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Mapping Coercive Violence

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Abstract

In this paper we propose conceptualizing a new and distinct form of intimate partner violence: coercive violence. Distinct from coercive control, which has been widely documented by scholars and activists, we argue that coercive violence is a form of violence that exposes victim/survivors to violence at the behest of institutions or the state. In this way, victim/survivors are not only exposed to significant violence, including exposure to deadly diseases like COVID, reproductive violence, and incarceration, but they are also frequently exposed to significant state surveillance, which, we argue, is another form of violence. Additionally, coercive violence is often viewed as originating in institutions and the state, thus the abuser cannot be held accountable for his role in deploying the violence of institutions and the state onto his partner. We conclude by arguing for future research that further explicates and interrogates coercive violence, its various forms, impacts on victim/survivors, and strategies for preventing it.

Keywords: intimate partner violence, domestic violence, coercive control, intimate terrorism, state violence

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Introduction

Millions of people in the United States are impacted by intimate partner violence each year, in fact according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), IPV homicide is now the leading cause of femicide. The CDC also estimates that IPV costs the nation upwards of 9 billion dollars annually in lost wages, medical care, and police and EMT response. Millions of children are silent witnesses to the violence perpetrated in their homes, which puts them at increased risk for growing up to become victims or perpetrators themselves. And, though these statistics should, on their own, alarm us, what is even more concerning about IPV is that it follows distinct lines of gender, race and class. Though all categories of people can and do experience IPV, the vast majority of IPV, especially physical abuse, sexual abuse and financial abuse is perpetrated by men against women. And, those with more marginalized identities--Black and Native women and poor women-- face even higher risks for being victimized by their intimate or ex-intimate partners. Feminist scholars and activists have long focused our attention on the roots of IPV; IPV is not bad behavior perpetrated by a few angry men, it is gendered violence that is deeply rooted in the power and privilege patriarchy (and white supremacy and modern capitalism). And, though IPV has always existed as part of the human condition, and it looks remarkably similar across time and space (author citation USAID), it is also adaptable and new forms of violence emerge in the changing conditions of social, political and economic landscapes. In this paper, we posit a new form of IPV, coercive violence, that has, like many phenomena, become visible as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Intimate Partner Violence in the United States

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Intimate partner violence is an umbrella term used to describe a variety of behaviors; it takes many forms, including physical, emotional, psychological, financial, and sexual abuse (author citation 1). Intimate partner violence is epidemic in the United States and is defined as a major public health crisis. According to the Centers for Disease Control (Smith et al., 2017) , 1 in 5 women (nearly 20%) and 1 in 7 men have experience severe physical violence perpetrated by a partner, 20% of women and 1 in 12 men have experienced sexual violence by a partner, and 10% of women and 2% of men have been stalked by an intimate or ex-intimate partner. Intimate partner violence can also take the form of teen dating violence (Smith et. al. 2017). At its most extreme form, physical violence results in death; intimate partner violence accounts for 9% of all homicides (Smith et. al. 2017). Annually in the United States, nearly 1500 women are killed each year by their intimate or ex-intimate partners; IPV homicide accounts for 50% of all femicides (author citation).

Though intimate partner violence has always been a part of the human condition, the history of defining IPV involves a continued expansion of the definition. Initially, and not surprisingly, the early "shelter" movement and consciousness raising groups focused on physical violence. At the same time, as attention was also focused on reproductive rights, activists and scholars advanced the concept of marital rape. Based on their hard work and intense focus, finally, in the mid 1980s all 50 states finally repealed the marital rape exemption in their sexual assault statutes. As our understanding of power and control as the roots of IPV began to develop, so did the definition of violence. The definition of IPV was once again expanded to include emotional and/or psychological abuse. As researchers and activists have documented, emotional and/or

