

**CHILLING EFFECTS:  
Diminished political participation among romantic partners of ex-offenders**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Over the past four decades, the criminal justice system has emerged as a key institution structuring social, economic, and political inequalities in the United States. The political disenfranchisement of ex-felons has measurably altered election outcomes and has critical implications for our democratic principles; yet, the focus on ex-felons likely underestimates the reverberating consequences of diminished participation. In this paper, I propose that the experience of criminal justice contact, and specifically incarceration, diminishes political behavior among not only ex-offenders but also their romantic partners. To test this, I use data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing survey. I find that partner incarceration is associated with reduced political participation that is not explained by socioeconomic characteristics and is robust to alternative tests. I argue that diminished participation is not mediated by stigma or broad withdrawal from civic and social life. Rather, it is the product of legal barriers and political socialization processes that result from partner's criminal justice involvement. The findings suggest that the de-politicizing consequences of mass incarceration are widespread, are influential, and marginalize groups that could most benefit from exerting their political voice.

The expansion and disproportionate concentration of criminal justice system involvement among low-income, urban, and minority groups deepens already existing inequalities in the United States. While incarceration rates have increased among all groups, African American men have the highest lifetime risk of imprisonment—if present rates continue, one in three African American men born today will eventually go to prison (Bonczar 2003; Mauer 2011). The consequences of incarceration and a felony conviction extend well beyond the criminal justice sanction itself. The legal barriers, social stigmas, and financial costs of conviction and imprisonment shape an individual's future labor market status and lifetime earnings (Western 2006), marriage prospects and romantic partnerships (Jakubowski 2011; Lopoo and Western 2005), health and morbidity (Schnittker and John 2007), and eligibility for government programs and subsidies (Geller and Curtis 2011; Rubinstein and Mukamal 2002).

One particularly salient consequence of the country's punitive turn is diminished political participation among ex-felons and formerly incarcerated individuals. State-based disenfranchisement laws vary in severity, but the exclusion of felons and ex-felons from voting in certain states may have changed the outcomes of state and national elections in consequential ways (Uggen and Manza 2002). Even when legally eligible to vote, ex-felons often have misinformation about voting rights or face incarceration-related administrative difficulties to register to vote, leading to *de facto* disenfranchisement (Drucker and Barreras 2005; Allen 2011).

Apart from these barriers, contact with the criminal justice system also serves as a critical site of political socialization. Often the most frequent place of government interaction, contact with the criminal justice system promotes negative perceptions of government that depress trust and voting behavior (Weaver and Lerman 2010). The political retreat of an already disadvantaged group is a concern for our democratic principles and social contract; yet, the focus

on ex-felons and individuals with direct contact with criminal justice likely underestimates the de-politicizing consequences of an expanded carceral state.

There are several ways in which indirect criminal justice involvement—and in this paper, the incarceration of a romantic partner—may diminish political participation. Most obviously, political attitudes and behaviors are “contagious.” Research in nearly every domain, including health (Smith and Christakis 2008; Christakis and Fowler 2007), schooling and achievement (Dishion and Tipsord 2011; Zimmerman 2003; Sacerdote 2000), volunteerism (Rotolo and Wilson 2006), and attitudes and emotions (Wood 2000; Fowler and Christakis 2008), finds that individuals are strongly influenced by their peers and partners. For political behavior, there is evidence from longitudinal studies (Stoker and Jennings 1995) as well as experimental designs (Nickerson 2008) that spouses play an important role in shaping political opinions and participation. While the romantic partnerships of ex-offenders may not be as close as the marriages studied in voting research, scholarship describes significant financial, emotional, and behavioral consequences to families of incarcerated men. It is likely that political influences are no different, and that the numerous, well-documented deterrents to political involvement faced by ex-offenders have measurable repercussions for their families.

Apart from influence, qualitative research on families of incarcerated men points to two additional mechanisms. First, diminished political participation might be one symptom of broader withdrawal from civic, religious, and social life. Termed “sticky stigma,” Donald Braman (2004) finds that families and partners often experience greater embarrassment and judgment from their peers compared to their incarcerated counterparts. His ethnographic research, as well as other qualitative work, describes a “social silence” where families retreat from church, workplace relationships, and extended family, consequently diminishing social

capital (Braman 2004; Clear 2007). Lower rates of political participation could be one indication of broader retreat and social silence.

Second, partners and families may experience criminal justice interactions that shape their understandings of and involvement with other government institutions, such as the political system. Partners of ex-offenders are oftentimes intimately involved in street-level interactions with the criminal justice system, whether as frequent visitors to prisons (Comfort 2003) or as people navigating highly policed ghettos (Goffman 2009). These everyday interactions may shape their political attitudes and behaviors, similar to political socialization processes theorized among ex-offenders (Weaver and Lerman 2010). In her ethnography of women partners, Megan Comfort finds that partners of incarcerated men feel disenchanting with political protests and collective action. Rather than being politically “disengaged,” Comfort finds that many partners have a strong political consciousness but have either lost faith in political participation as a legitimate avenue of change or are afraid of retaliation from penal authorities (Comfort 2008). Instead of a broad withdrawal from civic and social life, the mechanism described here is specific to political action and participation.

In this paper, I examine several measures of political participation among female partners of men with incarceration experiences. Using the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing study, I employ multiple approaches to show that the negative association between political involvement and partner incarceration is not explained by socioeconomic characteristics and is robust to alternative tests of selection bias. I then investigate potential mechanisms for diminished participation, including disenfranchisement laws, peer influences, political socialization processes, and social stigma. While prior scholarship has largely focused on legal barriers to

voting and individual-level associations, this paper argues that the political ramifications of mass incarceration are more extensive and multifaceted than previously imagined.

## **I. BACKGROUND**

The growth of the criminal justice system since the 1970s has transformed penal contact from a rare event to a common life transition among low income, urban and minority populations. African American men born in the 1960s are more likely to experience incarceration (22 percent) than serve in the military (17 percent) or obtain a bachelor's degree (13 percent) (Western 2006). Because contact is disproportionately concentrated among already disadvantaged groups, criminal justice involvement—and all of its associated consequences—is often considered a necessary institution in any discussion of social and economic inequality in the contemporary United States.

As one of the most punitive forms of criminal justice contact, incarceration in prison carries penalties and consequences that extend well beyond the penal sanction. Incarceration is associated with lower lifetime wages, earnings, and employment rates (Freeman 1991; Western 2006; Apel and Sweeten 2010; Grogger 1995; Lyons and Pettit 2011).<sup>1</sup> While part of this is due to lost skills and work experience because of incarceration, individuals also face social stigma related to their conviction and prison stay (Pager 2003) and encounter legal barriers to entering certain occupations (Harris and Keller 2005). Apart from labor market consequences, formerly incarcerated men are less likely to form stable partnerships and marriages (Lopoo and Western 2005; Jakubowski 2011) and are more likely to experience long term health limitations (Schnittker and John 2007). They are often barred from accessing public assistance (Rubinstein and Mukamal 2002) and are at greater risk for housing insecurity and homelessness

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that some papers find non significant associations between incarceration and future labor market status (Kling 2006; Loeffler 2012).

