

The London School of Economics and Political Science

When state violence comes home: Partner violence in an era of mass incarceration

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Declaration

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Abstract

Research with returning prisoners and their partners finds astoundingly high rates of partner violence—as much as tenfold those observed in the general population. Yet very little is known about its nature or etiology in the context of the American experiment in hyper-incarceration.

The current project responds to this gap by integrating qualitative narratives with couples-based, longitudinal survey data to understand the nature and etiology of partner violence among former prisoners and their partners. It draws on data from the Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering to address four aims:

1. Examine patterns in the use of physical violence and controlling behavior by returning prisoners and their partners using latent class analysis and a stratified qualitative case study.
2. Investigate qualitative understandings and experiences of partner violence among returning prisoners and their partners and their perceived connection to experiences of state and structural violence through an inductive qualitative analysis.
3. Test quantitative relationships between individual criminal justice system exposure and later partner violence perpetration using structural equation modeling with couples-based survey data.
4. Examine whether and how local social and material conditions associated with mass incarceration predict partner violence perpetration by men returning from prison using structural equation modeling with couples-based survey data linked to representative data sources on local characteristics.

This work reveals dense connections between government-sanctioned violence and acts of

violence in private homes and relationships. Applying Bronfenbrenner's social ecological framework to synthesize results from four empirical inquiries, the study links partner violence to the state violence of criminalization and imprisonment and the structural violence of material deprivation and heightened mortality in hyper-incarcerated communities. The stories told by former prisoners and their partners reveal the coextension of violence and penal authority across carceral, domestic, and street spaces. They highlight how strategies of resistance to authority in one sphere become tools of domination in another and how heteropatriarchal social structures help to reallocate and obscure the harms of incarceration.

Quantitative testing of hypotheses generated from qualitative data suggest how childhood criminal justice system exposure and cumulative criminal justice system exposure during adulthood each predict later partner violence perpetration via (distinct) behavioral health problems. Results also identify two different classes of partner violence among returning prisoners and their partners—coercive controlling violence and jealous-only situational violence—that are distinguished by accompanying patterns of controlling behavior (consistent with Johnson's typology). While the types have different proximal precursors and different apparent consequences for victims, both are predicted by the local adversities associated with geographically concentrated incarceration.

Built on the insights of partner violence survivors and survivors of mass incarceration, this work advances a new empirical and theoretical understanding of the relationship between penal authority and violence. It also reveals the workings of gender as an instrument of harm transfer in hyper-incarcerated poor communities of color. It argues that the most pervasive form of violence in America deserves focal attention in scholarly conversations about hyper-incarceration and as part of the urgent policy projects of decarceration and reparation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis aims to understand what a historic period of punishment in America has meant for the use of violence in intimate relationships. It also considers how the nature and etiology of partner violence among returning prisoners helps to reveal a broader relationship between punishment and violence across carceral, domestic, and community settings.

The current chapter frames the research and policy problem of partner violence during the period of American mass incarceration. It discusses the prevalence and impact of partner violence in the United States and what is known about its determinants, particularly among the poor and criminalized; suggests possible connections between partner violence and current systems of punishment; and highlights key challenges in researching violence and family life among vulnerable and criminalized individuals and families.

The Human and Policy Significance of Partner Violence

Americans face a higher risk of violence from an intimate partner than any other form of violent victimization (Black et al., 2011). One in five women (22.3%) and one in six men (14.0%) has experienced severe physical assault from an intimate partner in their lifetimes, while 9 percent of women and 0.5 percent of men have been sexually assaulted by a partner (Breiding, 2015). No other violent crime is more prevalent (Sumner et al., 2015).¹

Partner violence exacts a steep human and economic price, much of it borne by public systems (Waters et al., 2005). The World Health Organization estimates that partner violence costs

¹ Based on estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's nationally representative surveillance survey, which used behaviorally specific questions that did not require respondents to view their experiences as crimes. Estimates vary widely by study methods (see, for example, Sinozich & Langton, 2014).

Americans approximately 3.2 percent of the United States gross domestic product each year (Waters et al., 2005). These costs include medical and mental health care and lost productivity and earnings among victims (estimated at \$5.8 billion annually) (Max et al., 2004) as well as the lifetime fallout of children's exposure to interparental violence (estimated at \$55 billion for every American birth cohort) (Holmes et al., 2018). Reflecting the seriousness of these burdens, three major United States government institutions are charged with addressing partner violence. They are the public health system, charged with preventing and responding to violent injury; the human services system, charged with supporting the welfare of vulnerable children and families; and the criminal justice system, charged with protecting the public from violence and other criminalized forms of harm.

Partner violence causes far-reaching harm to individuals and families. Impacts on health and well-being are often serious and can last for years or decades after the violence ends. Women who sustain partner violence victimization at any point in their lives are more likely to experience current mental health conditions (including post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, and self-harming behavior), substance use issues (including smoking and binge drinking), sleep disorders, gynecological conditions, chronic illness, chronic pain, and functional physical limitations (Bosch et al., 2017; Dillon et al., 2013). Those who perpetrate violence against their partners report suffering a variety of negative consequences of their actions, including anxiety, sadness, and occupational impairment (Walker et al., 2010).

The impacts of partner violence linger not only over the life course of a victim; they are intergenerational. Partner violence may hinder the cognitive and socioemotional development of victims' children (Carpenter & Stacks, 2009). Children who are directly or indirectly exposed to partner violence against their parents are more likely to experience later internalizing problems

(such as depression), externalizing problems (such as aggressive behavior toward peers), and poor educational outcomes (Wood & Sommers, 2011). Children exposed to interparental violence are also at elevated risk of partner violence victimization or perpetration when they reach adulthood (Ehrensaft et al., 2003).

As with other forms of interpersonal violence, the costs and burdens of partner violence are borne disproportionately by the poor and marginalized. Poverty is the most consistent predictor of partner violence victimization across research settings and methods (Jewkes, 2002; World Health Organization, 2010). In the United States, low income (Breiding et al., 2014), subjective financial strain (Benson et al., 2003; Golden et al., 2013), food and housing insecurity (Breiding, 2014) and men's unemployment (Stith et al., 2004) or unstable employment (Benson et al., 2003) are all associated with increased risk of partner violence. (Household income appears to be the strongest of these economic predictors [Cunradi et al., 2002].) Women of color—particularly Black, Latina, and multiracial women—are at greater risk of partner violence victimization than White women (Breiding, 2014; Yakubovich et al., 2018). Theorists suggest that the historically and spatially entrenched economic marginalization of urban communities of color in the United States places Black women at high risk for initial and repeat partner violence victimization (Gillum, 2019; Hampton et al., 2003).

Concentrated neighborhood poverty is consistently associated with partner violence victimization and perpetration after controlling for neighborhood composition (Benson et al., 2003, 2004; Cunradi et al., 2000; Hampton et al., 2003). The concentrated disadvantage that characterizes many urban communities of color in the United States has been deepened by the “hyper-incarceration” of poor Black men (Wacquant, 2001, p. 96). The expanded use of imprisonment in the United States over the last forty years (Travis et al., 2014) has been targeted

at those who were already racially, socioeconomically, and geographically marginalized (Wakefield & Uggen, 2010; Western & Pettit, 2010). Indeed, the “racialized growth” of the convicted and formerly incarcerated population (Shannon et al., 2017, p. 1814) has been densely concentrated in disadvantaged urban communities (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010). In these targeted communities, the collective effects of incarceration appear to shape violence-related socialization, neighborhood cohesion, and economic stability (Clear, 2008; Kirk & Papachristos, 2011; Lopez-Aguado, 2016; Rose & Clear, 1998b) in ways that might, in turn, exacerbate partner violence. Indeed, the local concentration of mass incarceration’s collateral consequences appears to exacerbate other forms of violence and criminalized activity (Clear, 2002; Clear et al., 2014; Drakulich et al., 2012; Kirk & Papachristos, 2011). Its effects on partner violence remain unknown.

Partner Violence in an Era of Mass Incarceration

Incarceration is increasingly recognized as a major social determinant of health and a potential driver of racial and economic inequality in the United States (Brinkley-Rubinstein & Cloud, 2020; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2020; Pettit & Gutierrez, 2018; Sykes & Maroto, 2016; Wakefield & Uggen, 2010; Wildeman & Wang, 2017). Americans are incarcerated at four times the rate of Britons and more than ten times the rate of those in Northern European democracies such as Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands (Pettit & Gutierrez, 2018). In 2003, the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimated that one in 15 Americans, including one in three Black men, would be imprisoned in their lifetimes (Bonczar, 2003). While imprisonment rates have declined somewhat from their peak, the number of formerly incarcerated Americans continues to rise and one in three Black men is currently living with a felony record (Shannon et al., 2017). Twenty-two percent of American women, including 30

percent of Black women, have had an incarcerated partner (Enns et al., 2019). In major American cities, approximately 44 percent of unmarried new mothers report that their baby's father was incarcerated in the last three years (Jones, 2013).

Persistent data and design limitations in literature on the collateral consequences of incarceration tend to prevent causal inference; however, imprisonment has been linked to a host of acute and enduring negative outcomes for prisoners, their families and communities (Kirk & Wakefield, 2018; Travis et al., 2014; Wakefield et al., 2016). Prisoners experience deterioration in mental health (Haney, 2006, 2018; Kupers, 1996; Kupers, 2017), deterioration in physical health (Massoglia, 2008b, 2008a; Massoglia & Pridemore, 2015; Wang et al., 2009), and the weakening of social ties and loss of social capital (Apel, 2016; Khan et al., 2011; Maruna & Roy, 2007; Mowen & Visher, 2016; Rengifo & DeWitt, 2019; Rose & Clear, 2003) over the course of incarceration and reentry. Returning prisoners face the lingering effects of these losses as well as employment prospects curtailed by hiring discrimination (Pager, 2003; Pager & Western, 2005) and diminished lifetime earnings (Western, 2002; Western et al., 2001).

Another set of collateral consequences accrues among the families and communities that prisoners leave behind and to which they return. Partners of current or former prisoners face heightened risk of mental health disorders, asthma, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection (Johnson & Raphael, 2009; Lee, Wildeman, et al., 2014; Wildeman et al., 2013, 2019). Children of incarcerated fathers experience higher infant mortality (Wildeman, 2012b), caregiver maltreatment (Turney, 2014; Wakefield, 2015), reduced school readiness (Haskins, 2014), greater food insecurity (Turney, 2015), and more internalizing and externalizing problems (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2011) than similarly disadvantaged youth. Those living in communities with high rates of prison admissions and release face elevated risk

of mental health conditions (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2015) and weakened social networks (Clear, 2008).

In the American population as a whole, mass incarceration is associated with excess infant mortality (Wildeman, 2012b), excess adult mortality (Daza et al., 2020), and gaping racial disparities in health and child well-being (Johnson & Raphael, 2009; Lee & Wildeman, 2013; Massoglia, 2008b; Wakefield & Wildeman, 2011; Wildeman, 2012b, 2014). Mass incarceration appears not only to exacerbate racial disparities within the United States but to contribute to observed disparities between the United States and other wealthy countries on major indicators of population health, such as life expectancy (Daza et al., 2020; Wildeman, 2016).

How a forty-year campaign of criminalization and incarceration might shape partner violence in the United States has been little investigated. Research in several large samples of former prisoners and their families find rates of partner violence that exceed those in the general population (Breiding, 2015) by as much as a factor of ten (McKay, Landwehr et al., 2018; Western, 2004; Wildeman, 2012b). Still, whether exposure to imprisonment or other forms of criminal justice system involvement might influence partner violence in affected families or communities has not been studied. The failure to investigate the complex potential link between incarceration and partner violence represents “the most disappointing gap” in research on collateral consequences of mass incarceration (Wildeman et al., 2019, p. 18S).

The Challenge of Partner Violence Research with Heavily Surveilled Families

This thesis engages with two distinct fields of inquiry: research on partner violence and research on the collateral consequences of mass incarceration. Our scholarly understanding of these experiences, which are intimately intertwined in the lives of former prisoners and their partners,

has been largely built in separate studies and in (artificially) distinct fields of knowledge. As Katherine Beckett argues persuasively, however, the insights of “people and communities that are disproportionately affected by both violence and mass incarceration” are critical to the dismantling of hyper-incarceration and the development of responses to violence that truly promote safety among the vulnerable (Beckett, 2018, p. 251).

A persistent disconnect between quantitative and qualitative approaches to this research has further limited what we know. Quantitative strategies, while essential to capturing the scope and scale of both partner violence and mass incarceration, tell us little about what sense people make of living through these experiences. Yet we know that the ways people interpret and narrate their experiences are at least as important as the countable facts of a situation in shaping what might follow it (Maruna, 2001, 2004). In addition, despite indications that our survey measures fall short of capturing the constructs they are intended to, many common quantitative approaches do not account for error in measurement when estimating relationships among social phenomena (Gallop & Weschle, 2019; Saris & Revilla, 2016). Still, exclusively qualitative approaches (though capable of describing the complexity of people’s subjective experiences of imprisonment and violence) strain to accommodate the breadth and diversity of these experiences or to summarize them in ways that facilitate inference and comparison.

These issues, common across social science research, represent especially serious challenges to research on stigmatized and criminalized behavior in the households of former prisoners . Attempts to measure experiences with the criminal justice system and with partner violence are subject to various forms of recall bias and miscomprehension, each exacerbated by the complexity and irregular recurrence of these experiences (Hamby, 2014; Yan & Cantor, 2019). In addition, and particularly among couples affected by incarceration, measurement of these

experiences is likely to be affected by an especially charged form of social desirability bias. Couples affected by one partner's incarceration—who are often facing ongoing monitoring by criminal justice system, child support enforcement, and child welfare systems—often have good reason to orient defensively toward efforts to study their home lives and may tailor their survey responses accordingly. Yet these are the same vulnerable families whose experiences of violence we must better understand if we are to reimagine public policies that promote safety for all.

This thesis engages the methodological challenge of understanding complex, highly charged experiences in a heavily surveilled population. It applies novel approaches to synthesizing qualitative and quantitative data to render these experiences with greater clarity and precision than single-method strategies: for example, inductive case review stratified and informed by quantitative reports and qualitative hypothesis generation followed by quantitative testing with structural equation modeling. To analyze the intertwining of imprisonment and partner violence in ways that map to participants' lived experiences, this work emphasizes quantitative approaches that assess the presence of unobserved latent constructs (reflected in responses to survey items) and account for measurement error when testing relationships among them. Together, these strategies move toward a more precise understanding of the etiology of partner violence in heavily system-involved families and communities.

Focus and Structure of the Thesis

The form and scale of punishment effected in America over the last four decades has been a policy failure of historic proportion (Clear & Frost, 2015, pp. 137–158). The need to learn from and, ultimately, replace this system is urgent. This thesis contributes to that end by building a more precise understanding of the etiology of the most common form of violence among

individuals and families affected by mass incarceration. It addresses four research aims:

1. Examine patterns in the use of physical violence and controlling behavior by returning prisoners and their partners using latent class analysis and a stratified qualitative case study.
2. Investigate qualitative understandings and experiences of partner violence among returning prisoners and their partners and their perceived connection to experiences of state and structural violence through an inductive qualitative analysis.
3. Test quantitative relationships between individual criminal justice system exposure and later partner violence perpetration using structural equation modeling with couples-based survey data.
4. Examine whether and how local social and material conditions associated with mass incarceration predict partner violence perpetration by men returning from prison using structural equation modeling with couples-based survey data linked to representative data sources on local characteristics.

Table 1 shows the focus and contribution of each empirical chapter.

Table 1. Focus and Contribution of Empirical Chapters

Chapter	Research Questions	Methods Contribution(s)	Substantive Contribution(s)	
4	Types of Partner Violence in Couples Affected by Incarceration: Applying Johnson's Typology to Understand the Couple-Level Context for Violence	1. What dyadic behavioral types are evident in the use of physical violence and controlling behavior in a large, multi-state sample of couples affected by incarceration? 2. Do partner violence types obtained from survey data correspond to meaningful narrative distinctions in participants' qualitative accounts of their relationships? 3. How do individuals assigned to the major dyadic types differ from one another?	First study in the field to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply latent class analysis to identify clusters of physically violent individuals using controlling behavior reports from both partners• Conduct qualitative case studies of couples assigned to each type to validate and refine quantitative approach	Results indicate that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two types of partner violence were present (jealous-only situational violence and coercive controlling violence).• Coercive controlling violence was more severe and linked to victim post-traumatic stress and feeling unsafe.• Jealousy was often a situational response and not a tactic of control (as typically conceptualized).
5	“Things That Get the Police Involved”: State Violence and Partner Violence in an Era of Mass Incarceration	1. How do former prisoners and their intimate or co-parenting partners understand the use of interpersonal violence and control in their relationships? 2. Are understandings of private, interpersonal uses of violence and control shaped by exposure to public, institutional uses of violence and control among returning prisoners and their partners?	First study in the field to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct inductive analysis with a very large qualitative sample (167 participants)• Use linked, longitudinal survey data to structure and inform qualitative analysis• Include qualitative interviews from both couple members	Results indicate that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understandings and experiences of partner violence were shaped by exposure to state violence.• Prisonization, secondary prisonization, and an institutionally driven abuse cycle extracted labor from partners and constrained victims' ability to prioritize and protect their own safety.
6	Pathways from Criminal Justice	1. Which, if any, aspects of criminal justice system exposure over the life	First study in the field to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Test pathways to partner	Results indicate that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Controlling for violent

	<p>System Exposure to Partner Violence Perpetration in an Era of Mass Incarceration</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> course (childhood exposure, lifetime exposure, or conditions of the most recent incarceration) predict partner violence perpetration by returning prisoners? Does criminal justice system exposure among returning prisoners predict later partner violence perpetration via behavioral health problems and couple conflict dynamics? Does criminal justice system exposure among returning prisoners predict later partner violence perpetration via “institutionalized” interpersonal style and couple conflict dynamics? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> violence suggested by qualitative narratives in longitudinal survey data Assess how variation in the accumulation and developmental timing of criminal justice system exposure predicts later outcomes Apply structural equation modeling to examine precursors of partner violence perpetration among returning prisoners 	<p>criminal conviction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childhood criminal justice system exposure predicts men’s post-traumatic stress and “institutionalized” interpersonal style, which predicts partner violence perpetration. Lifetime criminal justice system exposure predicts addiction problems, which predict partner violence perpetration.
7	<p>Mass Incarceration and Local Influences on Partner Violence Perpetration</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Do local conditions (including median income, prison admissions rate, and violent death rate) predict partner violence perpetration after men return from prison? Do local conditions predict partner violence perpetration among returning prisoners via post-traumatic stress, hopelessness, and couple conflict dynamics? Do pathways from local conditions to partner violence perpetration differ based on how partner violence is operationalized? 	<p>First study in the field to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess pathways from ZIP-level local conditions to partner violence using structural equation modeling Operationalize partner violence outcomes as dyadic behavioral types Examine local predictors in a population with heightened vulnerability to local conditions 	<p>Results indicate that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adverse local conditions predict incidents of physical partner violence perpetration via hopelessness, post-traumatic stress, and dysfunctional conflict. Jealous-only situational violence and coercive controlling violence share local-level antecedents but have different proximal predictors.

My aim in this thesis is to build an understanding of partner violence that crosses domestic, carceral and street contexts; theoretical disciplines; and social-ecological levels. To accomplish this, I apply a novel and carefully integrated mixed-method approach that captures the complexity of partner violence and punishment experiences among returning prisoners and their intimate and parenting partners.

The goal of the current chapter was to summarize the steep consequences of partner violence in the American population and the burden it imposes on the poor and marginalized, to describe what is and is not known about partner violence in the context of mass incarceration, to highlight challenges in the study of partner violence in the current punitive era, and to briefly outline how this thesis will address them using data from a sample of men imprisoned at the height of mass incarceration and their partners.

Chapter 2 describes how criminological theories of partner violence have influenced current criminal justice policy responses to partner violence in the United States. It identifies two issues in this body of work that merit closer theoretical attention: first, the role of interpersonal control in partner violence and second, how the broader context of state authority and violence might influence the use of control and violence in intimate and co-parenting relationships. It presents several competing perspectives on these issues and argues for using the social ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) to engage them critically.

Chapter 3 reviews the scholarly literature on partner violence and the collateral consequences of mass incarceration. It considers persistent empirical challenges in each body of work and how one might address them to better understand experiences of partner violence among returning prisoners and their partners. It justifies the four research aims for the thesis based on the gaps and

shortcomings identified in prior work and proposes a set of research methods and a focal data source for addressing them.

Chapters 4-7 present the empirical work undertaken for this thesis. These four chapters, each of which addresses one of the four research aims, take the form of manuscripts intended for publication in peer-reviewed journals. Each manuscript (1) reviews the prior empirical work informing the research aim it addresses, (2) presents the specific research questions that will be answered to address that aim, (3) describes the methods applied to each research question, (3) presents results, and (4) discusses the implications of the results, their limitations, and directions for future research and intervention.

Chapter 8 uses Bronfenbrenner's social ecological framework to synthesize key findings from the four empirical chapters and discuss their overarching limitations and contributions to the field. This chapter outlines an agenda for future research and proposes public policy initiatives to prevent and respond to partner violence as part of the broader project of decarceration and reparation.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

This chapter reviews key developments in criminological theories of partner violence and how they have influenced United States criminal justice policy responses to partner violence. It argues that two theoretical issues constrain our understanding of partner violence in the current punitive era. First, criminological theories of partner violence etiology tend to focus on physical violence without attention to the role of interpersonal control. Second, such theories rarely consider how the broader context of state and structural violence in hyper-incarcerated communities might influence the use of control and violence in intimate and co-parenting relationships. This chapter discusses why these gaps are problematic for public policy and argues for considering alternative theoretical perspectives. Finally, it proposes the social ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) as a meta-theoretical model to engage and test critical theories of partner violence etiology among returning prisoners and their partners.

Criminological Theory and Criminal Justice Policy on Partner Violence

The criminal justice system represents the front line of government responses to partner violence. Partner violence is the single biggest driver of civilian-initiated law enforcement intervention in the United States, prompting a plurality or even a majority of calls for service depending on the jurisdiction (Klein, 2009). Until the 1970s, responses from law enforcement and courts emphasized reconciliation and conflict management between victims and perpetrators, as well as linkage to services and other forms of non-criminal intervention (Sherman, 2018). As the era of mass incarceration opened, however, this response changed radically.

The remaking of front-line government responses to partner violence was heavily informed by the classic criminological theory of deterrence. With its origins in the 18th-century works of

Beccaria and Bentham, and informed by the advent in criminology of rational choice theory in the late 20th century, deterrence theory proposes that potential perpetrators choose courses of action based on their assessment of likely consequences (Akers, 1990; Tomlinson, 2016). Although the empirical basis of deterrence theory is debated (e.g., Paternoster, 2010), it has been widely applied in criminological scholarship on partner violence to suggest that perpetrators' expectations of the certainty and severity of consequences influence their perpetration decisions (e.g., Bachman et al., 1992; Song et al., 2017).

Criminal justice system responses to partner violence in the United States have been heavily informed by the deterrence perspective, which struck an unlikely chord with second-wave feminist advocates and theorists in behavioral health, sociology and criminology. These scholars took issue with the prevailing behavioral health perspective that partner violence was a private matter, rooted in perpetrators' and victims' psychopathology and best addressed in private clinical treatment (Deutsch, 1930; Faulk, 1974; Snell et al., 1964). Feminist sociologists and behavioral health theorists contended that individual men's violence against their female partners was not primarily an issue of psychopathology but an effort by individual men to dominate their partners as part of men's collective efforts to maintain power and control over women (e.g., Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Martin, 1978; Walker, 1979). Feminist criminologists suggested that men's violence against women—though it occupied a central place in the consciousness and day-to-day choices of women—had been long ignored, accepted, or trivialized by male-dominated institutions, including the criminal justice system (Stanko, 1995; Stanko, 2006).

Drawing on this analysis, feminist scholars and battered women's movement activists argued that ending men's violence against women would require a strong message to individual

perpetrators and society at large that it would not be tolerated (Houston, 2014). This imperative aligned with the view of deterrence scholars that criminal laws, law enforcement, and adjudication practices influence criminalized behavior not only among the individuals on whom consequences are legally imposed (individual or special deterrence) but also shape behavior in society at large (generalized deterrence) (Stafford & Warr, 1993; K. R. Williams, 2005).

Consistent with this perspective, some feminist scholars and activists came to believe that, as inaction by the criminal justice system had helped to perpetuate the domestic abuse of women, so the criminal justice system must take action to end it (Coker & Macquoid, 2015; Hanmer & Stanko, 1985; Miccio, 2007; B. A. Stanko, 2007).

A now-famous study of police responses to partner violence in a midwestern American city, conducted by criminologists Lawrence Sherman and Richard Berk, reinforced this budding perception. The randomized experiment, presented as a test of deterrence theory, compared the effect of mediation, removal, and arrest in police responses to partner violence calls, finding that arrest had a deterrent effect on near-term future perpetration (Sherman & Berk, 1984). Their results suggested an opportunity to put classic criminological theories of deterrence and feminist theories of partner violence into action: arrest could help to end partner violence by sending a clear message to individuals and society that perpetrators would face criminal consequences.

Broad publicity for the apparent effectiveness of arrest in deterring partner violence, ongoing advocacy from the battered women's movement, and growing concerns about public liability for police inaction helped to inaugurate a newly punitive era in criminal justice responses (Buzawa, 2012; Houston, 2014; Miccio, 2007). By the end of the 1980s, 28 states had passed mandatory arrest laws for partner violence (Sherman, 2018). Criminal justice system responses came to

focus on arrest and prosecution of perpetrators, typically to the exclusion of other forms of assistance (Johnson, 2015). Today, most states have mandatory arrest policies and some also have mandatory prosecution; that is, charges are pressed even if the victim asks to have them dropped (Houston, 2014). These punitive strategies unequivocally dominate criminal justice responses to partner violence despite some evidence that non-punitive strategies (for example, linkage to services without perpetrator arrest) reduce risk of repeat victimization (Xie & Lynch, 2017).

Unfortunately, continued research on mandatory arrest—the cornerstone of deterrence-based criminal justice policy on partner violence—has shown troubling effects. A wave of replication studies conducted by criminologists in the 1980s and 1990s produced mixed results: positive, negative, and null impacts on repeat perpetration (Garner et al., 1995). Meta-analysis showed that a given arrest did diminish the likelihood of a future official report of domestic violence involving the same victim and perpetrator, but weakly (Maxwell et al., 2002). At the same time, individual arrest events and mandatory arrest laws have also been linked to serious negative outcomes. Passage of state-level mandatory arrest laws is associated with a subsequent increase in partner homicide rates—likely due to a retaliation effect (Iyengar, 2009). Perhaps most strikingly, Sherman’s own long-term follow-up research with experimental data from another midwestern American city showed that (compared to police warning), arrest of partner violence perpetrators increased the risk of repeat partner assault and partner homicide when perpetrators were unemployed (Sherman & Harris, 2015). Another follow-up analysis of these data found that arrest placed perpetrators themselves at elevated risk of future (non-intimate-partner) homicide victimization (Sherman & Harris, 2013).

The example of mandatory arrest—a policy whose nationwide implementation responded directly to criminological theory and research (Sherman & Cohn, 1989)—highlights the need for an expanded theoretical lens from which to consider criminal justice policy and partner violence in a time of mass incarceration. First, a definitional expansion is needed. Feminist criminologists have long argued that the study of partner violence must not be reduced to consideration of physically violent criminal events or “crude counts of behavior”; rather, it requires a broader understanding that encompasses “contexts, meanings and motives” (DeKeseredy, 2016, p. 1044; Gadd & Corr, 2017). Feminist theorists maintain that these contexts, meanings and motives differ sharply by gender, with men’s use of force against their partners reflecting attempts at patriarchal domination and women’s levelled largely in self-defense (DeKeseredy, 2016, p. 1044; DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2007; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998; National Institute of Justice, 2000). Still, criminological research has remained less interested in how partner violence victims and perpetrators frame their experiences and more focused on "domestic violence" as defined in criminal law: generally, a violent criminal act distinguished by the existence of an intimate or domestic relationship between the victim and perpetrator.

Far from eliciting victims’ and perpetrators’ subjective accounts, criminological research on partner violence continues to rely on survey reports or official reports to police. This limitation persists despite the fact that “women’s choice not to engage officialdom in much of what they experience at the hands of men” is among the most abiding empirical findings in violence research (Stanko, 2007, p. 211). Viewed in this light, the fact that each study in the last decade that has produced evidence of negative consequences of arrest for partner violence has found impacts (only) on homicide—the sole violent crime not subject to gross underreporting (Sumner

et al., 2015)—is not only substantively disturbing but empirically unsettling as well. Among the system-involved and heavily surveilled families on whom this work has focused, it is plausible that criminal justice system contacts and the outcomes of such contacts (such as an arrest and conviction) could depress future reporting to government officials and even researchers. If this were so, it would contribute to Type 1 error in research on the effectiveness of criminal justice interventions and even obscure harmful consequences. Scholarship on partner violence in families affected by criminal justice system involvement would do well to address this possibility.

Relatedly, in the focus on singular violent events and one-time criminal justice system responses, criminologists and sociologists concerned with partner violence have rarely addressed the potential cumulative or contextual effects of criminal justice system exposure. In the face of policies that have made repeated arrest and imprisonment normative for young men of color in many poor, urban communities (e.g., Lopez-Aguado, 2016; Rios, 2011), and alongside evidence that even a single arrest event can increase the risk of a violent death for victims and perpetrators (Sherman & Harris, 2013, 2015), this potential link demands greater theoretical attention.

Finally, criminological theory has paid relatively limited attention to the role of interpersonal control in partner violence. Interpersonal control and power dynamics have been central to feminist sociological and behavioral health theory on partner violence for almost forty years. This perspective connects men’s broader social domination with their individual efforts to dominate their intimate partners through the use of violence (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Dobash et al., 1992). Extending this perspective, Stark theorizes that men’s abuse of women is best understood not by counting incidents of physical violence but by examining patterns of

interpersonal control. He argues against “a [dominant] paradigm that defines domestic violence as an incident-specific crime, equates abuse with physical and psychological assault, applies a ‘calculus of harms’ to assess severity (the more injury or trauma, the more serious the abuse), and rations intervention accordingly” (Stark, 2009, p. 1510).

Recent research in the United States and United Kingdom supports the notion that a perpetrator’s use of controlling behavior is the “golden thread” leading researchers and practitioners to the most dangerous acts of physical partner violence (Myhill & Hohl, 2019, p. 4494). Theorists focused on interpersonal control suggest that acts of physical partner violence are most dangerous and damaging when they are accompanied by other controlling behaviors that deprive victims of agency and self-determination (Crossman & Hardesty, 2018; Myhill & Hohl, 2019; Stark & Hester, 2019). This understanding challenges the more orthodox treatment of controlling behavior as one of many forms of mistreatment that (like insults and other verbal aggression) can accompany physical abuse. Feminist work reverses this characterization, figuring physical violence as one among a variety of tactics used by abusive partners to assert and maintain interpersonal control (Johnson, 2008; Stark, 2010). Still, criminological work on partner violence has persisted in centering physical violence and in according limited theoretical or empirical attention to processes of interpersonal control in intimate relationships. Even as responses to partner violence by the United States public health sector (Niolon et al., 2017) and also by criminal justice systems outside of the United States (Stark & Hester, 2019) have expanded to include controlling behavior, American criminal and civil remedies for partner violence victims focus solely on physical violence.

This omission is an artefact, perhaps, of the little room that violence in private relationships and

spaces (which is predominantly violence against women) has traditionally occupied in the criminological imagination and in violence theory (Stanko, 2006). Scholarship on partner violence has doubtless grown, but it has yet to assume a position in criminological thinking that reflects its incredible pervasiveness and harmfulness relative to other forms of crime and violence. Further, as I will argue later in this chapter, the intellectual “grandfathering” of prior criminological theory (developed with a focus on other forms of crime and violence) to partner violence has left us with a weak fit between criminological theory and the universe of violence as we recognize it today.

Considering the case of partner violence among returning prisoners—situated as they are in the crosshairs of multiple government systems (Halushka, 2020) and in intersecting struggles for institutional and interpersonal control—presents an opportunity to engage each of these issues. In the next two sections of this chapter, I will consider key theoretical perspectives from within and beyond criminology on the role of interpersonal control in partner violence and discuss how a focus on control illuminates the potential links between mass incarceration and partner violence.

The Role of Interpersonal Control in Partner Violence

Conflicting perspectives on the role of interpersonal control have consumed partner violence scholars for decades. These questions are tightly bound up with disagreement about the importance of gender in partner violence.

Interpersonal Control in Feminist and Family Violence Theories

Classic feminist theories consider partner violence as a tactic used by men for maintaining control of individual female partners in the context of men's collective domination of women

(e.g., Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Martin, 1978; Walker, 1979). Interpersonal control is thus central to the feminist conceptualization of partner violence motives, tactics, and impact (Stark, 2010).

This perspective is grounded in several decades of research with partner violence victims who seek help in hospitals, crisis shelters, and courts (e.g., Dobash, Cardiff, & Daly, 1992; Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Stanko, 2013).

Family violence theories, in contrast, view partner violence as arising in the context of couple conflict and strain (Gelles, 1974; Gelles & Straus, 1979; Steinmetz, 1977). This perspective is primarily concerned with incidents of physical violence but also examines the extent to which physical violence is accompanied by other abusive acts, including verbal abuse and controlling behavior. It draws on general-population and university student surveys, which consistently find gender-symmetrical patterns in the use of physical force between intimate partners (Straus, 2010).

Unresolved differences between feminist and family violence theorists are reflected in a protracted debate over gender symmetry (or asymmetry) and the relevance (or lack thereof) of patriarchal social structures. This debate has consumed tremendous scholarly attention for as long as partner violence has existed as a major field of research (Hamberger & Renzetti, 1996; National Institute of Justice, 2000; Rosen, 2006; Stark, 2010; Straus, 2010). Almost 20 years into this standoff, criminologist Claire Renzetti commented that she was “dismayed” by persistent theoretical controversy over the relevance of gender. She observed that the inability to accept and build on the relevance of gender had impeded the development of “a fuller understanding of—and therefore, the development of more effective responses to, intimate violence”; that is, one that addressed the fundamental micro- and macro-level role of gender as well as its

intersection with class, race, sexual orientation, and other individual and structural characteristics (Renzetti, 1996, p. 214). Another 20 years later, some of the most widely cited partner violence theorists and researchers continue to question the importance of gender, citing gender symmetry in survey reports of physical violence (e.g., Hines et al., 2020). As Renzetti argued, and as scholars on each side of the debate forcefully remind us, the failure to acknowledge the importance of gender in partner violence theory is highly consequential. From a feminist perspective, gender is so fundamental in shaping partner violence that attempting to ignore it distorts whatever else one might attempt to understand of partner violence etiology (DeKeseredy, 2016).

Beneath this crucial concern, however, lies an even more fundamental one about what partner violence is and how it should be studied. Whether interpersonal domination and control is viewed as the central fact of partner violence (as by feminist scholars) or as tangential to acts of physical force (as by family violence theorists) shapes almost every aspect of partner violence research: the theories that guide research questions and hypotheses; the choice of sampling design, measurement approach, and analytic technique; the results such research produces regarding prevalence, distribution, and etiology; and the forms of policy and intervention that are envisioned to address what is observed (Crossman & Hardesty, 2018; Stark, 2009; Stark & Hester, 2019). To explore the link between partner violence and structural forms of violence in the era of mass incarceration (as to answer any question regarding partner violence etiology) requires clarity on this point.

Centering Interpersonal Control in the Study of Partner Violence

Feminist sociologist Michael Johnson's theory of partner violence, which calls for closer attention to the couple-level patterns of interpersonal power and control surrounding physically violent acts, offers evidence to resolve this theoretical stalemate. Examining patterns of interpersonal control across a variety of study populations, Johnson observes one type, "coercive controlling violence," that conforms to the empirical predictions of feminist theory: that is, violence is used by one partner (typically male) as a tactic to dominate and control the other (typically female). Victims of this type of violence may also use physical violence in response or resistance to their abusers. Another behavioral type, "situational couple violence," conforms to family violence theory: that is, conflicts escalate into gender-symmetrical uses of violence without an emphasis on interpersonal domination and control. The former type is relatively rare in the general population but predominates among victims who seek domestic violence services and perpetrators who come to the attention of the criminal justice system (Johnson, 1995, 2008, 2010, 2011; Kelly & Johnson, 2008). Table 1 summarizes this framework.

Table 1. Johnson's Typology of Partner Violence (adapted from Kelly & Johnson, 2008)

Type	Defining Characteristics
Coercive controlling violence	One member of a couple uses a variety of tactics, including physical violence, to dominate and control the other.
Violent resistance	A victim of coercive controlling violence uses physical force to resist her/his/their abuser.
Situational couple violence	One or both partners in a couple use physical violence against the other in the context of escalating conflict. Neither partner attempts to dominate and control the other.

Empirical work that attends closely to interpersonal control finds that couple-level processes of control (that is, acts of controlling behavior and physical violence used by one partner to

dominate and intimidate the other) predict and shape the harmfulness of physical partner violence. Research applying Johnson's typology demonstrates that perpetrators of coercive controlling violence tend to use more frequent and severe physical violence than situational couple violence perpetrators (Johnson & Leone, 2005; Leone et al., 2004). Their victims experience more depression, more post-traumatic stress (Johnson & Leone, 2005; Leone et al., 2004) and more fear (Piispa, 2002) than victims of situational couple violence. Victims of coercive controlling violence are also more likely to want and attempt to leave (Johnson & Leone, 2005) and to seek formal help from courts or victim services providers (Leone et al., 2007). This work suggests that assessing (and operationalizing) the presence of distinct types of partner violence among returning prisoners and their partners based on interpersonal control dynamics would lay the groundwork for a more precise understanding of partner violence etiologies in this population.

Systems of Race and Class Domination and the Etiologies of Johnson's Types

Applying Johnson's theory to partner violence among returning prisoners and their partners prompts consideration of how interpersonal control and violence are connected not only to patriarchy but to other forms of social domination and structural violence. While Johnson characterizes the nature and etiology of one type of violence (coercive controlling violence) as connected to heteropatriarchy, he does not rigorously address whether or how the most common form of partner violence (situational couple violence [Kelly & Johnson, 2008]) is linked to victims' or perpetrators' experiences of collective domination. Instead, he tends to emphasize individual and dyadic characteristics, such as addiction and poor conflict and communication skills, in shaping situational couple violence (Johnson, 2011).

Yet as Black feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins notes, violence in the United States is profoundly and simultaneously shaped by multiple forms of social domination, including those related to race, class, gender, and sexuality (Collins, 1998, 2017). While Johnson acknowledges the likely importance of racial and economic subjugation and related policy structures (e.g., welfare policy) in shaping partner violence (Leone et al., 2004), his theory does not address how they might influence the types of violence he identifies. This work suggests, however, that a theoretical and empirical focus on the role of interpersonal control in the partner relationship could support efforts to assess the links between partner violence and broader tactics of racial and economic domination, including mass incarceration (Wacquant, 2000, 2010a).

Mass Incarceration and Partner Violence

Various theoretical works suggest that partner violence could be promoted by the population-scale forms of domination and control imposed on communities targeted for mass incarceration. This section explores several perspectives on this link and the mechanisms that each suggests.

Partner Violence and Deficits of Informal Social Control: Social Disorganization Theories

Scholars concerned with the connection between broad, sociohistorical conditions and criminalized activity have built an extensive, evolving body of work on social disorganization theory. As put forth by Shaw & McKay (1942) and revised and extended by other major sociologists and criminologists (Kornhauser, 1978; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Sampson & Wilson, 1995) (e.g., Kornhauser, 1978; Wilson; 1987; Sampson and Groves, 1986, 1989; Sampson & Wilson, 1995), social disorganization theory posits that communities with strong traditional social structures (particularly neighborly and familial ones) exert informal social

control over their members. Such control functions to define and to limit deviance, including violence. As the social structures that support such control deteriorate, proponents suggest, a community's collective efficacy for restraining violence and other forms of deviance erodes (Sampson & Wilson, 1995).

Social disorganization theory and partner violence

Social disorganization theory is the predominant framework used in theory-informed studies of broad, social and material determinants of partner violence (Beyer et al., 2015; VanderEnde et al., 2012; Voith, 2019). Brought into prominence in partner violence research through a pair of influential feminist studies of violence against women in public housing developments (Dekeseredy et al., 2003; Renzetti & Maier, 2002), this line of research examines the possibility that differences in the collective ability to control deviance help to explain community-level differences in rates of partner violence perpetration.

Applying social disorganization theory to partner violence requires a contextual and conceptual shift from community or street spaces to domestic ones. This conceptual transfer has been acknowledged (e.g., DeKeseredy et al., 2005) but less often interrogated closely. Social disorganization theory has traditionally been applied to describe how communities restrain the behavior "of teenage peer groups in public spaces" (Sampson & Wilson, 1995, p. 46). Whether the acts of informal social control that social disorganization scholars observed as restraining public delinquency by youth are also deployed to restrain adult behavior in spaces and relationships long considered private (Houston, 2014) is unknown. Partner violence may not be observed by individuals outside the couple or household, and even if it comes into view, may not be subject to the same normative judgments as other forms of violence or regarded as an

appropriate target for outside intervention (Browning, 2002; Emery et al., 2011; Wright & Benson, 2010).

Another conceptual tension in the extension of social disorganization theory to partner violence lies in the protective role the theory accords to the traditional, heteropatriarchal family. Social disorganization theory describes the supposed weakening of familial social structures in urban communities of color in both heterocentric and patriarchal terms. So-called “family disruption” is synonymous in these works with a low prevalence of legal, heterosexual marriage and “the [high] proportion of Black families headed by women” (e.g., Sampson & Wilson, 1995, pp. 41–42, 53). Such a perspective equates poor urban families’ low uptake of legally sanctioned marriage and apparent lack of male domestic sovereignty with social instability.

The idea that traditional family structures restrain violence misses the mark, at least regarding partner violence. Two decades of research in a variety of contexts and populations finds that traditional family gender roles promote partner violence perpetration and victimization (Herrero et al., 2018; Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 2000; Jewkes, 2002; Love et al., 2018; Spencer et al., 2019), including among poor, urban families (Golden et al., 2013). At a broad scale, research by the United States Census Bureau on marriage policy and partner violence prevalence finds that family stability in the conventional sense applied by social disorganization theorists (the non-dissolution of legally sanctioned marriages) is actually associated with *higher* rates of partner violence (Heggeness, 2019).

Social disorganization theory and mass incarceration

Criminologists and sociologists interested in the collateral consequences of mass incarceration

have also widely applied social disorganization theory. Such work considers how the downstream effects of incarceration might accrue not only to criminalized individuals and their families but to entire localities or neighborhoods. Empirically, it tends to examine how concentrated prison admissions or returns from particular localities affect local social and material conditions.

Key works in this vein suggest that the development of hyper-incarcerative responses in poor communities of color has prompted a worsening of criminalized activity in such communities (Clear, 2009). Social disorganization theory attempts to explain this apparent coextension. Its proponents suggest that the residential instability, workforce dislocation, and interrupted family bonds associated with mass incarceration disrupt traditional social roles and structures. The deterioration of these social roles and structures across entire communities, in turn, erodes traditional restraints on deviant behavior (Clear et al., 2003; Rose & Clear, 1998b, 2003). This argument is commonly referred to as the coercive mobility thesis.

That the criminalized themselves, and those living in hyper-incarcerated communities, experience heightened exposure to violence is reasonably clear. That the relative ubiquity of violent victimization and perpetration in impoverished and criminalized communities demands an explanation beyond individual propensities or motives is also a patently reasonable proposition. As Bruce Western suggests, writing about violence in the lives of returning prisoners, experiences of violence among the poor and criminalized do not comport well with individually focused explanations of (or punishment for) perpetration:

Roles in violence are not neatly divided...At different times and in different venues, people come to play the roles of victim, offender, participant or witness...former prisoners have been surrounded by serious violence since early childhood and their roles

in violence have shifted unevenly from victim to offender. The social facts of violence challenge the usual criminal justice jurisprudence of individualized culpability that is largely stripped of social context and biography. (Western, 2015, p. 3)

Whether social disorganization offers the strongest explanation for these observed community-level patterns of violence merits a closer look, however. Empirical applications of the coercive mobility thesis never fully operationalize the pathways they propose from local hyper-incarceration through deteriorated traditional social structures to violence or other criminalized activity. Such works typically focus on a single relationship; for example, the link between neighborhood rates of imprisonment or release in one year and rates of crime in the next. The proposed mediation of this relationship via “increasing inequality, more broken families, decreases in levels of informal social control, and increasing social disorder” remains unsubstantiated (Clear et al., 2003, 2014, p. 5; Dhondt, 2012).