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psychological abuse is the most common form of abuse, in part because it is utilized as a primary strategy to the control that characterizes intimate terrorism (author citation--2008; 2020). Many women who are victims/survivors of IPV note that it can be the most damaging, because as the injuries of physical violence heal, the harsh words and name-calling can be replayed in one's head, over and over, for a lifetime. Another form of psychological abuse is gaslighting. Gaslighting involves an abusive partner using manipulation and distraction tactics to distort the truth to undermine a victim/survivor's judgment and perceptions of reality, making them question their own sanity (Sweet, 2019). Gaslighting can have long term consequences for victims. As our understanding of IPV expanded again, scholars and activists pointed to yet another tool that many abusive men use to control their partners: access to financial support. Many victim/survivors of intimate partner violence are prohibited by their partners from working. Among those who are allowed to work, many women are required by their partners to "turn over" their earnings to their partners. Financial abuse often also involves giving victim/survivors an "allowance"; and commonly women are denied access to bank accounts, credit cards, and even their own credit. This type of abuse is termed "financial" abuse. Beginning in the early 2000s, another form of abuse began to be defined: stalking. Though scholars and activists had long talked about the surveillance that abuse partners engage in, the category of stalking was developed specifically in response to the kinds of surveillance that became available and were commonly deployed through new technologies including cell phones and the internet. The National Stalking Resource Center catalogs the myriad ways in which stalking can be accomplished and the types of tools that abusers have literally at their fingertips to put tracking devices into their partners' phones, computers and any other device like a fitbit that connects to the internet. They can install software that captures keystrokes allowing them to read text

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messages and emails in real-time and surveill web activity. It's quite remarkable and frightening to learn about all of the ways in which victims can be tracked by their abusers.

Just as the advent of the widespread use of technology allowed scholars and activists to "name" stalking as a new form of violence, the 2020 Global COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated another form of IPV that needs to be named: coercive violence. Similar to all of the other evolutions in the language used to define IPV, coercive *behavior* has always been part of the formula for abusive men to control their partners, yet, we argue that the *naming* of these strategies and patterns of abuse as a *distinct form of violence* is important for several reasons.

First, the term coercive violence, though it often involves emotional and financial abuse is distinct from these other forms of violence. Second, coercive violence is much more than an individual level behavior, it is a direct response to various forms of surveillance and state violence. And, third, because coercive violence is an extension of state surveillance, it disproportionately impacts the most marginalized, those individuals already most subjected to state surveillance and violence, including minorities and those living in poverty.

Scholars and activists have certainly considered coercion and coercive behavior, in fact it appears on the power and control wheel as a significant strategy that abusers utilize to control their partners. That being said, we argue that coercion as a strategy is distinct from coercive violence. Coercive violence is not a strategy or a means to an end, it is violence in and of itself.

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Coercion as a strategy of control

As documented by others (Stark, 2009; Stark, 2013; Crossman & Hardesty, 2018), coercion is a significant and powerful tool that abusers use to manipulate their partners into or away from particular behaviors. Examples of coercion include making threats to leave or end the relationship, to hurt the partner or her children or pets, or even to commit suicide. Coercion is a powerful tool because it works and because it reinforces the power that the abuser holds in the relationship.

Coercive violence on the other hand is not a threat designed to control behavior, but rather it is a form of violence in and of itself. In cases of coercive violence the abuser does not, himself, engage in violence, but rather he forces the woman to behave in such a way as to *expose* her to violence at the hands of others, of an institution, or even of the state.

The concept of coercive violence first entered the public discourse during the fall of 2020 in a blog written by Carrie N. Baker (2020). In the blog published on Ms.com, the author argues that a new form of violence has emerged in the pandemic, she refers to these as "coercive control bans." Some examples of coercive control bans identified in the blog include not allowing one's partner to practice COVID precautions, such as wearing a mask or practicing physical distancing, or forcing a partner to complete a pregnancy despite her concerns about giving birth during a global pandemic. In these examples, the abuser isn't threatening his partner that he will beat her up or kill her if she wears a mask or practices physical distancing, that would be coercion. Rather, he is forcing her to engage in particular behaviors that put her at risk for

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contracting a deadly disease, which we argue is an act of violence distinct from a strategy. In the example of carrying a pregnancy to term, the pregnancy was not initially unwanted, the pregnancy did not occur out of an act of sexual violence, rather, the woman wanted the pregnancy initially, but as her fears about the medical visits and labor and delivery in a hospital during COVID mounted, she changes her mind about the pregnancy and seeks to terminate it. When her partner forces her to carry the baby to term despite her legitimate concerns, he is not using this as a threat, rather, *the action itself* is exposing her to the potential of contracting a life-threatening illness, which is in and of itself a form of violence.