(Geller and Curtis 2011). While incarceration in jail or prison has been the focus of most scholarship, recent work finds consequences associated with a range of criminal justice penalties, including warrants, arrests, and convictions. These studies suggest that even more minor forms of criminal justice interactions can lead to withdrawal and avoidance of key institutions, such as hospitals, banks, and schools (Goffman 2009; Brayne 2011). Taken together, scholarship describes a multitude of social, demographic, and economic consequences of criminal justice contact that further destabilize already disadvantaged groups.

### **Political exclusion and disengagement among ex-offenders**

The political ramifications of an expanded carceral state are particularly salient, as they point to the exclusion of some of the most vulnerable groups from fundamental democratic processes. Most scholarship has focused on the political exclusion of ex-felons due to state disenfranchisement laws. States vary in their prohibitions, but nearly all states (48 states and the District of Columbia) exclude inmates and the majority of states (30) prohibit individuals who are under criminal justice supervision; in total, an estimated 5.3 million Americans are currently barred from voting (The Sentencing Project 2011). Because felony conviction rates are not evenly distributed throughout population but are concentrated among poor, urban, and minority males, disenfranchisement laws exacerbate existing inequities in political participation. Due to these laws, thirteen percent of black men nationwide and up to forty percent of black men in states with lifetime bans are unable to vote (The Sentencing Project 2011). The existence of legal barriers to voting may have affected the outcomes of recent state and national elections;<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The 2000 presidential election was very close and hinged on electoral votes in Florida, a state that disenfranchises over 800,000 individuals. Based on these exclusions and an estimated, hypothetical voter turnout rate, Manza and Uggen argue that Democratic candidate Al Gore would have won the state's electoral votes and therefore, the presidential election (Uggen and Manza 2002)

accordingly, Manza and Uggen (2002) argue that disenfranchisement laws threaten democratic governance and violate principles of universal suffrage. While many states have recently passed policy reforms to broaden voting rights, disenfranchisement laws continue to exclude large numbers of felons and ex-felons.

Even ex-offenders that are legally eligible to vote have substantially lower turnout rates—in the single digits—compared to similar individuals (Haselswerdt 2009). While some individuals are not likely to vote, regardless of criminal justice involvement, others face barriers that can deter voting. First, administrative practices by some local government offices prevent legally eligible individuals from registering to vote. For example, local election offices in New York require eligibility documents and non-existent forms as requisites for voter registration for ex-felons (Allen 2011). Termed “documentary disenfranchisement,” these administrative practices prevent ex-felons from voting even though they are legally eligible.

Second, ex-offenders commonly lack knowledge about disenfranchisement laws and how to reinstate voting rights upon release from prison (Drucker and Barreras 2005). Eligibility differences across states and the frequency of changes made to state-based laws further complicate the situation. Since 2000, nineteen states have passed legislation to amend their disenfranchisement laws; in three states, the efforts to broaden voting rights have since been repealed (The Sentencing Project 2011). It is likely that many ex-offenders mistakenly believe that they are not eligible to vote and have not heard about recent legislative changes. Even when eligibility criteria have remained the same, individuals may not know that disenfranchisement laws in some states apply to certain supervisory categories (e.g., incarceration and parole) but not to others (e.g., probation).



Apart from legal barriers, administrative practices, and information failures, diminished political participation may also be a consequence of political socialization processes. Recent scholarship argues that direct interactions with punitive arms of government, such as criminal justice, instill feelings of distrust and promote active avoidance of government (Weaver and Lerman 2010; Bruch, Marx Ferree, and Soss 2010). Public policies and government institutions have long been viewed as regulating the behaviors and political involvement of their constituents (Piven and Cloward 1993). Recent scholarship has focused on the importance of everyday, routine interactions with government agencies for shaping the civic and political engagement of individuals. When government agencies are paternalistic and rely on sanctions and other punitive measures, clients are less likely to be politically involved (Bruch et al. 2010). The criminal justice system, as an explicitly punitive institution, serves as a critical site for socialization. Interactions with police and criminal justice agencies lead individuals to consciously limit their contact with institutions such as hospitals and schools (Brayne 2011; Goffman 2009), which are traditionally considered benevolent arms of government. Incarceration, in particular, is an importance source of political socialization, where frequent and negative interactions with the criminal justice system dominate overall perceptions of government and explain lower voting rates and political disengagement (Weaver and Lerman 2010).

Political socialization processes, misinformation about voting eligibility, administrative practices, and disenfranchisement laws pose as formidable barriers to political participation among ex-offenders.

### **Diminished political participation among romantic partners**

Prior scholarship has documented how the disenfranchisement of ex-offenders threatens ideals of democratic governance; yet, I argue that focusing on individuals with direct criminal justice contact underestimates the extent of political retreat.

Drawing from research on social contagion and influence, political behavior, and consequences of incarceration to families, I propose that there are at least three mechanisms for lower political commitment and involvement among romantic partners of ex-offenders. The first concerns peer effects. Research on social contagion and influence finds that individuals' peers and partners shape their own behaviors and opinions; voting and political behavior are no exceptions. Scholarship in political science describes how spouses and partners are very similar in their political involvement and voting behavior. While part of this is due to homophily, where similar individuals partner, research finds that peer effects and influence account for changes over time (Beck and Jennings 1975; Holahan 1984; Cast, Stets, and Burke 1999; Meyer and Lobao 2003). Longitudinal studies of couples interviewed over many years suggest that spousal influence measurably shapes political opinions (Holahan 1984). While it is often hard to distinguish among homophily, shared experiences, and peer influences in survey data, experimental designs substantiate the importance of spousal influence on voting behavior. A recent experiment found that the treatment—a get-out-the-vote message—increased the likelihood of voting by both the research subject and the subject's spouse (Nickerson 2008).

In the context of partner incarceration, I suggest that partners of ex-offenders are not insulated from the disenfranchisement laws, administrative barriers, and political socialization processes that dampen participation among their romantic counterparts. Rather, their political opinions and behaviors are influenced by the political exclusion of their previously incarcerated partners. Where that exclusion is the most palpable—for example, in states with ex-felon

disenfranchisement laws—partners might exhibit the highest rates of retreat. In this narrative, partners of ex-offenders are influenced by the diminished political involvement of their counterparts, which is the direct result of legal barriers to voting. In a slightly modified scenario, individuals are still influenced by lower rates of political behavior exhibited by their formerly incarcerated partners; however, in this case, a host of factors including legal barriers, administrative hurdles and political socialization processes account for diminished participation.

Qualitative work on families of ex-offenders points to two additional mechanisms aside from influence. First, diminished political participation among partners may be one indication of broader isolation and withdrawal from social life, resulting from social stigma. Donald Braman finds that partners experience more stigma and embarrassment than their incarcerated counterparts because they are left on the outside to navigate prying questions and judgment from others (2004). He describes partners who retreat from workplace relationships and extended family. He also draws a sharp contrast between personal faith and church going, finding that partners often withdraw from the latter while deepening their commitment to the former. The social silence and diminished social capital that Braman describes is echoed in other qualitative work. According to Todd Clear, “when a family member goes to prison, the remaining family members often withdraw from social life” (2007:147). In line with these accounts, diminished political participation might be one symptom of broader social silence and stigma experienced by partners.

