

CALL FOR PAPERS

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Issue on:

Disparate Effects of Disruptive Events on Children

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Disparate Effects of Disruptive Events on Children

Economic recession, natural disaster, pandemic, and other large-scale events can have far-reaching effects on families. Individuals often experience disruptive events within these contexts, losing jobs, homes, or their lives, as a result. Disruption can induce socioeconomic loss, psychological distress, and injurious health consequences, potentially inducing long-term scarring effects on wellbeing for families. Disruptive events may be particularly harmful for children because they impact access to resources, cognitive and socioemotional development, and health, in ways that shape later educational attainment and socioeconomic wellbeing (Farah et al. 2006; Heckman 2006).

Understanding the consequences of disruptive events on children is important because these exposures are highly prevalent at the population level and they are occurring at an unprecedented rate in the context of current health, economic, and social crises. Furthermore, the risk of exposure is not neutral. Rather, it is typically stratified by sources of disadvantage, such as socioeconomic and racial/ethnic minority status. Poor and marginalized families in disadvantaged communities are more likely to experience harmful disruption in their daily lives. As such, early-life exposure to harmful events could contribute to the intergenerational persistence of disadvantage (Cook, Fletcher, and Forgues 2019).

Much attention focuses on *overall* average effects of disruptive events on children. However, the consequences of such events vary, sometimes dramatically, across different groups. Some studies suggest that the same event could have profound negative consequences for some populations but less, or even no, impact among others. For example, prenatal exposure to natural disaster hampers children's cognitive development among poor families, but carries no penalties among more advantaged families (Torche 2018). Historical evidence suggests that the negative consequences of early-life exposure to the 1918 flu on mortality, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status were stronger for African Americans than Whites (Almond 2006).

Several mechanisms have been suggested to explain the stronger effects of disruptive events on poor and marginalized children. Advantaged families have more educational, economic, and informational resources that allow them to compensate for the negative consequences of harmful exposures (Torche 2018). Constraints faced by disadvantaged families and racial and ethnic minorities may emerge not just from having fewer resources in a single domain, but rather from interactive and compounding dimensions of disadvantage (Manduca and Sampson 2019; Sampson, Sharkey, and Raudenbush 2008). Theoretical models of allostatic load and cumulative risk factors suggest that the chronic stress emerging from diverse sources of disadvantage may act as a predisposing factor for the influence of novel exposures, i.e., a novel exposure will cause more damage to children already debilitated by long-term multidimensional disadvantage (McEwen and McEwen 2017; McEwen and Stellar 1993). For example, disadvantaged children are more likely to suffer from mental health issues from cumulative exposure to disadvantaged

conditions, which could exacerbate their ability to cope with exposure to disruptive shocks (Currie et al. 2010; Jans, Johansson, and Nilsson 2018).

Alternatively, some research suggests that the effect of some disruptive events could be stronger among advantaged populations. For example, parental job loss may not be as consequential for psychological well-being among children in disadvantaged families expecting economic instability relative to those more advantaged families accustomed to stability (Brand and Simon-Thomas 2014). Affluent children, who face strong pressure from parents to achieve, may be more likely to experience anxiety and depression (Luthar 2003), which exacerbates the impact of disruptive events. Another potential explanation for a stronger effect of disruptive events among advantaged children is that the many burdens experienced by disadvantaged populations contribute to the development of protective mechanisms variedly termed habituation, adaptation, and resilience, which could reduce the reactivity to any particular exposure (Feder, Nestler, and Charney 2009; Gump and Matthews 1999). This is not to say that children's achievement or wellbeing is higher among poor or minority children. It is instead to say that the reduction of children's' achievement might be better understood as the result of cumulative exposure to disadvantaged conditions rather than any single disruptive event.

Heterogeneity in the effect of disruptive events on children could also emerge from interactions between macro-level and micro-level exposures. Macro-level disruptions include economic recession, pandemic, natural disaster and other events affecting entire communities. Micro-level experiences such as losing a job, losing a home, and experiencing a health shock affect specific families. While the prevalence of micro-level experiences depends on macro-level contexts (for example, the probability of job displacement increases during recessions), the distinction invites important questions about micro-macro interactions as a source of heterogeneity in the effect of disruptive events. For example, the harmful effect of job loss on individual-level psychological wellbeing has been found to be weaker in contexts of widespread job loss (Brand 2015; Clark 2003; Clark, Knabe, and Rätzl 2010), plausibly because when unemployment becomes normative the stigma, shame, and guilt associated with losing one's job decreases (Miller and Hoppe 1994; Turner 1995). Importantly, the detrimental effect of a macro-level shock such as economic decline is not necessarily mediated by micro-level outcomes such as job loss. For example, researchers have shown that state-level job loss has a similar negative effect on adolescent mental health among families that experienced job loss and those that were spared, suggesting job loss is a community-level trauma whose consequences extend to those not directly affected (Ananat et al. 2017; Ananat, Gassman-Pines, and Gibson-Davis 2011; Gassman-Pines, Oltmans Ananat, and Gibson-Davis 2014).

