

Coercive Control

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Questions for today

- Why should we care about coercive control?
- What is it?
- How common is it?
- How do we screen for it?
- What might we think about when representing victims?

Why should we care about Coercive Control?

- Growing interest— as of Feb. 2012
 - 18 empirical (studies) articles
 - 19 theoretical articles
 - 4 books
 - 2 Federal Research Grants

Why should we care about Coercive Control?

- Two state statutes include it
 - 43 Okl. St § 109(l)(1) – child custody
 - KRS § 403.7505 –mental health professionals treating dv offenders
- May appear in AZ statute one day
 - Proposed 2011 for AZ custody statute

Terminology

- Legal and social science...
 - Domestic Violence (DV)
 - Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)
 - Family Violence
- Intimate Partner Abuse (IPA)
- Coercive Control aka Coercive Controlling Violence
- Intimate Terrorism
- Coercive Controlling Behaviors

What is the definition of Coercive Control?

Definition by Evan Stark

- **Strategies** designed to retain privileges and establish domination in a partner's personal life based on fear, dependence and deprivation of basic rights and liberties.

Definition Evan Stark

- Strategies include...
 - Intimidation
 - Degradation
 - Isolation
 - Control
 - "May" include Assault (physical & sexual)

Intimidation

- Threats of violence to partner or others close to partner
- Violence/harassment of others close to partner
- Threats to children or pets

Intimidation

- Destruction of property
- Surveillance
- Demean, belittle, disparage

Degradation

- Generally targets areas of self-respect, self-esteem
- Targets traditional gender roles
- Demand subservience
 - adherence to rigid sex roles and expectations

Degradation

- Sexual...
 - Forced oral/anal, partners
- Unwelcome pornography
- Digital inspections of genitals
- Shaming
- Additional lovers without agreement

Isolation

- Limit access to
 - Family and friends
- School, work, church (religion)
- Transportation
- Communication
- Assistance of helping professionals

Control...

- What to cook
- When to eat
- When & where to sleep
- What to wear
- When to work & go to school
- Who to go out with & without
- When & how to have sex
- What to think

Control

- Threaten punishment for noncompliance
 - financial, social, emotional or physical
- Define reality
 - Lead partner to question own perceptions and judgments

Assaults

- Once credible threat (injury/rape) established, no longer need violence to ensure compliance
- "Cuffing," pushing, shoving, punching
- Breaking bones, choking, strangling
- Rape; forced sex acts

Summary

- **Pattern** of micro-management of daily life with threats and violence if victim resists or disobeys ...

Why does victim stay?

- May leave, several times
 - Leaving can be a long process
 - Separation is also dangerous
- No resources; believes no resources
- Love for abuser; relationship began differently
- Thinks children need father/mother
- Mental health issues

What prompts victim to leave?

- Often when children, friends, family directly victimized or observe victimization
- Children learn to treat parent as abuser does
 - Verbal degradation
 - Physical violence
 - Attempts to control

Why does abuser do this?

- Enjoy privileges and power
- Exploitation works
 - sex, money, control
- Mental health issues
 - Emotionally dependent
 - Fear of being alone (abandoned)
 - Personality disorders

What is the prevalence of Coercive Control?

Prevalence of Couples Referred to a Domestic Violence Treatment Program

	Victim	Perp
Blamed for causing violence	90%	64%
Acted like partner was servant	84	38
Ordered around	89	58
Monitored time	85	59
Did not allow socializing with friends	79	37
Did not allow going to school	62	19
Did not allow to leave house	62	26
Restricted telephone use	56	17
Kept from seeing family	60	20
Tried to convince partner she was crazy	55	16
Restricted car use	54	21
Did not allow to work	35	11

Tolman, 1989

What behaviors do COUPLES report?

Types of behaviors assessed

- Psychological abuse
- Coercive Controlling Behaviors
- Physical abuse
- Threats of and Escalated Physical Violence
- Sexual Coercion, Intimidation, Assault

Proposed Couple Types

(Kelly & Johnson (2008), *Family Court Review* 46(3), 476-499)

- **Situational Couple Violence**
 - Symmetric low level physical abuse—pushing, shoving
- **Classic Battering—Coercive Controlling Violence**
 - High frequency all types (coercive control, psychological, physical, sexual)
- **Mutually Violent Control—Both Coercive Controlling Violent**
 - Both partners classic batterers
- **Violent Resistance**
 - One partner resisting classic batterer
- **Separation-Instigated Violence**
 - No prior history; either partner perpetrates violence