A second potential mechanism is political socialization, similar to the process described by Weaver and Lerman in their study of ex-offenders (2010). Partners of ex-offenders experience direct interactions with criminal justice institutions as visitors to prisons, navigators of courts, and family members of wanted men in highly policed ghettos (Comfort 2008; Goffman

2009). Analogous to the processes put forth by Weaver and Lerman (2010), where negative orientations with government contribute to a pessimistic view of government overall, the partners of ex-offenders undergo routine interactions with the criminal justice system that shape their own views of government. In her study of women visiting their partners in prison, Megan Comfort finds that women experience regulations, punitive measures, and emotional frustrations to such an extent that they comprise a “secondary prisonization.” In using this term, Comfort proposes that women undergo transformative experiences as a result of efforts to preserve family relationships. Goffman’s study of men with warrants in Philadelphia also documents how close friends, family members, and romantic partners become directly implicated with the police (2009). Partners must manage their households while navigating pressures from the police to provide information and act as informants, experiences that are likely to exacerbate already existing feelings of police distrust.

There is ethnographic evidence that political socialization processes may dampen political participation among romantic partners of ex-offenders. In her research, Comfort finds that partners of ex-offenders have little interest in political activism and collective action. She suggests that this political disengagement is a direct result of criminal justice interactions and that future research might “reveal not so much depoliticization as disenchantment sown by fatalism, exhaustion, or fear of criminal justice retaliation” (Comfort 2008:193). The mechanism of political socialization describes withdrawal from voting, collective action, and commitment to the political process as the direct result of interactions with the criminal justice system. It is not the broad withdrawal from civic and social life, as described by Braman and others, but a specific and targeted retreat from government.

While these works provide suggestive evidence that political retreat may be a potential consequence of partner incarceration, this paper is the first to analyze this question and its related mechanisms quantitatively, with a nationally representative sample of urban parent partnerships.

### **Diminished political participation: another facet of inequality**

The finding of diminished participation among partners of formerly incarcerated men would add another aspect of inequality to the growing list of collateral consequences for families of ex-offenders. Partners and children of previously incarcerated men experience a multitude of economic, social, and emotional penalties as a result of paternal incarceration. They are poorer (Geller, Garfinkel, and Western 2011), more reliant on public benefits (Sugie 2012), and experience greater material hardship (Schwartz-Soicher, Geller, and Garfinkel 2011). Partners of ex-offenders are more likely to report poor mental health and life satisfaction (Wildeman, Schnittker, and Turney 2012). The children of incarcerated parents exhibit more aggressive behaviors in early childhood (Wakefield and Wildeman 2011; Wildeman 2011; Geller et al. 2009), are less school-ready compared to similar peers (Haskins 2009), and are more likely to experience homelessness (Wildeman 2011). This growing body of research finds that families of ex-offenders experience a multitude of poorer outcomes following incarceration; political retreat would add another dimension to our understanding of the economic, emotional, and social disadvantage that they experience.

## **II. DATA, MEASURES, AND METHODS**

### **Data**

I use data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (“Fragile Families”) to analyze how partner incarceration<sup>3</sup> is associated with political behavior. The Fragile Families study is a longitudinal survey of approximately 5,000 children born between 1998 and 2000 to parents in US cities with populations over 200,000. The study conducted initial interviews in 20 cities with mothers shortly after giving birth, contacted and interviewed fathers, and oversampled non-marital births (for more information on study design and sample, see Reichman et al. 2001). Follow-up interviews were conducted with both parents when the child was one, three, five, and nine years old. I rely primarily on information gathered from the mothers, beginning with the initial interview at the child’s birth and continuing through the 3-year interview, which is when the dependent variables for the parents are measured. I consider the influence of incarceration among fathers on the political participation of their female partners (or mothers) in Fragile Families.

The Fragile Families data are particularly well suited for analyzing the consequences of paternal incarceration for partners and families. Most importantly, the data includes detailed information on both parents over several years, allowing researchers to study partner relationships regardless of marital status. Since marriage is less common among ex-offenders, the focus on partners that share a child is a more inclusive measure that better captures the prevalence of cohabiting and romantic relationships. Given that the romantic partners studied here share a child together, it is likely that these relationships are closer than other types of

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<sup>3</sup> This paper considers partner incarceration as opposed to other types of criminal justice system involvement, such as felony convictions or arrests. While incarceration in jail or prison can often include felony convictions, individuals can be incarcerated without being convicted of a felony. In this paper, I focus on incarceration because it best captures the host of various mechanisms—political socialization processes, administrative barriers, and legal exclusions—theorized to reduce participation among ex-offenders. It is also the most common sanction studied in most scholarship on criminal justice and inequality.

relationships. Even so, parents make up the majority of those incarcerated in state (52 percent) and federal (63 percent) prison (Glaze and Maruschak 2010).

The Fragile Families survey data also provides a wealth of detailed information on the characteristics of mothers and fathers, including demographics that are commonly correlated with political behavior as well as other important characteristics such as mental health and substance use. The longitudinal design of the study further allows the use of multiple analytic models, in order to more convincingly narrow the causal argument. As with any analysis of observational data, there are concerns about bias due to unobserved characteristics associated with partner incarceration and political behavior. While the political measures and other dependent variables of interest are only asked in the survey's third wave, the repeated measures of partner incarceration enable robustness checks that would not be possible with cross-sectional data.

Because the analyses focus on voting behavior and political participation, I exclude mothers and fathers who are not United States citizens by the three-year follow up interview (n=384 and 152, respectively). I also exclude mothers who state that they do not know the child's father (n=10). I do not include mothers who are missing information on the dependent variables (n=46) or who are not interviewed at the three-year survey (n=598). Excluding these respondents leaves a final sample of 3,708 mothers. In this paper, I report findings that include multiple imputation for missing information on the independent variables.

## **Measures**

This section describes the key dependent variables used in the analyses (mother's political participation), the key independent variable (father's incarceration), and a variety of control variables that are used in all of the models.

Political participation. I consider three measures of mother’s political participation. In the three-year survey, mothers are asked whether they are registered to vote, whether they voted in the November 2000 election, and their beliefs about the importance of voting in elections. I present separate models for each outcome because they measure different aspects of political participation. The voting variable captures a concrete, one-time behavior whereas registration is a broader measure of intent to vote. The question about the importance of voting—how important do you feel it is for Americans to vote in elections?—is a non-behavioral measure that captures belief in our country’s political system. Answers that assert importance of voting (very important or somewhat important) are coded as =1; “not important” is coded as 0. The binary form of the measure is used to keep consistency with the other two voting outcomes; analyses repeated with the three-category response produce estimates that are consistent with the binary measure.

Partner incarceration. Two measures of paternal incarceration are used in the analyses. The primary independent variable measures whether the father has ever been incarcerated by the three-year survey and is constructed from both mother and father reports (“partner incarceration”).<sup>4</sup> In some models I also use a second measure of incarceration, which reflects whether the father has been incarcerated between survey years three and five—a time period

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<sup>4</sup> I have used other versions of the incarceration variable, such as whether the father has ever been incarcerated by the year 1 survey, and the results are substantially similar. Utilizing both mother and father reports to construct the measure of incarceration has strengths and weaknesses. Mainly, mothers generally report higher levels of prior incarceration and Fragile Families researchers have concluded that mother’s reports may be more accurate since they may be less subject to response bias (Geller, Garfinkel, and Western 2011). Other scholarship suggests that women’s reports can provide a reliable measure of their partner’s deviant behavior, although specific levels of deviance and diagnoses should not be made using second-hand reports (Caspi et al. 2001). While using measures from two respondents introduces error into an already broad measure, noisiness in the measure would bias any estimates towards zero. This suggests that the findings reported here represent a conservative estimate of the true association.



after the dependent variables are measured in year three. This measure is also drawn from both mother and father reports and is used as a placebo test, to investigate the importance of timing in the association between partner incarceration and political participation.