Western, Clear, and other contemporary scholars of incarceration’s collateral consequences (e.g., Morenoff & Harding, 2014) consistently frame disproportionate violence and other criminalized activity in marginalized urban communities as shaped by social disorganization. Yet applied to violence in the lives of returning prisoners, their arguments acquire a circularity almost as pernicious as that with which the criminalized are shunted from “neighborhoods of relegation” into prisons and back again (Wacquant, 2015; p. 248). That is, entrenched poverty in criminalized neighborhoods attenuates traditional social structures, weakening informal social controls and forcing institutions of formal social control (including police and prisons) to step in:

The informal sources of social order in stable families and neighborhoods regulate violence in a non-violent way, nudging everyday social interaction in the direction of the productive participation in prosocial roles. Without informal supervision, institutional efforts at social control play a larger role. Schools, police, and prisons are called on to control violence in poor communities relying on the instruments of punishment, arrest,

and incarceration. Without informal supervision, the formal social control agencies kick into gear, bringing their own kind of violence to the effort to maintain order. (Western, 2015, pp. 6–7).

Like their theoretical forefathers, these theorists point to the breakdown of moral and social conventionality in such communities as exacerbating interpersonal violence and inviting increasing state intervention. In this line of thinking, low rates of legal marriage and the proliferation of “female-headed” households of which Sampson and Wilson warned not only compromise physical safety in the communities to which prisoners return; they also make room for, even call in, the continued violent presence of the state.

Mass incarceration, partner violence, and deficits of informal social control

Drawing together key theoretical works on mass incarceration and the determinants of partner violence, critical legal theorists Coker and MacQuoid (2015) argue that hyper-incarceration and the deep alienation from resources accomplished by neoliberal economic policies promote partner violence in hyper-incarcerated communities. They assert that “the weakening of social supports and community cohesion creates the very conditions that the social disorganization research finds to be strongly correlated with increased rates of domestic violence” (Coker & Macquoid, 2015, p. 612).

Compelling as their broader argument is, Coker and MacQuoid overstate the evidence for a pathway from mass incarceration to partner violence via social disorganization. Multiple studies have found that social disorganization-related constructs are non-significant (Daoud et al., 2017; Frye & Wilt, 2001) or far less significant than concentrated poverty (Wu, 2009) in predicting partner violence. One study linking neighborhood social disorder (residents’ perceptions of

neighborhood physical conditions and criminalized activity) to elevated risk of partner violence (Cunradi, 2007) did not use an analytic strategy capable of accounting for the nesting of cases within neighborhoods. Another study using more robust analytic methods found lower rates of partner violence in communities where residents reported more social cohesion and greater collective efficacy, defined as the likelihood that neighbors would intervene in various forms of youth misbehavior, a street fight, or a fire station closure (Browning, 2002).

What collective efficacy means in poor urban communities targeted for mass incarceration has not been well examined, however. The presumed relationship between collective efficacy as typically operationalized and efforts by community members to prevent or intervene in partner violence is rarely studied (see Edwards et al.'s [2014] rural study for an exception). “Collective efficacy” is generally measured with survey items that assess residents’ confidence in their ability to shape and define their shared physical and interpersonal spaces. Defined in this way, the low collective efficacy observed in neighborhoods with high rates of partner violence could reflect not so much the problematic *absence* of internal social controls but rather the corrosive *presence* of overpowering, dominating forms of authoritarian control (such as those visited intensively on communities targeted for mass incarceration).

Partner Violence and Excesses of Formal Social Control: Scholarship on State and Structural Violence

Evidence suggests that the most severe and damaging forms of partner violence occur when an individual is subject to another’s controlling behavior (see “The Role of Interpersonal Control in Partner Violence” above). A parallel dynamic is possible at the collective level; that is, that partner violence is more prevalent or damaging in the context of the intensive *group-based*

controlling behavior to which those in prisons and heavily policed communities are subject.

Theoretical literatures on state and structural violence, while not concerned with mass incarceration *per se*, support this possibility.

State violence, a concept originally used to describe acts of military force, is helpful in considering the experience of authoritarian control visited on poor, urban communities in the context of hyper-incarceration. Following various contemporary scholars of the American criminal justice system (e.g., Seigel, 2018; Smith, 2016), I extend the idea of state violence to include the use of physical force and armed physical coercion by non-military government personnel, including law enforcement and correctional officers. Such violence, and its racially targeted application, has been normalized in the United States as an ordinary and necessary part of government operations (Seigel, 2018). Indeed, American law enforcement officers have served as agents of racially targeted state violence for as long as they have existed, tracing their origins to Southern slave patrols (Phillips, 2016). Their historic and ongoing participation in racist violence, including lynching (Z. Spencer & Perlow, 2018; Ward, 2016) and the street killings of Black children (Goff et al., 2014; Staggers-Hakim, 2016) is also widely documented.

This kind of government-sponsored, group-based violence appears to produce uniquely damaging effects among members of targeted communities (Hernández, 2002; Weingarten, 2004). This may be in part because victims of state violence, like victims of structural violence, have limited prospects for escape. Physical harm sustained in the context of state violence occurs at the hands of a governing body with broad power and authority over the victim. Analyzing narratives from clinical treatment of state violence survivors, Hernandez suggests that the traumatic effect of these events stems from the “helplessness and hopelessness” prompted by

physical violence that occurs in “a context in which one group has the power to decide and enact what is to be validated as ‘real’ for all other groups” (Hernández, 2002, p. 17).

Helplessness and hopelessness dominate experiences of structural violence as well. A concept brought into common usage by medical anthropologist and public health researcher Paul Farmer, the idea of structural violence is based on the work of peace and conflict sociologist and mathematician Johan Galtung (1969). Farmer describes structural violence as "social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm's way" (Farmer et al., 2006, p. 2). His and other usages focus on material conditions, particularly how divisions of labor and resources in a population influence the population distribution of bodily harm (including illness, injury, and death) (Começanha et al., 2017; Galtung, 1969; Rylko-Bauer & Farmer, 2016). Although sometimes used interchangeably with concepts like poverty, structural violence points more precisely at systematically imposed, population-level material disadvantages that register concretely in the body (for example, in elevated infant mortality or diminished life expectancy at birth). Scholars of peace and conflict think of structural violence not merely in terms of the deprivation of economic well-being but in terms of the denial of self-determination that accompanies it (Christie, 1997).

Sociologists concerned with political economy have meticulously described how the macroeconomic and public policy shifts accomplished during the second half of the twentieth century systematically imposed material disadvantage on poor Black communities, effectively segregating them from crucial social and economic resources (Wacquant, 1996; Wilson, 1987). The rise of mass incarceration during this period, trained on members of those same communities, drew on and reinforced the emergence of deep, localized disadvantage in urban

neighborhoods of color (Wacquant, 2000, 2001). A defining feature of the structural violence visited on such communities is the helplessness and hopelessness they help to construct. For those born into poor families in deeply impoverished urban communities, the subjective experience of material poverty is shaped by an assessment (often actuarially correct) of the relative inescapability and ultimate deadliness of the material conditions under which they live (Nguyen et al., 2012).

Although theoretical perspectives on state and structural violence have not previously been applied to examine partner violence in the context of mass incarceration, the etiological insights of former prisoners and their families suggest that these perspectives bear further examination. Two qualitative studies with men in heavily criminalized American communities reinforce the relevance of state and structural violence theories for understanding partner violence perpetration in a time of mass incarceration. Their results suggest that intensive and protracted state and structural violence in hyper-incarcerated communities prompts both hypervigilance and a pervasive sense of helplessness and hopelessness among criminalized men—the latter akin, perhaps, to the “doomed...mindset consistent with persistent offending” evident in the narratives of former prisoners in the Liverpool Desistance Study (Maruna, 2001; Maruna & Copes, 2005, p. 280). The same studies suggest that this socioemotional state could, in turn, promote the use of violence against intimate partners (Hairston & Oliver, 2011; Holliday et al., 2019; Oliver & Hairston, 2008). These pathways have not been tested in quantitative research.

Policy Implications of Theoretical Perspectives on Control and Partner Violence

Theories of social disorganization and of state and structural violence each call attention to the possibility that mass incarceration-era social and material conditions might shape experiences of partner violence. Scholars differ substantially, however, regarding potential mechanisms. This thesis will examine these pathways and their broad implications for public policy.

Social disorganization theory, widely influential in literatures on the collateral consequences of mass incarceration and on the social determinants of partner violence, points to deterioration in traditional social structures as loosening restraints on deviance and creating fertile conditions for violence to arise. This narrative—and the persistent tendency in social disorganization research to “search for social underpinnings of violent crime” (Jefferson, 2017, p. 2)—deflects responsibility for economic and policy shifts that have eviscerated poor communities of color onto those communities themselves. This deflection has landed particularly on the shoulders of poor Black women (Cohen, 1997, 1999, 2004; Lee & Hicken, 2016). The long-lasting impact of United States Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Moynihan, 1965) offers a stark example of the policies this rhetorical strategy has helped to bolster. The report, though firmly grounded in an understanding of the historical exploitation of Black communities, asserted that a "tangle of pathology" stemming from the proliferation of “matriarchal” family structures in Black communities perpetuated intergenerational poverty and violence (Moynihan, 1965, p. 47). Moynihan, like other social disorganization-oriented scholars, saw the loss of traditional heteropatriarchal family structures as the key mechanism by which the harms associated with macro-level adversity and exploitation had seeded persistent disadvantage in Black communities (Collins, 1989).

Rather than point to public policies that could help to address ongoing racism and structural violence against the poor urban communities of color with whom he was concerned, Moynihan's argument bolstered the rise of a racialized "welfare queen" archetype that helped turn American public opinion against basic safety-net programs and toward a minimally supportive, surveillance-oriented welfare state (Geary, 2015; Hancock, 2003; Rich, 2016). The predominance of this perspective well into the current century continues to inform an array of policy responses that reflect it; for example, the ongoing redirection of public financial assistance for poor families into nationwide marriage promotion efforts beginning in 2005 (Congressional Research Service, 2007). Should the extension of this perspective to partner violence in the era of mass incarceration prove well supported, it would suggest that public policies promoting traditional, heteropatriarchal social structures in heavily incarcerated communities might help to prevent partner violence as well.

In contrast, theoretical works on state and structural violence (and some qualitative work with individuals directly affected by mass incarceration) call attention to alternative explanations that have been overlooked in the overwhelming focus on social disorganization-based mechanisms. These alternative perspectives suggest that state and structural violence exposure in the context of mass incarceration could promote traumatic stress, hypervigilance, and feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. Such effects might, in turn, erode healthy couple-level processes and contribute to partner violence perpetration. If these alternate perspectives are correct, marriage-promotion efforts in criminalized communities would do little to prevent violence in families (and could even worsen it). In this case, public policies to reverse each of these population-scale forms of violence and treat their lingering behavioral health effects in

criminalized communities would appear more promising than efforts to strengthen traditional social restraints on deviance.

Applying the Social Ecological Framework to Partner Violence in the Era of Mass Incarceration

The theoretical work reviewed in this chapter highlights key tensions related to the role of interpersonal control in partner violence and the potential links between partner violence and mass incarceration. Each of these tensions informs the current inquiry into how mass incarceration-era social and material conditions might shape partner violence.

Key Points of Theoretical Engagement for the Current Work

Regarding the role of interpersonal control in partner violence, a decades-long theoretical controversy has persisted between family-violence and feminist theorists. While proponents of each theory cite extensive evidence to support their perspectives, studies that use Johnson's typology to examine dyadic (couple-level) patterns of physical violence and controlling behavior typically find one type whose characteristics and etiology is consistent with feminist theory and another consistent with family-violence theory. Examining these patterns of interpersonal control and physical violence among returning prisoners and their partners will lay the groundwork for my efforts to understand the etiology of partner violence in the context of mass incarceration. Johnson's theory begins to articulate the connections between partner violence and broader forms of social domination and structural violence by framing the coercive controlling type of partner violence as strongly rooted in women's broader subordination. However, this work does not address whether or how coercive controlling violence or (much more prevalent) situational

couple violence are connected to forms of structural inequality beyond patriarchy—particularly those used to maintain racial and economic domination. In this thesis, engagement with Johnson's types will keep interpersonal control at the fore of my examination of partner violence while supporting a more precise inquiry into the connections between partner violence and mass incarceration.

Regarding potential links between partner violence and mass incarceration, prior scholarship points to the need to broaden beyond social disorganization to accommodate competing perspectives from state and structural violence theory as well as the etiological insights of individuals directly affected by mass incarceration. While social disorganization theory has predominated in scholarship on the social determinants of partner violence and on the collateral consequences of mass incarceration, its extension to partner violence raises serious conceptual problems that have not been well addressed: particularly, whether the forms of collective efficacy that restrain public acts of destructiveness by youth also prevent destructive behaviors by adults in private spaces and relationships and whether traditional social structures (particularly the heteropatriarchal family) play a supportive, detrimental or neutral role.

Engaging these tensions productively requires a framework that is broad enough to support systematic consideration and testing of etiological insights from qualitative research and from diverse theoretical perspectives. Criminological scholarship on partner violence rarely assesses whether or how criminological theories align (or don't) with works in other major social-scientific disciplines. Even where clear interdisciplinary interest exists—for example, in the influence of social-ecological context on partner violence (Lindhorst & Tajima, 2008) and in the developmental processes that condition the use of partner violence (Cochran et al., 2017)—

researchers rarely engage points of interdisciplinary conflict or convergence directly. This lack of interdisciplinary insight is exacerbated by a more generalized tendency to under-operationalize partner violence theories, particularly those dealing with broad social determinants. Most partner violence research focuses on assessing a single, proximal relationship or pathway without operationalizing (or sometimes even proposing) the full pathways within which the observed phenomena are believed to lie (Ali & Naylor, 2013; Beyer et al., 2015; Mulder et al., 2018; White et al., 2015).

In addition to engaging multiple theoretical perspectives, the current work aims to address a number of shortcomings in how theoretical insights are applied and tested in empirical work on partner violence. Most research on partner violence has confined tests of etiology to a single arena: assessing, for example, the influence on partner violence of individual psychopathology, or of strain in the couple and household, or of broader economic conditions. Rare are studies that trace the etiology of partner violence across more than one contextual sphere (for example, macroeconomic conditions, localized poverty, household economic strain) despite the ubiquitous expectation that these spheres must, in some way, relate. Rarer still are studies that examine patterns among the acts of violence and controlling behavior that are thought to comprise partner violence (such as Johnson's types) and identify whether such patterns might emerge through distinct etiological processes. To effectively engage each of these theoretical issues, I will use Bronfenbrenner's (1977) social ecological framework to organize my empirical work.

The Social Ecological Framework and Process-Person-Context-Time Model

Beginning in the late 1970s, and evolving through the late 1990s, Urie Bronfenbrenner's theoretical work described how processes of regular interaction between individuals and their

social and material environments produce behavioral outcomes over time. While Bronfenbrenner framed this work in terms of human development, he understood such development not to be confined to “the formative years;” rather, he suggested that “throughout the life course, human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction” between the person and the environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, pp. 996, 997).

Bronfenbrenner’s full framework, articulated in his later works as the Process-Person-Context-Time model, examines how an outcome such as partner violence arises through the repetition of “proximal processes” that are influenced by characteristics of the individual (including what he termed demand, force, and resource characteristics) and characteristics of the social and material context or environment. He envisioned these person-environment interactions as occurring in a nested set of contextual systems extending outward from the individual; in his words, “the ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the other like a set of Russian dolls” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a, p. 3). These nested contexts include: (1) the microsystem, comprised of the immediate environments in which the individual spends time regularly (e.g., home and family, school and peer group); (2) the mesosystem, understood as the interactions among these immediate contexts; (3) the exosystem, comprised of various environments in which an individual does not regularly spend time but which affect him/her/them by influencing the microsystem (for example, a parent’s workplace comprises part of a child’s exosystem); and (4) the macrosystem, encompassing beliefs, institutions, resources, social systems and opportunity structures that are shared across a population or sub-population (Bronfenbrenner, 1993).

The model's critical intervention lay in challenging previously acontextual, ahistorical work on the etiology of human development and behavior: what Bronfenbrenner referred to as "the tacit assumption of environmental generalizability and...historical generalizability" (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). As it evolved over several decades of work, his model also took on greater specificity regarding the constructs understood to comprise each sphere and with regard to "their bidirectional, synergistic interrelationships" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 997). The focus on addressing contextual (and inter-contextual) complexity and situating experiences within both historical and developmental time make this model useful for considering the etiology of partner violence among returning prisoners and their partners in a period of mass incarceration.

Versions of the social ecological framework have been widely applied in public health and social psychological research on partner violence (Beyer et al., 2015; Dahlberg & Krug, 2006; Heise, 1998; Voith, 2019) and violent injury generally (e.g., Rutherford et al., 2007). Such works use it as a pan-theoretical framework linking narrower perspectives on partner violence to one another as a set of nested contextual influences. Such influences are typically mapped from the most proximal (e.g., individual psychological history, relationship dynamics, household income) to the most distal (e.g., police responses to violence, societal gender norms), with more distal influences conditioning more proximal ones (Assari, 2013; Dahlberg & Krug, 2006; Heise, 1998).

As with empirical applications of the framework elsewhere in the social sciences, the full model is rarely operationalized in partner violence research. As Tudge and colleagues conclude from a review of 25 empirical studies applying Bronfenbrenner's work, his model is most often applied simply to suggest "that the contexts in which developing individuals exist have an influence on

their development or that both contexts and the individuals themselves are influential”—a general assertion that, as they note in their critique, “hardly needs to be supported theoretically” (Tudge et al., 2009, p. 206). Bronfenbrenner’s own, more faithful efforts to apply his model to various behavioral phenomena with complex, cross-contextual etiologies (e.g., Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) suggest that a more precise application of this theory to partner violence etiology could be illuminating. Prior research concerned with the social determinants of partner violence has been largely atheoretical, applied social disorganization theory, or applied a very general version of the social ecological framework. The full Process-Person-Context-Time perspective supports a structured, transtheoretical assessment of these relationships.

Applying Bronfenbrenner’s Framework to Partner Violence in an Era of Mass Incarceration

Bronfenbrenner’s full Process-Person-Context-Time framework affords the opportunity to examine how returning prisoners’ individual characteristics contribute to couple-level processes and partner violence outcomes, as well as how these experiences are situated in historical and developmental time. Table 2 shows the application of Bronfenbrenner’s Process-Person-Context-Time model to the etiology of partner violence in the households of returning prisoners.

Construct	As defined by Bronfenbrenner	As applied to partner violence in the households of returning prisoners
Process	“Enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 996)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interaction in the intimate or parenting relationship• Interaction with penal authorities

Person			
Demand	Outwardly observable individual traits that influence how others respond to a person (Bronfenbrenner, 1993)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Race • Gender 	
Force	“Behavioral dispositions that can set proximal processes in motion and sustain their operation or...actively interfere with...their occurrence” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 1009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propensity to use violence • Interpersonal style (cooperativeness, reactivity) 	
Resource	“Mental and emotional resources such as past experiences, skills and intelligence and also...social and material resources” (Tudge et al., 2009, p. 200)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-traumatic stress • Hopelessness • Addiction 	
Context			
Microsystem	An immediate, face-to-face setting in which an individual regularly experiences and enacts roles, relationships, and patterns of activity (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, 1994)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation of penal authority across contexts, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Local community conditions (poverty, street violence, law enforcement) *Prison conditions 	
Mesosystem	“A system of two or more microsystems” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 1016)		
Exosystem	“The linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives.” (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal justice system policies and procedures • Health and human services policies and procedures 	
Macrosystem	Shared beliefs, institutions, resources, social systems and opportunity structures in a population or sub-population (Tudge et al., 2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyper-incarceration • Social welfare retrenchment • Family gender roles and norms 	
Time			
Developmental time	“Timing in lives” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 1020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childhood to adulthood • Incarceration and reentry 	

Macro-time	“Historical time” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 1020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Period of mass incarceration in the United States, 1978-present
Outcome	Any “developmental outcome” occurring at any point “throughout the life course” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 996)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner violence incidents • Types of partner violence

Considering partner violence among returning prisoners through the social ecological lens offers several advantages: it addresses individual and couple-level characteristics and processes while foregrounding the role of broad, social and material determinants that too often slip into the background in empirical research (Baum, 2016; Farmer et al., 2006). Yet the model lacks a direct, critical analysis of the historical, macro-level social and material forces it incorporates. Bronfenbrenner foregrounds the importance of historical developments such as the Great Depression of the 1930s and the women’s movement of the 1970s, but figures them as unfolding simply through the accumulated, reciprocal interaction of individuals with their environments. Rather than critically engage the uneven distribution of political and economic power and how it shapes macro-level social and material developments, for him, “history is exploited as an experiment of nature” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 1020).

A critical analysis of power is also absent from Bronfenbrenner’s treatment of interpersonal interactions. For example, though he explicitly acknowledges that age, race, gender, and physical appearance influence how an individual is treated by others, and how different individuals operate within different opportunity structures, he does not engage a broader critique of these dynamics. His model is agnostic not only on the role of interpersonal control in partner violence but also on how broader, population-scale forms of violence and control might shape it—a key point of engagement for the current project. If Bronfenbrenner’s model is applied as a meta-

theoretical framework rather than a singular theory of the problem (at least when considering partner violence among returning prisoners), its relative emptiness regarding the role of control in violence is accommodating rather than limiting. That is, relationships proposed by other theories (for example, Johnson's typology) or in the narratives of directly affected individuals can be tested and integrated within it. This supports a much-needed move toward cross-theoretical and interdisciplinary integration in partner violence scholarship. Toward that end, the empirical work undertaken for this thesis is organized according to Bronfenbrenner's framework:

1. Work on my first research aim (to examine patterns in the use of physical violence and controlling behavior by returning prisoners and their partners) builds a clearer understanding of partner violence outcomes, particularly the role of controlling behavior in interpersonal violence, and their relationship to different proximal processes and characteristics of persons.
2. Work on my second research aim (to investigate qualitative understandings and experiences of partner violence among returning prisoners and their partners and their perceived connection to experiences of state and structural violence) uses qualitative perspectives to understand the interaction between characteristics of persons and contexts, with a particular focus on how experiences of control or powerlessness in the mesosystem and the macrosystemic contexts of hyper-incarceration and heteropatriarchal norms might condition understandings and experiences of partner violence.
3. Work on my third research aim (to test the relationships between individual criminal justice system exposure and later partner violence perpetration that are suggested in qualitative research with returning prisoners and their partners) examines the role of

mesosystemic factors and proximal processes, including their developmental timing and accumulation through the life course, in shaping partner violence outcomes.

4. Work on my fourth research aim (to examine whether and how the local social and material conditions associated with mass incarceration predict partner violence perpetration by men returning from prison) engages the influence of the mesosystem on couple-level processes, person characteristics, and partner violence outcomes over time.

Finally, the focus on mass incarceration era experiences, especially the use of data from former prisoners who were incarcerated at its peak, situates all four of these inquiries in historical time.

This overarching theoretical approach will enable me to draw together the results of the four empirical inquiries into a broader map of relationships among partner violence outcomes, individual characteristics, proximal processes within the couple, and the nested contexts in which they are embedded. The use of a meta-theoretical framework provides a coherent structure within which to bring disparate theories into conversation and to synthesize empirical results. My work on each specific aim is also informed by critical theoretical works specific to that aim (detailed in the background sections of my four empirical chapters and in my concluding chapter). Across the body of evidence presented in this thesis, I will highlight overall areas of theoretical friction and empirical uncertainty that bear consideration in future research and policy. With this approach, I hope to contribute to a more integrated body of interdisciplinary theory and evidence on partner violence—one that is both critical enough and coherent enough to inform more humane and effective public policy.

Chapter 3: Review of Empirical Literature

This chapter summarizes the state of the evidence on partner violence in the context of mass incarceration. Given the dearth of research on this topic, the first two sections of this chapter draw on empirical work in two closely related areas: (1) research on the collateral consequences of mass incarceration, and (2) research on violence in the lives of returning prisoners and their partners. Prior research is reviewed through the lens of the social ecological framework (discussed in detail in Chapter 2).

The third section of this chapter discusses empirical challenges to the study of partner violence in an era of broad-scale criminal justice monitoring and surveillance and how they might be addressed. The fourth section describes how the research gaps identified in this chapter motivate the research aims for this thesis. In addressing its four aims, the current study will map observed relationships among acts of violence and control in relationships, their more proximal precursors, and the broad social and material conditions under which they arise in a historical period of mass incarceration. The final section of this chapter offers an overview of the empirical approach to this project, including the features and limitations of the focal data source.

The Collateral Consequences of Mass Incarceration (and Who Bears Them)

Collateral consequences of mass incarceration have been documented at every level of the social ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1977): among the formerly incarcerated, their partners and families, their neighborhoods and communities, and the American population at large. The burdens associated with incarceration are grossly maldistributed by gender, race, and class in ways that produce substantial (and in the case of gender, surprising) population-level disparities.

Many former prisoners grapple with “disabling behavioral and physical changes” (Travis et al., 2014, p. 174) following incarceration. Some of this physical and mental aftermath may be attributable to harsh conditions of confinement in American institutions, which expose prisoners to serious violence (Bierie, 2012) and cut off many avenues of communication with the outside world (Uggen, 2016). The American prisoner faces conditions notably more severe, restrictive, and “extreme” than those in other high-income democracies (Wildeman & Wang, 2017, p. 1466), including overcrowding and the heavy use of solitary confinement. Indeed, “imprisonment does not get much more inhumane than the conditions in so-called ‘supermax’ confinement widespread in the United States” (Liebling & Maruna, 2005, p. 3).

Returning prisoners are significantly more likely than similar never-incarcerated individuals to experience stress-related illnesses (including chronic headaches, sleep problems, heart problems, and hypertension) as well as infectious diseases (including urinary tract infections, hepatitis and tuberculosis) (Massoglia, 2008a). Controlling for selection into prison, imprisonment steeply increases the chances that one will experience later major depression or persistent depression; these, in turn, are strongly associated with disability (Schnittker et al., 2012). Many returning prisoners also report psychological distress and depression associated with experiences of criminal record-based discrimination after their release (Assari et al., 2018; Turney et al., 2013).

Returning prisoners face severe, long-term challenges with employment (Uggen et al., 2014; Visher et al., 2011). First-time incarceration reduces the likelihood of any formal employment and of being stably employed (Apel & Sweeten, 2010). A history of incarceration also depresses earnings over the long term (Apel & Sweeten, 2010; Western, 2002). Returning prisoners, particularly Black Americans, face conviction-related hiring discrimination from potential

employers (Pager, 2003; Pager & Western, 2005). Even compared to others with conviction histories, individuals who have been incarcerated are more likely to avoid seeking employment (Apel & Sweeten, 2010). Incarceration also appears to erode economic well-being over the long term, reducing the likelihood of home ownership and depressing net worth by an average of \$42,000, with larger asset effects for those who experience longer prison stays (Maroto, 2015).

In the United States, these consequences are borne disproportionately by men of color with limited formal education. Men are over 12 times more likely than women to be imprisoned (Bronson & Carson, 2019). Jail and prison incarceration are visited disproportionately on Black Americans: at least 31 percent of Black Americans have ever been to jail or prison, compared to 17 percent of White and Hispanic/Latino Americans (Enns et al., 2019). Among men born in 1978 who did not complete high school, 69 percent of Black men and 15 percent of White men has been to prison (Wildeman & Western, 2010). These disparities accumulate over the life course, such that the average Black American man spends almost two years of his working life imprisoned and over eleven of his potential working years marked by a felony criminal record (Patterson & Wildeman, 2015). Black men also pay a much steeper labor market penalty for their criminal histories than do White men (Pager, 2003) and incarceration compounds underlying racial disadvantages in economic asset-building (Maroto, 2015). Among returning prisoners of color, experiences of conviction-related discrimination are compounded by racial and ethnic discrimination, which are independently associated with psychological distress (Turney et al., 2013).

The collateral consequences of incarceration also extend to the households, partners, and children of prisoners and former prisoners. The social and economic exclusion of ex-prisoners in

America is so systematic and complete that quantitative sociologists have proposed that the convicted and their families constitute a distinct socioeconomic class (Western & Pettit, 2010 but see also Wakefield & Uggen, 2010). Former prisoners' households suffer economic hardships associated with their incarceration (Geller et al., 2011; Schwartz-Soicher et al., 2011; Wildeman & Western, 2010). Their partners and co-parents not only absorb heavy financial burdens during and after the stay in prison (Clayton et al., 2018; Comfort et al., 2017; deVuono-Powell et al., 2015) but also face heightened risk of mental health disorders, asthma, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and HIV (Johnson & Raphael, 2009; Lee et al., 2014; Wildeman et al., 2013, 2019). Children of incarcerated fathers experience higher infant mortality (Wildeman, 2012b); greater maltreatment (Turney, 2014), physical abuse (Wakefield, 2015), and harsh or inappropriate parenting (Wakefield, 2015) by caregivers; more food insecurity (Turney, 2015); and more internalizing and externalizing problems (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2011) than similarly disadvantaged youth.

The family-level burdens of mass incarceration are unevenly distributed as well. Most Black Americans (63%) have experienced the incarceration of an immediate family member (Enns et al., 2019) and one in four women, including 44 percent of Black women, currently has a family member in prison (Lee et al., 2015). As the experience of imprisonment itself is sharply uneven by gender, and as male prisoners tend to report being in relationships with women (e.g., Lattimore et al., 2009), far more women than men navigate the incarceration and reentry of a partner or co-parent. Among the Fragile Families sample (representing births to unmarried parents in major American cities), 44 percent of new mothers reported that the father of their child had been incarcerated (Jones, 2013). Parental incarceration is also unevenly distributed:

White children born in 1990 had a 1 in 25 chance of their fathers going to prison, whereas Black children born in 1990 had a 1 in 4 chance (comparable to their chances of their fathers having completed college). Among Black children whose parents had less than a high school education, a majority had experienced their father's imprisonment before their 14th birthday (Wildeman, 2009).

Consequences of incarceration accrue at the neighborhood level as well. High rates of incarceration weaken residents' workforce attachment, social engagement with their neighbors, and long-term partnership formation (Clear, 2009; Lynch & Sabol, 2004). Whether they have been imprisoned themselves or not, individuals living in neighborhoods with high incarceration rates are more likely to experience major depression and anxiety disorders than those in comparable neighborhoods (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2015). Again, these collateral consequences are unevenly shared. The spatial targeting of mass incarceration means that its neighborhood-level effects are overwhelmingly visited on low-income, urban communities of color (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010; Wacquant, 2001).

It is at the population level, however, that the uneven consequences of mass incarceration are most starkly apparent (Wakefield & Uggen, 2010). Mass incarceration accounts for a large share of national Black-White disparities in infant mortality (Wildeman, 2012b), child homelessness (Wildeman, 2014), children's internalizing and externalizing disorders (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2013), men's physical health functioning at midlife (Massoglia, 2008b), and women's cardiovascular disease (Lee & Wildeman, 2013) and HIV infection (Johnson & Raphael, 2009). It also contributes to the systematic exclusion of Black Americans from an equitable share in the nation's wealth (Sykes & Maroto, 2016; Western et al., 2002).

These population-scale inequities are, of course, shaped by disproportionality in individual incarceration risk. An unexpected pattern emerges at the population level, however. Racial disparities associated with mass incarceration appear to be most heavily driven by racial disparities not in the risk of becoming incarcerated but in the risk of having an incarcerated family member (Sykes & Maroto, 2016; Wakefield & Wildeman, 2013; Wildeman, 2012b). Gender disparities in the likelihood of having an incarcerated partner or family member manifest at the population level: though men represent the overwhelming majority of the incarcerated population, women appear to bear a disproportionate share of its population-level consequences (Wildeman, 2012a).

Violence in the Lives of Returning Prisoners and Their Partners

Lifetimes of Violence

Scholarship on violence has tended to consider forms of violence, and roles in violence, in separate studies and publications (Sumner et al., 2015). But it does not enter the lives of the returning prisoner so discretely. Asked about their experiences with violence, most returning prisoners in Harvard's Boston Reentry Study recounted being violently victimized, witnessing serious interpersonal violence, weathering the violence of arrest and imprisonment, and using violence themselves in various forms and contexts (including with partners and other family members). Considering these experiences and the conditions under which they arose, Western proposes that "varieties of violence, from street crime to child abuse, can be traced to broadly similar conditions of material disadvantage...[P]oor people will see a great deal of violence in their lives but come to play a range of roles--as victim, offender, or witness" (Western, 2015: 17).

This phenomenon materializes in quantitative research as the well-documented victim-offender overlap, whereby criminal conviction is a risk factor for criminal victimization (Jennings et al., 2012). In considering violence in the lives of returning prisoners, we would do well to extend our temporal and spatial horizons beyond individual victimization and perpetration incidents into life histories and spatial contexts in which experiences of violence are both complex and unexceptional (Schwab-Stone et al., 1995; Steiner & Meade, 2013; Western, 2015). For returning prisoners, their families and communities, experiences of state violence, structural violence, institutional violence, street violence, and partner violence may well intertwine. For example, it is widely recognized that involvement in street violence can precipitate incarceration (and exposure to prison violence); however, evidence also suggests that exposure to violent victimization during incarceration promotes violence perpetration after release (Zweig et al., 2015). In neighborhoods where large numbers of children and adults are regularly drawn into and expelled from the carceral net, criminalization and incarceration (and the violence-related socialization that accompanies them) are not exceptional individual experiences but shape collective socialization and interpersonal norms (Lopez-Aguado, 2016; Rios, 2011).

A social ecological perspective suggests that acts of violence are at once initiated and experienced by individuals and simultaneously embedded within families, communities, and broader social structures and institutions (Dahlberg & Krug, 2006). Alongside an understanding of mass incarceration's multi-layered consequences, this perspective calls our attention to the ways that violence and the harms it produces manifest at multiple levels of the social ecology.

Violence by Social Ecological Level

The individually focused theories and cross-sectional, single-method studies that predominate in scholarship on violence and the criminal justice system often fail to capture its complex manifestations. A shift in theoretical and methodological approach is required if we are to understand the interplay between violent acts, broader social and material conditions, and a criminal justice system that professes to protect the vulnerable from harm.

To better accommodate this complexity, this literature review (and the empirical work presented in later chapters of this thesis) will draw on several violence-related concepts. I consider violence in the expansive but concrete sense proposed by criminological historian Micol Seigel:

The gamut of violence is best grasped expansively, as Gilmore does with her incisive definition, 'the cause of premature deaths'. This capacious prescription...includes all the forms of violence beyond physical coercive force that constrict and immiserate, leading people to an early grave. (Seigel, 2018, p. 26)

Within this overarching understanding of violence, this thesis is concerned with acts of interpersonal violence and also with broader, collective forms of violence. Most social scientific research focuses on interpersonal violence, which involves individual victims and perpetrators. A social ecological perspective on violence, however, highlights the operation of violence at three ecological levels: *population-level forms of violence* that are best understood in terms of the action or inaction of governments (including state and structural violence); *community- or institution-level forms of violence* that are shaped by many individual actions and occur largely in settings understood as public (including institutional and community violence); and *interpersonal-level forms of violence*, most commonly partner violence, which is committed and

experienced by individuals in private relationships and in settings understood as private (overwhelmingly in homes [Durose et al., 2005]).

At the population level, structural and state violence each play a potent role in the lives of returning prisoners. Returning prisoners bear the brunt of a particularly entrenched form of structural violence. This is in part because it is the poorest and most disadvantaged American men who are selected into incarceration and also because “incarceration alters life chances in myriad ways” that tend to deepen prior material disadvantage (Wakefield & Uggen, 2010, p. 388). The material suffering of returning prisoners and the dense and persistent complex of material disadvantage they face both reflects and reinforces broader patterns of racialized economic exclusion (Pettit & Gutierrez, 2018; Wakefield & Uggen, 2010). Consistent with Farmer’s concept of structural violence (Farmer et al., 2006), the bleak prospects returning prisoners describe (Binswanger et al., 2011) register as bodily fact; returning prisoners in Washington State, for example, are three and a half times more likely to die than those of similar age, sex and race (Binswanger et al., 2007). Structural violence also manifests spatially, in the “broadly similar conditions of material disadvantage” that returning prisoners face after release. Most returning prisoners are released or paroled to materially and socially resource-alienated localities (Harding et al., 2013; Lynch & Sabol, 2001; Walker et al., 2014). Such localities are blighted not simply with entrenched poverty but a moralized “spatial taint” expressive of deep racial and economic subjugation (Wacquant et al., 2014, pp. 1271–1272).

Both the social and the spatial locations of returning prisoners make them prime targets of state violence as well. Psychologist and collective trauma scholar Kaethe Weingarten observes that violence deployed in a group-based manner that is seen by one or both sides as “intended to

influence power relations" between the groups inflicts a distinctive form of terror on members of the targeted group (Weingarten, 2004, p. 52). The racially targeted and politically motivated use of arrest and imprisonment in the United States since approximately 1978 fits this bill (Wakefield & Uggen, 2010; Xenakis & Cheliotis, 2020). Under this regime of state violence, the criminalized are subjected to the racially and socioeconomically targeted application of violence, including forcible arrest and imprisonment, at the hands of agents of government.

For former prisoners, exposure to state violence continues upon release. The "punitive containment" of the criminalized "stretch(es) beyond bars and over the lifecourse of convicts by keeping them under the stern watch and punctilious injunctions of criminal justice even as they return to their barren neighborhoods" (Wacquant, 2010c, p. 616). Most prisoners in the United States are released to some form of legally mandated community supervision. Former prisoners and their families often experience such monitoring as a demoralizing, socially invasive, materially draining, and emotionally disturbing process (McNeill, 2019; Ortiz & Wrigley, 2020; Sandoval, 2020). Yet ongoing, physically and psychologically invasive contacts with criminal justice system personnel are not limited to legally imposed forms of monitoring. As Maruna notes, "Individuals with past criminal justice system involvement are frequently subjected to ritual humiliations by police officers and others, even decades after commission of the offense" (Maruna, 2011, p. 17).

In poor urban communities of color in the United States, the "stern watch and punctilious injunctions" and "ritual humiliation" to which the criminalized are subject are accompanied by the constant possibility of physically aggressive police contact (Kramer & Remster, 2018). The dangerous attentions of armed government personnel are regularly trained on individuals and

communities with long histories of sustaining racially targeted state violence (Rios et al., 2020; Sewell et al., 2016; Sewell & Jefferson, 2016). In the era of mass incarceration, policing authority and practice in the United States has expanded to include practices such as “stop and frisk” and “broken windows policing” that require little legal grounds to initiate, are heavily racially targeted, and tend to inspire fear in communities thus policed (Fradella & White, 2017; Hinkle & Weisburd, 2008). The forcible arrests that result from many such encounters have, in turn, become quantifiably disconnected from criminalized behavior (Weaver et al., 2019). Far from offering a sense of protection, the frequent and racially targeted application of force by government personnel both evokes and perpetuates a collective vulnerability to violence that Black Americans have lived with for generations (Gaber & Wright, 2016; Willingham, 2018).

In addition to their ubiquitous exposure to state violence, returning prisoners may also be exposed to (and engaged in) institutional and community violence. Institutional violence is commonly understood as “actual, attempted or threatened harm toward another person within the institutional setting, which may include physical, verbal, and/or sexual aggression” (Gadon et al., 2006, p. 515). Institutional violence research focuses largely on acts of violence committed by inmates of correctional facilities and psychiatric hospitals, with an eye to preventing disorder and harm to staff (Gadon et al., 2006; Griffin & Hepburn, 2013; Steiner et al., 2014). The application of physical force and threats against prisoners by correctional staff are so routine and essential to prison operations and the acceptance of violence between inmates is so pervasive (Steiner, 2008) as to go uncounted. However, nationally representative research finds that 6-8 percent of detained children and 3 percent of incarcerated adults are sexually victimized by facility staff while serving their sentences (Beck et al., 2013; Beck et al., 2010; Beck & Harrison, 2007; Smith

& Stroop, 2019) and approximately 2 percent of prisoners report assault injuries during incarceration (Sung, 2010). Thus, returning prisoners often bring histories of institutional violence victimization home with them.

Community violence is "violence that is experienced as a victim or witness in or near homes, schools, and surrounding neighborhoods" (Scarpa, 2003, p. 211). Community violence encompasses multiple forms of localized interpersonal violence (for example, assault and homicide) but is defined by its occurrence in the local spaces that individuals occupy routinely. Living amid such violence has a combined and cumulative effect, whether one is directly targeted or not (Motley et al., 2017; Wright et al., 2017). The link between localized structural violence and residents' heightened exposure to violent victimization and perpetration is long recognized (e.g., Krivo & Peterson, 1996); this association has come to comprise an essential aspect of the "spatial taint" that adheres to such localities. Spatial quantitative research, moreover, suggests a strong relationship between community violence exposure and the extreme forms of spatial estrangement (Johnson & Kane, 2016) that returning prisoners face. People returning from prison are not only more likely to reside in high-violence localities (e.g., Morenoff & Harding, 2014) but are also heavily targeted by street violence as individuals and much more likely to die from an act of street violence than their neighbors (Binswanger et al., 2007; Willoughby et al., 2020).

In these contexts, it comes as little surprise that the private relationships of returning prisoners are not immune from the violence that pervades the other spheres of their lives. Partner violence, the most common form of interpersonal violence in the United States (Sumner et al., 2015), is defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as "violence or aggression

[against] current and former spouses and dating partners". It includes physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, and psychological aggression (defined as "the use of verbal and non-verbal communication with the intent to harm another person mentally or emotionally and/or exert control over another person") (Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2018). CDC's definition aligns with lay understandings of partner violence in the communities to which prisoners return. Concept mapping with urban adults finds that partner violence is understood to mean "physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, control, and manipulation" (O'Campo et al., 2017). As defined in United States criminal code, however, criminal domestic violence encompasses only the subset of such behaviors that involve physical threat, physical assault, or sexual force or coercion (United States Department of Justice, 2014).

Even by this narrow definition, returning prisoners appear to experience and engage in a great deal of partner violence. Though no representative research has established its prevalence, research with several multi-site samples of former prisoners and their partners finds rates of physical violence that vastly exceed those observed in the general population (McKay et al., 2018; Western, 2004; Wildeman, 2012b). In the Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering, for example, 50 percent of participants reported physical violence victimization or perpetration in their focal relationship during the six months following the incarcerated partner's release from prison (McKay, Landwehr et al., 2018). Cross-lagged fixed effects models with longitudinal data from the Serious and Violence Offender Reentry Initiative study found that post-release substance use and involvement in other criminalized activity were significant predictors of post-release partner violence (Stansfield et al., 2020).

Private Lives and Public Policy: Addressing Empirical Challenges to the Study of Partner Violence in a Time of Mass Surveillance

The perspective that violence is an act of deviance, erupting in the absence of effective control, has potent policy ramifications. This view has guided and bolstered some of the most significant American public policy developments of the latter twentieth century: the retrenchment of the welfare state, the massive redirection of public funds from provision of a social safety net to promotion of socially conservative values, and the large-scale deployment of punitive responses to violence and other criminalized acts (Beckett & Western, 2001; McClain, 2013; Wacquant, 2010b). With the unfolding of the current century, evidence for the extreme harmfulness (Travis et al., 2014) and costliness (Morenoff & Norris, 2019; Schmitt et al., 2010) of this policy approach has accumulated rapidly. As it builds, an urgent question emerges for scholars of violence and social policy: What comes next?