In our own research (author citations), the men and women we interviewed described experiences that we initially defined as coercion, but which are, we now recognize, examples of coercive violence. One of the most common experiences that was recounted in interviews involved men who were entangled in the criminal-legal system demanding that their partners take the "rap" for drugs that were discovered through an apartment raid or traffic stop. In this example, the man doesn't threaten to beat his partner or leave her or commit suicide if she won't take the rap (each of which would be an example of coercion), rather, he reminds her that if he is arrested on another drug charge, he will go to prison, again, possibly for life. In an attempt to save her partner, the woman takes the "rap" and goes to prison herself. This is not an example of coercion, it is an example of coercive violence; the partner experiences violence herself through her own exposure to the criminal-legal system.

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Conceptualizing coercive violence in this way opens the door for us to consider other actions not as coercive tactics, but as a distinct form of intimate partner violence which we term "coercive violence."

The State

As we and others have argued, though individual people may perpetrate violence, the state often sanctions that violence and/or requires that individuals act as agents of the state. For example, we argue (author citation), that when police officers shoot unarmed Black people the violence they perpetrate is not simply individual, it is state sanctioned violence that individual police officers perpetrate acting as agents of the state. The War on Drugs, a thinly disguised War on Black people, identifies Black people as the enemy of the state. Thus, when they are killed by police officers, or their surrogates, the violence is not only condoned, it is in fact a matter of doing one's job, similar to the work that US soldiers do when they kill enemy combatants in a war zone. As long as the killing complied with the "rules of engagement" it is legal and soldiers are not tried for homicide. Similarly, when police officers kill unarmed Black people who *they* perceive as threats to the state, they are simply doing their jobs. They are not tried for homicide nor are they held accountable in any meaningful way (author citation).

Similarly, across the first 300 plus year history of the United States, IPV can be understood as a form of state sanctioned violence (Trent, 1979; author citations). Much like the soldier or the police officer engages in state-sanctioned violence in order to protect the citizenry, husbands were charged with not only the care and support of their wives, but also with ensuring that they

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behaved "properly." As such, it was legal for men to "discipline" their wives, even if this included or required physical violence. In contrast, if women were found to have engaged in violence against their husbands, it was deemed an act of treason. Men were not only full-citizens, but they were also deputized as agents of the state charged with controlling the women in their charge.

We argue that coercive violence can also be perpetrated and experienced as an extension of state violence. For example, in the previous illustration, it is the arcane drug laws and habitual felon statutes that put the abuser at risk for serving a long prison sentence, possibly for life. Under the duress of the state, he then exposes his partner to coercive violence in order to escape the violence the state will perpetrate on him.

Institution		Coercive Threats	Coercive Violence
Health Care	Forcing a woman to complete an unwanted pregnancy	Partner threatens to leave her if she terminates the pregnancy	Partner refuses to drive her to an abortion clinic or there is no abortion clinic near where she lives and she seeks an "underground"

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			abortion or attempts a self-abortion
Criminal Legal System	Forcing a woman to take the rap for her partner's drugs during a traffic stop	Partner threatens to beat her up if she doesn't say that the drugs are hers	Her partner reminds her that if he gets caught with drugs he will violate his parole and go back to prison or be sentenced under habitual felon laws. She takes the rap to save him from criminal legal system vis-a-vis her own incarceration
Criminalization of welfare	Welfare fraud	Her partner threatens that if she doesn't come home from the store with beer or cigarettes, which are not SNAP eligible, he will beat her up	Her partner knows that she may misused SNAP benefits and turns her in, thus subjecting her to the violence of a welfare prosecution

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Child welfare system	Child custody	Her partner threatens to kill her if she sues for custody of their shared children	Her partner turns her into child protective services (CPS) and exposes her to an investigation and the possibility of losing custody of her children or even her parental rights
Immigration	Separation or divorce	Her partner threatens to kill her if she leaves him	Her partner turns her into immigration officers where she faces the risk of detention and deportation

Modes of state surveillance

The state functions as both an instigator of violence but also as a surveiller of citizens. Here we argue that not only does the state perform surveillance, but the surveillance is almost exclusively harnessed on the marginalized, women, people of color and the poor.