Demographic measures. I include mother's demographic characteristics, including age, race and ethnicity, highest level of education attained, marital and cohabiting status, and total children. These measures are well-known correlates of voting behavior.

Labor force status and economic situation. I include several measures of work and economic situation that are measured at the three-year survey: participation in the formal labor market, household income (logged), material hardship, and receipt of TANF, food stamps, and Medicaid/SCHIP. Household income is a well-established predictor of voting and political behavior, where higher income is positively associated with voting. I expect that participation in the formal labor will similarly matter. Material hardship is measured as an index based on Schwartz-Soicher et al. (2011) and is the sum of five questions asked in the twelve months prior to the survey: did you receive free food or meals? Did you not pay the full amount of rent or mortgage payments? Were you evicted from your home or apartment for not paying the rent or mortgage? Did you not pay the full amount of a gas, oil, or electricity bill? Was there anyone in your household who needed to see a doctor or go to the hospital but couldn't go because of the cost? I also include measures of TANF, food stamps, and Medicaid/SCHIP receipt because prior research finds that paternalistic welfare policy and involvement with the TANF program, in particular, negatively affects political involvement (Bruch et al. 2010).

Mental health. I include four measures of mother's mental health, all administered at the three-year survey: major depression, generalized anxiety disorder, drug dependence, and alcohol dependence. Questions for these disorders come from the Composite International Diagnostic

Interview Short Form (CIDI-SF). Based on several questions, which are described more fully in the Fragile Families core scales documentation for year three (Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study 2006), a dichotomous score is calculated. A positive score (=1) means that the respondent is a probable case for the specific disorder, while a zero score suggests that the respondent is a probable non-case. It may be that mental health is associated with diminished political participation.

Incarceration history. This variable measures whether the mother has ever been incarcerated by the three-year survey. Given the extensive literature on ex-felons and voting, I expect to find diminished voting rates among mothers who have histories of incarceration.

## **Methods**

I utilize several logit<sup>5</sup> models to analyze the relationship between partner incarceration and mother's political participation. First, I demonstrate that mothers report lower voter registration rates, lower voting rates, and are less likely to believe that voting is important following the incarceration of their male counterparts. This association is not explained by socioeconomic characteristics such as age, race, education, family status and economic situation. I also control for mental health and incarceration history. The detailed questions asked in Fragile Families surveys allow me to control for numerous measures that are considered important for political behavior and voting.

As with any observational study, concerns of selection bias on unobserved characteristics remain. Paternal incarceration is not a randomly distributed event, and the association between

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<sup>5</sup> Logit models estimate coefficients that are not comparable across models with different variances. This is unlike ordinary least squares regression analysis, where the variance is constant. Logit coefficients, and corresponding odds-ratios, are calculated relative to the groups of interest (e.g., mothers with and without formerly incarcerated partners). In the interpretation of results, I consider coefficients and odds-ratios within models as opposed to directly comparing the magnitude of coefficients across models.

partner incarceration and diminished political participation rates may be capturing unobserved characteristics associated with lower voting and involvement. Because the Fragile Families survey administered the political behavior questions in only one wave, I am unable to use within-person change models, which address stable, unobserved characteristics. Instead, I take advantage of other strengths in the Fragile Families data to address concerns of selection bias. First, I limit sample heterogeneity by restricting the analysis sample to mothers whose partners had prior criminal justice contact. For this analysis, prior contact includes being stopped by the police for a non-minor traffic violation, charged or convicted for breaking the law, or experiencing jail or prison by the three-year survey. While the measure of prior contact is admittedly broad, this definition reduces sample heterogeneity without sacrificing sample size. Limiting the sample to mothers whose partners who are more likely “at-risk” for incarceration addresses unobserved factors that can potentially bias cross-sectional regression results (LaLonde 1986).

The second approach is a placebo test, which further narrows unobserved characteristics and tests the importance of timing for the association. In this model, I regress the political participation variables on a measure of paternal incarceration that occurs after the dependent variables (three-year survey). If the observed association is due to unobserved, stable characteristics only, the future measure of incarceration should be significantly associated with prior measures of political participation. However, if future partner incarceration is not associated with prior measures of political involvement, this demonstrates that diminished participation occurs *after* partner incarceration. This test provides additional evidence that lower rates of voter registration, voting, and perceived importance of voting are significantly related to partner incarceration and are not biased by selection on unobserved, stable characteristics.

After establishing the negative association between partner incarceration and diminished political participation, I consider three potential mechanisms. First, I analyze how residency in states with ex-felon disenfranchisement laws moderates the association. In these models, I include an indicator variable for residency in states with ex-felon disenfranchisement laws and interact this variable with partner incarceration. The indicator variable is positive for states that permanently bar ex-felons from voting, rather than states that exclude only those on parole, on probation, and currently incarcerated.<sup>6</sup> A negative association with the interaction term would suggest that partner incarceration is particularly salient in places that legally exclude ex-felons from voting. This would indicate that mothers are influenced by father's lower rates of voting and political participation, which have been shaped primarily by legal impediments. Prior scholarship has primarily focused on disenfranchisement of ex-felons due to these laws; however, there is growing evidence that criminal justice contact deters political participation through other administrative and socialization mechanisms as well (Drucker and Barreras 2005; Allen 2011; Weaver and Lerman 2010).

To further examine the role of peer effects and influence, I consider father's self-reported political behavior and beliefs as mediating variables. These variables are measured after paternal incarceration, in survey year three. The inclusion of father's political characteristics analyzes whether father's behavior mediates the association between prior paternal incarceration and mother's political participation. While this analysis provides evidence of a mediating relationship, it is not a definitive test of peer effects. As with other survey-based research, it is not possible to distinguish between peer effects and shared experiences. For the latter, it may be

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<sup>6</sup> Other variations on this measure, which distinguish among restrictions for parolees and probationers, were also used in models whose findings are not reported here. The results were consistent with the analyses in this paper and are available upon request from the author.

that the experience of father's incarceration similarly reduces future political participation among both fathers and mothers, perhaps through the political socialization processes described earlier. Notwithstanding this important caveat, this analysis provides useful suggestive evidence about the explanatory role of father's own political behavior.

Finally, I analyze whether social stigma explains diminished political participation. Qualitative research suggests that families and partners of incarcerated men retreat from social relationships, community organizations, and church going because of embarrassment and perceived social stigma. These accounts find that families and partners experience diminished social capital across a variety of arenas (Braman 2004; Clear 2007), not just political participation. To investigate this, I analyze the association between paternal incarceration and civic involvement, church involvement, and social support. If diminished political participation is a symptom of broader retreat, partner incarceration should be similarly related to these additional measures.