The era of punishment has itself furnished researchers with a rich source of information that might be tapped to guide the next generation of violence-related policy strategies. The approaches to crime control that have defined this era offer a unique opportunity to understand relationships among interpersonal violence, interpersonal control, and the intensive, broad-scale forms of violence and control to which the marginalized have been subjected. Experiences of partner violence in the families of returning prisoners offer one “saturated site” (Collins, 2017, p. 1464) for observing the action and interaction of these macro- and micro-level forms of violence and control. Those who have used and experienced violence in carceral, street, and domestic contexts, and who have been subjected to various violent government attempts at controlling it, could help to illuminate the nature and etiology of partner violence. Despite this, and despite the

compelling conceptual departures that those affected by mass incarceration have begun to contribute to the study of its collateral consequences, research on the social determinants of partner violence has largely failed to engage their insights.

Partner violence occurs at a troubled boundary between public and private domains that presents both conceptual and methodological challenges for research. Normative understandings of the public-private distinction, and the contestation of such understandings, shape the study of partner violence and of policy responses to it. Although very little research exists on the reporting of partner violence to researchers, an early study with known crime victims found that 29 percent of victims of intra-familial assault disclosed their experiences to researchers compared to 78 percent of victims of extra-familial assault (National Institute of Law Enforcement, 1972). As Houston (2014) meticulously documents in her legal and social history of the criminalization of partner violence, private experiences are traditionally understood as the exclusive concern of individuals and families; experiences constructed as being of public concern invite the attention of other parties and, if needed, the intervention of the state. For this reason, the public-private distinction has long been focal for feminist scholars of partner violence and activists of the Battered Women's Movement, who fought for decades against the treatment of partner violence as a private matter and in favor of state intervention in domestic experiences and spaces (Houston, 2014).

For racialized and criminalized communities, however, the terrain of the public and the prospect of state intervention in private life may not represent safety. In his local history of intimate partner homicide against Black women in the Jim Crow-era United States, Ponton (2018) documents how racial residential and workforce segregation, and the racialization of Black

women as outside of the domain of the vulnerable and protected, complicated the public-private divide that was so salient for their White contemporaries. He notes that "although Americans in the 1950s understood intimate partner violence to be a private matter, for black women who experienced such violence the 'private' was quite often public and publicized [but] not considered a matter of public concern." Recounting a litany of murders of Black women by their partners, most of which were witnessed or overheard and also covered sensationalistically in the media, he notes: "Bystanders intervened in none of these incidences" (Ponton, 2018, p. 67).

Writing on the legal and social vulnerability to partner violence of immigrant South Asian women, Battacharjee suggests that the White/Western feminist struggle to open domestic spaces to public intervention is differently charged for immigrant victims, whose full membership in the public and whose claim on home (and the ostensibly private) are each troubled by immigration status (Battacharjee, 2008: 337).

Strong parallels exist between the conditions Ponton and Battacharjee describe and those faced by returning prisoners and their families, for whom private life is hardly private. During incarceration, the incarcerated and their families occupy a home divided by prison walls; every possible intimacy that a couple or a parent and child might share is regulated and surveilled by correctional authorities (Comfort, 2008; Comfort et al., 2018; Fishman, 1990; McKay, Feinberg et al., 2018). After the prison term ends, most reentrants face ongoing correctional monitoring in the community (for example, the provision of biospecimens on demand), the regular remission of a host of mandatory fines and fees under threat of reincarceration (Baumgartner et al., 2017; Corbett, 2015; Harris, 2016), and the omnipresent threat of police stops—burdens that their partners and children also carry (Comfort et al., 2017; McKay et al., 2016). Under the eye of the

state, aspects of life that are presumed private among non-criminalized people (the contents of one's pockets, the composition of one's urine, what one does behind closed doors) are made public through the "hyper-surveillance" to which former prisoners, their families, and their neighbors are subjected (Phelps, 2018; Walker & García-Castañon, 2017, p. 548). The Damocles sword hanging above these households is further sharpened by monitoring and surveillance from child protective services and the looming threat of child loss.²

Access to public life (as Bhattacharjee understands it) is also curtailed among the formerly incarcerated and those close to them. Diminished civic participation and attenuated involvement in key community institutions, such as schools, is common among individuals, families and communities affected by incarceration (Haskins & Jacobsen, 2017; Lee, Porter, et al., 2014; Olivares et al., 1996; Uggen et al., 2006). Legally, a criminal record consigns returning prisoners to a circumscribed, "custodial citizenship" (Lerman & Weaver, 2014, p. 8). Further, as Ponton's historiography keenly illustrates, acts of violence in private relationships, and public responses to such acts, simultaneously reflect and construct complex, racialized and gendered understandings of safety, protection, and value. Not fully invited into the public sphere, nor fully at ease in the private, former prisoners and their families often manage each domain uneasily in an effort to preserve physical freedom and safety. It is to these heavily surveilled doorsteps that researchers turn in hopes of understanding partner violence in the context of mass incarceration (McKay et al., 2019, pp. 63-86).

² Cheliotis, L. & McKay, T. (under review). "Uneasy Partnerships: Prisoner Reentry, Family Problems and State Coercion in the Era of Neoliberalism."

Responding to Gaps in the Literature: Research Aims

Amid burgeoning scholarship on the collateral consequences of mass incarceration, little rigorous research on partner violence has been conducted (Wildeman et al., 2019)—despite the fact that partner violence is the most common violent crime (Sumner et al., 2015) and that 44 percent of unmarried new mothers in American cities are partnered or co-parenting with formerly incarcerated men (Jones, 2013). The gaps and issues discussed in this literature review give rise to an overarching question: How might state and structural violence shape partner violence in the era of mass incarceration? While an investigation of the causal hypothesis implied by this question would be difficult to achieve, in this thesis, I will begin to explore the relationship between these phenomena through four interrelated research aims.

First Research Aim

The social ecological framework suggests that a meaningful assessment of the conditions under which acts of partner violence arise should be built on a clear grasp of the nature and proximal context of such acts. As noted above, extraordinarily high rates of physical violence and controlling behavior are evident in large samples of former prisoners and their partners (e.g., McKay, Landwehr et al., 2018), but a precise understanding of these experiences does not exist.

Quantitative research on partner violence with returning prisoners, as with most partner violence research in the general population, has summarized behavioral reports into simple frequencies of victimization and perpetration without distinguishing individual- or couple-level patterns of physical violence and controlling behavior. Such descriptions fail to capture dyadic patterns of controlling behavior that have distinct etiologies, correlates and impacts (Johnson, 2008; Kelly &

Johnson, 2008). Research with other populations has overcome this issue by applying Johnson's typology (Anderson, 2008; Frye et al., 2006; Hardesty et al., 2015; Johnson & Leone, 2005; Leone, 2011; Leone et al., 2004). However, these studies rely on one partner's accounts of both partners' behavior, despite evidence that couple members' accounts of partner violence in their relationships with one another usually differ (Berger et al., 2012; Cunradi, Bersamin, and Ames 2009; Schafer, Caetano, and Clark 2002). Though the typology approach represents an improvement over aggregated behavioral descriptions of victimization and perpetration, it would be improved by incorporating reports from each member of a couple about their own experiences and behavior as well as their partner's.

Research applying Johnson's typology rarely makes use of qualitative data (for an exception see Rosen et al., 2005), despite its clear utility for the purpose. Acts of interpersonal social control comprise a universal feature of intimate and co-parenting relationships but, when undertaken in excess, appear to be defining features of abusive ones (Johnson, 2008; Stark, 2007) and a form of harm in themselves (Stark & Hester, 2019). There is no recognized "bright line" distinguishing helpful and harmful acts of interpersonal social control in couple relationships (Hardesty et al., 2015; Johnson, 2008); the distinction is a fundamentally subjective one that is best made with insight from those experiencing it. While Johnson's method for distinguishing the types using survey reports of physical violence and controlling behavior has been widely applied, critics suggest that behaviorally specific survey items do not (on their own) enable the identification of meaningful distinctions (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013; Gadd & Corr, 2017). Johnson, too, has long acknowledged that rich qualitative interview data would be ideal for classification (Johnson, 2008; National Institute of Justice, 2000). However, no published study has yet used linked

quantitative and qualitative data to examine how partners make sense of patterns of violent or controlling behavior in their relationships and how their understandings align with types derived from survey data.

These gaps motivate my first research aim, *to examine patterns in the use of physical violence and controlling behavior by returning prisoners and their partners*. To address this aim, I pose three questions:

1. What dyadic behavioral types are evident in the use of physical violence and controlling behavior in a large, multi-state sample of couples affected by incarceration?
2. Do partner violence types obtained from survey data correspond to meaningful narrative distinctions in participants' qualitative accounts of their relationships?
3. How do individuals assigned to the major dyadic types differ from one another?

To answer these questions, I apply latent class analysis with couples-based data to construct an empirically and theoretically based typology of partner violence among returning prisoners and their partners; compare the qualitative narratives of a stratified subsample of participants assigned to each quantitative type to assess the qualitative salience of type distinctions; and apply two-sample t-tests to compare victims and perpetrators of each of the major types of partner violence identified.

Second Research Aim

Foundational criminological and sociological understandings of the relationship between social control and violence (particularly social disorganization theory) have been widely influential in

the study of the social determinants of partner violence. Such works have helped to call attention to the possibility that localized forms of racialized class subordination could promote partner violence. They also implicitly valorize a traditional, heteropatriarchal conceptualization of social stability that appears to be at odds with quantitative evidence on partner violence etiology at the individual and couple levels. Scholarship in this vein has rarely sought the perspectives of those whose experiences it aims to describe. Perspectives elicited through qualitative research in criminalized communities on related topics present some potential challenges to social disorganization-based understandings of the relationship between violence exposure and conformity to middle-class social and cultural norms (for example, Kerrison et al., 2018) and of the relationship between partner violence perpetration and experiences of control or helplessness in the face of structural disadvantage (Holliday et al., 2019).

Returning prisoners and their partners could likely also lend insight on the relationships among different forms and scales of violence, but their perspectives have been largely absent from partner violence research of any theoretical orientation. An early focus group study found that former prisoners and their partners saw experiences of incarceration and reentry as contributing to post-release violence via changes in men's interpersonal style, lingering hypervigilance, displaced rage, and attempts to gain control over the households to which they returned (Hairston & Oliver, 2011; Oliver & Hairston, 2008). Yet it remains under-examined how returning prisoners and their partners view connections between partner violence and exposures to state and structural violence in the context of mass incarceration. These gaps motivate my second research aim, *to investigate qualitative understandings and experiences of partner violence among returning prisoners and their partners and their perceived connection to experiences of*

state and structural violence. To address this aim, I pose three questions:

1. How do former prisoners and their intimate or co-parenting partners understand the use of interpersonal violence and control in their relationships?
2. Are understandings of private, interpersonal uses of violence and control shaped by exposure to public, institutional violence and control among returning prisoners and their partners?

I answer these questions using formal, inductive qualitative methods with 170 interview transcripts from returning prisoners and their partners, iteratively coded based on a set of deductive and inductive codes developed for this study and systematically reviewed to identify themes and illustrative quotations.

Third Research Aim

Individual- and couple-level predictors of partner violence perpetration among men returning from prison have been little studied. The experiences returning prisoners share—ongoing surveillance, episodic arrest and imprisonment, and other forms of state and structural violence—are widespread among individuals living in hyper-incarcerated American communities (Comfort, 2012; Lopez-Aguado, 2016; Sampson & Loeffler, 2010; Simon, 2007; Western & Pettit, 2010). Elevated rates of partner violence perpetration have been observed in samples of those who survive other forms of state violence, including genocide and wartime violence, with some indication that these effects could be mediated via behavioral health problems. However, no quantitative study has investigated whether or how individual exposures to state violence in the context of mass incarceration might shape the use of violence against a partner.

Efforts to understand partner violence etiology more broadly (beyond returning prisoners and their partners) have been constrained in several other important ways. First, such studies often use cross-sectional survey data, despite the importance of establishing temporal sequencing in etiological research. Most studies use data collected from individuals, though evidence for highly incongruent reporting within couples suggests that a single partner's account will miss a substantial proportion of acts that are experienced as violent or controlling by at least one member of the couple. As a result, models predicting partner violence outcomes have been shown to differ based on whether one or both partners' reports of violence outcomes are used (Szinovacz & Egley, 1995).

Finally, many studies of partner violence etiology are atheoretical. When they do test theoretical models, they often focus on single relationships, rather than more complete processes or mechanisms that might better map to how violent events unfold in time and at multiple contextual levels. While qualitative research offers the possibility of more complex and grounded perspectives on etiology, it is often conducted in isolation from quantitative research; relationships or processes documented in qualitative work on partner violence are rarely modeled quantitatively.

These gaps motivate my third research aim, *to test the relationships between individual criminal justice system exposure and later partner violence perpetration that are suggested in qualitative research with returning prisoners and their partners*. This aim will be addressed by answering three questions, informed by prior research and by my work on the second research aim:

1. Which, if any, aspects of criminal justice system exposure over the life course (childhood exposure, lifetime exposure, or conditions of the most recent incarceration) predict

partner violence perpetration by returning prisoners?

2. Does criminal justice system exposure among returning prisoners predict later partner violence perpetration via behavioral health problems (post-traumatic stress or alcohol and other drug abuse) and couple conflict dynamics?
3. Does criminal justice system exposure among returning prisoners predict later partner violence perpetration via “institutionalized” interpersonal style (reactivity or non-cooperativeness) and couple conflict dynamics?

I answer these questions using couples-based, longitudinal survey data from returning prisoners and their partners, estimating four structural equation models to assess each of the proposed pathways from criminal justice system exposure to partner violence outcomes via the proposed individual- and couple-level factors while controlling for men’s violent criminal convictions. These analyses operationalize partner violence as incidents of physical violence perpetration by the male partner after returning from prison based on survey reports from both partners.

Fourth Research Aim

The current punitive era has reshaped conditions in American cities in ways that could exacerbate violence. Quantitative research on local-level determinants of partner violence, though it has not focused on returning prisoners and their families nor on hyper-incarceration per se, suggests that local social and material conditions can promote elevated risk of partner violence among residents of affected communities. Much research on partner violence in urban communities is limited by reliance on cross-sectional data, reports from only one couple member, an atheoretical orientation, and a focus on the role of a single process or contextual

level in predicting partner violence outcomes. Further, despite evidence for distinct dyadic types of partner violence with different etiologies, etiological research operationalizes partner violence outcomes in limited ways: as simple sums of individual behavioral measures or official reports to police. However, two of the most rigorous studies in this literature find that concentrated neighborhood disadvantage (Voith & Brondino, 2017) and adverse labor market conditions (Schneider et al., 2016)—which collateral consequences scholars suggest are exacerbated by hyper-incarceration—are associated with higher rates of partner violence.

These gaps motivate my fourth research aim, *to examine whether and how the local social and material conditions associated with mass incarceration predict partner violence perpetration among men returning from prison*. Building on the results of my work on the first research aim described above, this aim will be addressed by answering three questions:

1. Do local conditions (including median income, prison admissions rate, and violent death rate) promote partner violence perpetration after men return from prison?
2. Do local conditions predict partner violence perpetration among returning prisoners via post-traumatic stress, hopelessness, and couple conflict dynamics?
3. Do pathways from local conditions to partner violence perpetration differ based on how partner violence is operationalized (as a simple behavioral sum or using the dyadic behavioral types identified in the first research aim)?

To answer these questions, I use couples-based longitudinal survey responses from returning prisoners and their partners linked to representative data on local social and material conditions to test the proposed pathways in a set of three structural equation models. The first model

operationalizes partner violence as a count of physically violent incidents after the male partner's release from prison (based on both partner's reports), while the second and third models operationalize it using each of the two major dyadic behavioral types obtained for research aim one.

An Unlikely Data Source: The Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering

Because a great deal of partner violence is never reported to law enforcement (or, if it is, never results in criminal charges), survey-based research is widely recognized as a more complete and valid approach to understanding partner violence experiences than reliance on official records (Barrett & St Pierre, 2011; Office for Victims of Crime, 2018). Yet even survey-based research is hindered by the criminalized nature of partner violence perpetration and the stigma associated with victimization. Obtaining meaningful data on these experiences from those accustomed to intensive monitoring by government agencies with the power to imprison, to take away children, to terminate any safety-net support a family might have managed to secure (Bridges, 2017; Grattet et al., 2011; Roberts, 2014) requires particular care.

Origins and Scope of the Multi-site Family Study

The current study leverages an unlikely source of such data: a study of returning prisoners and their partners conducted under a government-funded marriage promotion initiative. In 2005, President George W. Bush signed into law a Deficit Reduction Act that required states to cut families from the country's largest public safety-net program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF or "welfare"); raise work requirements; and redouble their monitoring and enforcement against welfare beneficiaries. It also redirected \$100 million in TANF funding to be

used for the promotion of marriage (Congressional Research Service, 2007). Following the definitions set out in the federal Defense of Marriage Act of 1996 (Pub.L. 104-199), these programs focused explicitly on supporting heterosexual marriage.

The marriage promotion activities of this period included a special initiative to support marriage and “responsible fatherhood” among current and returning prisoners (Herman-Stahl et al., 2008; McKay et al., 2015). The federal Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, led by Wade Horn—a public administrator who advocated that promoting heterosexual marriage was key to ending child poverty—funded the Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering (“Multi-site Family Study”) to determine whether these healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood programs for returning prisoners succeeded in fostering marital stability, restraining criminalized activity, or improving child well-being.³ Generally speaking, they did not (Lindquist, Steffey et al., 2018).

The Multi-site Family Study, however, generated the most comprehensive data ever collected on returning prisoners and their families. The study recruited 1,991 incarcerated men and 1,482 of their female intimate or co-parenting partners from five states: New York, New Jersey, Indiana, Ohio, and Minnesota. Each couple member was interviewed separately at baseline and again 9, 18, and 34 months later—during which time most male partners were released from prison into the community. Surveys collected information on participants' family lives and involvement with the criminal justice system.

³ The design and implementation of these programs, which varied in their approaches and intended outcomes, is described in detail in McKay, Lindquist, Corwin, & Bir (2015). “The Implementation of Family Strengthening Programs for Families Affected by Incarceration.” Washington, DC: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Multi-site Family Study Longitudinal Survey Data Collection

Field interviewers conducted all Multi-site Family Study interviews in private rooms within state prisons and local jails or in private community settings, including homes. Interviews began with computer-assisted personal interviewing, in which interviewers asked questions out loud to respondents and entered their answers electronically in a computerized survey instrument. To maximize confidentiality and candor, interviewers then assisted respondents in switching into audio computer-assisted self-interviewing (ACASI) mode to answer more sensitive questions, including those about the couple relationship and about any criminalized behaviors. ACASI allowed respondents to read each survey question on the screen while it was read aloud through headphones and select their answers on the laptop in privacy. The survey module containing these sensitive items, which was embedded in the middle of the instrument, was locked as soon as it was completed by the respondent, such that interviewers could not access the respondent's answers. Interviewers explained these computerized privacy and confidentiality protections to participants and also informed them during the informed consent process that their answers were protected from subpoena or other use by law enforcement agencies under a federal Certificate of Confidentiality obtained from the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

The survey captured extensive data on couple and parenting relationships in the context of criminal justice system involvement, with a particular focus on the incarceration during which participants were enrolled and the reentry process that took place during their study follow-up period. The work conducted for this thesis drew particularly on survey data concerning partner violence, including physical violence, controlling behavior, use of physical violence when drinking or using drugs, and feelings of safety in the relationship; other couple relationship

dynamics, including conflict and communication habits; conditions of the most recent imprisonment, including duration of incarceration, expected release, primary offense or violation, days spent in administrative segregation during the incarceration, and transfers between prison facilities; history of involvement with the criminal justice system, including age at first arrest, number of juvenile detentions, number of lifetime arrests, and number of adult incarcerations; and behavioral health, including depression, post-traumatic stress, impulsivity, any use of alcohol or criminalized drugs, problem drinking, and problem drug use. (More detail about the measurement of each of these constructs is included in the empirical chapters.)



Photo 1: Sing Sing Prison, a 194-year-old maximum security facility in Ossining, New York, and one of the state prison facilities where the author and others conducted interviews for the Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering.

*Photo Credit:
United States
Library of
Congress*

Partner violence, an experience central to all of the work undertaken for this thesis, was captured by asking each member of the study couple independently about their experiences of partner violence perpetration and victimization with their study partner. This section of the survey, answered using ACASI, was a modified version of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2)

developed by early family violence researchers (Straus et al., 1996). The CTS2 is the recognized "gold standard" measure against which other measures are validated (e.g., Kawakami et al., 2014; Reichenheim et al., 2014; Signorelli et al., 2014) and is the tool most widely used in survey research on partner violence. It uses a set of discrete, behaviorally specific items that capture detailed information about violence and control within intimate relationships without requiring respondents to apply a label (e.g., "violence" or "abuse") to those experiences. Its binary structure (asking respondents first about perpetration and then about victimization experiences for each behavior) is designed to increase reporting of both victimization and perpetration. Items elicit information on the number of times a respondent used a given tactic against a focal partner and the number of times the respondent experienced that tactic from the focal partner during the reference period. For the Multi-site Family Study, the CTS2 was modified to include additional items designed to measure interpersonally controlling behavior and to omit the subscales on verbal abuse, injury and negotiation.

Multi-site Family Study Qualitative Interviews

With ethnographer Megan Comfort, I co-led the Multi-site Family Study team in collecting in-depth qualitative data from a subsample of 167 respondents, including 54 couples. This subsample was limited to couples who lived within 30 minutes of the outer boundaries of one of eight metropolitan areas in Indiana, Ohio, and New York (where most of the study sample lived) and in which the male partner was released from incarceration between May 2012 and December 2015. Members of each couple were interviewed separately and the other member of the couple was not permitted to be in the same building at the time of the interview.

During the 90-minute qualitative interviews, participants were asked about their family structure, living arrangements, and household economic stability, including whether or how these had changed because of the incarceration; the nature and quality of their relationships with their intimate partners, co-parents, and children; whether and how the incarceration had shaped their intimate and co-parenting relationships; whether and how being imprisoned had affected the male partner's mindset or ways of relating; their perspectives on gender roles and on healthy and unhealthy intimate relationships; their expectations and experiences of intimate and co-parenting relationships, employment, finances, and informal supports after the male partner's return from prison; and the influence of institutional policies and formal supports on these relationships.

Interviewers also referred to a respondent profile summarizing selected survey responses that had been provided by the interview participant over the course of the study, including reports of their partnership and parenting status and of partner violence. For study couples in which the male partner had not yet been released from prison at the time the qualitative study was fielded, each partner was invited to complete one in-depth qualitative interview shortly before his release and another shortly after his release. For couples in which the male partner had already been released from prison, each partner was invited to complete a single interview.

All interviews were audio recorded. A professional transcriptionist prepared deidentified verbatim transcripts and recordings were subsequently destroyed. Deidentified transcripts were then subject to an additional deidentification step in which a trained member of the research team reviewed each transcript to remove any remaining information that could be used to deductively identify a study participant (e.g., mention of a respondent's place of employment). Such

information was systematically redacted from every transcript to produce a qualitative file suitable for public use.

Additional Data Sources

To address the research aims for this thesis, Multi-site Family Study data on individuals' and couples' experiences were supplemented with nationally representative estimates of locality-level characteristics. Data on local conditions were obtained from the United States Census Bureau (median income), United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (violent deaths), and state departments of correction (prison admissions). Data were linked to Multi-site Family Study data by ZIP code, the finest geographic indicator that remained in the dataset after identifiers were destroyed.

Protection of Human Subjects

All Multi-site Family Study data collection protocols were reviewed and approved by the Office for Human Research Protections in the United States Department of Health and Human Services (US DHHS) and by an Institutional Review Board maintained by RTI International, the non-profit research institute that conducted the study. A federal Certificate of Confidentiality was obtained from US DHHS to protect data from subpoena or other law enforcement use. Data are publicly available through the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan. The analyses conducted for this thesis used deidentified data. As such, the study did not constitute research with human subjects as defined by the *United States Code of Federal Regulations* (45 CFR 46, 102). It was deemed eligible for self-certification of

ethics review according to the Research Ethics Policy and Procedures of the London School of Economics.

Overarching Limitations

Each of the four empirical inquiries that comprise this thesis is subject to a distinct set of limitations, which are discussed in the respective empirical chapters. In addition, the work as a whole is limited by the lack of an experimental design and the use of secondary data.

Lack of Experimental Design

This study examined the conditions under which partner violence arises in an era of mass incarceration and the qualitative relationships between state and structural violence exposure and partner violence perpetration. A major limitation of the work is its contextual, rather than causal, focus. It does not answer the compelling question of whether there might be a causal relationship between imprisonment or other forms of criminal justice system contact and partner violence. Without experimental data or another strong counterfactual strategy, the observed qualitative and quantitative links between individual and local-level criminal justice system exposures, various mediating factors, and partner violence perpetration cannot be interpreted as causal pathways.

The study does not address selection into incarceration and the potential for omitted variable bias. Patterns of partner violence observed among the study population could be influenced, for example, by the same individual characteristics and disadvantages that influence the likelihood of criminal justice system contact (Kirk & Wakefield, 2018). The inability to control for all factors that might influence both the likelihood of incarceration and the likelihood of partner violence perpetration means that the quantitative relationships observed in this study could also

be spurious. The analytic approaches selected for research objectives two, three and four address this concern in various ways, controlling for potential confounders (such as involvement in violent crime) and making rigorous use of qualitative data to inform quantitative analysis and interpret quantitative results. Nevertheless, this represents an undeniable limitation of the current study and an important direction for future research.

Limitations of Secondary Data

The current study relied exclusively on secondary data sources, primarily the Multi-site Family Study. Work on each of the four research objectives benefited from the use of high-quality data collected with methods that would be infeasible for a doctoral student working independently. It incorporated several thousand in-depth surveys conducted in person across a broad geographic range, in dozens of correctional institutions, and in a variety of community settings. The challenges of this work included resource-intensive ACASI programming and delivery of a highly private and secure surveying platform and obtaining roughly three years of longitudinal follow-up data with high response rates from a highly mobile and hard-to-locate study population. The advantages of these data for the current purpose included the ability to analyze multiple waves of longitudinal survey reports, the lower attrition bias associated with use of resource-intensive field tracing techniques and appropriately generous incentives for participants, the lower social desirability bias associated with collecting information on sensitive and stigmatized experiences in ACASI mode (Islam et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2008; Lindberg & Scott, 2018), and the greater statistical power afforded by a generous sample size.

The choice of Multi-site Family Study data as the focal data source for all analyses brings certain measurement limitations, however. The original study was designed to capture detailed

qualitative and quantitative information on parenting and partner relationships during incarceration and reentry; it was not a study of partner violence nor a study of the collateral consequences of mass incarceration. The survey instrument included detailed measures of criminal justice system experiences and of many dimensions of family life before, during and after incarceration. However, the partner violence measure was sub-ideal in two ways. First, as in all studies using Conflict Tactics Scale-based measures, no information was collected on the motives or meanings that surrounded acts of partner violence (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998; Hamby, 2014). Second, the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale was modified for the Multi-site Family Study such that information on psychological aggression dimension of partner violence (which includes behaviors such as name-calling) was not captured and additional items intended to measure controlling behavior were included. While there is a strong theoretical basis for focusing primarily on physical violence and controlling behavior (Johnson, 1995; Myhill & Hohl, 2019; Stark & Hester, 2019), these modifications meant that results from this work are not directly comparable to those obtained from other studies using the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale.

Available measures also limited the hypotheses that could be tested. Two of the research aims for this study involved testing hypotheses suggested by the qualitative narratives of returning prisoners and their partners. These narratives, I argue, offer a more grounded account of potential links between partner violence and mass incarceration than those proposed in the widespread application of social disorganization theory to partner violence. The Multi-site Family Study survey data generally supported rich operationalization of the pathways suggested by participants' qualitative interview data; however, they did not include appropriate measures of

community cohesion and informal social control (concepts that are essential to social disorganization theory). Thus, while it was possible to execute the core aims of testing alternative pathways to partner violence that were evident in the qualitative narratives of returning prisoners and their partners and to examine whether qualitative narratives included reference to social disorganization constructs, it was not feasible to quantitatively assess the competing pathways proposed by social disorganization theorists.

Finally, this work should be read with the caveat that Multi-site Family Study participants are not representative of returning prisoners nor their intimate partners and co-parents. The lack of nationally representative data on characteristics of returning prisoners and the partners and co-parents of returning prisoners further prevents me from being able to offer a comparison between the characteristics of the Multi-site Family Study sample and those broader populations. However, comparing the Multi-site Family Study sample with the general state prison population reveals some differences in family and demographic characteristics. Representative data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics show that 44 percent of men in state prisons report being married or in a committed, cohabiting relationship prior to arrest⁴ and 51 percent were parents of minor children (with a mean of two children) (Mumola, 2000). Due to study eligibility criteria, Multi-site Family Study participants were all in committed intimate or co-parenting relationships and most were parents of minor children. Some differences in race and ethnicity between the national population of state prisoners and the Multi-site Family Study sample are also evident. The Multi-site Family Study population includes a higher percentage of Black men and lower

⁴ Berzofsky, M. (2015). Unpublished analysis of data from the 2004 Bureau of Justice Statistics.

percentages of White and Hispanic/Latino men compared to the state prisoner population nationwide (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Lindquist, McKay et al., 2018).

Expected Contribution

Despite the limitations in scope and inference associated with my methods, this research strategy makes two key contributions to the field.

First, my approach to this work contributes to the development of more precise methods for violence research with individuals and families living under heavy state surveillance. It integrates qualitative and quantitative methods to document broad patterns through time and across a large study sample while also integrating the subjective meanings ascribed these experiences by research participants. To accomplish this, I apply latent variable methods alongside in-depth qualitative inquiry to capture complex experiences of partner violence and of criminal justice system exposure and assess the relationships among them. Using Bronfenbrenner's social ecological framework as a meta-theoretical model, I then synthesize the results of each inquiry with an eye to situating acts of partner violence among returning prisoners in a precisely described set of contextual influences.

Second, in centering a highly impactful form of violence that has been somewhat neglected in critical criminological and sociological scholarship, this research strategy contributes fresh insight to the study of violence and punishment in an era of mass incarceration. It helps to outline the relationship between the most common (and private) acts of violence and the manifestations of penal authority across carceral, community, and domestic spheres. In so doing, this work furthers the broader project of documenting the collateral consequences of a historic

period of punishment in America—revealing, in particular, its gendered harms in poor communities of color.

Chapter 4: Types of Partner Violence in Couples Affected by Incarceration: Applying Johnson's Typology to Understand the Couple-Level Context for Violence⁵

Manuscript coauthors: Stephen Tueller (15%), Justin Landwehr (5%), Michael P. Johnson (5%)⁶

Abstract

In prior research, samples of incarcerated and reentering men and their partners report partner violence at rates as much as ten times those found in the general population. The relationship dynamics underlying these experiences remain poorly understood. Addressing this gap and expanding prior applications of Johnson's typology in other populations—which typically rely on survey data alone and include reports from just one member of a couple—we applied latent class analysis with dyadic survey data from 1,112 couples to identify types of partner violence in couples affected by incarceration. We assessed congruence between quantitative types and couples' qualitative accounts and compared the two major types using two-sample t-tests.

In some couples, one partner used various tactics to systematically dominate and control the other, as in Johnson's coercive controlling violence. In others, physical violence arose in the context of jealousy but no other controlling behavior. This type resembled Johnson's situational couple violence. Qualitative data suggested that jealousy, while typically classified as a controlling behavior, often represented not a control tactic but a situational response to periods of prolonged separation, relationship instability, status insecurity, and partnership concurrence among couples separated by incarceration. Victims of coercive controlling violence experienced

⁵ This manuscript was accepted for publication on 17 July 2020 and will appear in *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*.

⁶ I generated the idea for this manuscript, chose the methods, conducted the final latent class analysis, conducted the qualitative analysis, and wrote all sections of the paper. Stephen Tueller ran the initial latent class analysis, which I then replicated. He and I agreed on a final model approach; I re-ran all models using this approach. Justin Landwehr did the data linking and descriptive statistics. Michael Johnson provided overall analytic guidance and interpretive feedback and he and Stephen Tueller each provided input on the draft manuscript.

more post-traumatic stress and felt less safe in their relationships than victims of jealous-only situational violence. Perpetrators of coercive controlling violence were more likely to use severe physical violence against their partners than perpetrators of jealous-only situational violence.

Partner violence prevention and response strategies tailored to these types could help couples cope safely with the extreme relationship stressors of incarceration and reentry. They suggest a need to move from an exclusive focus on individual accountability and treatment toward a model that also incorporates institutional accountability and change.

Introduction

One in five American women is partnered with someone with a history of incarceration (Enns et al., 2019). The racial, spatial and socioeconomically disproportionate use of incarceration has made this experience even more common among women in targeted communities: Thirty percent of Black women have a formerly incarcerated partner and 44 percent of unmarried new mothers in major American cities report that their baby's father is formerly incarcerated (Enns et al., 2019; Jones, 2013). In such communities, incarceration has come to represent a rite of passage for many young couples (Comfort, 2012).

Studies with former prisoners and their partners find very high rates of partner violence (e.g., McKay, Landwehr et al., 2018; Wildeman, 2012)—as much as tenfold those observed in the general population (Breiding et al., 2014). Qualitative research documents unique relationship dynamics among such couples (Comfort, 2008; Comfort et al., 2018), suggests serious partner violence risks and challenges (Hairston & Oliver, 2011; Oliver & Hairston, 2008), and highlights the need for supportive responses (McKay et al., 2020). Partner violence behavioral types

represent a promising tool for guiding the development and tailoring of partner violence interventions (e.g., Jaramillo-Sierra & Ripoll-Nunez, 2018; Stith et al., 2004). Yet no study has examined partner violence types among couples affected by incarceration.

Background

Nature of Partner Violence in Couples Affected by Incarceration

Researchers and service providers recognize partner violence as a complex behavioral universe encompassing physically and sexually violent acts as well as controlling behavior and verbal abuse (Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2018). Researchers most often capture it with self-report survey measures that ask about individual behaviors and combine these reports into composite measures; for example, “any physical or sexual violence victimization.” However, such approaches fail to capture the contexts for these behaviors (Hamby, 2017), which could shape their impacts and help to differentiate their etiologies.

Johnson's typology offers a more precise empirical understanding of the dyadic (couple-level) behavioral context for partner violence for informing prevention and response (Derrington et al., 2010; Schneider & Brimhall, 2014). Arguably the most influential (Ali et al., 2016) and also contested (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2010; Straus & Gozjolko, 2016) typology of partner violence, it uses information on each partner's physically violent or controlling behavior to distinguish dyadic types of violence (Johnson, 1995, 2008, 2016). Johnson and others applying his method find that individuals who seek formal services or legal help for partner violence often report being both physically victimized and highly controlled by their partners, whereas most acts of physical partner violence in the general population are unaccompanied by tactics of

control (e.g., Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003; Johnson, 1995; Love et al., 2018). According to Johnson's theory, the high-control type observed in court, clinic and shelter samples represents "coercive controlling violence" in which one partner uses a variety of tactics to dominate the other, while the low-control type represents "situational couple violence" arising when conflicts escalate without a one-sided controlling dynamic (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). These types tend to differ from one another in the severity of physical violence and its impact on the victim.

The presence or nature of dyadic types has not been tested among couples affected by incarceration, but research in other populations finds that perpetrators of coercive controlling violence do use more frequent and severe physical violence (Anderson, 2008; Friend et al., 2011; Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003; Hardesty et al., 2015; Johnson et al., 2014; Johnson & Leone, 2005; Leone et al., 2004). Their victims experience more depression and post-traumatic stress (Adkins & Kamp Dush, 2010; Anderson, 2008; Johnson & Leone, 2005; Leone et al., 2004) and more fear (Hardesty et al., 2015) than victims of situational couple violence. Further, although Johnson and others have found that situational couple violence arises from conflict escalation (and coercive controlling violence does not), some research suggests that poor conflict and communication skills are a risk factor for both types of violence (Love et al., 2018).

Methodological Approaches to Understanding Partner Violence Types

Despite advances in research on partner violence types, several shortcomings persist. Some typology studies have begun to apply cluster modeling to identify an empirically-based cutoff that distinguishes high-control and low-control groups (e.g., Hardesty et al., 2015; Mennicke, 2019) rather than a standardized cutoff such as percentile or number of standard deviations from the mean (e.g., Johnson, 2006; Straus & Gozjolko, 2016). To date, however, many such studies

have used k-means or hierarchical clustering approaches, which assume continuous data with spherical bivariate distributions. This assumption is likely to be violated by the typical variable structure and response distributions of survey-reported controlling behavior, a problem that could be addressed with the use of latent class analysis (LCA). LCA has proven useful for identifying distinct types of partner violence and their gendered distribution in other focal populations, including a diverse sample of divorcing couples and a Canadian general-population survey (Ansara & Hindin, 2010; Beck et al., 2013). However, LCA is still rare in research on Johnson's typology and has never been applied to examine partner violence behavior among couples affected by incarceration.

Second, researchers and theorists have long acknowledged the limitations of quantitative research methods for describing and classifying partner violence experiences—particularly given the role of victim-perpetrator power imbalances in shaping whether and how certain acts are experienced as abuse (Stark, 2007; Stark & Hester, 2019) and the complexity of capturing such imbalances in behaviorally based surveys (Hamby, 2014, 2017; Stark, 2010). Subjective contexts (for example, gendered social conditioning) are known to shape how the individual acts captured in surveys coalesce into the distinct dyadic behavioral patterns distinguished in Johnson's typology, such as one partner establishing domination and control over the other (Nybergh et al., 2016). Nevertheless, most typology-based research uses behaviorally based survey reports alone (see Rosen et al., 2005 for an exception).

In addition, partners' accounts of abuse in their relationships with one another differ more often than they agree (Berger et al., 2012; Cunradi et al., 2009; Nakamura & Hashimoto, 2018; Schafer et al., 2002). Typology research tends to rely on a single partner's accounts of both partners'

behavior, yet representative research with urban adults finds that IPV experiences reported by either partner (even when the other partner's report does not concur) are associated with significant victim impacts (Nakamura & Hashimoto, 2018). Incorporating accounts from both couple members could help to capture a more complete picture of the dyadic behavioral dynamics on which Johnson's typology is based.

Remaining Gaps and Research Questions

Applying a novel dyadic, mixed-method approach, this study fills gaps in our understanding of partner violence among couples affected by incarceration, and contributes to the development of more rigorous methods in partner violence research generally, by addressing the following research questions:

1. What dyadic behavioral types are evident in the use of physical violence and controlling behavior in a large, multi-state sample of couples affected by incarceration?
2. Do partner violence types obtained from survey data correspond to meaningful narrative distinctions in participants' qualitative accounts of their relationships?
3. How do individuals assigned to the major dyadic types differ from one another?

Drawing on quantitative and qualitative data from couples-based interviews conducted for the Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering, this study reveals and refines types of partner violence in a five-state sample of 1,112 couples affected by incarceration.

Methods

Data Source

The Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering ("Multi-site Family Study")ⁱ recruited 1,991 incarcerated men and 1,482 of their intimate or co-parenting partners from five states: New York, New Jersey, Indiana, Ohio, and Minnesota. To be eligible, men had to be incarcerated in a state prison in one of five study sites and identify as being in a committed intimate or co-parenting relationship with a different-sex partner.ⁱⁱ Male partners were consented and interviewed first, and asked to refer researchers to the individual they identified as a committed intimate or co-parenting partner. Interviewers then contacted each male enrollee's female partner to invite her to participate in the study. Each couple member was interviewed separately at baseline and again 9, 18, and 34 months later. (Thirty-four-month interviews were conducted only in the two largest study sites, Indiana and Ohio.)

Surveys lasted approximately 90 minutes and collected information on participants' family lives and involvement with the criminal justice system. Highly trained field interviewers conducted all interviews in private rooms within state prisons and local jails or in private community settings, including homes. Respondents completed sensitive questions, including those about partner violence, via audio computer-assisted self-interviewing. Qualitative interviews were conducted with a subsample of couples who lived within 30 minutes of the outer boundaries of one of eight metropolitan areas in Indiana, Ohio, and New York (where most of the study sample lived) and in which the male partner was released from incarceration between May 2012 and December 2015. This resulted in 170 in-depth, 90-minute qualitative interviews that drew on selected survey responses provided by the participant, including partnership and parenting status and reports of partner violence. All interviews were recorded; deidentified verbatim transcripts were prepared from each by a professional transcriptionist and a member of the study research team,

with recordings subsequently destroyed. All protocols were reviewed and approved by the United States Office for Human Research Protections, departments of correction in the five states, and by RTI International's Institutional Review Board. Interview data were protected from subpoena or other law enforcement use under a federal Certificate of Confidentiality obtained from the United States Department of Health and Human Services. RTI International's Institutional Review Board determined that the current study, which used deidentified versions of the survey and qualitative interview data, did not constitute research with human subjects as defined by the United States *Code of Federal Regulations* (45 CFR 46, 102).

Sample Characteristics

This secondary analysis focuses on 1,112 Multi-site Family Study couples who answered survey questions about partner violence at baseline. As shown in Table 1, this sample was diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, with relatively low levels of formal education. Men had long histories of criminal justice system involvement (since a mean age of 17). Men were all incarcerated in state prison at study baseline for a variety of instant offenses, including violent crimes (such as robbery, homicide, or assault) and other crimes (such as drug, property, or public order offenses) (McKay, Lindquist et al., 2018). Both men and women were typically in their early thirties at baseline and had been together for a mean of 8 years. Partner violence was widespread, with over 40 percent of the sample reporting physical violence victimization by their study partner. The subsample of cases included in the qualitative case review resembled the full sample in terms of age, race and ethnicity, and educational attainment. However, they had been together for somewhat longer at the time of study enrollment (9.5 years).

Measures

Survey measures. The Multi-site Family Study survey captured physical violence and controlling behavior using a modified version of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus et al., 1996) that omitted subscales on verbal abuse, injury and negotiation and added items on threat, isolation, and financial abuse to better capture controlling behavior. Each couple member was asked independently about their victimization and perpetration in the focal relationship during a 6-month reference period. *Physical violence* items assessed how many times in the reference period one partner shoved, hit, slapped, grabbed, threw something at, strangled, slammed, kicked, burned, or beat the other; used a knife or gun on the other; or forced the other to have sex by hitting, holding down, or using a weapon. Dichotomous composite variables representing any physical violence victimization or perpetration and severe physical violence perpetration or victimization were created based on both partners' reports of these behaviors (with severe violence defined as strangling, slamming, kicking, burning, beating, weapon use, or forcible sexual assault). *Controlling behavior* items assessed how many times one partner threatened to hurt the other or their children, family members, or loved ones; tried to keep the other from seeing or talking to friends or family; tried to keep money from the other, took money from the other, or made the other ask for money; and in two items asking how often one partner was jealous or possessive and how often one partner made the other feel not good enough. This final dimension of control has not been measured consistently in other research on Johnson's types, but recent work on measurement of coercive control has highlighted its importance (Myhill, 2015; Stark & Hester, 2019). Variables representing reports of each of these individual behaviors from each couple member were included in our models, while a mean of the controlling behavior items was used to create a composite control score for classification using the cutoff point approach.

Qualitative interview. Qualitative interviews were conducted using a semi-structured guide that elicited respondent-driven narratives on general topics including the nature and quality of their intimate and co-parenting relationship with one another during the male partner’s incarceration and reentry, whether and how incarceration had shaped this relationship, what had informed their decisions to continue or end the relationship, and their general perspectives on healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Analytic Approach

To answer the first research question, we used reports from both couple members to identify men who had used any form of physical violence against their partners prior to the current incarceration (which was, on average, men’s 6th). Among these men, we conducted a latent class analysis (LCA; McCutcheon, 1987) using MPlus (Muthén & Muthén, 2017) to identify clusters of controlling behavior as reported by the respondent and his partner.ⁱⁱⁱ We then used the Adjusted Rand Index function (ARI; Hubert & Arabie, 1985) of the mclust library (Scrucca et al., 2016) in R (R Core Team, 2018) to identify the cutoff point in the controlling behavior mean score that best distinguished the two identified clusters and applied this cutoff to classify all physically violent respondents as “high control” or “low control.”