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When citizens in the United States engage or are required to engage with the criminal legal system, the child welfare system, or any social safety net program, one condition of their engagement often requires that they make themselves "available" for surveillance. Here we consider several forms of institutional surveillance and their potential for providing abusers opportunities to expose their partners to coercive violence.

The health care system.

In addition to the example we already provided regarding COVID-19 safety protocols, perpetrators can also engage in coercive violence using the health care system in other ways as well (Kaukienen, 2020). For example, in the case of an unwanted pregnancy, an abuser may engage in *coercive tactics* by threatening to beat up his partner or kill himself if she terminates a pregnancy. But, if he refuses to drive her to an abortion clinic and thereby forces her to either complete an unwanted pregnancy or seek a back-alley abortion, both of which expose her reproductive body to violence, he has engaged in *coercive violence*.

What distinguishes coercion from coercive violence in this example are the actions by the abuser that expose his partner to either unsafe or unusually restrictive health care providers.

Low income and poor people often rely on medicaid in order to access the health care and medical services. Extant literature (citations Roberts,1997; Angela Davis, 1983) documents the ways in which low-income and poor women who rely on medicaid are subjected to not only

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surveillance but violence. For example, during most of the twentieth century, many state colleges of obstetrics and gynecology advised physicians that when pregnant women on "welfare" arrived at the emergency room to deliver their babies, especially if this was not their first child, the physician should strongly encourage women to "consent," while in labor and prior to the birth of their child, to a tubal ligation to be performed during the delivery. Forced sterilization is a form of state sanctioned sexual violence. Similarly, despite the fact that Roe v Wade legalized abortion, in many states laws have been passed that severely limit access to abortion and many poor women have no other option to terminate a pregnancy than the closest planned parenthood, which may not even be in the state in which they live; data indicate that 80% of women live more than 100 miles from an abortion provider (Kizinger, et al., 2020). Forcing a woman to carry an unwanted pregnancy to term--either by outlawing abortion in the statey where she lives or closing abortion providers near her, as well as requiring her to "consent" to a sterilization process before delivering her baby---are examples of state sanctioned violence. This state sanctioned violence becomes coercive violence in two ways. First, because access to labor and delivery services as well as abortion services are not restricted only to those women who rely on state health care systems. Women with private or employee provided health insurance are often free to access these services without the surveillance of the state. Those women subjected to the surveillance of the state are often coerced into or denied the health care treatment they need, especially reproductive health care, and this constitutes coercive violence.

Given the violence that state health systems perpetrate on women's reproductive bodies, abusers also engage in coercive violence when they force their partners to be exposed to these state systems. Abusive partners may refuse to cover their partners on their health insurance, for

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example, or refuse to legally marry them, or refuse to allow them to work, each of these actions forces women to rely on medicare and other state health systems which expose them to state violence.

Welfare programs.

Again, extant literature exposes the ways in which welfare programs that include Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) and SNAP (or food stamps) surveille the low-income and poor women that utilize them (Headworth, 2020; Kohler-Haussman, 2007; Richie, 2012). For example, one of the authors taught a student in her classes who was utilizing TANF as a strategy for escaping an abusive relationship. As part of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act that "reformed" welfare, signed into law by then President Bill Clinton, TANF limited receipt to no more than two years. This student, who was less than 6 months from completing her bachelor's degree received a letter informing her that she would no longer be eligible for TANF if she continued to pursue her BA but that she could retain her benefits by transferring to an associate degree program or licensing program like cosmetology. The "rationale" was that because a BA takes four years, on average, to complete, students in BA programs, regardless of their time to completion, were no longer eligible for TANF. This kind of surveillance is routine. And, we argue, it functions as a form of educational violence. (It also doesn't make any sense.) Another example is that of "period poverty." Because SNAP benefits restrict beneficiaries from purchasing feminine hygiene products, many low-income and poor women find that they have no way of paying for or legally obtaining these products. This is, without a doubt, another form of reproductive violence. Not only is "managing" a period without appropriate products a from of