The civic involvement variable is binary and measures participation in a group affiliated with a service club, a community organization or an organization working with children. The church involvement variable is binary and measures participation in a group affiliated with a church or regular attendance at church (a few times a month or more). The social support variable measures the extent of support perceived by mothers and her contact with extended family. It is coded affirmatively if the mother answers yes to either of these questions: is there someone you could count on to provide you with emergency child care? Is there someone you could count on to provide you with a place to live? The variable is also coded affirmatively if the mother has frequent contact with her parents or her partner's parents (e.g., sees them a few times a month or more). These questions were intentionally chosen to measure support and contact

that does not necessarily depend on kin's financial resources. Finding no association for these other domains, I suggest that diminished political participation is not an indicator of broader social stigma. Rather, it is a particular form of retreat from government interaction and political involvement.

### **III. RESULTS**

Before presenting results for the regression analyses, I first describe the means and standard deviations for variables, by partner incarceration history (see Table 1). Female partners of formerly incarcerated men have significantly lower rates of registration, voting, and perceived importance of voting compared to partners of men who have never been incarcerated.

Considering the voting characteristics of men themselves, those with histories of incarceration have lower rates of registration, are less likely to have voted, and are less likely to believe in the importance of voting compared to men without prior incarceration. Among men with no history of incarceration, 41 percent report having some prior criminal justice contact. While this is a relatively large percent, it reflects the primarily urban and non-marital sample of the Fragile Families survey. Five percent of fathers without prior incarceration by survey year three report a future incarceration between survey years three and five.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

Distinguishing by partner incarceration, mothers are different on a variety of observable characteristics. Mothers with previously incarcerated partners are younger, more likely to be non-Hispanic black, and less likely to have graduated from high school. They have lower rates of marriage and higher rates of non-resident partnerships. In terms of economic situation, they are less likely to be working in the formal labor market, are poorer, experience greater levels of material hardship, and are more likely to receive public benefits. Partners of formerly

incarcerated men also have higher rates of mental health issues (with the exception of alcohol dependence) and incarceration histories. Because of these observed differences between mothers with and without prior paternal incarceration experiences, the following analyses control for these factors and use several methods to further address unmeasured differences.

### **The association between partner incarceration and mother's political participation**

Table 2 considers the association between paternal incarceration and mother's voter registration, voting behavior, and belief in the importance of voting. The models include a full set of control variables for demographics, economic situation, mental health, and incarceration history. Even after adjusting for these characteristics, all three measures of political participation are negatively associated with prior paternal incarceration. The models reported in Table 2 present logit coefficients for the estimated associations. The coefficients for voter registration (-0.25), voted (-0.32) and importance of voting (-0.22) translate into odds ratios of 0.78, 0.73, and 0.80, respectively. Therefore, mothers that have previously experienced partner incarceration have a 0.78 times lower odds of being registered to vote compared to mothers without partner incarceration histories. In models that are not displayed here (but are available upon request), I replicate Table 2 with a control for civic involvement, a measure that is also used in the latter part of the paper concerning mechanisms. The inclusion of the civic involvement measure does not change the estimated associations and significance levels.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

To assess the magnitude of the negative associations, Figure 1 presents predicted probabilities for political participation by partner incarceration, holding other measures at their means. Predicted probabilities are also computed for other important correlates of political involvement, including educational attainment, race, and receipt of welfare (cash assistance).

As shown in Figure 1, partner incarceration is associated with lower predicted probabilities of political participation, but not to the degree of critical factors such as educational attainment and race. However, partner incarceration does have a larger, negative magnitude compared to receipt of welfare, a governing institution that prior scholarship has focused on (Bruch et al. 2010; Piven and Cloward 1993). The predicted probability of being registered to vote for mothers with partner incarceration is 78.9, as opposed to 82.7 for mothers without incarceration. The probability of voting is 46.5, in contrast to 54.6 for mothers without incarceration. The probability for belief in the importance of voting is 77.4 among mothers with previously incarcerated romantic partners (in contrast to 81.0 for mothers without partner incarceration). In summary, the incarceration of a romantic partner has modest negative associations compared to important factors such as educational attainment and race. However, it appears to be a more consequential deterrent to political participation than the previously recognized, politically regulating institution of welfare.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

The models reported in Table 2 control for many observed characteristics that prior scholarship suggests are important for explaining political participation. However, these models do not address unmeasured stable differences between mothers that are likely to be associated with both partner incarceration and participation, potentially biasing the estimated association. Table 3 presents results from two approaches that attempt to address unobserved stable characteristics. First, I restrict the analysis sample to women whose partners are most at risk of experiencing incarceration. By limiting the sample to women whose partners have had prior contact with criminal justice, I reduce sample heterogeneity and diminish confounding factors that potentially bias estimates in the full sample (LaLonde 1986). The estimated logit coefficients



based on the restricted sample – - 0.34 for voter registration, -0.34 for voting, and -.26 for importance of voting – are analogous to the findings for the full sample; they suggest a negative, statistically significant association between partner incarceration and political participation.

As a second approach, I estimate the association between mother’s political participation and *future* partner incarceration. If the original association reported in Table 2 is simply a reflection of unobserved selection bias, the measure of future partner incarceration should have a negative, statistically significant association with political participation. Table 3 reports the logit coefficients for future measures of partner incarceration (after year 3 survey), with and without controls for prior incarceration. In all of these models, the coefficient on future partner incarceration is negative, modest, and non-significant. These findings suggest that timing is important in the association of diminished political participation and partner incarceration, and that future measures of partner incarceration do not explain the negative association. Taking together both approaches of the restricted sample and the time-ordering tests, I argue that lower levels of registration, voting, and importance of voting are consequences of partner incarceration.

### **Potential mechanisms for the association**

The next set of models investigates three potential mechanisms for lower political participation. First, I consider whether residency in a state with an ex-felon disenfranchisement law moderates political participation among mothers. In these models, I include an indicator variable for state disenfranchisement law and an interaction with partner incarceration; Figure 2 presents the predicted probabilities for these results, holding other factors constant at their means (see Appendix for logit models). The predicted probability of voting and belief in the importance of voting is lower in states with disenfranchisement laws, regardless of partner incarceration experiences (although the negative association for the importance of voting is not

significant at  $p < 0.05$ ). As the figure illustrates, the probability of being registered to vote and voting among mothers with partner incarceration is lower for states with legal barriers to voting; however, these interactions are not significant. Interestingly, there is no difference in the stated belief in the importance of voting among mothers living in states with and without ex-felon disenfranchisement laws. While it is possible that a larger sample of states would produce significant differences between states with and without disenfranchisement laws, diminished political participation among mothers with partner incarceration experiences appears to exist regardless of legal barriers.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

I next consider the role of father's own political participation for explaining the association. Table 4 presents logit models that include corresponding measures of father's political participation. For voter registration and voting behavior, the inclusion of father's political characteristics mediates much of the negative association between father's incarceration and mother's political participation. The main correlation remains negative; however, the estimated coefficients are modest and non-significant (although voting is marginally significant at a p-value of 0.059). For importance of voting, the main association is only slightly reduced and remains significant by the inclusion of father's self-reported belief in voting importance.

