

Identifying the Effects of Parental Absence on the Probabilities of Graduation and Arrests

April 2, 2012

Ravaris L. Moore¹

Dept. of Sociology, UCLA and CCPR

PRELIMINARY AND INCOMPLETE.

DO NOT CITE.

Abstract

This paper uses data from the NLSY97 to investigate the effects of parental absence on high school graduation rates and young adult arrest probabilities. Respondents are segmented into five household structures reflecting the number of biological parents with whom they reside, and reason for parental absence. Differences in outcomes are characterized by group. A simple structural model then transforms group level differences into separate effects of parental absence, parental death, and unobserved factors correlated with endogenous parental absence. Preliminary findings suggest that parental absence is responsible for the vast majority of observed difference in graduation rates. Parental death also has a sizable effect. Circumstances have a very small effect. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first work that attempts to separate the effects of parental absence from unobserved effects of factors that correlated with parental absence.

¹Contact: ravarism@ucla.edu