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reproductive and sexual violence, but in interviews conducted with formerly incarcerated women, they reported that they were sentenced to serve time in jail on theft charges after they stole feminine hygiene products they could not afford to buy, which were not covered by their SNAP benefits (Wayland 2019). In short, the policies that regulate poor women's access to feminine products subject them to the violence of the criminal legal system. Period poverty becomes period violence.

An abuser may also perpetrate both coercive tactics and coercive violence vis-a-vis the welfare system. For example, he might threaten to beat his partner if she doesn't come home with cigarettes or toilet paper, neither of which can be purchased with SNAP benefits, which would constitute an act of coercion. In contrast, refusing to allow her to take birth control pills or throwing the pills away, which she needs in order to manage and reduce her monthly flow or refusing to allow her to receive a donated diva cup, thus exposing her to period poverty, a form of reproductive violence, is an example of coercive violence. Specifically, she may, as women interviewed by Wayland (2019) report, be forced to steal feminine hygiene products necessary to manage her monthly cycle.

Abusers also engage in coercive violence by keeping their partners dependent on welfare. They do this by utilizing a variety of coercive tactics that undermine her ability to maintain long term work. For example, an abuser will argue with his partner all night long, preventing her from getting any sleep, and forcing her to call in sick and miss work the next day. If the abuser engages in this kind of behavior even just a few days a month it may result in the victim/survivor losing her job for absenteeism and thereby leaving her with no choice but to cycle on and off

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welfare intermittently. In another example, women who rely on welfare as a strategy for leaving a violent relationship may find that once they leave the abusive relationship that they, again, cycle on and off welfare as they get settled into a shelter and ultimately into a new life. In both of these examples, the cycling on and off of welfare has the potential to create an overlap in benefits, which, under the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, allows the state to charge welfare recipients with fraud if their overlap in benefits is determined to be illegal or if they are not able to payback benefits they received during periods when they were employed, no matter how temporary (Kohler-Hausmann, 2007). Repeated over and over again, these coercive tactics create a "cycling" of welfare receipt and overlapping benefits. Abusers who are aware of the cycling that creates these overlapping benefits may call social services and report their partners for welfare fraud, potentially subjecting them to criminal prosecution, which is yet another form of coercive violence. In another example, an abuser may steal his partner's meager savings, which she has planned to use to pay back her benefits once she is again employed. This act of financial abuse becomes a form of coercive violence when as a result of his stealing, she finds herself unable to pay back benefits and facing prosecution for welfare fraud.

Further, surveillance tactics enacted by the state include administrators/investigators who enlist neighbors and others close to the victim/survivor in their investigations to gain information to ascertain whether she is living with her partner, and/or violating occupancy rules by having the partner spend the night at her home and how often (Headworth, 2019; 2020). This policing mechanism can become weaponized by abusive partners to punish their partner and subject them to prosecution by the state, even if the partner is not currently living with the victim. This forces the woman to defend herself against the state and charges of welfare fraud. In this way, policing

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welfare fraud becomes an act of coercive violence by exposing her to the criminal legal system, potential prosecution and loss of benefits.

The child welfare system.