Next, building on a method used in recent empirical applications of Johnson’s typology (e.g., Hardesty et al., 2015; Mennicke, 2019; Nielsen, Hardesty, & Raffaelli, 2016; Zweig, Yahner, Dank, & Lachman, 2014), we compared physical violence indicators (any/no) and controlling behavior indicators (high/low) within couples to assign a dyadic type to each case based on both partners’ behavior using Johnson’s method (Table 2). Individuals who did not use physical violence were classified as “non-violent.” Consistent with Nakamura and Hashimoto’s (2018)

findings, for each of these operations, we considered a study participant to have used physical violence or controlling behavior if the participant self-reported the tactic or if their partner reported that the participant had used that tactic (or both). We used descriptive statistics to assess the frequency of the identified partner violence types in the study population. Parallel sets of indicator variables were created using the same cutoffs and logic to indicate partner violence type for each subsequent study follow-up wave.

To address the second research question, we examined transcripts from a subsample of cases for which a quantitative type had been assigned and whose qualitative transcripts contained a sufficient description of power and control dynamics to support qualitative type assignment. This included 10 transcripts from cases who were classified quantitatively as experiencing mutual violent control, 13 transcripts from cases who were identified as victims or perpetrators of coercive controlling violence, and 19 who were identified as victims or perpetrators of (a variant of) situational couple violence. We reviewed each in full, paired by couple, to identify participants' accounts of power and control dynamics and the context for violence. We also examined qualitative markers of victimization and perpetration of each type of violence as described by advocates and in prior qualitative research (Hodes & Mennicke, 2019; Rosen et al., 2005) as well as aspects of victims' interpretations or responses that were not captured in the survey data (e.g., fear or a sense of restriction). Partner violence type based on the qualitative account, along with other observations related to patterns of violence or control and representative quotations, were documented in an analytic memo for each case. Congruence between the quantitatively and qualitatively assigned types was tabulated and the approach to quantitative type assignment was assessed on that basis.

To address the third research question, we ran two-sample t-tests comparing victims and perpetrators of the two highest-frequency types of violence. We compared perpetrators' use of severe physical or sexual violence, substance use, perceived service needs (asked of men only), and conflict skills; victims' post-traumatic stress and depression symptoms, feelings of safety in the relationship, and extended-family social support; and victims' and perpetrators' reports of fidelity issues in the relationship. We applied a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons.

Results

Types of Partner Violence Among Couples Affected by Incarceration

Latent class analysis of men's controlling behaviors (as reported by men and their partners) produced 2-, 3-, 4- and 5-cluster solutions with the model characteristics shown in Table 3. To choose a preferred model, we compared (1) the model fit, as quantified in the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC; Nylund, Asparouhov, & Muthén, 2007; Schwarz, 1978); (2) the clarity with which the model delineated each class, as represented by the model entropy and the average latent class probability (indicating clearer class delineation as each value approaches 1 (Celeux & Soromenho, 1996)); and (3) the substantive interpretability of the model, based on examination of variable thresholds for the observed dependent variables (men's and women's reports of men's use of control tactics) within the identified latent classes. As shown in Table 3, the three empirical criteria that we assessed indicated that a two-class solution was preferred in terms of model fit (lowest BIC value) and clear class delineation (entropy and latent class probability values approaching 1). Although the entropy for the 5-class model was closer to 1 than for the 2-class model, the associated BIC and average latent class probabilities were less desirable.

With regard to substantive interpretation, an examination of variable thresholds within the two-class solution indicated that men assigned to Class 1 (who comprised 32.3 percent [N=199] of the subsample of men who had used physical violence against their partners as of the baseline survey) resembled Johnson's coercive controlling type: they used a variety of control tactics, including threats to hurt the partner; threats to hurt the partner's children, pets, or other loved ones; social isolation; and financial abuse—as well as being jealous or possessive. Men assigned to Class 2 (who comprised 67.7 percent [N=417] of the physically violent subsample) resembled Johnson's situational couple violence type in that they used physical violence without high levels of controlling behavior. However, it was not simply the level of controlling behavior but its form that distinguished Class 2 from Class 1 cases. They tended to exhibit jealousy or possessiveness (though response patterns suggested that they did so less often than their Class 1 counterparts) but they did not tend to use threats or other tactics of control with their partners. The controlling behavior mean score (a composite of all controlling behavior items; $M=.41$, $SD=.50$, $min=0$, $max=4.0$) among men assigned to Class 1 (coercive controlling violence) was $.67$, compared to $.36$ among men assigned to Class 2 (jealous-only situational violence).

When the male 2-class model was fitted to data on controlling behavior perpetration among physically violent women, it assigned 17.4 percent of such women (N=125) to the coercive controlling Class 1 (compared with 32.3% of men, N=199) and 82.6 percent (N=593) to the jealous-only Class 2 (compared with 67.7% of men, N=417).

ARI for the controlling behavior mean score identified an optimal cutoff of 1.0. This cutoff was applied to the composite controlling behavior score (incorporating each partner's reports of their own and their partner's behavior; see Supplement 1 for distribution) to create a high/low control

indicator. This indicator and the physical violence perpetration indicator were used to assign all cases to Johnson's types (mutual violent control, coercive controlling violence, violent resistance, situational couple violence, and non-violence) based on their own and their partner's behavior, as shown in Table 2.

Qualitative Salience of Quantitative Types

To assess the qualitative salience of these initial quantitative types, we stratified the qualitative sample using the assigned type indicators. Using descriptions provided by expert domestic violence advocates and in prior qualitative research (Hodes & Mennicke, 2019; Rosen et al., 2005), we reviewed these qualitative narratives (paired by couple) to identify qualitative markers for coercive controlling and situational couple violence perpetration and victimization. Victims of coercive controlling violence expressed fear of their partners and a feeling of being trapped in their relationships.

I was scared, I feared for my life and I just wanted better for my kids. So, I had to find a way out. Even though I tried plenty of times before, it didn't work out because he just knew. Like he wouldn't allow me to leave. Like I was stuck.

Perpetrators of coercive controlling violence often mentioned plans to use the legal system against their partners, particularly to take away their children. They devoted significant interview time to attempts to discredit the partner (for example, as drug addicted, promiscuous, neglectful of children) to the interviewer. Coercive controlling violence perpetrators were also largely unable to take the perspective of the study partner or to empathize, even when directly asked to do so during the qualitative interview (for example, in responding to probes such as, "What do you think it was like for study partner when you were incarcerated?"). Finally, narratives of coercive controlling violence perpetrators directed blame toward their study partners and lacked

statements reflecting on or assuming responsibility for their own actions.

I just snapped and beat her up and I don't remember it. And I apologized to her and she was not being herself like she used to be. She was going around, sleeping with whoever and all that. And I see through it...I respect her, but essentially...somebody needs to knock some sense into her.

Qualitative narratives did not always align well with assigned quantitative types, however. For example, all 10 couples who were assigned the type "mutual violent control" based on survey data pointed instead to either coercive controlling violence or situational couple violence in qualitative accounts. Among these potentially misclassified couples, expressions of jealousy that were classified as highly controlling in the quantitative analysis were not interpreted as such by participants. Jealousy, a dimension of controlling behavior captured in the survey and included in the latent class analysis, was very salient in most of the qualitative narratives. However, jealousy was often interpreted as a situational response rather than a character trait or a control tactic comparable to the other controlling behaviors measured in the survey and discussed in the qualitative interviews. Interviewees emphasized a variety of situations specific to the study population that appeared to contribute to jealousy among individuals who were not otherwise attempting to dominate their partners. All couples had undergone periods of prolonged physical separation during the incarceration, and they were often uncertain or insecure regarding their relationship status and agreements even in highly committed, long-term primary romantic relationships. Concurrent sexual relationships by one or both partners were common and one or both partners often had romantically ambiguous and financially competing co-parenting relationships with the other parents of their children.

One couple, classified as experiencing mutual violent control using quantitative data, had separated by the time of their qualitative interview. They described an amicable co-parenting

relationship and strong mutual respect after ending a romantic relationship that both described as ridden with jealous conflict over the multiple intimate and co-parenting relationships that the male partner maintained during and after prison. He characterized his study partner, whom the quantitative approach had classified as violent and controlling, as being an ideal partner who was unable to tolerate the interpersonal drama that he brought home from prison:

I had three or four more chicks, I'm juggling four, five people while I was in [prison]. It was killing time...lying to people or the games that I was playing with them people...It ain't nothing bad [about partner]. She was all good...I honestly don't have nothing bad to say about her and the relationship. She's cool. I mean, she'll be a good wife. She's good. It's just me.

Among couples like these for whom the quantitative classification did not align with couple members' narrative accounts, it seemed that one or both partners' emotional responses to these relationship conditions were identified as "high control" based on the mean control score cutoff, but were understood as a non-controlling situational response by those involved.^{iv}

Refined Quantitative Types of Partner Violence

Qualitative results suggested that the substantive distinction between the dominating and controlling Class 1 and jealous-only Class 2 behavior patterns identified by the LCA might have been eroded when, following the convention established in prior research, we applied a mean score cutoff to create the controlling behavior indicator. To address this, we re-ran the quantitative type assignments, modifying them to retain more of the substantive information from the LCA. In this approach, we used predicted class membership as the control indicator, rather than the "high/low" control indicator previously generated by applying the ARI-derived cutoff to men's and women's mean control scores. We fitted the male cluster model to the female data, fixing variable thresholds for each item within the two classes at the values obtained

for men. Class proportions in the female data were allowed to vary from those obtained in the male data. We then reapplied the type classification logic (see Table 2) using the same physical violence indicator as before but with predicted control class membership (“Class 1”/“Class 2”) replacing the previous (“high/low”) control indicator. Finally, we re-reviewed the original sample of 44 qualitative interview transcripts to assess whether the revised type classifications better fit the qualitative accounts. The distribution of the resulting types in the total male and female samples and by couple is shown in Table 4. Overall, 32.4 percent of men and 42.4 percent of women engaged in jealous-only situational violence, 12.9 percent of men and 6.3 percent of women engaged in coercive controlling violence, 5.1 percent of men and 10.9 percent of women engaged in violent resistance (to a coercive controlling partner), and 4.9 percent of men and women engaged in mutual violent control. The remainder (45% of men and 35% of women) did not use physical violence against their partners.

The revised control classification approach reduced by roughly 28 percent (from N=76 to N=55) the number of couples assigned to the “mutual violent control” type—a category that the qualitative analysis had suggested was previously misapplied. Among those included in the qualitative case review, the revised quantitative assignments resulted in newly congruent quantitative-qualitative classification for four cases, maintained congruent classification for 24 cases, and produced unimproved qualitative-quantitative congruence for 16 cases.

Distinctions Among Quantitative Types

Results of t-tests comparing perpetrators and victims of the two largest violence types, coercive controlling violence and jealous-only situational violence, appear in Table 5. Applying a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons, we obtained critical alphas of .003 and .004,

respectively, for comparisons of male and female perpetrator characteristics and of .007 for comparisons of male and female victim characteristics. As shown in the table, perpetrators of coercive controlling violence were more likely to use severe physical or sexual violence against their partners than perpetrators of jealous-only situational violence ($p<.0001$ for both men and women based on both partners' reports). Among victims, both men and women who experienced coercive controlling violence reported more post-traumatic stress than those who experienced jealous-only situational violence ($p=.0011$ for female victims and $p=.0030$ for male victims). Both male and female victims of coercive controlling violence reported feeling less safe than did victims of jealous-only situational violence ($p<.0001$ for female victims and $p=.0067$ for male victims). Victims of coercive controlling violence were more likely to report that they were tempted to have sexual or romantic contact with another person during their relationship with the perpetrator ($p<.0001$ for female victims and $p=.0077$ for male victims). Female victims of coercive controlling violence were also more likely to report that they actually had sexual or romantic contact with another person during the relationship ($p=.0030$).

Discussion

Nature of partner violence in couples affected by incarceration

Focus group research with formerly incarcerated men and their partners has suggested that violence in couples affected by incarceration arises in the escalation of post-release conflicts, or as part of a partner's attempt to assert control over the household upon his return from prison (Oliver & Hairston, 2008). Qualitative research with Multi-site Family Study couples indicated that prisonization (Clemmer, 1958) and secondary prisonization (Comfort, 2008; Comfort, 2003)—particularly the effects of institutional violence and control on couples' communication,

economic stability, and understandings and responses to interpersonal violence and control—might shape the incidence and forms of partner violence.^v The current study expands prior understandings of partner violence among couples affected by incarceration by examining dyadic behavioral patterns of physical violence and controlling behavior. This sample included both current and former intimate partners, which Johnson has indicated is critical for accurately identifying violence types (Johnson et al., 2014).

LCA identified two clusters of controlling behavior distinguished by the frequency and form of controlling behaviors, echoing findings from a recent study that used similar methods in a non-incarcerated convenience sample (Mennicke, 2019). In our analysis, physically violent individuals who used a variety of control tactics to dominate their partners were assigned to Class 1, which resembled the coercive controlling violence found in various prior studies, predominantly among clinic and shelter samples and those adjudicated for criminal domestic violence (Johnson, 2010, 2016; Mennicke, 2019).^{vi}

More often, however, physical violence among the couples in our study occurred in the context of one or both partners' struggles with jealousy, without generalized attempts at control. Qualitative and quantitative analyses suggested that issues with jealousy were widespread among study couples and reflected a plausible situational response to periods of prolonged physical separation, complex family relationships involving multiple co-parents, sexual partnership concurrency, and relationship status insecurity or ambiguity. Both the situational context in which jealousy arose, and the level and form of control tactics observed in this sub-group (who rarely used threats and who reported lower overall levels of controlling behavior) suggested a strong resemblance to the situationally violent type common in general-population samples

(Johnson, 2010, 2016; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2012; Zweig et al., 2014). Consistent with prior research comparing jealousy in situationally violent and coercive controlling perpetrators (Love et al., 2018), cases of jealous-only situational violence in our sample demonstrated jealous behavior *less* frequently than did coercive controlling cases and were distinguished from the latter by the absence of other control tactics rather than by the presence of jealousy.

T-tests comparing perpetrator and victim experiences with jealous-only situational violence and coercive controlling violence confirmed the observed parallels between these two groups and the types obtained in prior research using Johnson's typology. Relative to jealous-only individuals, the coercive controlling individuals in our sample were more likely to use severe physical violence against their partners, and their victims experienced more post-traumatic stress and felt less safe in their relationships than victims of jealous-only partners. These distinctions echo those found in prior studies comparing victims and perpetrators of situational violence and coercive controlling violence (Adkins & Kamp Dush, 2010; Anderson, 2008; Hardesty et al., 2015; Johnson et al., 2014; Johnson & Leone, 2005; Leone et al., 2004; Piispa, 2002). The distribution of these types in our sample of couples affected by incarceration generally resembled that found in prior typology research with community or school-based surveys, rather than samples of clinic or shelter clients or individuals adjudicated for domestic violence, but with a somewhat higher proportion of cases classified as mutual violent control (Johnson, 2006; Zweig et al., 2014).

These results confirm the relevance of Johnson's typology for partner violence research with a uniquely vulnerable study population. They also lend empirical support to a growing chorus of practitioners who reject the "one-size-fits-all approach" to partner violence intervention (Messing, Ward-Lasher et al., 2015, p. 310) consisting of formal adjudication and Duluth Model

treatment for perpetrators alongside shelter-based services for victims (Pence & Paymar, 1993; Price & Rosenbaum, 2009). Research with other legally marginalized groups, particularly immigrant women (see Bhattacharjee, 2006; Messing, Becerra et al., 2015), suggests that such a model may be of limited utility for those who are conditioned to expect punishment rather than protection from formal institutions. Responses to partner violence that are sensitive to the distinction between situational couple violence (including the jealous-only situational violence evident in this sample) and coercive controlling violence might be useful for reducing recidivism and revictimization (Hodes & Mennicke, 2019; Stare & Fernando, 2014). Therapeutic and supportive responses to situational couple violence, such as joint educational and cognitive behavioral interventions (Jaramillo-Sierra & Ripoll-Nunez, 2018; Schneider & Brimhall, 2014) may be more appropriate than punitive and criminalizing responses.

In addition to reinforcing the utility of typology-based strategies for addressing partner violence, this study also contributes to burgeoning research suggesting that individually focused services for partner violence victims and perpetrators must be accompanied by efforts to address community- and institutional-level determinants of violence (Holliday et al., 2019; Iyengar & Sabik, 2009; Raiford et al., 2013; Schneider et al., 2016; Voith & Brondino, 2017). Together, the qualitative and quantitative findings presented here suggest that—contrary to prior assumptions regarding the predominance of coercive controlling violence among those involved with the criminal justice system—partner violence in Multi-site Family Study couples did not usually represent a concerted effort by one partner to dominate and abuse the other. Rather, most violence arose amid a complex of incarceration-related relationship circumstances that were widely experienced by study participants as promoting jealousy and outstripping their ability to

relate in healthy, nonviolent ways. This suggests that future research on controlling behavior should continue to test and refine analytic strategies capable of distinguishing between what Johnson has characterized as a universal desire for some degree of interpersonal control in intimate relationships (Johnson, 2008) (such as clear mutual expectations and consistent agreement-keeping) and the dominating forms of controlling behavior that are the hallmark of the most damaging and dangerous forms of abuse (Leone et al., 2007; Myhill & Hohl, 2019; Stark, 2007; Stark & Hester, 2019). It also suggests a need to expand from an individual accountability-focused approach to partner violence to a model that incorporates institutional accountability for mass incarceration-era practices. This could include reversing the harsh sentencing policies identified by Tonry (2014) and making a robust array of behavioral health treatment and partner violence prevention and response services freely available in the predominantly poor, Black communities subjected to hyper-incarceration.

Refining research methods for understanding partner violence

The current study advances a quantitative modeling strategy that is more suitable for working with the typical structure and distribution of survey reports of controlling behavior than previous approaches. The LCA approach applied here accommodates multinomial controlling behavior variables with zero-inflated distributions or floor effects. This approach is useful not only for partner violence research generally (as previously noted; e.g., Ansara & Hindin, 2010) but particularly useful for feminist and typology-informed research in which distinguishing interpersonally controlling behavior patterns is critical. This study is also unique in drawing on survey reports from both couple members to capture a more accurate picture of the dyadic behavioral dynamics on which Johnson's typology is based.

Finally, where most previous efforts at partner violence type classification have relied on single-method (usually quantitative) approaches, the linked Multi-site Family Study data structure made it possible for the current analysis to compare the types obtained from a quantitative classification procedure against individuals' qualitative accounts of their relationship dynamics. Like at least one prior study that used qualitative data to examine types of controlling behavior (Crossman & Hardesty, 2018), this study was able to identify distinctions in controlling behavior patterns that were subjectively meaningful among those who experienced them and to map them to broader social and structural constraints; in this case, the relationship challenges associated with criminal justice system involvement in an era of mass incarceration. This comparative case review prompted a further refinement of the quantitative classification method: that is, the use of predicted class membership, rather than a "high/low" control score cutoff, to distinguish controlling behavior for purposes of type classification. (The "high/low" approach, typical in typology research, could overemphasize the frequency of controlling behavior while eliding differences in its form, such as the distinction between expressing jealousy and threatening to harm a partner or partner's loved ones.) This new approach permitted retention of the essentially qualitative distinction between the two patterns of controlling behavior uncovered with LCA.

Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As in most prior research on partner violence typologies, this study was limited by use of a non-representative sample. Findings may not generalize to broader populations of couples affected by incarceration, and comparisons of the distribution of partner violence types relative to those observed in other non-representative studies must be interpreted with particular caution.

In addition, this analysis was subject to several measurement limitations associated with the

secondary data source. The Multi-site Family Study survey items on partner violence focused on a 6-month reference period, much shorter than the 12-month reference period used in the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (Breiding, 2015) and other partner violence research. The controlling behavior measure constructed from these data omitted monitoring, a common dimension of coercion and control (Hardesty et al., 2015; Myhill & Hohl, 2019), which was not measured in the original survey. These two limitations amplify the already considerable possibility in partner violence research that individuals who were violent or controlling were not identified as such in survey data. Further, our research team's assessment of likely partner violence type based on qualitative interview transcripts was subject to error: assessments of the same case will differ even among skilled advocates (Hodes & Mennicke, 2019), let alone researchers. In addition, as only a subset of qualitative interviews addressed dynamics of control and violence in the relationship in enough detail to permit type assessment, those who opted not to discuss these experiences during the interview are not represented here. Prior research suggests that experiences of victims and perpetrators in current coercive controlling relationships are especially likely to be left out, due to the higher risks associated with disclosing such experiences (Johnson et al., 2014).

Finally, consistent with prior empirical applications of Johnson's typology, this study began by using cluster analysis to identify the number of distinct groups evident in respondents' reports of controlling behavior in their relationships. However, future work (including reanalysis of prior data) would ideally first test the assumption that distinct types exist (Lubke & Tueller, 2010). In this study as in prior typological research using LCA or other clustering methods, the possibility remains that a single, normally distributed factor, rather than distinct classes, is the true latent

structure of the observed items. With these limitations in mind, findings from the current study point to an urgent need for future research to assess partner violence types, prevalence, and etiologies in a representative sample of couples affected by incarceration.

Conclusions

Findings from this study enrich our understanding of the couple-level behavioral dynamics that underlie high observed rates of partner violence in samples of couples affected by incarceration. Their experiences conform to distinct types that are analogous to Johnson's partner violence types but take unique form in the context of situational strains faced by returning prisoners and their partners. This work also helps to advance more precise methods for partner violence research generally, including the use of dyadic survey data, the integration of qualitative and quantitative accounts, and the refinement of LCA-based typology research strategies. Such approaches represent an important next step in ongoing efforts to better understand, distinguish, and address the contexts in which partner violence arises.

Table 1. Demographic, Criminal Justice, and Family Characteristics of Study Sample

	Men (N=1,112)	Women (N=1,112)
Demographic characteristics		
Age at study enrollment (mean)	33.1	31.7
Highest educational attainment		
Less than high school	34.4%	25.6%
Graduate equivalency degree (GED)	24.8%	7.3%
High school diploma	12.3%	22.3%
Vocational degree	3.5%	5.8%
Some college	17.0%	27.8%
Advanced degree	7.9%	11.2%
Hispanic/Latino ethnicity	9.6%	7.7%
Race		
Black	59.4%	48.7%
White	28.9%	39.9%
Another race or multiple races	11.8%	11.4%
Criminal justice system involvement		
Age at first arrest (mean years)	17.0	(not asked)
Previous adult incarcerations (mean number)	6.0	1.7
Duration of current incarceration (mean years)	2.5	(not asked)
Relationship characteristics		
Relationship duration (mean years)	8.1	7.5
Any physical or sexual violence victimization by partner	45.7%	40.9%
Severe physical or sexual violence victimization by partner	10.8%	17.7%
Controlling behavior victimization by partner	33.9%	37.6%

Table 2. Johnson's Type Classification Based on Violence and Control Reports

Respondent Used Physical Violence	Respondent Used High Control	Partner Used Physical Violence	Partner Used High Control	Assigned Type
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Mutual violent control
Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Coercive controlling violence
Yes	Yes	No	No	Coercive controlling violence
Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Coercive controlling violence
Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Violent resistance
Yes	No	No	No	Situational couple violence
Yes	No	Yes	No	Situational couple violence
Yes	No	No	Yes	Situational couple violence

Table 3. Model Characteristics for Latent Class Analysis of Men's Controlling Behavior

Cluster Solution	BIC	Entropy	Average Latent Class Probability
Two Classes	11258.020	0.808	0.930-0.952
Three Classes	11330.084	0.769	0.849-0.912
Four Classes	11446.563	0.797	0.848-0.908
Five Classes	11597.389	0.827	0.841-0.924

Table 4. Frequency of Identified Partner Violence Types

Partner (Type)	Female Partner							
	CCV	VR	JOSV	MVC	NV	Missing	Total	
Male Partner	CCV	0	121	0	0	23	0	144
	VR	56	0	0	0	0	0	56
	JOSV	0	0	312	0	49	0	361
	MVC	0	0	0	55	0	0	55
	NV	14	0	160	0	322	0	496
	Total	70	121	472	55	394	0	1,112

CCV=coercive controlling violence, VR=violent resistance, JOSV=jealous-only situational violence, MVC=mutual violent control, and NV=nonviolence

Table 5. Comparing Jealous-Only Situational Violence and Coercive Controlling Violence

	Jealous-Only Situational Violence (male N = 361; female N = 472)			Coercive Controlling Violence (male N = 144; female N = 70)			P-value for Comparison	
	Obs	Mean	Std.	Obs	Mean	Std.		
Perpetrator Behaviors and Characteristics								
Among male perpetrators (18 items)								
Severe violence perpetration—self report (1 = yes, 0 = no)	360	0.11	0.016	143	0.17	0.032	0.0436	
Severe violence victimization—partner report (1 = yes, 0 = no)	360	0.17	0.020	144	0.60	0.041	<0.0001	
Severe male-on-female violence—either partner's report (1 = yes, 0 = no)	360	0.26	0.023	143	0.62	0.041	<0.0001	
Problem drinking—self report (higher = more problem drinking)	360	1.72	0.092	143	1.78	0.155	0.7278	
Problem drug use—self report (higher = more problem drug use)	361	1.37	0.067	144	1.42	0.109	0.7344	
Anger problems when drinking or using drugs—self report (1 = often, sometimes, 0 = rarely or never)	359	0.48	0.026	144	0.58	0.041	0.0631	
Use of violence with family when drinking or using drugs—self report (1 = often, sometimes or rarely, 0 = never)	360	0.36	0.025	144	0.46	0.042	0.0322	
Receipt of anger management services—self report (1 = yes, 0 = no)	361	0.39	0.026	144	0.37	0.040	0.7232	
Need for anger management services—self report (1 = yes, 0 = no)	360	0.53	0.026	144	0.56	0.041	0.5536	
Receipt of services to avoid hurting or abusing partner—self report (1 = yes, 0 = no)	361	0.13	0.018	144	0.10	0.025	0.2701	
Need for services to avoid hurting or abusing partner—self report (1 = yes, 0 = no)	360	0.19	0.021	144	0.24	0.036	0.2256	
Conflict skills—self report (1 = skilled/successful, 0 = not)	355	0.89	0.017	140	0.90	0.025	0.6844	
Tempted to have sexual/romantic contact with someone else (1 = often, 4 = never)	344	2.94	0.051	129	2.91	0.085	0.7438	
Had sexual/romantic contact with someone else (1 = yes or maybe, 0 = no)	342	0.70	0.025	127	0.70	0.041	0.9673	
Know how to avoid temptation to cheat (1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree)	343	1.75	0.041	129	1.69	0.068	0.4331	
Own fidelity is very important (1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree)	343	1.38	0.031	129	1.46	0.060	0.2265	
Partner's fidelity is very important (1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree)	343	1.22	0.024	130	1.32	0.054	0.0492	
Confident in partner's fidelity (1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree)	340	2.05	0.048	128	2.11	0.074	0.5143	
Among female perpetrators (14 items)								
Severe violence perpetration—self report (1 = yes, 0 = no)	469	0.10	0.014	70	0.40	0.059	<0.0001	
Severe violence victimization—partner report (1 = yes, 0 = no)	471	0.07	0.012	70	0.10	0.036	0.4129	

Severe female-on-male violence—either partner's report (1 = yes, 0 = no)	469	0.17	0.017	70	0.44	0.060	<0.0001
Problem drinking—self report (higher = more problem drinking)	463	0.38	0.040	69	0.35	0.107	0.7554
Problem drug use—self report (higher = more problem drug use)	472	0.25	0.031	70	0.36	0.104	0.2265
Anger problems when drinking or using drugs—self report (1 = often or sometimes, 0 = rarely or never)	467	0.06	0.011	70	0.10	0.036	0.2378
Use of violence with family when drinking or using drugs—self report (1 = often, sometimes or rarely, 0 = never)	467	0.07	0.012	70	0.07	0.031	0.9169
Conflict skills—self report (1 = skilled/successful, 0 = not)	460	0.89	0.015	69	0.87	0.041	0.6335
Tempted to have sexual/romantic contact with someone else (1 = often, 4 = never)	452	3.35	0.042	66	3.27	0.117	0.5143
Had sexual/romantic contact with someone else (1 = yes or maybe, 0 = no)	452	0.32	0.022	66	0.44	0.062	0.0569
Know how to avoid temptation to cheat (1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree)	457	1.54	0.036	67	1.51	0.101	0.7459
Own fidelity is very important (1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree)	456	1.34	0.030	65	1.29	0.072	0.6061
Partner's fidelity is very important (1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree)	457	1.22	0.025	65	1.17	0.056	0.4517
Confident in partner's fidelity (1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree)	452	2.10	0.043	65	2.23	0.107	0.2837
Victim Experiences							
Among male victims (7 items)							
Post-traumatic stress (higher = more symptoms)	472	0.98	0.062	70	1.50	0.185	0.0030
Depression symptoms (1 = depressed, 0 = not)	472	0.64	0.022	70	0.79	0.049	0.0149
Feel safe in relationship (1 = safe, 0 = unsafe)	467	0.59	0.023	69	0.42	0.060	0.0067
Tempted to have sexual/romantic contact with someone else (1 = often, 4 = never)	454	2.94	0.044	66	2.61	0.126	0.0077
Had sexual/romantic contact with someone else (1 = yes or maybe, 0 = no)	451	0.67	0.022	65	0.77	0.053	0.0935
Know how to avoid temptation to cheat (1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree)	455	1.72	0.034	66	1.89	0.110	0.0778
Support from extended family (higher = more support)	472	13.24	0.160	69	13.09	0.428	0.7313
Among female victims (7 items)							
Post-traumatic stress (higher = more symptoms)	361	0.97	0.068	144	1.41	0.127	0.0011
Depression symptoms (1 = depressed, 0 = not)	361	0.66	0.025	144	0.73	0.037	0.1293
Feel safe in relationship (1 = safe, 0 = unsafe)	359	0.58	0.026	144	0.17	0.032	<0.0001
Tempted to have sexual/romantic contact with someone else (1 = often, 4 = never)	344	3.35	0.047	130	2.92	0.093	<0.0001
Had sexual/romantic contact with someone else (1 = yes or maybe, 0 = no)	344	0.32	0.025	130	0.47	0.044	0.0030
Know how to avoid temptation to cheat (1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree)	347	1.57	0.042	131	1.53	0.061	0.5755
Support from extended family (higher = more support)	360	13.66	0.181	144	13.67	0.313	0.9936

Chapter 5: “Things That Get the Police Involved”: State Violence and Partner Violence in an Era of Mass Incarceration

Abstract

Little research has examined how state and structural violence enacted in the context of hyper-incarceration might influence the most common form of violence: the abuse of a partner.

Through a mixed-method analysis of linked data from 167 former prisoners and their partners who completed in-depth qualitative interviews and longitudinal surveys for the Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering, this study examined how hyper-incarceration shapes concepts and experiences of partner violence. Results highlight the conceptual invisibility of physical violence, the centrality of struggles for interpersonal control, the defining importance of police responses in understandings of what constitutes abuse, and an underlying dynamic of women’s coerced labor. They suggest how an attenuated sense of personal agency as well as dynamics of prisonization, secondary prisonization, and a prisonized abuse cycle promote partner violence perpetration by men while extracting uncompensated and dangerous forms of labor from their intimate and parenting partners.

Introduction

Partner violence is the most common violent crime and a major driver of physical injury, disability, disease and death in the United States (Campbell, 2002; Sumner et al., 2015). In the American population, 4-5 percent of adults report partner violence victimization during the last 12 months (Black et al., 2011), a rate far exceeding that of any other form of violence.

Partner violence puts victims at risk for post-traumatic stress, depression, chronic pain, and chronic and infectious diseases as well as death by homicide or suicide (Campbell, 2002).

Victims' children may experience negative impacts on cognitive and socioemotional development (Carpenter & Stacks, 2009); are at heightened risk of depression, aggressive behavior, and poor school outcomes (Wood & Sommers, 2011); and are more likely to experience partner violence victimization or perpetration as adults (Ehrensaft et al., 2003).

Despite the prevalence of partner violence and the immense burden of its impacts—particularly on women (Black et al., 2011; Campbell, 2002) and children (Wood & Sommers, 2011)—it has traditionally occupied a peripheral place in criminological scholarship on violent crime (DeKeseredy, 2016; Stanko, 2006). Partner violence research has expanded in the last three decades, but a long-standing disciplinary tendency to consider it as a special or adjunct case in crime and violence research, rather than as the predominant and most impactful form of violent crime, persists. This tendency is reflected in the relative absence of scholarship on partner violence in a burgeoning body of empirical work on mass incarceration and its collateral consequences for crime, violence, and health (Clear et al., 2014; Kirk & Wakefield, 2018; Wildeman et al., 2019).

Evidence that mass incarceration's collateral consequences are heavily concentrated among poor communities of color contradicts the idea that it is a “mass” phenomenon. Wacquant's more precise term, “hyper-incarceration,” has been adopted to describe the criminalization of poor, urban communities of color through a complex of intensive policing, sentencing, surveillance and the retraction of public resources (Wacquant, 2001, p. 96). Under this policy regime, the consequences of criminalization and incarceration have been largely absorbed among an already disadvantaged group of Americans (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010), drawing from and deepening their racial and socioeconomic marginalization (Wakefield & Uggen, 2010).

While researchers are beginning to document collateral consequences of some forms of criminal justice system contact other than imprisonment (Comfort, 2016; Lageson, 2016; Turney & Conner, 2019; Uggen et al., 2014), it is the consequences of imprisonment that have been best studied (Kirk & Wakefield, 2018). Imprisonment curtails future employment prospects (Apel & Sweeten, 2010; Sykes & Maroto, 2016), depresses future earnings (Western, 2002), drains assets (Maroto, 2015), damages parenting capacity (Turney, 2014; Wakefield, 2015), and can promote a range of physical and behavioral disabilities and functional impairments (Travis et al., 2014). At a national level, incarceration's maldistributed consequences help to drive stark racial disparities in key indicators of infant, child and adult health and well-being (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2011; Wildeman, 2012a, 2012b; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Wildeman & Wang, 2017).

The gendered distribution of incarceration and its consequences has been less well considered in this literature. Most research on the collateral consequences of mass incarceration has focused (quite intuitively) on those targeted for imprisonment—primarily men. Even scholarship on the role of imprisonment in effecting the gendered “discipline” of women (Roberts, 2016, p. 93) has generally focused on incarcerated women—despite the fact that women are 1/12th as likely to become incarcerated as men (Bronson & Carson, 2019). Yet most men who become imprisoned are in spousal, intimate, or co-parenting relationships with women (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Glaze, 2010; Lattimore et al., 2008). American women are far more likely to be connected to incarcerated or formerly incarcerated male partners and co-parents than they are to become imprisoned themselves.

Indeed, one in four American women (including 44 percent of Black women) reports having a family member currently in prison (Lee et al., 2015) and 22 percent of American women (including 30 percent of Black women) have experienced the incarceration of an intimate or co-parenting partner (Enns et al., 2019). Among intimate partners and co-parents, men's incarceration is associated with heavy financial costs and burdens (Christian et al., 2006; Clayton et al., 2018; Comfort, 2016; Grinstead et al., 2001) and diminished civic participation (Lee, Porter et al., 2014). They also bear a disproportionate disease burden in the form of increased risk for mental health conditions, cardiovascular disease, and human immunodeficiency virus infection (Johnson & Raphael, 2009; Lee, Wildeman et al., 2014; Wildeman et al., 2012).

The largely indirect burdens of hyper-incarceration among women, while substantial, have been presumed secondary to the direct burdens borne by incarcerated and formerly incarcerated men. Yet a growing literature on indirect consequences of incarceration for families of the imprisoned has produced two unexpected findings. First, a rigorous analysis of the negative population-level health consequences of hyper-incarceration found that the collateral burdens produced by increased male incarceration rates accrue more heavily to women and children than to men (Wildeman, 2012a). Second, studies that examine the mechanisms for negative effects of paternal incarceration on children have begun to suggest that children are affected not by changes in the behavior of their fathers, but by changes in their mothers' relationships, coping, and parenting behavior that are associated with the father's imprisonment (Turney, 2014, 2015; Wakefield, 2015; Wildeman et al., 2012).

This striking evidence points to a need to better understand how a four-decade campaign of state violence against poor men of color has shaped their intimate and co-parenting relationships. The

qualitative accounts of the criminalized and convicted (e.g., Rios, 2011; Rios et al., 2020) and their partners and family members (e.g., Clayton et al., 2018) suggest that criminal justice system intervention permeates every part of life, including the domestic and family spheres. Those in criminalized communities are subjected to constant surveillance and monitoring from police and community supervision systems as well as episodic experiences of violent search, arrest, detention, and imprisonment (Phelps, 2020; Sampson & Loeffler, 2010; Weaver et al., 2019). Even imprisonment, arguably the most severe of such exposures, has been experienced by many millions of Americans during this period. Fifteen percent of Black men and 3 percent of the general American population have been to prison (Shannon et al., 2017). Forty-four percent of unmarried new mothers in major American cities report that the father of their child was incarcerated sometime in the last three years (Jones, 2013). Yet little research has examined how being on the receiving end of government-sponsored violence and control tactics might shape how one understands or uses violence and control in private life.

Several secondary analyses suggest possible links between exposure to state violence in the era of mass incarceration and the use of violence against a partner. Large-scale samples of formerly incarcerated men and their partners report physical partner violence at rates as much as tenfold those seen in the general population (Breiding, 2015). For example, in a representative sample of American mothers with less than a high school education, 41.3 percent of those whose child's father had been incarcerated also reported that he had been physically violent with them, compared to 15 percent of mothers who parented with never-incarcerated men (Wildeman, 2012b). Among unmarried new parents in urban areas, men who had been incarcerated within the last three years were almost four times as likely as men without recent incarceration histories

to have physically hurt the mother of their new child (Western, 2004). Among men returning from prison and their partners in the Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting, and Partnering, one half of couples reported physical violence in their relationship during the 6 months following the male partner's release from prison (McKay, Landwehr et al., 2018).⁷

Despite extraordinarily high frequencies of partner violence in samples of former prisoners and their partners, we have little scholarly understanding of whether or how mass imprisonment and partner violence are connected. This may be due, in part, to the fact that both imprisonment and partner violence take place behind closed doors, stigmatized and out of view. This social hiddenness has often been perpetuated, rather than challenged, by methodological choices in the social sciences that left both imprisonment and partner violence largely outside of our quantitative sights (Pettit, 2012; Stanko, 2006). It is exacerbated by the fact that most related research (such as tests of the effects of domestic violence arrest on future calls to police or of the influence of poor social and material conditions in urban neighborhoods on partner violence) tends to apply criminological theories—particularly deterrence (see Paternoster, 2010) and social disorganization (Sampson & Groves, 1989)—that were developed by White men of the middle classes to explain the more public crimes, such as youth delinquency, that fell within their subjective view and methodological reach.

The insights of the criminalized and their intimate partners have generally been omitted from scholarship on partner violence. Two compelling exceptions—both focus group studies of partner violence in hyper-incarcerated communities (Hairston & Oliver, 2011; Holliday et al.,

⁷ These comparisons are based on simple frequencies, without matching or adjustment for differences between formerly incarcerated and never-incarcerated men; they illustrate only how common partner violence was in each study population.

2019; Oliver & Hairston, 2008)—find that abusive policing, aggressive sentencing, and adaptations to the harshness and danger of the prison environment create fertile ground for men’s use of violence against their partners. These results not only underscore the importance of further inquiry into partner violence in the context of mass incarceration; they also suggest that individuals exposed to state violence in the context of mass incarceration represent a crucial source of information on how public and private forms of violence intertwine. As in other scholarship that brings subaltern perspectives to the fore, research on experiences and understandings of partner violence among the criminalized could offer “counter-hegemonic forms of thinking and reflecting upon the world [that] better grasp the impact of current social and material relations of power” (Darder, 2018, p. 100). As Black feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins suggests, the study of any form of violence in contemporary America offers a critical opportunity to uncover these intersecting power relations (Collins, 1998, 2017).

Nowhere is this opportunity more relevant than in the study of a widespread form of violence against women in poor, criminalized communities of color. Engaging it as such, this study examines how returning prisoners and their intimate and co-parenting partners view and connect experiences of interpersonal and institutional violence and control. It considers the implications of such experiences for the gendered redistribution of mass incarceration-related burdens and harms and for broader scholarship on violence and the criminal justice system.

Background

Understandings of Partner Violence Among the Hyper-Incarcerated

Understandings of what constitutes partner violence, why it occurs, and whether it is acceptable are (of course) socially constructed. These questions have occupied significant attention from scholars and advocates. Whether particular behaviors (or patterns of behaviors) are understood as partner violence—for example, controlling behavior (Stark & Hester, 2019), sexual assault between current spouses or intimate partners (Randall, 2006), and acts of physical violence undertaken without threat of harm or in the context of self-defense (Dragiewicz & DeKeseredy, 2012; Hamby, 2014)—has been the subject of vigorous definitional debate. Scholarly and official definitions of partner violence, far from trivial semantic concerns, determine what is captured and counted in research as well as which experiences qualify one for legal protection or a bed in a crisis shelter.

Lay understandings of partner violence, though they figure somewhat less prominently in academic discourse, are equally consequential. What is (and is not) understood as partner violence can shape the interpersonal tactics that individuals choose to use in their relationships, how they respond to a partner's use of certain tactics, and how members of a social network or community respond (O'Campo et al., 2017). Such conceptualizations are far from universal, particularly as they concern behaviors other than physical violence, such as stalking or controlling behavior. Qualitative concept mapping finds that gender, age, race, and direct or indirect experience with abuse shape how individuals come to define partner violence (Carlson & Worden, 2005; O'Campo et al., 2017).

Gender-related socialization appears to shape perceptions of interpersonal control and their relative centrality in defining abuse. Women often differentiate the abusiveness of interpersonal behaviors according to their controlling intent or effect, while men tend to make plainly

behavioral distinctions without reference to control (O'Campo et al., 2017). Scholars, too, are divided on the importance of interpersonal control. One-sided controlling dynamics are seen as a defining feature of partner violence by feminist theorists (e.g., Johnson, 2008; Stark, 2010). Among family violence theorists, controlling behavior is regarded as problematic but (like insults or name-calling) tangential to physical violence (Straus & Douglas, 2004).

Since some degree of interpersonal control is a universal part of intimate and co-parenting relationships (Johnson, 2008), it is also difficult to establish an objective line differentiating helpful and harmful acts of interpersonal control. As such, quantitative approaches to measuring controlling behavior have varied widely (see Hardesty et al., 2015). Even partner violence researchers who tend to rely on quantitative data suggest that the one-sided pattern of controlling behavior associated with the most dangerous forms of partner violence is a fundamentally subjective experience best understood with reference to the qualitative insights of those involved (National Institute of Justice, 2000).

Worldwide, differences in perceptions of partner violence appear to be heavily explained by local variation in gender role socialization and attitudes toward general violence (Herrero et al., 2017). Black feminist theorists and ethnographers suggest that in urban communities of color, gender-role socialization and attitudes toward general violence have both been shaped by persistent conditions of extreme deprivation and racial injustice (Bourgois, 1995; Gillum, 2019; Hampton et al., 2003). In neighborhoods targeted for repeated and pervasive exposure to imprisonment (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010), qualitative researchers find that the prison itself acts as a major site of gender- and violence-related socialization that helps to shape shared understandings of gender and violence in the community (Lopez-Aguado, 2016; SpearIt, 2011).

Still, qualitative research that examines concepts of partner violence in communities affected by mass incarceration is scarce.

Connecting State Violence and Partner Violence in the Context of Hyper-Incarceration

Studies with large, multi-site samples of formerly incarcerated men and their partners or co-parents find extraordinarily high rates of partner violence—as much as tenfold those observed in the general population (McKay, Landwehr et al., 2018; Western, 2004; Wildeman, 2012b).

Whether or how these experiences are connected has been little studied.

Critical legal theorists Coker and Macquoid (2015) suggest that hyper-incarceration could promote partner violence in targeted communities via the social disorganization produced by concentrated imprisonment. The coercive mobility thesis extends social disorganization theory (originally developed with data collected prior to the hyper-incarceration era [Sampson & Groves, 1989]) to consider community-level influences on crime in the context of hyper-incarceration. It suggests that high rates of imprisonment in a community tend to worsen crime and violence via the erosion of traditional social structures, which weaken collective efficacy to restrain deviance (Clear et al., 2003). Studies in this vein consistently link concentrated imprisonment and release in hyper-incarcerated communities with a lagged increase in rates of crime and violence (Clear et al., 2014; Drakulich et al., 2012; Kirk & Papachristos, 2011); however, the hypothesized mediation of these effects via weakened social structures and diminished collective efficacy is much less well tested. Social disorganization theory is also the predominant theoretical perspective applied in literature on the influence of concentrated economic disadvantage on partner violence in urban communities (Beyer et al., 2015; Voith, 2019). In contrast with empirical tests of the influence of social disorganization pathways on

other forms of crime and violence, however, studies of social disorganization-based pathways to partner violence often show weak or null effects (Daoud et al., 2017; Frye & Wilt, 2001; Wu, 2009; but see Browning, 2002).

