Document Title:	**Post-Incarceration Partner Violence: Examining the Social Context of Victimization to Inform Victim Services and Prevention**
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Document Number:	**254662**
Date Received:	**April 2020**
Award Number:	**2016-VF-GX-0010**

Post-Incarceration Partner Violence: Examining the Social Context of Victimization to Inform Victim Services and Prevention

FINAL REPORT

December 19, 2019

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1 Study Purpose and Implementation

Despite the staggeringly high prevalence of post-incarceration partner violence observed in the first study to rigorously measure it (the Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting, and Partnering [MFS-IP]), little was known of the social contextual factors that shape violent victimization in justice-involved couples or of how those factors operate. Our study addressed this gap by assessing the role of contextual factors that empirical and theoretical work suggested might affect partner violence in this vulnerable population, then translated our findings to inform context-responsive victim services approaches (Goal 1) and identified theories of change and key leverage points for primary and secondary prevention (Goal 2). Using newly available secondary data from the MFS-IP study and three other publicly available secondary data sources, the project developed an actionable understanding of the social contexts of post-incarceration partner violence victimization.

1.1   Conceptual Framework

The study purpose, goals, and objectives were guided by the theoretical perspectives on partner violence summarized in *Exhibit 1.*

Exhibit 1.   Key Theoretical Perspectives on the Social Context for Partner Violence Victimization

Authors	Theoretical Contribution
Dahlberg & Krug (2002)	Uses the Social Ecological Framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to understand the etiology of violence for purposes of designing primary and secondary prevention.
Capaldi & Kim (2007)	Summarizes individual- (e.g., mental health) and couple-level (relationship dissolution, conflict escalation, presence of children) social context factors that shape both partner violence and its impact and suggests how these factors may moderate intervention effectiveness ("Dynamic Developmental Systems Model").
Lindhorst & Tajima (2008)	Delineates five dimensions of the social context that influence partner violence: situational context, the social construction of meaning by the survivor, cultural and historical contexts, and systemic oppression.
Cuevas, Finkelhor, Turner, & Ormrod (2007)	Identifies distinct types of violence victims among youth involved with the juvenile justice system, based on individual- (e.g., mental health, substance use, victimization history, involvement in violence) and family-level (e.g., presence of adult perpetrators of violence in family) social context factors.
Evans-Campbell (2008)	Proposes how historical trauma[a] may shape adverse experiences, including violent victimization, via contextual factors at the individual, family, and community levels.

[a] The concept of historical trauma was developed in research with and by American Indian communities (Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 2000) and Holocaust survivors and their descendants (Kellermann, 2001a). It has also been applied by Eyerman (2002), Leary (2005), and others to describe intergenerational trauma stemming from the enslavement of Africans in the Americas and is extended here to help understand how the sociohistorical continuity between enslavement and mass incarceration could shape how Americans in communities with high rates of incarceration may experience family relationships, victimization, and trauma.

These perspectives also guided the development of research questions and the selection of focal constructs for inclusion in qualitative and quantitative analysis.

1.2   Purpose, Goals, and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to better understand the social context of post-incarceration partner violence victimization in order to guide context-responsive victim services (Goal 1) and primary and secondary prevention efforts (Goal 2). *Exhibit 2* shows our goals and the analytic and dissemination objectives we accomplished to achieve them.

Exhibit 2.   Goals and Objectives

Goal 1. Describe evident types of post incarceration partner violence to inform context responsive victim services.
Objective 1a—Identify violence types by applying hierarchical cluster analysis to identify whether post-incarceration partner violence experiences cluster into types observed in the general population (e.g., Johnson, 2008) or another set of types (or classes). Apply k-means clustering to objectively assess whether the classes identified fit the data best.
Objective 1b—Assess the prevalence of each identified type using simple descriptive statistics.
Objective 1c—Assess stability in type membership across interview waves using latent transition analysis.
Objective 1d—Identify services and supports that violence victims describe as helpful or protective by examining qualitative interview data on self-described service needs and recommendations from respondents in each identified type.
Objective 1e—Identify implications of these quantitative and qualitative findings for victim services with this population.
Goal 2. Identify individual , couple/family , and community level contextual influences on post incarceration partner violence to inform primary and secondary prevention.
Objective 2a—Examine the relationship between proposed social context influences at the individual, family, and community levels and partner violence victimization *experiences* by running multiple regression models.
Objective 2b— Examine the relationship between proposed social context influences at the individual, family, and community levels and partner violence *types* by running multiple logistic regression models.
Objective 2c—Identify the potential causal pathways from identified contextual influences to partner violence outcomes in justice-involved couples using structural equation models.
Objective 2d—Describe relationships among proposed social contextual influences and partner violence victimization experiences by running queries in ATLAS.ti to identify pertinent textual data, examining co-occurrences of these constructs in the data and participants' stated associations among them, and developing a conceptual map.
Objective 2e—Identify implications of these quantitative and qualitative findings for primary and secondary prevention with this population.

1.3   Study Sample and Data Sources

MFS-IP. The MFS-IP study was funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation and Office of Family Assistance, to assess the impact of family strengthening programming on incarcerated and reentering men and their partners, with supplemental funding from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) to better understand recidivism and reentry outcomes. The MFS-IP study sample is not nationally representative, and some respondents received services as part of a healthy marriage promotion and responsible parenting program that the original study evaluated (controlled for in our study). Yet the MFS-IP dataset's other rare and advantageous features—a longitudinal, couples-based structure, linked qualitative and quantitative data, recent time frame, and rich information on partner violence and proposed contextual influences—create a unique opportunity to rigorously describe post-incarceration violence in an understudied population that appears to be highly vulnerable to violent victimization.

The MFS-IP study included five sites—New York, New Jersey, Indiana, Ohio, and Minnesota—and recruited opposite-sex couples in which the male partner was incarcerated at the time of study enrollment. These "justice-involved couples" were first interviewed during the male partner's incarceration and then again 9 and 18 months later. In the two largest sites (Indiana and Ohio), an additional 34-month follow-up interview was conducted.

Interviews took place from December 2008 through August 2014 and were conducted by experienced RTI International field interviewers using computer-assisted personal interviewing, with sensitive questions (including those about partner violence) asked using audio computer-assisted self-interviewing, which allowed respondents to answer questions without interviewers' being able to see or hear their answers. Interviews were similar in content at each interview wave and for men and women, but they were tailored based on the male partner's incarceration and release trajectory in each follow-up period. Topics included history of criminal justice system involvement, incarceration experiences (including family contact during incarceration), service receipt, family structure, couple

relationship quality, parenting and coparenting, child well-being, employment, housing, substance use, and reentry expectations and experiences. Response rates were 76% at baseline, 74% at 9 months, 78% at 18 months, and 83% at 34 months.

   MFS-IP Qualitative Substudy. Additionally, a qualitative study was conducted to better understand family relationships during reentry. In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with a subsample of MFS-IP study couples: those in which the male participant was nearing release from prison (who were interviewed twice: both before and after release) or had been released within approximately the prior year (who were interviewed once: after release). Both members of the study couple were invited to participate. Interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes and were guided by a semistructured interview guide. Interviewers also used prompt sheets with information from the participant's responses to the quantitative MFS-IP survey questions related to family relationships. The interviews, conducted with 172 respondents in 2014 and 2015, focused on family experiences and needs during reentry, as well as on what forms of interpersonal, programmatic, and policy support were, were not, or would have been helpful during the reentry process.

   Of the 172 respondents, 55 were selected for analysis based on their reports of IPV in the quantitative interviews. A total of 66 qualitative interviews were conducted with the 55 respondents, and each of the 66 interview transcripts underwent thorough checks to ensure that they were deidentified before being published to the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICSPR) archive. An outline of the deidentification protocols is provided below:

- When deidentifying names, we opted to redact the name or initial to an alphanumeric option (e.g., "CHILD1NAME1" and "CHILD2NAME1").
- Names of all types of correctional facilities, regardless of type, were changed to "[name of prison]" or "[name of jail]" or "[name of work release facility]" to the extent the facility type could be discerned.
- Cities that were identifiable as a person's residence were changed to "[city in Ohio/Indiana]". All small towns were changed to "[town name]" regardless of whether they were the respondent's current residence.
- Street addresses, birthdates, and release or admission dates were changed to "[street address]", "[birth date]", "[release date]", and "[admission date]", respectively.