Couple Types Found in Divorce Mediation

- **36%/314 Mutually Low (below average)**
 - Both partners below the mean or group average
- **30%/248 Lower Frequency Battering—Father Perp**
 - no physical abuse, all others
- **Classic Battering—Coercive Controlling Violence**
 - 13%/112 -- Male perpetrator, very high levels of all behaviors
 - 17%/146-- Female perpetrator, lower level of behaviors, no sexual
- **4%/34 Mutually Violent Control—Both Partners are Coercive Controlling Violent**
- **NONE Situational Couple Violence**

Types Found in Mediation

- Guesses as to why...
- No **Situational Couple Violence** category emerged?
 - mutual pushing, shoving; no coercive controlling behaviors
- **Separation-Instigated Violence**
- **Violent Resistance**--Female partner resisting batterer
- NOT ABLE TO TEST—FILE DATA, NO INTERVIEWS

Types Found in Mediation

- Asymmetries in victimization within couples
- ... exist in nearly equal numbers but...

Types Found in Mediation

- IPV/A behaviors occur at much higher levels in
 - **Battering—Father Perpetrator** type than for
 - **Battering—Mother Perpetrator** type
- In the
 - **Battering—Mother Perpetrator Type:**
 - no reported sexual abuse/violence

Types Found in Mediation

- **Battering—Father Perpetrator Type:**
 - Mothers reported to perpetrate low levels of physical abuse (push, shove)
 - Is this what is called “mutual violence”?
- **NOT** Equal

How do you screen for Coercive Control?

- **Must ask the questions...**
- Three methods
 - General: “Have you ever been abused?”
 - Ask behaviorally specific questions.
 - Ask about “lived experience.”

Mediation study

- 75% of women reporting physically forced sex did not report high frequency physical abuse
 - shove, push, hit
- 83% of women reporting threats to life...
- 80% of women reporting choking, strangling...

Screening for Violence

- Types
- Typical dynamic
- Frequency
 - 1st, worst, most recent
- Use of Children
- Weapons
- Violence against others

Screening for Intimidation

- Level of fear
- Threats to kill you, himself or children
- How has your behavior changed because of fear?
- Stalking
- Invisible threats
- When are you most frightened of your partner?
- Recent changes
- Threats against Others

Screening for Isolation

- Level of support
- Friends
- Family
- Workmates
- Helpers
- Phone
- Car
- Jealousy
- Self-isolation
- Privacy, allowed any personal possessions

Screening for Emotional Abuse

- Incompetent
- Name calling
- Restrict sleep
- Yelling/Screaming
- What does your partner do or say when you make a mistake?
- ... refuse demands?

Screening for Control

- Material necessities
- Sexuality
- Time
- Movement
- Activities of Daily Living
- Discipline of children
- Who decides
 - Material necessities
 - Activities of Daily Living
 - Rules/Expectations
 - Financial issues
- Who makes “the Rules?”

Highest Risk of Lethal Violence

- Abuser
 - highly controlling
 - uses drugs and/or alcohol
 - has access to guns/weapons
 - stalks victim
 - threatens physical/lethal violence
 - is currently unemployed
- Victim
 - expresses fear of abuser
 - woman of child-bearing age
 - has children from another partner/spouse living with her
 - leaving for a new relationship (Campbell research)

Several questionnaires

- Assess all types of Intimate Partner Abuse INCLUDING coercive controlling behaviors
- Holtzworth-Munroe, Beck, & Applegate (2010). The Mediator’s Assessment of Safety Issues and Concerns (MASIC). *Family Court Review*, 48, 646-662.
- Free.

MASIC – Section 2

- Items 1 – 37: Behaviorally specific items of violence and abuse

A = never, B = once or twice, C = three to six times (approx. once ever few months), D = seven to twelve times (approx. every month or two), E = weekly, F = daily

A. Did the other parent ever (whether living together or not)		B. How often did that happen in the past 12 months?						
	Yes	No	A	B	C	D	E	F
2.	Insult you or make you feel bad in front of others?							
4.	Forbid you to go out without him/her?							
26.	Slap you?							
34.	Follow or spy on you in a way that made you feel frightened or harassed?							

