

WHAT MAKES CONTROL COERCIVE?

BY

KIMBERLY A. CROSSMAN

DISSERTATION

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Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Jennifer L. Hardesty, Director of Research & Chair
Professor Marcela Raffaelli
Professor Ramona F. Oswald
Emeritus Professor Michael P. Johnson, Pennsylvania State University

Abstract

The construct coercive control is central to making distinctions between Johnson's (2008) types of intimate partner violence. Prior research has involved examining coercive control in conjunction with physical violence, rather than on its own. Thus, it remains unknown whether and how coercive control can be disentangled from physical violence and its effects. Furthermore, there is a lack of clarity in how to distinguish control that is coercive from control dynamics that are a part of all relationships. The present study used grounded theory methods to develop a theoretical explanation of the processes of control in intimate relationships and what makes control coercive. Data collection consisted of in-depth interviews with mothers regarding their experiences of coercive control and intimate partner violence during marriage and after separation. "Felt or experienced constraint" was the theoretical category identified as central to the process of control, but two distinct patterns were involved in producing this phenomenon. The first pattern, *constraint through commitment*, involved a process of being constrained by oneself or one's partner to uphold cultural conventions of heterosexual marriage and parenting. The second pattern, *constraint through force*, involved a process of being controlled in a targeted and systematic way by one's partner. Study findings reveal important variations in control processes, namely differences between control that is and is not coercive, and provide an understanding of control that is not contingent on physical violence. Increased knowledge gained from this study can inform measurement development for assessing coercive control and be applied to healthcare and legal interventions to address diverse experiences of control and violence.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV) refers to physical and/or sexual assault of a current or former partner (Campbell & Boyd, 2000). IPV is a major public health problem in the United States. About 1 in every 4 women experiences IPV in her lifetime (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008), and an estimated 1,300 women are murdered by intimate partners each year (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007). Further, approximately 2 million injuries to women by intimate partners are reported every year (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007) along with numerous mental and physical health consequences (e.g., posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, substance abuse, chronic pain; Basile & Black, 2011). In the last decade, violence researchers have focused increasingly on understanding and distinguishing contexts of violence, namely whether violence occurs in a context of coercive control or situational conflict. Indeed, studies indicate that the risks and consequences associated with IPV tend to be greater for women when violence is used in a context of coercive control (Ansara & Hindin, 2010; Campbell et al., 2003; Johnson & Leone, 2005; Johnson, Leone, & Xu, 2014).

Coercive control refers to the use of nonviolent tactics (e.g., intimidation, isolation) aimed at maintaining dominance over one's partner (Johnson, 2008; Stark, 2007). Coercive control is central to making distinctions between Johnson's (2008) two main types of violence: coercive controlling violence and situational couple violence. According to Johnson (2008), coercive controlling violence is motivated by one partner's overarching desire for power and dominance over the other partner's life. In contrast, situational couple violence occurs in the context of specific situations that escalate to one or both partners using violence but lacks a larger motive to assert or maintain dominance over a partner. Coercive controlling violence is considered a gendered phenomenon. Men are more likely than women to be perpetrators of coercive controlling violence (Ansara & Hindin, 2010; Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003; Johnson, 2006; Johnson, Leone, & Xu, 2008; Laroche, 2005), and, in IPV studies, men's patriarchal attitudes towards women have been associated with their perpetration of coercive controlling violence (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003; Johnson, 2006; Sugarman & Frankel, 1996). Furthermore, compared to situational couple violence, coercive controlling violence tends to be more severe, frequent, and injurious, resulting in more serious short and long-term consequences for women. Thus, it is critical that IPV researchers continue to recognize and distinguish types of IPV to advance research and effective practice.

Despite significant progress in understanding different types of IPV, less is known about the construct of coercive control itself (Dutton & Goodman, 2005). Indeed, studies often examine coercive control and physical violence concurrently or consider coercive control within a broader framework of other forms of nonphysical abuse (e.g., verbal abuse). Thus, existing work has left unclear whether and how coercive control itself is abusive and/or gendered (Crossman, Hardesty, & Raffaelli, in press; Dutton & Goodman, 2005). Furthermore, it remains uncertain how the processes of control that are considered

coercive (i.e., aimed at restricting a partner's freedom and autonomy) differ from other power and control dynamics in intimate relationships (e.g., conflict dynamics, unrealistic role expectations, gendered ideologies, or attempts at self-preservation; Babcock, Waltz, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1993; Corrales, 1975; Gray-Little & Burks, 1983; Lindahl & Malik, 1999; Xu & Burleson, 2001). To address these gaps in the literature, the present study sought to generate a grounded theoretical explanation of the processes of control in intimate relationships and what makes control coercive.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks

Despite empirical and theoretical advances in research on intimate partner violence (IPV) over the past several decades, there remains no universal definition of IPV (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2011). Broad definitions of IPV that include physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse have been criticized for including “everything but the kitchen sink,” while narrow definitions that include only physical and sexual assault have been criticized for minimizing the experience and effects of nonphysical forms of abuse (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2011, p. 7). Definitional concerns, in part, grew out of measurement issues in the field. For example, factor analysis and principal components methods have been used to create definitions of IPV from measures that tap into discrete acts with no consideration for context (Follingstad, 2007). Thus, definitions of IPV often contain a list of acts that, even when considered together, do not fully capture such a complex phenomenon. Further, researchers’ choice of measure for empirical work often depends on their theoretical approach to IPV, influencing the kinds of data they gather and creating a feedback loop into current definitional and methodological dilemmas that continue to confound our understanding of IPV.

Johnson’s Typology of Domestic Violence

To address these methodological issues, Johnson (2008), a leading scholar in the IPV field, emphasizes the need to distinguish among four types of IPV based upon the context in which the violence occurs: situational couple violence (i.e., violence that occurs in the context of conflict), coercive controlling violence (i.e., violence that is used as one tactic, among many, to control one’s partner; also called intimate terrorism), violent resistance (i.e., violence used to resist coercive controlling violence) and mutual violent control (i.e., coercive controlling violence perpetrated by both partners in a relationship). Researchers have focused primarily on distinguishing between the two most common types of IPV: situational couple violence and coercive controlling violence (Johnson, 2008). Importantly, these two types of IPV are qualitatively different, and distinctions between them are made based upon the context within which the violence occurs. Situational couple violence occurs in the context of conflict, where an argument may escalate to the point that one (or both) partner uses violence as a means of conflict resolution. Coercive controlling violence, on the other hand, involves a pattern of coercive control tactics, including physical violence, which is used to create a foundation for one partner to exert and maintain power over another partner that becomes a pervasive part of the relationship (Johnson, 2008).

Johnson’s (2008) typology was groundbreaking in IPV research because it helped explain apparent discrepancies in findings. For example, some studies have found that men are primarily the perpetrators of IPV and women are most often the victims (e.g., Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly, 1992), while others have found that women are just as violent if not more violent than men (Straus, 1999).

Although these findings appear contradictory, Johnson's typology provides an explanation for the incongruity. Specifically, when distinctions are made by type of violence, researchers find that coercive controlling violence in heterosexual relationships is perpetrated primarily by men (89% - 97% of coercive controlling violence incidences) while situational couple violence is perpetrated by both men (55% - 56% of situational couple violence incidences) and women (44% - 45% of situational couple violence incidences; Johnson, 2008). Distinctions also help explain differences in the consequences of IPV: coercive controlling violence tends to be more frequent, severe, and injurious than situational couple violence (although situational couple violence can, at times, be severe; e.g., Johnson, Leone, & Xu, 2008) and is associated with numerous negative psychological consequences, including depression (e.g., Anderson, 2008), posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD; e.g., Johnson & Leone, 2005), low self-esteem (Sackett & Saunders, 1999), intense fear (Sackett & Saunders, 1999), and a sense of losing one's identity (Johnson, 2008). Compared to situational couple violence, coercive controlling violence also is associated with more risk for ongoing and increased violence, lethality, and intrusion after separation (Ansara & Hindin, 2010; Campbell et al., 2003; Johnson, 2008; Ornstein & Rickne, 2013).

Johnson's work also advanced IPV research by demonstrating how biased sampling procedures and response rates contribute to discrepancies in research findings. Johnson explains that coercive controlling violence is more often found in agency samples (i.e., samples from shelters, hospitals, court records, police) because women in relationships characterized by coercive controlling violence are more likely to be seriously injured and need these services than women in relationships characterized by situational couple violence. Because coercive controlling violence tends to be chronic and pervasive, these women may also be more likely to seek help from a variety of services in comparison to situational couple violence in which violence tends to be more isolated or sporadic. In contrast to coercive controlling violence, women who experience situational couple violence are more often identified in studies involving general or random samples (i.e., survey research using community samples; Johnson, 2005). Women who experience coercive controlling violence are less likely to participate in general survey research, perhaps due to fear of their partner discovering their participation (Johnson, 2008; Waltermaurer, Ortega, & McNutt, 2003). Thus, general survey research on IPV has been dominated by cases of situational couple violence (Johnson, 2008).

Coercive control is central to making distinctions between situational couple and coercive controlling violence. How to conceptualize and measure coercive control as a construct separate from physical violence, however, remains unclear and challenging (Dutton & Goodman, 2005). Indeed, inconsistent methods have been used to measure coercive control in research (see Hardesty et al., in press), and practitioners, attorneys, and police report difficulty assessing coercive control for the purposes of identifying types of IPV when working with and on behalf of survivors (e.g., Dunn, 2002). As a result,

scholarly and applied efforts remain thwarted by the lack of a clear conceptual and methodological understanding of the construct of coercive control.

What Makes Control Coercive?

Coercive control involves nonviolent tactics, such as harassment, intimidation, and monitoring of one's time and activities, used to exert and maintain dominance over one's partner (Johnson, 2008; Stark, 2007). Historically, studies have conceptualized the use and effectiveness of coercive control in heterosexual relationships as contingent on physical violence (Johnson, 2008). Thus, most researchers have examined violence only or violence and coercive control concurrently. Studies have demonstrated, however, that a pattern of coercive controlling behaviors can precede, motivate, or increase the likelihood of physical violence in intimate relationships (Antai, 2011; Follingstad, Bradley, Helff, & Laughlin, 2002; Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2008; Murphy & O'Leary, 1989; O'Leary, Malone, & Tyree, 1994; Robertson & Murachver, 2011; Rouse, 1990; Tanha, Beck, Figueredo, & Raghavan, 2010; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000) and that the dynamics and consequences of coercive control alone (i.e., without any physical violence) appear similar to the dynamics and consequences of coercive control with violence (Coker, Smith, McKeown, & King, 2000; Crossman, et al., in press). Similarly, Dutton, Goodman, and Bennett (1999) found that adverse mental health consequences of IPV were independently associated with coercive controlling behaviors and dominance as well as emotional and verbal abuse after controlling for physical violence. These findings suggest that coercive control, even without physical violence, warrants further study.

According to Johnson (2008), "Control is a continuum. Everyone 'controls' their partner to some extent" (p. 87). Power, dominance, and control dynamics have long been considered important and necessary aspects of all relationships, and especially so for intimate relationships because partners depend on each other to meet their goals (Amaro, 1995; Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005; Jacobson, 1989; McDonald, 1980; Olson & Cromwell, 1975). Theorists argue that power, dominance, control, and even manipulation, are not inherently malicious (e.g., Buss, Gomes, Higgins, & Lauterbach, 1987; Dunbar, 2004), but can become so when partners' goals conflict (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005; McDonald, 1980; Rollins & Bahr, 1976). For example, spouses are more likely to complain, criticize, put down, ignore, or coerce their partner when they are dissatisfied in their marriage, particularly if their needs and goals are not being met (Aida & Falbo, 1991; Lindahl & Malik, 1999). It remains unclear, however, what makes power struggles and control dynamics coercive.

Stark (2007) and Dutton and Goodman (2005) have developed definitions of coercive control based on prior research and clinical work that help to illuminate how coercive control differs from other common relationship issues. Stark (2007) defines coercion as "the use of force or threats to compel or dispel a particular response" (p. 228) and control as "structural forms of deprivation, exploitation, and

command that compel obedience indirectly by monopolizing a partner's behavior, limiting her options, and depriving her of supports needed to exercise independent judgment" (p. 229). When coercion and control occur together, the result is a "condition of unfreedom" (p. 205) or entrapment. Stark (2007) further argues that coercive control is a gendered phenomenon targeted at women and made possible by the historical and ongoing oppression of women. According to Stark (2007), its gendered nature distinguishes control that is coercive from short-term control attempts enacted in the midst of conflict or a power struggle.

Dutton and Goodman (2005) define coercion as "a dynamic process linking a demand with a credible threatened negative consequence for noncompliance" (p. 746-767). They posit that coercive demands are explicit or implicit communications and expectations that require compliance or result in negative consequences (e.g., opportunity costs, physical violence, humiliation) with noncompliance. Importantly, determining whether demands are coercive and threats are credible is contextually dependent. As Jasinski, Blumenstein, and Morgan (2014) illustrate:

[A] husband could state that his wife tries to limit his contact with his friends (because his friends are drug addicts), whereas a wife might also say that her husband prevents her from similar contact (so that she cannot confide to anyone that she is being abused). Both would be counted as acts of control although the two situations obviously differ. The crucial element to consider is how much power does each partner bring to the relationship to turn those acts from annoyances into actual coercion? In other words, which partner is actually able to maintain and enforce her or his control (Dutton & Goodman, 2005, p. 85)?

These conceptualizations bring coercive control to the center of examining the gendered and patterned nature, process, and consequences of coercive controlling violence. Dutton and Goodman (2005) enrich current understandings of coercive control by defining what makes control coercive; however, the criteria rely on social norms regarding whether or not particular controlling behaviors are considered socially acceptable. In extreme cases of coercive controlling violence, controlling behaviors are clearly unacceptable and coercive to outsiders (e.g., forbidding her from leaving the home without him). In other cases, however, the boundary between socially acceptable and unacceptable behavior is less clear. For example, Dutton and Goodman's framework may overlook subtle nuances in coercive controlling behaviors or prosocial and positive behaviors that are *misused* by manipulative abusers (e.g., showing up at her home unannounced, calling her at work). Indeed, researchers and clinicians have documented neutral or positive behaviors that convey a "subtle warning only understood by the victim" (Stark, 2009, p. 293) but appear harmless or even charming and desired to outsiders. By framing coercive control as gendered, Stark (2006) explains the social context within which coercion is made possible;

however, Stark does not explain how gendered behaviors become coercive. Indeed, as Dutton and Goodman (2005) posit, a gendered demand is only coercive if it is linked to a credible threat. Thus, not all demands that are gendered are also coercive. In sum, these frameworks offer a useful foundation for understanding coercive control, but further research and refinement are needed.

A clearer conceptualization of coercive control can inform safety planning, counseling interventions, and batterer treatments as well as assist legal professionals in making informed decisions about IPV perpetration, victimization, and victim safety (Dutton & Goodman, 2005). Assessment tools or screening measures (e.g., Abuse Assessment Screen; McFarlane, Parker, Soeken, & Bullock, 1992) currently used in healthcare, legal, and other practice-oriented settings focus primarily on acts of physical violence with less attention to the context of physical violence. Indeed, tools to screen for coercive control in practice settings have not been developed. As a result, women may experience challenges trying to locate community resources and support for managing coercive controlling behaviors, especially if these behaviors are not accompanied by physical violence. Current assessment tools that focus on physical violence also may prevent service providers from recognizing or acknowledging the risks and consequences associated with coercive control.

Limited understanding of coercive control may also impact women's degree of social support, particularly when physical violence has not occurred or is less severe. Influenced by social definitions of abuse that focus on physical violence, friends and family members may not validate a woman's need for help if they do not recognize coercive controlling behaviors alone as abusive. That these behaviors may appear harmless or even charming adds to the difficulties friends, family members, and even practitioners, face in recognizing them as abusive (Stark, 2009, p. 293). Women themselves may not acknowledge coercive controlling behaviors as abusive or seek help, in part due to the social issues described but also due to restricted contact with outsiders and self-blame. For instance, a woman may not believe that calling the police for help is justified if her partner has neither physically assaulted nor physically injured her. Or she may not believe she deserves help because she blames herself for his actions.

The legal realm presents similar challenges. For instance, women may have limited access to legal protections or have little way of proving in court that they are a victim of coercive control if there has been no physical violence. Indeed, the model policy for police response to abuse against women mandates screening for physical abuse, sexual abuse, and psychological abuse but not coercive control (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2006). Thus, legal professionals (e.g., judges, child custody evaluators) may deny or dismiss the relevance of coercive controlling behaviors, for example in protective order hearings or child custody cases, giving women little recourse from services designed to protect abuse victims (Hardesty, Hans, Haselschwerdt, Khaw, & Crossman, in press).

As this review indicates, more theoretical and empirical work is needed to advance and refine our conceptual understanding of coercive control. The current study sought to address this need. Two theoretical frameworks served as useful guides in this endeavor: 1) Raven's (1993) theory on how individuals obtain, maintain, and exert social power, and 2) Connell's (2009) theory on the ways in which gender influences everyday life.