As a quality assurance measure, every deidentified transcript was reviewed in full by a second member of the study team.

Exhibit 3. Sample Characteristics at Baseline

Sample Characteristics.
As shown in *Exhibit 3*, the full MFS-IP study sample and the qualitative subsample had similar demographic characteristics, family structures, and histories of criminal justice system involvement. Respondents were racially and ethnically diverse and mostly of color: just over

	Qualitative Subsample		Quantitative Sample	
	Men (n 83)	Women (n 87)	Men (n 1,991)	Women (n 1,482)
Age				
Age at study enrollment (mean)	33.7 years	32.8 years	33.5 years	32.4 years
Family characteristics				
Relationship to study partner Married	25%	18%	26%	25%
In an intimate relationship	71%	70%	69%	61%
In a coparenting relationship only	4%	12%	5%	14%
Number of children (mean)	2.3	2.3	3.1	2.4
Incarceration history				
Age at first arrest (mean)	17 years	(not asked)	17 years	(not asked)
Number of previous arrests (mean)	12.3	1.7	11.9	1.4

half of men and just under half of women were Black, about a third were White, and slightly less

than 10% were Hispanic/Latino. Study participants were typically in their 30s, and a third of men and a quarter of women reported not having a GED or high school diploma. Most couples were in long-term, nonmarried intimate partnerships with one another. Most were also parents of minor children, with men reporting an average of three children and women an average of two children; study couples parented an average of two children together. Men had extensive histories of criminal justice system involvement—more than half reported being detained as youth, and they averaged 12 previous arrests and 6 adult incarcerations each. Although female respondents had far less direct justice system involvement than their male partners, nearly half had been arrested, averaging 1.4 lifetime arrests. At baseline, men were serving sentences for a broad range of criminalized behavior, including property offenses (17.6%), drug offenses (30.8%), and crimes against persons (42.7%).

Other Data Sources. Data collected through the MFS-IP quantitative and qualitative interviews served as our primary data source. We obtained additional data elements from three other publicly available sources: the U.S. Census Bureau (for median household income by ZIP code), the Justice Atlas (for admission and release rates by ZIP code), and the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS, for violent victimization by ZIP code).

Constructs of Interest. Based on the prior works summarized in *Exhibit 1*, we identified the focal constructs shown in *Exhibit 4* for analyses related to Goal 1 (informing victim services) and Goal 2 (informing primary and secondary prevention) and the data sources for each.

Exhibit 4. Focal Constructs by Analytic Goal and Social-Ecological Level

Construct	Data Source	Goal	Construct	Data Source	Goal
Partner violence					
Physical violence victimization	MFS-IP quant. data	1–2	Most recent incarceration (instant offense, duration, days in segregation)	MFS-IP quant. data	2
Physical violence perpetration					
Sexual violence victimization	MFS-IP quant. data	1–2	Perceived influence of criminal justice system experiences on relationships	MFS-IP qual. data	2
Sexual violence perpetration	MFS-IP quant. data	1–2			
Individual context			**Couple and family context**		
Feeling safe or unsafe	MFS-IP quant. data	1	Controlling behavior in relationship	MFS-IP quant. & qual. data	1
Violence attitudes			Couple conflict style	MFS-IP quant. & qual. data	2
Relationship attitudes	MFS-IP quant. data	2			
Gender role attitudes			Infidelity issues in relationship	MFS-IP quant. & qual. data	2
Posttraumatic stress disorder	MFS-IP quant. data	2	Couple relationship quality and stability	MFS-IP quant. & qual. data	2
Depression			Parenting and coparenting	MFS-IP quant. & qual. data	2
Alcohol and substance use	MFS-IP quant. data	2	Household financial strain	MFS-IP quant. & qual. data	2
Polyvictimization			**Community context**		
Employment status	MFS-IP quant. data	2	Perceptions of available and unavailable victim services	MFS-IP qual. data	1
Barriers to employment					
Income	MFS-IP quant. data	2			
Race/ethnicity			Neighborhood poverty (median household income by ZIP code)	U.S. Census	2
Age	MFS-IP quant. data	2			
Lifetime criminal justice system involvement (ever arrested, age at					

Construct	Data Source	Goal
Neighborhood criminal justice system involvement (prison admission and release rates by ZIP code)	Justice Atlas	2
Community violence (violence-related injury rates by ZIP code)	National Violent Death Reporting	2

Construct	Data Source	Goal
	System restricted access database	
Community violence norms	MFS-IP qual. data	2
Neighborhood quality	MFS-IP quant. data	2

Accessing and Linking Publicly Available Datasets. We obtained approval from RTI's institutional review board (IRB) for secondary analysis activities involving data from MFS-IP, Census, Justice Atlas, and the NVDRS. Once IRB approval was received, we acquired the needed datasets and used ZIP code data from the MFS-IP quantitative interview to link them. (RTI collected and prepared the public-use dataset for MFS-IP, and ZIP code-level data from the Census and Justice Atlas data are freely available on demand.) To obtain ZIP code-level data from the NVDRS, we applied to the CDC Center for Injury Prevention and Control for access to the restricted-use file, set up a data-sharing agreement to conduct the specific analyses for this study, and accessed the dataset prepared by CDC staff using CDC's secure portal. (Per the requirements of the NVDRS data-sharing agreement as specified by CDC, these data could not be included in the public-use archive.)

1.4   Scientific Approach

Goal 1. We began by addressing the research question, **Do post-incarceration partner violence experiences in justice-involved couples conform to the most widely used evidence-based typology of partner violence in the general population** (Johnson, 2008)? We used reports from both couple members to identify men who had used any form of physical violence against their partners at baseline. 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. An example LCA model is shown in the left part of *Exhibit 5*, where c_1 is the latent class variable comprising two or more classes, and the u variables are the observed variables that include measures of physical violence, coercive control, and perceived safety. Unlike clustering methods used in earlier partner violence typology analysis (Johnson, Leone, & Xu, 2014), LCA allows us to account for the non-independence within couples by generalizing the common-fate dyadic model (Ledermann & Macho, 2014) using the approach of Asparouhov & Muthén (2015) when possible for both LCA and latent transition analyses (LTA; see below). This approach allows for latent classes of couples whose controlling behavior is incongruent (e.g., one member of the couple is controlling, the other is not).

We then used the Adjusted Rand Index function (ARI; Hubert & Arabie, 1985) of the mclust library (Scrucca, Fop, Murphy, & Raftery, 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 (Table 1). Individuals who did not use physical violence were classified as "non-violent." We used descriptive statistics to assess the frequency of the assigned type indicators

in the study population. Parallel sets of type indicators were created using the same cutoffs and logic for each subsequent study follow-up wave.

**Table 1. Dyadic 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	High-control violence
Yes	Yes	No	No	High-control violence
Yes	Yes	No	Yes	High-control violence
Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Violent resistance
Yes	No	No	No	Low-control violence
Yes	No	Yes	No	Low-control violence
Yes	No	No	Yes	Low-control violence

We then compared the dyadic type indicators against a map of the density with which text passages related to conflict and conflict tactics occurred in the qualitative study sample. We selected 44 qualitative interview transcripts for stratified analysis: 12 whose dynamics were classified as mutual violent control, 7 who were identified as victims or perpetrators of high-control violence, 14 who were identified as victims or perpetrators of low-control violence, and 11 who were identified as non-violent or unassigned. We reviewed each transcript to assess the qualitative salience and meaningfulness of the quantitative type distinctions and documented findings in an analytic memo for each case.