Exploratory focus group research with couples affected by incarceration offers a different perspective on how partner violence might be connected to hyper-incarceration. Black men returning from prison report that the hypervigilance, distrust, and social distancing that they adopt to survive incarceration can produce relationship attitudes and conflict approaches consistent with the use of violence against a partner (Oliver & Hairston, 2008). In parallel focus groups, Black women who were partnered with former prisoners suggested that men's imprisonment experiences normalized the use of violence and also put them in an uncomfortably dependent position with their partners; together, they saw these dynamics as leading to partner violence perpetration (Hairston & Oliver, 2011). Focus group research with men enrolled in a partner violence perpetration intervention in hyper-incarcerated urban Baltimore suggests connections between ongoing exposure to state violence in the context of mass incarceration and the use of violence against female partners. Participants described how an environment of police-community antagonism, lack of trust in police, widespread incarceration of men in the communities, and the imposition of harsh prison sentences affected their behavioral health and their attitudes toward violence and intimate relationships (Holliday et al., 2019).

These works converge on the idea that experiences of imprisonment and ongoing criminalization (each in the broader context of hyper-incarceration) are associated with changes in psychological and interpersonal functioning that could promote violence in intimate and co-parenting relationships. The qualitative perspectives elicited in focus group research with affected

individuals and couples align with quantitative research showing deterioration in mental health among prisoners (Massoglia & Pridemore, 2015; Wildeman & Wang, 2017) and those living in hyper-incarcerated communities (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2015) as well as potential shifts in attitudes toward sexual violence (Debowska et al., 2016). Together, this initial body of evidence suggests that the adaptive "prisonization" (Clemmer, 1958) of individual personality and coping styles among the hyper-incarcerated may inadvertently invite the penal system into their interpersonal relationships—"secondary prisonization" (Comfort, 2003; Comfort, 2008)—in ways that make violence more likely. The perspectives of couples affected by incarceration represent a valuable but under-tapped source of insight on connections between state violence and partner violence in a time of hyper-incarceration.

Summary of Gaps and Research Questions

Partner violence, the most common violent crime in America (Sumner et al., 2015) and extraordinarily widespread among study populations of justice-involved men and their partners (McKay, Landwehr et al., 2018; Western, 2004; Wildeman, 2012), has been the subject of very little research in the context of the American experiment in hyper-incarceration. Efforts to grapple with its effects—particularly on violence and particularly among women—require a clearer understanding of how men's exposure to state violence might shape the use of violence and control in their intimate and co-parenting relationships. This study is intended to contribute to that task by addressing the following questions:

1. How do incarcerated and reentering individuals and their intimate or co-parenting partners understand the use of interpersonal violence and control in their relationships?

2. Are understandings of private, interpersonal uses of violence and control shaped by exposure to public, institutional uses of violence and control?

Methods

Data Source

This study used qualitative and quantitative data from the Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering ("Multi-site Family Study"), funded by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation and Office of Family Assistance (Bir & Lindquist, 2017). The study conducted separate but parallel surveys and in-depth qualitative interviews with 1,991 incarcerated men and 1,482 of their intimate or co-parenting partners from five American states. Participants completed baseline surveys during the male partner's incarceration in state prison, with follow-up surveys conducted 9, 18, and 34 months later and in-depth qualitative interviews with a subset of 167 participants around the time of the male partner's reentry from prison. The current analysis focuses on these individuals.

Measures

Interviewer-administered surveys lasted approximately 90 minutes and collected information on participants' family lives and involvement with the criminal justice system. Each couple member was interviewed independently about their experiences of partner violence perpetration and victimization with their focal study partner. This section of the survey, administered using audio computer assisted self-interviewing (ACASI) for enhanced privacy and confidentiality, was a modified version of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2) (Straus et al., 1996) with the

subscales on verbal abuse, injury and negotiation omitted and additional items on controlling behavior. The analysis presented here used analytic variables created using a simple summing approach that combined behaviorally specific items into categories. The categories used for this analysis were physical violence (incidents in which one partner shoved, hit, slapped, grabbed, threw something at, choked, slammed, kicked, burned, or beat the other; used a knife or gun on the other; or forced the other to have sex by hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) and controlling behavior (incidents in which one partner threatened to hurt the other partner or their children, family members, or loved ones; tried to keep the other from seeing or talking to friends or family; or tried to keep money from the other, took money from the other, or made the other ask for money).

The dyadic behavioral context for partner violence was operationalized using a type indicator based on Johnson's typology (Johnson, 2008; Kelly & Johnson, 2008). This indicator was obtained from prior work (described in Chapter 4 of this thesis) that applied latent class analysis and descriptive statistics to both couple members' survey reports of controlling behavior and physical violence in their relationship. It distinguished between individuals who used violence in the context of a generalized effort to dominate and control their partners, those who used violence in resistance to a dominating and controlling partner, those who used violence in the absence of a controlling dynamic, and those who did not use physical violence against their study partners.

In-depth qualitative interviews with a subsample of 167 respondents, including 54 couples, were conducted separately with each couple member around the time of the male partner's reentry from prison. In-depth interviews elicited detailed information on respondents' family

relationship experiences during and after the incarceration, including challenges in their relationships, whether and how the incarceration (or other institutional policies and formal supports) had influenced their relationships or affected the male partner's mindset or ways of relating, their perspectives on gender roles, and their perceptions of healthy and unhealthy relationships.⁸

Analytic Approach

For the structured qualitative analysis, an initial qualitative codebook was developed that included deductive codes based on the study research questions and guided by relevant prior literature. Deidentified, verbatim transcripts were coded in ATLAS.ti. Deductive codes included physical violence, controlling behavior, feelings of safety, material deprivation, state violence, prisonization, secondary prisonization, formal social control, informal social control, collective efficacy, perceived life chances, and mental health symptoms. Over the course of the analysis, the codebook was expanded to include 27 inductive codes based on themes that emerged from review of qualitative data. Inductive codes included “developmental disconnect,” “displaced anger,” “gendered family roles,” “jail talk,” “it just happened,” and “persistent ambivalence.”

Queries were run in ATLAS.ti using Boolean language to identify text data related to each research question. These query results were reviewed to identify themes, generating a spreadsheet of themes and the text passages that substantiated them. For the inductive case review, each full-length transcript was individually reviewed alongside corresponding

⁸ To protect the safety of interview participants in a couples-based, longitudinal study, the original study protocol approved by the Institutional Review Board specified that no direct questions about partner violence would be included in the qualitative interview protocol, since the added privacy and confidentiality protections that ACASI had afforded for survey questions on partner violence could not be extended to qualitative interviews.

longitudinal survey reports of partner violence victimization and perpetration provided by the respondent and study partner, including the presence of severe or frequent physical violence and the dyadic behavioral type of violence based on Johnson's typology (obtained through the analysis described in Chapter 4). Themes identified in the inductive case review, along with substantiating text passages, were added to a master analytic file and consolidated with themes from the query-based analysis as relevant. Identified themes were then elaborated in analytic memos addressing concepts or understandings of interpersonal violence and control in partner and co-parenting relationships; exposures to, and understandings of, institutional forms of violence and control; and narrative patterns that connected interpersonal and institutional uses of violence and control. Themes were categorized by research question and the strongest (most prevalent) themes related to each research question were selected.

Sample

As shown in Table 1, most participants in the Multi-site Family Study qualitative interviews were in long-term, intimate or co-parenting relationships with one another and reported an average relationship duration of 8-9 years. They typically had two or more children together, and both men and women also commonly had at least one child whom they co-parented with another adult besides their study partner.

The sample was racially and ethnically diverse, comprising about two thirds Black participants (65% of men and 66% of women), one third White participants (28% of men and 25% of women), and 6-7 percent Hispanic/Latino participants, with the remainder identifying with another racial or ethnic group or reporting a multi-racial identity. Most were in their early thirties.

[Table 1 about here]

All men were incarcerated at the time of study enrollment and most had extensive histories of conviction and incarceration, averaging 13 lifetime arrests and five prior incarcerations. Most women in the study also had some direct contact with the criminal justice system, though less extensive; they reported an average of two lifetime arrests. At the time of the baseline survey, men had served an average of two and a half years in state prison on their current sentences and expected to serve a total of six years before release.

Results

“Things That Get the Police Involved”: Understandings of Partner Violence (Research

Question 1)

Analyzing the qualitative narratives of former prisoners men and their partners alongside each couple’s survey reports of physical violence and controlling behavior revealed unique subjective understandings of partner violence. Four major themes emerged: the invisibility of physical violence, the centrality of struggles for interpersonal control, the conceptual power of criminal justice system responses, and the underlying presence of women’s coerced labor.

Invisibility of physical violence

The high frequency of physical violence reported by study participants in their longitudinal surveys contrasted sharply with its relative invisibility in the stories they told of their relationships. Reviewing qualitative interview transcripts alongside couples’ survey reports on partner violence revealed that many individuals whom survey data indicated had used or been

subject to physical violence in the partnership never mentioned it—despite (in many instances) revealing a great deal of other personal and sensitive information during an extensive qualitative interview about intimate relationship quality, challenges, conflicts, and reasons for continuing or terminating the relationship. Physical violence victimization tended to be mentioned only by victims who had endured very severe or calculated forms of violence (for example, repeated sexual assault resulting in the conception of a child, repeated beating in places on the body where bruises would not show) and who had already ended the relationship with the violent partner prior to the interview.

Even among interview participants who had ended the romantic partnership and who spoke quite candidly and even forcefully about other aspects of the relationship, the physically violent incidents reported in their surveys were rarely foregrounded in narrative accounts. One participant, whose survey reports reflected the presence of severe bilateral physical violence with her study partner and who noted elsewhere in the qualitative interview that he had made credible death threats against her new partner after being released from prison, noted that a prison-based relationship education class on “mental [and] physical abuse” had been quite irrelevant to what she saw as their “perfect” relationship:

There was a lot of things [in the class] that had to do with abuse....Me and him were sitting there looking at each other like, ‘Baby, we don’t got those problems’...I felt like our relationship was perfect; I don’t know, our relationship was fine. I didn’t see nothing wrong with our relationship. Like, it was, like I told you earlier, too good to be true.

The “too good to be true” relationship that this participant described involved significant turmoil and physical violence and ended with her being left to raise an infant alone (after her partner’s imprisonment) while attempting to complete high school. Another participant, whose long-term partner had been in and out of prison for many years and was unable to contribute financially to

their household, observed that “we are the ideal couple around the area, the neighborhood.” Although the couple’s survey reports indicated some physical violence in the relationship, when asked what accounted for her long-term commitment to him, she explained, “I couldn’t see myself with anybody else because he is a nice guy. He doesn’t abuse me. He is not abusive. He is a nice guy.”

For some, the narrative omission of physical violence likely also reflected a calculated judgment. Although most qualitative interview participants shared openly about stigmatized or criminalized experiences, they also made frequent reference to the male partner’s vulnerable legal status and the possibility of his being returned to prison. One expressed a sense that her partner’s behavior was being continuously monitored and that a decision to disclose partner violence during a supposedly confidential research interview might well expose him to serious, immediate legal consequences. She conveyed this indirectly:

It is so much domestic violence out here, and women are scared...They need to be honest about it, but they are not going to be honest because they feel like the man going to — the police going to knock on the door as you [the study interviewer] are going out — knock at the door and cuff him out and take him out of there.

Referring to the neutral or positive accounts she had previously offered of her relationship with her partner, this participant explained that the threat of state responses that she suggested might have a chilling effect on other women’s responses had compelled her, too, to make a calculated, neutral portrayal of their relationship for the research team: “Because *I* felt that way [too]. That is why I was like, ‘We this and we that.’” Other interviewees whose survey reports indicated physical violence victimization echoed this account, always indirectly. These interviews sometimes described intense conflict or betrayal in their relationships but stopped short of

mentioning acts of physical violence. Some participants even flagged these omissions explicitly: “Some things I am not even going to share with you, so don’t ask me.”

Centrality of struggles for interpersonal control

Whereas physical violence remained below the surface, struggles for interpersonal control occupied a focal place in relationship narratives. Participants often reflected at length on interpersonal acts and patterns in their relationships that they experienced as controlling. Former prisoners and their partners each described (and objected to) efforts by their partners to curtail their contacts with family or friends. Beyond this commonality, however, perceptions of interpersonally controlling behavior differed by gender. Women relayed serious concerns and critiques regarding what they viewed as their partners’ controlling behavior, including verbal manipulation, stalking, threats, and adoption of a rigid or authoritarian position in household negotiations. Some suggested that such behaviors had preceded the incarceration but came into sharper view (and were harder to ignore or tolerate) after the couple had reunited from the prolonged separation:

He calls all the time. He calls for me, like where am I at. He’s always asking for me, this and that. And for me, if I go somewhere, he just, oh my god, he just makes a big thing about it...he just gets upset if I go anywhere. He’s just real possessive. That’s how he is, you know...I don’t like — probably because I been with him for so long and I’ve always done what he said, whatever. Now I’m just like, I’m not used to it no more, because he wasn’t around [during the incarceration].

In contrast, men’s accounts of struggles for interpersonal control focused largely on their partners’ expectations of mutual accountability in domestic, financial, or co-parenting endeavors. These registered for many as intolerably controlling. Men often referenced experiences of state or institutional control and constraint in describing their partners’ imposition of household

routine or other conventional relationship expectations. One father explained feeling intensely controlled when his partner objected to his use of their household funds for gambling. For him, the partner's desire for mutual financial accountability seemed to suggest that she would like him to be subjected to the immobilizing restrictions he experienced while incarcerated:

I would go to the casino. She was upset that I went to the casino...because she needs to know what I'm doing at all times...Actually, our relationship was better when I was incarcerated. I think it was better because [partner and children] knew I couldn't go nowhere...Now I can just get up and go leave.

After exposure to the all-encompassing incapacitation of imprisonment, men also seemed to associate domestic spaces, and the structure and routine imposed on them by their female partners, with the forcible confinement they had experienced.

That's when we get into it bad, because I be telling her like, sometimes I'll be feeling like I'm in the [prison] cell still... [I feel like that] when I be locked in, when I get stuck in the house like that. And then I take care of the kids all week... I feel like I be needing to breathe sometimes. I need me, by myself, sometimes...But she do that and I be feeling like I'm stuck.

Interviewees who had ended their intimate relationships since the incarceration nevertheless described ongoing struggles related to interpersonal control. These control battles usually emerged in the context of co-parenting. Participants recounted a variety of actions by their partners that they viewed as interfering in their parenting choices, threatening their access to their children, or attempting to extract an unfair financial contribution. Although both fathers and mothers took issue with such actions and perceived them as controlling, men appeared to be strongly sensitized to the possibility of being controlled by their co-parents and quick to associate this possibility with institutional forms of control. One father, who had a history of severe physical violence toward his child's mother, characterized her attempts to prevent him from physically disciplining their child as akin to imprisoning him:

I somewhat feel sometimes I am in prison still... You don't want me to whip our child... [Mother] is undermining my authority... As long as I don't put a bruise on [daughter], I don't care how mad [mother] gets. I am not going to play her game that she wants to play. Because they feel like they can control it.

For some men, navigating the interdependent reality of intimate partnership or co-parenting after imprisonment proved highly problematic. Being affected by the free choices and actions of another person evoked in these participants an intolerable sense of being controlled—which they attempted to manage by depriving their partners of personal freedom instead.

Conceptual power of criminal justice system definitions and responses

Legal system responses to criminal domestic violence exerted a defining power in study participants' characterizations of interpersonal behaviors and relationships. When asked to describe what makes a relationship healthy or unhealthy, many drew on general normative ideals ("communication" or "trust") or specific personal experiences ("people that think they know everything"). But they also defined these experiences according to the prospect of state intervention:

What is a healthy relationship? Just communication, really. Talking about things, interaction. Being able to agree to disagree to move forward. *What about an unhealthy relationship?* Fighting, arguing. Things that get the police involved.

Criminal justice system intervention also seemed to drive whether participants self-identified their own use of physical violence against their partners. The rare participants who made mention of this typically also acknowledged a criminal conviction for domestic violence or extra-familial assault elsewhere in the interview. While instances of criminal domestic violence severe enough to result in conviction could have simply been more salient, many instances of apparently severe physical or sexual violence reported in surveys went unmentioned in

perpetrators' qualitative interviews. This suggests that for those convicted of a violent crime, the arrest and adjudication process had conferred a label that rendered their use of violence in their relationships visible and acknowledgeable.

Labor coercion

Many interviewees described a coercive or extractive division of labor in their relationships whereby women were compelled to contribute labor and material resources to such a disproportionate extent that each recognized it as unfair and harmful. Patterns of coerced labor and resource extraction from women arose through discrete acts of interpersonal control by men, heteronormative relationship ideals, and the desperate social and material circumstances most couples faced during men's incarceration and reentry.

Facing men's extreme dependency during their prison stay and their hobbled interpersonal and occupational capacities after release, women in most couples served as exclusive financial providers, assumed overwhelming responsibility for parenting and domestic life, and functioned as unpaid social workers and first responders who managed men's interactions with their children, parole officers, employers, peers, and the outside world. Men often occupied a role of child-like dependence, unable to contribute financially, struggling to fulfill parenting and other household responsibilities, and requiring women's intensive support to cope with extra-domestic tasks such as telecommunications, transportation, job-seeking, fulfilling community supervision requirements, completing public benefits applications, and securing behavioral health care.

He does not know what it is to pay bills every month. To pay rent every month. Okay, so let's see, rent is the — rent is only \$300 and the bills are \$100. So that is \$400...Buy toilet paper all month. Buy toothpaste all month. Buy this or buy that. But he don't

understand that... You have boosted your toilet needs, your shampoo needs. I have to buy that, and not only for me but for a child. But he has no reality of that.

Despite the strain and frustration associated with these burdens, women rarely refused the work—perhaps in part because men’s abject dependence on them was so clear. Both women and men tended to express their sharply lopsided contributions to their relationships as a sort of developmental disconnect resulting from men’s institutionalization:

In there, you all got it good because you all don’t have no rent, no light bill, no water bill. You don’t have to buy no clothes. You’re just living free like a little baby. Out here, it’s 100% real.

He was just on pause. There was no nothing happening, no maturity, no growth, no — no development. It was just like, like he was just paused, he just lived. He survived. Like physically — physiologically he survived his [incarceration], you know what I mean? He did the 7 and a half years but other than that, there was nothing.

As such, the tremendous material support that women funneled through their partnerships to men (and the very limited benefits women seemed to reap from these partnerships) had a compulsory element. Even in relationships they described as abusive and even when asked by interviewers to reflect on it, women rarely evaluated how these relationships aligned with their personal needs or wants. Rather, they highlighted how desperately men needed their assistance—even as they noted how long they had deferred their own goals (including educational aspirations and hopes for financial stability) to the imperative of meeting men’s perpetually acute needs. Couples’ shared understandings of the institutional forces that constrained men’s household contributions and hobbled their interpersonal capacities, the perpetual anticipation that these institutionally and structurally determined adversities might someday relent, and the quasi-parental forms of responsibility that women assumed for their partners, all worked in concert to compel their indefinite participation in what was, in reality, a perpetually extractive arrangement.

In addition to assuming the material burdens associated with men's imprisonment, women also labored to prevent men from further contact with the criminal justice system. Deputized by their desire to protect their partners, themselves, and their children from what they understood as the far-reaching ramifications of such contact, women supported their partners in complying with parole terms and conditions (paying their fees, bringing them to required monitoring visits, providing a home that complied with parole conditions).

Many interviewees understood women as responsible for keeping their partners out of police view and out of prison. One woman, who privately endured physical violence and controlling behavior from her partner for more than two decades, held strongly to her responsibility for keeping her abuser "out of trouble" with the criminal justice system:

(How do you think your relationship with him affected him staying out of trouble with the police?) I always kept him out of trouble. I'm the one that has. Even his dad said, 'Oh, my God. Why did he get in trouble? Where's [partner] at? She always kept him out of trouble'...I mean, I've never let him get into trouble...He wanted to start a fight with somebody, stuff like that, I'm like, 'Come on, let's leave,' you know.

Yet as their descriptions of interpersonal control struggles suggest, women's attempts to influence their partners away from activities that might expose them to criminal justice system intervention were often undertaken at serious personal risk and cost.

"It Just Happened": Connecting State and Structural Violence with Partner Violence (Research Question 2)

In the narrative accounts of former prisoners and their partners, partner violence was tightly connected to experiences of state and structural violence. This analysis revealed three primary

themes: the attenuation of personal agency, the relationship ramifications of men's "institutionalized" interpersonal style, and the role of secondary prisonization in cycles of abuse.

Attenuated agency

In recounting the male partner's incarceration and release (often the latest of many the couple had weathered), interviewees emphasized their lack of personal agency in the face of state authority. Encounters with police and criminal justice system personnel made it clear to them that their personal and domestic lives were subject to (sometimes violent) forces beyond either of their control. The sense of vulnerability to state violence often unfolded from the male partner's arrest, as arrest experiences palpably disrupted families' sense of control over their domestic spaces and parents' ability to protect their children from harm.

It was very traumatizing to my kids, because the police kicked in our door and they seen their daddy get tazed and seen him get put in handcuffs and hauled off to jail. They just — all just started grabbing their hair and crying and I am crying because I don't know what to do now. Like, 'Oh, my God.' I just felt like everything ended. Like my life was about to end because he is gone again and I got to raise these three kids by myself.

It happened right in front of them. You know, the cops came in, you know, handcuffs and the whole nine. Kids were screaming. Yeah, that is something that I will never forget...But kids are resilient...I would like to think that over the long term, they will maybe eventually just — maybe they will forget.

Violent arrests that visibly overpowered fathers in front of their partners and children were the most obvious and traumatic way that state violence entered domestic life—but not necessarily the most impactful. For households already struggling with subsistence, men's forced absence frequently triggered severe and physically resonant forms of domestic hardship: homelessness, food insecurity, difficulty maintaining utilities. As one formerly incarcerated father put it, "It takes two to raise a family, especially in our situation, so when I got incarcerated, she had

nothing.” Responsibility for the suffering families endured during men’s incarceration was often allocated ambiguously between the incarcerated partner and the prison system that confined him.

After men’s release, they and their partners continued to struggle with how to understand their accountability to the domestic unit in the context of the institutional forces to which they were subject. Participants agreed that men, to fulfill any semblance of conventional expectations for family participation and contribution, would have to invest tremendous personal initiative and effort. Yet they also observed from experience that a positive outcome from such efforts was unlikely and would be heavily determined by forces beyond either partner’s control. One father explained how difficult it was to deliver on commitments to his family in the absence of a social safety net and with a criminal record that “always pops up”:

I would like to be in my own place with [partner] and the kids. That is my goal. But I know once I get released, it is all going to change, because right before you get released you have got everybody saying, ‘I am going to help you. I am going to help you do this or do that.’ When you actually get there and you are looking for the help, the help is not always there...I have got a dream, a goal, about my kids and my family and I don’t want to let anybody down. [But] no matter if I try to get a job and not bring [my criminal record] up, if they ask for a police report or criminal history, background check or whatever, it always pops up.

Repeated experiences of state and structural violence appeared to promote an understanding that pivotal events in partnerships and family lives were beyond individual control. In this context, even highly consequential events involving some personal initiative (such as the use of interpersonal violence or the conception of a child outside of the relationship) were often regarded by both partners as having “just happened”:

Like I told him, stuff happens. Just like, you know, you shooting those two people. Stuff happens. You don’t intend for it to happen, but it happened.

She didn't [have a child with someone else] to get back at me; it just happened. And I understood because it happened to me; it just happened. Both of my sons, they just happened.

The shared perception of limited personal control over actions that affected one's partner and family made it difficult for couples to create and uphold agreements about acceptable behavior, take full responsibility for the impact of their actions on one another, or hold one another accountable.

Prisonization and partner violence

Couples' accounts of their interactions during and after the imprisonment made frequent reference to men's "institutionalized" approach to relationships. Such references are reminiscent of Clemmer's (1958) concept of "prisonization," which describes changes in prisoners' values, worldview, and behavior as they adjust to the prison environment. Men described shifts in attitudes, cognitive habits, and interpersonal styles during their time in prison. The mandatory nature of these shifts was made clear by men who compared them to those of "a chameleon" and stressed that radical adaptation was critical to surviving "hell on earth":

Being in there, you only — the mindset is bad because you got to do what they say to do inside the penitentiary. So, it definitely messes up your mind for real... You have to sort of like fit in. Without fitting in, it is bad. It is real bad... It is just — there is just a lot of violence in there now... They are killing each other.

You have to be selfish in here... You know, you worry just about, like, 'I've got to get enough food for me to eat today.' You know? But now I'm going to have to worry about me and three other little kids, you know what I mean? When I get out of here.

Interpersonally, men described how prison had prompted them to adopt a frankly transactional approach to human interaction, characterized by hard, unilateral boundaries; hypervigilance; and

a narrow and well-contained emotional range. Some men characterized these as temporary changes that they hoped to leave behind:

When I became incarcerated, I put myself like a chameleon. I adapt to the environment. If the environment changes, I try to change along with the environment. So being incarcerated, I had to change my way of thinking from the outside to the inside, which is not good...when you come to the penitentiary, you expect this, you expect that. You expect people to give you stuff.

It makes you where you don't trust people. In there, everybody's out to get everybody...that's the sh-t that I don't never want to have to feel again. They could be trying to trick you out of your money from your family and they're stealing soap out of your box...That's a mental anguish, like waking up and just looking like, 'My shoes still there?' You know, that's crazy.

Other men framed the prison-related changes in their interpersonal styles as adaptive strengths.

They set themselves apart from people who had never been incarcerated by the fact that they "don't play"; that is, they brought a predetermined set of non-negotiable boundaries or objectives into their interactions with others. Some noted that their lack of vulnerability and strict control over their emotional experiences was important to avoid being exploited by others: "Feelings, that is just one thing that I never did anyway; I don't want anybody to play with my feelings." They expressed pride in the ability to subdue emotion in interpersonal situations and focus on achieving their objectives:

It is all about thinking. I just can't go off on anger or emotion or call to my feelings at that moment...You always have to be thinking. You could lose your life in there. People think it is easy, but you could really lose your life if you are not paying attention to what you are doing. It is like chess.

Where some men prided themselves in what they saw as a more goal-oriented and strategic approach to human interaction, women observed this change in a different light: they perceived their partners as having become highly self-interested, exploitative, and "manipulative." Like men, women characterized these interpersonal habits as adaptations to prison—and did make

some allowances for them as such: “I mean, I can’t expect for him to come from being, from having a selfish mind frame from being incarcerated for four years...to think that he can just immediately come in and be ready to be a full- functioning father, husband.” But both men’s and women’s statements suggested that the more strategic, transactional style men brought to their partnership could readily become damaging to their partners:

I live my life like I’m in jail...Most people that in jail will f-ck you up...I just know that I can’t buck the system out the system...I know I could beat the person mentally before I beat them physically, you feel me?

Women also observed that men’s incarceration experiences had conferred an arbitrary rigidity regarding daily routines; for example, they saw their partners recreating prison-based habits or schedules that were out of alignment with other family members’ domestic needs. Partners of men who had served long or repeated prison sentences frequently described them as “institutionalized,” suggesting that they were incapable of creating or adhering to self-directed or collaborative routines or agreements and only knew how to react to or recreate the absolutist control imposed by a violent government authority.

After release, partners suggested that such men struggled to impose a purposeful structure on their own time, respond to others’ needs, or plan for the future. This often led to asserting uncompromising personal freedom and reacting forcefully and inflexibly to any form of structure, routine, or obligation (including partners’ expressed expectations for reliable household and family participation) that men associated with imprisonment. This combination of poor agreement-keeping and high reactivity created fertile ground for fast-escalating conflict and the eruption of violence. It also contributed to pervasive struggles for interpersonal control (see also “Centrality of struggles for interpersonal control,” above).

Secondary prisonization and the (prisonized) abuse cycle

Men's incarceration experiences not only attenuated both partners' sense of agency and promoted interpersonal styles that were seemingly at odds with mutuality and intimacy; they also defined the terms and conditions under which ostensibly private family relationships were enacted. Consistent with Comfort's concept of "secondary prisonization" (2003), correctional schedules, facility assignments, visitation restrictions, and communications monitoring shaped couples' private interactions and came to govern women's lives as well as men's. For example, many interviewees stated that the tightly restricted conditions under which they interacted with one another during the incarceration kept them from communicating openly about challenges:

Listen, we played an Oscar-winning role in these visiting rooms. You just go with the process. Like, you know what I mean? Like nothing had happened because it's for the kids and shit. Like, that's all. You just — I mean, 'We'll talk about this when I come home'...You just don't talk about that. You just act like, you know, 'I'm glad to see you. How's the kids doing?' You know? And she does the same. And you just don't speak on the rough days because, you know, we'll have a good visit and you only get three hours with your family.

Although adapting to the prison environment in this way enabled couples and their children to maintain some connection during the incarceration, many noted that it prevented them from coping jointly with other shifts in their lives and relationships that the incarceration precipitated. Women deferred their anger about impoverished single parenting during men's confinement and about the concurrent relationships that men often used to meet the needs to which their primary partners could not singlehandedly attend (for example, sending frequent letters, paying to receive collect telephone calls, visiting the prison in person, sending packages, putting money on men's prison accounts, and bringing their other children to visit). Men harbored rage and resentment at women for not being able to manage the higher-frequency contact or more resource-intensive

support that might have made their time in prison more bearable, or for resorting to relationships with other men to provide what incarcerated partners were unable to offer (including physical protection, housing, help with bills, physical intimacy and companionship, or support in raising their children).

Upon the male partner's release, partners often shared information and feelings with one another that they had withheld for long periods, and conflicts erupted over this new material. Released men, often returning to their households in a state of diminished interpersonal capacity, struggled to meet this challenge. One man whom survey reports indicated had both used and experienced physical violence in his relationship described how poorly equipped he was to cope with his partner's feelings:

I let her vent. Like, of course, you got a whole bunch of things to say and a whole bunch of things you feeling and all that. Cool, fine, I understand that. And it's all about me. Cool, fine and all that. I forgive you, I forgave you for all the things you did, you feeling me — I'm just like that type of person, [but] you was beating my ass down...I ain't never dealt with nothing like this in five years so — if I'm going to ask you to like chill, relax, because every time I come in the house, like I was on the edge...Man, I had to go, man. I felt like shit, man. I didn't feel like no man.

The institutionally controlled timing and conditions of men's confinement and release were associated in many couples' stories with distinct cycles of physical violence, controlling behavior, and reprieve—often fostering, suppressing, and then abruptly unleashing forms of relationship conflict that outstripped many couples' coping skills. During the incarceration, it was common for partners to tolerate relationship adversity and to suppress or defer individual needs and wants, citing the belief that everything would be better after the male partner was released. They described little opportunity for physical violence during this time, but controlling

behavior was commonplace. Men occasionally described tolerating manipulative or verbally abusive behavior from their partners during their incarceration because regular contact with the outside world was so valuable to them. Most often, however, interviewees relayed how incarcerated men resorted to controlling behavior to extract as much contact and support as possible from their partners:

People are more controlling in jail than anything. People be on the phone cussing their girls out, threatening them, putting – ‘Put money in this phone.’ Want to talk to them all day on the phone. All day. ‘Why I didn’t get no letter? Why didn’t you answer the phone?’ All that.

He would write me really bad letters because I wasn’t helping him with whatever he needed over there, you know. If I didn’t have money, how am I going send you money or clothes or booze or food or whatever? And, you know, it would hurt because I’m over here — I tried to send him as much as I could, and he still wouldn’t appreciate it. So, what could I do, you know?

Some men backed their demands with threats, accusations, or other verbal abuse, but they also used “jail talk,” a term used by interviewees to describe incarcerated men’s practice of telling women what they believed they might want to hear, including extensive and poetic (but sometimes hollow) expressions of love and commitment to manipulate them into providing ongoing support. Partners were aware of this practice but often looked past this and other actions they perceived as problematic, believing that the relationship would right itself after the incarceration was over:

You know, a lot of [domestic violence] resources that may have been there, I didn’t think we needed until it got so bad and I realized, oh man, you know...I don’t know what may have been out there that maybe we could have looked at. I mean, I think we just put a lot of weight on him coming home, that that was just a cure-all to everything. And it wasn’t.

After men’s release, couples often experienced a brief “honeymoon” period in which both partners focused on celebrating the reunion and suppressing sources of conflict. This period

rarely lasted more than a few days or weeks, after which men described growing frustration with women's imposition of domestic routines and expectations and women recounted a painful and confusing disjuncture between men's "jail talk" and their return to "old patterns," such as substance use or concurrent partnerships. During the reentry period, it was not uncommon for physical violence to erupt in the context of these issues or as part of some men's efforts to assert control of the households to which they returned.

Despite the brutal and draining quality of couples' interactions during reentry, many men and women applied the same spirit to these challenges that had carried them jointly through the incarceration. They gave everything they had to the urgent task of surviving a fresh set of adversities (particularly related to men's economic, domestic, and emotional incapacity) that appeared to be beyond either partner's control. Some conveyed that they persisted through an ugly reentry period precisely *because* the relationship had long been difficult and unrewarding and they could not afford to relinquish their investments just as the possibility of reward (bitterly termed "my happy ending" by one interviewee in a violent and controlling relationship) was on the horizon:

I had a lot of opportunity to walk away when he came home, but because I felt like I had invested all of this time, that I was owed something, [I stayed]... That is a long time. I could have had that time with somebody else that was actually out here, you know what I am saying?

Women, in particular, weighed these sunk costs heavily when deciding to leave or stay—perhaps because of just how steep they had been.

Discussion

Drawing on linked data from 167 incarcerated and reentering men and their intimate and parenting partners, this study examined participants' subjective accounts of their relationships alongside behaviorally specific reports of physical partner violence and interpersonally controlling behavior provided during confidential, ACASI-administered surveys. Results illuminate how the state and structural violence associated with hyper-incarceration shapes understandings and experiences of partner violence among the criminalized and their partners.

Contributions

Conceptual coercion: how hyper-incarceration shapes concepts of abuse and partnership

Understandings of partner violence shape the actions of victims and perpetrators and the responses of their communities (O'Campo et al., 2017). Such understandings are malleable. Concepts of abuse may shift over the life course and even over the course of a single relationship; for example, as individuals adapt to accommodate behavior from a partner that they would have previously considered "over the line" (Rivas et al., 2013). Prior work suggests that these concepts are also shaped by gender-related socialization (O'Campo et al., 2017) and violence norms in the peer group or local community (Holliday et al., 2019; Rennison et al., 2013; Rivas et al., 2013).

The analysis conducted to address the first study research question indicated that the meaning partners made of one another's behaviors and the salience they accorded these behaviors were each strongly influenced by their experiences with the criminal justice system. It revealed the

narrative invisibility of experiences of physical violence between partners; the salience of (heavily gendered) struggles for interpersonal control and domestic authority; and the ways that criminal justice system responses and extractive gender roles shaped participants' concepts of partner violence and of what constituted healthy or acceptable realities in their intimate relationships.

These findings add to growing evidence that encounters with the criminal justice system, and exposure to prison environments in particular, have come to represent an important socialization process and a defining influence on interpersonal norms and expectations among the criminalized, their partners, and the communities in which they live (Comfort, 2012; Lopez-Aguado, 2016; Rios, 2011). Indeed, the explicitly gendered forms of domination and violence to which criminalized men are subjected at the hands of police, correctional officers, and fellow prisoners have much in common with the gendered violence they inflict on women in their homes and communities (SpearIt, 2011). In her excruciatingly precise account of the gendered language and practice of physical domination to which criminalized men are subjected by various agents of the state, Black feminist legal theorist Angela Harris argues that:

The criminal justice system is not only a race-making institution, [it] is also a gender-making institution, and destructive masculinity is a key product. The incorporation of gender violence into the criminal justice system begins with the police... Incarceration, however, most dramatically incorporates gender violence and the most destructive forms of hegemonic masculinity... Violence against women is one predictable consequence of a destructive masculinity that degrades femininity and whose coin is force. (Harris, 2011, pp. 28, 30, 32)

The accounts of formerly incarcerated men and the women with whom they partner and parent suggest that state violence exerts a defining influence on the concept and practice of partner violence—simultaneously trivializing experiences of physically violent victimization and

foregrounding gendered struggles for control in private relationships. The simultaneous conceptual and structural influence of hyper-incarceration also helps to normalize and necessitate women's forced labor in their relationships with criminalized men.

Enacting violence and control across carceral and domestic spaces

Social disorganization theory, the predominant perspective applied in scholarship linking state or structural violence and partner violence (Beyer et al., 2015; Coker & Macquoid, 2015), suggests that concentrated disadvantage in urban communities of color might promote partner violence by eroding traditional social structures and reducing collective efficacy to restrain deviance (e.g., Browning, 2002; Daoud et al., 2017; Kirst et al., 2015). In contrast, focus group research with male targets of hyper-incarcerative state violence and their partners suggests that such experiences affect men's psychological well-being and interpersonal style in ways that make abuse of a partner more likely (Hairston & Oliver, 2011; Holliday et al., 2019; Oliver & Hairston, 2008).

Analysis focused on the second study research question did not identify any themes related to collective efficacy, the erosion of traditional social structures, or other social disorganization related concepts in participants' descriptions of the circumstances surrounding their relationships. However, participants suggested multiple other ways that the violence and control enacted by the state shaped their family lives. Some of these influences are sudden and "traumatizing" (as in violent arrests that took place inside homes and in front of children), while others are slower or more insidious (as in the reorganization of women's lives around maintaining support for their incarcerated partners). The pervasive and overpowering presence of penal authority not only in carceral spaces but also in domestic ones seemed to strip

participants of their sense of personal agency. Some men described a sense of helplessness and hopelessness consistent with the doomed mindset of the Liverpool persisters (Maruna, 2001). Others seemed to channel their otherwise thwarted need for control into attempts at dominating their partners and households. For partners, apparent evidence of men's attenuated personal agency made it difficult to hold them accountable even for highly impactful behaviors in the relationship or family.

Findings suggested various ways that processes of prisonization (Clemmer, 1958) and secondary prisonization (Comfort, 2003) promoted interpersonally violent and controlling behavior and defined the forms those behaviors assumed at different points in the cycle of incarceration and reentry. In the context of prisonized relationship dynamics, women also perpetually deferred their relationship discernment and decision-making (even when faced with severe or repeated experiences of partner violence) in hopes that, once the institutional forces that had conditioned their relationships receded, they would be left with the "happy ending" for which they had heavily sacrificed (Comfort, 2008).

The insights of Multi-site Family Study participants help to illuminate the social and structural continuities between carceral and neighborhood spaces in hyper-incarcerated communities that have been examined in prior work (e.g., Lopez-Aguado, 2016; Wacquant, 2010)—suggesting that the institutional violence and domination enacted by state authorities in carceral spaces is reenacted in domestic ones (see also Nurse's [2004] account of young formerly incarcerated fathers' authoritarian behavior with their children). They also suggest that it is not the weakening of traditional, heteronormative social structures but rather their enhanced functioning in

relationships between criminalized men and their partners that links state violence against men with private violence against women.

Absorbing and concealing the damage of hyper-incarceration

This analysis exposed the substantial emotional, economic, and time burden that men's incarceration and reentry imposed on their intimate and co-parenting partners, as well as the coercive conditions under which that burden was assumed and the abuse that often accompanied it. Findings also highlighted the uncompensated and sometimes dangerous roles women played in attempting to prevent their partners' engagement in criminalized activity and limit further involvement with the criminal justice system. The women who shared their stories as part of the Multi-site Family Study regularly maintained relationships that were abusive, unrewarding and essentially extractive out of a sense of excruciating obligation. Among the predominantly poor women of color who comprised the study sample, the long-term funneling of material and emotional resources to support incarcerated and reentering partners occurred in the context of pervasive state and structural violence that normalized both their continual struggles and men's imprisonment.

In these narratives, intimate and co-parenting relationships absorb and conceal the damages inflicted by criminalization and imprisonment—essentially expanding women's invisible domestic responsibilities to include the labor of managing these additional harms. Writing of the extraction and concealment of women's domestic labor in capitalist economic systems, Silvia Federici suggests that "we are not speaking of a job like other jobs...we are speaking of the most pervasive manipulation, and the subtlest violence that capitalism has ever perpetrated" (Federici, 2012, p. 16). Read through such a lens, the results of this study document how women come to

assume a substantial share of the physical, emotional, interpersonal, and material damages associated with men's incarceration. They also highlight the forms of coercion—both interpersonal and structural—by which this labor is extracted from those who can little afford it.

This understanding builds on prior ethnographic evidence for the private and deeply personal mechanisms by which women assume the “second shift” of housework and the “third shift” of emotionally managing their partners (Hochschild & Machung, 2012) by suggesting how the private field of domestic labor is stretched by the effort to survive hyper-incarceration. The unpaid occupation in which women are broadly and silently engaged is extended, among partners of the criminalized, by the staggering task of remediating the damages inflicted by the state and assuming the social welfare functions it has abdicated. The obligation imposed on this sample of economically struggling women of color to personally compensate for the aftermath of state violence in their partners’ lives was shaped by their affective experiences (e.g., love for their partners, concern for their children’s need for fathering, and awareness of how acutely men would suffer in the absence of continuing support) but also by the tactics of interpersonal control partners used to extract women’s support and the heteronormative expectations imposed by their social networks and the institutions with which they interacted.

The function assigned to poor women of color in the hyper-incarcerative state not only drains scarce time and material resources; it conscripts their physical bodies into a dangerous form of service. In the same essay, Federici writes:

Capital create[d] the housewife to service the male worker physically, emotionally, and sexually, to raise his children, mend his socks, patch up his ego when it is crushed by the work and the social relations (which are relations of loneliness) that capital has reserved for him...The poorer the family [and] the more blows the man gets at work the more his

wife must be trained to absorb them, the more he is allowed to recover his ego at her expense. (Federici, 2012, pp. 17–18)

In the context of hyper-incarceration, it seems, poor women's bodies not only labor; they also absorb the displaced violence and need for control of men whose own physical safety and personal agency has been obliterated by the state. Women's stories suggested that their assumed responsibility for managing men's behavior and keeping them from contact with law enforcement sometimes conflicted with their ability to protect themselves from partner violence. Many continued to attempt to influence their partners away from violence, both within and beyond the relationship, rather than contemplating other courses of action that would have prioritized their own safety. This role put them on the front lines of violent conflicts related to men's community and household reintegration while exacerbating the (already substantial) barriers that women of color face in seeking help for their own victimization (Nnawulezi & Murphy, 2017; Nnawulezi & Sullivan, 2014; Nnawulezi & West, 2018). Those who would have needed help to escape an abusive relationship—as most poor women do—were forced to weigh the consequences for their families of disclosing their partners' potentially criminal behavior (the looming possibility that “the police going to knock on the door as you are going out”) against the value of whatever support they might receive.

Limitations

This study was subject to several limitations. To protect the safety of interview participants in a couples-based, longitudinal study, the Multi-site Family Study qualitative interview protocol did not include direct questioning about experiences of partner violence. Many participants opted to disclose experiences with partner violence in response to detailed questions about challenges and conflicts in their relationships, how their relationships had been affected by incarceration and

reentry, what they felt constituted a healthy or unhealthy relationship, and what had influenced their decisions to stay in or leave their own relationships. Interviewers were briefed in advance on how participants had responded to survey questions on partner violence and they created conversational space for such experiences to be shared at the participant's discretion; however, they did not directly question individuals who opted not to disclose. This precaution was intended to bolster the prerogative of victims to choose whether and when it was safe or advantageous to share their experiences; by definition, respecting this victim prerogative meant that perspectives on partner violence would not be elicited from every study participant who had experienced it. As such, the analysis presented here omits the perspectives of those who chose not to discuss their experiences with the interviewer, whom other research suggests might be those whose acute safety or privacy concerns (whether related to victimization, criminal justice system involvement, or both) made disclosure in the interview undesirable (Johnson et al., 2014).