This special issue will invite **empirical papers that examine heterogeneity in the effects of disruptive events on children's attainment and wellbeing**. Given the health, economic, and social upheaval of 2020, this is a crucial time to understand the differential impact of disruption on children's lives. In addition to analyses of heterogeneity in the effects of disruptive events, we encourage contributions that consider mechanisms accounting for and policies aimed at

alleviating heterogeneous effects of disruptive events. **We are interested in both aggregate shocks (e.g., economic recession, natural disaster, pandemic) and individual- or family-level disruptive events (e.g., job loss, housing loss, and health shocks), and various axes of heterogeneity, such as demographic, socioeconomic, and developmental. Finally, we are interested in interactions between macro-level and micro-level sources of disruption.**

Below is a set of possible topics that scholars may address. This list is by no means an exhaustive list of topics of interest.

Heterogeneity in the Impact of Macro (Aggregate) Disruptive Events

- How does the impact of economic recessions on children's psychological well-being vary according to parental income?
- How does the impact of natural disasters on children's socioeconomic attainment vary by socioeconomic resources?
- How does the pandemic differentially impact children's education by race?

Heterogeneity in the Impact of Micro (Individual) Disruptive Events

- How does exposure to violence differentially impact children's psychological well-being according to different likelihoods of being exposed to community violence?
- How does the effect of parental job loss on children's own likelihood of job loss vary by the developmental period in which parents lost jobs?
- How do health shocks differentially impact families and children with different socioeconomic resources?
- Are differential impacts of disruptive events on children's outcomes conditioned by variation in family ties (multigenerational vs. single generation households, presense of kin)?
- How does housing loss, by foreclosure or eviction, differentially impact children's socioeconomic attainment by race?

Interaction between Macro and Micro Disruptive Events as a Source of Heterogeneity

- How does the impact of parental job loss on children's psychological well-being vary across contexts with higher or lower unemployment levels?
- How does the impact of parental housing loss on children's educational attainment vary across contexts with higher or lower aggregate foreclosures or evictions?
- How does a family health shock's affect on children's well being vary by state level policy environments?

Mechanisms Explaining Heterogeneity in the Impact of Disruptive Events

- How do we explain heterogeneity across contexts in the effect of parental job loss on children's psychological well-being? Do children who are unaccustomed to socioeconomic adversity or have few peers experiencing similar disruption feel more stigma than children accustomed to adversity or surrounded by peers who share similar experiences?
- How do we explain variation in effects of economic recessions on children's educational attainment by socioeconomic status? Do some children no longer have access to parental resources that they were depending on to continue their schooling? Do some adolescent children begin working to compensate for lost family income?
- How do we understand the differential effects of housing loss on children's socioeconomic attainment? Do some more disadvantaged children experience homelessness, or food insecurity, or no longer reside with custodial parents? How do other kin, and the socioeconomic resources of kin, help explain differential response to housing loss? Do some more advantaged children suffer because they expected housing stability and are suddenly faced with residential and school changes?
- Does family history of disadvantage in the previous generation affect the current generation's ability to cope with a new disruptive event?
- Do some policies help alleviate the impact of job loss on children, and do so for some children more than others? If job loss impacts the psychological well-being of more advantaged families who were not expecting job instability, do unemployment benefits insufficiently compensate for that loss relative to families who were most concerned with income loss?

We invite papers using diverse methodological approaches –quantitative and qualitative– to uncover heterogeneous effects of disruption on children's attainment and wellbeing. Analyses that add to our understanding of the *mechanisms* linking event exposure and subsequent outcomes, are welcome. We welcome work that addresses disruptive events in the U.S. and abroad.

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Anticipated Timeline

Prospective contributors should submit a CV and an abstract (up to two pages in length, single or double spaced) of their study along with up to two pages of supporting material (e.g., tables, figures, pictures, references that don't fit on the proposal pages, etc.) no later than 5 PM EST on August 11, 2021 to:

<https://rsf.fluxx.io>

NOTE that if you wish to submit an abstract and do not yet have an account with us, it can take up to 48 hours to get credentials, so please start your application at least two days before the deadline. All submissions must be original work that has not been previously published in part or in full. Only abstracts submitted to <https://rsf.fluxx.io> will be considered. Each paper will receive a \$1,000 honorarium when the issue is published. All questions regarding this issue should be directed to Suzanne Nichols, Director of Publications, at journal@rsage.org and **not** to the email addresses of the editors of the issue.

A conference will take place at the Russell Sage Foundation in New York City on **June 10, 2022** (with a group dinner the night before). The selected contributors will gather for a one-day workshop to present draft papers (due a month prior to the conference **on 5/9/22**) and receive feedback from the other contributors and editors. Travel costs, food, and lodging for one author per paper will be covered by the foundation. Papers will be circulated before the conference. After the conference, the authors will submit their revised drafts by 9/6/22. The papers will then be sent out to three additional scholars for formal peer review. Having received feedback from reviewers and the RSF board, authors will revise their papers by 11/9/22. The full and final issue will be published in the fall of 2023. Papers will be published open access on the RSF website as well as in several digital repositories, including JSTOR and UPCC/Muse.