[Insert Table 4 about here]

One interpretation of these results is that father's own diminished political participation is an important explanatory pathway between partner incarceration and mother's political retreat. In this narrative, a father's incarceration experience reduces his own political participation, which in turn influences the behavior and beliefs of his partner. However, an alternative scenario that also aligns with these findings is that mother's direct experiences with the

incarceration of her partner shapes her own political behavior and beliefs in a way similar to the political socialization processes of her partner. In this account, the shared experience of father's previous incarceration is associated with future diminished political behavior and commitment. While survey research does not permit me to distinguish between these two processes, qualitative studies on families of those formerly incarcerated and studies on political behavior suggest both narratives.

Qualitative accounts also suggest a third potential mechanism, where diminished political participation is one indication of broader social stigma. This research finds that female partners of incarcerated men retreat from community organizations, church going, and extended familial relationships. To test this explanation quantitatively, I consider the association between partner incarceration and three additional outcome measures: civic involvement, church involvement, and social support. If social stigma explains reduced political participation, we would expect to see similar associations with these other key measures. As Table 5 describes, all three measures are negatively associated with partner incarceration; however, the estimated relationships are modest and not significant. The lack of an association with these other measures suggests that mothers are not retreating from other social and civic domains, and that broad social stigma is not the key explanatory mechanism for diminished political participation. Rather, partner incarceration is associated with reduced participation in the political arena, in particular. These findings suggest that mothers are retreating from this specific form of government interaction and political involvement.

#### **IV. DISCUSSION**

This paper extends prior scholarship on political exclusion and disengagement among ex-offenders by considering the political ramifications for their romantic partners. While qualitative

research on families of ex-offenders and literature on peer effects suggest that diminished participation is a potential consequence, this is the first paper to study this question quantitatively. By doing so, the paper documents how the criminal justice system's expanded use of incarceration has generated widespread political exclusion among resource-poor groups with already tenuous connections to political institutions. I find that female partners of previously incarcerated men are less likely to participate politically following incarceration and that this association remains robust to tests of selection on unobserved, stable characteristics. While disenfranchisement laws are potentially important moderators for voting behavior, it appears that legal barriers are less consequential compared to other processes such as influence and political socialization. In contrast to qualitative accounts about widespread social stigma and broad-based retreat among families of ex-offenders, this paper finds that diminished political participation is not indicative of stigma. Instead, it is a specific form of retreat from political action.

This study's contributions must be considered in light of several limitations. First, political participation questions are only asked in year three of the Fragile Families survey so changes over time cannot be extensively analyzed. The strength of longitudinal data is that methods can account for unobserved, stable characteristics of individuals, which is not possible with these data. However, to address concerns about unmeasured factors, I used several approaches including a restricted sample and a measure of future incarceration. A second potential limitation is that the measure of partner incarceration is drawn from reports of both mothers and fathers, which may result in more measurement error compared to reports by fathers only. However, prior research using Fragile Families data suggests that utilizing reports from both respondents may actually be more reliable (Geller et al. 2011), as mothers' reports are not susceptible to response bias or the inclination to make favorable self-reports. Nevertheless, if the

measure of incarceration has greater error, the estimates of the association between partner incarceration and mother's political participation will be biased towards zero, meaning that the estimates presented here should be considered lower-bound estimates of the actual association. A third consideration is that the Fragile Families survey design includes men and women that have a child together and these partnerships may be stronger compared to partnerships without children. Even so, the majority of individuals in state and federal prison are more likely to be parents than not (Glaze and Maruschak 2010).

Despite these limitations, the findings suggest that partner incarceration experiences represent an important and measurable deterrence to political action. These consequences are specific to the political realm and are not explained by ex-felon disenfranchisement laws, which is the focus of most scholarship (Uggen, Manza, and Thompson 2006; Uggen and Manza 2002; Manza and Uggen 2006). They are also not the apparent result of broad-based retreat and social stigma, as some ethnographies and qualitative research describe. Given these findings, this paper supports the call for greater attention to the political socialization processes of mass incarceration for ex-offenders (Weaver and Lerman 2010), families and communities (Comfort 2008).

The findings presented here contribute to a growing body of research documenting an array of consequences of incarceration to families and communities of ex-offenders. Whereas prior work has focused almost exclusively on the financial (Geller et al. 2011; Schwartz-Soicher et al. 2011; Sugie 2012), behavioral ( Geller et al. 2012; Wakefield and Wildeman 2011; Wildeman 2011), and public safety (Clear et al. 2003; Clear, Waring, and Scully 2005; Clear 2007) concerns of incarceration for families and communities; political disengagement can now be added to this long and growing list. Across these various domains, families of incarcerated men are experiencing greater social, economic, and political inequality as a consequence of mass

incarceration. As a system that exacerbates disadvantage among resource-poor groups, criminal justice is a key stratifying institution whose role must be considered in social, economic, and political inequality scholarship.

In addition, the political retreat of partners of ex-offenders has important implications for theories of social exclusion and the governance of marginalized groups. As prior work has described (Uggen et al. 2006), the criminal justice sanction is a lifetime stigma that effectively excludes ex-offenders from actively participating in many spheres of social and economic life, including employment (Pager 2003; Western 2006), public benefits (Rubinstein and Mukamal 2002), and voting (Uggen and Manza 2002). Political disengagement is only one of the many and varied ways that ex-offenders are socially excluded from some of the fundamental aspects of society and citizenry. The extension of political exclusion to the partners of ex-offenders supports the mounting evidence that ex-offenders are not unattached deviants but consequential members of families and communities. The social exclusion faced by ex-offenders is not limited to individuals but extends to their partners and families. Ex-offenders *and their partners* experience many of the financial (Geller et al. 2011; Schwartz-Soicher et al. 2011; Sugie 2012), social (Clear, Rose, and Ryder 2001), and political exclusions associated with a criminal record; they are a status group (Uggen et al. 2006) *by association*. The political retreat of those that are best positioned to mobilize against an expanding criminal justice system—that is, the partners and families of those incarcerated—presents an grave obstacle to political action efforts. The large and growing population of economically disadvantaged and politically excluded groups has critical repercussions for our democratic ideals and the legitimacy of our social contract.