Next, we repeated the quantitative type classification to determine whether an alternative approach might strengthen the fit between identified quantitative types and the narratives of partner violence documented in the qualitative interviews. In this approach, we preserved more information from the LCA by using men's predicted class membership as their control indicator (rather than use ARI to create a cutoff score from the two classes obtained in LCA). We then 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 1) 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-stratified and re-reviewed the original sample of 44 qualitative interview transcripts to assess whether the revised type classifications better fit the qualitative accounts.

Finally, we ran two-sample t-tests comparing victims and perpetrators of the two highest-frequency types of violence: dominating-controlling violence and jealous-only violence. We compared perpetrators' use of severe physical or sexual violence, substance use, perceived service needs (asked of men only), and conflict skills; victims' PTSD 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 to account for multiple comparisons. This analysis focused on 1,112 Multi-site Family Study couples who answered survey questions about partner violence at baseline.

Exhibit 5. Latent Class and Latent Transition Analysis
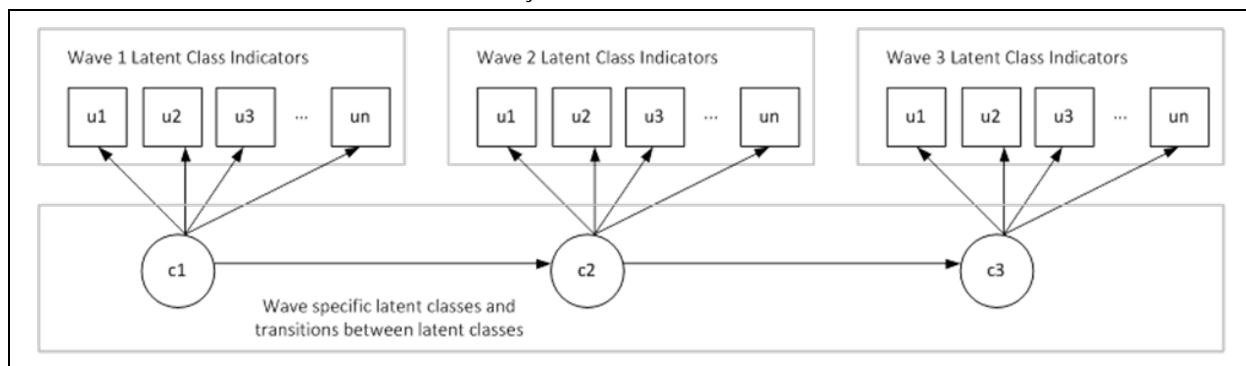
Note. The latent class indicators u are observed variables that include measures of physical violence, coercive control, and perceived safety. The latent class variable c has two or more classes (e.g., couples in "high control" or "low/no control") at each wave. The arrows between the latent class variable at each time point represent transitions (e.g., a couple may move from high control to low control and back again across the three waves).

To address our second research question, **How prevalent is each of the identified types (or classes) of partner violence victimization?**, we created indicator variables for most likely membership in each partner violence type. We then used simple descriptive statistics to estimate the prevalence of each observed type in the study population at the first post-release MFS-IP interview. Next, we addressed the research question, **How stable is class (or type) membership over time?** This analysis incorporated data from all four MFS-IP interview waves. To better understand the implications of the identified violence types for the nature and timing of victim services relative to incarceration (e.g., during adjudication, immediately upon reentry, later in the post-release period), we used LTA to explore the extent to which membership in each identified class or type remains stable across MFS-IP interview waves, including pre-incarceration and up to three waves of post-release data points. LTA is a longitudinal generalization of LCA that estimates a latent class model at each time point and allows participants to change class membership between time points. This is illustrated in Exhibit 5, where the variables u are the latent class membership indicators (e.g., controlling behavior perpetration, physical violence, coercive control, perceived safety), and c1, c2, and c3 are the latent classes at each wave (e.g., a two-class LTA might have "high control" and "low/no control" couples). The arrows between c1 and c2 and between c2 and c3 indicate estimates of the probability of changing class membership (e.g., from "high control" to "low control" or vice versa) and are known as latent transition probabilities. Missing data was a minimal issue because of high MFS-IP study response rates, but handling it appropriately is important for analyses (like LTA) that draw on multiple waves of data from both partners. Missing data was handled using full information maximum likelihood (Enders, 2010).

Next, we answered the research question, **What services do victims need, seek, and access?** This analysis used data from MFS-IP qualitative interviews conducted with both partners around the time of the male partner's release from prison and employed MFS-IP quantitative data for case selection. We purposively selected six qualitative study respondents who fall within each observed type of post-incarceration partner violence identified in the typology analysis, using the quantitative cluster indicators for the first post-release MFS-IP interview wave. For these cases, we reviewed the full qualitative interview transcript segment in which the respondent identifies the formal and informal supports that were or would have been helpful to him or her, and we identified themes related to the perceived influence of available (or unavailable) supports. Memos were developed for each theme, and as analysis progressed these memos were iteratively expanded, refined, and brought into dialogue with each other as we worked to build an understanding of the victim services needs and preferences that victims of each observed type of partner violence identify.

Goal 2. We first addressed the research question, **What aspects of social context at the individual, couple/family, and community levels shape post-incarceration partner violence experiences?** This work incorporated data from the Census, Justice Atlas, and NVDRS, in addition to MFS-IP quantitative data from the first post-release interview. Independent variables representing our proposed social context factors at the individual and couple/family levels and some constructs at the community level were drawn from the MFS-IP dataset, incorporating reports from both couple members. Variables representing the other community-level factors were obtained from the NVDRS, Census, and Justice Atlas.

▪ Using **NVDRS** data, we created a summed measure of **neighborhood violence.** Consistent with CDC recommendations, the measure incorporated data on violent deaths over a ten-year period from all ZIP codes in which MFS-IP study participants lived. (All states from which participants were recruited participate in NVDRS.)

▪ Using **Census** data, we obtained a simple measure of **neighborhood poverty** based on median household income for all ZIP codes where MFS-IP sample members lived. We accessed 2010 American Community Survey data from the Census Bureau because it was the mean year of release for most ZIP codes.

▪ Using **Justice Atlas** data, we created a composite measure of **neighborhood criminal justice system involvement** based on prison admission and release rates from MFS-IP respondent ZIP codes in Indiana, Ohio, and New York (New Jersey and Minnesota ZIP codes are not available). These data are currently available only for 2008.

To identify contextual factors that influence post-incarceration partner violence victimization, we first ran multiple regression models incorporating independent variables at the individual, couple/family, and community levels that were identified based on the evidence-informed theoretical works summarized in Exhibit 1 and dependent variables capturing any, frequent, and severe physical or sexual partner violence victimization. We checked for collinearity between individual- and community-level measures of similar constructs (e.g., individual income and median income by ZIP code) and controlled for the baseline version of the dependent variable, for site, and for treatment group membership (MFS-IP was originally funded as an impact evaluation).

We then ran a similar set of multiple regression models using membership in each of the observed partner violence types or classes as the dependent variables. These models used independent variables similar to those of the models of victimization experiences, but they excluded any factors identified as latent class indicators in the Goal 1 analysis. Taken together, these models enabled us to identify both the contextual factors that contribute to or protect from partner violence victimization and also the factors that predict the likelihood of experiencing a particular violence type.

Next, we assessed whether the potential pathways to partner violence proposed by prior theoretical work are evident in the experiences of justice-involved couples. This analysis addressed the research question, **Do couple/family-level social context factors mediate the observed relationship between the identified community-level influences and experiences of partner violence?** Based on the qualitative data analysis, we identified a set of six hypotheses that could be tested quantitatively using the linked dataset constructed from MFS-IP, Census, Justice Atlas, and NVDRS variables. We applied structural equation modeling in Stata to assess each hypothesized relationship among the latent constructs as indicated by a set of observed variables from the linked dataset, using robust maximum likelihood estimation to account for non-normality in some

indicators. Once adequate model fit was obtained based on approximate fit statistics, we obtained estimated regression coefficients (Beta) for each structural relationship in the model.