As Dorothy Roberts (1997) argues, the history of Black women's sexual and reproductive bodies has located power in the wombs of Black women. Roberts argues that during the 200 plus years of enslavement, Black women's bodies produced billions of dollars of wealth in the form of more bodies to enslave. Therefore, Black women's reproductive bodies required surveillance and policing. During the first half of the 20th century, the concern shifted from encouraging the Black womb to reproduce enslaved labor, to sterilizing the Black womb so that it could not reproduce "unfit" bodies. Under the guise of eugenics, tens of thousands of Black girls and women were forcibly sterilized or sterilized without their consent. By the 1980s, when it was no longer acceptable to engage in eugenics, another strategy needed to be developed to surveill and control Black women's wombs; and the child welfare system that Dorothy Roberts describes did just that. Black women's sexual and reproductive bodies were constructed as needing control and when they couldn't be controlled, the focus turned to controlling the children born of these wombs. As Roberts details, 50% of all Black children have at least one touch by the child welfare system, not because Black mothers are bad mothers, but because they are disproportionately likely to be poor, and they are referred to child welfare or child protective services by teachers, health care providers, or even neighbors who are concerned about the child's welfare. Roberts argues that rather than seeing child welfare as a condition of poverty it becomes defined as a condition of Black motherhood. As a result, Black mothers are under

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increased surveillance, as compared to their white counterparts, regardless of their social class. Increased surveillance leads to increased "touches" by the child welfare system, and ultimately it leads to disproportionate rates of Black children being in foster care. According to the report *The State of America's Children*, Black children are twice as likely to be in foster care as their representation in the US population (Childrens' Defense Fund 2020).

Abusers can take advantage of the hegemonic ideology that Black mothers are bad mothers by threatening to take their children away from them. Threats to take her child away or sue for custody if, for example, she tries to leave her abuser, is an act of coercion. In contrast, abusers who threaten to call CPS and expose the mother and her children to the child welfare system is an act of coercive violence; she may lose her children, at least temporarily, to a foster care system that is not designed for her children to thrive. Once referred to the child welfare system, she will be under more intense surveillance, she may have to endure home visits by a social worker, she may have to attend parenting classes, she may risk losing custody of her children (Hester, 2011; Khaw et al, 2021). Exposure to the child welfare system is an example of coercive violence.

Furthermore, when abusers report their partners or ex-partners to social service or child protective services, the perception is that the abuser has done nothing wrong, in fact, he's done the right thing by reporting a potential case of child abuse or welfare fraud. The victim/survivor not only can't blame her partner, but she may have feelings of having been complicit in the behavior that he not only reported, but that exposed her to state surveillance. This phenomenon

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can be conceptualized as the ultimate form of coercive violence: convincing a victim/survivor that she is to blame for her own predicament.

Criminal-legal system.

Of all demographic groups in the United States, Black men are by far the most over-policed by the criminal-legal system. One third of Black men will spend some time in jail or prison, and if they are poor and uneducated the rates are even higher; 70% of Black men without a high school degree will go to jail or prison in their lifetimes. Managing their criminal legal involvement can become a full-time job for the partners of Black men. Elsewhere (author) explores the emotion work that the partners of Black men with criminal legal involvement perform in attempts to keep their relationships intact (author, 2021). Here we focus on the ways in which criminal legal involvement can produce conditions for coercive violence.

Hyper Surveillance.

In addition to incarceration, which poses challenges to intimate relationships, even more common, Black men experience surveillance and control by the criminal legal system that takes place outside of prison, including while they are parole, probation and electronic monitoring or e-carceration. In many ways, it is these prisons outside of prisons that pose the greatest risk for coercive violence. When one is under the supervision and surveillance of the criminal legal system one is at risk for being sent or returned to jail or prison. The threat that one may be (re) incarcerated can be extremely stressful and can put intense pressure on intimate relationships

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(author). For example, an individual on e-carceration may be subjected to random drug tests or phone calls that confirm the person is where they are supposed to be. Schenwar (2015) describes a scenario in which an individual on house arrest may be required to answer a phone call to their home landline phone on the first ring. Failure to do so will result in police officers being sent to confirm their location. This type of 24/7 surveillance is highly stressful not only for the individual on e-carceration, but for their entire family and household. Similarly, people on probation for drug charges may be required to submit to random drug tests. Knowing that an officer of the court can come to your home any time, day or night, 24/7 to collect urine or blood for a drug test can be stressful. And, if one "fails" a drug test, they will be immediately remanded back into state custody. The stakes are high, especially for someone facing a third felony drug conviction and the possibility of a long, perhaps even a life sentence, under the habitual felon or Three Strikes You're Out laws.