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<b>TABLE 1: Means and standard deviations of variables, by partner incarceration</b>					
	No partner incarceration		Partner incarceration		
<i>Mother's political involvement</i>					
Registered to vote	0.812	(0.402)	0.744	(0.454)	***
Voted in Nov 2000	0.582	(0.492)	0.411	(0.495)	***
Importance of voting	0.810	(0.402)	0.746	(0.454)	***
<i>Father's criminal justice experience</i>					
Prior criminal justice contact	0.406	(0.492)	---	---	
Incarceration btwn yr 3 and 5	0.048	(0.223)	0.225	(0.454)	***
<i>Father's political involvement</i>					
Registered to vote	0.793	(0.552)	0.620	(0.581)	***
Voted in Nov 2000	0.517	(0.538)	0.244	(0.465)	***
Importance of voting	0.654	(0.549)	0.514	(0.612)	***
<i>Mother's other involvement</i>					
Civic	0.347	(0.480)	0.269	(0.448)	***
Church	0.642	(0.482)	0.576	(0.497)	***
Social support	0.992	(0.088)	0.987	(0.115)	
<i>Mother's characteristics</i>					
Age	29.406	(6.346)	26.379	(5.362)	***
Race/ethnicity					
White, non-Hispanic	0.297	---	0.161	---	
Black, non-Hispanic	0.439	---	0.614	---	
Hispanic	0.225	---	0.204	---	
Other	0.039	---	0.021	---	
Education					
Less than high school	0.233	---	0.424	---	
High school graduate	0.292	---	0.339	---	
Some college	0.288	---	0.219	---	
College graduate	0.186	---	0.019	---	
Family status					
Married	0.446	---	0.126	---	
Cohabiting	0.189	---	0.186	---	
Non-resident	0.365	---	0.688	---	
Total children	2.384	(1.385)	2.670	(1.526)	***
Formal labor market participation	0.605	(0.492)	0.533	(0.495)	***
Household income (logged)	10.253	(1.117)	9.568	(1.072)	***
Material hardship	0.285	(0.447)	0.422	(0.495)	***
TANF receipt	0.085	(0.268)	0.242	(0.412)	***
Food stamps receipt	0.267	(0.447)	0.573	(0.495)	***
Medicaid/SCHIP receipt	0.451	(0.492)	0.752	(0.454)	***
Major depression	0.121	(0.313)	0.184	(0.371)	***
Generalized anxiety disorder	0.034	(0.179)	0.064	(0.247)	***
Drug dependence	0.004	(0.045)	0.014	(0.124)	***
Alcohol dependence	0.002	(0.045)	0.003	(0.041)	
Incarceration history	0.013	(0.134)	0.056	(0.247)	***
N	1993		1701		
Notes: Due to multiple imputation estimates, N varies for no partner incarceration (N=1993 to 2007) and partner incarceration (N=1701 to 1715)					
*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001					

TABLE 2: Logit regression of mother's political participation						
	Registered to vote		Voted in Nov 2000		Importance of voting	
Paternal incarceration	-0.246	(0.095)**	-0.320	(0.081)***	-0.222	(0.094)*
Age	0.034	(0.009)***	0.036	(0.008)***	0.015	-0.009
Race/ethnicity						
Black, non-Hispanic	0.779	(0.121)***	0.960	(0.103)***	0.910	(0.113)***
Hispanic	-0.151	(0.123)	-0.012	(0.116)	0.584	(0.122)***
Other	-0.497	(0.246)*	-0.189	(0.259)	0.556	(0.266)*
Education						
High school graduate	0.469	(0.103)***	0.409	(0.093)***	0.012	(0.101)
Some college	0.789	(0.127)***	0.902	(0.106)***	0.067	(0.120)
College graduate	1.729	(0.247)***	1.846	(0.186)***	1.183	(0.231)***
Family status						
Cohabiting	0.075	(0.132)	-0.072	(0.116)	-0.204	(0.134)
Non-resident	0.239	(0.122)*	-0.055	(0.107)	-0.299	(0.120)*
Total children	0.017	(0.035)	-0.001	(0.029)	0.014	(0.032)
Formal labor market participation	0.136	(0.096)	0.072	(0.082)	0.150	-0.091
Household income (logged)	0.158	(0.051)**	0.211	(0.047)***	0.041	(0.048)
Material hardship	0.037	(0.092)	-0.101	(0.080)	0.046	(0.090)
TANF receipt	0.107	(0.136)	0.058	(0.117)	0.297	(0.130)*
Food stamps receipt	0.397	(0.116)***	0.045	(0.102)	-0.113	(0.111)
Medicaid/SCHIP receipt	-0.115	(0.109)	-0.083	(0.095)	-0.015	(0.109)
Major depression	0.366	(0.133)**	0.206	-0.113	-0.025	(0.123)
Generalized anxiety disorder	-0.430	(0.198)*	-0.232	(0.181)	0.090	(0.200)
Drug dependence	-0.843	(0.379)*	-0.199	(0.364)	-0.282	(0.416)
Alcohol dependence	-0.557	(0.633)	-0.230	(0.610)	0.270	(0.786)
Incarceration history	-0.913	(0.218)***	-0.447	(0.219)*	0.434	-0.246
Constant	-2.231	(0.608)***	-3.922	(0.550)***	-0.089	(0.569)
N	3708		3708		3708	

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

**TABLE 3: Logit regressions of political participation, with a restricted sample and testing importance of time-ordering**

	Restricted sample			Time-ordering					
	Registered	Voted	Importance of voting	Registered	Voted	Importance of voting	Registered	Voted	Importance of voting
<i>Paternal incarceration</i>									
Prior to yr3	-0.337	-0.344	-0.263		-0.240		-0.313		-0.248
	(0.117)**	(0.101)***	(0.118)*		(0.095)*		(0.082)***		(0.096)*
After yr3				-0.106	-0.052	-0.131	-0.055	0.151	0.207
				(0.140)	(0.140)	(0.126)	(0.128)	(0.134)	(0.137)
N	2512	2512	2512	3708	3708	3708	3708	3708	3708
Notes: All models are based on Logit. For space considerations, models include controls that are not reported here for age, race/ethnicity, education, family status, total children, formal labor market participation, household income (logged), material hardship, TANF receipt, food stamps receipt, Medicaid/SCHIP receipt, major depression, generalized anxiety disorder, drug dependence, alcohol dependence, incarceration history. Full results tables are available from the author. Standard errors in parentheses.									
*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001									

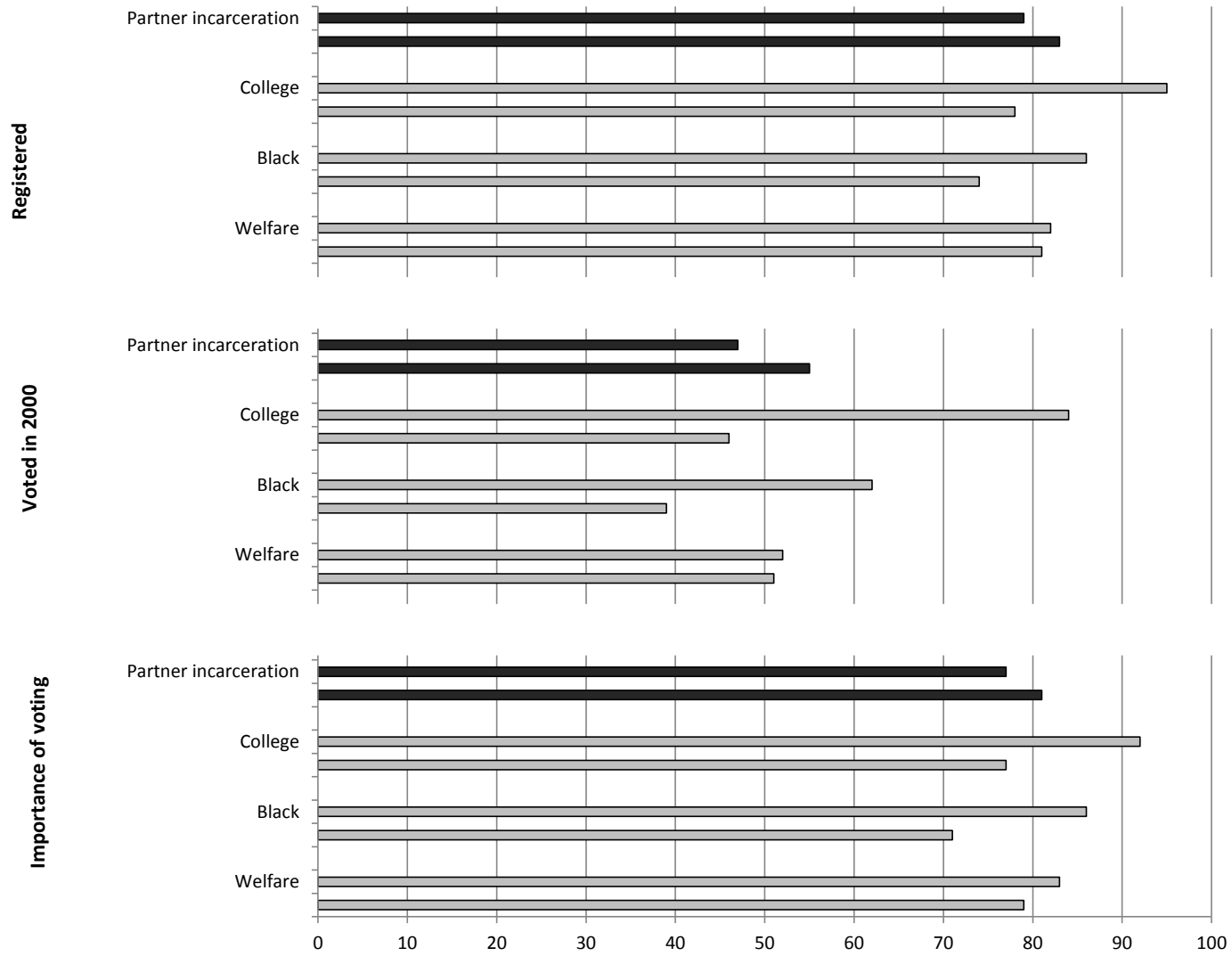
**TABLE 4: Logit regression of mother's political participation, with partner characteristics**