Finally, we answered the research question, **What social context factors at the individual, couple/family, and community levels do members of justice-involved couples see as shaping their experiences of partner violence?** This analysis used MFS-IP qualitative data from in-depth interviews with both members of study couples around the time of the male partner's release from prison. These data were coded in ATLAS.ti, a qualitative analysis software package. Using a combination of existing codes (e.g., partnership, conflict and conflict tactics) and secondary coding specific to the proposed work (e.g., violent victimization), we queried the qualitative interview database for textual data related to experiences of and attitudes about violent victimization or perpetration. We also queried for text related to each of the individual-, couple/family-, and community-level factors that we hypothesize might influence partner violence. We examined participants' explicit attributions regarding the influence of social context factors on interpersonal interactions or on partner violence directly as well as their more general observations regarding connections between social context factors and partner violence. For each query that we ran, we reviewed all of the data output and identified common themes. We also used the software to assess the density and proximity with which pertinent codes or constructs co-occur in participants' statements, and we reviewed instances of such co-occurrences to identify themes; as with the Goal 1 qualitative analysis, memos were developed to capture and expound upon themes throughout the analytic process.

As a quality assurance measure, all qualitative and quantitative analytic work (coding) was reviewed by a second member of the study team or a senior RTI statistician.

1.5   Dissemination Products

The goals and research questions were addressed in the following dissemination products:

- A manuscript using quantitative and qualitative data titled, "Types of Partner Violence in Couples Affected by Incarceration: Applying Johnson's Typology to Understand the Context for Violence" submitted to *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*;
- A manuscript using qualitative data titled, "'Things That Get the Police Involved': Intimate Partner Violence and the Burden of Mass Incarceration" submitted to *American Journal of Public Health*;
- A brief report using qualitative data titled, "Help for Partner Violence Victims in Couples Affected by Incarceration: Overcoming Barriers to Recognition and Help-Seeking" submitted to RTI Press (a peer-reviewed academic press operated by our non-profit research institute);
- A brief report using qualitative data titled, "Partner Violence After Reentry from Prison: Putting the Problem in Context" submitted to RTI Press (a peer-reviewed academic press operated by our non-profit research institute);
- A presentation addressing methods and findings from all components of the study titled, "Post-Incarceration Partner Violence: Examining the Social Context to Inform Victim Services and Prevention," presented on an NIJ-led panel at the American Society of Criminology conference (November 13, 2019); and
- A fact sheet presenting highlights from study findings titled, "Post-Incarceration Partner Violence."

| **2** | Study Findings |

2.1   Findings on Types of Partner Violence in Couples Affected by Incarceration

Types of Partner Violence Among Justice-Involved Couples

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 2. 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.

Table 2. 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

As shown in Table 2, 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) tended to use a variety of control tactics against their partners—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) tended to exhibit jealousy or possessiveness, though response patterns suggested that they did so less often than their Class 1 counterparts; 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 ("dominating-controlling") was .67, compared to .36 among men assigned to Class 2 ("jealous-only"). 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 dominating-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 for distinguishing between Class 1 and Class 2 members. This cutoff was used to create a high/low

control indicator. This indicator and the physical violence perpetration indicator were used to assign all cases to dyadic types (mutual violent control, high-control violence, violent resistance, low-control violence, and non-violence) based on their own and their partner's behavior, as shown in Table 1.

Qualitative Salience of Quantitative Types

Following descriptions provided by expert domestic violence advocates, we identified distinct qualitative markers for victims and perpetrators of high-control and low-control violence (e.g., Hodes & Mennicke, 2019). Perpetrators of high-control 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. High-control 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 high-control violence perpetrators directed blame toward their study partners and lacked statements reflecting on or assuming responsibility for their own actions.

Qualitative narratives did not always align well with assigned quantitative types, however. For example, qualitative accounts from 10 couples that were assigned the type "mutual violent control" based on survey data pointed instead to either (one-sided) high-control violence or low-control violence based on qualitative interview data. Among these apparently misclassified couples, behavior patterns that were classified as highly controlling in the quantitative analysis were not interpreted as such in participants' qualitative narratives. 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, for many respondents, jealousy was 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. Interviews emphasized a variety of situations that appeared to contribute to jealousy among individuals who were not otherwise attempting to dominate their partners. Concurrent sexual relationships by one or both partners were common even in highly committed, long-term primary romantic relationships; one or both partners often had romantically ambiguous and financially competing coparenting relationships with the other mothers or fathers of their children; all couples had undergone periods of prolonged physical separation; and partners were often uncertain or insecure regarding their relationship status and agreements. Among the subset of couples 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.

Refined Quantitative Types of Partner Violence

Qualitative results suggested that the substantive distinction between jealous-only and dominating-controlling 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 use predicted class membership according to the 2-class cluster model 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. This modification was intended to better retain the substantive distinction between dominating-controlling behavior patterns (Class 1; mean controlling behavior score .67) and jealous-only behavior patterns (Class 2; mean controlling

behavior score .36) that had been identified by the LCA.

Using these revised control indicators, we then re-assigned types according to the same logic (shown in Table 1). Retaining the substantive distinction between the two classes of controlling behavior used to differentiate them (as opposed to the high/low control score cutoff used previously), we renamed the high-control violence type as "dominating-controlling violence" and the low-control violence type as "jealous-only violence." The distribution of the resulting types in the total male and female samples and by couple is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Frequency of Dyadic Types of Partner Violence

Partner (Type)	Female Partner						
	DCV	VR	JOV	MVC	NV	Missing	Total
DCV	0	121	0	0	23	0	144
VR	56	0	0	0	0	0	56
JOV	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

DCV=dominating-controlling violence, VR=violent resistance, JOV=jealous-only violence, MVC=mutual violent control, and NV=nonviolence

Overall, 32.4 percent of men and 42.4 percent of women engaged in jealous-only violence, 12.9 percent of men and 6.3 percent of women engaged in dominating-controlling violence, 5.1 percent of men and 10.9 percent of women engaged in violent resistance (to a dominating-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 (using predicted class membership, rather than mean control score, as the controlling behavior indicator) reduced by roughly 28 percent (from N=76 to N=55) the number of couples assigned to the "mutual violent control" type—a category which the qualitative analysis had suggested was often applied when interview transcripts suggested either jealous-only violence or dominating-controlling violence (with violent resistance by the victim). Among the subset of couples included in the case review comparing quantitative type assignments to apparent qualitative types, the revised assignments resulted in newly congruent classification for four cases for which quantitative and qualitative types had previously been mismatched, maintained congruent classification for 19 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, dominating-controlling violence and jealous-only violence, appear in Table 4. 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 dominating-controlling violence were more likely to use severe physical or sexual violence against their partners than perpetrators of jealous-only violence ($p<.0001$ for both men and women based on both partners' reports). Among

victims, both men and women who experienced dominating-controlling violence reported more PTSD symptoms than those who experienced jealous-only violence (p=.0011 for female victims and p=.0030 for male victims). Both male and female victims of dominating-controlling violence reported feeling less safe than did victims of jealous-only violence (p<.0001 for female victims and p=.0067 for male victims). Victims of dominating-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 dominating-controlling violence were also more likely to report that they actually had sexual or romantic contact with another person during the relationship (p=.0030).

Table 4. Comparing Jealous-Only and Dominating-Controlling Violence	Jealous-Only (male N = 361; female N = 472)			Dominating-Controlling (male N = 144; female N = 70)			P-value for Comparison
	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	
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 male-on-female 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)							
PTSD symptoms (higher = more PTSD 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)							
PTSD symptoms (higher = more PTSD 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

2.2   Findings on Qualitative Narratives of Partner Violence and Control

Qualitative interviews were conducted with each couple member around the time of the male partner's reentry from prison and focused on family relationship experiences during and after the incarceration. In-depth, structured qualitative analysis revealed the following themes related to influences on post-incarceration partner violence.