Theoretical Frameworks

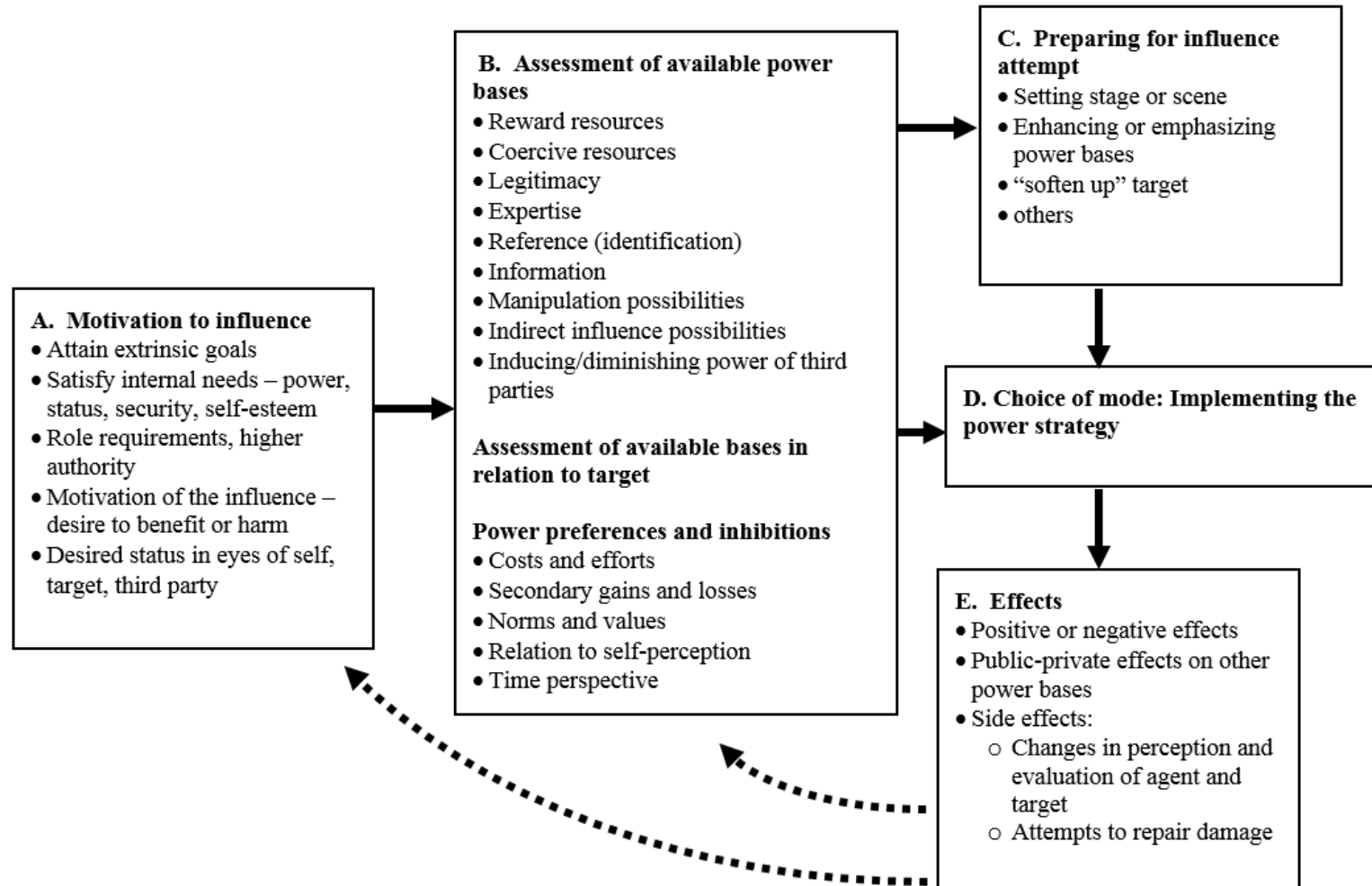
Social Power Theory

Social power is defined as “potential influence,” or the ability for one person (the “agent”) to change another person's (the “target”) beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors (Raven 2008, p. 1). Raven's (1993) Social Power Model (also known as the Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence) is widely used by contemporary scholars (see Figure 1), and offers a comprehensive, contextual framework that describes the bases of power (i.e., the agent's ability to control), the agent's motives to influence, the processes of power (i.e., preparation strategies and mode of choice), and the effects of influence (i.e., direct outcomes and side effects). This model has been widely used as a conceptual tool for studies on social influence in sexual interactions (e.g., Otto-Salah et al., 2008) or sexual harassment (e.g., Popovich & Warren, 2010), agencies and work settings (e.g., Nag, Nongmaithem, & Tripathi, 2008; Saam, 2007), relationship conflict (e.g., Schwarzwald & Koslowsky, 1999), religion (e.g., Raven, 1999), schools (e.g., Erchul & Raven, 1997), healthcare settings (e.g., Gabel, 2011), and families (e.g., Blanton & Vandergriff-Avery, 2001; Singh-Sengupta, 2001). It also was used to guide Dutton and Goodman's (2005) framework of coercive controlling violence discussed earlier.

As noted, a theoretical understanding of what makes control coercive (apart from physical violence) is unclear in the literature. However, the components of the Social Power Model can be applied to coercive control to provide possible explanations for why control becomes coercive (i.e., the *motivation to influence*), how it occurs (i.e., *power strategies*, *preparation strategies*, and *choice of mode*), and its outcomes (i.e., *effects*).

Motivation to influence. According to social power theorists, the “motivation to influence” refers to the agent's conscious or unconscious drives or reasons to influence the target (e.g., the desire to meet a goal, or to help or harm someone; Raven, 1993). The motivation does not necessarily stem from the person's internal desires but rather may be required of a certain position or role (e.g., a teacher's duty to shape students' learning). Further, it is often based on the agent's perceptions of or beliefs held about the target, such as how vulnerable, susceptible, or resistant he or she is to external influence.

Figure 1. The Social Power Model as it appears in Raven (1993). This model illustrates the processes of exerting social influence.



IPV research provides some possible explanations regarding the motivation to use coercive control: to satisfy a psychopathic desire to harm (e.g., Dutton & Gondolf, 2000); to attain sexual access to women (e.g., Wilson & Daily, 1992); to fill a role as learned from their family of origin (e.g., Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2005); or to satisfy an internal need for power (e.g., DeKeseredy & MacLeod, 1997). Research on psychological abuse suggests additional possible motives for exerting control, including the desire to obtain higher status in the relationship (O’Hearn & Davis, 1997), to increase or maintain control when control is being lost (Miller, 2001), or to harm another person out of selfishness (Miller, 2001). Understanding a partner’s motivation to influence may be useful in distinguishing the intent to control one’s partner wholly through a pattern of coercive control from the intent to control oneself, a situation, or one aspect of the partner’s behavior.

Power strategies: Assessment of available power bases. The agent’s assessment of available power bases involves an exploration of the resources available to exert power, an assessment of the most effective power resource for the particular target in mind, and an assessment of the costs and benefits of using the chosen resource. The bases of power, or resources for influencing others, are listed and defined in Table 1. Social power theorists assert that with power, the agent determines the most effective strategy based on what he or she knows about the target, the target’s perceptions or attitudes, the target’s behaviors, and/or the target’s feelings.

Due to the intimate nature of the relationship between partners, abusers have access to a wealth of personal information about their partner’s daily lives, attitudes, beliefs, medical records, finances, job, friends, and family (Stark, 2007) that allows them to assess the most effective means for exerting power. Further, each of these areas, amongst many others, provides the resources and knowledge to exert control (i.e., the bases of power). For instance, an abuser’s access to his partner’s finances provides him a resource to deprive her of money if she disobeys his commands (e.g., *coercive power*), to give her money if she complies with a demand (e.g., *reward power*), to make her dependent upon his money (e.g., *legitimate power*), or to persuade her to give him all of her money (e.g., *informational power*). An abuser’s relationship with mutual friends or his partner’s family may provide the resource for him to isolate her from her social network physically (e.g., locking her up; *force*) or socially (e.g., influencing her decisions on whom to befriend; *expert power*). The knowledge of his partner’s work schedule and other activities provides him the resource to damage her vehicle so she cannot get to work (*manipulation*) or get her in trouble with the law or an employer so that she is fired (*invoking the power of third parties*). Additionally, a woman’s attachment to the abuser may provide a basis for using *referent power* (e.g., diminishing her self-esteem so that her decisions or actions are based upon his wants and needs rather than her own).

Table 1.

Bases of Power

Basis of Power	Definition
Informational power	Information available to the agent that can affect the behaviors or feelings of the target
Coercive power	The agent's threat of punishment of the target, the agent's rejection of the target, or the agent's disapproval of the target
Reward power	The agent's promise of a reward to the target, the agent's approval of the target, or the agent's acceptance of the target
Legitimate power	The agent's position or role of authority over the target that makes the target feel obligated or dependent on the agent
Expert power	The target's belief that the agent knows best
Referent power	The target's identification with the agent or the target's evaluation of him or herself based on the agent's perception
Force	The agent's physical restraint of the target
Manipulation	Changes to the environment made by the agent to elicit or inhibit the target's behaviors or feelings
Invoking or reducing the power of third parties	The agent's invoking or reducing the power of someone in authority, someone else close to the target, or any other third party

Importantly, which power strategies are selected to implement coercive control affects how the agent prepares to influence the target (i.e., preparation strategies) and how the power strategy is implemented (i.e., the choice of mode).

Preparation strategies: Preparing for the influence attempt. Preparation strategies include the agent's behaviors or actions taken to prepare for an influence attempt and increase the chance of success. Preparation includes "setting the stage," "enhancing" power bases, "softening" the target, and/or surveillance of the target. Each strategy ensures that the target knows the agent has both the means and the will to exert power. Examples of preparation strategies include developing a relationship with the target, threatening the target, demonstrating that the agent can punish or reward the target, inducing guilt or a sense of obligation in the target, or monitoring the target.

Abusers who use coercive control may prepare before taking action to ensure success. Preparation strategies chosen are influenced by the power bases available. Continuing with the above example, if an abuser attempts to control his partner by making her dependent upon him and his money, he may first move his funds to a separate account that she cannot access (Stark, 2007). If he knows that she evaluates herself based on his opinion of her, he may humiliate and degrade her often to decrease her self-esteem so that she stays with him (Johnson, 2008). Abusers also may monitor their partner's behavior through surveillance to identify the most effective preparation strategies. For instance, abusers may monitor their partner's whereabouts by calling them frequently, inspect the house to determine if their partner cleaned adequately, monitor car mileage to determine where their partner went, or ask their children to report back on their mother's activities (Dutton & Goodman, 2005). These strategies to "set the stage" increase the likelihood that control tactics will be successful by "softening" her resolve and creating the "vulnerability for coercion" (Dutton & Goodman, 2005, p. 748-749).

Choice of mode: Implementing the power strategy. The "choice of mode" refers to the behaviors that constitute the influence attempt, or the direct actions taken by the agent to exert power over the target (Raven, 1993). These behaviors vary greatly depending on the situation but may involve direct verbal communication, direct physical contact or force, withdrawal of verbal or physical communication, punishing the target, and/or rewarding the target. The mode chosen depends on the power base utilized and the preparation strategies implemented. For instance, a mother may give her daughter a sticker because she went to bed on time after determining her daughter's favorite kind of stickers. In this scenario the base of power is reward power, the preparation strategy implemented is identifying the kind of sticker to reward, and the mode is giving the sticker.

Research and theory on coercive controlling violence have suggested numerous coercive control tactics, many of which appear in existing models. For example, the Duluth Model (also known as the Power and Control Wheel; see Figure 2), was created by Pence and Paymar (1993) and is often used in

domestic violence shelters as a tool for describing and discussing coercive controlling violence. Tactics in the original Power and Control Wheel have been empirically documented in IPV research (e.g., Johnson, 2008; Stark, 2007; Tolman, 1989; Walker, 1979) and describe the modes, or control tactics, chosen to implement and maintain coercive control.

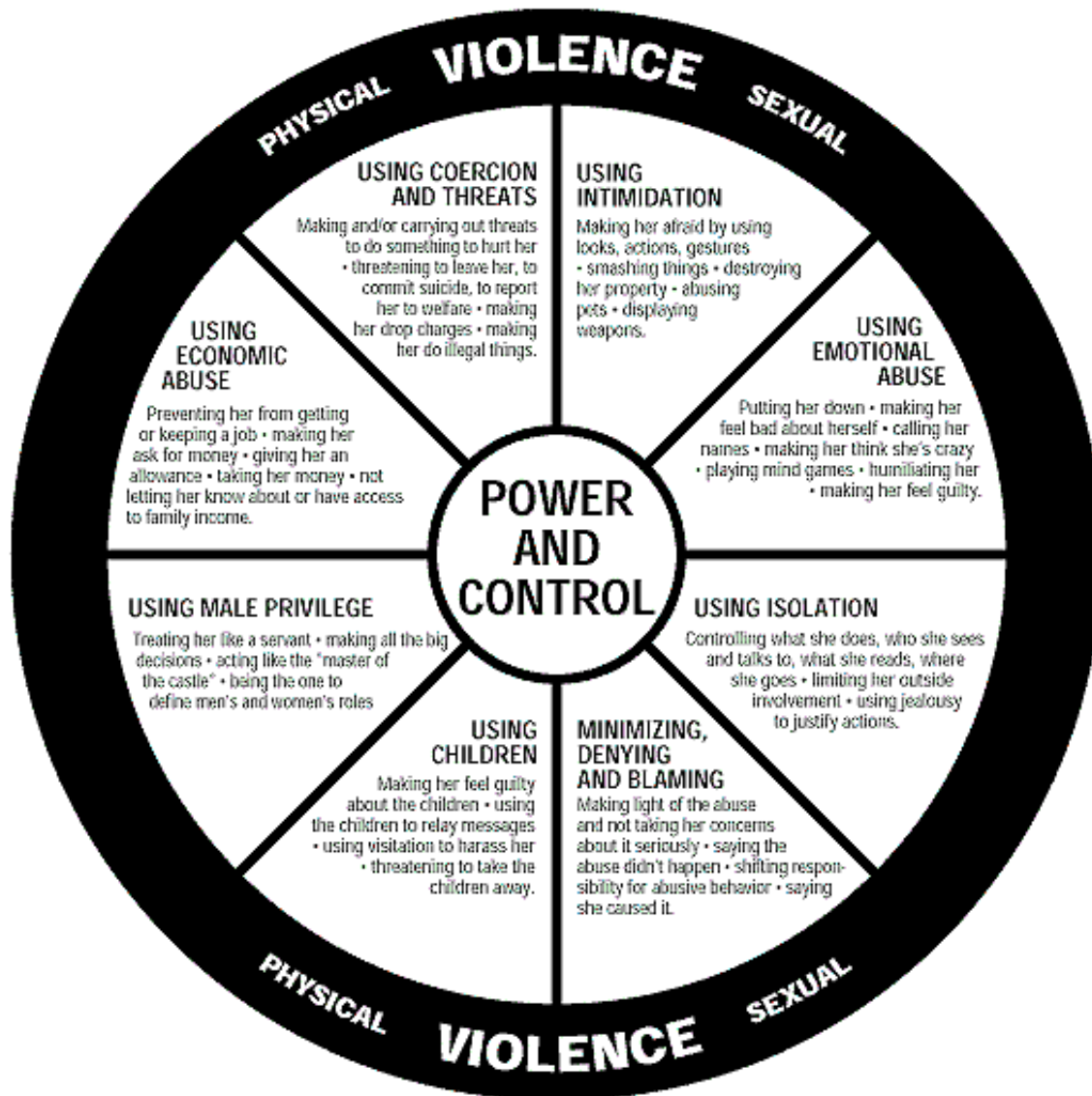


Figure 2. The Power and Control Wheel (Pence & Paymar, 1993). This model is often used in shelters to discuss the ways in which violence and control tactics are used to maintain male power and control in abusive relationships

Application of the Social Power Model may be particularly useful in considering control tactics, or modes, that do not fit into traditional definitions or measures of coercive control (e.g., those not included in the Power and Control Wheel). Current measures of coercive control rely on reports of harmful or negative behavior without consideration of behaviors or modes that may appear helpful or neutral. Just as an abuser may threaten to take his partner's child away, he may reward her time to spend with the child if she complies with his demand. Similarly, an abuser may provide occasional compliments, although few and far between amongst the many criticisms, to charm her, her friends, and her family in order to maintain a relationship or hide the abuse, thus reducing the chances of her leaving. Thus, tactics, or modes, that initially appear neutral or positive may involve ulterior motives to build a foundation of control in a relationship and ensure success in subsequent power assertions. Such possibilities make consideration of the context, preparatory strategies, and patterns of coercive control in a model like Raven's (1993) particularly compelling.

Effects. Finally, the effects of the implementation strategy can include success or failure (Raven, 1993). The agent assesses effects by monitoring the target's compliance (i.e., target changes her behavior) or resistance (i.e., target refuses to change behavior or remains the same) after the influence attempt. The agent also may monitor how the target responds emotionally or psychologically to determine which control attempts are successful or not. Thus, the effects provide an informational feedback loop to the agent's motivations and available power bases to ensure future success, as demonstrated by the dashed and curved arrows from box E to boxes A and B in Figure 1 (see p. 12).

