

# Parental History of Disruptive Life Events and Household Food Insecurity

Dylan B. Jackson, PhD<sup>1</sup>; Michael G. Vaughn, PhD<sup>2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To investigate whether a history of disruptive life events (ie, school suspension or expulsion, job termination, hospitalization for mental health, and/or criminal justice involvement) among parents is positively associated with household food insecurity.

**Design:** Structured interviews and self-report surveys.

**Setting:** Households across all 50 states in the US.

**Participants:** Subsample of 6,270 households that participated in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study–Birth Cohort with valid maternal and paternal data.

**Main Outcome Measures:** Food insecurity was measured when children were aged 9 months (wave 1), 2 years (wave 2), and 4 years (wave 3). Parental history of disruptive life events was measured at wave 1.

**Analysis:** Logistic regression was used to carry out the analyses.

**Results:** Each examined disruptive life event was associated with a significant increase in the odds of persistent household food insecurity ( $P < .05$ ). The probability of persistent household food insecurity was >6 times as large in households with 1 or both parents reporting the occurrence of each of the disruptive life events, relative to households with none of these parental risk factors.

**Conclusions and Implications:** Practitioners may want to consider parental history of various disruptive life events in their assessment of familial risk of household food insecurity. Future policy efforts might include a cost–benefit estimate analysis of intervening earlier in the food insecurity–disruptive life events nexus to advocate for savings to the taxpayer for prevention services. Moreover, future research could evaluate these practice and policy-driven efforts using quasi-experimental designs.

**Key Words:** adverse life events, food insecurity, parents, children, health (*J Nutr Educ Behav.* 2017;49:554–560.)

Accepted April 19, 2017.

## INTRODUCTION

Food insecurity, or the consistent lack of healthy household foods and the experience of frequent hunger, is an important public health issue. Food insecurity has been linked to a host of harmful outcomes for children and families, including asthma, frequent hospitalizations, obesity, and poor school performance.<sup>1–5</sup> Across a number of studies, food insecurity has been found to be a harbinger for long-term negative health consequences. In particular, research has revealed that frequent experiences of hunger

during childhood increase the risk of poor health status and being diagnosed with a variety of chronic conditions by late adolescence or early adulthood.<sup>6</sup> However, physical health and well-being are not the only components of health that are influenced by food insecurity. For instance, research has revealed that children who are raised in food-insecure households manifest more emotional problems, including high levels of anxiety and difficulty coping with stress<sup>2</sup> and even a higher risk of suicide ideation.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, externalizing symptoms (eg, hyperactiv-

ity, inattention) and misconduct (eg, bullying, cheating) are also more common in children who are raised in food-insecure households.<sup>8–10</sup>

One clear antecedent of household food insecurity is chronic poverty.<sup>11</sup> Even so, a number of scholars have begun to examine other household factors that influence food insecurity above and beyond the influence of poverty, such as chronic disease in parents and/or adult household members<sup>12,13</sup> and maternal sensitivity to children's needs.<sup>2</sup> In short, it appears that factors related to parent–child interactions and, more specifically, the qualities and traits of caregivers may influence the likelihood of food insecurity among children and may increase their likelihood of experiencing chronic hunger.<sup>2</sup>

Although it is well established that food-insecure households face a number of challenges, including chronic poverty and physical ailments, a challenge that is frequently overlooked is parental history of disruptive life events. This oversight is important to consider,

<sup>1</sup>Department of Criminal Justice, University of Texas at San Antonio, San Antonio, TX

<sup>2</sup>College for Public Health and Social Justice, Saint Louis University, St Louis, MO

*Conflict of Interest Disclosure:* The authors' conflict of interest disclosures can be found online with this article on [www.jneb.org](http://www.jneb.org).

Address for correspondence: Dylan B. Jackson, PhD, Department of Criminal Justice, University of Texas at San Antonio, 501 W Cesar E Chavez Blvd, San Antonio, TX 78207; Phone: (210) 458-2611; Fax: (210) 458-2531; E-mail: [dylan.jackson@utsa.edu](mailto:dylan.jackson@utsa.edu)

©2017 Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior. Published by Elsevier, Inc. All rights reserved.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2017.04.010>

not only conceptually but also with respect to prevention. A history of disruptive life events among parents has the potential to affect various facets of social functioning and therefore may also have an impact on the household environment. Recent research has suggested that paternal incarceration, a highly disruptive event, is associated with a statistically significant increase in the risk of household food insecurity.<sup>14</sup> It is possible that other disruptive life events, in addition to incarceration, may increase the risk of household food insecurity by disrupting family well-being and healthy functioning. This line of reasoning is consistent with recent research suggesting that adverse life experiences during childhood may also increase the risk of current household food insecurity by affecting school performance, emotional health, and job stability.<sup>15</sup> The current study builds on this line of research and explores whether adverse, disruptive life events during adolescence and adulthood (eg, school suspension or expulsion, criminal justice involvement) also increase the likelihood of household food insecurity and its persistence over time.