Other questionnaires

- Integrated Domestic Violence Interview Guide. Davis & Frederick
 - Developed by lawyers for lawyers
 - Covers
 - Economic stability
 - Children/parenting
 - Privacy/autonomy
 - Types of Abuse and Violence
 - Personal relationship with partner

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF BATTERING (WEB)¹

1-Agree Strongly 4-Disagree a Little
2-Agree Somewhat 5-Disagree Somewhat
3-Agree a Little 6-Disagree Strongly

1. He makes me feel unsafe, even in my own home
2. I feel ashamed of the things he does to me
3. I try not to rock the boat because I am afraid of what he might do
4. I feel like I am programmed to react a certain way to him
5. I feel like he keeps me prisoner
6. He makes me feel like I have no control over my life, no power, no protection
7. I hide the truth from others because I am afraid not to
8. I feel owned and controlled by him
9. He can scare me without laying a hand on me
10. He has a look that goes straight through me and terrifies me

Source: Smith, P.H., Smith, J.B., & Earp, J.L. (1999). Beyond the measurement trap: A reconstructed conceptualization and measurement of woman battering. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 23, 177-193.

Other questionnaires

- Compendium of questionnaires measuring all types of Intimate Partner Abuse—gives details on each questionnaire
- Measuring Intimate Partner Violence Victimization and Perpetration: A compendium of Assessment Tools
- http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/publications/Measuring_IPV_Victimization_and_Perpetration.htm
- Free

Refer to competent person to conduct

- Domestic violence assessment
- Psychological evaluations
- Custody evaluation

Impacts on Victims

- Clinical literature – Battered women report the routine, ongoing, coercive control worst part of intimate partner abuse.
- Destroys self-esteem, ability to think and reason.
- ... begin to question own reality.

Challenges to representation

- Documenting coercion, control & violence if any
- Explore multiple sources of abuse
- DO NOT simply ask “Have you been abused?”
 - or Stop asking questions when person says no to pushing, shoving
- Reframing victim’s emotional & behavioral problems as ‘attempting to parent, have control in the context of no control’

Challenges to representation

- Supporting right to make choices about daily living
- Reframing harms as violations of personal rights, liberties critical to personhood and citizenship
- Build a narrative that links harms to victim partner and child

Reframing in the context of CC

- Reframe client as protective parent operating within extremely constrained options
- Reframe FEAR as a reasonable response to multiple constraints
 - personal, financial, physical, emotional, association

Linking Harms to Rights

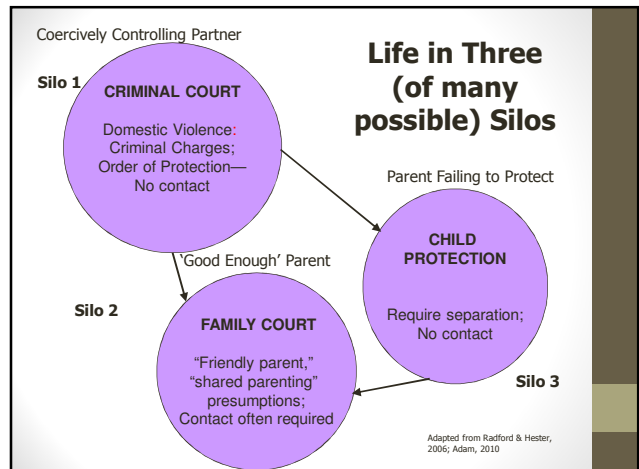
- Violence = Right to security
- Intimidation/degradation =
 - Right to dignity and to live without fear
- Isolation = Right to association with others
- Control = Right to autonomy
 - Drucilla Cornell, *The Imaginary Domain*

Court system operates in “Silos”

- Quoting Judge Karen Adam... (2010)
- “...one of 20 cases on my calendar that day, it was set for 15 minutes. ... neither party was represented by counsel ... by my second question, it was clear that this was not a routine divorce...”

Legal system operates in “Silos”

- “...the probate division had ordered Diane into mental health treatment;
- the juvenile court had made Jack’s parents permanent guardians of their children;
- Jack and his parents had orders of protection against Diane because of domestic violence;
- the civil division was handling their mortgage default; and
- the couple was considering bankruptcy.”



Caution

- If you read research on Coercive Control
 - Samples?
 - Questions asked/not asked?
 - Who are authors generalizing to?
- Have not talked today about impact of CC or general DV on children, parenting...

More on this topic at

- **Arizona Association of Family and Conciliation Courts**
 - February 1-3, 2013
 - Hilton Sedona Resort
- Thank you!
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