This cycle and feedback loop explains the pattern of coercive control that is unique to coercive controlling violence (Johnson, 2008) and that likely also characterizes coercive control when used without physical violence. As with coercive controlling violence, a woman's reactions to an abuser's coercive control attempts may include complying with his demands or resisting his demands. She also may alter her attitudes or perceptions of her partner in response to his behavior, which may impact future attempts at coercion. For instance, a woman's refusal to comply with her partner's demands may influence him to use a different approach in the future: failure may change or increase his drive to control, alter his assessment of the resources available, and thus influence his choice of preparation and control strategies. Therefore, the Social Power Model allows for a look at the *processes* of coercive control, beyond discrete acts or consequences of control or physical violence.

As a whole, the Social Power Model provides an interactive, process framework for the study of coercive control and a possible method for identifying when control becomes coercive. As demonstrated by the arrows in Figure 1 (p. 12), components of the model interact to explain the process of creating and maintaining a foundation of coercive control in a relationship. In the current study, the theory suggests

sensitizing concepts and ideas related to how men exert control over women, how women respond to coercive control, and the ongoing patterns and feedback loops that make the cycle of influence effective.

A limitation of the Social Power Model in regards to coercive control is that it simplifies women's responses to their partners' control and does not distinguish their behavioral or emotional response from their mental or physical health outcomes. Profound effects on women's mental health and well-being (e.g., depression, PTSD, intense fear) should be considered and distinguished from women's behavioral response (i.e., compliance or resistance). These mental health consequences have the potential to further soften her resolve, increase her vulnerability to coercion, or provide easy opportunities for her abuser to play on her weaknesses and exert or maintain power and control.

IPV studies also identify additional behavioral responses that should be considered, including implementation of protective and coping strategies by the target or victim (Goodman, Dutton, Vankos, & Weinfurt, 2005; Goodman, Dutton, Weinfurt, & Cook, 2003). These strategies include obtaining or seeking tangible resources (e.g., money), emotional resources (e.g., opportunities for autonomy), and/or interpersonal resources (e.g., social support; Goodman et al., 2005). Although strategies may, indeed, involve compliance or resistance (as included in Raven's model; 1993), placating the abuser has also been identified as an active response to coercion (Goodman et al., 2005). Taken together, these strategies demonstrate women's agency and their active and intentional responses to managing coercive control.

Finally, the Social Power Model neglects contextual factors that may influence women's experiences of or abusers' use of coercive control. That is, the theory does not account for individual, relationship, or social factors that may contribute to men's success in using coercive control or women's vulnerability to it (e.g., gender ideology, patriarchy, gendered inequalities; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2011; Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003; Jasinski, 2001; Johnson, 2005). Thus, the theory falls short in providing a holistic explanation of how and why control becomes coercive. Gender theory, which explains how gender impacts everyday life, provides a framework for contextualizing coercive control within larger social structures.

Gender Theory

Feminism is not one universal theory but rather a framework that houses a variety of different perspectives with several common goals: to encourage research that supports and listens to women's voices; to acknowledge and end oppressive social structures and forces; and to call attention to gender as an organizational, socially constructed, and fundamental component of daily life (Osmond & Thorne, 1993). Gender theory is situated within a feminist framework but stands as its own theoretical perspective (Connell, 2009). Applied to IPV literature, gender theory can be used to further conceptualize coercive control as a gendered process involving power, production, symbolic, and emotional relations.

Coercive Control as Gendered

Feminist theorists in the IPV field posit that coercive controlling violence is perpetuated by macro-level, highly influential societal structures that uphold and reproduce gender inequalities, power differences, and patriarchy (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2011; Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003; Jasinski, 2001; Johnson, 2005). Feminist researchers have long debated with family violence researchers about the gendered dimensions of abuse (Jasinski, 2001). Family violence scholars (e.g., Fergusson, Horwood, & Ritter, 2005; Straus, 1999) argue that IPV is gender symmetric while feminist scholars argue that making distinctions based on type of violence reveals the influence of gender (see Johnson, 2011). Indeed, studies reveal similar rates of perpetration by both men and women for situational couple violence and gender asymmetric rates of perpetration for coercive controlling violence, with men as the primary perpetrators (e.g., Johnson et al., 2008). This evidence supports feminists' assertion that coercive controlling violence is a gendered phenomenon. Importantly, feminist researchers call attention to the gendered nature of violence and coercive control, not based solely on perpetration rates of violence but rather on men's motives to achieve and maintain male dominance (see Johnson, 2011; Stark, 2007). Connell's (2009) dimensions of gender provide a model to explain where men's motives come from and how male dominance is made possible at the individual and social levels.

Dimensions of Gender

Connell's (2009) dimensions of gender include power relations, production relations, emotional relations, and symbolic relations. These gendered dimensions, broadly, involve the interactions between micro-level forces (the individual, social interaction) and macro-level forces (societal contexts, such as institutions, sociocultural norms, and ideologies) that influence gender in daily life. That is, these dimensions incorporate the direct and indirect influences in personal life with larger influences that seem impersonal but in fact are quite personal because they embed and contextualize daily life experiences. Applied to coercive control, Connell's dimensions identify the micro contexts in which coercive control is used and experienced by individuals as well as the macro contexts that contribute to or uphold coercive control in heterosexual relationships more broadly. Importantly, the dimensions of gender are situated contextually within time and space; thus, they evolve and change over time or vary between locations.

Power relations. Power relations refer to the patriarchal forces of everyday life that maintain power differentials in personal and social life (Connell, 2009). Power relations include the direct influence of *patriarchy in personal life* (i.e., the power of men over women in daily life), *impersonal patriarchy* (i.e., patriarchy of the state, such as biases in the legal system that favor men or disadvantage women), and *discursive patriarchy* (i.e., the ways in which we talk about or categorize people that reflect male power or oppress women; e.g., images in the media that objectify women). Importantly, each of these relations interacts in such a way that what *appears* to be impersonal or indirect *becomes* personal,

and vice versa. In other words, social-level forces (e.g., patriarchy of the state) impact individuals' daily lives while individuals' daily lives (e.g., patriarchy of interpersonal relationships) uphold and reproduce patriarchy at the social level.

Thus, applying *power relations* as a gender dimension illuminates coercive control as socially constructed and maintained via mutual influences of individuals, institutions, and society. For instance, a woman's attempt to leave her abusive partner may be interpreted as a threat to a man's power (Arditti & Allen, 1993; Arendell, 1995; Johnson, 2008). Multiple studies have found that psychological and/or physical abuse are used by men to prevent women from leaving, to force them to return, or to seek revenge (Anderson, 1997; Redden-Reitz, 1999). Thus, *patriarchy in personal life*, one type of power relation, is particularly relevant to understanding coercive control.

Social structures, attitudes, and ideologies may further uphold and contribute to men's success in using power relations in coercive control via *impersonal* and *discursive patriarchy*, the remaining two forms of power relations. For instance, criticisms of women who stay in violent relationships by the media or in social conversation reproduce victim-blaming attitudes, remove men's responsibility, and further isolate women (i.e., *discursive patriarchy*; Enander, 2010; Mahoney, 1991). However, at the same time, stigma surrounding divorce and "broken" families prevails (Arendell, 2000; Boney, 2002; Enander, 2010), leaving abused women with few socially desirable options. If she decides to leave, pressure to share custody after divorce for the "best interests of the child" implicitly "reifies male power and privilege by enabling continuing abuse and domination of mothers through state sanctioned contact with their abusive ex-partners" (i.e., *impersonal patriarchy*; Davies, Ford-Gilboe, & Hammerton, 2009, p. 37).

Production relations. Production relations refer to "the total social division of labor" based on gender (Connell, 2009, p. 79). Historically, this refers to the sexual division of labor, where certain tasks are occupied by men (e.g., management) and others by women (e.g., secretarial duties, childcare), but extends further to a larger division between "'work,' the realm of paid labor and production for markets and 'home,' the realm of unpaid labor" (Connell, 2009, p. 79). In today's social context, "the economic sphere is culturally defined as a men's world (regardless of the presence of women in it), while domestic life is defined as a women's world (regardless of the presence of men in it)" (Connell, 2009, p. 79).

Production relations explain how our notions of masculinity and femininity and the different characteristics of men and women are tied closely to the division of labor in general (i.e., who occupies which positions and where) as well as the social aspect of how work is done in each realm: "in the economy, work is done for pay . . . in the home, work is done for love or mutual obligation" (Connell, 2009, p. 80). Further, the institutions and corporations that make up the economy consist of gender regimes, or gendered practices, that favor men with higher wages or benefits and thus contribute to women's subordination (Connell, 2009).

To continue with the example used in the previous section, a coercive partner may make his partner financially dependent on him, limiting her daily activities and her ability to leave (Stark, 2007). He may do this directly by forbidding her to work, or perhaps more passively by encouraging her to stay home or enter certain gendered positions (that likely produce less income) to increase her feelings of obligation to fill a certain role or guilt if “appropriate” female roles are not filled (Stark, 2007). These behaviors have been identified in research and practice dealing with IPV (Stark, 2007) and likely characterize the construct of coercive control because the behaviors serve to maintain power and control, regardless of the use of physical violence. Further, the social division of labor and ideology surrounding women’s work and men’s work may influence women’s decisions to work for pay or not and in which positions. Thus, social forces may also contribute to women’s dependence.

Emotional relations. Emotional relations refer to emotional attachments and behaviors that relate to cultural definitions of gender (Connell, 2009). These relations describe the social structure of emotional attachments, beyond the physical body or its biological reflexes. For instance, hegemonic beliefs emphasize cross-gender attachment, marriage ideologies emphasize emotional and sexual attraction based on romantic love, and family ideologies emphasize parent-child relations based on parental love. Despite the physical and emotional involvement of men or fathers in attachment, marriage, and parenting, emotional relations today are still considered “the business of women, especially mothers” (Connell, 2009, p. 82). While some emotional relations can be positive (e.g., a mother being loving towards her child or husband), others can be negative (e.g., bullying among siblings).

Emotional relations may explain how women’s bond with and love for their children complicate their decisions to leave abusive partners and create vulnerability for coercive control to be effective. For instance, a man may threaten to kidnap or harm his partner’s children if she attempts to leave or does not comply with his demands (McCloskey, 1996). Or, men may blame women for disrupting their children’s lives or being a “bad” wife (and thus a “bad” woman) by breaking up the family or the relationship (Hardesty & Ganong, 2006). Women’s emotional attachment to their partners further complicates the situation (Choice & Lamke, 1997; Khaw & Hardesty, 2014). Thus, nuclear family ideologies and notions of femininity may support and contribute to men’s use of coercive control.

Symbolic relations. Symbolic relations refer to the ways in which meaning and reality are socially constructed in gendered ways (Connell, 2009). For instance, “male” and “female” have social meanings beyond the physical differences between sexes. As much as meanings of gender influence behaviors, social practices, and attitudes, they also influence values. For instance, images of women in advertising or music videos may contribute to valuing women’s appearance over their intellect, and images of family in television may influence how we define family.

IPV and psychological abuse research has demonstrated that men who hold traditional values about gender are more likely to use violence or psychological abuse (Goldner, Penn, Scheinberg, & Walker, 1990; Próspero, 2008). Even men who do not self-identify as traditionally masculine report a desire to fit into society's definition of masculinity and display behaviors, including violence and nonphysical forms of abuse, to meet social expectations (Rosenbaum, 1986). Men may also target women's femininity as a means for exerting control. Indeed, Stark (2007) argues that coercive control is inherently gendered because it involves the "microregulation of everyday behaviors associated with stereotypical female roles, such as how women dress, cook, clean, socialize, care for children, or perform sexually" (p. 5). Thus, symbolic relations, or the ways in which the meanings of "male" and "female" are socially constructed, may contribute to the use of coercive control.

Symbolic relations can also contribute to the use of coercive control at the social level through social policy and laws as well as through socially constructed meanings of personal life experiences, such as abuse, courtship, and romance. For instance, the criminal justice system rarely takes psychological abuse or coercive control seriously without evidence of physical violence or injury (Stark, 2012). If abuse is brought into the forefront in divorce proceedings, for example, societal and cultural messages about how to define abuse complicate responses. Dunn (2002) found that attorneys and police have difficulty distinguishing stalking from behaviors considered normative in by cultural definitions of courtship and romantic gestures (e.g., calling frequently, asking what someone's day consisted of, pursuing someone, showing up as a "surprise").

In sum, the interaction of gender dimensions may explain how and why some men use coercive control and some women are vulnerable to it. Men directly use power relations, production relations, emotional relations, and symbolic relations to exert power and control over women, to isolate women, to microregulate women's daily lives, and to entrap women in relationships characterized by coercive control. Social forces, too, use the dimensions of gender in ways that indirectly contribute to women's entrapment. Thus, the dimensions of gender demonstrate how societal attitudes, ideologies, and practices both maintain a "patriarchal state" and contribute to "personal patriarchy" (Connell, 2009), while individual attitudes or beliefs and interpersonal social interactions, in turn, reproduce the same. Therefore, Connell's (2009) dimensions of gender provide a lens to examine the micro-level and macro-level influences that interact to produce and maintain the contexts by which coercive control is possible and effective.

Although the dimensions of gender may explain the social and interpersonal factors that influence relationships characterized by coercive control, they do not explain the process of how coercive control occurs and is effective. For instance, the dimensions do not describe women's responses, the patterns of coercion, or how using the dimensions of gender is successful. Some IPV researchers also have criticized

the examination of patriarchy as a contributing factor to violence against women. For instance, family violence scholars have critiqued feminist explanations of coercive controlling violence by questioning why only some men become batterers, why coercive control occurs in same-sex relationships, and why some (although few) women perpetrate coercive controlling violence if patriarchy is to blame (Cook, 1997; Hines & Douglas, 2010; Renzetti, 1992). Anderson (2009) questions the examination of gender in coercive controlling violence only: if gender is an ongoing performance that impacts all forms of daily life, why do researchers examine gender only for violence with coercive control and not for violence during conflict? Research is needed to further tease out the roles that gender may (or may not) play in all scenarios of abuse as well as the motives, behaviors, and factors that influence each form of abuse. Finally, consensus on how to measure the gendered relations of coercive control does not currently exist (Johnson, 2006).

Purpose of the Study

Using grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2006), the current study sought to develop a theoretical explanation of the processes of control in intimate relationships and what makes control coercive. The current study addresses several limitations of existing literature. First, research has focused primarily on examining coercive control in conjunction with physical violence or embedded within a broader framework of psychological abuse; therefore, this study examines the construct of coercive control on its own. Second, existing measures rely on discrete acts of control with little attention to the processes by which they occur or become coercive. By developing a theoretical explanation of coercive control, this study aims to explain when control is coercive and whether control is effective without physical violence, which can be used to improve the measurement of coercive control. Finally, current screening procedures and resources available in healthcare, legal, and other practice-oriented settings limit practitioners' ability to identify, intervene in, and prevent coercive control and its consequences for women. Findings from this study will shed light on a hidden form of abuse and the needs of women in these relationships. Notwithstanding limitations, the Social Power Model (Raven, 1993) and theory on the dimensions of gender (Connell, 2009) together provide a sensitizing framework for the current study. Specifically, the Social Power Model provides a skeletal framework for examining how the process of coercive control occurs, and the dimensions of gender help to contextualize the process. Gaining an understanding of the process and context in which coercive control occurs ultimately will provide the knowledge base needed to understand what makes control coercive.

Chapter Three: Methods

Grounded theory methods were used in this study. Grounded theory is an interpretive, constructivist approach to research, in which the primary goal for researchers is to develop a theoretical understanding of processes that are grounded in the data themselves (Charmaz, 2006). Key to this approach are its assumptions of “emergent, multiple realities; indeterminacy; facts and values as inextricably linked; truth as provisional, and social life as processual” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 126-7). In other words, understanding human life, and thus any human-related phenomenon of interest, necessitates acknowledging the *process* of life experience and life *as situated within* one’s “particular positions, perspectives, and experiences” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 127). Using a grounded theory methodological approach was appropriate for this study as the goal was to construct an understanding of the processes of control in intimate relationships, while identifying and contextualizing the patterns within which it occurs.

In grounded theory, meaning is created and theory is constructed throughout the entire research process, from initial formation of a research question, to sampling, to collecting data, to analyzing data, to writing manuscripts, and so on (Charmaz, 2006). This process is both nonlinear and abductive, meaning that steps to grounded theory are not mandated in any particular order and the developing theory comes neither solely nor passively from the data (i.e., through a unidirectional, inductive process) nor from outside of the data (e.g., through situating data into preconceived understandings). Rather, theory is constructed through a back-and-forth “dance” that involves confirming and disconfirming data and emerging hypotheses in an ongoing, interactive process (Charmaz, 2006). When collecting data through this approach, there is a crucial interplay between the researcher and the participant that creates meaning in and of itself (Charmaz, 2006). Thus, researchers, too, interpret and engage in the data further after collecting it, which brings forth theoretical categories and patterns that cannot be identified whilst in the process of collecting data (Charmaz, 2006). A major strength of this study, then, was that the methodological approach allowed for thinking beyond the data and analysis to construct meaning and piece together the “fragments of experience” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 148) in women’s descriptions of control in their relationships. This was accomplished through each step of the research process, as outlined below.