"Things That Get the Police Involved": Understandings of Partner Violence

Invisibility of physical violence

Much of the physical violence that participants reported in their surveys was invisible in their qualitative accounts of their relationships. One participant, who reported severe bilateral physical violence with her study partner and mentioned his death threats against her new partner during her qualitative interview, explained how a class on "mental [and] physical abuse" had felt irrelevant to their "perfect" relationship:

> 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.

For others, narrative omissions of physical violence appeared more protective. Interviewees shared many stigmatized and criminalized experiences, but they also frequently referenced the male partner's vulnerable legal status:

> 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.

The looming possibility of the male partner being returned to prison clearly shaped the relationship stories couples told interviewers, and perhaps themselves.

Centrality of struggles for interpersonal control

Whereas physical violence remained below the surface, acts of interpersonal control occupied a focal place in relationship narratives. During incarceration, men commonly applied threats and verbal abuse to extract as much contact and support as partners could provide. One man explained:

> 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.

Some also used "jail talk," poetic (but sometimes hollow) expressions of love and commitment designed to keep a partner engaged. Women reported that men's use of verbal manipulation, threats, and stalking became harder to tolerate once they were released:

> He calls all the time…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…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.

In men's accounts, women's post-release expectations for mutual accountability in domestic, financial, or co-parenting endeavors registered as objectionably controlling. Men often referenced their experiences of institutional control and constraint in describing their partners' imposition of household routine or expectations of financial accountability:

> She was upset that I went to the casino. You know what I mean? It's just a -- 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 physical restriction and incapacitation of imprisonment, men seemed to associate domestic space, and the structure and routine imposed on it 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…I be feeling like I'm stuck.

Conceptual power of criminal justice system definitions and responses

Institutional 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, participants drew on general normative ideals ("communication," "trust") and reference to their own specific experiences, but also defined their experiences according to the prospect of criminal justice system 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 shape the salience of physically violent acts. When participants acknowledged their use of physical violence against partners, it was in usually in the context of mentioning a criminal conviction for domestic violence or assault. The fact that most instances of severe physical or sexual violence reported in surveys went unmentioned in qualitative interviews suggests that institutional intervention may have conferred significance on certain violent acts while leaving others unadjudicated and therefore invisible.

"It Just Happened": Associations between Interpersonal and Institutional Forms of Violence and Control

Ambiguous agency

Interviewees' encounters with criminal justice authorities appeared to cultivate a shared sense that their personal and domestic lives were subject to (sometimes violent) institutional forces beyond their control. This sense of vulnerability often unfolded from the male partner's arrest, which

disrupted families' sense of control over their domestic spaces and parents' ability to protect their children.

> It was very traumatizing to my kids, because the police kicked in our door and they seen their daddy get Tased and seen him get put in handcuffs and hauled off to jail.

> 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…I would like to think that over the long term, they will maybe eventually just -- maybe they will forget.

Domestic manifestations of institutional violence were not limited to scenes of violent arrest. Men's abdication of economic responsibilities during and after incarceration typically brought severe hardship on their families. Couples assigned responsibility for this suffering in part to the incarcerated partner but also largely to the prison system that they saw as rendering him economically impotent.

In this context, partners also hesitated to assign individual agency for other major domestic events, such as the use of interpersonal violence or the conception of a child outside of the relationship:

> 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.

Interviewees who used or experienced partner violence characterized acts of control or violence more as emerging from conflicted or undesirable situations than as problematic individual behaviors. The shared perception of limited agency made it difficult for partners to create and uphold agreements regarding acceptable behavior or take responsibility for the impact of their actions on one another.

Prisonization and partner violence

Couples' accounts of their interactions during and after the male partner's incarceration were rife with references to prisonization, a term coined by Clemmer (1958) for adaptive adjustments to the values, worldview, and behavior of the incarcerated.[29] Men experienced these adaptations as necessary for survival:

> When I became incarcerated, I put myself like a chameleon. I adapt to the environment…I had to change my way of thinking from the outside to the inside. Which is not good.

> 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…there is just a lot of violence in there.

They 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 hoped to leave these changes behind:

> 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 prison-related changes in their interpersonal styles as adaptive strengths, distinguishing themselves by the fact that they brought a predetermined set of non-negotiable boundaries and objectives into their interactions with others (often summed up with the expression, "I don't play"). Some noted that their lack of vulnerability and strict control over their emotional experiences helped them 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 took 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 [prison]. 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. You have to think this step forward. If I do this, how is this going to affect me? What consequence is it going to have?

Women observed this adaptation in a different light: they perceived their partners as having become highly self-interested and "manipulative." Both men's and women's statements suggested that the more strategic, transactional style that prison-exposed men brought to relationships could indeed become damaging or problematic for their partners:

> I live my life like I'm in jail…Most people that in jail will f-ck you up…I know I could beat the person mentally before I beat them physically, you feel me?

Describing men who functioned in this way as "institutionalized," their partners noted that they were incapable of creating or adhering to self-directed or collaborative routines or agreements and only knew how to respond to absolute institutional authority. Back at home, they often asserted complete personal freedom and reacted forcefully and inflexibly to any form of structure, routine, or obligation (which they associated with imprisonment). This combination of poor agreement-keeping and high reactivity created fertile ground for fast-escalating conflict and the eruption of violence.

Secondary prisonization and the (prisonized) abuse cycle

Consistent with Comfort's concept of "secondary prisonization" (2003), prison regulations and procedures profoundly shaped couples' private interactions.[30] The institutionally-controlled timing and conditions of men's confinement and release brought distinct patterns of physical violence, controlling behavior, and reprieve.

During incarceration, the institutional conditions under which couples interacted kept them from communicating openly about challenges or conflicts:

> 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.

Women deferred their anger about impoverished single parenting during men's confinement; 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; and each resented the other for maintaining (real or perceived) intimate relationships with others during their prolonged separation.

After release, partners shared information and feelings that they had withheld for long periods, a process that taxed the diminished interpersonal capacities of men recovering from incarceration. One man (whom survey reports indicated had both used and experienced physical violence in his relationship) described attempting to face his partner's feelings after release:

> 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…[but] 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.

Persistence through these often-brutal relationship circumstances was inspired by the same framing perspective that had carried couples through the incarceration: overcoming a shared adversity beyond either partner's control.

"I Always Put the Burden on Her Shoulders": Distributing the Consequences of Institutional and Interpersonal Violence

Women's structurally coerced material support

Interviewees of both genders acknowledged that female partners carried steeply disproportionate responsibility in their families and households, often framing the asymmetry in developmental terms:

> I always put the burden on her shoulders to carry the load with the kids…at some point, I have got to grow up.

Women attributed this child-like dependence to the structural constraints men faced based on criminal histories and the developmental "pause" associated with long-term institutionalization.

> 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.

Although interpersonal control tactics extracted women's material support during incarceration, a more structural form of coercion appeared to shape their ongoing support. The low-income women of color who comprised most of the study sample funneled resources to their partners in a social

context that normalized both poverty and male criminal justice involvement. Even in abusive relationships and when asked by interviewers to reflect on it, women rarely refused this resource sharing and also rarely evaluated whether these relationships served their own needs.

Women's attempts to prevent criminal justice system intervention

Deputized by their desire to protect their families from criminal justice system contact, women not only supported their partners in complying with parole (paying fees, transporting them to monitoring visits, providing parole-compliant residences) but also intervened in behaviors that could bring them into contact with police. Some privately endured partner violence for decades while simultaneously preventing their partners from engaging in more public forms of interpersonal violence:

> 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'…Like [if] he wanted to start a fight with somebody, stuff like that, I'm like, 'Come on, let's leave,' you know…nothing major.

Though normalized, such attempts to keep partners "out of trouble" were risky, often making women the most proximal target for men's attempts at regaining a sense of control or resisting forms of constraint that they associated with surveillance and imprisonment.

2.3   Findings on Qualitative Accounts of the Context for Post-Incarceration Partner Violence

The Social-Ecological Framework (SEF) suggests that contextual influences at multiple ecological levels influence individuals' experiences of violence (Figure 1). Multi-site Family Study participants perceived four distinct mechanisms by which the distal contexts of their lives (outer rings) shaped more proximal contexts (inner rings), which in turn shaped their experiences of partner violence: (1) economic exclusion and poverty, (2) social isolation and disempowerment, (3) the erosion of trust and intimacy, and (4) traumatic violence exposures.
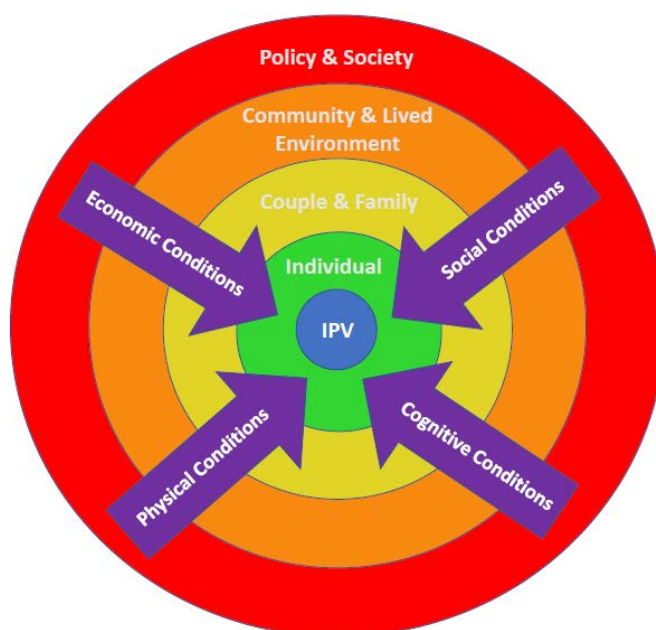

Figure 1. Social-Ecological Context for Post-Prison Intimate Partner Violence

Economic Exclusion and Poverty

Consistent with prior research, economic conditions placed constant strain on relationships between reentering men and their partners. At the individual level, reentering partners struggled to secure income from legal employment—which, at the couple and family level, brought household financial strain and high-stakes conflicts over the shortage of money to meet basic needs. These strains were shaped by community-level shortages of legal employment and a density of

opportunity for criminalized activity—which participants saw as perpetuated at the societal and policy levels by conviction-related employment barriers, a lack of institutional support for post-prison workforce reintegration, and fines and fees imposed by the criminal justice system. They were further exacerbated by societal-level gender norms positioning men as family economic providers (an unattainable scenario for most participating couples). In this environment, financial strain and conflict sometimes escalated into the use of violence.

Erosion of Trust and Intimacy

Like many couples reuniting after an incarceration, Multi-site Family Study participants experienced deteriorating communication and an erosion of trust and intimacy during imprisonment and reentry. Shaped at the policy level by the imposition of physical separation during incarceration and institutional and policy barriers to open dialogue, couples often experienced high-intensity, recurrent conflicts around one or both partners' actual or perceived intimacy with others and regarding household routines and divisions of labor. These conditions made it difficult to maintain stable routines or agreements that could facilitate secure, interdependent collaboration. Instead, one or both partners sometimes attempted to control the other's behavior using manipulative or abusive tactics.

Traumatic Violence Exposure

Multi-site Family Study participants often described partner violence in the context of individual-mental health symptoms, particularly post-traumatic stress (including hypervigilance and dissociation) and other forms of traumatic adaptation; struggles with addiction; and unrelenting anger at their partners and their larger circumstances, particularly around the ways that encounters with the criminal justice system had changed their families and life prospects.

Participants described these individual struggles as arising in community environments where highly addictive substances were readily available and exposures to violence and trauma were common. Such exposures appeared gendered, with men more often relaying experiences with (criminalized-activity-related) street and prison violence, and women more often describing prior sexual violence and partner violence victimization as well as traumatic pregnancy, birth, and parenting experiences (e.g., loss of custody).

Other community-level dynamics, including a perceived lack of protection from the criminal justice system or other government entities and a sense of harsh and inconsistent implementation of criminal justice policies (including violent police-civilian encounters) contributed to a sense of overriding physical vulnerability and the need for constant defense. Study participants reported that such a stance contributed to devastating encounters at the couple level, as emotional and physical reactivity impaired one or both partners' ability to respond non-aggressively in charged situations.

Social Isolation and Disempowerment

Extending prior theory, Multi-site Family Study participants saw abusers' attempts at domination as shaped by their own perceived helplessness in the wider social and economic environment (particularly prison). Where general-population research has shown that abusers often isolate victims from sources of social support, women in this study often already faced social isolation at the community level due to the adjudicated partner's criminalized activity and the stigmatization of

incarceration. This social isolation and victims' dependence on abusive partners' coparenting contributions (particularly child care or small contributions to children's day-to-day material needs) further extended their vulnerability to abuse.

Drawing on an Understanding of Context to Inform Prevention

Results of the current study point to a set of strategies that might help to prevent post-prison partner violence by addressing the contextual influences described by those who have experienced it (*Table 5*).

**Table 5. Context-Responsive Strategies for Preventing Post-Prison Intimate Partner Violence**

Context	Potential Prevention Strategies
Economic Conditions	• Address barriers to post-prison employment that perpetuate economic exclusion of former prisoners and their families. • Implement more robust workforce development programs for the adjudicated and in neighborhoods heavily affected by incarceration.[1] • Eliminate criminal justice system fines and fees levied against low-income individuals.
Social Conditions	• Eliminate barriers to contact during incarceration and support families in establishing open, safe, and healthy communication through trauma-informed relationship education and counselling. • Offer free, trauma-informed mental health and substance use treatment to incarcerated and reentering individuals and partners.
Physical Conditions	• Limit the use of prison and jail incarceration. • Prohibit conditions of confinement known to cause psychological damage (e.g., overcrowding, solitary confinement). • Apply zoning or other physical environment-based strategies to curtail marketing and availability of addictive substances (such as liquor) in neighborhoods heavily affected by incarceration.
Cognitive Conditions	• Eliminate forms of criminal justice system surveillance that might impair attention, sense of safety, or cognition among the surveilled. • Offer culturally responsive, local programs that support participants in heavily incarcerated communities in transforming normative beliefs about gender and family roles and cultivating beliefs and agreements that serve them and their families.

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[1] For example, the STRIVE Program and other economic success initiatives developed by the Center for Urban Families in Baltimore, Maryland deliver a robust combination of pre-employment services, comprehensive adjunct supports (including transportation and clothing assistance), job retention and advancement programs, and career- and family-focused case management in communities heavily affected by incarceration with guidance and leadership from individuals directly affected by incarceration and economic exclusion.

2.4   Findings on Help-Seeking Among Victims in Couples Affected by Incarceration

Qualitative data from Multi-site Family Study participants indicates that, for couples affected by incarceration, distinct barriers can interfere with each of these processes (*Figure 2*).

Figure 2. Influences on Partner Violence Help-Seeking in Couples Affected by Incarceration
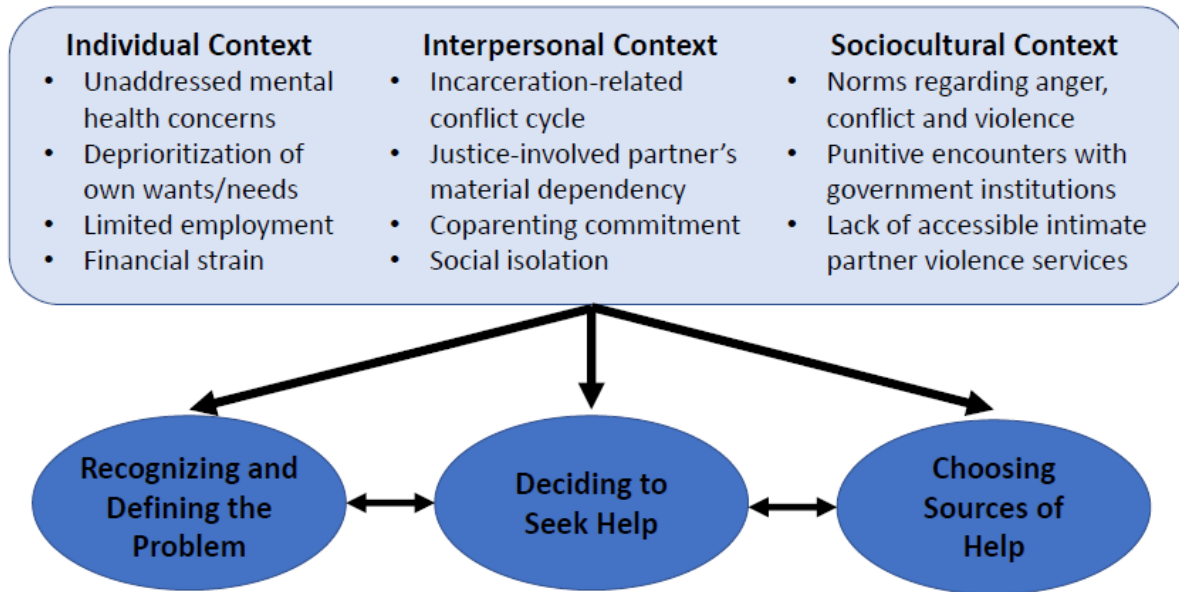
Individual-level Barriers to Help-seeking

Victims in couples affected by incarceration described unmet behavioral health needs, particularly depression and post-traumatic stress, related to the incarcerated partner's arrest, adjudication and imprisonment—which many found traumatic, grief-inducing, and depressing. Reasons for treatment needs going unmet included acute competing needs and time demands and a lack of accessible, individual mental health services in the neighborhoods in which many lived. Struggles with employment and finances (a key risk factor for partner violence victimization) were prominent; couples faced daunting financial demands related to criminal justice involvement and related employment barriers. These contributed to a sense of limited options and difficulty prioritizing tasks that were not critical to immediate survival (such as reflecting on an intimate relationship or evaluating potential sources of support).

Interpersonal Barriers to Help-seeking

Interpersonal dynamics accompanying a family member's incarceration and release can uniquely impede partner violence help-seeking. Multi-site Family Study couples experienced phases of hopeful anticipation pre-release and "honeymoon" during reunification immediately post-release, followed by growing tension and the eruption of violence as the strains of re-entry intensified. This made it difficult for victims to assess the health of their relationships at a given point in time, as behavioral patterns were constantly shifting with cycles of incarceration and reentry. Further, reentering individuals were acutely dependent on their partners for basic needs like food and housing. This high-stakes dependency, along with couples' coparenting commitments, made it

difficult for either partner to freely consider his or her relationship choices and diminished the relative importance of considering whether the relationship was unhealthy. Study participants also described deep social isolation, with only a small number of close and trusting relationships. Many adopted an interpersonal attitude of staunch independence and self-reliance that made them unlikely to consider seeking outside help and narrowed the field of potential sources of support from which they might have chosen.

Sociocultural Barriers to Help-seeking

The sociocultural atmosphere of chronic deprivation and injustice that Multi-site Family Study couples recounted both provoked and normalized a sense of constant anger and unresolved conflict. In this context, it was often difficult to define episodic violence and controlling behavior in a relationship as distinct "problems." Some victims reported being angry "all the time," but their narratives suggested that it was difficult to differentiate their own anger at abusive treatment by their partners from the generalized anger they experienced at the circumstances of the male partner's incarceration and the burdens it had placed on the household, and at broader conditions in their communities. Among those who did identify their victimization as a problem, many suggested that violence (including partner violence and other forms of street and family violence) was commonplace in their communities; other research suggests that victims are less likely to decide to seek help in such contexts.

Finally, Multi-site Family Study participants recounted repeated punitive (or sometimes simply unhelpful) encounters with government institutions that shaped their attitudes toward formal help-seeking. Although many such encounters involved criminal justice institutions, they produced a generalized distrust—making it difficult for victims to consider seeking outside assistance or to discern which sources of support might be most helpful. Victims expressed concern that their partners' parole would be revoked if they disclosed their experiences to anyone—a consequence that was often difficult to countenance given their coparenting commitments and desperate material circumstances. Further, the shortage of partner violence services in the low-income communities in which many victims lived, the persistent lack of culturally specific intimate partner violence services for victims of color and those connected (directly or indirectly) to the criminal justice system, and the flawed treatment accorded to intimate partner violence victims of color in legal protection processes suggest that the difficulty study participants had in imagining meaningful, non-punitive institutional help for their experiences reflected more than just a limitation in perspective.

Promoting Access to Support for Couples Affected by Incarceration

Couples affected by incarceration describe a set of formidable barriers to help-seeking for partner violence. Their stories call attention to the unique obstacles that many victims face in defining their victimization experiences as a problem, deciding to seek help, and identifying sources of help. They also suggest how first- or second-hand experiences with imprisonment and re-entry from prison might exacerbate the already-significant obstacles to help-seeking that other marginalized victims commonly face: a general shortage of intimate partner violence services in low-income neighborhoods; a lack of culturally specific services; fearfulness and distrust of institutions; social isolation; cycles of "honeymoon" and revictimization; and the strains of parenting, poverty, and unaddressed behavioral health concerns that can overwhelm victims' abilities to prioritize their own abuse-related needs and discernment processes.

The barriers to help-seeking reported by victims in couples affected by incarceration highlight an ongoing need for partner violence services and policies that respond to intersecting influences at each level of the Social Ecological Framework that shape victims' available options and the strategies they choose. Strategies to dismantle the multi-level barriers to help-seeking that Multi-site Family Study participants identified are shown in *Table 6*.

Some individual- and interpersonal-level barriers could be addressed (at least in part) by expanding the availability of formal supports that are tailored to the needs articulated by justice-involved individuals and their partners. Ongoing work by advocates and service providers to "reduce the gap between intimate partner violence (IPV) survivors' expressed needs and the services that IPV programs most typically offer," which focuses on individualized service delivery in the context of staff-client relationships that emphasize authenticity and shared power, may also be highly relevant to victims in couples affected by incarceration.

Creating the kinds of environments in which intimate partner violence victims in couples affected by incarceration will seek and find meaningful help will require more than adjustments in service delivery approach, however. Indeed, researchers and domestic violence advocates have characterized "community change and systems change" or "robust systems advocacy" as an indispensable component of programs' efforts to end violence. Meaningfully addressing the sociocultural barriers to help-seeking identified by Multi-site Family Study participants will require just such efforts; for example, longer-range strategies to replace punitive institutional practices in communities that have been heavily affected by mass incarceration with richer and more effective preventive and protective functions that communicate the value of the individuals and communities served.

Table 6. Addressing Barriers to Successful Help-seeking for Intimate Partner Violence Victims in Justice-Involved Couples (by Social-Ecological Level)

Level	Potential Strategies
To address **INDIVIDUAL** barriers…	• Provide universal education to partners and families of incarcerated and reentering individuals that includes information on healthy and unhealthy relationships and available local and national resources. • Create opportunities for victims to disclose their experiences in trusted and responsive settings without law enforcement consequences. • Offer (and market) "full frame" domestic violence services that thoroughly address victims' employment, finances, parenting, and behavioral health needs.
To address **INTERPERSONAL** barriers…	• Provide a safety net for reentering individuals that ends their reliance on partners and family members for post-release survival. • Mobilize peer support approaches to address social isolation among prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their family members. • Alleviate overwhelming parenting burdens by offering high-quality, subsidized child care for low-income parents (particularly victims).