In addition, in an effort to bring the lived experiences and perspectives of individuals affected by hyper-incarceration to bear on questions about the link between partner violence and state-sponsored forms of violence and control, this study focused on the perceived causal relationships and narrative associations evident in a set of qualitative accounts. While these results suggest the presence of causal associations, they do not support causal inference.

Directions for Future Work

The pathways from state and structural violence to partner violence that this study suggests should be tested using longitudinal, quantitative data (a task undertaken in Chapters 6 and 7). In addition, future empirical work should examine whether the relationship dynamics documented among former prisoners and their partners contribute to known racial and socioeconomic

disparities in partner violence victimization (Black et al., 2011; Golden et al., 2013) or help-seeking (Cheng & Lo, 2015). This research agenda could help the field to move beyond the relatively narrow focus on social disorganization theory that has dominated empirical work on the influence of hyper-incarceration and other forms of structural violence on partner violence in poor, urban communities of color (Beyer et al., 2015; Voith, 2019). In so doing, it could help to make possible a more empirically grounded and precise formulation of the social ecological perspective on partner violence (Assari, 2013; Heise, 1998) that also responds to critical theoretical work on state and structural violence.

In addition, further research is needed to explore the possibility, suggested by this analysis, that a part of the public duty to prevent and respond to criminalized activity and rehabilitate individuals exposed to state violence is being absorbed into the larger body of women's uncompensated domestic labor. The distinctly private form of "violence work" (Seigel, 2018, p. 16) described by Multi-site Family Study participants—rather than being the province of paid government employees—is quietly and coercively extracted from the poor women of color who are disproportionately attached to imprisoned and criminalized men. Research on this phenomenon would benefit from applying intersectional feminist theoretical perspectives on the gendered and racialized development, maintenance, and contestation of the public-private divide (Bhattacharjee, 2006; Federici, 2012; Houston, 2014; Roberts, 2016) that supports both the extraction and concealment of such labor. Continued inquiry at this troubled intersection of carceral and domestic spheres is essential if we are to ensure that the forms of government intervention we deploy to prevent and respond to violence are, indeed, protecting the vulnerable.

Table 1. Characteristics of Multi-site Family Study Qualitative Sample

	Men (n=83)	Women (n=84)
Age		
Age at study enrollment (mean)	33.7 years	32.6 years
Race/ethnicity		
Black	65%	66%
White	28%	25%
Hispanic/Latin@	7%	6%
Another race*	10%	2%
Multiracial	4%	4%
Relationship with Survey Partner		
Relationship status		
Married	25%	18%
In an intimate relationship	71%	70%
In a co-parenting relationship only	4%	12%
Relationship duration (mean)	9.1 years	7.9 years
Parenting/ Co-parenting Characteristics		
Number of children (mean)	2.3	2.3
Number of co-parents (mean)	3.1	2.2
Co-parent any children w/survey partner	90%	93%
History of Criminal Justice Involvement		
Age at first arrest (mean)	17 years	NA
Number of lifetime arrests (mean)	13.23	1.74
Prior adult incarcerations (mean)	5.3	NA
Time served at study enrollment (median)	2.5 years	NA
Current incarceration term (median)	6.0 years	NA

*“Another race” included American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Asian, or self-description by the respondent as “some other race.”

Chapter 6: Pathways from Criminal Justice System Exposure to Partner Violence Perpetration in an Era of Mass Incarceration

Abstract

Several studies have found very high rates of partner violence in samples of couples affected by incarceration. Qualitative research suggests that criminal justice system exposure might promote partner violence perpetration via behavioral health issues and a prison-adapted interpersonal style (Hairston & Oliver, 2011; Holliday et al., 2019; Oliver & Hairston, 2008; see also Chapter 5 of this thesis), but these relationships have not been tested quantitatively. The current study applied structural equation modeling with couples-based survey data from participants in the Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting, and Partnering to test hypothesized pathways from several dimensions of criminal justice system exposure to later partner violence perpetration. Fitted models showed that, controlling for violent criminal conviction, childhood criminal justice system exposure predicts men's adult post-traumatic stress symptoms, reactivity, and non-cooperativeness. Post-traumatic stress and non-cooperativeness, in turn, predict partner violence perpetration via poorer couple conflict dynamics. Reactivity predicts partner violence perpetration directly. Lifetime criminal justice system exposure predicts men's post-release alcohol and other drug problems, which predict partner violence perpetration directly and via dysfunctional couple conflict. These findings offer preliminary support for the possibility that criminal justice system exposure could influence later partner violence perpetration and that the accumulation and developmental timing of such exposure matters.

Introduction

Partner violence is the single most common form of interpersonal violence in the United States (Sumner et al., 2015). In a given year, 1 in 20 individuals in the general population experiences

victimization by an intimate partner (Breiding, 2015). Among individuals returning from prison and their partners, rates appear much higher: roughly ten times the general-population rate in several large-sample studies (McKay, Landwehr et al., 2018; Western, 2004; Wildeman, 2012b). Prior work suggests at least two plausible explanations for this phenomenon. One is that criminal justice system exposure in the context of mass incarceration makes people more likely to use violence against a partner. Another is that generally violent individuals are more likely to become incarcerated or otherwise involved with the criminal justice system (for engaging in violent crime) and also more likely to use violence against their partners.

Drawing on data from the Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering, this study examines the first possibility (that criminal justice system exposure predicts partner violence) while controlling for the alternative (that both criminal justice system exposure and partner violence perpetration are independently related to involvement in violent crime). Analyses demonstrate several significant indirect effects of criminal justice system exposure on later partner violence perpetration. Controlling for violent criminal conviction, childhood criminal justice system exposure predicts men's adult post-traumatic stress symptoms, reactivity, and non-cooperativeness. Post-traumatic stress and non-cooperativeness predicts their partner violence perpetration via poorer couple conflict dynamics; reactivity predicts partner violence perpetration directly. Lifetime criminal justice system exposure predicts men's post-release alcohol and other drug problems, which predicts partner violence perpetration directly and via poorer couple conflict dynamics. Fitted models suggest that criminal justice system exposure could promote partner violence perpetration and that the developmental timing and accumulation of criminal justice system exposures over the life course matters in shaping such outcomes.

Background

Mass Incarceration as State Violence

The expanded imposition of incarceration in the United States (Clear & Frost, 2015) has brought its aftermath home to an unprecedented number of families. The racially and socioeconomically targeted regime of “hyper-incarceration” (Wacquant, 2001) maintained in the United States over the last four decades requires the routine use of physical force and weaponized coercion against civilians by criminal justice system personnel. Millions of Americans have been exposed to this historically and internationally exceptional (Drakulich et al., 2012; Wildeman, 2016) mobilization of state violence (Bryant-Davis et al., 2017; Seigel, 2018; Smith, 2016).

Representative research finds that almost half of Americans have experienced the incarceration of an immediate family member, and one in five women has faced a partner’s incarceration (Enns et al., 2019). Among unmarried new mothers in major American cities, 44 percent report that the father of their child was incarcerated sometime in the last three years (Jones, 2013).

Despite longstanding theoretical and clinical recognition of the catastrophic effects of state violence exposure on family systems (e.g., Weingarten, 2004), the psychological and interpersonal aftermath of broad, population-scale exposure to state violence in the context of mass incarceration has been little studied.

Partner Violence in Populations Exposed to State Violence

In other populations exposed to state violence, its aftermath has included a set of physiological, psychological, and cultural disruptions often collectively referred to as historical or cultural trauma (Brave Heart, 2000; Brave Heart et al., 2011; Eyerman, 2001; Kellerman, 2001).

Theoretical work on these collective traumas proposes that the distinct package of experiences associated with state violence exposure might contribute to partner violence perpetration (Burnette, 2015). This theory has not been rigorously tested but appears consistent with some empirical findings in state violence-exposed populations. For example, research among refugees of Rwandan (Verduin et al., 2013) and Sudanese (Meffert & Marmar, 2009) genocides and among Lebanese survivors of the Israeli-Hezbollah War (Usta et al., 2008) suggests that state violence exposure under conditions of war and genocide is associated with a steep increase in the prevalence of post-traumatic stress symptoms. Post-traumatic stress, in turn, is associated with elevated risk of interpersonal violence among survivors, particularly partner violence perpetration. Among combat veterans, too, exposure to wartime violence may promote partner violence perpetration. Current evidence does not support causal claims, but partner violence perpetration is up to three times as common among active-duty military personnel and veterans (Heyman & Neidig, 1999; Marshall et al., 2005) as in the general population. In one study, within-sample differences in partner violence perpetration among combat veterans were accounted for primarily by post-traumatic stress (Jordan et al., 1992), suggesting a similar potential mechanism from state violence exposure to partner violence perpetration as among civilian survivors of war and genocide. Whether such pathways are evident among the survivors of mass incarceration has not been examined.

Criminal Justice System Exposure, Behavioral Health, and “Prisonization”

Prior research points to several pathways by which exposure to the violence of arrest, detention, or imprisonment might promote the use of violence against a partner. Behavioral health theory and research ties an array of mental health conditions and alcohol and substance use problems to

elevated risk for partner violence perpetration (Cheng & Lo, 2016; Dutton & White, 2012; Faulk, 1974; Hahn et al., 2015; Jackson et al., 2015; Reingle et al., 2014; White & Chen, 2002).

Behavioral health conditions are highly prevalent among incarcerated individuals (Fazel et al., 2017; Fazel & Danesh, 2002; Hirschtritt & Binder, 2017; James & Glaze, 2006) and imprisonment does appear to promote certain behavioral health problems, including mood disorders (Schnittker et al., 2012). While the complex relationship between incarceration and other criminal justice system encounters and poor behavioral health is still being elucidated, it is possible that the high-level (and often chronic) stress exposure associated with arrest, detention imprisonment, and reentry may worsen behavioral health (Massoglia & Pridemore, 2015; Sewell & Jefferson, 2016; Sugie & Turney, 2017; Toch & Adams, 2002; Travis et al., 2014; Turney et al., 2013; Wildeman & Wang, 2017). Extremely high-stress conditions of confinement, such as solitary confinement, appear particularly corrosive to behavioral health (Haney, 2018; Kupers, 1996; Kupers, 2017; Wildeman et al., 2018). Certain stress-induced or stress-responsive behavioral health conditions (including post-traumatic stress and alcohol and drug problems (Bates, 2018)) are, in turn, strongly associated with partner violence perpetration (Barrett et al., 2014; Breet et al., 2019; Crane et al., 2014; Hahn et al., 2015; Reingle et al., 2014).

Prisons also demand intensive social and interpersonal adaptations from their inhabitants, characterized by theorist Donald Clemmer as “prisonization” (Clemmer, 1958). Qualitative and qualitative research suggests that the experience of incarceration prompts reactivity and distancing in interpersonal relationships (Haney, 2003; McCorkle, 1992; Wildeman et al., 2014). Among couples interviewed for the Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering (“Multi-site Family Study”), this set of interpersonal adaptations was often referred to

by interviewees as becoming “institutionalized” (see Chapter 5). One aspect of the “institutionalized” interpersonal style described by affected individuals, reactivity (a tendency to respond impulsively to stimuli), is a known predictor of partner violence perpetration (Caetano et al., 2008; Romero-Martínez et al., 2019; Schafer et al., 2004; Shorey et al., 2011; Yakubovich et al., 2018). Whether other aspects of the “institutionalized” interpersonal style, such as noncooperativeness (including the unwillingness to adjust one’s own actions to accommodate others’ needs, to depend on others, or to be depended upon), might predict partner violence perpetration has not been studied.

Couple Conflict Dynamics and Partner Violence

Qualitative research documents unique relationship dynamics among different-sex couples affected by the male partner’s incarceration (Comfort, 2008; Comfort et al., 2018; Fishman, 1990; Fishman, 1988). Men returning home after imprisonment sometimes approach communication and conflict with their partners in ways that promote escalation into violence (Bobbit et al., 2011; Hairston & Oliver, 2006, 2011; Oliver & Hairston, 2008). Prior qualitative and quantitative research suggests that these conflict dynamics may stem, in part, from the lingering effects of men’s criminal justice system exposure on their behavioral health and ways of relating. Multi-site Family Study qualitative interviews suggested that incarceration experiences not only shaped men’s social and interpersonal experiences outside the home; rather, an “institutionalized” interpersonal style also altered their domestic interactions. Even with partners and children, men struggled with hypervigilance and impulsivity; hard, unilateral boundaries; and difficulty compromising or keeping agreements (see Chapter 5).

Research on partner violence typologies, including a latent class analysis of partner violence

types among couples affected by incarceration (see Chapter 4), suggests that most acts of partner violence occur in the context of escalated conflict without an underlying pattern of controlling behavior (known as situational couple violence in Johnson's typology). Prior research in other populations suggests that such violence is behaviorally and etiologically distinct from violence that is used by one partner as part of a concerted effort to gain control over the other (Johnson's coercive controlling violence) (Hodes & Mennicke, 2019; Johnson, 1995, 2008). Situational couple violence might well be precipitated or exacerbated by the kinds of dysfunctional couple conflict described by reentering men and their partners in qualitative studies.

Measuring Criminal Justice System Exposure

Measuring the effects of criminal justice system exposure on later partner violence perpetration requires clarity about what forms of such exposure matter. Research on the collateral consequences of mass incarceration focuses largely on the influence of being incarcerated or of having a criminal record (Kirk & Wakefield, 2018; Travis et al., 2014). Conditions of confinement are rarely assessed, despite evident variation in such conditions (Wildeman et al., 2018). Scholars of incarceration and family life have suggested that differences in conditions of confinement might matter for efforts to maintain intimate relationships (Uggen, 2016), but there is very limited empirical work on this possibility. Studies of incarceration's consequences for families also regularly fail to capture the duration or timing of the imprisonment or the type of crime for which it was imposed—omissions that might tend to wash out differences between those whose criminalized activities negatively affected their family members (for example, violence or substance abuse) and those targeted for minor offenses on the basis of race (Haskins & Lee, 2016). In addition, other forms of criminal justice system contact such as arrest,

conviction, and jail imprisonment have been shown to erode individual health and well-being (Fernandes, 2019; Sugie & Turney, 2017; Turney & Conner, 2019) and destabilize family relationships (e.g., Comfort, 2016), but collateral consequences of these encounters are more rarely studied.

Research on collateral consequences of criminal justice system involvement also tends to focus on the singular forms or instances of criminal justice system contact; for example, a term of imprisonment. Unless such studies identify samples that are naïve to criminal justice system contact, they may only succeed in capturing the additive consequences of this singular contact beyond any consequences of prior exposures. Experiences of arrest, conviction, detention, and incarceration might also reverberate differently for individuals and families depending on their developmental timing and whether they occur in the context of a lifetime of criminal justice system contact or are isolated events in the life course. Life-course criminological theory proposes that involvement in criminalized activity is profoundly shaped by trajectories of human development and individual and family milestone attainment (Laub et al., 1998; Sampson & Laub, 1995, 2016). Applied to criminal justice system involvement, it suggests that the timing, nature and accumulation of criminal justice system contacts over a lifetime would shape their collateral consequences for the criminalized. Indeed, arrest, conviction, and incarceration have contingent and cumulative effects on outcomes within and beyond the criminal justice system (Kurlychek & Johnson, 2019; Patterson & Wildeman, 2015). As such, it is possible that childhood criminal justice system exposures, lifetime adult criminal justice system exposures, and the conditions of one's most recent imprisonment might each shape partner violence perpetration in distinct ways. Prior work has not examined this possibility.

“Generally Violent” Individuals and Partner Violence

Many psychological theories of partner violence perpetration converge on the idea that some individuals are “generally violent”: they use violence against their partners and also against those outside the family (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994). Evidence from clinical and service provider samples supports this theory, finding that those who commit the most severe violence against their partners also tend to be violent and aggressive outside the home, including engaging in violent crime (Hamberger et al., 1996; Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 2000; Waltz et al., 2000). Since over half (55%) of state prisoners are serving time for violent crimes (Bronson & Carson, 2019), the association between incarceration or other criminal justice system exposure and later partner violence perpetration could be a spurious one. That is, it is possible that an underlying propensity to use violence prompts some individuals’ criminal justice system exposure as well as their partner violence perpetration.

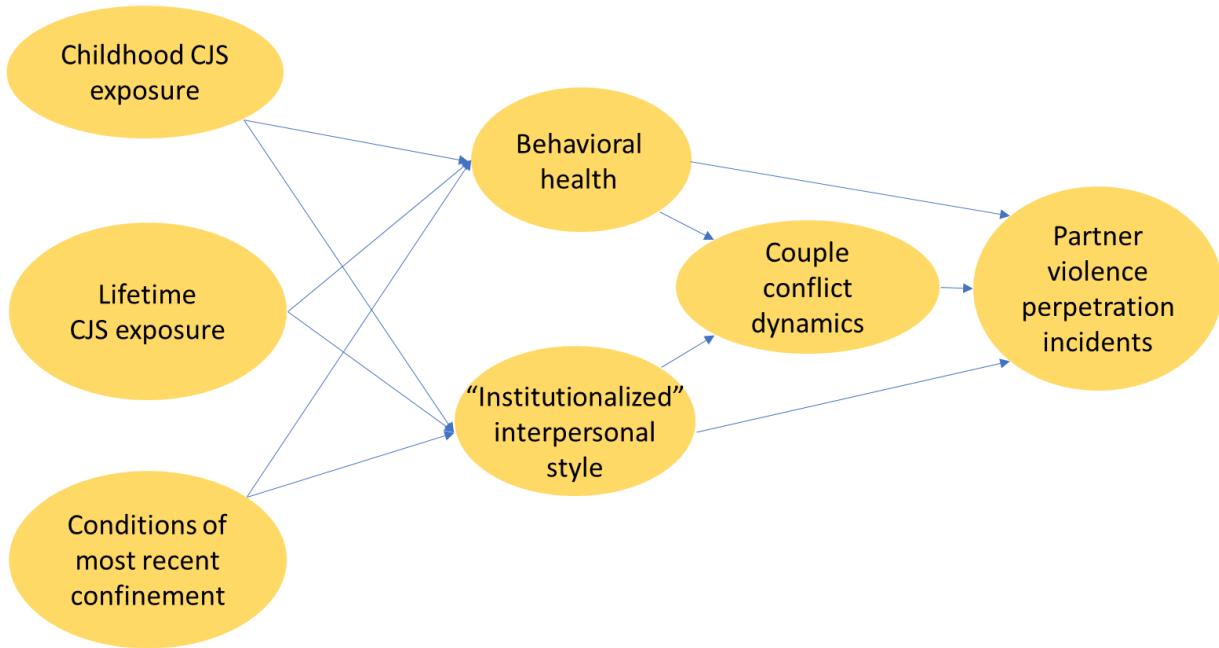
Current Study Contribution

The prior work summarized here suggests two hypotheses that will be tested in the current study:

1. Men’s criminal justice system exposure predicts behavioral health problems, which predict directly and indirectly (via couple conflict dynamics) their later use of violence against their partners.
2. Men’s criminal justice system exposure promotes an “institutionalized” interpersonal style, predict directly and indirectly (via couple conflict dynamics) their later use of violence against their partners.

Figure 1 depicts the two hypothesized pathways.

Figure 1. Generalized Model of Pathways from Criminal Justice System Exposure to Partner Violence



This study applies structural equation modeling with longitudinal data from criminal justice system-involved men and their partners to assess each of these proposed pathways. This method makes it possible to test the hypothesized relationships among criminal justice system exposure, proposed individual and couple-level mediators, and partner violence perpetration while controlling for violent criminal conviction and adjusting for measurement error.

Methods

Data Source

The Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering ("Multi-site Family Study") recruited 1,991 incarcerated men and 1,482 of their intimate or co-parenting partners from five states. Eligible men were incarcerated in state prison at the time of enrollment and had to identify as being in a committed intimate or co-parenting relationship with a different-sex

partner (see Lindquist, Steffey et al., 2018 for further detail).⁹ They were consented and interviewed first. Interviewers then contacted the women whom men identified as their partners and invited them to participate. Each couple member was interviewed separately at baseline and again 9, 18, and (in the largest two study sites) 34 months later; most male participants were released at some point during study follow-up. Surveys lasted approximately 90 minutes and covered participants' family lives and involvement with the criminal justice system; sensitive questions, including those about partner violence, were answered via audio computer-assisted self-interviewing. Response rates for returning prisoners and their partners generally held at or above 75 percent for each interview wave.

A subset of 167 respondents participated in a 90-minute qualitative interview around the time of the male partner's release from prison. Drawing on their survey responses, interviewees were asked about their partnership and parenting experiences over the course of incarceration and reentry. Deidentified verbatim transcripts were prepared and recordings (and all other identifiers) were subsequently destroyed. Protocols were approved by the United States Office for Human Research Protections, state departments of correction, and an Institutional Review Board at RTI International. The current study, which used deidentified survey and qualitative interview data, was determined not to constitute research with human subjects as defined by the *United States Code of Federal Regulations* (45 CFR 46, 102).

Measures

⁹ Male participants were incarcerated for a wide variety of criminalized acts, including some for domestic violence. Although the study protocol entailed separate, confidential interviews with each couple member, individuals subject to a restraining order prohibiting contact with their partners were excluded to protect victim safety.

Criminal justice system exposure. Three dimensions of men's criminal justice system exposure were measured with self-report items: childhood criminal justice system exposure (including age at first arrest, number of parents, parent figures, or grandparents arrested, and number of stays in juvenile detention); lifetime criminal justice system exposure (including lifetime number of arrests, convictions, and adult prison or jail incarcerations); and conditions of the most recent confinement (including duration, number of transfers, and days spent in solitary confinement).

Behavioral health. Men's self-reported post-traumatic stress symptoms were captured using a composite based on the four-item Primary Care PTSD Screen (Prins et al., 2004) and two individual items on fearfulness and preoccupation. For all three variables, higher values indicated worse symptoms. Self-reported alcohol and other drug problems were measured with two composites based on the CAGE 5-item problem drinking questionnaire and 4-item problem drug use questionnaire (Mayfield et al., 1974) and a single item indicating how often the respondent experienced anger problems when drinking or using drugs. For all three items, higher values indicated greater problems.

Interpersonal style. Two dimensions of "institutionalized" interpersonal style were measured with self-report items. Reactivity was measured using three Likert-type items (such as, "You often respond quickly and emotionally when something happens") and non-cooperativeness was measured with three Likert-type items (such as, "People involved with you have to learn how to do things your way"). For each of the variables, higher values indicated greater reactivity or non-cooperativeness.

Couple conflict dynamics. Couple conflict dynamics were measured using five self-reported items that captured how often the couple was able to manage conflict in non-destructive ways

(for example, maintaining a sense of humor when arguing, not letting small issues escalate), with higher values indicating healthier conflicts. Women's reports were used, based on prior work suggesting that women's reports of family relationship dynamics may be more accurate than those of their male partners (McKay et al., 2019).

Physical partner violence perpetration. Men's physical violence perpetration with their study partners was measured at each post-release wave using items on physical violence from the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus et al., 1996). Both couple members were asked separately about their own and their partner's use of violence, including how many times one partner shoved, hit, slapped, grabbed, threw something at, strangled, slammed, kicked, burned, or beat the other; used a knife or gun on the other; or forced the other to have sex by hitting, holding down, or using a weapon. A composite variable representing incidents of physical partner violence perpetration by the male partner across post-release interview waves was constructed from both partners' reports.

Analytic Approach

To test the study hypotheses shown in Figure 1, a set of structural equation models was constructed using Stata 15.1 (StataCorp., 2018). For computational feasibility and ease of interpretation, the paths shown in the generalized model were tested in four structural equation models (two of which pertained to each of the study hypotheses):

1. Criminal justice system exposure to post-traumatic stress symptoms to (poorer) couple conflict dynamics to partner violence perpetration (Hypothesis 1)
2. Criminal justice system exposure to alcohol or other drug problems to (poorer) couple

conflict dynamics to partner violence perpetration (Hypothesis 1)

3. Criminal justice system exposure to reactivity to (poorer) couple conflict dynamics to partner violence perpetration (Hypothesis 2)
4. Criminal justice system exposure to non-cooperativeness to (poorer) couple conflict dynamics to partner violence perpetration (Hypothesis 2)

Models took advantage of multiple waves of Multi-site Family Study data; constructs in each model were operationalized in a manner that reflected their temporal position in the hypothesized sequence of events. Each model controlled for whether the male partner was incarcerated for a violent crime. Models also controlled for the age of each couple member, based on robust associations between younger age and partner violence perpetration and victimization (Yakubovich et al., 2018). Full information maximum likelihood procedures (Arbuckle et al., 1996) were used, retaining all available observations. Standard errors were estimated using the observed information matrix method. A review of histograms indicated that several of the indicators of couple conflict dynamics violated the assumption of multivariate normality. As anticipated by Allison (1987), however, re-estimating all models using a Satorra-Bentler correction (robust to non-normality) produced very similar results.

Each model was tested in the basic form suggested by the two study hypotheses. Adjustments to the models focused on achieving convergence (e.g., adjusting starting values); additional controls or other parameters were not added to improve fit. Absolute model fit was assessed using standardized root mean squared residuals (SRMR). Monte-Carlo simulation results indicate that the SRMR retains accuracy across model sizes, sample sizes, and data normality or non-normality (Maydeu-Olivares et al., 2018). Chi squared estimates, and p values for those

estimates, were also examined. However, the chi squared test can be expected to reject the null hypothesis even for well-fitting models with samples of more than 200 cases, as in the current study. Relative model fit was assessed using the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA). RMSEA is stable across sample sizes and estimation methods (Fan et al., 1999) and recommended for confirmatory modeling and larger samples (Rigdon, 2009), as in the current study. Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis Fit Index (TLI) were also examined. All model statistics were compared to empirically based cutoffs (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Sample Characteristics

This analysis focuses on 1,112 Multi-site Family Study couples for whom complete baseline data were available. As shown in Table 1, the sample was diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, with relatively low levels of formal education. Men had long histories of criminal justice system involvement (since a mean age of 17). Both men and women were typically in their early thirties at baseline and had been together for a mean of 8 years. Partner violence was widespread, with over 40 percent of men and women reporting physical violence in the relationship at baseline.

[Table 1 about here]

Results

Criminal Justice System Exposure Predicts Partner Violence via Behavioral Health

To address the first hypothesis, structural equation models were constructed for pathways from criminal justice system exposure to partner violence perpetration via behavioral health and couple conflict dynamics. Three dimensions of criminal justice system exposure were included

as latent variables: childhood exposure (including parent, parent figure, or grandparent arrest, age first arrested, and number of juvenile detention stays); lifetime exposure (including number of arrests, convictions, and adult incarcerations); and conditions of confinement (including the duration, number of transfers, and number of days in solitary confinement during the most recent incarceration). Models tested whether these three criminal justice system exposure constructs predicted later physical partner violence via two aspects of behavioral health: post-traumatic stress symptoms (Model 1) and alcohol or other drug problems (Model 2), each of which was treated as an endogenous latent variable. These models tested whether behavioral health predicted partner violence perpetration directly and via couple conflict dynamics (an endogenous latent variable).

Structural regression coefficients, coefficients of determination, and absolute and relative fit statistics for Model 1 and Model 2 appear in Table 2. In Model 1, childhood criminal justice system exposure predicted adult post-traumatic stress symptoms, which predicted (poorer) couple conflict dynamics, which in turn predicted partner violence perpetration after the male partner's release from prison. Other aspects of criminal justice system exposure (cumulative lifetime exposure and conditions of confinement) did not predict post-traumatic stress, and post-traumatic stress did not directly predict partner violence perpetration. The variance in incidents of post-release partner violence perpetration that was accounted for by criminal justice system exposure in Model 1 was 0.982.

In Model 2, lifetime criminal justice system exposure predicted alcohol and other drug problems, which predicted (poorer) couple conflict dynamics, which in turn predicted physical partner violence perpetration after the male partner's release from prison. Alcohol and other drug

problems also exerted a direct effect on partner violence perpetration. Other aspects of criminal justice system exposure did not predict alcohol and other drug problems. The variance in partner violence perpetration at follow-up that was accounted for by criminal justice system exposure at baseline was 0.979 for this model.

[Table 2 about here]

Exact and approximate fit statistics for Model 1 and Model 2 appear in Table 3. As shown, SRMR was .060 for the model assessing mediation via post-traumatic stress, indicating adequate absolute fit relative to the recommended cutoff of .08. (SRMR for the model assessing mediation via alcohol and other drug problems could not be calculated due to missing values.) RMSEA values (.053 for each model) were at or below the recommended cutoff of .060, indicating adequate fit. However, chi squared values for each model were statistically significant and CFI and TLI were below the recommended minimum of 0.95.

[Table 3 about here]

Criminal Justice System Exposure Predicts Partner Violence via Interpersonal Style

To test hypothesis two, structural equation models were constructed for pathways from criminal justice system exposure to partner violence perpetration via “institutionalized” interpersonal style and couple conflict dynamics. As for hypothesis one, three dimensions of criminal justice system exposure (childhood exposure, lifetime exposure, and conditions of confinement) were included as exogenous latent variables. Models assessed whether these three constructs predicted later physical partner violence via two distinct aspects of “institutionalized” interpersonal style: reactivity (Model 3) and non-cooperativeness (Model 4), each of which was included as an

endogenous latent variable. These models tested whether reactivity and non-cooperativeness predicted partner violence perpetration directly and via couple conflict dynamics.

Structural regression coefficients, coefficients of determination, and absolute and relative fit statistics for Model 3 and Model 4 appear in Table 4. In Model 3, men's childhood criminal justice system exposure predicted their adult reactivity, which in turn predicted their physical partner violence perpetration after release from prison. No significant indirect effect of reactivity on physical partner violence perpetration via couple conflict dynamics was observed. Other aspects of criminal justice system exposure (lifetime exposure and conditions of confinement) did not predict reactivity.

In Model 4, childhood criminal justice system exposure predicted adult non-cooperativeness, which predicted physical partner violence perpetration via (poorer) couple conflict dynamics. No direct association was observed between non-cooperativeness and partner violence perpetration in the primary model.¹⁰ Other aspects of criminal justice system exposure did not predict non-cooperativeness. As shown in the table, the variance in partner violence perpetration at follow-up that was accounted for by criminal justice system exposure was 0.983 for each model.

[Table 4 about here]

Exact and approximate model fit statistics for Model 3 and Model 4 are shown in Table 5. SRMR values (.059 for both models) were below the recommended cutoff of .080, indicating

¹⁰ In the alternate model that used listwise deletion and included a Satorra-Bentler correction, a weak but statistically significant direct association (Beta = .053, $p = .049$) was observed between non-cooperative interpersonal style and partner violence perpetration.

adequate absolute fit. RMSEA values (.052 for Model 3 and .053 for Model 4) were at or below the recommended cutoff of .060, indicating that relative fit was also adequate. As with models one and two, however, chi squared values for each model were statistically significant and CFI and TLI were below the recommended minimum of 0.95.

[Table 5 about here]

As shown in the tables, conditions of confinement during the most recent incarceration did not significantly predict later partner violence (directly or indirectly) in any of the models. Re-running the models with a subsample of individuals with fewer than four prior incarcerations produced steep increases in the regression coefficients leading from conditions of the most recent confinement to behavioral health (for example, an 18-fold increase in the structural regression coefficient for the influence of conditions of confinement on post-traumatic stress) but these relationships remained non-significant.

Discussion

Key Findings

The possibility that mass incarceration might exacerbate interpersonal violence has been theorized (Clear, 2002; Coker & Macquoid, 2015; Morenoff & Harding, 2014; Western, 2015) but thinly studied. The current analysis used structural equation modeling to test potential pathways from criminal justice system exposure to partner violence in a sample of men who were imprisoned at the height of American mass incarceration. All four models showed that differences in criminal justice system exposure explained some of the variation in men's partner violence perpetration after release from prison. These relationships held while controlling for

violent criminal conviction, suggesting that the high rates of partner violence perpetration observed in prior research with criminal justice system-involved samples (McKay, Landwehr et al., 2018; Western, 2004; Wildeman, 2012b) are not exclusively an artefact of an underlying, generalized tendency toward violence.

The developmental timing of criminal justice system exposure mattered in considering its effects on partner violence. Multiple pathways from childhood criminal justice system exposure to partner violence were statistically significant. In contrast, lifetime criminal justice system exposure influenced partner violence perpetration only via alcohol and other drug problems, and conditions of the most recent confinement did not significantly predict later partner violence perpetration in any model. In a sample with extensive histories of criminal justice system involvement, then, the predictive value of the most recent incarceration experience for partner violence perpetration is quite limited (when controlling for other aspects of criminal justice system exposure).

Results suggest that couple conflict dynamics play an important mediating role in this population, linking addiction, post-traumatic stress, and a non-cooperative interpersonal style (each of which was influenced by criminal justice system exposure) to partner violence perpetration. Not all effects on partner violence occurred via dysfunctional couple conflict, however. Men's reactivity and addiction problems each affected partner violence directly. Findings also highlight the role of "institutionalized" interpersonal style—described by reentering men and their partners in prior qualitative research as a mode of interacting used by individuals who have spent extensive or developmentally significant periods of their lives in confinement—in shaping couple conflict dynamics and partner violence perpetration. Overall,

the models lend initial support to each of the two major pathways suggested by prior qualitative and quantitative research.

Limitations

This study is affected by several major limitations and interpretive constraints. The 1,112 Multi-site Family Study couples on whom it focused consisted of men incarcerated in state prison at study baseline and their intimate and co-parenting partners. These couples are not representative of the general United States population nor of all Americans involved with the criminal justice system. As such, results cannot be generalized to a broader population. They are, however, useful in understanding relationships among criminal justice system exposure, partner violence, and more proximal precursors of violence among men with extensive criminal justice system histories.

Second, this analysis did not include a counterfactual strategy. The observed direct and indirect “effects” of criminal justice system exposure on partner violence perpetration represent conditional correlations, not causal effects. However, the use of data from four waves of longitudinal surveys represents a valuable contribution. Unlike in structural equation models using cross-sectional data, in this study each construct in the proposed pathways was operationalized in a manner that reflected its temporal position in the hypothesized sequence of events; this lends greater credibility to the idea that the relationships observed in fitted models might indicate the presence of the hypothesized pathways.

Third, this study tested hypotheses gleaned from qualitative studies with criminal justice system-involved men and their partners (including Multi-site Family Study participants) and earlier

studies with survivors of state violence. While Multi-site Family Study survey data did include valid measures of most constructs of interest, they were not collected for this purpose. The “number of adult incarcerations” variable combined jail and prison stays, despite evidence for their distinct consequences (Harrington, 2008). Other constructs, such as reactivity and conditions of confinement, were operationalized in the current analysis using sets of survey items that have not been psychometrically validated for that purpose. The adequate but not excellent fit of these models (as indicated by approximate fit statistics) highlights the need to further develop validated measures of criminal justice system exposure (Yan & Cantor, 2019).

Response error in survey items intended to capture criminal justice system exposure is likely exacerbated by the cognitive demand of recalling such experiences given an average of 6 lifetime incarcerations and often dozens of arrests beginning in childhood (compared, for example, to the cognitive demand of answering similar questions for a member of the general population for whom an arrest experience might be highly salient, memorable, and easy to parse). Further, among individuals and households subject to ongoing parole monitoring and the prospect of a swift return to prison for engaging in any illicit activity, the social desirability bias associated with responses to survey items on criminalized behaviors (e.g., substance use) is likely also exacerbated. (For a parallel discussion of challenges measuring employment and earnings among those with unstable workforce attachment and low incomes, see Mathiowetz et al., 2002.)

Despite its limitations, the study has some methodological strengths. Analysis of longitudinal, couples-based data—rare in partner violence research—enabled appropriate temporal ordering of exogenous and endogenous variables and robust operationalization of partner violence outcomes (incorporating both partners’ reports of physical violence incidents perpetrated by the male

partner across multiple post-release follow-up waves). Notable in research on collateral consequences of mass incarceration (which is often affected by unobserved variable bias), this analysis exploited a rich dataset with a broad panel of indicator variables and the ability to control for the male partner's involvement in violent crime and both partners' ages.

Amid persistent challenges in addressing selection into incarceration in research on the collateral consequences of mass incarceration (Kirk & Wakefield, 2018), this analysis took a novel approach: namely, comparing outcomes among a sample of men who had all experienced a recent incarceration but who were quite heterogeneous with regard to the conditions of their most recent imprisonment, their cumulative lifetime criminal justice system exposure, and their childhood criminal justice system exposure. Including three latent variables for criminal justice system exposure in each model made it possible to examine how much of the variation in men's later experiences and behaviors was explained by each of these dimensions while controlling for the others.

The data and method also offered a unique opportunity to test a set of hypotheses drawn from the qualitative insights of those directly affected by criminal justice system exposure and partner violence. Doing so with structural equation modeling offered the added benefit of assessing our quantitative measurement approach (with factor loadings indicating strong measurement models for each construct¹¹) and adjusting for measurement error when estimating the strength of

¹¹ Variable loadings for the latent variable representing childhood criminal justice system exposure showed that age at first arrest was the strongest indicator (0.637), with similar values for number of childhood incarcerations (0.374) and number of parent/grandparent figures arrested (0.338). Loadings for lifetime criminal justice system exposure pointed to lifetime arrest (0.950) and conviction (0.847) as the most important indicators, with prior adult incarcerations relatively unimportant (0.209). Loadings for conditions of the most recent confinement were highest for duration (0.661), followed by number of days in solitary confinement (0.498) and number of transfers (0.300).

structural relationships among a set of stigmatized experiences and behaviors.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

Adding to prior research on pathways to partner violence among survivors of genocide and wartime violence, this preliminary work suggests how behavioral health, interpersonal approach, and couple conflict dynamics might link criminal justice system exposure to later partner violence perpetration in an era of mass incarceration. Future research is needed to assess whether the direct and indirect relationships evident in fitted structural equation models represent causal pathways and, if they do, to consider approaches to the administration of justice that do not exacerbate the threats from which they aim to protect us.

Prior research on collateral consequences of incarceration has often focused on the effects of a given incarceration or of having or not having a criminal record. The current study suggests that the developmental timing and accumulation of criminal justice system exposures, and perhaps also their likelihood, may shape their downstream consequences. Some research finds that collateral effects of imprisonment on other family outcomes are moderated by the likelihood of the family member's imprisonment. For example, the effect of maternal incarceration on child well-being is moderated by the mother's likelihood of becoming incarcerated (Wildeman & Turney, 2014) and the effect of paternal incarceration is moderated by the mother's likelihood of partnering with a criminal justice system-involved man (Turney, 2014).

In the current study, correlations between the conditions of the male partner's most recent incarceration and his partner violence perpetration were non-significant in all models but became much stronger when limiting to those with fewer lifetime incarceration experiences. This raises

the possibility that the fact or circumstances of a specific imprisonment in adulthood might have limited additive effects on partner violence among those with lifetimes of criminal justice system involvement. Future research on collateral consequences of mass incarceration should continue to consider a life course perspective on trajectories of criminal justice system exposure, to examine distinct forms and conditions of criminal justice system contact, and to attempt to better distinguish the effects of the type, frequency, and extent of criminal justice system exposure from the underlying behaviors and disadvantages with which exposure is associated (Kirk & Wakefield, 2018; Wildeman & Muller, 2012).

The results of this study also extend Comfort's prior qualitative work on "secondary prisonization" in the couple relationships of incarcerated men (Comfort, 2003; 2008). Findings suggest how men's experiences of prisonization (or "institutionalization," to quote Multi-site Family Study participants [see Chapter 5]) might contribute to their use of violence with their partners. Low-cost, trauma-informed, individual and couples counseling is urgently needed among hyper-incarcerated communities for whom punishment-based behavioral health care has often been the only accessible treatment (Kerrison, 2017). The limited availability of partner violence services in such communities (Iyengar & Sabik, 2009) must also be remedied. Promising, non-punitive strategies for perpetrator treatment include restorative justice approaches (Mills & Barcas, 2019; Mills et al., 2019), the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community's Building Bridges curriculum, and individual perpetrator counseling that addresses experiences of criminal justice system contact and post-traumatic stress (e.g., Gondolf & Williams, 2001).

Despite the violence-protection rhetoric surrounding the massive expansion of the criminal

justice system (Campbell, 2015; Campbell et al., 2015; Cheliotis, 2013; Kraska, 2007; Simon, 2001, 2007), this study suggests that certain patterns of criminal justice system exposure might actually promote the form of interpersonal violence to which Americans are most widely vulnerable (Sumner et al., 2015). While the causal nature of the relationships observed in this study remains to be seen, the observed link between life-course criminal justice system experiences and the later use of violence against a partner suggests that there might be yet one more reason to replace mass incarceration with something less harmful (Travis et al., 2014) and costly (Morenoff & Norris, 2019; Schmitt et al., 2010). In the current study, the limited observed role of conditions of confinement and greater importance of childhood criminal justice system exposure and accumulated adult criminal justice system exposure suggests that efforts to reduce the harmfulness of incarceration should not focus exclusively on reducing detrimental prison conditions identified in prior work (such as overcrowding, use of solitary confinement, and undue restrictions on family contact). Rather, efforts to reverse the harsh sentencing practices that have characterized the mass incarceration era (Tonry, 2014) and prevent childhood exposure to the criminal justice system (including children's exposure to the arrest of their parent figures as well as the imposition of juvenile detention) deserve serious consideration.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

	Men (N=1,112)	Women (N=1,112)
Demographic characteristics		
Age at study enrollment (mean)	33.1	31.7
Highest educational attainment		
Less than high school	34.4%	25.6%
Graduate equivalency degree (GED)	24.8%	7.3%
High school diploma	12.3%	22.3%
Vocational degree	3.5%	5.8%
Some college	17.0%	27.8%
Advanced degree	7.9%	11.2%
Hispanic/Latino ethnicity	9.6%	7.7%
Race		
Black	59.4%	48.7%
White	28.9%	39.9%
Another race or multiple races	11.8%	11.4%
Criminal justice system involvement		
Age at first arrest (mean years)	17.0	(not asked)
Previous adult incarcerations (mean, median)	6.0, 4.0	1.7
Duration of current incarceration (mean years)	2.5	(not asked)

Table 2. Structural Model Results for Pathway from State Violence to Partner Violence via Behavioral Health

	Beta	p-value
Model One: Mediation via Post-traumatic Stress		
Childhood state violence exposure -> Post-traumatic stress	0.216	0.000
Lifetime state violence exposure -> Post-traumatic stress	0.010	0.826
Conditions of most recent confinement -> Post-traumatic stress	0.005	0.924
Post-traumatic stress -> Couple conflict dynamics	-0.223	0.000
Couple conflict dynamics -> Partner violence perpetration	-0.338	0.000
Post-traumatic stress -> Partner violence perpetration (direct)	0.002	0.975
Model Two: Mediation via Alcohol and Other Drug (AAOD) Problems		
Childhood state violence exposure -> Addiction problems	0.138	0.141
Lifetime state violence exposure -> Addiction problems	0.183	0.005
Conditions of most recent confinement -> Addiction problems	0.137	0.285
Addiction problems -> Couple conflict dynamics	-0.230	0.002
Couple conflict dynamics -> Partner violence perpetration	-0.257	0.000
Addiction problems -> Partner violence perpetration (direct)	0.374	0.000

Table 3. Exact and Approximate Fit Statistics for Models One and Two

Model	Path Tested	X ²	df	P-value	RMSEA	SRMR	CFI	TLI	R ²
1	State violence exposure -> Post-traumatic stress -> Couple conflict dynamics -> Partner violence perpetration	693.05	169	.0000	0.053	0.060	0.859	0.827	0.982
2	State violence exposure -> Addiction problems -> Couple conflict dynamics -> Partner violence perpetration	692.00	169	.0000	0.053	NA	0.853	0.820	0.979

Table 4. Structural Model Results for Pathway from State Violence to Partner Violence via “Institutionalized” Interpersonal Approach

	Beta	p-value
Model Three: Mediation via Reactivity		
Childhood state violence exposure -> Reactivity	0.198	0.000
Lifetime state violence exposure -> Reactivity	0.016	0.662
Conditions of most recent confinement -> Reactivity	0.032	0.474
Reactivity -> Couple conflict dynamics	-0.082	0.113
Couple conflict dynamics -> Partner violence perpetration	-0.336	0.000
Reactivity -> Partner violence perpetration (direct)	0.102	0.014
Model Four: Mediation via Non-cooperativeness		
Childhood state violence exposure -> Non-cooperativeness	0.191	0.008
Lifetime state violence exposure -> Non-cooperativeness	0.017	0.701
Conditions of most recent confinement -> Non-cooperativeness	0.006	0.912
Non-cooperativeness -> Couple conflict dynamics	-0.152	0.020
Couple conflict dynamics -> Partner violence perpetration	-0.333	0.000
Non-cooperativeness -> Partner violence perpetration (direct)	0.053	0.316

Table 5. Exact and Approximate Fit Statistics for Models Three and Four

Model	Path Tested	X ²	df	P-value	RMSEA	SRMR	CFI	TLI	R ²
3	State violence exposure -> Reactivity -> Couple conflict dynamics -> Partner violence perpetration	834.6	210	0.000	0.052	0.059	0.863	0.836	0.983
4	State violence exposure -> Non-cooperativeness -> Couple conflict dynamics -> Partner violence perpetration	698.9	169	0.000	0.053	0.059	0.850	0.817	0.983

Chapter 7:
Mass Incarceration and Local Influences on Partner Violence Perpetration

Abstract

Prior research suggests that an unprecedented period of punishment in America has reshaped conditions in urban communities in ways that could exacerbate violence in families. Yet prior empirical work has not examined whether the complex of localized adversities associated with hyper-incarceration—including very low median income and high rates of prison admissions and street violence—predict elevated rates of partner violence among the criminalized and their partners. This study uses structural equation modeling with couples-based longitudinal survey data from returning prisoners and their partners, linked to representative data on local conditions in their communities, to test these relationships. Fitted models indicate that localized adversity predicts partner violence perpetration incidents; that statistical effects of local conditions on partner violence can be modelled via the mechanisms perceived neighborhood quality, behavioral health, and couple conflict dynamics; and that these mechanisms differ depending on whether partner violence is operationalized as incidents of physical violence or as types of partner violence defined by the use of controlling behavior (as in Johnson's typology). They highlight the role of post-traumatic stress and hopelessness in precipitating partner violence in hyper-incarcerated communities and underscore the importance of bringing the theoretical insights of those directly affected into quantitative scholarship on violence.

Introduction

The racial, socioeconomic and spatial targeting of mass incarceration in America (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010) has deposited a disproportionate share of its accumulated consequences on low-income, urban communities of color. That four decades of concentrated prison exposure, poverty

and street violence might, in turn, increase partner violence risk in hyper-incarcerated communities has been theorized (Coker & Macquoid, 2015) but not tested empirically. Studies with former prisoners and their partners find rates of partner violence that exceed those in the general population by as much as a factor of ten (McKay, Landwehr et al., 2018; Wildeman, 2012b). Secondary analysis of qualitative and survey data from one such study (the Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering) suggests that men's individual criminal justice system exposure, particularly in early life, partly explains their use of violence against their partners after returning from prison (see Chapter 6). Yet no study has rigorously assessed whether the local social and economic conditions associated with mass incarceration might also predict partner violence, beyond any observable effects of individual criminal justice system exposure. Further, despite evidence that different types of partner violence have different etiologies (e.g., Love et al., 2018), no study of local influences on partner violence has attempted to differentiate its potential antecedents by type.

The current study addresses these gaps using structural equation modeling with linked data from the Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering; state departments of correction; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and the United States Census Bureau. Results suggest that adverse local conditions (including median income and local rates of prison admissions and violent death) predict incidents of physical partner violence perpetration via hopelessness, post-traumatic stress, and dysfunctional couple conflict. Situational couple violence and coercive controlling violence share distal (local level) antecedents but occur via different proximal processes.

Background

The Localized Consequences of Mass Incarceration

In the era of “hyper-incarceration” (Wacquant, 2001), a relatively small number of racially and economically marginalized urban communities in the United States have been subjected to intensive criminal law enforcement. The individual experiences of policing, arrest, jailing, and imprisonment that characterize this decades-long campaign of state violence (Bryant-Davis et al., 2017; Seigel, 2018; Smith, 2016) are so racially, socioeconomically, and spatially targeted (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010) that they have come to represent a collective experience as well as an individual or family one. Drawing on social disorganization theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942, 1969), scholars propose that mass incarceration not only concentrates experiences of imprisonment in poor communities of color, but also exacerbates street violence and erodes residents’ economic resources (Clear, 2002, 2009; Drakulich et al., 2012; Rose & Clear, 1998a; Sharkey, 2013; Western, 2015).

Effects of Local Conditions on Partner Violence

Applications of Bronfenbrenner’s social ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) to partner violence propose that partner violence arises in the context of adverse local social and economic conditions, such as poverty, violence, and social marginalization (Assari, 2013; Lindhorst & Tajima, 2008). Quantitative research shows direct associations between local economic conditions, such as median income, and partner violence (Beyer et al., 2015; O’Campo et al., 1995; Pinchevsky & Wright, 2012). Local community (street) violence exposure has also been shown to promote partner violence (Raghavan et al., 2006; Stueve & O’Donnell, 2008).

Many studies of local influences on partner violence have used modeling approaches such as logistic regression that do not address the grouping of individuals within the geographic unit of study (Beyer et al., 2015), inspiring caution when interpreting their findings. However, hierarchical linear modeling with a representative sample of unmarried new parents in American cities shows that adverse labor market conditions (Schneider et al., 2016) and local material disadvantage (Voith & Brondino, 2017) each predict partner violence. Each of these local-level partner violence risk factors could be highly salient for returning prisoners, who tend to be concentrated in resource-estranged localities (Chamberlain & Wallace, 2016), to occupy vulnerable positions in adverse labor markets due to race- and conviction-related employment discrimination (Pager, 2003; Uggen et al., 2014), and to be targets of street violence (Binswanger et al., 2007; Jones et al., 2017).

Consistent with the violence-promoting “deserts of disadvantage” documented by Johnson and Kane (2016), qualitative research suggests that, in the locales to which most prisoners return, lifelong experiences with interpersonal violence “as victim, offender, or witness” are commonplace—even normative (Western, 2015, p. 17). In his spatial history of partner violence in low-income, urban Black communities, Ponton suggests that local characteristics are more meaningful than individual ones in the etiology of partner violence (Ponton, 2018). Nnawulezi and colleagues propose that spatially segregated, racialized poverty and criminalization heightens the risk of initial and repeat partner violence in communities targeted for mass incarceration (Nnawulezi & Murphy, 2017; Nnawulezi & West, 2018). Such influences have not been assessed quantitatively.

Pathways to Partner Violence in Communities Affected by Mass Incarceration

Research on the downstream consequences of localized hyper-incarceration often assesses a single relationship (e.g., between local prison admission or release rates and subsequent crime rates). How the complex of local factors associated with mass incarceration—not only local prison admissions or release rates but also depressed local income and elevated local street violence—might shape other outcomes for residents is less often examined. Further, though many works in this vein draw on a robust theoretical foundation (social disorganization theory), they rarely fully operationalize it. As such, it remains unknown whether observed relationships between mass incarceration-era local conditions and other negative local outcomes are mediated by “increasing inequality, more broken families, decreases in levels of informal social control, and increasing social disorder” as social disorganization theorists propose (Clear et al., 2003, 2014, p. 5; Dhondt, 2012) or something else.

Research focused on partner violence outcomes in couples affected by incarceration and in other populations affected by state violence suggests alternative mediation pathways: couple conflict dynamics and individual behavioral health. Experiences of incarceration and reentry precipitate couple conflict while constraining communication and other options for addressing relationship issues (Comfort, 2008; Comfort et al., 2018; McKay et al., 2020). In localities heavily affected by incarceration, such experiences affect community social norms (Lopez-Aguado, 2016; Simon, 2007), including norms for couple relationships (Comfort, 2012) and interpersonal violence (Holliday et al., 2019; Lopez-Aguado, 2016; Wacquant, 2001).

Research on partner violence in communities exposed to state-sponsored violence (including mass incarceration [see Chapter 5]) suggests that post-traumatic stress mediates the relationship between individual exposure and partner violence perpetration (Meffert & Marmar, 2009; Usta et

al., 2008; Verduin et al., 2013). In communities targeted for mass incarceration, experiences of systematic economic exclusion, criminalization, and street violence exposure may also promote partner violence perpetration via men's hopelessness, helplessness, and displaced rage (Hampton et al., 2003; Holliday et al., 2019). Quantitative research suggests that, controlling for individual criminal justice system experiences, residents of neighborhoods with high prison admissions rates are at greater risk of internalizing behavioral health problems (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2015) that are associated with partner violence perpetration (Birkley & Eckhardt, 2015).

Differences in Local Effects by Partner Violence Type

From a social ecological perspective, efforts to understand more distal influences on partner violence (such as local conditions) require a precise grasp of the proximal context for partner violence (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Dahlberg & Krug, 2006; Heise, 1998). Johnson's typology, which uses differences in controlling behavior to distinguish types of partner violence, offers such a foundation. Applications of the typology find two major types: coercive controlling violence (in which one partner uses violence and a variety of other tactics to dominate the other) and situational couple violence (in which one or both partners use violence without a controlling dynamic) (Johnson, 1995, 2008, 2010, 2016). The types have been very widely applied (Ali et al., 2016), including with Multi-site Family Study couples (see Chapter 4), and have distinct correlates and risk factors (Myhill & Hohl, 2019). However, dysfunctional couple conflict may be a proximal antecedent of both types of violence (Love et al., 2018). No research to date has assessed commonalities or differences in more distal, local-level antecedents.

Current Study Focus

Prior research suggests three hypotheses, which will be tested in the current study:

1. Local conditions (including median income, prison admissions rate, and violent death rate) promote partner violence perpetration after men return from prison;
2. Effects of local conditions on returning prisoners' partner violence perpetration are mediated by post-traumatic stress, hopelessness, and couple conflict dynamics; and
3. Pathways from local conditions to partner violence perpetration differ by the type of partner violence outcome (whether coercive controlling violence or situational couple violence).

Hypotheses will be tested using structural equation modeling with linked data from the Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering; state departments of correction; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and the United States Census Bureau.

Methods

Data Sources

The Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering ("Multi-site Family Study") served as the focal data source for all information on individual- and couple-level experiences. To be eligible for the study, men had to be in state prison in one of five states at the time of enrollment and to identify as being in a committed intimate or co-parenting relationship with a different-sex partner (see Lindquist, Steffey et al., 2018 for further detail).¹² Study staff consented and interviewed men, then invited the women whom they identified as their partners

¹² Male participants were serving time for a variety of felony offenses. To protect partners' safety, individuals subject to a restraining order prohibiting contact with their partners were excluded from the study; it is assumed that individuals with domestic violence convictions were therefore underrepresented. However, as the survey captured only the general nature of the instant offense (e.g., assault), the extent of underrepresentation cannot be assessed.

to participate in a separate interview. Each member of the couple was interviewed separately upon enrollment and was followed up 9, 18, and 34 months later; most men were released from prison at some point in the follow-up period. Surveys elicited information about participants' histories of criminal justice system exposure, behavioral health, and family relationships. Questions about partner violence and other sensitive topics were administered via audio computer-assisted self-interviewing. Wave- and gender-specific response rates were generally above 75 percent. The current analysis focused on 1,112 couples for whom complete baseline data were available. Their characteristics are shown in Table 1.

[Table 1 about here]

Data on local conditions were provided by the United States Census Bureau, United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and state departments of correction. Data were linked to Multi-site Family Study cases by ZIP code (the finest geographic indicator in the dataset after identifiers were destroyed). The current analysis used only deidentified data and was deemed not to be research with human subjects as defined by the *United States Code of Federal Regulations* (45 CFR 46, 102).

Measures

Median income. Median income and population by ZIP code were obtained from the United States Census Bureau's American Community Survey via Michigan Population Center. A variable representing the difference between the median income for the focal ZIP code and the average across all ZIP codes was used, such that higher values represented greater economic disadvantage.

Prison admissions rate. Prison admissions data were obtained using the Justice Atlas of Sentencing and Corrections, an online mapping tool supported by the National Institute of Corrections. Rates of prison admissions per 1,000 individuals, compiled from participating state departments of correction, were obtained for ZIP codes in New York, Indiana, and Ohio, the three states where most of the Multi-site Family Study sample resided. (Data on Minnesota and New Jersey, which contributed a small proportion of the sample, were unavailable.)

Violent death rate. Violent death count by ZIP code was obtained from the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Violent Death Reporting System via a restricted-use agreement with the National Centers for Injury Prevention and Control. A variable representing the ten-year violent death rate per 1,000 individuals in the ZIP code was calculated by summing the count across years and dividing by the Census population for each ZIP code.

Perceived neighborhood quality. Neighborhood quality was measured with four survey items that elicited men's perceptions of whether their neighborhoods were good places to live, find a job, and stay out of trouble and whether drug selling was a problem in the neighborhood. Variables were coded such that higher values represented higher perceived neighborhood quality.

Childhood criminal justice system exposure. Men's childhood criminal justice system exposure was captured with three variables: age at first arrest, parent figures arrested, and number of stays in juvenile detention.

Hopelessness. Men's feelings of hopelessness and helplessness were reflected in three items that captured how often they felt hopeful about the future, helpless, or pushed around in life. Variables were coded such that higher values represented a greater sense of hopelessness and

helplessness.

Post-traumatic stress. Men's self-reported post-traumatic stress symptoms were captured using a composite based on the four-item Primary Care PTSD Screen (Prins et al., 2004) and two individual items on fearfulness and preoccupation. For all three variables, higher values indicated worse symptoms.

Couple conflict dynamics. Couple conflict dynamics were measured using five self-reported items that captured how often the couple was able to manage conflict in non-destructive ways (for example, maintaining a sense of humor when arguing, not letting small issues escalate), with higher values indicating healthier conflicts. Women's reports were used, based on prior work suggesting that women's reports of family relationship dynamics may be more accurate than those of their male partners (McKay et al., 2019).

Physical partner violence perpetration. Men's physical violence perpetration with their study partners was measured at each post-release wave using the physical violence subscale of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus et al., 1996). Both couple members were asked separately about their own and their partner's use of violence, including how many times one partner shoved, hit, slapped, grabbed, threw something at, strangled, slammed, kicked, burned, or beat the other; used a knife or gun on the other; or forced him or her to have sex by hitting, holding down, or using a weapon. A composite variable representing incidents of physical partner violence perpetration by the male partner after release from prison was constructed from both partners' reports at each available follow-up wave.

Coercive controlling violence perpetration. A single, observed variable indicated whether the

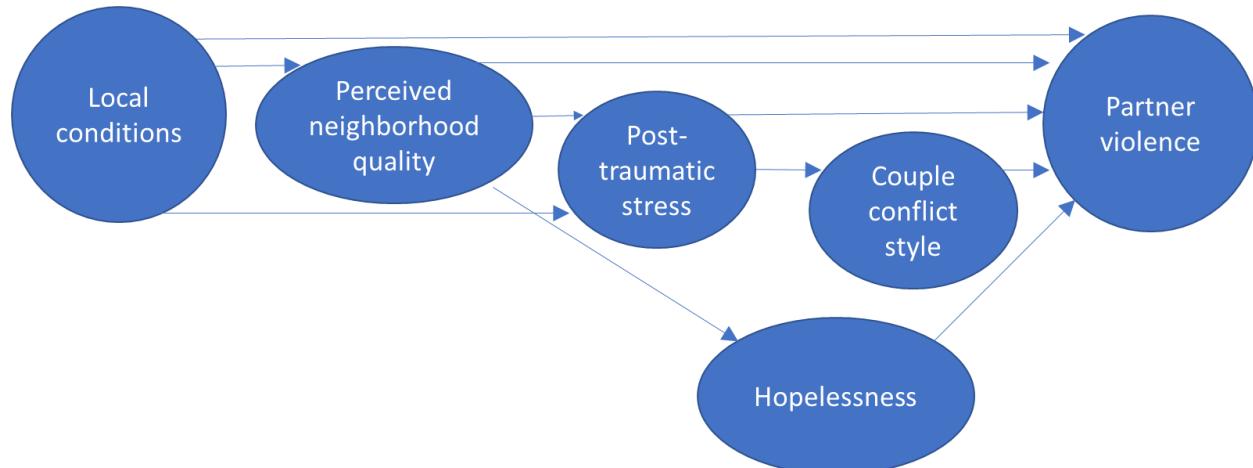
male partner was classified as a coercive controlling violence perpetrator at any post-release follow-up wave. The “coercive controlling violence” classification was assigned to men who used physical violence and highly controlling behavior with their study partners, but whose study partners did not use highly controlling behavior with them (see Chapter 4).

Situational couple violence perpetration. A single, observed variable indicated whether the male partner was classified as a situational couple violence perpetrator at any post-release follow-up wave and was not classified as a coercive controlling violence perpetrator at any post-release follow-up wave. The “situational couple violence” classification was assigned when men used physical violence against their study partners, but neither partner used highly controlling behavior.

Analytic Approach

The study hypotheses were tested using a set of structural equation models, constructed in Stata 15.1 (StataCorp., 2018), that followed the general form shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Pathway from Local Conditions to Partner Violence Perpetration



Measurement and structural models were constructed based on the study hypotheses. Chi squared estimates and p values for the likelihood ratio test were examined for the measurement models, although this test was expected to reject the null even if models were adequate (due to the large sample size). Approximate fit statistics, including the root mean squared error of approximation, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Tucker-Lewis Fit Index (TLI), were also calculated and compared to empirically based cutoffs (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Control variables for the structural models were selected based on prior quantitative research. Each model controlled for whether the male partner was incarcerated for a violent crime at study baseline (based on evidence that some “generally violent” individuals use violence against family members and also commit violent crimes outside the family (Hamberger et al., 1996; Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 2000; Waltz et al., 2000); the male partner’s childhood criminal justice system exposure (based on prior findings linking early-life criminal justice system exposure to partner violence perpetration among reentrants [see Chapter 6]); whether the male partner self-identified as Black (as proxy for experiences of criminalization, discrimination, and economic exclusion (Kaufman & Cooper, 2001)); and the age of both partners (due to the strong correlation between younger age and partner violence perpetration and victimization (Yakubovich et al., 2018).

All available observations were retained, with missing information imputed using full information maximum likelihood procedures (Arbuckle et al., 1996). The observed information matrix method was used to estimate standard errors. Several variables reflecting couple conflict dynamics were not normally distributed, violating the assumption of multivariate normality; while a limitation, the violation of this assumption is relatively unlikely to affect model results

(Allison, 1987).

Results

Measurement Results

Measurement model results for each latent construct, presented in Table 2, showed that observed variables loaded well on the constructs they were intended to reflect. As expected, the observed variable for parent figure arrests loaded relatively weakly on the measure of childhood criminal justice system exposure; this variable represented a different dimension of exposure than the other two observed variables, which captured childhood arrests and juvenile detention stays.

[Table 2 about here]

Examination of variable loadings revealed two unexpected measurement results. First, median income (operationalized as the difference between median income for all ZIP codes and median income for the focal ZIP code, such that higher values indicated greater adversity for all three indicators of local conditions) loaded negatively on the latent “local conditions” construct. Second, the variable capturing hope for the future loaded more weakly on the hopefulness construct than did the indicators of helplessness and feeling pushed around.

Approximate fit statistics for each measurement model were generally above recommended thresholds. Fit statistics for the couple conflict dynamics measurement model suggested a poorer-than-expected fit ($CFI = 0.814$, $TLI = 0.627$); however, high variable loadings for all five observed variables suggest that they strongly reflected the latent “couple conflict dynamics” construct.

Pathways from Local Conditions to Partner Violence

To test the first and second hypotheses, a structural equation model was constructed that assessed whether and how local conditions predicted men's partner violence perpetration after their release from prison. The model tested direct and indirect statistical effects of local conditions (treated as a latent exogenous variable) on post-release partner violence perpetration (an observed variable). Based on prior quantitative and qualitative research on possible mechanisms of effect, the following structural relationships were modeled:

- Local conditions predict perceived neighborhood quality (controlling for childhood criminal justice system exposure);
- Local conditions and perceived neighborhood quality predict post-traumatic stress (controlling for childhood criminal justice system exposure);
- Post-traumatic stress predicts couple conflict dynamics;
- Perceived neighborhood quality predicts hopelessness; and
- Hopelessness, couple conflict dynamics, post-traumatic stress, perceived neighborhood quality, and local conditions predict partner violence perpetration.

Structural regression results for Model 1, shown in the second column of Table 3, supported the first hypothesis: Adverse local conditions directly predicted partner violence perpetration incidents after the male partner's release from prison ($\text{Beta} = .2619, p < 0.0005$). The second hypothesis was also partially supported by Model 1. Two mechanisms for indirect effects of local conditions on partner violence incidents were evident:

1. Adverse local conditions predicted poorer perceived neighborhood quality ($\text{Beta} = -$

.3959, $p<0.0005$), which predicted hopelessness (Beta = -.1528, $p<0.0005$), which predicted partner violence perpetration incidents (Beta = .1416, $p=0.006$).

2. Adverse local conditions predicted poorer perceived neighborhood quality (Beta = -.3959, $p<0.0005$), which predicted post-traumatic stress (Beta = -.2271, $p<0.0005$), which predicted poorer couple conflict dynamics (Beta = -.2008, $p<0.0005$). which predicted partner violence perpetration incidents (Beta = -.2339, $p<0.0005$).

Pathways from local conditions and childhood criminal justice system exposure to post-traumatic stress were non-significant, as were pathways from perceived neighborhood quality and post-traumatic stress to partner violence perpetration. As shown in Table 3, the variance in later-wave partner violence perpetration that was accounted for by local conditions was 0.758 for Model 1.

[Table 3 about here]

Differences in Mechanism by Partner Violence Type

To test the third hypothesis, two additional structural equation models were constructed. These models included the same measurement and structural components of Model 1, but outcome variables were chosen that represented partner violence type rather than incidents of partner violence perpetration.

Model 2, which tested influences on situational couple violence perpetration, did not find a statistically significant direct effect of local conditions. Indirect effects of local conditions on situational partner violence perpetration occurred via a single pathway: Adverse local conditions predicted poorer perceived neighborhood quality (Beta = -.3959, $p<0.0005$), which predicted hopelessness (Beta = -.1421, $p<0.0005$), which predicted situational couple violence perpetration

(Beta =.1463, $p=0.002$).

Model 3, which tested influences on coercive controlling violence perpetration, also did not find a direct effect of local conditions. Indirect effects of local conditions on coercive controlling violence perpetration occurred via a single mechanism, different from the mechanism demonstrated in Model 2: Adverse local conditions predicted poorer perceived neighborhood quality (Beta = -.3947, $p<0.0005$), which predicted post-traumatic stress (Beta = -.1938, $p<0.0005$), which predicted poorer couple conflict dynamics (Beta =-.1417, $p=0.002$). which predicted coercive controlling violence perpetration (Beta =-.3145, $p<0.0005$).

As shown in Table 3 (third and fourth columns), the key difference between Model 2 and Model 3 was the statistically significant effect of hopelessness on situational couple violence (a pathway that was non-significant in the coercive controlling violence model) and the statistically significant effect of couple conflict dynamics on coercive controlling violence (a pathway that was non-significant in the situational couple violence model). In each of these two models, structural regression coefficients for other relationships were also significant but did not mediate the influence of local conditions on partner violence perpetration. The variance in partner violence outcomes that was explained by local conditions was 0.749 for Model 2 (situational couple violence) and 0.765 for Model 3 (coercive controlling violence).

Discussion

Model results supported all three study hypotheses. That is,

- (1) Local conditions predicted partner violence perpetration incidents;
- (2) Statistical effects of local conditions on partner violence occurred via perceived

neighborhood quality, behavioral health, and couple conflict dynamics; and

(3) Mechanisms differed depending on how partner violence perpetration outcomes were operationalized (whether incidents or type of violence).

Local conditions directly predicted partner violence outcomes in Model 1 (which tested influences on incidents of partner violence perpetration), but not in Model 2 (which focused on situational couple violence perpetration) or Model 3 (which focused on coercive controlling violence perpetration). Across all three models, the indirect predictive role of local conditions in partner violence outcomes occurred via perceived neighborhood quality.

Many collateral consequences of mass incarceration have been documented (Travis et al., 2014; Wildeman & Muller, 2012) and many more proposed, including the possibility of worsened violence in heavily incarcerated communities (Clear, 2009; Western, 2015). Yet partner violence, the most common form of interpersonal violence in the United States (Sumner et al., 2015), has been little considered in research on collateral consequences of mass incarceration. Contributing to this literature, the current study assessed whether and how local conditions (including locally concentrated imprisonment, violence and economic disadvantage) predict partner violence in a large study population of couples affected by incarceration.

Before the current study, the possibility that the adverse local conditions associated with mass incarceration might exacerbate partner violence had not been tested. An extensive literature on social-ecological influences on partner violence (Beyer et al., 2015; Matjasko et al., 2012; Schneider et al., 2016; Voith & Brondino, 2017; Willie & Kershaw, 2019) suggested links between adverse local conditions and elevated local rates of partner violence. However, this prior research had not focused on Americans targeted for mass incarceration and their families, who

report extraordinarily high rates of such violence (McKay, Landwehr et al., 2018). Such families might well face intensified effects of adverse local social and economic conditions due to incarceration-associated social capital depletion, labor market disadvantage, and behavioral health issues (Haney, 2018; Kupers, 1996; Lageson, 2016; Uggen et al., 2014). Nor had prior work examined the role of the specific complex of local conditions (including high imprisonment rates, depressed income, and elevated street violence) associated with hyper-incarceration.

Findings from this study suggest that the concentrated experiences of imprisonment, violence and poverty that characterize many urban American communities in the era of mass incarceration (Clear, 2009) might, indeed, contribute to partner violence perpetration. They also indicate that subjective experiences of local conditions matter at least as much in shaping partner violence as do objective indicators of local prison admissions, violent deaths, and income. In Model 1, local conditions influenced partner violence perpetration directly, but all indirect effects of local conditions (across all three models) occurred via perceived neighborhood quality. The perceived neighborhood quality construct—reflected in observed variables that captured men’s perceptions of whether their neighborhoods were good places to live, find a job, and stay out of trouble and whether drug selling was a problem in the neighborhood—was associated with hopelessness and post-traumatic stress, which in turn predicted partner violence (directly or via couple conflict dynamics). This result strengthens prior qualitative evidence that subjective experiences of local social and material conditions among criminalized men affect behavioral health, and in turn, their use of violence against their partners (Holliday et al., 2019) (see also Chapter 5).

Results underscore the possibility that local assets and deficits might affect partner violence risk differently for extremely disadvantaged residents (such as former prisoners and their partners)

than for their neighbors (Jackson, 2016). They also point to the limitations of research on local-level predictors of partner violence that uses broad geographic indicators such as ZIP code.

Across each of the three models, local conditions explained roughly three quarters of the variance in partner violence outcomes. This suggests the need for additional research that operationalizes local conditions at a finer geographic level and identifies key constructs and relationships beyond those included in the current study hypotheses.

Findings from this study also fill a gap in knowledge regarding the pathways by which adverse local conditions might influence partner violence and other poor outcomes among residents of hyper-incarcerated areas. Though prior research on the local effects of mass incarceration has often referred to social disorganization theory, the mediators suggested by this theory remained unsubstantiated. The current study examined alternative pathways from conditions in hyper-incarcerated localities to partner violence outcomes based on the qualitative accounts of directly affected individuals as well as research with communities affected by other forms of state violence. Extending findings from research with genocide survivors and war refugees, the current study also suggests that behavioral health represents an important link between adverse local (and collective) experiences and partner violence perpetration. The current study suggests that adverse local environments and associated poor neighborhood conditions (as subjectively assessed) predict partner violence via post-traumatic stress and a sense of helplessness and hopelessness among criminalized men. This finding amplifies the call to address post-traumatic stress and other behavioral health needs that might contribute to violence perpetration among men targeted for state violence in the context of mass incarceration (Powell, 2008; Seigel, 2018; Williams et al., 2008). It further highlights an urgent need for culturally and situationally

responsive, financially accessible behavioral health care in communities affected by mass incarceration (Begun et al., 2016). It also suggests that trauma-informed treatment may be essential to addressing partner violence perpetration in such communities (see Gondolf & Williams, 2001; Swogger, 2017).

By operationalizing partner violence more precisely than in prior research, this study also revealed differences in mechanism by partner violence type. Prior research has demonstrated that different types of partner violence have different proximal predictors (Love et al., 2018), but no study had examined potential differences in more distal, local-level antecedents. Further, partner violence survey research, while more complete than studies using official records (such as police reports), typically collects information from only one partner. Studies that gather data on both partners' behavior (even if only from one member of the couple) still rarely operationalize partner violence in ways that account for each partner's use of violence and control tactics. In the current study, each of the three partner violence outcome variables examined drew on accounts of violence and control from (and by) both couple members.

These data made it possible to model predictors of post-release physical violence incidents in Model 1; predictors of situational couple violence (that is, physical violence that arose without an accompanying pattern of controlling behavior) in Model 2; and predictors of coercive controlling violence (in which violence arose as one among multiple tactics used by one partner to dominate the other) in Model 3. Adverse local conditions predicted all three partner violence outcomes, but in different ways. Poor perceived neighborhood conditions predicted men's hopelessness, which in turn predicted situational couple violence. Poor perceived neighborhood conditions also partly explained men's post-traumatic stress symptoms, which contributed to

dysfunctional couple conflict, which in turn predicted coercive controlling violence. Both mechanisms influenced incidents of physical partner violence. Small differences in structural regression coefficients altered the statistical significance of certain pathways across the three models; as such, these differences in mechanism should not be overstated. Results do suggest, however, that better operationalization of partner violence outcomes, and particularly more precise attention to controlling behavior (Crossman & Hardesty, 2018; Stark & Hester, 2019) will support etiological clarity and translation to effective prevention and responses.

Indeed, distinguishing the presence of a one-sided controlling behavior pattern (the element that differentiates coercive controlling violence from situational couple violence) is widely recognized as valuable for guiding effective intervention (Jaramillo-Sierra & Ripoll-Nunez, 2018; Myhill & Hohl, 2019; Schneider & Brimhall, 2014). Results of the coercive controlling violence model suggest that couples who have difficulty communicating and resolving conflicts, as many reuniting after an incarceration do, will not be universally well served by prevention and responses that simply promote healthy communication and conflict resolution skills (such as couples-based relationship education and couples counseling). Among reentering men classified as perpetrators of coercive controlling violence, persistent, unhealthy conflict with their partners arises not from a mutual lack of skill but in the context of the male partner's underlying need for dominance and control. This dynamic is probably most safely and helpfully addressed through individual behavioral health treatment for the perpetrator and safety planning and other supportive services for the victim.

These results also reinforce the prior understanding of physical violence unaccompanied by a one-sided controlling dynamic as “situational” (Hardesty et al., 2015; Johnson, 1995); in this

case, promoted by the hopelessness that men returning from prison feel in the face of bleakly adverse neighborhood conditions (de Giorgi, 2017; Holliday et al., 2019). Yet they also highlight a clear structural (if not proximally “situational”) element to coercive controlling violence; that is, the post-traumatic stress that targeted men experience in targeted urban areas in an era of mass incarceration. These experiences, it seems, might contribute to some men’s psychological need to control their partners, which manifests initially in dysfunctional couple conflict and later in coercive controlling violence perpetration.

Finally, this study applied quantitative methods to examine the qualitative insights of individuals directly affected by mass incarceration and their partners. Prior partner violence research has often failed to engage perspectives of those who have used and experienced violence across domestic, carceral, and street contexts. This methodological gap perpetuates a substantive one: despite the proliferation of social ecological theories of partner violence, empirical work has rarely situated observation of the proximal contexts for partner violence within observation of more distal conditions. In addressing this gap, the current study also highlights the important intellectual contributions of directly affected individuals in research on partner violence and on mass incarceration. Future research on the antecedents and consequences of these experiences will benefit (and should actively make room for) their knowledge and contributions as research participants, researchers, and critical consumers of research concerning their experiences.

Limitations

Results should be interpreted with several methodological limitations in mind. The lack of an experimental design limits the conclusions that can be drawn from these models. The conditional correlations supported by the models (sometimes referred to as direct and indirect effects) do not

establish causation nor mediation. Improving on prior etiological work using cross-sectional data, however, this study made use of data from multiple longitudinal waves. As such, model results do point to potential causal pathways that could be further tested in future research with a counterfactual design.

This analysis used secondary data from a sample of 1,112 Multi-site Family Study couples that does not represent the general American population, nor all men released from state prison and their partners. A formal population of inference is generally considered less important for etiological research than for descriptive (e.g., prevalence) studies. Bearing this in mind, and in the absence of representative data from incarcerated and reentering men and their partners, the Multi-site Family Study sample—with its large size, geographic diversity, and longitudinal, couples-based format—is the best available study population for the current purpose.

The use of secondary data for this analysis also carried measurement limitations. While the Multi-site Family Study survey data are incredibly rich, they were not designed to address the hypotheses set out for the current study. For hopelessness and childhood criminal justice system exposure, two constructs the original survey did not explicitly set out to capture, the best available indicators were chosen based on face validity. Structural equation modeling is useful in accommodating this constraint, as it offers empirical feedback on the measurement approach (through inspection of variable loadings and measurement model fit statistics) and accounts for measurement error in model results.

A further limitation associated with the use of secondary data is that local conditions could not be operationalized at a finer geographic level than ZIP code due to the destruction or suppression of more precise geographic identifiers in the publicly available datasets. This limitation is partly

ameliorated by the predominantly urban focus of the current study (as ZIP codes tend to represent a more socially and spatially meaningful geographic unit in urban areas than in rural ones (Grubesic, 2008; Grubesic & Matisziw, 2006). Nevertheless, the greater socioeconomic diversity (and other potential heterogeneity) of ZIP codes introduces some noise and interpretive complexity in this analysis. The opposite-signed loading of the income-deficit variable (which captured the size of the difference between a given ZIP code's median income and the median income of all ZIP codes) points to a need for future studies that capture within-ZIP-code heterogeneity or operationalize local conditions in smaller spatial units.

Conclusion

This study tested a set of pathways from adverse local conditions in hyper-incarcerated areas to partner violence outcomes as suggested by the qualitative accounts of directly affected individuals and by quantitative research in communities affected by other forms of state violence. While the study design does not support causal inference, it contributed other methodological strengths: the use of structural equation modeling combined with a rich, couples-based longitudinal survey dataset linked to representative data on adverse local conditions. Results lend initial support to Coker & Macquoid's (2015) argument that the local conditions associated with hyper-incarceration could worsen partner violence in affected communities. However, the pathways identified depart from those envisioned by Coker and Macquoid and other social disorganization-informed scholarship (e.g., Clear et al., 2003). They highlight the potential role of behavioral health (including post-traumatic stress and hopelessness) and dysfunctional couple conflict in precipitating partner violence in hyper-incarcerated communities

and underscore the importance of bringing the theoretical insights of those directly affected into quantitative scholarship on violence.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

	Men (N=1,112)	Women (N=1,112)
Demographic characteristics		
Age at study enrollment (mean)	33.1	31.7
Highest educational attainment		
Less than high school	34.4%	25.6%
Graduate equivalency degree (GED)	24.8%	7.3%
High school diploma	12.3%	22.3%
Vocational degree	3.5%	5.8%
Some college	17.0%	27.8%
Advanced degree	7.9%	11.2%
Hispanic/Latino ethnicity	9.6%	7.7%
Race		
Black	59.4%	48.7%
White	28.9%	39.9%
Another race or multiple races	11.8%	11.4%
Criminal justice system involvement		
Age at first arrest (mean years)	17.0	(not asked)
Previous adult incarcerations (mean, median)	6.0, 4.0	1.7
Duration of current incarceration (mean years)	2.5	(not asked)

Table 2. Measurement Model Results for Pathways from Local Conditions to Partner Violence Perpetration

Latent Construct	Coefficient	Std. Error	Z	P>[z]	95% Confidence Interval	
Local conditions						
Prison admissions rate	.8545	.0313	27.29	0.000	.7931	.9158
Violent death rate	.5858	.0388	15.09	0.000	.5097	.6618
Median income	-.8425	.0314	-26.80	0.000	-.9041	-.7808
Childhood criminal justice system exposure (control)						
Age at first arrest	.8417	.2698	3.12	0.002	.3129	1.371
Childhood incarcerations	.3550	.1167	3.04	0.002	.1263	.5837
Arrests of parent figures	.1361	.0553	2.46	0.014	.0277	.2445
Perceived neighborhood quality						
Easy to keep out of trouble	.7365	.0174	42.33	0.000	.7024	.7706
Drug selling is a problem (reversed)	.8632	.0148	58.29	0.000	.8342	.8923
Good place to live	.7343	.0185	39.72	0.000	.6981	.7706
Good place to find a job	.5300	.0249	21.26	0.000	.4811	.5788
Hopelessness						
Hope for the future (reversed)	.2186	.0356	6.14	0.000	.1488	.2884
Feel helpless	.7866	.0774	10.16	0.000	.6349	.9383
Feel pushed around	.6393	.0647	9.88	0.000	.5125	.7661
Post-traumatic stress						
PTSD screening score	.3663	.0383	9.57	0.000	.2913	.4414
Fearfulness	.5425	.0468	11.60	0.000	.4508	.6341
Preoccupation	.6726	.0542	12.41	0.000	.5664	.7788
Couple conflict dynamics						
Calmly discuss something	.7400	.0186	39.76	0.000	.7035	.7765
Keep a sense of humor	.7380	.0186	39.76	0.000	.7016	.7743
Arguments get heated (reversed)	.5769	.0263	21.90	0.000	.5253	.6285
Small issues become big (reversed)	.6174	.0247	24.98	0.000	.5690	.6659
Able to work out differences	.8355	.0154	54.09	0.000	.8052	.8657

Table 3. Structural Model Results for Pathways from Local Conditions to Partner Violence Perpetration

	Model 1: Incidents of Physical Violence Perpetration (CD=0.758)	Model 2: Situational Violence Perpetration (CD=0.749)	Model 3: Coercive Controlling Violence Perpetration (CD=0.765)			
	Beta	p-value	Beta	p-value	Beta	p-value
Local conditions -> Perceived neighborhood quality	-.3959	0.000	-.3959	0.000	-.3947	0.000
Perceived neighborhood quality -> Hopelessness	-.1528	0.000	-.1421	0.000	-.1448	0.000
Local conditions -> Post-traumatic stress	-.2890	0.303	.1465	0.495	.1505	0.514
Perceived neighborhood quality -> Post-traumatic stress	-.2271	0.000	-.1937	0.000	-.1938	0.000
Post-traumatic stress -> Couple conflict dynamics	-.2008	0.000	-.1412	0.002	-.1417	0.002
Couple conflict dynamics -> Partner violence perpetration	-.2339	0.000	.0384	0.384	-.3145	0.000
Local conditions -> Partner violence perpetration	.2619	0.000	.0981	0.371	.2122	0.062
Perceived neighborhood quality -> Partner violence perpetration	.0087	0.870	-.0116	0.825	.0197	0.717
Post-traumatic stress -> Partner violence perpetration	-.0736	0.232	-.0118	0.827	-.0312	0.579
Hopelessness -> Partner violence perpetration	.1416	0.006	.1463	0.002	-.0806	0.102

Chapter 8: Discussion

Overview

Drawing together stories, survey responses, and public data collected in a time of large-scale state violence, this thesis produced a new understanding of the nature and etiology of partner violence among returning prisoners and their partners. Grounded in the insights of those caught up in the hyper-incarcerative machinery of the state and in intimate acts of violence, this work contributes to a more complete empirical understanding of the relationship between violence and penal authority than has been previously constructed.

This concluding chapter reviews how each empirical inquiry conducted for the thesis has contributed to the understanding of partner violence among returning prisoners and their partners. It considers how that understanding helps to advance broader scholarship on partner violence and on punishment. Then, it discusses the overarching limitations that affect this body of work as a whole and proposes directions and strategies for future research. Finally, it considers the implications of these preliminary findings in light of the current policy imperatives of decarceration and reparation.

Results of Empirical Work

The research undertaken for this thesis was guided by Bronfenbrenner's social ecological framework (1977) and by a review of the literature. As very few prior studies have considered partner violence in the context of mass incarceration, the literature review examined research on the collateral consequences of mass incarceration (including its implication for violence) and research on the etiology of partner violence (with a focus on the poor and criminalized). Research in each of these fields has pointed to the possibility that mass incarceration could shape

understandings and experiences of partner violence in affected families and communities. Yet much remained unknown.

Prior research on the consequences of mass incarceration has documented collateral damages at each level of Bronfenbrenner's nested framework: among former prisoners themselves, their partners and other family members, and in the places where they live. This literature also highlights the grossly disproportionate distribution of incarceration (and its consequences) by race, class, and gender. This body of evidence highlights the ways that mass incarceration has burdened the poor and racialized, as might be expected from their disproportionate likelihood of becoming incarcerated. It also points to the unexpected possibility that women, who are approximately 1/12th as likely to become incarcerated as men (Bronson & Carson, 2019), might somehow come to bear the heaviest share of the physical and material burdens it produces (Wildeman, 2012a).

Prior research on partner violence etiology has identified a host of individual- and family-level characteristics that predict partner violence—many of which are widespread among former prisoners and their partners. Prior work has also identified community characteristics that predict high rates of partner violence, which tend to mirror the characteristics of the places from which most prisoners are drawn and to which they return. Research on typologies of partner violence finds that different behavioral patterns of partner violence have distinct proximal precursors and may merit different policy and practice responses.

This project executed four empirical studies to advance the key lines of inquiry begun in each of these literatures.

First Research Objective

First, I conducted a latent class analysis and a stratified qualitative case study to understand patterns in the use of physical violence and controlling behavior among returning prisoners and their partners. This study was the first to apply Johnson's (2008) typology among returning prisoners and their partners and the first study in any population to use latent class analysis with survey data from both couple members to identify behavioral types of partner violence and to use qualitative data to validate and refine the quantitative approach to type assignment.

Whereas prior applications of Johnson's typology distinguished between low-control and high-control types of partner violence (by applying a numeric cutoff to summed scores for controlling behavior), this analysis revealed two qualitatively different types. In one subsample of violent couples, physical violence was one of many tactics used by the abusive partner to systematically dominate and control the other. This type, coercive controlling violence, was typically more physically severe and associated with lower self-assessed safety among victims and a greater likelihood of victim post-traumatic stress. For other couples, physical violence occurred in the context of jealousy but no other controlling behavior. For these couples, qualitative accounts suggested that jealousy was a situational response to prolonged separation and relationship status insecurity and not a tactic of control.

Second Research Objective

Second, I carried out a structured, inductive qualitative analysis to investigate how concepts and experiences of partner violence are shaped by direct and indirect exposures to institutional violence and control in the context of arrest, adjudication, incarceration, reentry, and community supervision. Building on just two related studies, each of which used focus group methods (one in 2019 and one in the early 2000s), this study was the first to examine qualitative accounts of

partner violence from in-depth interviews with a multi-site, couples-based sample of returning prisoners and their partners. It was also the first to use linked, longitudinal data to structure and inform that analysis.

This analysis found that understandings, experiences, and responses to partner violence were conditioned by exposures to state and structural violence. Respondents closely associated incarceration and reentry experiences with interpersonal violence and control tactics. The deprivation of personal agency they experienced at the hands of the state during arrest, incarceration and reentry manifested for some in a mindset of helplessness and hopelessness resembling the “condemnation script” described by Maruna among those who persist in criminalized activity (Maruna, 2001, 2010). For others, agentic deprivation in carceral and street spaces was relieved and redeemed in the private domination of partners and households. Extending theories of prisonization (Clemmer, 1958) and secondary prisonization (Comfort, 2003) developed in ethnographic research with prisoners and their families, this study suggested that the form and timing of abuse was shaped by cycles of adjudication, incarceration and release. These dynamics extracted significant uncompensated labor from female partners (including abuse victims) and constrained victims’ ability to prioritize and protect their own safety.

Third Research Objective

Third, I fit a set of structural equation models to test the pathways from criminal justice system exposure to partner violence perpetration that had surfaced in qualitative accounts. This was the first study to apply structural equation modeling to this topic and among the first partner violence studies in any population to apply structural equation modeling to examine etiological pathways

suggested by victims' and perpetrators' own narrative accounts. It was also the first study to attempt to parse the specific predictive influence of three different dimensions of criminal justice system exposure on partner violence by including three different exogenous latent variables: childhood criminal justice system exposure, cumulative criminal justice system exposure during adulthood, and conditions of the most recent incarceration.

Controlling for violent criminal conviction, this analysis demonstrated that childhood criminal justice system exposure predicts men's adult post-traumatic stress symptoms, reactivity, and non-cooperativeness. Post-traumatic stress and non-cooperativeness, in turn, predict their partner violence perpetration via poorer couple conflict dynamics. Reactivity predicts partner violence perpetration directly. Lifetime criminal justice system exposure predicts men's post-release addiction problems, which predict partner violence perpetration directly and via dysfunctional couple conflict. Results offer preliminary support for the possibility that criminal justice system exposure could influence later partner violence perpetration and that the accumulation and developmental timing of such exposure matters.

Fourth Research Objective

Fourth, I fit a set of structural equation models to examine whether and how local conditions might predict partner violence perpetration by men returning from prison. This study was the first in the field to apply structural equation modeling to assess how ZIP code-level conditions and perceived neighborhood quality predicted partner violence outcomes. It was unique among studies of partner violence and of the collateral consequences of incarceration in examining a set of complete hypothesized pathways rather than a single relationship (e.g., between rates of prison admissions and violence outcomes). Relative to prior studies of local predictors of partner

violence, it was also unique in focusing on an extremely disadvantaged population (returning prisoners) who might be particularly susceptible to the deleterious influence of adverse local conditions. Finally, it was the first study of partner violence etiology to assess whether local-level predictors of partner violence might differ by Johnson's types.

The fitted models indicate that adverse local conditions (as captured in objective measures of median income and rates of prison admissions and violent death) predict subjectively assessed neighborhood quality. Both objective local conditions and subjective perceptions of neighborhood quality predict incidents of physical partner violence perpetration after men's return from prison. The two behavioral types of partner violence identified in earlier work on this thesis (jealous-only situational violence and coercive controlling violence) had the same local-level antecedents but the pathways from those antecedents to partner violence outcomes differed by type. Indirect effects of local conditions on returning prisoners' jealous-only situational violence perpetration occurred via hopelessness, while effects on coercive controlling violence perpetration occurred via post-traumatic stress and dysfunctional couple conflict.

In the next section of this chapter, I will draw together findings from these four inquiries and suggest how they help to advance the theoretical and empirical literature on mass incarceration and partner violence.

Theoretical Implications

Incarceration affects a large proportion of couples and families in the United States. One in five American women has experienced the incarceration of an intimate partner (Enns et al., 2019). In poor urban communities, the proportion is much higher: for example, 44 percent of unmarried new mothers in major American cities report that their baby's father was incarcerated in the last

three years (Jones, 2013). Partner violence, too, is widespread. One in five American women (22.3%) has experienced severe physical violence victimization by an intimate partner in her lifetime (Breiding, 2015). Amid mounting evidence for mass incarceration as an important social determinant of health (Brinkley-Rubinstein & Cloud, 2020; Wildeman & Wang, 2017), however, little is known about the implications of America's massive system of punishment for partner violence (Wildeman et al., 2019, p. 18S).

Before the current study, evidence on partner violence in the context of incarceration and reentry was limited, including two focus group studies, an unpublished doctoral dissertation, my prior analyses, and a study of the predictive role of family contact, substance use and other criminalized behavior in post-release family conflict and violence (Freeland Braun, 2012; Hairston & Oliver, 2011; McKay, Landwehr et al., 2018; McKay, Lindquist et al., 2018; Oliver et al., 2004; Oliver & Hairston, 2008; Stansfield et al., 2020). Addressing this gap, this thesis brings together and contributes to two largely distinct fields of research on the social determinants of partner violence and on the collateral consequences of mass incarceration.

Applying the Social Ecological Framework

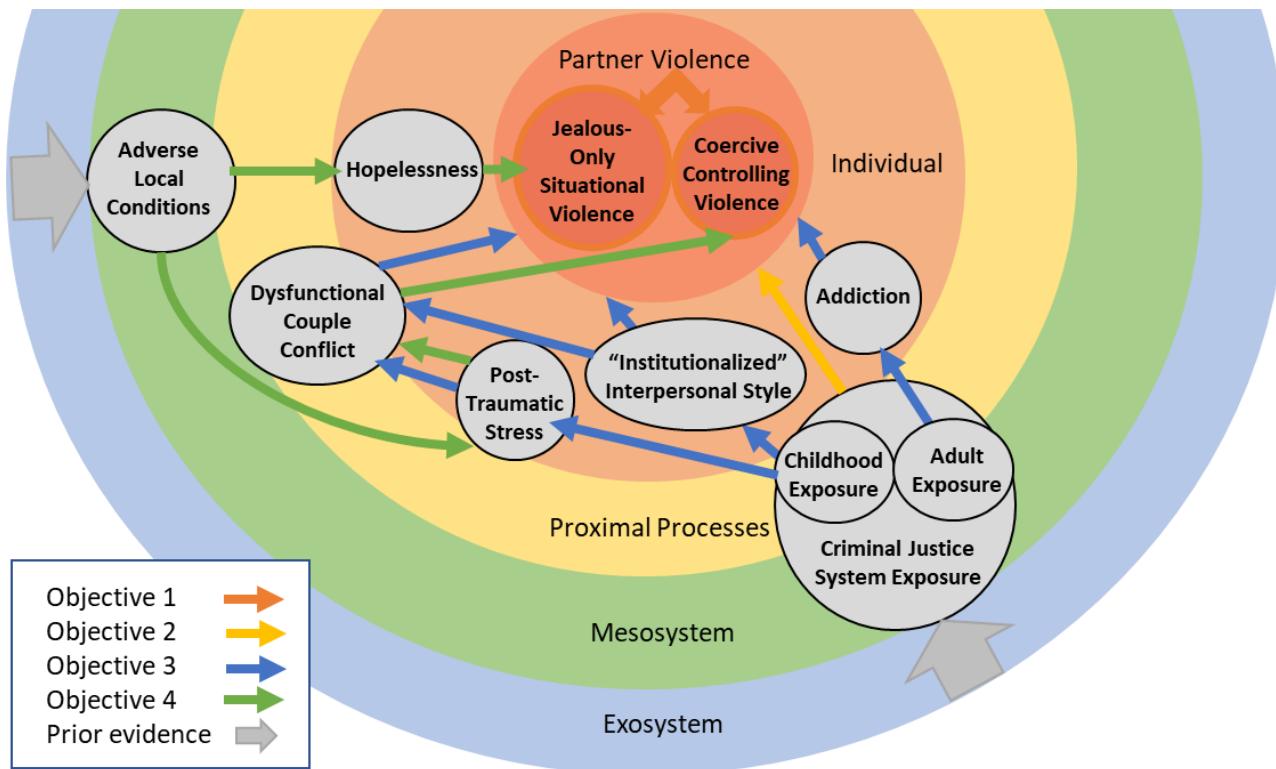
Examining partner violence among returning prisoners with multiple methods and at multiple social ecological levels, as this thesis has done, reveals a complex set of qualitative and quantitative links between partner violence and state and structural violence in the context of mass incarceration. Bronfenbrenner's framework offers an opportunity to synthesize these findings by considering how the interaction between returning prisoners' own characteristics and the characteristics of their various environments shapes couple-level relationship processes and experiences of partner violence.

Applying the model to synthesize study findings

As shown in Exhibit 1, the latent class analysis of couples' reports of physical violence and controlling behavior (described in Chapter 4 and indicated by dark orange circles in the diagram) found two distinct types of partner violence shaped by different proximal processes. Structural equation modeling of the relationship between local-level conditions and partner violence (described in Chapter 7 and indicated by green arrows in the diagram) showed that each of these types was predicted by the same meso-level factors: adverse local conditions and low perceived neighborhood quality. Pathways from these meso-level factors to partner violence outcomes were mediated by different proximal factors, however: pathways to jealous-only situational violence were mediated by hopelessness and pathways to coercive controlling violence were mediated by post-traumatic stress and dysfunctional conflict.

Inductive qualitative analysis (described in Chapter 5 and indicated by a yellow arrow in the diagram) and structural equation modeling of the relationship between individual criminal justice system exposure and partner violence (described in Chapter 6 and indicated by blue arrows in the diagram) highlight how relationships between former prisoners and their partners are shaped in an ongoing way by the penal system, even when neither partner is currently exposed to the prison environment. Qualitative narratives from returning prisoners and their partners and models fitted to couples' survey reports find that men's "institutionalized" interpersonal style, hopelessness, and behavioral health issues—linked (both qualitatively and quantitatively) to their exposures to imprisonment and other contacts with the criminal justice system—precipitate dysfunctional couple conflict and violence.

Exhibit 1. Study Findings from a Social Ecological Perspective



Note: Analysis for objective 3 indicated that addiction also predicts partner violence indirectly, via dysfunctional couple conflict. Analysis for objective 4 indicated that perceived neighborhood quality mediates the association between adverse local conditions and partner violence. These relationships are not depicted due to space constraints.

Implications of study results for Bronfenbrenner's framework

Mapping the results of the current study to Bronfenbrenner's framework highlights how penal authority exerts an ongoing influence over interactions between former prisoners and their partners—not the least in private interactions that occur well beyond its walls. These observations extend Comfort's (2003, 2008) ethnographic observations on "secondary prisonization" in relationships between prisoners and their partners, suggesting that such relationships are affected not only by the rules and routines imposed by correctional institutions but by the interpersonal style that men adopt to navigate such environments. Results also support the utility of Bronfenbrenner's emphasis on the person-process-context-time nexus. Its complexity in this regard is more helpful to the current purpose than an exclusive focus on

situational or contextual influences on behavior (though it should be noted that many applications of the social ecological framework take this approach [Tudge et al., 2009]) or alternatively, on only the influence of individual or couple-level characteristics. Instead, the model presses us to consider how each of these factors engage the others at various levels of the social ecology. Prior work—for example, Lebel and colleagues’ “subjective-social model” (LeBel et al., 2008, pp. 239–240) of reentry from prison—has described how internal, subjective states affect outcomes for former prisoners (in their case, recidivism) via a pathway from post-release social problems to criminalized behavior. The current work suggests how social or contextual problems, particularly those brought on by the experience of punishment (at both an individual and a local or collective level) might also shape subjective states in the pathway to criminalized behavior (in the case of the current study, partner violence).

Results of this study also suggest that mass incarceration-era contextual influences on violent behavior may be best understood by considering both their temporal and spatial dimensions. This result affirms a crucial, but under-operationalized, aspect of the social ecological framework. Researchers who apply the model to examine various questions about the etiology of human behavior often use cross-sectional data, are typically ahistorical in their analysis, and rarely capture precisely how contextual influences on behavior might unfold over the life course (Tudge et al., 2009)—but developmental and historical time are each a major emphasis of the original framework (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). In this study, the availability of longitudinal data from returning prisoners who were incarcerated at the peak of American mass incarceration made it possible to consider how contextual influences operate in personal and developmental time, and also through historical time, to shape behavioral processes.

Examining the context for returning prisoners' use of partner violence through the lenses of developmental and historical time is illuminating in three respects. First, testing the predictive value of three different latent constructs for individual criminal justice system exposure on later partner violence perpetration (described in Chapter 6) revealed that the most recent incarceration experience was not significantly linked to partner violence perpetration after release. Early-life criminal justice system exposure and accumulated criminal justice system exposure throughout adulthood were, however. Had the analysis focused only on the most temporally proximal context (the most recent incarceration), this study might have missed important connections between partner violence and engagement with the penal system.

Second, qualitative analysis (described in Chapter 5) highlights the historically exceptional forms of criminal justice system contact that shaped study participants' understandings and experiences of partner violence. Multi-site Family Study data were collected with men who went to prison around the peak of mass incarceration in America. Prior research has demonstrated that the penal policies of this era exposed Americans, particularly Black men with less than a high school education (Pettit & Western, 2004; Western & Pettit, 2010), to an unprecedented risk of imprisonment. Low-level contacts with the criminal justice system (such as cumulative arrests, one of the observed measures of the latent lifetime exposure construct included in the structural equation models) have been quite broadly and often groundlessly (Weaver et al., 2019) visited on poor Black communities during this punitive period. These policies and their implications for criminal justice system contact in poor communities of color are far from a thing of the past, but considering them through a historical lens calls our attention not simply to the potential fallout of policing and imprisonment per se but the lasting reverberations of a historic campaign of state violence against Black Americans.

Third, considering variation in criminal justice system exposure from these life-course and historical perspectives exposes spatial connections between mass incarceration-era conditions and partner violence that would not otherwise have been evident. Analyses that simultaneously considered temporal and spatial variation in experiences of mass incarceration (including individual exposure to the criminal justice system as well as adverse local conditions in hyper-incarcerated locales) clarified the fundamental etiological role of behavioral health. Prior partner violence research in other populations has suggested that exposure to state violence, including wartime violence and attempted genocide, might influence later partner violence perpetration via behavioral health (particularly post-traumatic stress) (Jordan et al., 1992; Meffert & Marmar, 2009). Research on the collateral consequences of mass incarceration has identified the influence of localized hyper-incarceration on the spatial distribution of behavioral health problems (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2015). In the current analysis, the temporal and spatial distribution of criminal justice system exposure seemed to shape whether or how it affected behavioral health and, in turn, the use of violence against a partner. While partner violence theorists have not uncommonly advocated a developmental perspective on partner violence—one that attends to ways that environmental context and couple-level processes shape partner violence through the life course (Capaldi et al., 2005; Capaldi & Kim, 2007)—empirical work on social determinants of partner violence has seldom delivered this kind of temporal or spatial specificity. Observations from the current study reinforce the utility of a model that accommodates developmental time and ecological space for understanding partner violence in a time of mass incarceration.

Contribution to Critical Theories of Violence and Punishment

This thesis aims to build a theoretical understanding of partner violence in the context of hyper-incarceration that advances the broader study of violence and punishment. Research on the

collateral consequences of incarceration has often left aside the topic of violence in families (but see Wakefield & Wildeman, 2013). Research on the social determinants of partner violence research has rarely assessed how partner violence experiences might be connected to hyper-incarceration. This field of partner violence research is generally under-theorized (Voith, 2017) and the utility of partner violence theory and research for guiding coherent policy responses across government systems has also been curtailed by disciplinary divergences. These unattended-to scholarly divergences are all the more unfortunate for being mirrored in divergent (and perhaps mutually cancelling) government responses to partner violence.

Applying the social ecological framework as a meta-theoretical model supports the effort to address these omissions and divergences. The framework accommodates results from each of the analyses conducted for this thesis and is specific enough to highlight points of tension between different theoretical perspectives (and between theoretical expectation and empirical observation) at each node. Though the framework itself lacks a critical analysis of power relations, it furnishes a helpful structure for engaging other critical theories on violence and punishment and considering how results of the current study might speak to them.

This section will engage competing critical theoretical perspectives at two nodes in the social ecological model. First, it will apply results of the current study to the question of how distinct couple-level patterns of interpersonal violence and control (Bronfenbrenner's proximal processes) might be linked to broader patterns of violence and control—a longstanding point of controversy among feminist and family violence theorists and site of speculation among those interested in applying social disorganization theory to partner violence. Second, it will extend critical theories of the functioning of penal authority across carceral and community spaces and settings (what Bronfenbrenner conceptualized as the meso-level environment, or the threads

connecting the environments in which a person operates). Finally, it will invite these works into conversation with intersectional feminist theories of violence to consider the underlying relationship between violence and the cross-contextual functioning of penal authority.

Linking forms of partner violence to broader systems of domination

The couple-level relationship processes documented in the current study lend support to Johnson's theoretical intervention in longstanding debates between feminist and family violence theorists. They also prompt a more precise consideration of the links between distinct interpersonal patterns of violence and control and broader social and material conditions, engaging the predictions of feminist theory and of social disorganization theory as extended by Robert Sampson and William Julius Wilson. The results highlight a limitation of Johnson's theory as previously applied, while also pointing to what might prove its most important empirical advantage: the ability to examine precisely how different forms of partner violence (distinguished by the presence of interpersonal domination) might be linked in common or distinct ways to broader systems of domination.

Johnson posits that some individuals use force against their partners as a tactic of interpersonal control, while others lash out during escalated conflict without a pattern of other controlling behavior. According to Johnson, coercive controlling violence occurs when men use physical force and a variety of other tactics to dominate their female partners. Consistent with classic feminist theory, this form of violence (understood to be the most damaging) is shaped by heteropatriarchal attitudes and reinforced by heteropatriarchal social structures. Situational couple violence occurs when one or both partners use violence in the context of escalated conflict, absent a pattern of controlling behavior. Consistent with family violence theory, this

form of violence is understood to be influenced by limited conflict skills and the broader social and material strains to which the couple is subject (for example, poverty) (Johnson, 1995, 2008).

Neither Johnson nor the family violence theorists whose perspective he judiciously invokes (regarding situational couple violence only) offer a critical sociohistorical perspective on the adversities that they see as straining couples and contributing to violence. Social disorganization theory, however, is explicit on this point. As extended by Sampson & Wilson (1995), the theory posits that macro-historical social and material influences, particularly racialized segregation and the estrangement of poor communities of color from crucial economic and social institutions, removes neighborhood-level restraints on violence and other forms of criminalized behavior. From this perspective, violence is a form of deviance that is held in check by traditional social structures. When these structures deteriorate—as they have, Sampson and Wilson argue, under conditions of generationally entrenched, spatially segregated, racialized poverty—more violence arises.

Applied to partner violence, social disorganization theory offers a way of thinking about how racialized class subordination might contribute to abuse, an analysis that is absent from Johnson's typology and from classic feminist theories of partner violence. The most widely applied theory in research on neighborhood-level influences on partner violence (Beyer et al., 2015; Voith, 2017), social disorganization has also been used by critical legal scholars to suggest that hyper-incarceration exacerbates partner violence by eroding local communities' ability to control deviance (Coker & Macquoid, 2015). However, as discussed in Chapter 2, the role that social disorganization theory accords to traditional, heteropatriarchal social structures—that of helping to restrain violence and other forms of criminalized behavior—is at direct odds with

feminist theories of partner violence, which see such structures as supporting or perpetuating partner violence at both the couple and community levels.

The latent class analysis, qualitative analysis, and structural equation modeling conducted for this study affirm the broader links proposed by feminist and social disorganization theories while also departing from each in important respects. Affirming Johnson's theory of the role of interpersonal control in partner violence, latent class analysis identified two distinct types of violence between returning prisoners and their partners: coercive controlling violence and jealous-only situational violence. As Johnson predicts (and consistent with other empirical applications of his theory), perpetrators of coercive controlling violence were predominantly male and used more severe physical violence than perpetrators of jealous-only situational violence. Victims of coercive controlling violence, who were predominantly female, experienced more fear and post-traumatic stress than did victims of jealous-only situational violence. Jealous-only situational violence was used by both men and women and was generally less severe and consequential.

Qualitative results, however, suggest an incomplete fit between the understanding of interpersonal control tactics on which Johnson's typology and other feminist formulations of partner violence rely (Stark, 2009; Stark & Hester, 2019) and the experiences of returning prisoners and their partners. Empirical works with other study populations treat the expression of jealousy in partner relationships as a tactic of interpersonal control (see Love et al., 2018 for a review). But in the stories of Multi-site Family Study participants, jealousy was widely regarded as a situational response to the relationship status insecurities common among couples who had weathered separation and severe disruption in their relationships. Couples described an unsettling tension between their mutual investment in the relationship (the typical couple had been together

7-8 years and was raising children together) and overwhelming uncertainties about their relationship status and future as they emerged from years of enforced separation. In the wake of one or more incarcerations, jealousy appeared less as a tactic of interpersonal control and more as a response to mutual (and perpetual) loss of control in the hands of penal authority. For most couples, jealousy did not signify an attempt to exert excessive control over one's partner but rather arose from the desire for an ordinary level of control over one's life and relationships. As such, jealous behavior was an artefact of the dissonance between normative relationship expectations (for example, the ability to spend time with or freely communicate with one's spouse, partner, or co-parent) and the reality of a relationship that is heavily dictated by penal authority.

Qualitative results and structural equation models fitted for the current study both affirm and diverge from the etiological predictions of feminist and social disorganization theories. Fitted models for the influence of adverse local conditions on partner violence confirm Johnson's prediction that the two major types of partner violence have different proximal precursors: hopelessness predicts jealous-only situational violence, while post-traumatic stress and dysfunctional couple conflict predict coercive controlling violence. They also confirm the social disorganization theory based prediction (as presented in Coker & Macquoid, 2015) that adverse local conditions associated with hyper-incarceration, including low median income and high rates of imprisonment and violent death, are associated with greater likelihood of partner violence among the criminalized.

The current results support a different mechanism for the link between hyper-incarcerated local conditions and partner violence than Sampson and Wilson imagined, however. Inductive analysis of participants' relationship stories found no evidence of the social disorganization pathway to

partner violence. Instead, returning prisoners and their partners suggested, and structural equation models affirmed, that local hyper-incarceration predicts partner violence via men’s behavioral health symptoms—specifically, post-traumatic stress and hopelessness—and dysfunctional couple conflict. Consistent with Johnson’s and other feminist theories but inconsistent with social disorganization theory, qualitative analysis also suggested that heteropatriarchal social structures and heteronormative romantic ideals support and perpetuate (rather than restrain) partner violence among returning prisoners and their partners.

Fitted structural equation models also provide new evidence regarding the relationship between more distal social and material conditions and Johnson’s types of partner violence. Before the current study, little information was available on this point. Models constructed for this study indicated that, while proximal predictors of the types differ (consistent with Johnson’s theory), the types share the same distal antecedents: adverse local conditions and poor perceived neighborhood quality.

A further surprise is that dysfunctional couple conflict mediates the association between these local antecedents and coercive controlling violence (via post-traumatic stress) and does not mediate the pathway to jealous-only situational violence. On its face, the finding that coercive controlling violence (and not situational violence) is predicted by ongoing dysfunctional couple conflict would seem to counter Johnson’s supposition that low-control violence is “situationally provoked” while high-control violence is more systematic and calculated (Johnson, 2008, p. 11). Given the Multi-site Family Study’s wide longitudinal follow-up windows, it remains possible that individual acts of violence of either type might arise in the context of an escalated conflict. Still, contrary to prior assumptions, it is important to note that a pattern of dysfunctional “couple

conflict" may be the first sign of one partner's efforts to assert power and control over the other, emerging prior to the overt application of force and controlling behavior.

Finally, these results suggest that state and structural violence in hyper-incarcerated communities might promote not only the low-control form of violence already imagined to be responsive to external strains (situational violence) but also the more systematic attempt at violent domination and control known as coercive controlling violence. For the desisters in Maruna's Liverpool sample, who faced substantial adversities but not a multi-decade campaign of racialized state violence, seizing narrative control of their lives required an attainable degree of cognitive distortion (Maruna, 2001, 2004). Among many former prisoners in the Multi-site Family Study, however, the delusion of personal agency was far from reach. For some of these criminalized men, returned from prison to hyper-surveilled and materially bleak surroundings, the sense of helplessness and hopelessness such surroundings instilled prompted them to lash out violently at their partners and co-parents (see also Holliday et al., 2019). Others, facing the same community conditions and equally unable to seize narrative control of them, seized fully upon the gendered possibility of domination and control available within their households—with at least equally violent (and ultimately more damaging) effects.

Among the criminalized, it seems, both the form of racialized class subordination described by social disorganization theorists and the heteropatriarchal norms emphasized by feminist theorists may promote or support men's abuse of their partners. Yet the operation of these broader social and material conditions in the lives of returning prisoners and their partners is more intertwined—and the mechanisms for their associations with violence more complex—than either perspective predicts.

Penality and violence across spaces and structures

The current study traces partner violence and penal authority across carceral and domestic spaces, while also highlighting how encounters with such authority unfold through the life course: from childhood through adulthood, and over the course of imprisonment and release. These findings build on ethnographies of punishment that consider the cross-contextual coherence in processes of individual criminalization and the production of collective and localized “spatial taint” in hyper-incarcerated communities (Wacquant et al., 2014, pp. 1271–1272). This prior body of critical ethnographic work has begun to sketch the mutable and mutually reinforcing manifestations of penal authority through the life course and across spheres and settings. Rios evokes how the criminalization of young men of color begins early in the life course; extends across schools, streets, and homes; and snowballs to punish and marginalize its targets in each of these spheres and move them into the prisons (Rios, 2011). Wacquant describes a “deadly symbiosis” that keeps poor adult men of color cycling at these margins, from prisons to streets and back again (Wacquant, 2001). Comfort illuminates how “secondary prisonization” entrains the day-to-day lives of prisoners’ partners and co-parents in the routines and restrictions imposed by prison authorities (Comfort, 2008; Comfort, 2003). Lopez-Aguado documents how the processes of bringing individuals and households under penal control, enacted on a neighborhood scale, effect the “tertiary prisonization” of community social life by prison-based socialization processes (Lopez-Aguado, 2016).

Affirming the merciless continuity of penal authority across carceral, domestic, and street settings (as this body of critical ethnographic work on penality has previously described), the current study reveals such authority as coextensive with violence in each sphere. As Western (2015) has also observed, the violence encountered and perpetuated by the criminalized as they

move across these spaces troubles the clean lines of classic etiological work. Despite increasingly robust research on poly-victimization and the “victim-offender overlap” in violent experiences over the life course (see for example, Andrews et al., 2019), most violence research examines the etiology of contextually specific forms of victimization or perpetration—prison violence, street violence, and partner violence—in relative isolation. This habit not only cordons off the social spaces in which violence occurs but also effectively bars full consideration of the broader sociohistorical contexts that might shape them in common. As noted earlier in this chapter, for example, works on street and carceral violence tend to emphasize the role of racialized class subordination, while works on violence between partners and in homes tend to focus on heteropatriarchal social conditions. Examining these influences simultaneously and cross-contextually helps to bring the intertwined mechanisms of their production into sharper relief. It also suggests how strategies of resistance to authority in one sphere (for example, a strategic and calculating orientation to interpersonal relationships and the willingness to use violence to defend oneself while in prison) become tools of domination in another (when used to exert control over one’s partner and household after release).

As critical ethnographers have amply demonstrated, the task of theorizing the connections among these broad circuits of power and the fine articulations of their everyday operation is often best undertaken by those directly concerned. With benefit of insight from returning prisoners and their partners, the current study helps to surface the workings of gender as a mechanism of harm transfer among those subordinated by regimes of race and class. For couples affected by incarceration, the entrenched heteropatriarchal reality of women’s invisible, coerced, uncompensated labor effectively relocates a large share of the damage associated with men’s criminalization and imprisonment. Their stories suggest how the physical, emotional, and

material fallout of hyper-incarceration among men (effected through the exercise of racialized class domination) is silently absorbed by their partners (effected through gendered labor coercion). Quantitative models built on their insights further highlight pathways from men's criminal justice system exposure and community-level hyper-incarceration to violence against women. Women's bodies, they suggest, are not only drawn further into coerced labor through the extension of penal authority but also function to absorb and neutralize the transferred blows of state violence against men.

By calling attention to the simultaneity and inseparability of race-, class-, and gender-based structural inequalities in conditioning violence across contextual spheres, this work argues implicitly for the necessity of cross-contextual understandings of violence. Though it comprises by far the largest share of violence in America, partner violence has often been treated as a secondary experience to which knowledge built at the criminological center (for example, in observations of street violence or youth delinquency) may be passed along. Reflective of an uncomfortably longstanding tendency in criminological and sociological scholarship to sideline violence against women and children, critical scholarship on violence has often set aside violence in family relationships as a special case to be considered by feminist researchers and those concerned with the family. This tendency has contributed to certain glaring areas of theoretical misfit (for example, the widespread application of social disorganization theory to partner violence) that persist despite weak empirical support. The current study—focused on understanding partner violence in the context of state and structural violence—creates an opportunity to move knowledge from this presumed margin back to the center of criminological thought, asking: *What might a better understanding of partner violence reveal about violence generally?*

The cross-contextual continuity and coextension of violence and penal authority documented in this study also has disruptive implications for the predominant view of violence (in critical criminological and sociological scholarship) as a possible negative outcome of broader systems of domination. This conceptualization, which underlies much empirical work on partner violence and other forms of violence (including the present study) misses something important about what violence is and does. It is challenged by Black feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins' argument that violence is not an outcome but itself a social location; a "saturated site" at which intersecting systems of race-, class- and gender-based domination are revealed. She does not mean by this that violence is one potential by-product of structural injustice, as I had regarded it in developing questions for the current study. Instead, for Collins, violence is "the conceptual glue that binds intersecting systems of power together" (Collins, 2017, pp. 1464–1465).

Looking at experiences of physical violence and of interpersonal control and domination from the perspectives of returning prisoners and their partners reveals a set of experiences that refuse to come undone from one another and whose stickiness (to extend Collins' binding metaphor) demands scrutiny. Physical violence is highly prevalent among Multi-site Family Study participants based on their survey reports, and relatively invisible in their stories. An act of physical force is not, in their narratives, a consequential outcome in itself, but instrumental; a way of winning or losing, a way of getting something done. Extending this perspective to the collective experience, partner violence might be regarded not as a "collateral" outcome of hyper-incarceration but as an instrument of the cross-contextual penal authority that hyper-incarceration effects. This observation dovetails with that of intersectional feminist legal scholar Angela Harris, who suggests that violence helps to constitute and maintain "the race of gender, the gender of race, and the sexuality and class of each." Harris suggests that the graphically

gendered nature of men’s violent victimization and perpetration—carried with them from streets to prisons to homes—is not an artefact of systems of race, class, and gender domination; it helps to make these systems conceptually and materially possible (Harris, 2011, p. 37).

Findings from the current study draw potent connections between the violent work of maintaining racialized class subordination and so-called women’s work. As police and other “violence workers” are tasked with applying violence to maintain a steeply imbalanced and inherently unstable racialized social order (Seigel, 2018, p. 20), so are spouses, partners, and co-parents tasked (toward this same end) with absorbing the violence of criminalized men. In a privatized and uncompensated version of violence work, women in hyper-incarcerated communities are conscripted into frontline service: absorbing men’s blows, blunting their abject poverty, and concealing their debilitation from the rest of the world. Indeed, if violence is the saturated site that marks the exercise of domination, the fundamental liminality of “women’s work” signals what systems of domination devalue and neglect. Among the partners of returning prisoners, women’s socially stabilizing work picks up at the edges where wage labor leaves off, where systems of social welfare fall precipitously short, where the prison gate closes and the emptied streets begin.

Directions for Future Research

Methodological Contributions

Until large-scale, longitudinal data can be collected with a probability-based sample of returning prisoners and their partners and other comparable families, Multi-site Family Study data represent the best available source for understanding experiences of partner violence in such families. The study’s couples-based design, relatively large sample size, four-wave longitudinal

structure, and the availability of qualitative interview data from a subset of 167 participants make it the richest current data source on the partner and co-parenting relationships of returning prisoners. The current study capitalized on these strengths and on the availability of nationally representative data on local conditions in the communities where study participants lived. It applied an innovative, multimethod design to maximize what could be learned about partner violence among returning prisoners within the limitations of available data (discussed in detail in Chapter 3 and in each empirical chapter).

Beyond the methodological contributions specific to each analysis (summarized earlier in this chapter), two novel design features are common across this work: the use of multimethod analytic approaches and the emphasis on latent variable based techniques. Three of the four empirical inquiries (those described in Chapters 4, 5, and 6) used linked qualitative and quantitative data to execute a closely integrated multimethod analysis. To address research objective one, patterns in the full study dataset were identified using quantitative methods, then a qualitative case review (stratified using the classifications obtained from quantitative patterns) was conducted to validate and refine the quantitative classifications. To address research objective two, an inductive analysis of the qualitative dataset was conducted while referring to a quantitative summary of multiple waves of longitudinal survey data on partner violence from each participant and the participant's partner. In this analysis, the ability to make simultaneous reference to quantitative and qualitative information and to reports from both members of the couple supported greater insight on the narrative choices that participants made in sharing stories of their relationships. To address research objective three, hypotheses regarding potential pathways from criminal justice system exposure to partner violence were generated from qualitative data and then modeled quantitatively. In all three of these inquiries, multimethod

analytic approaches lent greater nuance and precision to the findings. In addition, as discussed in the preceding sections, this effort brought forward several substantive relationships that would not have been apparent with recourse to a single data source or analytic method.

Three of the four analyses (those described in Chapters 4, 6, and 7) applied latent variable methods to examine patterns in survey data while partially mitigating its shortcomings. In partner violence research, the kind of securely collected ACASI survey data obtained for the Multi-site Family Study offer distinct advantages over law enforcement data or official records of service seeking. Still, survey items are an inherently imperfect means of understanding complex and subjective experiences like abuse. Latent variable approaches help to address this fundamental limitation by assessing the underlying concepts that a set of variables has captured (rather than presuming that survey items directly measure what researchers intended them to measure) and adjusting for error in measurement. Work on research objective one applied latent class analysis to understand whether attending to patterns in interpersonal control supported a meaningful distinction between types of partner violence (as proposed by Johnson). Structural equation modeling, used for research objectives three and four, made it possible to test whether the relatively complex pathways suggested in qualitative analysis held in survey data. Combined with qualitative methods, these strategies offer a powerful approach for characterizing the experiences of a large study sample while bearing in mind what those experiences meant to the people who lived them.

Questions and Strategies for Future Research

This study began to consider what a historic era of punishment might teach us about the nature and etiology of violence in its most common and impactful form. It leaves many questions

unanswered.

Chief among the questions that remain is whether imprisonment and other forms of criminal justice system exposure in the hyper-incarcerative era exert a causal influence on partner violence. Prospective data collection on the consequences of jail stays for post-release partner violence represents one possible direction for causal inquiry. Preliminary quantitative and ethnographic research suggests that even short jail stays may be profoundly consequential for jailed individuals and their family members (e.g., Comfort, 2016; Turney & Conner, 2019), but implications for partner violence have not been examined. Studies in this vein could take advantage of jurisdictional or judicial differences in bonding or sentencing approaches to compare individuals who spend time in jail with otherwise similar individuals who do not. Such an approach would leverage natural variation in punishment approaches as well as the greater viability of identifying never-jailed comparisons who are truly similar to the jailed (Kirk & Wakefield, 2018) (relative to identifying never-imprisoned comparisons who are similar to the imprisoned). Research along these lines would also help to remedy a general shortage of evidence on consequences of jail incarceration and other lower-level forms of criminal justice system contact.

Results of the current study further underscore the importance of ongoing efforts to apply a gender lens to research on the collateral consequences of mass incarceration. A powerful accounting has been made of the disproportionate burden of hyper-incarceration in poor communities of color and its broader consequences for racialized inequality in America (e.g., Wakefield & Uggen, 2010; Wakefield & Wildeman, 2011). Quantitative work that examines the gendered distribution of these consequences has begun to show what a substantial share of the burden of imprisonment is borne by female family members of current and former prisoners (Lee

et al., 2014; Lee & Wildeman, 2013; Wildeman et al., 2013; Wildeman et al., 2012). It also suggests a key role for female intimate partners and co-parents in transmitting the harms of parental (and overwhelmingly paternal) incarceration to children (Turney, 2014; Wakefield, 2015). The gendered process of harm transfer this study documents from former prisoners to their partners and the mothers of their children, though deeply private, may have broad population-scale ramifications.

This endeavor has also called attention to the need for improved social and behavioral research approaches for understanding family life among families with an incarcerated or formerly incarcerated member, who comprise 45 percent of the American population (Enns et al., 2019). This is a particular issue for partner violence research, given qualitative findings from this and other work with Multi-site Family Study participants (McKay et al., 2019, pp. 63-86) suggesting that partners of returning prisoners may hesitate to disclose their experiences even for research purposes. Partner violence researchers should continue to consider methodological innovations—including improvements in self-administered interviewing, multimethod data collection and linkage, and analytic approaches that draw on multiple data sources and account for quantitative measurement error—capable of eliciting a more complete picture of private, stigmatized and criminalized experiences and behaviors among families living under close state surveillance.

Finally, future research with heavily surveilled and vulnerable families should take into account not only the profound sensitivity of the endeavor but also the legacy of abusive research practices in poor communities of color that precedes it (Kahn et al., 2018). It is past time to consider what a reparative research paradigm (Laws, 2019) might look like in the social sciences; that is, one that confronts researchers' own contributions to the damages sustained by poor communities of color and aims to contribute to their repair. For those engaged in

understanding the interrelated harms of violence and punishment, such an approach should include research strategies that center, recognize and remunerate the intellectual contributions of those who have survived the hyper-incarcerative state. The catastrophic nature of these harms and the resulting urgency of the questions that confront us should also inspire increasingly efficient research approaches that place as little additional burden on research participants as possible. Developing a reparative approach to social scientific inquiry may be the least convenient item on the research agenda—but if we are not interested in building new ways of understanding the world and revisiting our proverbial places in it, we would do well to quit researching altogether.

Implications for Public Policy

This study, while preliminary, has some immediate implications for public policy. Findings suggest that in the presence of an abusive system of punishment and the absence of a social safety net for returning prisoners, their intimate partners and co-parents are coerced into keeping house for the state. Women's work may be effective at keeping the unsightly damage of mass imprisonment largely out of public sight and even (sometimes) at achieving a modicum of physical, emotional and material stability for their partners. However, it is undertaken at steep cost to women themselves—not the least of which is physical safety.

The untenability of the burden shouldered by poor women of color in hyper-incarcerative America speaks to two substantial and equally pressing policy concerns. First, a massive rebuilding of the health and human services infrastructure is urgently needed. This would include the restoration and expansion of fundamental social welfare programs, such as a basic guaranteed income, free or affordable physical and behavioral health care, safe and accessible public housing, and subsidized child care (or support for stay-at-home parenting) for poor families. As this study and much prior work has suggested, the lack of these basic supports contributes to impossible prospects for returning prisoners and places unbearable weight on their partners and co-parents.

Within such an expansion, adequate support for partner violence prevention and response at every social ecological level is equally critical. Government investment in addressing partner violence must be proportionate to its widespread and pernicious effects on the health and well-being of women and children. The current study points to the particular need for comprehensive strategies to address partner violence victimization and perpetration among those affected by

state violence. In the era of mass incarceration, these individuals and families comprise an enormous share of the American population (Enns et al., 2019; Muller & Wildeman, 2016; Shannon et al., 2017). The infrastructure put in place to meet their needs must reflect this breadth as well as the depth of harm to which they have been exposed.

Services and policies aimed at supporting victims should reflect a common interest in promoting behavioral health and economic stability and relieving the private burdens that have been unfairly imposed on them. Treatment approaches for those who use violence against their partners should move beyond an essentially punitive model of cognitive rehabilitation toward strategies that address underlying trauma and improve behavioral health (L. Mills & Barocas, 2019). The current study adds to a wider call to balance the focus on characterological understandings of and approaches to perpetration with reasonable acknowledgment of the structural and “situational” ones that affect the life choices of criminalized and non-criminalized individuals alike (Maruna, 2011, p. 5; Maruna & Copes, 2005; Maruna & Mann, 2006). Findings from the current study suggest that individuals who use violence against their partners could be supported in building and articulating a personally accountable but reasonably contextualized understanding of their behavior and in regaining a positive assessment of self and future. Such services could also be tailored to the distinct cognitive and interpersonal styles evident among Multi-site Family Study participants who used violence against their partners: those who had relinquished a sense of personal control in the face of ongoing state violence (the jealous-only situationally violent type) and those who attempted to regain it by dominating their partners (the coercive controlling violent type).

Second, the results of this study emphasize the likely limits of any regime of individual punishment or rehabilitation for addressing violence. Some of the generous funding currently

directed at surveilling, shaming and punishing (or punitively rehabilitating) those who use violence might be better spent redressing the population-scale conditions that have enabled and even necessitated its pervasive use. While dismantling the entrenched heteropatriarchy and racialized class domination that perpetuate these conditions is a daunting task, we know more about how to begin it than we care to admit. Much of this knowledge is tucked away in the humble annals of public health research and practice (for example, Bourgois, 2009; Matjasko et al., 2012; Nilon et al., 2017, 2019; Rylko-Bauer & Farmer, 2016). The solutions to which this body of work directs us are overdue for full-scale testing and replication.

At the same time, other sectors of government that respond to violence, particularly the criminal justice system, must stop doing further harm. Even if punishing wrong-doers is seen as a moral good in itself, there is no denying that the consequences of punishment cannot be contained to the targeted individual (Lacey, 2003). Indeed, the current study highlights how the powerful redistributive functioning of heteropatriarchal social relationships may mean that the partners and children of the convicted absorb an even heavier share of punitive consequences than the convicted themselves—a reality that would invalidate the very premise of punishing an individual for crime. It further suggests that criminal justice system responses that promote post-traumatic stress, hopelessness, and an “institutionalized” interpersonal style may foster, rather than deter, the continued use of violence. This work clarifies the imperative of replacing our present criminal justice system, built on the idea of deterring and incapacitating individual perpetrators, with something entirely different.

It is time to discard the notion that the radical policy implications of twenty years of scholarship on the social determinants of partner violence and on the collateral consequences of mass incarceration are of limited practical use. Indeed, the collective nature and vast scope of the

harms documented in each of these bodies of work (and in the current study, which aims to bring them together) point to the gross impracticality and even futility of an exclusively individual-level repair strategy.

The companion tasks of decarceration and reparation are urgent. American incarceration rates, if they continue to decline at present speed, could take eighty years to return to 1980 levels—and across decarceration scenarios, “the number of people *formerly* incarcerated will likely continue to rise for decades” (Mauer & Ghandnoosh, 2017; Shannon et al., 2017, p. 1815). The end of this era cannot come too soon—but we must be prepared that even radical decarceration will not undo the vast harms inflicted in a four-decade campaign of state violence. The long lag between childhood criminal justice system exposure and later partner violence perpetration observed in the current study, as well as the process of harm transfer to partners (and via partners, to children) this and other studies document, suggest that the harms of hyper-incarceration will continue to accrue for generations (Turney, 2014; Wakefield, 2015; Wakefield & Wildeman, 2013; Wildeman, 2015). As these catastrophic and unprecedented damages make their way home to us in the coming years, they must be met with an equally unprecedented set of reparative policies that lay the groundwork for a less violent future.

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ⁱ The Multi-site Family Study was funded by the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation to evaluate federal demonstration programs whose implementation and impact is described elsewhere (Lindquist, Steffey, Tueller, et al., 2018; T. McKay et al., 2015).

ⁱⁱ Eligibility and sample characteristics are described elsewhere (Lindquist, Steffey, McKay, et al., 2018).

ⁱⁱⁱ To construct the latent class models using the richest available information on men's controlling behavior, we used a set of observed dependent variables that represented each man's own reports regarding his use of various control tactics as well as his female partner's reports regarding his use of various control tactics. Of the dependent variables included in the model, four pairs of variables represented men's and women's respective reports of the same controlling behavior on the part of the male partner. Since such reports might be expected to be correlated within classes, the ideal latent class modeling approach would be to allow residual covariances between these variable pairs to vary from zero. However, MPlus does not currently allow a model constructed using such parameters to be fitted to a new dataset, making this approach infeasible for obtaining a model from the male controlling behavior data that could then be used to get predicted values for female controlling behavior data. We fitted a set of models using these alternate parameters to determine whether and how the solution obtained might differ from our focal set of models, in which all residual correlations were fixed to zero. As with the fixed-residuals approach, the freed-residuals approach identified a two-class solution as preferred. Model fit statistics (including Bayesian Information Criterion, entropy, and average latent class probabilities) suggested that this solution represented a modest improvement in fit and class delineation over the fixed-residuals model solution. However, examination of variable thresholds within classes suggested that the freed-residuals model was identifying the same substantive pattern as the fixed-residuals model, and overall class proportions differed very little between the two approaches.

^{iv} In nine cases, the research team was unable to assign a dyadic behavioral type based on qualitative interview data due to insufficient qualitative information on each partner's use of controlling behavior and physical violence.

^v See Chapter Five for qualitative analysis results.

^{vi} Consistent with prior methods, when this violent and controlling dynamic was two-sided, it was classified as mutual violent control (Johnson, 2008).