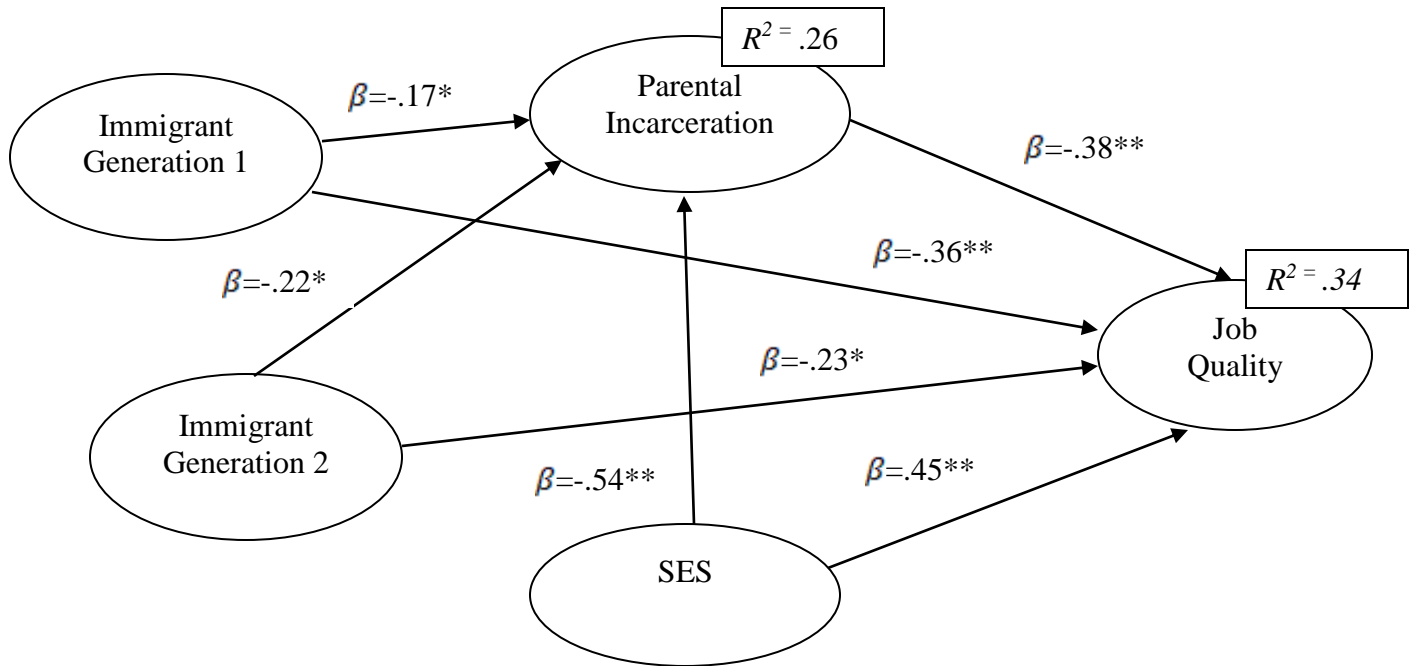


Figure 3. Structural Model Predicting Job Quality among Hispanic Young Adults. The Note: The Estimation Results for the Control Variables and Errors Are Not Shown for Reasons of Space.  $\chi^2 = 735.06$ ; CFI = .96, RMSEA=.04; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .