

# Situational Couple Violence & Intimate Terrorism: What is the difference and does it really matter?

Dr. TK Logan, presented at the community partnership for protecting children community training Lexington, KY (May 19 & 21, 2007)





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# Outline

1

**What is the difference?  
What does research tell us?**

2

**What is coercive control?  
What are the controllers seeking?**

3

**How does someone cope with coercive control?  
Why don't they just leave?**

4

**How do you know when coercive control is  
present?**



What is the difference between situational couples violence and intimate partner terrorism?



# Situational couples violence versus intimate partner terrorism (Johnson, 1995)

## Situational couples violence

- Fighting that gets “out of hand”
- Minor violence
- Mutual minor violence
- Motive may be anger but parties do not feel afraid or controlled

## Intimate partner terrorism

- Systematic control & domination
  - Motivation is control of partner
- More frequent and severe violence
- Male to female violence
- Female violence (if at all) is used as self-defense



# Situational couples violence

- Is this possible?
- What do marriage researchers say?

**The Gottman Institute Overview:  
Researching and Restoring  
Relationships**

<http://www.gottman.com>



# Gottman's research on relationships

- 50% of first marriages
- 60% of second marriages
- Cohabitation trajectories are similar
  
- What predicts dissolution or problems in relationships?



# Predictors of couple dissolution

**Fighting styles do not predict breakups**

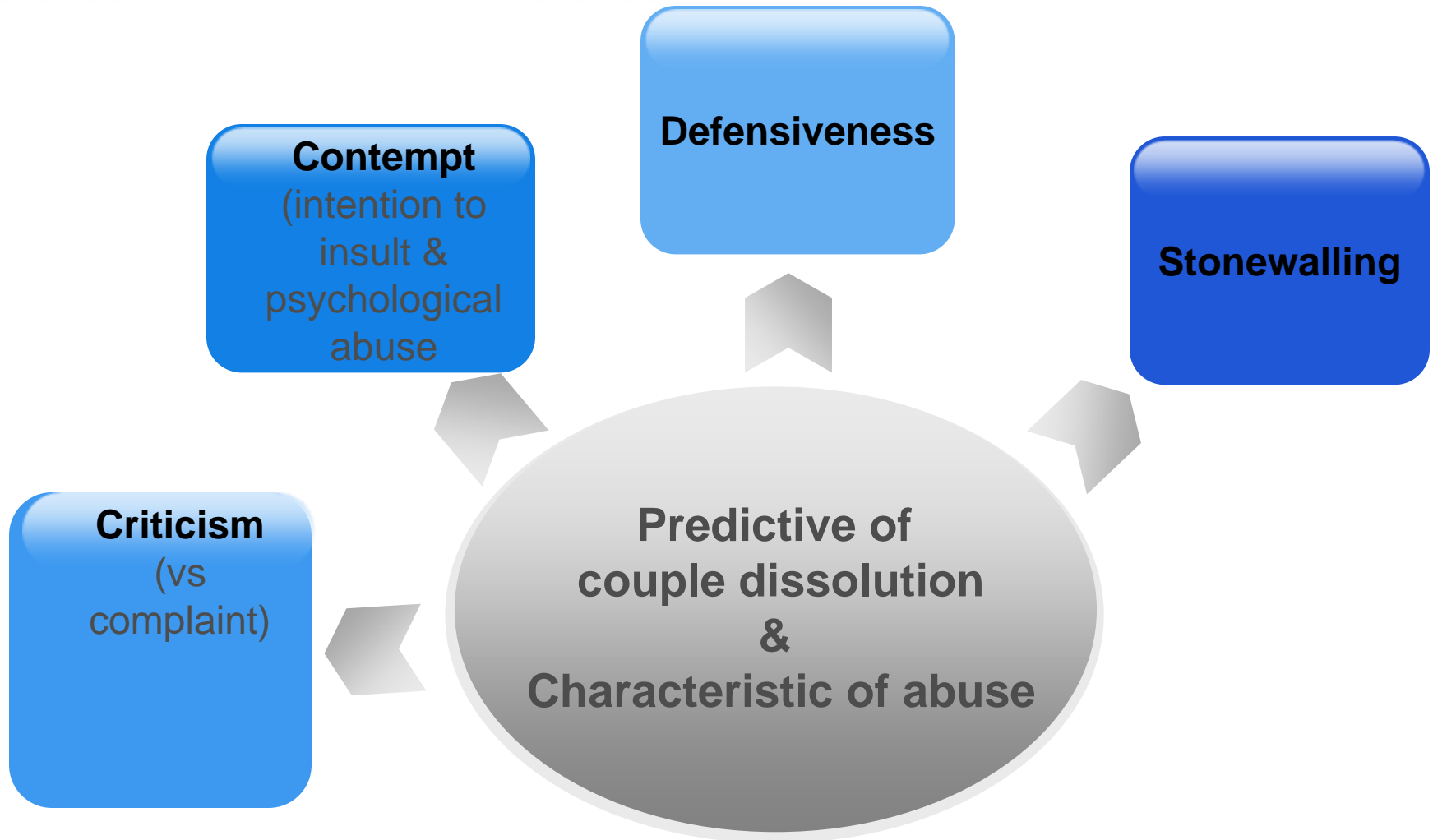


Very competitive  
Occasional violence  
Mutual drug and/or  
alcohol use is  
involved





# Four horsemen of the apocalypse



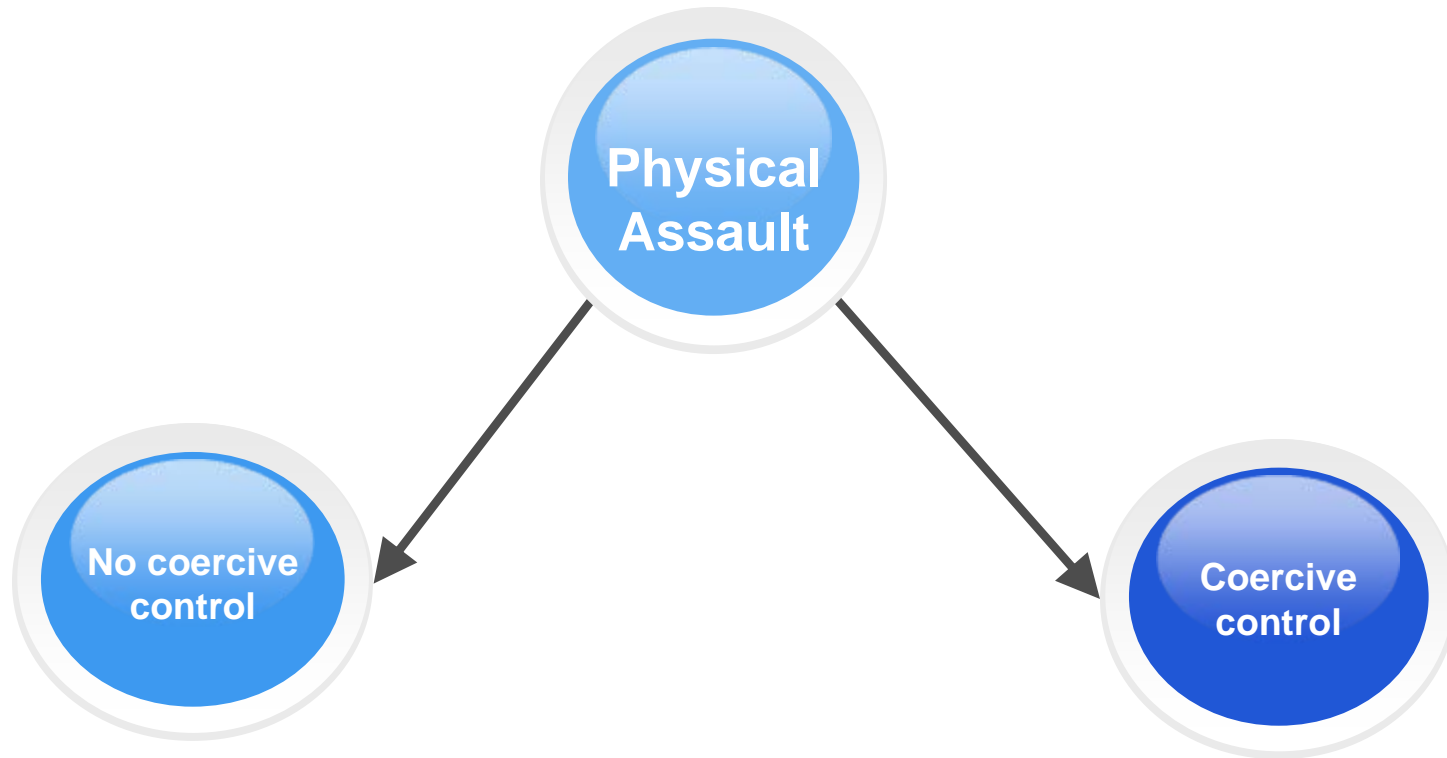


## DEFINITIONS: intimate partner terrorism & partner violence

- Intimate partner terrorism is “...defined by the attempt to dominate one’s partner and to exert **general control over the relationship**” (Johnson & Leone, 2005, p. 323).
- Includes physical, sexual, and psychological abuse committed by an intimate for the purpose of exercising **control** over the partner (Crowell & Burgess, 1996).
- Repeated physical and/or sexual assault within a context of coercive **control** (Campbell & Humphreys, 1993)



# Situational Violence versus Intimate Partner Terrorism





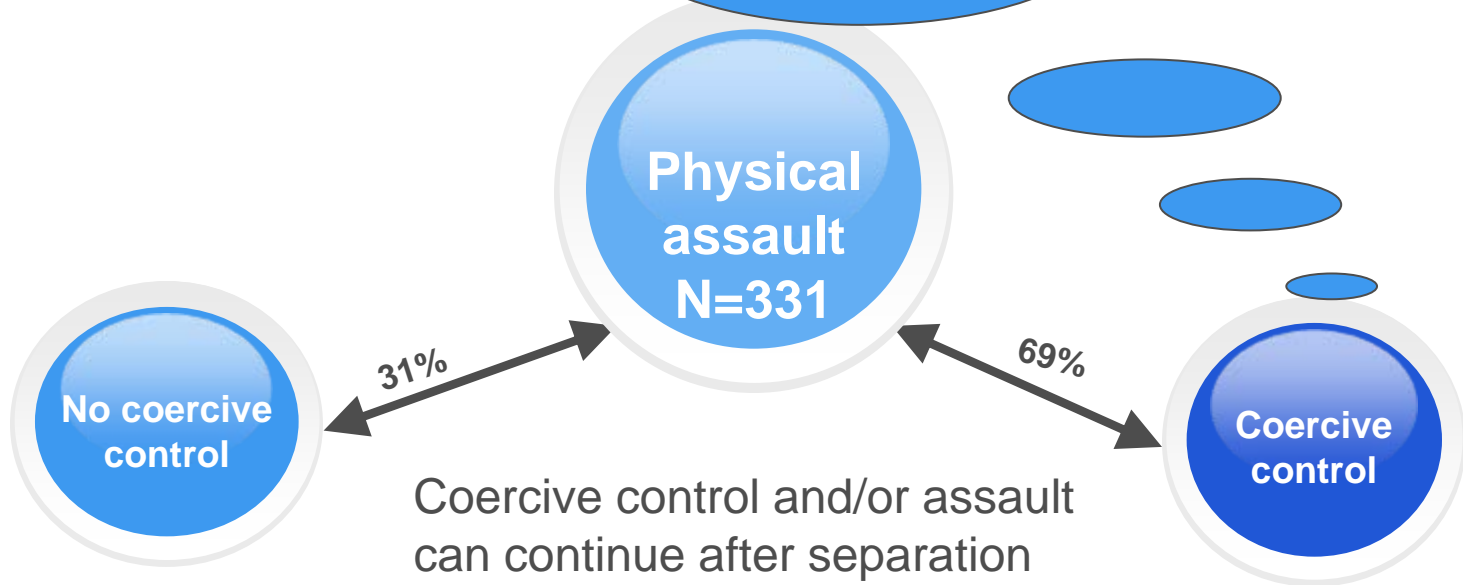
What does the research say about situational couples violence and intimate partner terrorism?



# Women who experienced physical assault by an intimate partner within the past 2 years

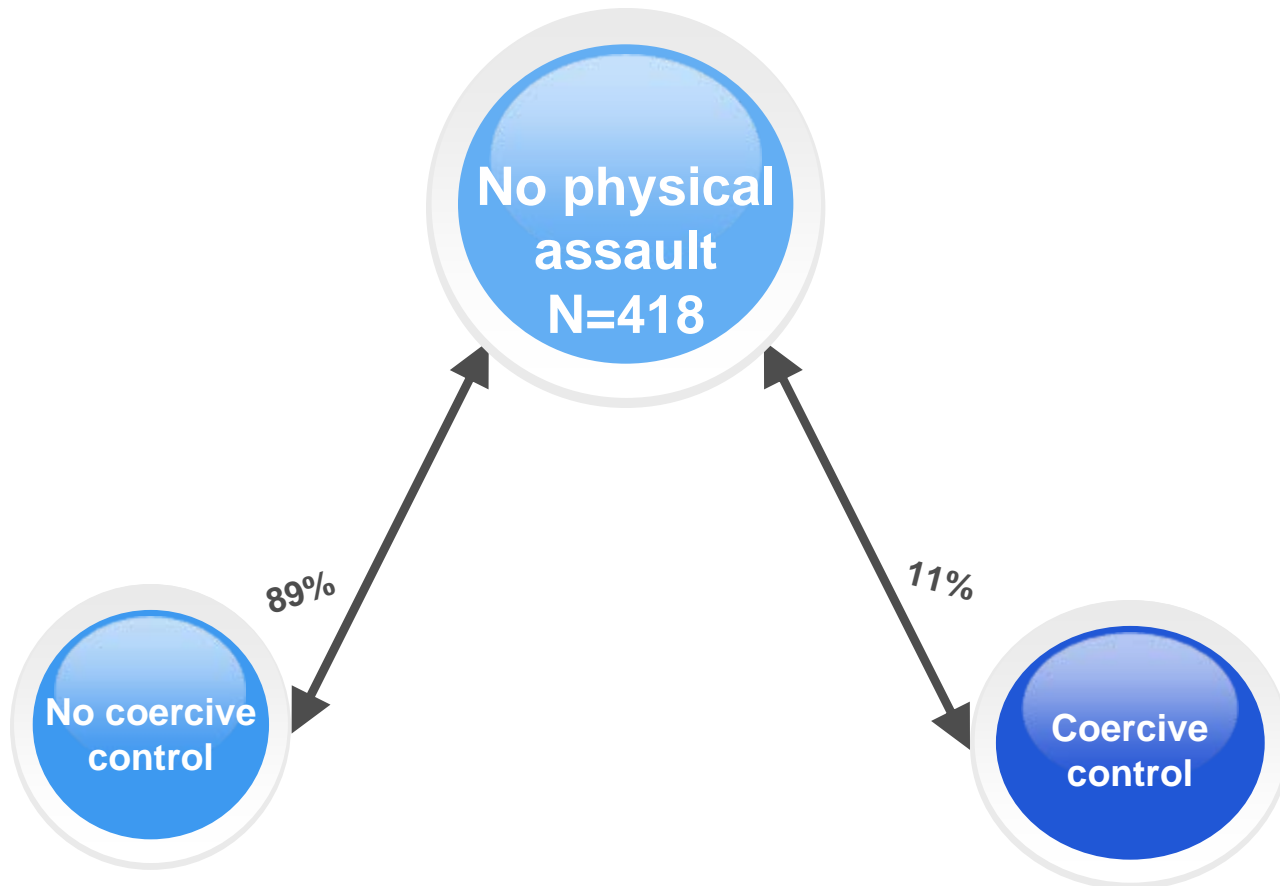
(Frye et al., 2006)

Escalating violence & Injury  
Perp first to use violence in worst incident  
Physically assaulted 10+ times in past 2 years  
Younger and lower income  
Perp (access to gun, arrested for DV)



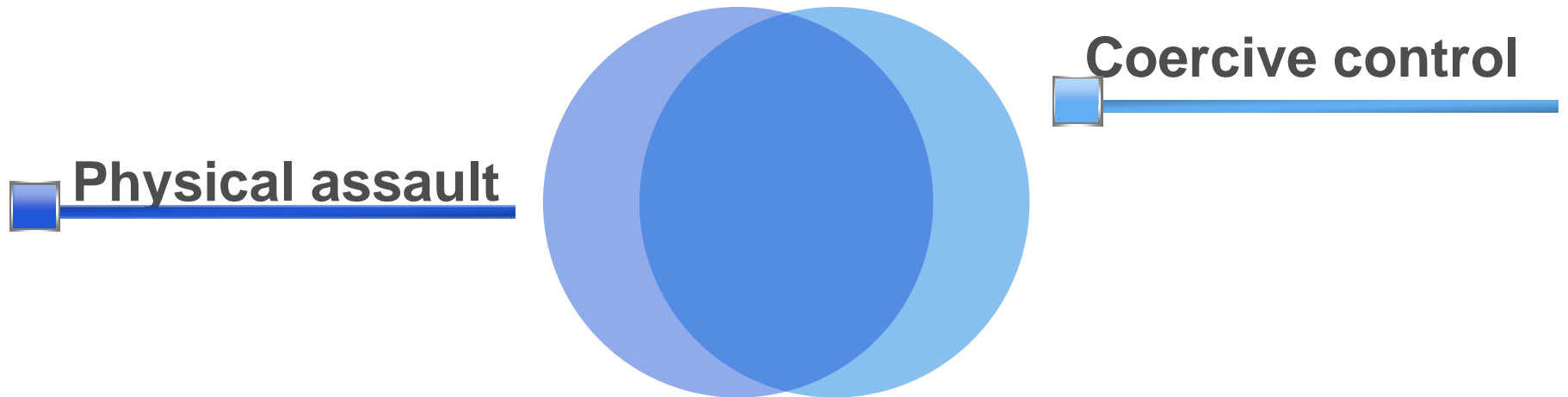


Women who experienced no physical assault by an intimate partner within the past 2 years





# Situational Violence versus Intimate Partner Terrorism





## Coercive control

- Using both Johnson's definition and Frye's definition the vast majority of over 700 women in Kentucky with protective orders (93%) were classified as experiencing coercive control/intimate partner terrorism



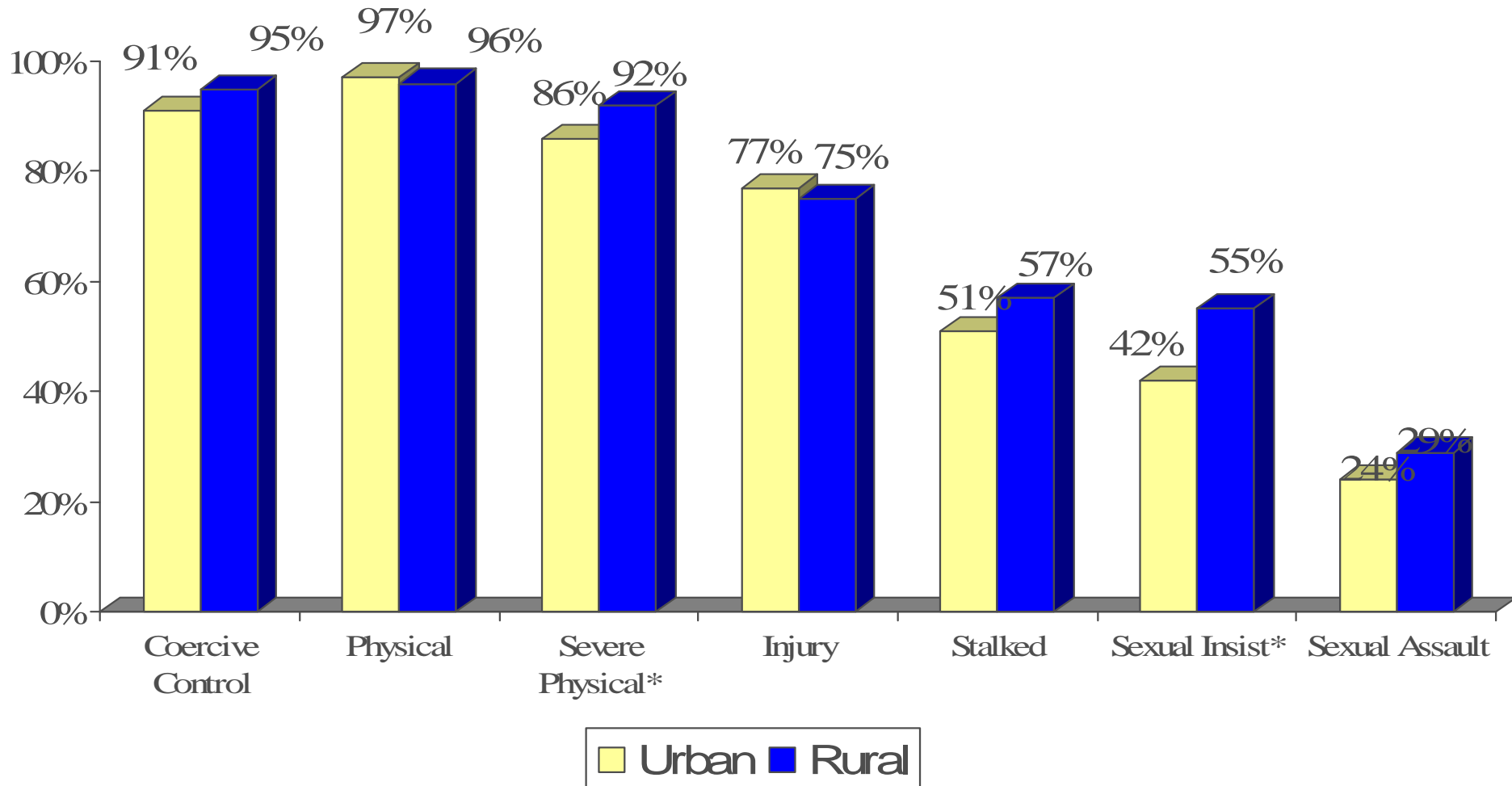


# Kentucky study (Logan & Walker, 2007)

	Urban (N = 379)	Rural (N = 377)	Total (N = 756)
Mean age	32	32	32
Relationship to DVO partner			
Married	37%	70%	54%
Cohabited	59%	27%	43%
Length of relationship (years)	5.1	9.1	7.1
Minor children in common w/DVO partner*	43%	58%	50%



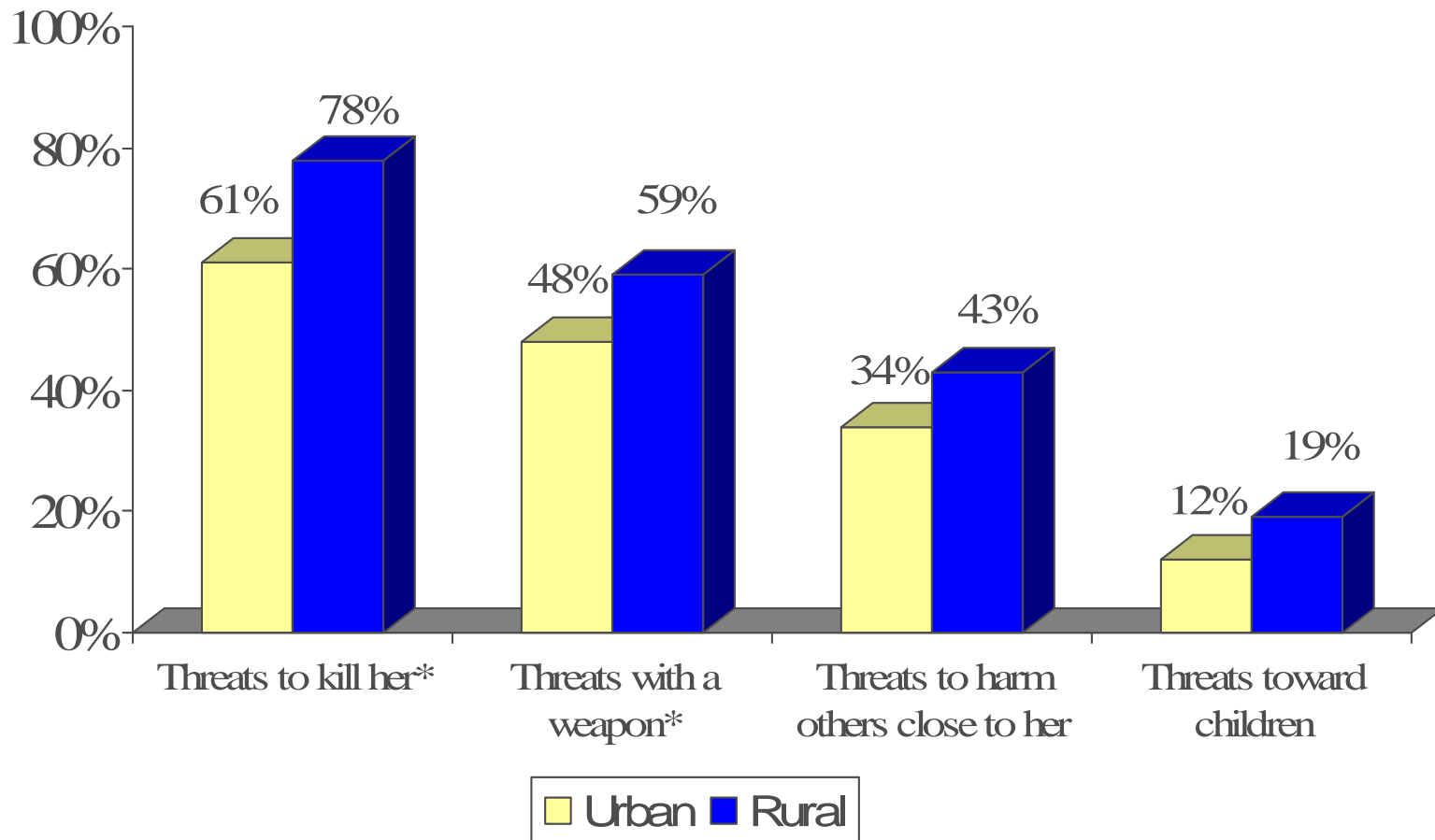
# Victimization experiences



**Severe physical:** Kicked, burned, hit with an object, slammed against a wall, tried to run down with a car, caused an accident on purpose, strangled, beat up, used a weapon

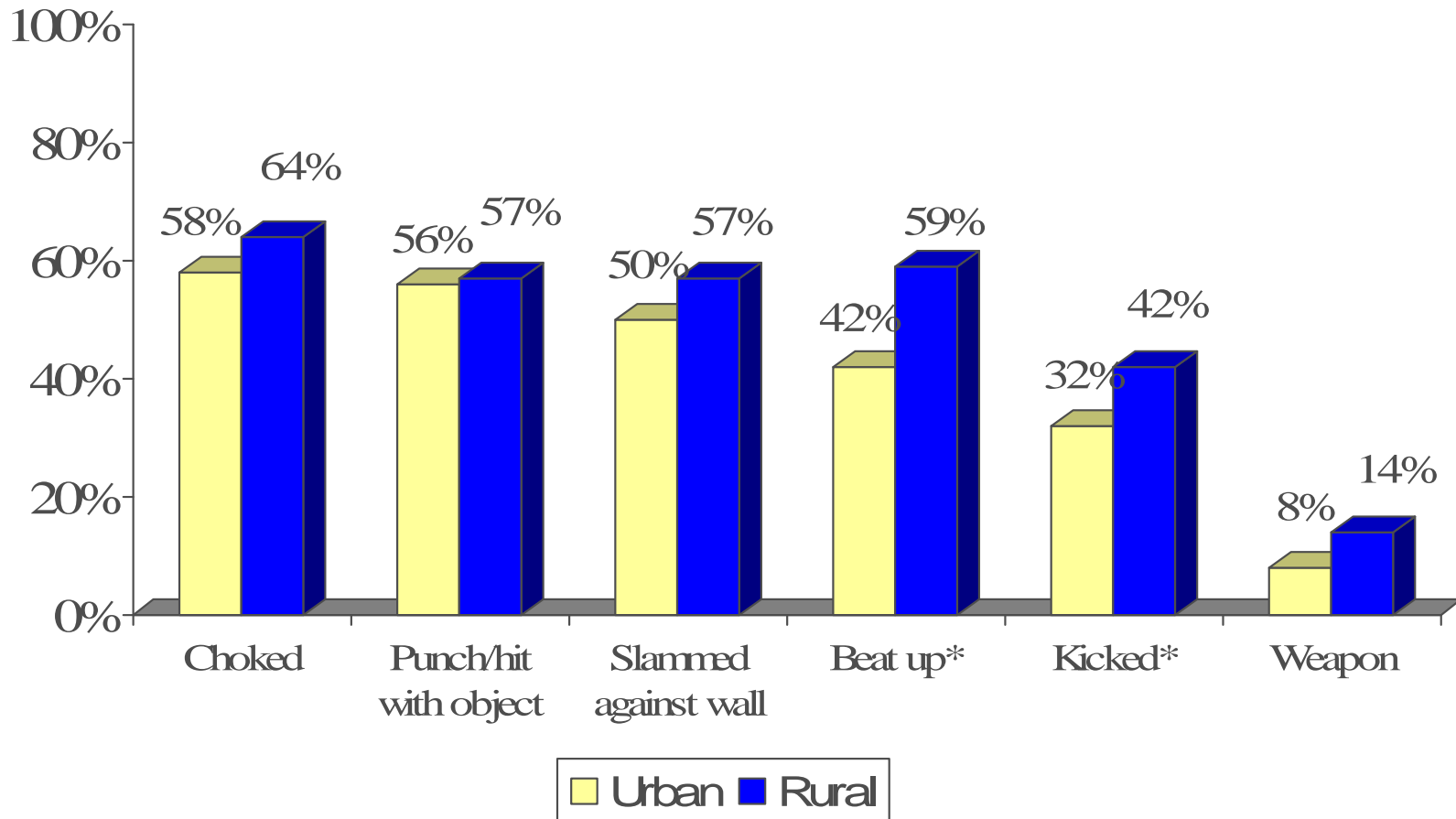


# Threats





# Severe violence





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What is coercive control?

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# Coercive control: What is it?

- Child abduction cases
  - Shawn Hornbeck
  - Elizabeth Smart
  
- “You have been so abused and so robbed of your free will and so frightened that you come to a point that you believe any lie that your abductor has told you. You don’t feel safe. You think that either you will be killed if you reach out for help, or you believe your family will be killed.” ---Patricia Hearst

<http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/West/03/13/life.after.kidnapping/>



# Denial

- Defense mechanism
- Individual choices defines our culture



# Coercive Control and Adult Males and Females

**Past**

**Current**



**Prisoner of war**

**Cults**

**Human trafficking**

**British Soldiers/  
Kidnap victims**

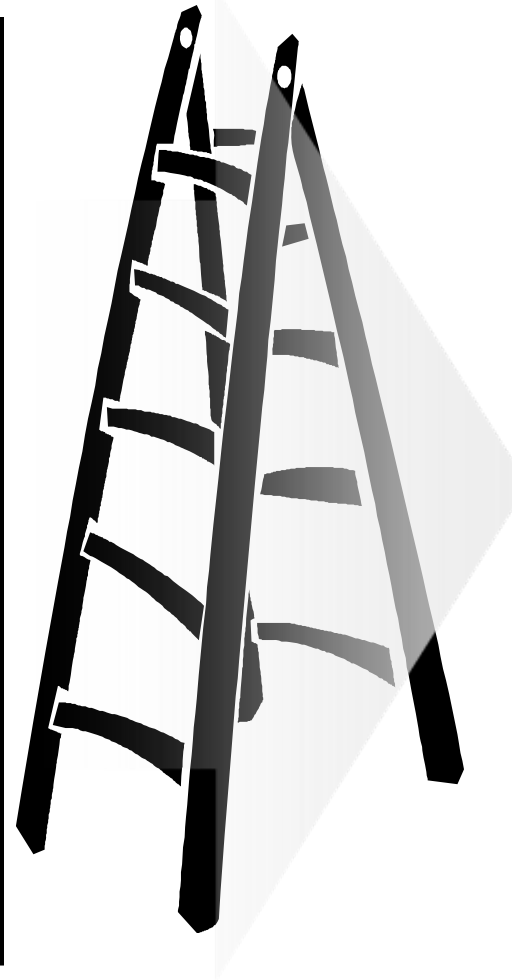




# Coercive control tactics:

Biderman's chart of coercion  
(Amnesty International report on torture, 1973)

Isolation
Monopolization of perception
Induced exhaustion
Threats
Occasional indulgences
Demonstrating 'omnipotence'
Degradation
Enforcing trivial demands



**Coercive  
Control**

# Anatomy of domestic violence using Biderman's framework





# Courtship

- Hormones
- Bait-and-switch
- Emotions that color true perceptions
- Jealousy*
- Interest in every move I make*





Method	Abusive relationship	Examples
<b>Isolation</b>	Deliberate isolation from friends and family Convinces others the partner is crazy, causes problems in the relationship, needs help	He moved me away from my family and friends. He didn't want me to go anywhere unless he was with me. He would eavesdrop.
<b>Monopolization of perception</b>	Focus revolves around keeping the abuser from becoming angry She becomes responsible for meeting his wants and needs Becomes violent when she does something he doesn't want her to	I was always scared he would blow up. I had to dress for him, give him sex whenever he wanted it. I had to control the kids so they wouldn't bother him. It was like walking on eggshells
<b>Induced exhaustion</b>	Makes her do all or most of the work at home Keeps arguments and assaults going for hours Wont allow sleep or interrupts sleep	He won't let me sleep. He started fights that lasted all night. He wouldn't let me see a doctor. He hurt me when I was physically weak (e.g., after surgery, sick)



Method	Abusive relationship	Examples
Threats	Threats of harm, kill Threats to harm children, take children Threats toward close others Damage her reputation	He said he would take the kids and I would never see them again. He said he would kill me. He told me I was so stupid I would never survive without him. He said he would find me if I left.
Occasional indulgences	May behave sometimes like the person she fell in love with, promise or appear to change, buy gifts, start counseling, apologize	He took me on vacation. He helps the kids with homework sometimes. Once in awhile he really listened to me and seemed to care.
Demonstrated 'omnipotence'	Seems to know everything. Suggests that no matter where she goes he will find her. Claims he has powerful connections. Tells her nobody will believe her over him	The police did seem to believe him or take his side. He follows me, constantly monitors everything I do.



Method	Abusive relationship	Examples
Degradation	Calls her names, humiliates her in front of children and others, forces her to do things which feel degrading to her	He told me I am fat. He would call me names and touch me inappropriately in public. He put me down intellectually and sexually, said I was ugly, said nobody else would ever want me.
Enforcing trivial demands	Requires her to do something that doesn't need to be done or that could easily be done by the abuser. Enforces very trivial rules.	The bacon had to be cooked to a particular doneness. I couldn't leave a cup on the bathroom sink. I was beat up for eating a can of green beans for lunch—he said that was dinner food. He monitored my food intake.