To address SOCIO-CULTURAL barriers…	• Implement large-scale, trauma-informed programs to promote healing from all forms of violence in communities affected by incarceration. • Fund culturally tailored domestic violence prevention and response programs in communities affected by incarceration.[2] • Broaden availability of individual counselling and other behavioral health treatment in communities affected by incarceration. • Develop long-range strategies to replace punitive institutional practices in marginalized communities with more robust preventive and protective functions.

3   Impact

    The public availability of many rich secondary data sources on experiences of violence creates myriad opportunities for research—but whether a study will also be of utility for prevention, criminal justice responses, and victim services is another matter. Every aspect of this study, from our analytic objectives and strategies to the individuals proposed to guide and execute them, was motivated by the team's focus on better supporting victim safety for a highly vulnerable, understudied, and often service-disconnected population.

3.1   Impact on Victim Services

    Victim advocates, victim services agencies, shelter staff, and criminal justice personnel share a common drive to protect and support victims of violence. Through these agencies, supports and protections are available to residents in every state in the country—yet many victims never access their help. Men and women who are subject to ongoing criminal justice system surveillance (of themselves, their partners, or other members of their households) may have unique needs as victims and may also face unique fears or consequences related to disclosing partner violence to police or service providers (Hairston & Oliver, 2007; Oliver, Williams, & Hairston, 2006). Advocates and criminal justice personnel (such as court staff involved in civil orders of protection) have few resources to guide their efforts with such victims, and they often express ambivalence about working with them (Williams & Jenkins, 2015).[3] Given these limitations, it is perhaps not surprising that some partner violence victims in justice-involved couples come to see prisons and parole officers as their primary sources of "victim services," leveraging the parole system to help manage an abusive partner or using periods of incarceration as times of respite or escape from a dangerous relationship (Comfort, 2008).

    The analyses under Goals 1 and 2 of this study were explicitly designed to support future efforts to address these issues. Under Goal 1, we described the couple-level context of partner violence

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[2] For those providing intimate partner violence services in African American communities affected by incarceration, curricula and audiovisual materials from the Safe Return Initiative are available. The program was developed by the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community with the Vera Institute for Justice and funded by the federal Office on Violence Against Women, with extensive input from African American women and men who had personal experience with post-prison intimate partner violence.

[3] Also Williams, O. & Jenkins, E. (under review). The results of a twenty-one state study: Battered women's programs' response to reentry when a male partner returns from prison. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma.*

victimization in this population in terms of a set of violence "types," identified how common each of the observed types was, and assessed how stable those types were over time (including within the same couple before and after an incarceration) and their implications for critical intervention time points. The types of partner violence that are established through these analyses generates a stronger understanding of victim services needs for justice-involved couples..

Our analytic work under Goal 2 identified concrete ways that partner violence victimization experiences are shaped by contextual factors at the individual, couple/family, and community levels, which can be used to guide planning for victim-centered service delivery and the tailoring of programs and services to the community characteristics that most heavily shape victims' experiences (e.g., community violence). This work builds on efforts already under way by various victim services agencies to deliver services that are more victim/survivor centered, context responsive, and trauma informed.

Efforts to support help-seeking by partner violence victims in couples affected by incarceration represent a key part of larger efforts in the fields of domestic violence and victim services to improve the accessibility of services in marginalized communities and better meet complex victim needs. Qualitative accounts from Multi-site Family Study participants suggest that involvement with the criminal justice system (whether directly or through a family member) introduces unique individual, interpersonal, and sociocultural barriers to defining one's experiences as a problem, deciding to seek help, and selecting sources of help. Opportunities exist not only to tailor service delivery approaches in ways that overcome the individual and interpersonal obstacles that affect victims, but also to pursue longer-range shifts in public policy and community infrastructure that will address broader and more entrenched barriers to help-seeking as well.

3.2   Impact on Primary and Secondary Violence Prevention Efforts

Violence prevention efforts generally, and partner violence prevention work specifically, is founded on an evolving understanding of the factors that either put individuals at elevated risk of victimization or help them to avoid it. Yet very little quantitative or qualitative research has focused on identifying contextual influences on partner violence among justice-involved couples or other members of marginalized groups who appear to experience partner violence victimization in disproportionate numbers. Practitioners and advocates in the field of violence prevention increasingly acknowledge the need for prevention efforts that address contextual factors at higher levels of the Social-Ecological Framework, such as structural disadvantage and historical trauma (Copp et al., 2015; Ehlers et al., 2013; Williams, Oliver, & Pope, 2008) and that are designed to be compatible with the cultural and social contexts in which they are delivered (Bent-Goodley & Williams, 2004; Chan et al., 2016; Gillum & Williams, 2016; Williams, 2007). However, the dearth of research on social contextual factors in this population (and, for higher-level factors, across populations) impedes the design of prevention initiatives. This study assessed the role of a variety of contextual factors at the individual, couple/family, and community levels in shaping partner violence experiences (as depicted in our conceptual framework, Exhibit 1). We expect that identified malleable factors will inform prevention program theories of change, and nonmalleable factors will guide the tailoring of such efforts to the cultural context of communities in which justice-involved couples reside.

Finally, secondary prevention efforts (such as those to assess and mitigate partner violence risk upon reentry from prison) can also benefit from our empirical information on risk factors for violence. Prior efforts, led by the American Probation and Parole Association with funding from DOJ's Office on Violence Against Women, have focused on persons adjudicated for domestic violence crimes (Crowe et al., 2009); however, findings from the Multi-site Family Study on

Incarceration, Parenting, and Partnering (MFS-IP) suggest that the general population of justice-involved persons and their partners might merit similar attention (McKay et al., 2013). The empirical information on risk factors generated by the Goal 2 work will be of immediate use in informing expanded risk assessment and mitigation efforts with this population.

3.3   Improved Understanding of the Social Context for Partner Violence

Informing Development of Theory-Driven Measures. A lack of theory-driven measurement approaches in violence and victimization research has long been acknowledged but requires stronger etiologic work to address it (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, n.d.). The analyses carried out under Goal 2 of this study build an understanding of social contextual influences and mechanisms of effect that can inform future work to address this limitation of commonly used measurement approaches. Initial evidence on the etiology of partner violence at multiple social levels, structured by a clear, empirically grounded framework (Exhibit 1), will support researchers in measure design and subsequent psychometric work to establish validated tools. Such tools would, in turn, improve future violence research and evaluation of violence prevention and victim services programs.

Advancing the Broader Field of Victimization Research. In his work on violence in the lives of men and women involved with the criminal justice system, Western (2015, p. 17) finds 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." By understanding the social contexts that shape a common form of violence in a population that reports very high rates of violent victimization, this study could help to advance an understanding of the contextual etiologies of other forms of violence as well. Our highly structured and theory-based (as opposed to exploratory) analytic design helped to ensure that these findings contribute to ongoing refinement of theoretical models that might similarly guide future violence and victimization research—particularly with low-income communities of color that are disproportionately affected by many forms of trauma and disadvantage, including partner violence.

The Social-Ecological Framework suggests that effective partner violence prevention requires a robust understanding of the individual, family, community, and societal or policy contexts under which it arises. However, little rigorous research has examined these influences (even among the general population); such research has focused largely on describing individual incidents, victims, and perpetrators or (more recently) individual victimization or perpetration trajectories. Insights from the current study offer a valuable starting point for future research and for considering how prevention could effectively target economic, physical, social and cognitive conditions at multiple social-ecological levels.

Promoting Available Secondary Data Sources. In a field that is abundant in hypotheses regarding the influence of higher-level contextual factors on violence and sorely lacking in empirical testing of those hypotheses, this study advances a clear and replicable set of analytic strategies for assessing the influence of social context factors at multiple theoretical levels on violent victimization. It also helps to promote the availability of existing public datasets for this purpose. Combining data from the couples-based MFS-IP study (which was supported in part by NIJ funding) and other, better-known sources of secondary data, including the National Violent Death Reporting System and Census, allows future researchers to take more efficient *and* more rigorous approaches to research on couple/family- and community-level influences than have previously been applied.

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