Participants

Recruitment. University of Illinois Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained before any recruitment efforts were made. Participants were recruited from an existing sample obtained for an ongoing longitudinal study on mothers’ experiences of coparenting after separation that has a specific focus on IPV. Participants in the longitudinal study met the following inclusion criteria: 1) they, or their partner, must have filed for divorce within the past four months; 2) they must have been physically separated from their former partner for no more than two years; 3) they must have had children

under the age of 18; 4) they must have had at least 25% time with their children; and 5) they must speak English. Participants in the longitudinal study completed five interviews over the course of a year and provided consent at the last interview to be re-contacted for possible participation in future studies. Those who agreed to be re-contacted provided follow-up contact information, and it was from these consenting participants that the current sample was obtained. To avoid any interference with data collection in the ongoing longitudinal study, only participants who had completed all five interviews were re-contacted to participate in the current study.

Initial purposive sampling involved identifying a subsample of information-rich participants from the longitudinal study. In line with the goal of seeking to understand coercive control apart from physical violence, initial purposive sampling involved identifying and re-contacting the participants who reported: 1) medium to high levels of coercive controlling behaviors during marriage at the first interview; and 2) no history of physical violence during marriage at the first interview. Specifically, the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PMWI) – Short Form (Tolman, 1992) was used to assess the degree of coercive control during marriage in the longitudinal project. Mothers reported how often their former partners engaged in 7 behaviors during marriage (e.g., “he monitored my time and made me account for my whereabouts”). Results of a previous cluster analysis of PMWI scores distinguished cases of “high control” from “low control” (see Hardesty, et al., in press, for details). The “high control” group included mothers who reported multiple controlling behaviors that occurred with moderate (i.e., “often) to high (i.e., “almost always” or “always”) frequency during marriage. Mothers were recruited from this “high control” cluster group to participate in the current study if they also reported no history of physical violence in marriage. In the longitudinal project, physical violence was measured using the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996) and a modified version of the Sexual Coercion subscale (Goodman et al., 2003). Mothers reported whether they experienced any of 13 acts of physical (e.g., “he choked me”) or sexual assault (e.g., “he used force to make me have sex”); mothers who reported “no” on all items were considered to have no history of marital violence.

Initial purposive sampling was followed by theoretical sampling, which was used to further question the meaning of data collected and to seek comparative and contrasting experiences of physical violence and coercive control. Theoretical sampling is “the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges” (Glaser & Strauss, 1999, p. 45). The initial approach to sampling produced rich data about the processes of control in relationships but did not provide a complete understanding of what makes control coercive. Thus, theoretical sampling involved recruiting participants from the longitudinal project who reported high coercive control and physical violence in marriage. The resulting data provided the opportunity to question whether and how

coercive control in violent relationships is similar to or different from coercive control in nonviolent relationships. Finally, participants who reported low levels of coercive control (i.e., participants in the “low control” cluster group) and no history of physical violence were theoretically sampled to answer questions about how less frequent controlling behaviors operate in relationships. In sum, initial efforts that restricted sampling to only those with high control and no physical violence were broadened as analyses progressed and the developing theory raised new questions about the nature of control and coercion.

To extend study invitations, each mother identified through initial purposive or theoretical sampling was contacted by telephone, provided information about the current study, and asked if they would be willing to participate (see phone script in Appendix A). If mothers did not answer when called, a brief message was left asking them to contact the research office regarding a follow-up interview to the longitudinal project. There was no mention of IPV or the former partner in the message to ensure mothers’ privacy and safety. If mothers could not be reached by telephone, a letter (see Appendix B) was sent to their home requesting that they contact the research office to learn more about the study. The letter also did not include any mention of IPV or the former partner. Attempts at re-contact ended after three letters had been sent, spaced three weeks apart. A total of 47 mothers from the longitudinal project were contacted. Twenty-two mothers agreed to participate and completed interviews; 3 agreed to participate but were unable to be scheduled; 4 refused to participate; and 18 were never successfully reached, either due to a lack of response or no longer valid contact information.

Sample description. Mothers who participated ($N = 22$) were between the ages of 28 and 49 years old ($M = 37.77$; $SD = 5.41$). The majority of mothers self-identified as White ($n = 16$; 73%); 5 (23%) self-identified as Black, and 1 (4%) self-identified as Asian. Most mothers had attained a Bachelor’s degree or higher ($n = 16$; 74%) and were employed at least part-time ($n = 21$; 95%). Mothers had between one and four children with their former partner ($M = 1.9$; $SD = 0.81$), one to twenty years in age ($M = 7.56$; $SD = 4.51$). They had been married, on average, 11.78 years (range: 2 – 25; $SD = 6.48$) and had been divorced for less than one month up to three years ($M = 1.83$; $SD = 0.95$) at the time of the interview.

Data Collection Procedures and Materials

Procedures. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews lasting one to three hours ($M = 89.63$ minutes; range: 59 – 188 minutes). Responsive interviewing is stressed in Rubin and Rubin’s (2005) guidelines for in-depth interviewing within an interpretive, constructivist framework and was the approach used in the current study. A central tenet of the constructivist model of interviewing is that interviewing is a dynamic exchange between two people that creates meaning (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Accomplishing this exchange involved asking open-ended questions that elicited the interviewee’s

personal views and life experiences through flexible and active participation as an interviewer (e.g., by probing for further information, by modifying and/or reordering questions in an interview protocol).

Interviews were conducted in a safe and private location determined in agreement with the participant (e.g., a private study room at a public library, a private office space on campus). Three mothers were unable to meet in person; thus, their interviews were conducted by telephone during a safe and convenient time for them. Informed consent (see Appendix C) was obtained and permission to audio record the interview was requested prior to meeting and again at the start of the interview. Detailed notes were taken during portions of an interview for one mother who did not feel comfortable having her entire interview audio-recorded. Participants received \$30 for their participation.

At the end of each interview, descriptive memos were written as an analysis tool and opportunity for reflection on the interview and my own perspectives or thought processes (i.e., for reflexivity). Then, interviews were transcribed and checked for accuracy with all identifying information removed and kept separate from the original data source to ensure participants' confidentiality. Specifically, the ID number used in the longitudinal project was assigned to each participant and all names and locations were replaced with pseudonyms. All data were kept locked in a University office accessible only to the research team. Electronic data were password-protected and also accessible only to the research team.

Materials: The interview protocol. Consistent with Rubin and Rubin's (2005) guidelines and the goals of grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2006), rich data were obtained through open-ended questions and probes that elicited meaning, process, and mothers' own stories to answer the research questions outlined in Chapter 2. The theories discussed in Chapter 2 informed the development of interview questions and provided sensitizing topics (or theoretical concepts) that served as a guide for eliciting mothers' perceptions of being or feeling controlled in their marriages. For instance, some questions elicited the sequence of events that occurred in mothers' experiences of control (informed by social power theory, Raven, 1993), while other questions focused on the contextual factors that may have contributed to their feelings of restriction (informed by social power theory, Raven, 1993; and gender theory, Connell, 2009). Although theories were used to help develop interview questions, additional questions were included and probes and follow up questions were asked to ensure that participant responses were not restricted by any preexisting concepts or ideas. The standard interview protocol consisted of five main sections (see Appendix D).

In the first section (Part 1), demographic information was obtained to assess mothers' and their former partners' social location (e.g., level of education, employment status). Part 2 consisted of questions that assessed mothers' daily routines and the expectations or household rules shared between themselves and their partner during marriage. Mothers were asked how these routines and expectations evolved over time, whether or not expectations were typically met, and what happened when she did not

meet her partner's expectations. Mothers also were asked to describe their partner's attitudes or views of women during their marriage and the extent to which these attitudes played a role in their partner's marital expectations and their own daily routines. Consistent with Connell's (2009) theory on the domains of gender described in Chapter 2, these questions were asked to reveal the ways in which *production* (e.g., how gender impacts the social division of labor), *symbolic* (e.g., how the social construction of gender impacts men's attitudes towards women), and *power* (e.g., patriarchy in personal life) *relations* played a role in mothers' marital interactions and expectations. Mothers were asked to share their partner's response when expectations were not met to reveal their partner's attitudes about women as well as the degree of control in the relationship. Questions regarding women's daily routines and interactions with others also were asked to help determine the degree of isolation or entrapment experienced and the level of social support available to them, as these may serve as potential indicators of their partners' restriction of their activities or contact with others outside of the home.

Next, in Part 3, mothers were asked to describe how abuse was a part of their marriage, if at all, and how it changed over time. For example, they were asked about specific times they felt harmed or hurt by their partner (e.g., when they felt controlled, emotionally hurt, threatened, or scared of their partner). Consistent with the Social Power Model (Raven, 1993), probing questions were asked to elicit information to understand the processes by which these events occurred (e.g., the antecedents of the event, the behaviors involved, and the effects or consequences). The wording of interview questions was modified slightly based on mothers' responses. That is, I allowed mothers to label their experience in the way that they perceived it and thereafter used their language when probing for more information. For example, I asked some mothers about their experiences of "physical assault" or "emotional harm" or their partners' "need to control" when mothers used those labels to define their experience. Mothers also were asked to describe their perceptions of why their partner behaved in the way that he did, which was intended to reveal mothers' perceptions of their partner's motive to control. Then, mothers were asked to share the impact these incidents had on themselves, their relationship with their partner, and their relationships with others, which allowed me to explore the effects and consequences of controlling behaviors as well as the salience of the control in women's lives.

Mothers were also asked to describe why they thought their partner was never abusive in other ways (i.e., those not named) and how their experience may have been different had those other forms of abuse occurred. For example, if mothers shared no descriptions of physical abuse, they were asked to share why they felt their partner never resorted to using physical violence and how they think their experience may have been different had he been physically violent. These questions were asked to help explore if and why control attempts alone were effective in restricting mothers and how mothers defined their experiences themselves (e.g., whether they consider their experiences to be "abuse" or not). Finally,

mothers were asked to share any help or resources that they sought during their marriage in response to their partner's behavior. Consistent with the social power theory (Raven, 1993) and gender theory (Connell, 2009), mothers' responses to these questions helped to reveal the effects of controlling behaviors, mothers' definitions of abuse and control, and any structural barriers mothers encountered in obtaining help and resources.

Part 4 focused on mothers' experiences with physical separation and divorce. First, women were asked to describe the initial process of separating (e.g., what happened, how each partner responded, how family responded, how easy or difficult the experience was) and filing for divorce. Mothers were asked to share how, if at all, the abuse incidents they described in Part 3 influenced the divorce or separation decision. Mothers were asked to share the contact or interactions they had with their former partners, including experiences of ongoing abuse and/or control, and the expectations they had of themselves and their former partners throughout the separation/divorce process. Mothers were also asked to compare their abuse experiences during the separation/divorce process to the experiences they had in their marriage, which intended to reveal the trajectories of abuse and/or the ways in which gender influences relationships over time and throughout space, a key aspect of Connell's (2009) theory. Finally, mothers were asked to share any major challenges they faced throughout the process (e.g., with family, friends, or the legal system) and how their custody decisions were made. Consistent with Connell's (2009) theory on the domains of gender, questions were intended to highlight mothers', family members', and friends' ideologies or attitudes surrounding family and motherhood (i.e., *emotional relations*), as well as any biases present in the legal system that favor men (i.e., impersonal patriarchy, a form of *power relations*).

In the last section (Part 5), mothers were asked to share their current experiences and plans for the future. First, women were asked to describe their current relationship with their former partner, which was intended to reveal ongoing control or successful escape from it. Mothers then were asked to describe their current typical day, the current expectations shared between themselves and their former partners, their current understanding of the abuse and divorce process they experienced, and their future plans and projections for themselves and their family. These questions were asked to help reveal how *production*, *power*, *symbolic*, and *emotion relations* impacted mothers' current lives and the salience of the abuse and/or control for them today. Finally, to obtain information that may help women in similar situations in the future and to end the interview on a positive and hopeful note, mothers were asked to share the advice they would like to tell mothers who have been in similar situations as themselves, or the advice they wished someone had told them.

Although the standard protocol was utilized, questions varied slightly from participant to participant depending on her own unique situation. That is, follow-up questions were added to probe for further information or specific examples from mothers that may not be asked to all participants. For

example, although some interview questions were informed by social power theory (Raven, 1993) and gender theory (Connell, 2009), additional probes were asked to ensure that participants were not restricted to describing their experiences in ways that fit the theories. In other words, participants were not forced or guided to answer questions in any particular way. Indeed, an advantage of in-depth interviews and the flexible design of grounded theory is its opportunity to explore and contextualize mothers' unique, individual experiences as the study evolves. Thus, each mother's story was elicited, considered, and questioned further about, instead of relying on structured questions that would elicit generalities or commonalities among groups of women. This approach to in-depth interviewing is consistent with the goals of grounded theory and highlights the indeterminacy of human experiences (Charmaz, 2006).

Data Analysis

Consistent with grounded theory methods, data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously and remained ongoing until theoretical saturation of key concepts and categories was reached (Charmaz, 2006). This interplay between analysis and data collection is essential to grounded theory research because the analysis may inform changes to the interview protocol or recruitment methods by sparking new ideas and questions to pursue with participants. Thus, an ongoing, back and forth "dance" between data collection and analysis took place to develop the most complete theory of control processes in intimate relationships. The main analytic techniques included: 1) open coding, consisting of incident-to-incident and focused coding techniques used to label and categorize the data; 2) axial coding to build connections between and among the categories; and 3) selective coding to refine and complete the theoretical framework. Procedural and analytic memos, including theoretical reflexive memos, were written, and mapping or diagramming techniques were used at various stages of analysis to aid in conceptualizing the data and constructing theory. NVivo qualitative data analysis software was used to organize, sort, and code data.

Coding techniques. Three main types of coding techniques were used: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

Open coding. The first stage of analysis consisted of open coding, specifically line-by-line, incident-to-incident, and focused coding techniques (Charmaz, 2006), to create an initial codebook from early interviews. Open coding is often used in the initial stages of data collection to "get to know" the data and begin observing what appears to be important from the data (Charmaz, 2006).

First, line-by-line coding of several early interviews was conducted to generate open codes that stuck close to the data, or that summarized and described details within the data. This method was important early on in the analysis process to ensure that no data were overlooked or taken for granted. Then, incident-to-incident coding was conducted to add to an initial codebook of broad codes generated solely from the data by focusing on larger "fractures" of data (Birks & Mills, 2010, p. 95), such as several

lines of data or a paragraph of data. For example, in incident-to-incident coding, “feeling constrained” was one open code applied to women’s descriptions of the ways in which mothers felt limited or restricted in their marriages. By conducting line-by-line and incident-to-incident coding, I was able to stay close to the data and minimize the influence of my own preconceptions or biases regarding mothers’ experiences and perceptions of being controlled. This helped to ensure that the early codes identified were truly “grounded” in the data collected and built upon in subsequent coding steps, rather than formed from preconceived ideas or sensitizing concepts.

The next step of open coding involved focused coding, in which initial codes were refined and categorized. Focused coding involved grouping and organizing early codes (developed through line-by-line and incident-to-incident coding) into more specific theoretical categories. For example, women’s descriptions of feeling limited or restrained in marriage were coded broadly as “constraints” during incident-to-incident coding, but in focused coding these “constraints” were examined and organized into “constraints of motherhood” or “constraints of marriage.” In other words, focused coding helped to identify the source of the constraint. Subcodes were also developed (e.g., “forced constraints” or “perceived constraints”) to better capture the nuances of particular constraints.

Axial coding. Axial coding involves creating codes to “sort, synthesize, and organize large amounts of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 60). These codes are created by making connections between theoretical categories and concepts identified in open and focused coding. In the current study, axial coding involved defining the “properties” (i.e., meaningful features) and “dimensions” (i.e., locations or spaces within the larger conceptualization) of the codes that were created and refined during open coding, giving “coherence to the emerging analysis” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 60). That is, the bits and pieces of the theoretical framework (or the theoretical categories and subcategories, or concepts) constructed in focused coding were brought together to identify and explicate relationships between and among them.

Corbin and Strauss’ (2007) axial coding paradigm was used to identify the *conditions*, or causes, of a phenomenon (i.e., the precipitating events or structures that lead to the experiences through which control is produced; e.g., a husband’s surveillance of his partner that provided him the information to control or interpret the breaking of an agreement), the *context* in which the phenomenon occurred (i.e., the specific situations or conditions in which control attempts occurred; e.g., during conflict), the *action/interaction* strategies that produced the phenomenon (i.e., the specific behaviors, interactions, experiences used to exert control; e.g., an abuser’s threat to take away the children if his demands were not met, or the experience of an argument), and the *consequences* of the phenomenon (i.e., the result of the actions/interactions used to exert control; e.g., her resistance to or compliance with his control). Applying a coding paradigm, such as Corbin and Strauss’ axial coding paradigm, is not a required step in grounded theory analysis. Glaser (1978) and Charmaz (2006) both caution against forcing data to fit a

particular coding paradigm. In the current study, Corbin and Strauss' (2007) axial paradigm was used because it fit the goals of the analysis and the data. The framework allowed me to construct from the data the processes by which control attempts occurred or became coercive; thus, rather than forcing a framework onto the data, the axial paradigm supported the construction of theoretical relations grounded in the data.

Selective coding. The final stage of analysis involved selective coding, in which the theoretical story was fully refined and fleshed out. Data were reduced and integrated, and a core category was identified that was "theoretically saturated and centrally relevant" (LaRossa, 2005, p. 851). Specifically, identifying the central category, "experienced or felt constraint," allowed me to organize other theoretical categories in a way that provided a holistic understanding of how constraint occurs and is felt. This category had the most connections to other theoretical categories and thus, best held the story or explanation together (LaRossa, 2005). Because theoretical saturation of this category was needed to complete the story, the final stages of analysis involved a back and forth process between axial coding and selective coding around the central category, "experienced or felt constraint."