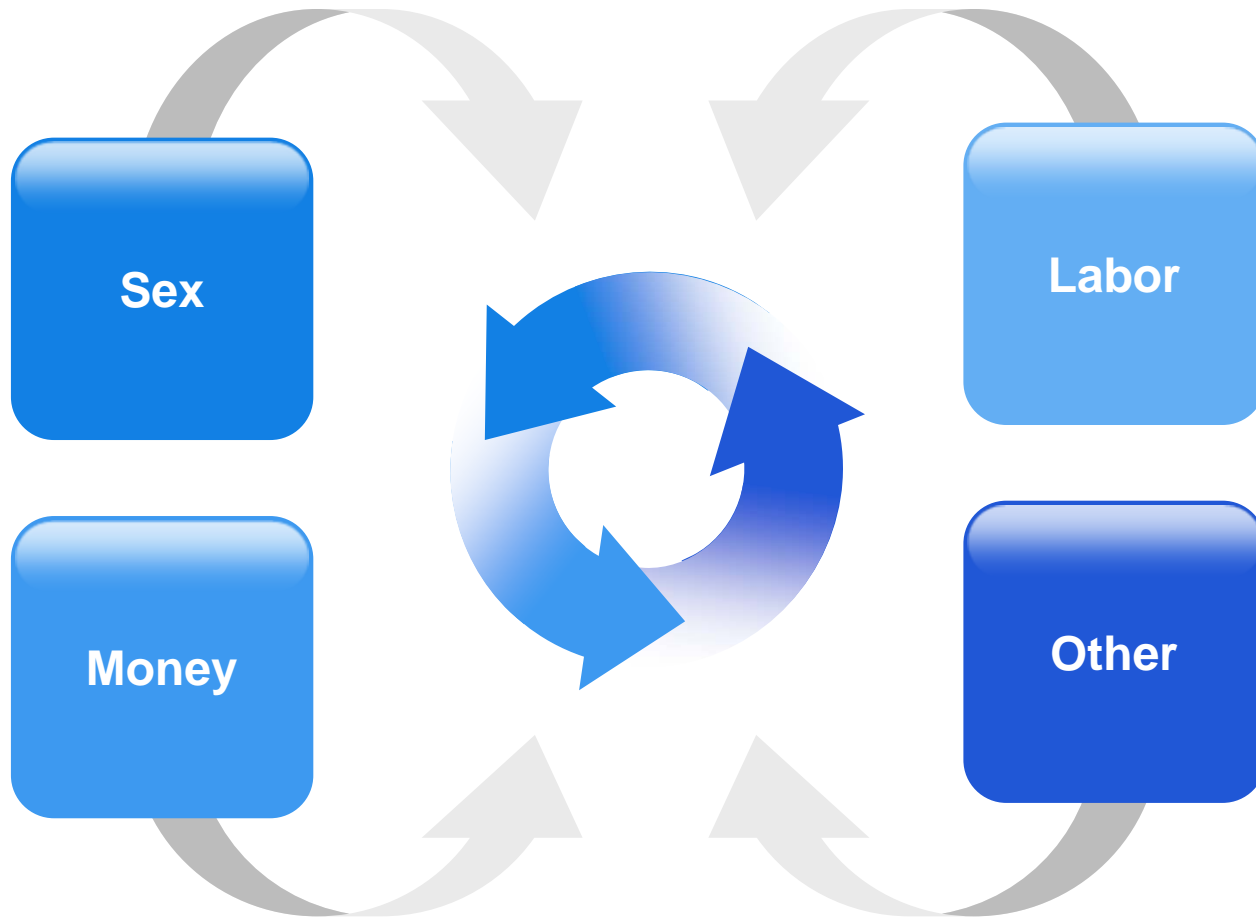
Adapted from Ann Jones (2000). Next time she'll be dead: Battering & how to stop it (pp 90-91). Beacon Press. Biderman's chart of coercion. And from "Amnesty International Report on Torture," by Duckworth & Co. Copyright 1973 by Amnesty International (p. 49). And from Ohio Domestic Violence Network Information is Power sourcebook. www.odvn.org. <http://www.isna.net/services/dv/resources/coercion.html> (5/1/07).

Why? What are the controllers seeking?





