Paternal incarceration intensifies educational disparities among children innocent of their fathers’ crimes. Individual-level analyses underestimate the macro-level influence of variation in state socio-legal contexts. State investment in inclusionary welfare and educational programming can offset some exclusionary effects of paternal incarceration that state disinvestment doubly disadvantages. Intergenerational educational attainment therefore requires individual- and contextual-level analyses. We analyze multi-level national data with HGLM regression and propensity scoring supplemental models. Post-secondary educational attainment is especially important. College graduation rises with state investment in welfare and education, even among children found in this and prior research to have been “held back” following paternal incarceration.

Professor Hagan’s paper is available on our website and in hard copy at the Center.