Types of codes. Sensitizing concepts and emergent codes were used throughout analysis. Sensitizing concepts are a priori codes from existing research or theory. I included sensitizing concepts derived from social power theory (Raven, 1993) and Connell's (2009) theory on the domains of gender, but only when these labels earned their way into the analysis. That is, sensitizing concepts were added to the codebook only when they fit the data. For instance, in open coding, the sensitizing concept "production relations" from Connell's (2009) gender theory was applied to narratives describing the division of stereotypical male and female roles in the home.

Unlike sensitizing concepts, emergent codes were derived from the data themselves and added to the codebook throughout analysis. Identifying emergent codes help to ensure a "fit" is accomplished between the developing theory and participants' experiences (Charmaz, 2006, p. 54). This process is critical for grounded theory given its requirement to construct meaning *from* and *with* the data, rather than apply a preexisting framework or lens (Charmaz, 2006). Emergent codes included labels I applied to name segments of data as well as codes that used participants' own words. For example, *in vivo* codes (Charmaz, 2006) were constructed from specific language a participant used that captured a significant perception, meaning, or viewpoint of the study participants. These codes "serve[d] as symbolic markers of participants' speech and meanings" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55). For instance, when a mother was asked to describe how she managed all of her household and work duties while being constantly criticized by her husband, she responded, "it's my job," followed by a story demonstrating the social pressures she felt as a mother. Other mothers described similar feelings using the same or different language that were also adequately captured by the *in vivo* code, "it's my job." Taken literally, this phrase and code said very

little about the mothers' viewpoints or experiences; however, in the context of the stories shared and in the context of the larger analysis, "it's my job" described the more complicated, symbolic meaning of the societal pressures and obligations of being a mother that contributed to mothers' feelings of constraint.

Coding process. Diagramming was used throughout the analysis to map out and examine the theoretical structures and construct theoretical ideas. For example, early on in analysis, a visual map was created to organize codes and categories and identify the processes that lie within. This mapping technique was particularly useful between stages of coding to fully involve myself in the data and generate ideas (Charmaz, 2006). Diagramming was also crucial before conducting axial coding because it provided an unstructured opportunity to diagram how theoretical categories were related before looking more specifically at the connections among the categories and subcategories using the axial coding paradigm. Thus, by using diagramming as an analytic tool, I was able to develop a skeletal, theoretical framework early on of main categories and concepts constructed from the data that was later expanded upon and linked together in axial and selective coding.

Memo writing was also used throughout analysis to serve as an audit trail for analytic decisions, to help construct theoretical ideas, and to maintain reflexivity. Coding and other analysis activities were recorded in procedural memos to document analytic steps, decisions, and changes in direction. For example, I documented decisions regarding when and why I moved from open coding techniques to axial coding techniques. Other memos included reminders to map out a portion of codes the next time I was in the data, including a note about why this would be helpful. Theoretical memos were written to document my own personal thoughts about the analysis process, including challenges and successes. These memos also were used to develop theoretical ideas and ask questions of the data as well as of myself as a researcher. Memoing ensured that I remained reflexive throughout the research process, or remained aware of and challenged any potential biases or limitations that I brought with me to the analytic process.

In sum, open (i.e., line-by-line, incident-to-incident, and focused) coding allowed me to label and categorize the data; axial coding allowed me to build connections between and among the categories; and selective coding allowed me to systematically refine and flesh out the theoretical framework in full. Analytic tools, such as diagramming and memoing, required "reentering" the data throughout the coding process to open my mind as a researcher, eliminate the natural tendency to want to fit data into preconceived notions, and ensure active and continuous engagement in the research process (Charmaz, 2006, p. 148).

Theoretical Saturation

Theoretical saturation generally refers to the point in data collection and analysis when no additional information, properties, or dimensions can be added to complete or advance the theoretical explanation that has been developed (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1999).

It is imperative to note that in grounded theory, achieving saturation is *not* as simple as recognizing when the same information is presented over and over again from multiple data sources, as Rubin and Rubin (2005) define it (and that others call data or information saturation), a common misunderstanding of the concept. Although data saturation may be one step in accomplishing theoretical saturation, more is required. Data analysis and/or collection should continue until meaningful categories are fully understood in terms of their properties and dimensions, no new meaningful categories are identified, and relations or linkages between categories and concepts are no longer formed or modified (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2007). To put it more simply, theoretical saturation occurs when the “meat” of the theoretical framework (e.g., its components and the linkages between those components) is in place and complete.

Achieving theoretical saturation is difficult and time-consuming. In fact, Corbin and Strauss (2007) argue that complete theoretical saturation can *never* fully be achieved. Given that grounded theory is built upon the assumptions that experience (and thus, the developing theory as well) is situated within an ever-changing world consisting of endless, sociocultural and historical contexts, theories developed, too, will be ever changing and evolving through time and space, never reaching full saturation. The theoretical model developed in this study, too, never reached full theoretical saturation. Analytic exercises described above, such as coding, diagramming, and memoing, helped me twist and turn and link together individual datum, categories, and patterns to identify missing gaps in the theoretical framework and to refine the theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2007) until a core construct was saturated. These exercises helped to develop the beginning workings of a theoretical explanation of control processes in intimate relationships, but theoretical saturation could not be achieved for the full model due to time and resource constraints, including the constraints imposed by using an existing sample frame.

Rigor

Throughout the research process, I made efforts to ensure a rigorous and trustworthy grounded theory analysis. Conducting a credible analysis is important to ensure a researcher’s own honest examination of the phenomena of interest, to provide confidence to readers that the knowledge they are absorbing is empirically sound, and to demonstrate and establish credibility to colleagues or other researchers who may not be familiar with grounded theory methods. Evaluating the rigor of a grounded theory analysis can be done in multiple ways and guidelines for doing so vary across fields (e.g., see Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1999). For purposes of this study, I used Charmaz’s (2006) guidelines, as she integrates multiple approaches to evaluating rigor into one cohesive set of criteria. Specifically, I established rigor by demonstrating *credibility*, *originality*, and *usefulness*.

Steps were taken throughout the research process to demonstrate *credibility*. Systematic comparisons were continuously made among the data, the codes and categories applied to the data, the emerging patterns and relationships, and the developing theory (Charmaz, 2006). I used multiple analytic

tools, such as memoing, coding, diagramming, and mapping, to facilitate a constant back and forth process of making comparisons. Indeed, no grounded theory is truly “grounded” and thus credible without a constant back-and-forth engagement with the data and what emerges from the data.

Patterns and relationships that were identified through constant comparison were evident across multiple data sources. In other words, codes, categories, and their linkages “fit” and were “relevant” to multiple participants’ experiences (Charmaz, 2006, p. 54). Such continuity across observations and strong connections between the data and my own inferences lends credibility to the analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Throughout Chapter 4 (Results), I provide specific quotations from the interviews as further evidence of the credibility of my interpretations. Furthermore, credibility was enhanced through the use of a research team: all interview transcripts were independently coded by at least two research team members; all stages of coding and fleshing out of the theoretical framework were discussed among at least two team members; and in instances of disagreement or confusion, discussions took place until agreement was reached among the coding group to reduce the potential for individual coder bias.

A rigorous grounded theory analysis should also be *original*. A central goal of grounded theory is to uncover new and fresh ideas or insights rather than confirm preconceived notions (Charmaz, 2006). Importantly, the analysis should be significant and meaningful socially and theoretically to both the field of study and the human experience; it should challenge, build upon, or refine preexisting knowledge on social processes or current theoretical ideas in the field (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory is essentially innovative and particularly fitting for this study, as it remains unclear in current literature what makes control coercive in abusive relationships. Although existing theory is used to inform the current study, the theoretical explanation constructed was entirely original and grounded in the women’s experiences shared during the interviews.

Last, but equally important, grounded theory should be *useful* (Charmaz, 2006). It should be applicable to everyday life and guide future research endeavors in the same or relevant areas of study. It should contribute to the current state of knowledge in the field and have implications for real people and real life circumstances. The grounded theory proposed in the current study advances a more complete and nuanced understanding of control in intimate relationships and will be useful in both future research (e.g., measurement) and practice (screening to identify coercive control for intervention and prevention purposes).

Ethical Considerations

Numerous steps were taken to ensure the safety and privacy of participants and to reduce potential risks. Mothers who participated could have been at emotional risk due to their history of abuse and potential for ongoing abuse after separation. They also may have been emotionally vulnerable given their recent experience of divorce. To ensure their comfort and reduce distress, mothers were informed of

the potentially emotional nature of the interviews, told they could skip any questions that they did not want to answer or come back to any questions they were not ready to process, take a break at any point during the interview, or end the interview entirely. I, too, stayed attuned to their reactions and checked in on how they were doing throughout the interview. During the informed consent process, mothers were informed that, although I would not be asking specifically about child abuse, I would be mandated by law to report any recent incidents of it; thus, chances of disclosed child abuse were reduced and additional distress or burden associated with the reporting process was deterred. I also informed mothers of my obligation to report any reports of suicidal or homicidal feelings.

Also during the informed consent process, I detailed the procedures in place for data security to assure mothers of the confidentiality of their responses. Specifically, I explained that all data were secured in a university office where only the research team could access it; an identification number was assigned to all data; all identifying information was removed from the data files and transcripts (e.g., names would be replaced with pseudonyms); and all audio recordings were kept separate from the main data files until transcribed and destroyed upon completion of the project. Mothers received cash payments only to eliminate any paper trail from checks, and any correspondence with participants regarding the project did not reveal the focus on abuse. Finally, a federal certificate of confidentiality was obtained prior to recruitment so that signed payment forms would not be required, further protecting participants' confidentiality.

Chapter Four: Results

Control was present in all relationships in complex ways, not all of which were coercive. The central category of control identified was “felt or experienced constraint,” but the processes of constraint involved two distinct patterns. The first pattern, *constraint through commitment*, involved mothers who felt constraint from the trust and commitment involved in heterosexual marriage. The second pattern, *constraint through force*, involved constraints that were targeted and forced on wives by their husbands. The second pattern was more consistent with notions of coercive control described in the IPV literature (i.e., with battering). In contrast, the first pattern of constraint resembled the ways in which cultural conventions of marriage and family can create or contribute to one’s restriction of themselves or their partner to meet societal expectations

Constraint through Commitment

In the pattern of *constraint through commitment* ($n = 17$), one or both partners constrained the other or themselves in order to uphold cultural conventions of heterosexual marriage, maintain their marriage, and manage parenting. Over time, feelings of constraint turned into feelings of being controlled when unresolved issues and recurring conflict triggered or magnified controlling behaviors by husbands, ultimately leading to marital dissatisfaction, disillusionment, and divorce. See Figure 3 for a visual representation of the processes involved in constraint through commitment.

Maintaining marriage and managing parenting. Maintaining marriage and managing parenting involved meeting partners’ expectations, making sacrifices, and holding partners accountable to those expectations. Efforts often became burdensome or unsuccessful for these mothers over time.

Meeting expectations. Mothers reported feeling restricted by their partners’ traditional views of gender roles and expectations of how men and women should operate as parents and spouses. These attitudes often stemmed from husbands’ family of origin or observations of men’s and women’s roles in daily household tasks and childcare. For example, Hannah shared pressures her husband placed on her to fulfill the traditional female role in the household that were influenced by his own upbringing:

I wait on him hand and foot . . . and I knew that he appreciated it and then I don’t know when that changed, but then it was just expectations . . . lack of appreciation . . . I think the way he grew up and . . . how he was raised on what his mom did definitely was a big impact on what he felt I should do. You know, kind of the old “barefoot and in the kitchen” type thing.

Many of the husbands, like Hannah’s, were openly vocal about their expectations and became critical when expectations were not met, such as when prepared meals or cleaning efforts were “not good enough.” Criticism led to feelings of worthlessness and perceptions of being undervalued and limited in freedom, as mothers felt more and more “like a slave” and less like a wife and partner.

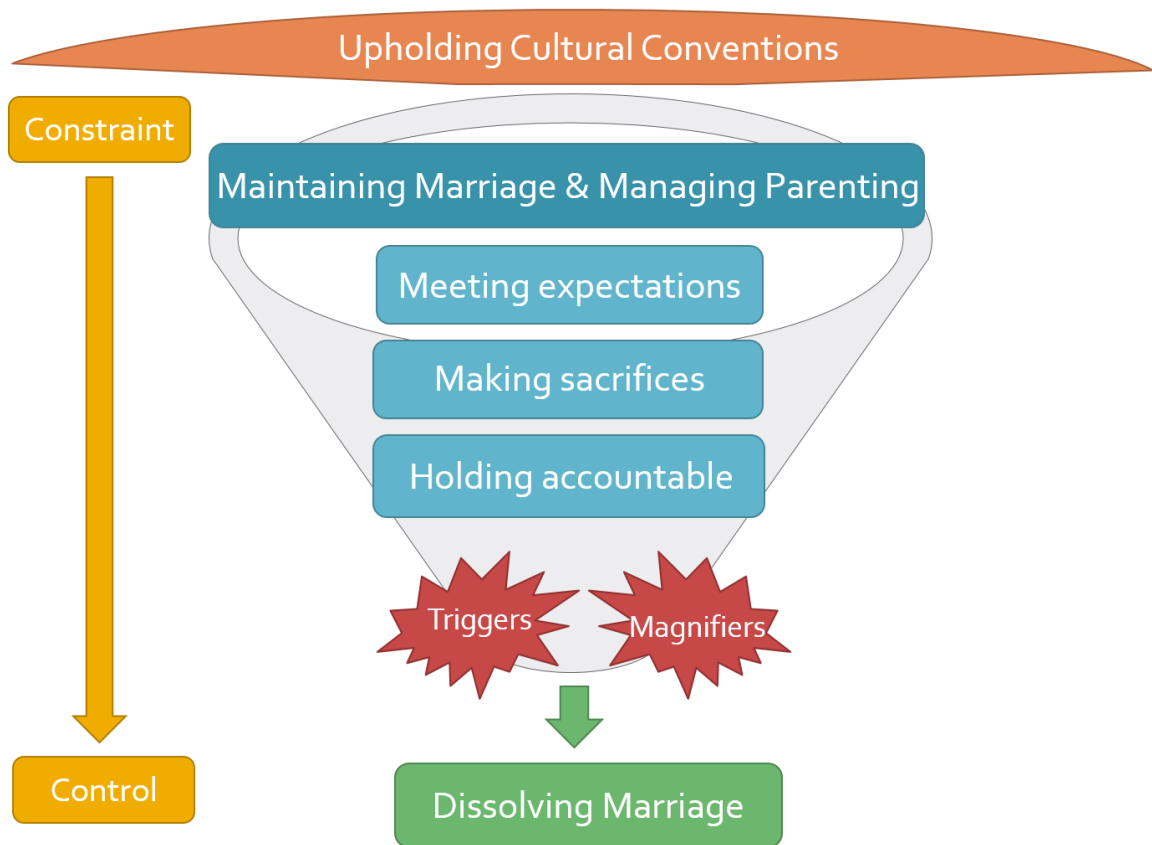


Figure 3. The process of constraint through commitment (pattern 1).

Other mothers became aware of unspoken expectations during conflict, such as arguments about how one's social time interfered with household or childcare responsibilities. Janet shared that she would sometimes have a close family member babysit her son when invited to spend time with friends because her husband was sometimes unable, but more often unwilling, to care for him. Like some mothers expressed, her husband never told her directly that she needed to sacrifice personal time for parenting, but recurring conflict and disapproval revealed underlying expectations:

He was a little bit controlling. . . . I was working at the bank and . . . there's a bunch of girls that work there. . . . They would wanna go out and do things together and I think he really felt like . . . I should be at home with Mack [her son] . . . doing housework.

Mothers often placed undue burden on themselves from internalized messages about what a mother or wife should be that were reinforced by those around them, adding to their feelings of restriction. When Teresa was asked if she felt like her partner was the reason for feeling constrained in her role as a mother and a wife, she replied:

No . . . I probably put those restrictions upon myself that this is what I'm supposed to do as a wife and a mother. This is my obligation . . . the role that a female is supposed to

have, because that's what I knew. It's the example that I'd had from everybody around me.

Thus, mothers like Teresa felt constrained by cultural conventions of marriage and motherhood, not always directly by their husbands.

Making sacrifices. Maintaining marriage and managing parenting also involved mutual sacrifice. Many mothers shared the belief that compromise and sacrifice of some personal needs and time were necessary and acceptable in marriage among both partners. For example, Ivy described how she or her former husband would take on more burdens of juggling work and family, but that efforts would even out over time:

Maybe there were times where Frank felt like, you know, I'm just here as the babysitter. Or . . . I'm just the guy on the side . . . because I was just too busy working, trying to maintain everything. . . . [But] you know, we were good with that. Me and Frank worked really, really well together with taking care of the household tasks. . . . So you have to be flexible, you know. There are times that I make more money, and times that he makes more money, and times when you have to be home with the kids. Not only are we one, but I couldn't do anything without you and vice versa.