## Coercive control motives (Human trafficking/Cults/POW)

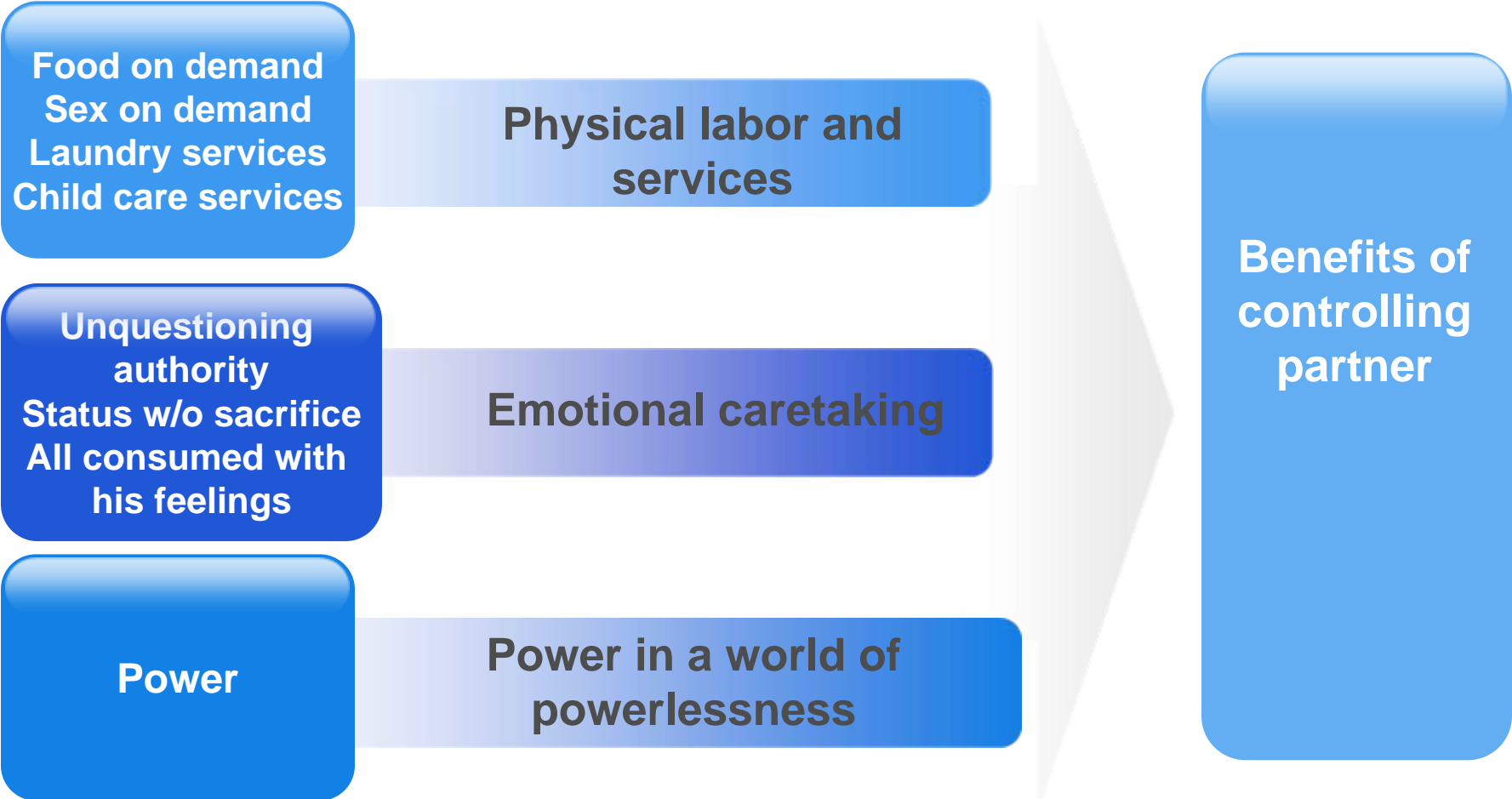






# Coercive control motives: Partner violence

(Bancroft, 2002)



How does someone cope with coercive control?





# Coping with coercive control



Continuous state of anxiety

Profound depression

Thought processes, bodily desires and functions become less important

Other stresses produce little distress because mind and body are already maximally distressed

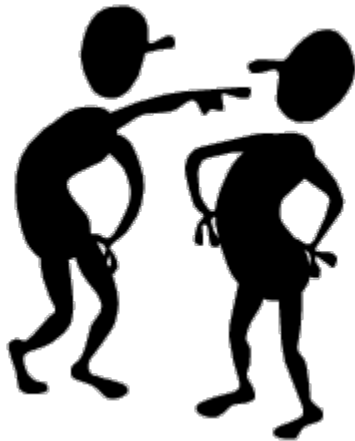
Total denial/disengagement

Coercive control is defined by context or culture and circumstances—it is not necessarily objective



## Research shows

- In fact, research shows these responses are also typical of women living in controlling and abusive relationships (Logan et al., 2006a; 2006b)



Why don't they just leave?





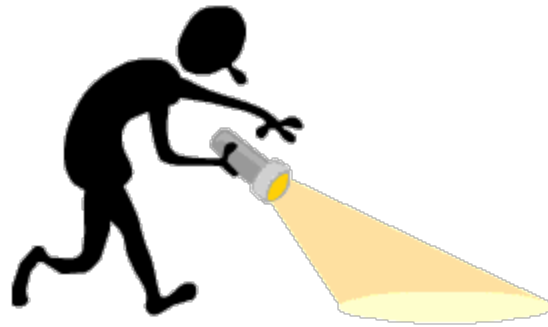
# Why don't they just leave?

- Most women do leave abusive relationships (Logan et al., 2004)
  - **Studies show the majority of women in abusive relationships leave within 5 years**
  - **Separation is dangerous**
  - **Separation for all couples is difficult; especially when fear and violence is involved**
  - **Many factors are considered when leaving; children are a huge consideration for staying and for leaving**



## Why does she stay?

- Would I (and my children) be better off?
- Can I do it?
  - **Internal and external resources**





# Consequences of Separation in the Context of Victimization

## General consequences of Separation

- Economic status changes
- Psychological adjustment
- Social support changes
- Other life changes
- Health, mental health, & substance use

## Consequences of Victimization

- Mental health problems
- Health problems
- Substance use and substance-related problems

## Stress

## Consequences of Separation with Children

- Increased need for financial resources
- Role strain
- Legal complications

## Separation in the Context of Victimization

Continuing violence and safety concerns

Exacerbation of health problems, mental health problems, and stress

Child safety concerns and custody conflicts

Economic, structural, psychological, & social constraints

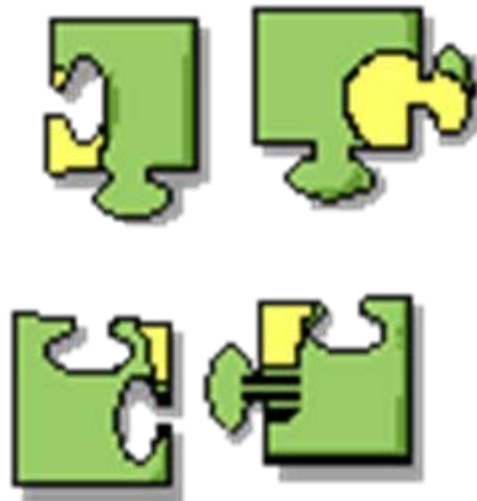




## Research shows

- Outside agencies are key in helping women leave, protecting their lives, and in helping these women protect their children
- Some women killed by batterers (perhaps the most extremely violent cases) did not reach out to any services
- The vast majority of women who turn to the justice system (police, protective orders, criminal charges) are women who have experienced coercive control

How do you know when coercive control is present?





## Coercive control: How do you know?

- Tactics may vary because they are situational and target specific (Stark, 2007)
- Includes things like monitoring of time, stalking, enforcing trivial rules, not allowing freedom to come and go, controlling contact with friends or relatives, excessive jealousy, threats of harm, etc.



# Coercive control

- **Women's experiences of battering (WEB) Scale** (Hall Smith et al., 1995):
  - **He makes me feel unsafe even in my own home**
  - **I feel ashamed of the things he does to me**
  - **I try not to rock the boat because I am afraid of what he might do**
  - **I feel like I am programmed to react a certain way to him**
  - **I feel like he keeps me prisoner**
  - **He makes me feel like I have no control over my life, no power, no protection**
  - **I hide the truth from others because I am afraid not to**
  - **I feel owned and controlled by him**
  - **He can scare me without laying a hand on me**
  - **He has a look that goes straight through me and terrifies me**

# Summary





## Situational Couple Violence & Intimate Terrorism: What is the difference and does it really matter?

- Johnson's typology is valid
- Understanding the context of assault does matter and can be done
- Coercive control is more common than situational violence
- Coercive control is an invisible prison; thus, fear levels, reaction levels, survival needs may not be apparent to others
- The controller has a lot at stake, is good at manipulating others, and will fight very hard to keep the power
- Women need help to leave and to keep herself and her children safe

# Thank You!





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