	Registered to vote		Voted in Nov 2000		Importance of voting	
Paternal incarceration	-0.153	(0.099)	-0.160	-0.085	-0.207	(0.094)*
<i>Father's political measures</i>						
Registered to vote	0.717	(0.109)***				
Voted in Nov 2000			0.897	(0.086)***		
Importance of voting					0.280	(0.095)**
<i>Mother's characteristics</i>						
Age	0.035	(0.010)***	0.030	(0.008)***	0.014	(0.009)
<i>Race/ethnicity</i>						
Black, non-Hispanic	0.772	(0.123)***	0.926	(0.105)***	0.887	(0.113)***
Hispanic	-0.109	(0.124)	0.100	(0.118)	0.578	(0.122)***
Other	-0.493	(0.250)*	-0.083	(0.255)	0.549	(0.266)*
<i>Education</i>						
High school graduate	0.406	(0.104)***	0.380	(0.095)***	0.019	(0.102)
Some college	0.678	(0.128)***	0.836	(0.108)***	0.068	(0.119)
College graduate	1.605	(0.247)***	1.713	(0.185)***	1.167	(0.231)***
<i>Family status</i>						
Cohabiting	0.094	(0.133)	-0.058	(0.119)	-0.200	(0.134)
Non-resident	0.259	(0.124)*	-0.001	(0.108)	-0.242	(0.123)*
Total children	0.010	(0.036)	-0.006	(0.030)	0.012	(0.032)
Formal labor market participation	0.132	(0.096)	0.059	(0.083)	0.140	(0.091)
Household income (logged)	0.145	(0.051)**	0.189	(0.048)***	0.036	(0.048)
Material hardship	0.019	(0.094)	-0.108	(0.083)	0.041	(0.090)
TANF receipt	0.049	(0.140)	0.004	(0.120)	0.289	(0.130)*
Food stamps receipt	0.359	(0.117)**	0.018	(0.105)	-0.110	(0.111)
Medicaid/SCHIP receipt	-0.070	(0.110)	-0.036	(0.097)	-0.021	(0.109)
Major depression	0.380	(0.133)**	0.226	(0.113)*	-0.022	(0.124)
Generalized anxiety disorder	-0.437	(0.198)*	-0.195	(0.179)	0.085	(0.201)
Drug dependence	-0.742	-0.383	-0.061	(0.361)	-0.268	(0.417)
Alcohol dependence	-0.687	(0.654)	-0.331	(0.653)	0.264	(0.788)
Incarceration history	-0.908	(0.216)***	-0.427	-0.221	0.431	-0.247
Constant	-2.588	(0.609)***	-3.927	(0.562)***	-0.169	(0.573)
N	3708		3708		3708	
*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001						

<b>TABLE 5: Logit regression of mother's involvement and social support</b>						
	Civic involvement		Church involvement		Social support	
Paternal incarceration	-0.066	(0.087)	-0.079	(0.079)	-0.199	(0.426)
Age	0.015	(0.008)*	0.020	(0.007)**	-0.105	(0.025)***
Race/ethnicity						
Black, non-Hispanic	0.232	(0.101)*	0.887	(0.097)***	-0.046	(0.580)
Hispanic	-0.155	(0.120)	0.693	(0.111)***	-0.810	(0.556)
Other	-0.004	(0.234)	0.069	(0.225)	-0.714	(0.792)
Education						
High school graduate	0.100	(0.103)	0.050	(0.090)	1.429	(0.526)**
Some college	0.583	(0.112)***	0.094	(0.104)	1.133	(0.530)*
College graduate	0.911	(0.163)***	0.503	(0.169)**	1.926	(1.221)
Family status						
Cohabiting	-0.325	(0.120)**	-0.663	(0.112)***	-0.457	(0.613)
Non-resident	-0.113	(0.106)	-0.315	(0.103)**	-0.685	(0.602)
Total children	0.096	(0.029)***	0.097	(0.029)***	-0.078	(0.100)
Formal labor market participation	0.200	(0.085)*	0.103	(0.078)	0.265	(0.420)
Household income (logged)	0.208	(0.049)***	-0.023	(0.042)	0.194	(0.130)
Material hardship	0.117	(0.083)	-0.108	(0.077)	-0.680	-0.348
TANF receipt	0.105	(0.126)	-0.108	(0.111)	0.378	(0.544)
Food stamps receipt	0.197	-0.107	-0.210	(0.097)*	0.292	(0.452)
Medicaid/SCHIP receipt	-0.112	(0.101)	-0.135	(0.093)	0.316	(0.441)
Major depression	0.063	(0.113)	-0.172	(0.107)	-0.321	(0.428)
Generalized anxiety disorder	-0.229	(0.195)	0.064	(0.178)	-0.419	(0.546)
Drug dependence	-0.248	(0.437)	0.582	(0.420)	1.744	-0.934
Alcohol dependence	0.962	(0.746)	-1.592	(0.735)*	-3.008	(0.713)***
Incarceration history	0.047	(0.214)	-0.153	(0.197)	-0.390	(0.533)
Constant	-3.984	(0.570)***	-0.279	(0.493)	6.105	(1.896)**
N	3708		3708		3708	
*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001						



**FIGURE 1: Predicted probabilities of political participation, holding other factors constant at their means**



**FIGURE 2: Predicted probabilities of political participation with state laws, holding other factors constant at their means**