Issues arose, however, when sacrifices were not equal over time or personal needs were not met. According to mothers, often it was them who bore the most burden. To appease their husbands or their own concerns, mothers reported avoiding conflict by sacrificing personal preferences or intimacy. For example, Kirsten explained:

There were things that, like, I would enjoy doing that I wouldn't do because I knew that he wouldn't like doing that. . . . So I made sacrifices . . . or, like, there were times, I guess, I would not tell him stuff because I knew he wouldn't be happy and we'd get into a fight about it. So I guess I kind of felt restricted 'cause I couldn't be as open with him as I would want to be with someone I'm in a serious relationship with.

Mothers also shared how their personal needs or preferences were limited because their husbands held the decision-making power in their relationship. Heidi, for example, described trying to thwart her husband's reckless spending in an effort to avoid taking out a second mortgage without much success:

We don't even own a home . . . and you wanna get all these things and we have small children? We have no time . . . but . . . he's like, he's the man, he's gonna get it . . . and he did it. Was just kind of, like, "I have the final say."

Finally, several mothers described the ways in which they earned their personal time and freedom by making sacrifices or using knowledge of their husbands' needs to gain the upper hand. Julie, for example, explained:

He hated when I would go out with my girlfriends. . . . He would give me so much grief. . . . I used to joke . . . when my girlfriends and I would want to do something . . . like, “you gotta give me enough heads up because I gotta sleep with Charlie like three times the week before – before I ask him if I can go” (laughs). . . . So I’ve gotta get him good and buttered up first.

Holding accountable. Husbands reportedly used controlling behaviors to reinforce mutual agreements of trust and commitment in marriage. Husbands held their wives accountable to those agreements using intimidation, surveillance, and physical force. For example, although he did not have a history of being controlling, Teresa’s husband began to monitor her when he suspected she might cheat on him:

I was going out with my siblings every weekend . . . but I was staying out way later than any adult needs to be staying out. . . . That caused a lot of issues for us, because . . . it was . . . maybe borderline inappropriate sometimes . . . just to get a reaction from him. . . . His behavior then got a bit more crazy-weird. . . . He was convinced that I was cheating on him. . . . He was reading my emails. He was taking my phone. . . . He admitted to me that he had recording devices set up in the basement . . . because he knew that he was going to catch me in the act.

Similarly, Aliyah’s husband “forbid [her] to have male friends” when she spent time with a male acquaintance whom he had discouraged her from seeing, and Mindy’s husband began restricting her computer activity, eventually destroyed her laptop, and then resorted to physical violence after finding a dating website in her web history. She said that in times of conflict, her husband “was the type that took his anger out on physical objects because he couldn’t take it out on me, until he did. That was wrong.” Some husbands held their wives accountable for their own problems. Chrissy, for example, agreed to hide her husband’s drug addiction from others. He would have periods of “agitation” and “paranoia” when high and would not allow her to see her family: “I think it was just a paranoid feeling that he had, that if I went over to my mom and dad’s house then I, you know, told them what was going on then he might’ve gotten caught.”

Triggers and magnifiers. Controlling behaviors first surfaced when trust was broken or expectations were not met and were episodic and situational. Husbands’ control attempts and motives to control were clearly identifiable and explainable by the mothers. For example, when Chrissy was asked if her husband was controlling when he was not using drugs, she replied, “No, not at all. Not at all. He was very calm, very easy going.” Teresa explained that her freedom was not limited by her husband in her everyday life: “He never told me I couldn’t do anything. I pretty much just did whatever I wanted to do.” It was only when she sought male attention outside of the marriage that he began to monitor her activities

and contact with others. Thus, feelings of being controlled were triggered or magnified by specific situations or events but did not define the marriage as a whole.

Dissolving marriage. Over time, however, as issues remained unresolved, husbands' controlling behaviors and mothers' feelings of restriction increased and contributed to marital dissatisfaction, disillusionment, and ultimately dissolution. Chrissy later described the impact of the restrictions her husband placed on her contact with family and his drug addiction on her marriage: "In the end it became we just didn't even speak to each other. One would walk into a room and the other would walk out." The pressures Hannah felt to fulfill her husband's expectations of traditional female roles and her husband's criticism when she did not weighed heavily on her during marriage, contributed to their divorce, and still impacted her at the time of the interview:

He really just made me feel worthless, you know? Just in the ways he would talk. . . . I pretty much wanted to just go in a corner and hide. . . . I just really . . . withdrew from him . . . withdrew from a lot of things. . . . I remember my mom said . . . "the bubble . . . he's taking the bubble from her" . . . just the bubbly personality, you know? . . . I think people would still say I'm . . . outgoing and [a] nice kind of person . . . just the insides and outsides don't match up as easily as they used to. . . . A lot of things just feel like a farce . . . to make sure that I still have the appearance of what I used to feel inside.

Constraint through Force

Constraint through force ($n = 5$) involved enforced constraint and an intentional deprivation of freedom and liberties. In contrast to upholding cultural conventions of marriage to maintain the family in the first pattern, constraint through force involved husbands *using* social norms regarding gender and the family as a tool for depriving their wives of the freedom to be themselves and liberty to do what they wanted. Husbands used a combination of tactics, including isolation, manipulation, intimidation, and micro-regulation, to maintain power over their wives, often in gendered ways. According to mothers, controlling behaviors were not isolated to particular triggers or situations; rather, they were present early on in the relationship and increased over time. Mothers were reportedly imprisoned by their partners—literally in their homes and symbolically in regards to their sense of self. In contrast to the first pattern, marriages were not gradually dissolved over time due to unresolved issues; rather, mothers underwent a process of realization and, with the exception of one mother, had to actively break free from being imprisoned. Figure 4 provides a visual representation of the processes involved in constraint through force.

Depriving freedom and liberties. Husbands reportedly used a combination of isolation, manipulation, intimidation, and micro-regulation to maintain power over their wives, deprive them of freedom and autonomy, and contain them.

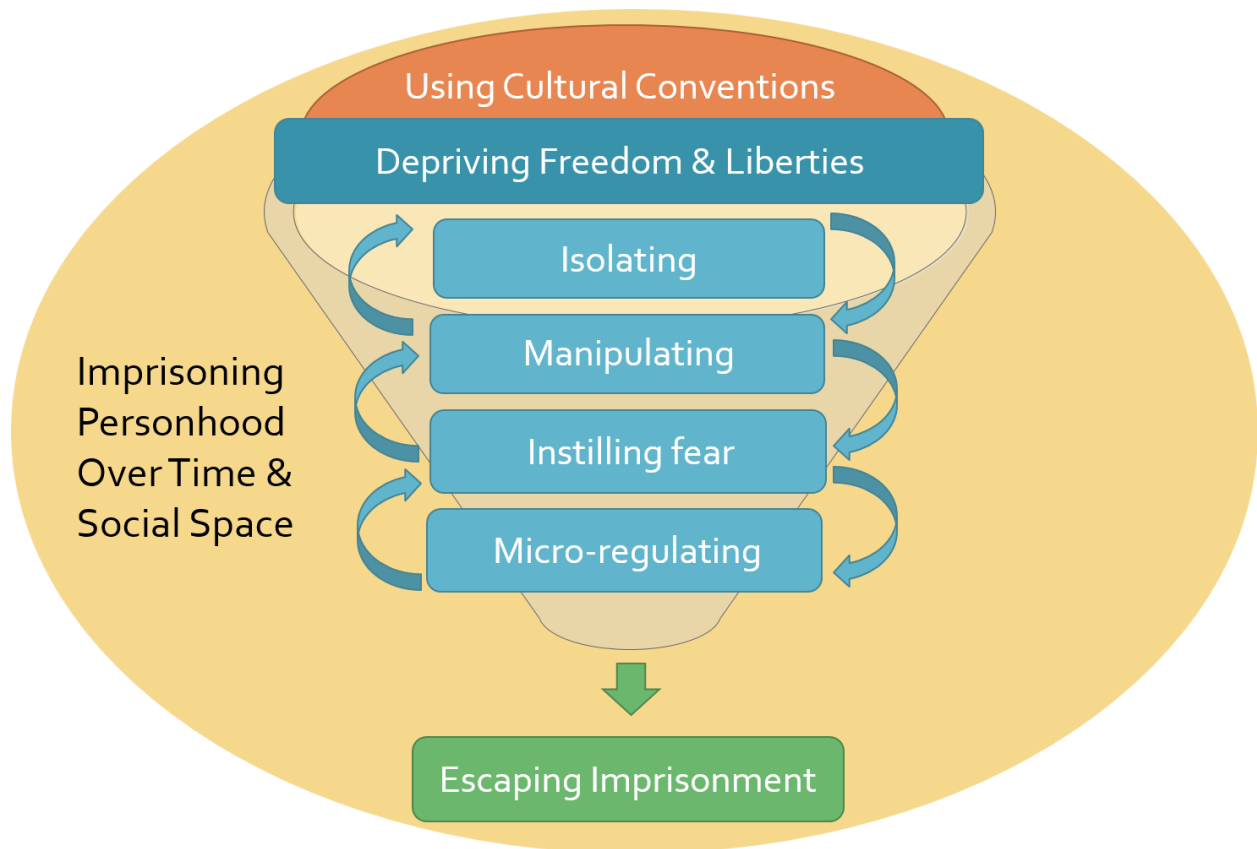


Figure 4. The process of forced constraint (pattern 2).

Isolating and manipulating. According to mothers, husbands controlled and severely limited their contact with family and friends outside of the home. They often convinced their wives that communication with others was detrimental to themselves, to him, or to the family. Kitty described:

He pretty much took all of my friends. I wasn't allowed to socialize. And . . . he found reasons for me not to be able to do those things: because it was too dangerous, because it was my friends tainted me. . . . So he would try to turn things against me, against them.

Kelly's husband made guests feel uncomfortable in their home and "made it known" that her friends or family were not welcome. Ultimately she withdrew herself from many of those relationships: "I stopped doing those things . . . because of my embarrassment . . . just kind of withdrew for a while." As a result, many mothers became distanced from family and friends and thus lost their network for social support. Jamie shared, "You know, his big thing was isolation, and he kept me away from all my friends. I lost all of my friends." Dakota's husband would retaliate by giving her the silent treatment for days if she spent any time with her friends. "He was teaching me a lesson," she said, "like . . . 'You didn't choose me tonight. You chose them.'" Through isolation and manipulation, husbands could have the greatest influence on their wives and ensure that others would not find out about his treatment of her.

Instilling fear. Husbands used physical force, either directly at their wives through physical assault or indirectly by throwing objects and punching walls to intimidate and scare their wives. These behaviors reinforced husbands' control over wives by instilling fear that would prevent them from resisting, disobeying, or leaving. Kitty described her husband's scare tactics:

He, like, hit a door in our house instead of hitting me, like he had me up against the wall and he hit the door. . . . And he would always pull me over to that door and like shove my face over there to show me that he could hit me. . . . He wanted to scare me and show me he owned me.

Intimidation had a lasting impact on mothers and a climate of fear was pervasive. Andrea recalled, "There wasn't a day that went by that I didn't cry, you know, or was scared or stuck. . . . I felt threatened and restricted 24/7. I mean, it's always walking on egg shells." Jamie described how this fear prevented her from leaving:

I was just the same [as other abused women] . . . going back and going back time after time. . . . I was scared, and I think this fear is what brings a lot of women [back] because the fear of not having that man with you and not knowing where he is and not know what he's doing is worse than when he is with you. At least if he's with me . . . then at least I'm prepared.

Only one woman, Dakota, shared that despite her husband's efforts and use of severe physical abuse, she was never afraid of what he might do to her. When asked if she ever felt threatened or afraid she replied, "No, 'cause I think I could probably handle myself. . . . Just anxious." It was only later, when her husband threatened her children, that she felt afraid.

Micro-regulating. Mothers reported that their husbands closely regulated and monitored their daily activities to ensure compliance and limited contact with the outside world. Kitty's husband tracked her car activity: "He would measure my tires from my garage door to make sure I didn't leave the house." When Andrea's husband did allow her to leave the house, she was on a strict schedule: "He would time me . . . if I left and went to the post office or went to the grocery store." Husbands often kept tabs on who their wives communicated with by tracking their cell phone usage and computer activity. Jamie shared, "I had no privacy. He was always checking my emails, checking my phone, going through my purse, going through my wallet, snooping through everything."

Unlike mothers in the first pattern, there was no identifiable trigger, such as suspicion of an affair or a change in their wives' behavior that motivated husbands' isolating, manipulating, intimidating, or micro-regulating tactics. In a struggle to understand their husbands' behavior, three of the mothers, like Kitty, shared a sense of bewilderment and tried to find a source to blame, often turning inward to blame themselves: "Why would you [her husband] do something like that? . . . I don't know what I was doing to

deserve that. . . . I replayed it and replayed it and I'm like I don't know where I'm going wrong." Two mothers perceived that their husbands were controlling because "that's just who he is." For example, when I asked Andrea if she could explain her husband's controlling behavior, she responded:

The thing is [it's] just the way he ended up being. . . . It's just him and I don't understand why, um, what triggered him to be that way, other than he's the type of person that thinks he can control everybody and everybody should obey him.

Husbands' motives appeared to stem from a larger need to create and maintain control, fear, and a sense of ownership.

Using cultural conventions. Rather than expecting mothers to fill gendered roles for the good of the family, as in the first pattern, gender was used as a tool to reinforce husbands' control and ownership of their wives. Four of the husbands manipulated and forbid their wives from pursuing education or employment because that is only "for men to do." Dakota explained

I was a mom and that's all I should ever consider myself being. . . . So going back to school or anything would be ridiculous because I'm just a mom and that's what I need to do. . . . I couldn't have a life.

Andrea's husband forced her to quit her job: "He said that's just the way it was supposed to be. You know, the woman's not supposed to work. The woman's supposed to stay home and do her jobs." These tactics served as a way to limit wives' access to resources that might benefit or empower them. Andrea added that she wasn't allowed to have access to any money. Indeed, these mothers were forced to be dependent on their husbands for money, transportation, and opportunities to be outside of the home. Finally, two mothers reported that their husbands tried to de-womanize them to diminish their sense of self and femininity. Kitty shared, "He didn't like me wearing dresses. He didn't like me wearing tank tops. . . . I wasn't allowed to look at all like a woman." Similarly, Andrea said, "I couldn't wear makeup anymore. I had to stop wearing perfume. . . . I couldn't paint my nails."

Expanding over time and social space. Mothers observed "red flags" of control issues early on but did not give them much thought at the time. Kitty explained, "He was controlling in our dating, like he would pick fights and say that I was looking at someone. . . . It was very petty. . . . But [I] just didn't really think much of it." Control increased over time and social space, particularly when relationship milestones were met, such as getting married or having children. Kitty continued, "As soon as we got married, but really once Nate was born, then he had control over me, and he knew I wasn't going anywhere." Similarly, Andrea said that after the birth of her first son, "Things just started changing. He started becoming really controlling and doing what he wanted, but I couldn't go anywhere and I couldn't have any friends. I couldn't have any family."

Ultimately mothers were held captive in their homes and denied personal rights of autonomy and sense of self. Even though control increased over time, it was unpredictable and unexplainable. As Kitty stated:

I don't know what I was doing to deserve that. . . . And, you know, one day it would be OK and then the day it would be horrible. So . . . it was a yo-yo. You never knew what you were going to be given and that was what was terrifying and hard.

Unlike the control attempts and triggers that were explainable, short-term, and situational in constraint through commitment, being constrained through force involved pervasive control, present in everyday life. As Jamie shared, "It was every day. It was a way of life for me. . . . And over the years it got worse." Dakota shared having a similar experience when asked how often she felt controlled: "I think that was just a constant. . . . All the time."

Escaping imprisonment. Over time, four of the mothers came to realize their imprisonment and took steps to actively break free from their husband's control. Some of these mothers described a defining moment of awareness. Kitty's husband's control over her became most salient when:

He took away the groceries shopping. He took away me being allowed to see my family. . . . That's when it was really apparent to me. I mean I could live without my friends . . . but when I wasn't allowed to leave my house at all, that was when I really thought this guy is really—he has me on lockdown.

For these four mothers, escaping involved a long process of financial and emotional preparation. Dakota described her preparation:

I got my own checking account. . . . He would give me his receipts and . . . every time he'd spend money on something excessive, I would put the same exact amount in my savings account. So I ended up with over \$3,000 to leave him. . . . I got [an] apartment in March and kept it a secret. . . . I was really scared to take the jump. . . . But it's what made me . . . say I'm done; I can't do this anymore.

These four mothers were eventually able to leave the relationship but not without consequence or risk. For Jamie, her attempt to leave resulted in severe violence and injury:

I had intentions of getting the keys and leaving and he wouldn't let me have the keys. . . . He grabbed me, pushed me up against the wall. Threw me on the floor. Threw me against the coffee table. Pinned me down on the couch. Was choking me . . . and I could tell that I was about to pass out.

Husbands also prevented their wives from leaving in indirect ways. Jamie added:

He threw [my shoes] outside in the snow. . . . He knew I couldn't walk without my shoes because I had a broken foot at the time. . . . He broke my phone . . . broke my glasses so I

couldn't see . . . took my coat away . . . imprisoning me in his own way to the house, and he knew what he was doing.