Examining disruptive life events as potential risk correlates for persistent household food insecurity has important implications. If a pathway toward a food-insecure household is primarily via parental experiences of disruptive life events, for instance, efforts to reduce the prevalence of household food insecurity may benefit from considerations of broader parental and family experiences of adversity. In short, attempts to address the lack of food may not be sufficient if the household food insecurity is associated with family disruptions that may be occurring as the result of a parent or guardian being, for example, institutionalized from either an arrest or a mental health disorder.

Little research has accrued on these links between parental history of disruptive life events and household food insecurity, particularly studies that include disruptive life events during adolescence or adulthood. The objective of the current study was to better specify the relationship between disruptive life events and food insecurity by examining these associations while controlling for key covariates that might serve to confound the relationship, such as maternal and

paternal education, employment, parental involvement, and insecure attachment. The current study considered the possibility that a history of adverse or disruptive life events among parents may constitute a pathway to a food-insecure household. Consequently, the proposed hypothesis was that various disruptive life events (ie, school suspension or expulsion, job termination, institutionalization for mental health, criminal justice involvement) would be associated with a statistically significant increase in the likelihood of household food insecurity.

## METHODS

### Sampling and Participants

The researchers used data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study–Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) in the current study. The ECLS-B is a longitudinal, nationally representative study of 10,688 US children and their caregivers (usually the mother) from birth to early childhood. The ECLS-B researchers used a multistage, stratified sampled approach to obtain the data. To be precise, birth certificates were sampled from the National Center for Health Statistics in the 2001, allowing for coverage of approximately 99% of US births. Although mothers were typically the respondent during the parent interview, 6,270 residential fathers also participated in the study by completing self-report questionnaires concerning their life history, personality, and relationship with the child. Some children and their families were deemed ineligible (eg, if the child died or was adopted before age 9 months, if the mother was aged <15 years at the time of birth). The ECLS-B obtained data from a number of sources, including mothers, fathers, teachers, school administrators, direct assessment, and hospital records. Ultimately the study was intended to assess educational and academic development of children. Notwithstanding, the data were well-suited to the current study, because they include a large number of items tapping food insecurity across multiple waves, in addition to questions about both parents' problem behavior, mental health, and substance abuse history. Data from waves 1, 2, and 3 were included in the current study. The first wave of data was collected between 2001 and 2002, when focal children were approximately 9 months

old. The second wave of data was collected between 2003 and 2004, when focal children were approximately 2 years old. Finally, the third wave of data collection was between 2005 and 2006, when children were approximately 4 years old. These waves were included because of the availability of food-insecurity data at each wave and the available reports of paternal and maternal history of disruptive life events at wave 1, which permitted longitudinal analyses. The researchers obtained approval for the current study from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

### Measures

The same questions that comprise the core food-security module were used in the current study to identify homes that were food insecure (for a complete list of items, see [Supplemental Materials](#)).<sup>16</sup> For further information on the core food security module used in the ECLS-B, see the *Guide to Measuring Household Food Security Revised 2000*, US Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, August, 2000.<sup>16</sup> Following the recognized criterion,<sup>5</sup> households in which at least 3 of the 18 questions were responded to in the affirmative were categorized as food insecure at that particular wave. In addition, households that were categorized as food insecure at multiple waves were assigned a value of 1 on the measure of persistent food insecurity, whereas all other households were assigned a value of 0 on this measure.

Four items from the first wave of data collection were employed to tap into the history of disruptive life events experienced by the parents. These events have the potential to disturb household functioning and have cascading, negative repercussions for children and families. In some cases, these events may also serve as early indicators of impaired social skills or self-regulation deficits in parents (eg, school suspension or expulsion). Both fathers and mothers were asked the following questions at this wave: *Which of these, if any, have happened to you in your whole life?*

1. School suspension or expulsion: Have you ever been suspended or expelled from school?
2. Job termination: Have you ever been fired or laid off from a job

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4939521>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4939521>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)