Victims are often coerced into engaging in illegal activity by their abusive partners. One woman (author) interviewed recounted her experience with coercive violence. On one occasion, Stella was driving because her partner Will's license had been suspended as a part of his sentence on a drug possession conviction. Will had a bag of crack in the car when they were pulled over by the police. Will threw the bag at Stella saying "Tell the cop the drugs are yours or you know what will happen, I'll go back to jail. We don't want that, do we?" When the police officers approached the car they simply informed Stella that her tail light was out, gave her warning, and she never had to submit to Will's request. A coercive threat would have been if Will had threatened to beat Stella up if she refused to say the drugs were hers. Rather than threatening her with harm, Will simply demanded that Stella take responsibility for the drugs which had the

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potential to expose Stella to incarceration, which is a form of state violence. Thus, Will's behavior in this instance was more than a threat, it was an act of coercive violence.

For LGBTQ+ victims of IPV, using threats to "out" their partner to those that are not aware of their sexuality is a *coercive tactic* abusers employ. Crimes of survival, such as sex work are often used by victims of all different sexual identities. However, as a result of widespread discrimination and stigma, trans people are often locked out of engaging in work that has been normalized within our society and pushed into marginalized and criminalized work, such as sex work (Nadal, Dacidoff & Fuji-Doe, 2014; U.S. Transgender Survey, 2015). The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey reports that 19 percent of all trans people, and 47 percent of black trans women, have engaged in sex work (U.S. Transgender Survey, 2015). If a trans person is engaging in sex work and their abusive partner threatens to call the police on them and "out" them as a sex worker, this is an exampe of harnessing the *coercive violence* of the state. This is a subtle but important difference. "Outing" a partner's sexuality is an act of coercion, calling the police on one's partner to report that they are engaged in illegal activity, which may lead to their arrest and their exposure to the criminal legal system is an act of coercive violence.

Undocumented victims of IPV are often afraid to call the police when they are experiencing abuse for fear of deportation, of themselves and for their partners, and also for fears of losing their children to the state. Research shows that abusive partners will use the victim's undocumented status as a coercive tactic to maintain control over their partner; he may threaten to tell the victim's employer that she is undocumented to get her to fired and comply with his dictates (Women's Law.org, 2021). However, if, instead, the abuser calls ICE and reports his

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partner or ex-partner's immigration status, knowing that she will be detained and possibly deported, this is an example of coercive violence. Her arrest and detention exposes her to the criminal legal system and her deportation exposes her to the power of the state, both of which constitute coercive violence.

Implications

The implications of our argument are significant in several key ways. First, and perhaps most important, by distinguishing between coercive behavior and coercive violence we have identified and articulated a new form of IPV. Second, our argument focuses attention not on the individual behavior of abusive men, but moresoe on the ways in which they engage in a form of violence that exposes their partners to state surveillance and state violence, including the welfare system and the criminal legal system. Coercive violence is particularly dangerous for victim/survivors of IPV because, among other things, it further removes their ability to control the situation. Even when abusive men engage in severe forms of IPV, including near lethal violence, severe emotional abuse, and rape, victim/survivors can often find some ways to control the situation. They can call the police, which may interrupt the violence, especially if the abuser is arrested. They can run away. Some victim/survivors we've talked with and cases we examined describe controlling the violence by triggering it. As the cycle of violence develops and the tensions build, a victim/survivor may choose to engage in a behavior she knows will trigger the outburst before it becomes more serious, or when she knows someone will be coming over who can help her, or because she knows he has an obligation and will have to leave soon after the beating. All of these

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strategies are examples of agency for victim/survivors. In cases of coercive violence, victim/survivors lose agency. Now under the surveillance and control of a state system, they are revictimized by the very state that is supposed to protect them. And, more often than not, as we have demonstrated, the state systems that are, in theory, designed to help people, especially the most marginalized and vulnerable, are instead weaponized against them. Not only are victim/survivors further victimized by the state, but the state "intervention" often re-ignites the cycle of violence victim/survivors are working so desperately to escape. How? By leaving them with no other option than to return to their abusive partner. Facing deportation, a victim/survivor may marry her abuser in order to stay in the United States. Facing another night in jail, a victim/survivor may call her abuser in order to bail her out of jail. In short, coercive violence not only harms victim/survivors but it returns enormous power to the abuser, far more power than other forms of IPV.