All of the mothers reported ongoing intrusion by their former partners after separation. After escaping, Kitty reported ongoing fear, stalking, and harassment by her former partner: "For a very long time when we first got separated, he would stake out by my parents' house and like watch us from up on a hill. . . . I was afraid to death to leave the house."

The fifth mother, Kelly, stayed with her husband to protect herself and her children until *he* was removed from the home by police arrest. He was never physically violent towards her but she feared he would kill her if she left and thus had never planned to leave him:

[I] felt like I was trapped in a situation where I wouldn't have gotten out safely. . . . He would've stalked me if I would've left him and I didn't want to live that kind of life. It's easier to keep the peace and maybe not be real comfortable, but it's better than the unknown of, you know, I'm gonna get shot in the parking lot or stalked.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The current study used grounded theory methods to develop a theoretical explanation of the processes of control in intimate relationships and what makes control coercive. The theoretical category identified as central to the processes of control was “felt or experienced constraint,” but two distinct patterns were involved in producing this phenomenon. The first pattern, *constraint through commitment*, involved a process of being constrained by oneself or one’s partner to uphold cultural conventions of heterosexual marriage and parenting. The second pattern, *constraint through force*, involved a process of being controlled in a targeted and systematic way by one’s partner. Husbands in each pattern exhibited some of the same behaviors (e.g., limiting time with friends or family, monitoring contact with others, pressuring or expecting wives to fill traditional gender roles, using physical violence), and some mothers in each group explicitly described their partners as controlling. However, the antecedents, contexts, and consequences of constraint were very different, and only one pattern, *constraint through force*, resembled what is classically thought of as coercive by violence researchers. Importantly, each group in the current study included mothers who had and had not experienced physical violence. Thus, the findings not only reveal important variations in control processes, namely differences between control that is and is not coercive, but also provide an understanding of control that is not contingent on physical violence.

Understanding the Processes of Non-Coercive Control

Because I was interested in understanding coercive control, I initially purposively sampled mothers who had medium to high scores on the PMWI (Tolman, 1992), a widely used measure of coercive control. Surprisingly, few of these mothers’ narratives appeared to involve the all-encompassing, chronic coercive control often described in the IPV literature. In contrast, the control they experienced—*constraint through commitment*—appeared similar to the “short-term” (p. 6) control attempts that accompany nonviolent conflict or situational couple violence (Johnson, 2008). Indeed, husbands used control tactics in an attempt to win an argument or address a recurring issue (e.g., broken trust or unmet expectations), rather than in an attempt to control their partner wholly. These reports are in line with conceptualizations of control as a behavior intended to get something that one wants, direct one’s partner to behave a certain way, or to prevent a behavior that is perceived as “inappropriate” (Stets, 1995; Stets & Hammons, 2002). Thus, controlling behaviors were enacted by husbands to meet self-serving or family-serving goals, such as to meet a partner’s expectations or hold a partner accountable to expectations, rather than to limit one’s ability to live freely and autonomously.

Although husbands’ control attempts were situationally triggered, mothers perceived an ongoing pressure to fulfill roles and expectations related to the cultural conventions of heterosexual marriage. In this way, constraint was pervasive, but not targeted by their partner specifically and intentionally toward them. According to past and contemporary research, these experiences of heterosexual marriage and

motherhood are not uncommon (Arendell, 2000; Connell, 2009; Russo, 1976). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that traditional marriages involving patriarchy, incongruent role expectations, and inequities in the division of house and family work contribute to marital dissatisfaction and conflict for women, particularly mothers (Blair & Johnson, 1992; Hackel & Ruble, 1992; Jansen & Liefbroer, 2006; Kalmuss, Davidson, & Cushman, 1992; McHale & Crouter, 1992; Wilcox & Nock, 2006; Zvonkovic, Schmiege, & Hall, 1994). These issues, rather than coercion or physical violence, appeared to contribute to divorce among mothers in the *constraint through commitment* group.

In the process of *constraint through commitment*, mothers' feelings of restriction were produced by the common constraints involved in commitment to marriage, including the "personal commitment" to want to continue a relationship despite its challenges, the "moral commitment" that one ought to continue despite sacrifices, and the "structural commitment" that one has to continue to fulfill cultural conventions of marriage as a commitment for life (Johnson, Caughlin, & Huston, 1999; Kapinus & Johnson, 2002). Although "structural commitment" shaped mothers' endurance to continue the marriage despite trials of stress and conflict, the process of *constraint through commitment* strained their "personal" and "moral" commitment over time, ultimately contributing to divorce. Findings are consistent with theoretical and empirical explanations of power and control as essential to human interactions but with potential to become malicious or problematic in times of relationship conflict, role conflict, unmet needs, poor communication, and relationship dissatisfaction (e.g., Babcock et al., 1993; Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005; Lindahl & Malik, 1999). Thus, power and control dynamics, even when non-coercive, can have profound negative consequences for intimate relationships and contribute to divorce. So, then, what makes control coercive and is it any more harmful than non-coercive control?

Understanding What Makes Control Coercive

Based on the current study, control becomes coercive through the process of *constraint through force*. This pattern of control involved a systematic and targeted entrapment of one's partner. For these mothers, their everyday routines, behaviors, and interactions within and outside of the home were closely monitored by their husbands, mirroring the "microregulation of everyday life" that Stark (2007, p. 5) characterizes as coercive control and that has been found in coercive controlling violence (Johnson, 2008). Mothers recalled early signs of their husbands' control in their dating relationship and saw an increase in controlling behaviors over time, particularly as relational or legal commitments were made (e.g., cohabitating, getting married, having children). Thus, husbands appeared to exploit mothers' vulnerability and emotional dependence on them (Harne & Radford, 2008; Keeling & Fisher, 2012). Husbands forced mothers to meet their demands, restricted their contact with others, and prevented them from leaving the home or making choices freely. Consistent with Johnson (2008), coercive control was "general and long term" and embodied the husband's "ownership of his partner" (p. 6). Furthermore,

constraint through force was a pervasive part of mothers' everyday lives, which also supports Hardesty and colleagues (in press) argument that the frequency in which control tactics are used is a better indicator of coercive control than the number of different tactics implemented.

Constraint through force produced barriers to leaving the relationship that were not present for mothers in the *constraint through commitment* group. Mothers were afraid to leave and risked their safety in doing so. For example, physical violence escalated when mothers attempted to leave their relationship, and harassment and surveillance persisted after separation. Thus, *constraint through force* involved an intense fear of and increased risk for severe physical violence and intrusion after separation. Fear and heightened risk have been found in studies on coercive controlling violence (Fleury, Sullivan, & Bybee, 2000; Hardesty, Khaw, Chung, & Martin, 2008; Hayes, 2012; Johnson, et al., 2014) when abusive partners exert their last attempt to control and contain their partner. Fear and risk also explain mothers' need to make calculated and careful exits from their relationship, steps that were not apparent in the relatively less challenging separation process of mothers in the *constraint through commitment* group. Indeed, even though some mothers in both groups reported a history of physical violence, it was only *constraint through force* that persisted after separation and contributed to ongoing feelings of fear and perceived risk. Therefore, findings suggest that the processes of non-coercive control may not persist after relationship dissolution in the way that coercive control often does (Fleury et al., 2000; Hardesty, 2002).

How Gender and Social Influence Construct the Processes of Control

Stark (2007) argued that the gendered nature of control tactics in abusive relationships is what makes control coercive. In *constraint through force*, gender was, indeed, exploited and used as a tool to regulate one's partner. That is, similar to Stark's (2007) explanation of coercion, control processes in this pattern served to undermine the freedom and autonomy of mothers in highly gendered ways. For example, husbands controlled how their wives dressed and interacted with others as well as their access to transportation, money, and employment. Therefore, in *constraint through force*, Connell's (2009) dimensions of gender were misused to oppress and entrap mothers, supporting Stark's (2007) theory.

However, the process of *constraint through commitment*, also was gendered. Here, the dimensions of gender constructed and influenced the expectations and roles of women as wives and mothers, and "patriarchy in personal life" (Connell, 2009) appeared to contribute to mothers' marital dissatisfaction. Whether or not husbands' expectations were explicitly shared, their traditional, gendered views of family roles surfaced in marital conflict as well as in their criticism of their wives' household work, childcare, and time spent out of the home. These findings are consistent with prior literature documenting the negative effects of men's poor "emotion work" (i.e., positive efforts, such as showing gratitude or providing compliments; Hochschild, 1979) on women's perceptions of marital quality and the

burdens that women unequally bear in daily household and childcare tasks, particularly during the transition to parenthood (Belsky & Pensky, 1988; Bernard, 1982; Blair & Johnson, 1992; Delphy & Leonard, 1992; Erickson, 1993; Greenstein, 1996; Wilcox & Nock, 2006; Wilkie, Ferree, & Ratcliff, 1998). Mothers in the *constraint through commitment* group, too, reported making greater sacrifices than their partners, an inequity that has been frequently discussed in feminist theory and research (e.g., Jack, 1991; Lerner, 1988)

Thus, although *constraint through force* and *constraint through commitment* differed in important ways, both processes involved a degree of regulation of women's roles in and outside of the family. This highlights the ways in which gender serves as an organizational, socially constructed, and fundamental component of daily life (Osmode & Thorne, 1993). West and Zimmerman (1987) argued that the performance of gender reproduces male power; it is this performance that constructs and upholds the power dynamics involved in both control processes, albeit in distinct ways. Thus, contrary to Stark's (2007) argument that coercive control is *uniquely* gendered, non-coercive control in intimate relationships can be gendered as well.

Considering the Social Power Model (Raven, 1993) may help to explain how processes of control, coercive or not, compare in the ways that they are gendered. Feminist and sociological theorists posit that women are disadvantaged to enter relationships with less power than men because they are predefined by social norms to have less power in many realms. That is, women tend to hold less power and status than men in most societies (Lee, Pratto, & Johnson, 2011; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) and are perceived as less powerful (Connell, 2009; Lennon, Stewart, & Ledermann, 2012; Wingood & DiClemente, 2000). Men's power over women in relationships is made possible by these perceptions in addition to their greater access to valued resources in society (England & Farkas, 1986; Stets & Hammons, 2002), providing men the ability and the means to exert social influence or power over a female partner. Thus, according to the Social Power Model (Raven, 1993), patriarchy provides the "bases of power" to "set the stage" for the production of *constraint through commitment* and *constraint through force*.

How and why control becomes coercive in *constraint through force*, and its outcomes, however, are distinct from the motives and outcomes of *constraint through commitment*. Specifically, power is intentionally exploited in *constraint through force*, and the exertion of power is intentionally persistent and patterned to make control tactics effective and for power and dominance to be maintained. As the findings demonstrate, patterns of control were present in early relationship dynamics and expanded over time, creating and maintaining the ideal foundation for ongoing coercion (Johnson, 2008; Stark, 2007). In *constraint through commitment*, although control tactics were also used to exert social influence, they occurred episodically and with a different intent. As opposed to intentionally isolating, intimidating, and

monitoring a partner to control her life and personhood, control tactics used in *constraint through commitment* were implemented as a last resort to win an argument or control a difficult situation or problematic behavior. It was only when issues remained unresolved and partners became increasingly dissatisfied in their marriages that control tactics became more targeted at one's partner and dominated the relationship. Thus, although gender and patriarchy produced men's ability to control and create social influence within both patterns, only *constraint through force* was coercive in its implementation and intent.

Implications for Measuring and Addressing Coercive Control

As explained previously, mothers were initially recruited for the current study because they reported medium to high *coercive* control. What accounts for the apparent mismatch between mothers' qualitative stories and the story suggested by their quantitative responses? The study findings suggest that quantitative measures, like the PMWI, may mask important differences in women's lived experiences of control in intimate relationships. Although mothers initially recruited reported experiencing the control tactics indicated on the PMWI, their narrative reports illuminated critical differences in contexts and consequences. Thus, the PMWI, and other measures of battering relationships (e.g., Women's Experiences with Battering scale; Smith, Earp, & DeVillis, 1995) may fail to adequately capture the processes of control due to their focus on discrete power imbalances and specific acts that are, in fact, present in many relationships (Hardesty et al., in press).

Furthermore, an over focus on determining the presence or absence of *coercive* control creates a false dichotomy: control is either coercive and harmful or not coercive and thus less important. As this study demonstrates, control issues occur and can be harmful to relationships whether coercive or not and whether coupled with physical violence or not. Measures are needed that tap into the nuances of control and physical violence in their myriad of combinations and contexts to continue to advance theoretical and empirical understandings of abuse in intimate relationships. Efforts to develop new measures or revise existing ones must be informed by qualitative research, which take processes and the larger context of both violence and control into account (Jasinski et al., 2014).

Advances in measurement and empirical understandings have implications for practice and policy efforts related to types of violence. Existing assessment tools and interventions used in healthcare and legal arenas rely on identifying discrete acts of violence and treat IPV as a one-size-fits-all phenomenon, excluding the element of coercion (Dutton & Goodman, 2005): "Without attention to this critical element of IPV, legal actors hear only parts of the stories that victims bring them every day in court" (p. 744). Furthermore, the relevance of coercive control to issues of mothers' safety when coparenting with abusive former partners is often overlooked in the development of divorce-related child custody and parenting plans (Hardesty, Hans, Haselschwerdt, Khaw, & Crossman, in press). A comprehensive understanding of

the processes of control is needed to equip legal and healthcare professionals with the knowledge and tools necessary to tailor approaches to the unique dynamics of individual families. The findings of the current study provide a step in that direction.

Study Limitations and Future Directions

Study findings should be considered in light of several limitations. First, this study relied on retrospective data collected at least one year after women had physically separated from their former partner, and, for some women, over two years. Thus, findings may not capture potential nuances in women's perceptions of their partner or relationship during their marriages. Some women also may have had difficulty remembering the details of specific events that occurred during the history of their marriage or they may have reflected more negatively given their marriages had ended. The study also used an existing sample, which, although appropriate for the study goals, limited my ability to theoretically sample new participants to achieve a fully saturated theory.

Second, women were recruited from a sample of divorcing mothers, many of whom initiated the divorce or separation from their partner. Their motherhood status and their desire and ability to divorce should be considered when interpreting findings. Specifically, study findings do not provide an explanation of control in relationships without children and may not apply to relationships that remain intact due to choice or the inability to leave. Furthermore, it is possible that the current sample does not adequately represent mothers with the greatest coercion in their relationships if these mothers refused to participate (e.g., out of fear) or were unreachable (e.g., due to relocation) during recruitment. If this were the case, findings may not capture what Johnson (2008) describes as the truest and most dangerous forms of coercive control.

Finally, the longitudinal study's sample from which mothers were recruited consisted primarily of White, employed, educated middle-class women from one geographic region. Thus, the theoretical explanation developed does not reflect diverse racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic backgrounds and communities. Furthermore, the current analysis did not involve a focus on institutional factors that can create additional barriers for mothers in the separation and divorce process, particularly when abuse is involved. Future studies could expand and/or revise the proposed theory to account for intersections of male power and control with race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, institutional factors, and cultural differences in social pressures or beliefs regarding family, motherhood, marriage, or femininity.

Despite these limitations, this study makes important contributions to the literature on IPV and women's experiences of marriage and motherhood. Theoretical propositions developed in this study fill a gap in current literature on what makes control coercive and shed light on control issues in heterosexual marriage that may contribute to divorce, even if not coercive or abusive. These theoretical propositions provide the early workings of a theory of coercive control, as well as a theory of control in relationships

that is not coercive, that can be developed and refined in future qualitative research and tested empirically in quantitative research. As discussed, this understanding is crucial to empirical and practical efforts to address IPV and other relationship challenges, including conflict and divorce. Finally, this study adds to prior findings on the ways in which social norms, expectations, and patriarchal attitudes influence and create challenges or harm to women and families. The study also supports feminist scholars' advocacy for social change and the call for IPV researchers to consider how and why gender matters in *all* forms of IPV (Anderson, 2013).

Conclusion

In summary, this study supports Johnson's recommendations to consider the context and processes involved in IPV. Findings suggest a need to move beyond measures of isolated behaviors to a more complex assessment of constraint and control in intimate relationships, abusive or not, and to examine the ways that gender can influence a variety of relationship problems. A comprehensive understanding of constraint and control in intimate relationships can inform the development of assessment tools and measures to more accurately identify the types of IPV and distinguish control that is coercive from control dynamics that stem from conflicting expectations and other relationship issues. Furthermore, increased knowledge can be applied to healthcare and legal interventions to address diverse experiences of control and violence.

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Appendix A: Phone Script

NO ANSWER

If an answering machine picks up, leave the following message:

Hello, I am calling for [first and last name]. My name is [first and last name]. I am calling to follow up on the Make It! Project, a project that you participated in at the University of Illinois. I will call back at another time. However, if you would like to call the project office, the phone number is [redacted] or our toll free number is [redacted]. Please feel free to leave a message if I am not available. Thank you very much and I look forward to hearing from you.

ANSWER

Hello, I am calling to speak with [first and last name]. Is she available?

If not available: Do you know when would be a good time to reach her? Could I ask to leave the number to the project office and anyone can assist her? My name is [first and last name]. My telephone number is [redacted] or our toll free number is [redacted].

If asked why I am calling: I am calling to follow up on a research study at the University of Illinois.

If available: Hi, my name is [first and last name] and I am a [graduate research assistant] at the University of Illinois. I am calling to follow up a research study that you participated in recently, the Make It! Project. Is now an OK time to talk for just a few minutes?