Our argument advances our understanding of the ways in which systems of oppression, including patriarchy, white supremacy, and modern capitalism are *inherently violent* as others have documented (Combahee River Collective, 2015; Hill Collins 2016; Gillespie, 2006; Koepke, 2007) by demonstrating the violence that state systems built on systems of oppression, can be deployed against individual actors, in this case by contributing to and perpetuating IPV.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In sum, we have argued for defining and naming a new form of intimate partner violence. Specifically, we distinguish between coercive threats and coercive violence. Coercion, it has

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been well documented, predominates in violent relationships. Coercion is literally at the center of the power and control wheel. We argue here that a new form of violence needs to be recognized: coercive violence. Rather than simply a tactic or strategy for facilitating other forms of violence, including emotional, psychological, financial and even physical and sexual abuse, coercive violence involves deliberately exposing his partner to violence that is perpetrated by instutions or the state. Coercive violence, as compared to coercive control, relieves the abuser of having to engage in the violence himself, rather through his actions, he deliberately exposes his partner to institutional and state systems where she experiences violence. Examples can include exposing her to the potential for contracting serious diseases, including COVID, reproductive violence, as well as state violence experienced through exposure to the criminal legal system and the welfare state. Vulnerability to coercive violence is, like all forms of intimate partner violence, intersectional, with certain populations being at significantly greater risk, including Black and Native American women, poor women, immigrants, and people who identify in the LGBTQ+ communities. Because coercive violence is perpetrated by institutions and the state, rather than individuals, coercive violence can and often does have long-term, even lifetime, implications for the victim/survivors who experience it. Whereas the bruises of physical abuse will eventually heal and the memories of the name-calling of emotional abuse may fade, the impact of criminal legal involvement or the surveillance of the welfare system may follow women for the rest of their lives, impacting their abilities to obtain employment, receive welfare benefits, or retain custody of their children. For immigrant women, the consequences may involve deportation, never able to return to their families and the lives they built in the United States.

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Recommendations for ameliorating coercive violence demand radical, systemic change rather than reform. For example, calls to decriminalize less serious forms of IPV will not address coercive IPV. Rather, the systems themselves must be dismantled. Specifically, the carceral state and the welfare state, as they are constructed in the United States, must be dismantled and reconfigured. If we dismantled the carceral state and reserved incarceration for the very small number of violent offenders who threaten public safety, rather than locking up nearly half a million people on low level drug offenses, abusers, no longer facing life sentences for drug possession would no longer have any incentive to force their partners to "take the rap" for a bag of crack during a traffic stop. In fact, there would be no more traffic stops, because as we (author citation) and others (Balko 2013) have argued, traffic violations could be handled through a combination of traffic cameras and a brigade of unarmed "meter maids." If laws like Title IX and Title VII were passed to protect trans people from job and housing discrimination, trans folk would be far less likely to be engaged in sex work and other aspects of the illegitimate economy, which would not only reduce their exposure to the criminal legal system, but it would remove their partner's power to engage in coercive violence by "outing" or turning them into the police for their involvement in sex work. If the welfare system were dismantled and rebuilt around support and trust for people seeking assistance rather than assuming they are simply trying to cheat the system, we can imagine there would be "checks and balances" but not the need for the kind of invasive and persistent surveillance that people using the system currently experience. If the welfare system were transformed, it would, as with the other institutions, remove a tool in the abuser's toolkit. There would be no reason to unnecessarily call child protective services or in any other way subject a victim/survivor to the state surveillance of an agency.

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