If no: Arrange a time to call back.

If YES: Great! As I mentioned, you recently participated in a research study at the University of Illinois on mothers' experiences with divorce and with parenting after divorce. I am a doctoral student and am contacting women who participated in this project and who indicated a willingness to be contacted again for future opportunities to conduct a confidential, in-depth, follow-up, interview to learn more about their experiences for my dissertation research project. If you agreed to participate, I would meet with you for one interview that would last about 1-2 hours and you would be paid \$30 for your time. Similar to the project you were previously involved in, we would meet in a private, safe location to conduct the interview on a day and time that is convenient for you (e.g., university office, private room at local library). However, the structure of this interview will be different than the interviews you have already participated in. Rather than having you respond to structured questions with a brief or numerical response, I will ask you open-ended questions to learn additional details about your experiences and thoughts. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. Is this something that you think you would be willing to participate in?

If no: [OK. I understand. However, I would like to just see if there are any concerns or issues you might have about the study that I could address? (Answer questions/address concerns.)]

If YES: Great! If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked various questions about your experiences during marriage and after separation with your former partner, as well as current experiences and plans you have now. I am interested in learning about both your positive and negative experiences. I also would like to learn about significant events that have occurred as well as your regular or daily activities. For example, I will ask you about the daily routines and

expectations shared between you and your former partner during marriage, such as household tasks, work, or childcare. I also will ask you about potentially negative experiences when your former partner may have done something to hurt or upset you.

Would you be willing to share your experiences in an interview?

If no: **OK. I understand. However, because your participation is important to me, I would like to just see if there are any concerns or issues you might have about participating that I could help with?** (Answer questions/address concerns.)

If still no: **OK. I understand. Could I leave you our project office's phone number just in case you have any questions or decide at a later point that you would be willing to participate?**

If yes: **Great. My name is [first and last name] and our project office's phone number is [redacted]. Please feel free to contact me at any time. Thanks for your time.**

If no: **Thanks very much for your time.**

If not sure and wants time to think about it: [Arrange a time to call back.]

If YES: Great. All we need to do now is set up a time and place for the first interview. Because the interview contains some questions that may be sensitive, it's very important that we conduct the interview in a private and safe location where no one is likely to interrupt, including your former partner. I can schedule an interview at the public library, our office, or your home if that is convenient and safe for you.

- Discuss and make a decision on location:
 - discuss need for child care and for a private room to interview.
 - discuss the possibility of the former partner interrupting the interview if the interview is conducted at the home)
 - set up day/time
 - get directions/ give directions if she's coming to Bevier (see next page)
 - ask if she would like a reminder call the day before
 - make sure she has your contact information
 - agree upon an alternate explanation for our meeting if we are interrupted (e.g., an interview about women's health or parenting.)

Ok, great. Last, because of the structure of the interview and my interest in hearing your story, I would like to audio record the interview if you would be comfortable with that. This helps me collect all of the information I need to best understand your experiences. Every effort will be made to keep these recordings private and secure. All recordings will be saved in password-protected files and only our research staff will have access to the files. Recordings also will be destroyed upon completion of the project. Audio recording the interview is not required, however, and I will take detailed notes if you are not comfortable with being recorded. May I audio record the interview?

If no: **OK. I understand. I will not record the interview and will only take detailed notes.**

IF YES: Great, thank you. Before we end our call, do you have any questions for me? [Answer questions. If no questions, tell her to feel free to contact me before the interview if she should have any questions.] **Thank you very much for your time, and I look forward to meeting with you on [scheduled date, time, and place.]**

Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

[ADD CURRENT DATE]

Name
Street
Street
City, state, zip

Dear _____,

Recently, you participated in the MAKE IT! Project, a research study on mothers' experiences of divorce and parenting after divorce, at the University of Illinois. At your 5th interview you gave permission to be contacted about future opportunities. I am writing to invite you to take part in a follow-up interview to obtain some additional information about your experiences for my dissertation research project. My dissertation project is under the supervision of Dr. Jennifer Hardesty, Associate Professor in the Department of Human and Community Development.

I would very much like to learn more about your experiences in a confidential in-person interview. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you agree to take part in the interview, you will be asked questions about your experiences during your marriage to your former partner, during the separation/divorce process, and the experiences you are having now. I am interested in learning about a variety of experiences, including both positive and negative experiences.

Similar to your previous interviews with the MAKE IT! Project, I would meet with you at a location, date, and time that is safe and convenient for you. However, the structure of the interview will be different from the ones you completed in the past. Rather than asking you to provide a brief or numerical response to structured questions, I will ask you more open-ended questions to gain additional details about your experiences and thoughts. In other words, I would like to hear your story. Your name will not be used in connection with any of the information obtained.

If you join this research study, you would meet with me once for about 1 – 2 hours. To thank you for your time and participation, you will receive \$30.

If you would like to learn more, **please call me at [redacted], or email me at [redacted]**. If you have received this letter in error, I apologize for the inconvenience and would appreciate hearing from you so that I can correct my records.

I look forward to talking with you and appreciate your consideration of this important project.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Crossman, M.S.

Appendix C: Consent to Participate

Title: Family Health and Adjustment After Separation

Investigator: Kimberly Crossman, M.S.
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Human and Community Development
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Project Supervisor: Jennifer L. Hardesty, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Human and Community Development
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Date/Revision: February 26, 2013

Purpose of Research Study / Who is Conducting It

I am conducting a dissertation research project to understand mothers' experiences during marriage, during the separation or divorce process, and after the divorce. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Human and Community Development at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and the study is under the supervision of Dr. Jennifer Hardesty, Associate Professor in the Department of Human and Community Development.

Procedures

I am following up with mothers who participated in the MAKE IT! Project and inviting them to participate in this research study, which is an extension of the same project. You would meet with me one time for about 1 – 2 hours for a follow-up interview. I will meet with you at a time and place of your choosing, such as a university office, in a private room at a local library, or another location that is private and comfortable for you. Before the interview begins, you will be asked for your permission to audio record the interview for the sole purpose of transcribing the interview later. Audio recording the interview is not required and if you are not comfortable with my doing so, I will take detailed notes instead. I will ask you some interview questions about your marriage, your divorce or separation experience, and how things have been going since your divorce (both positive and negative). Research participants in this study must be at least 18 years of age. Project staff members will work in pairs if needed for child care. While I interview you in a separate and private room, another person will be present to provide child care if needed.

Voluntariness

You do not have to join this or any research study. Your participation is voluntary. If you do join, and later change your mind, you may quit at any time. If you refuse to join or end your participation early, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision to participate, decline, or withdraw from participation will have no effect on your current or future relations with the University of Illinois. You also may refuse to answer or skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering during the interview.

Confidentiality

All information collected will be kept private (confidential). Only the project staff will have access to the interviews. All documents with your name, audio recordings, and interview transcripts will be kept locked up in a safe place. Your interviews will only be identified with a code number, not your name. I will describe the results of the study without using names or identifying information. Upon completion of the study, the audio recordings will be destroyed as an added security measure.

I am committed to protecting your privacy. All identifying information in interview notes and transcripts will be immediately removed and replaced with pseudonyms (made-up names) or non-identifiable labels (e.g., participant1). Results of the study will be written and discussed without identifying you or your family. For example, I may use direct quotes from the interview as examples in reporting the results but I will not use any names or identifying information in quotes. If necessary, I will edit the quotes to remove the identifying information without changing the meaning of the quotes.

Your confidentiality is guaranteed. The only time I will report what someone said is if I am told about child abuse (I am required by law to report child abuse), or if someone is so upset they are thinking of hurting or killing themselves or someone else. I will then take steps to help that person get treatment.

Risks/Discomforts

The risks involved in doing this study are minimal. You may find it upsetting to talk about what happened or how you are doing now. That is quite understandable. If you do become upset, we will take a break or stop the interview if you want to. I can do the interview at your home, at a community location (e.g., a private room in a public library), or in a university office. I will schedule the interview at a time and place that is convenient and safe for you. Some people may experience some risk of harm if their former partner finds out about their participation in the study and becomes upset. Please let me know if that is a possible risk for you and I will take every safety measure to lessen this risk. You may end participation at any time without penalty, and you may skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

Benefits

Many people find it helpful to talk about their divorce experience or how things are going, but I do not know for sure if taking part in the study will be personally beneficial for you. However, the information you provide will help other families who have similar experiences in the future. What I learn from you and other mothers in this study will help me and others plan services for divorced mothers and their children in the future.

Compensation

To thank you for your time and participation, I will give you \$30. If you choose to stop participating before completing the interview session, you will still receive the monetary compensation.

Alternatives to Participation

You do not have to participate in this study. If you feel that you would like to talk to someone about your divorce experience or receive help, I can make a referral for you to appropriate community resources.

Questions You May Have About the Research Study

This consent form explains the research study. Please read it carefully. Ask questions about anything you do not understand. If you do not have questions now, you may ask later. If you have questions you can contact me, Kimberly Crossman, or my supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Hardesty.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study or any concerns or complaints, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at [217-333-2670](tel:217-333-2670) (collect calls will be accepted if you identify yourself as a research participant) or via email at irb@illinois.edu

Giving Consent

Your consent to participate in this research study means that you understand the information given to you about the study and in this consent form and you have been given a copy of the consent form. Your consent means that you agree to join the study and give permission to Kimberly Crossman and her supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Hardesty, to perform the procedures referred to; report research findings to

scientific bodies and funding agencies; and to publish and present the findings in professional settings. By consenting, you have not waived any of the legal rights which you otherwise would have as a participant in a research study.

By giving oral consent, you are indicating that you understood what you have read and/or heard and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the study. Do you agree to participate in the study?

Consent to audio record

Your consent to be audio recorded means that you understand the interview will be audio recorded for the sole purpose of collecting and analyzing the data. Audio recording helps us to ensure that we fully learn your experience from your own words and descriptions, but it is not required for you to participate. That is, you may choose not to be audio recorded at all or request that audio recording be stopped at any point during the interview. Only detailed notes will be written if you do not feel comfortable with being audio recorded. Do you allow for the interview to be audio recorded?

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Introduction Script

Thank you for agreeing to meet and talk with me today. The purpose of this interview is to explore further your experiences within your marriage and the separation and divorce process through today. I would really like you to tell me your story as you experienced it. In contrast to the format of prior interviews, today I will be asking broad questions followed by more specific questions throughout the interview. I encourage you to just share your story.

I want you to know that I will not judge you based on your responses. If I don't comment on certain things you tell me, it is simply because I want you to continue your story. I also understand that it may be difficult or emotional to talk about some of your experiences, and your comfort is my priority throughout the interview. You can choose not to answer any questions that you are not comfortable with. If you need to stop any time during the interview, please let me know and we can take a break. Feel free to bring up any questions that you may have as we go through the interview as well.

May I audio record this interview? Do you have any questions for me so far?

Part 1: Background Information/Family Genogram

First, I'm going to ask you some background information, and I'm going to draw out a picture of your family, called a genogram, so that I can get a picture of who is in your family and the relationships in your family. I know that you have shared most of this information with us before but this will serve as a refresher for me and something we can refer to throughout the interview.

1. First, could you tell me who you consider to be in your family, including their relationship to you? *Include immediate and extended family, friends, pets, etc. (generally anyone that she defines as her family). Ask the following questions as she describes her family:*
 - a. Her date of birth, current employment status, highest level of education
 - b. Children's date of birth, ages, sex *(Cover all children and confirm biological/adopted children of former partner vs. other relationships)*
 - i. What is your current custody agreement (physical & legal)? *Confirm where children primarily reside if joint*
 - c. Former partner's date of birth, current employment status, highest level of education
 - i. *If not reconciled*, has your divorce been finalized? During what month & year?
 - ii. Where does he live?
 - iii. What is his current relationship status?
 - d. What is your current relationship status?
 - i. *If in relationship*, where does your partner live?

2. I have one last background question for you. Have you or your former partner had any significant change in income since your last interview with the MAKE IT project?

Part 2: Routines and Expectations During Marriage

Now I'd like to understand what your day to day life was like during your marriage and the expectations that you and your former husband had for each other during that time. Let's start by getting a general picture of what your marriage was like in the beginning.

3. How would you describe the early years in your marriage? (*Prompt: What were some of the good things about your marriage? What were some of the not so good things?*)
4. How did you and your former husband get things done around the house (in terms of who does what and when) early on in your marriage?
 - a. How did this change, if at all, once you had children?
 - b. How did it change, if at all, throughout the later years of your marriage?
5. What other expectations did you have for each other? (*Probe about social life, balancing work and family, travel, time as a couple, finances, other activities outside the home*)
6. Did you typically meet each other's expectations?
 - a. What happened when you didn't?
7. What role, if any, do you think your husband's broader views about women or women's roles played in all of this?

Part 3: Specific Experiences During Marriage

Okay, thanks. That gives me a really good picture of your daily life during your marriage. Next I'd like to ask you about some more specific experiences you may have had during your marriage.

8. Can you describe for me the first time when you were aware that there was a problem with your marriage?
9. Some mothers in our project have talked about abuse by their former partners during marriage. How was abuse a part of your marriage, if at all?
 - a. *If physical abuse:*
 - i. Can you describe the physical abuse you experienced? (*If necessary, probe for frequency and feelings*)
 - ii. What was the context of the abuse? In other words, what kinds of things were going on when abuse occurred? (*If necessary, probe regarding specific arguments, unpredictable violence, and violence used to control*)

iii. In addition to physical abuse, was your former husband abusive in other ways?

1. *If yes:*

- a. Please explain. (*Probe with examples of emotional, sexual, financial, etc. abuse if needed.*)
- b. *If necessary*, Could you describe some ways in which you felt threatened, restricted, or controlled during your marriage, if at all?

2. *If no:*

- a. Sometimes when a partner is physically abusive, they are also abusive in other ways, such as emotionally abusive or controlling. Why do you think your former husband was never abusive towards you in these ways?
- b. How do you think your experience might have been different had you also experienced these other kinds of abuse?

b. *If no physical abuse:*

- i. Can you describe the abuse you experienced? (*If necessary, probe with examples of emotional, sexual, financial, etc. abuse if needed; probe for frequency and feelings*)
- ii. What was the context of the abuse? In other words, what kinds of things were going on when abuse occurred? (*If necessary, probe regarding specific arguments, unpredictable abuse, and abuse used to control*)
- iii. Could you describe some ways in which you felt threatened, restricted, or controlled during your marriage, if at all?
- iv. Sometimes when a partner is emotionally abusive or controlling, they are also violent. Why do you think your former husband was never physically violent during your marriage?
- v. How do you think your experience might have been different had he also been physically violent?

10. How do you make sense of these experiences?

- a. What do you think motivated your former husband's abusive behaviors?

11. How did the abuse change over time, if at all?

12. What effect, if any, did these experiences have on:

- c. Your marriage?
- d. Your other relationships or activities? (*Probe for impact on friendships, family, work, etc.*)

- e. You personally and emotionally?
13. Did you ever tell someone about these experiences?
- f. How did you come to that decision?
 - g. Tell me what that was like, how that went. (*Probe for her feelings and the person's reaction.*)

Part 4: Separation/Divorce Experiences

Ok, thanks so much for sharing those experiences with me. Now I'm going to ask you to tell me about your experiences during your physical separation and divorce.

14. Who initiated the separation? *If he did, why? If she did, how did he respond to your decision?*
- a. What about the divorce?
15. How did the abuse incidents you described play a role in the divorce/separation decision, if any?
16. Tell me about the kind of contact or interactions you had with your former husband during the divorce/separation process? *Probe for frequency, content*
- a. How was abuse a part of the separation and divorce process, if at all? *Probe for emotional, verbal, sexual, physical, control, etc.*
 - b. How would you compare the abuse during the separation/divorce process to the abuse experienced during your marriage?
17. What expectations did you and your former husband have of each other through the separation/divorce process? *Probe same areas as before: time together/apart, coparenting, time with children, finances, household chores, sharing or splitting of assets, etc.*
18. What major challenges have you faced during the separation/divorce process? *Probe regarding custody, child support, coparenting, family & social relationships, work, legal barriers, personal emotions)*
- a. How did you come to your custody agreement?

Part 5: Current Experiences & Future Plans

Ok, thanks. That gives me a good picture of what the separation and divorce process was like for you. In this final section, I would like to talk about how things are going for you now.

19. Describe your current relationship with your former husband.
20. What expectations do you have of each other now? *Probe same areas as before: time together/apart, coparenting, time with children, finances, sharing or splitting of assets, etc.*

21. In what ways have your daily routines and lifestyle changed since your separation/divorce?
Probe regarding social life, work, family relationships, personal emotions
22. Currently, how do you make sense of your marriage and divorce/separation experiences? *Prompt:*
To what extent does it affect you now? *Probe about impact of abuse now.*
23. How do you foresee your relationship with your former husband over the next five years?
24. What are your current priorities for you and your family?
25. If you were to give advice to other mothers who've been in similar situations as you, what would you tell them? Or, what do you wish someone would have told you?

Conclusion

Thank you so much for your willingness to talk to me today. I have learned so much from all that you have shared and you have provided me with some great insight into your experiences. As a gesture of thanks, I would like to give you \$30 for sharing your story with me. Feel free to contact me after the interview if you have any questions or concerns later. Before we end today, do you have any questions for me?