Re-presenting Battered Women: Coercive Control and the Defense of Liberty *

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Throughout the world, with a few exceptions, the legal and policy responses to domestic violence are typically built on a violence model that equates partner abuse with discrete assaults or threats. Implicit in this response is the assumption that the severity of domestic violence can be assessed by applying a calculus of physical and psychological harms to particular assaults. Based on this model, programs focus only on victims' immediate safety. Laws target violent acts; batterer intervention programs (BIPs) seek to "end the violence;" public education campaigns highlight dramatic injuries or fatalities; and child welfare agencies emphasize how children are harmed by "exposure to violence." Assessment instruments designed to predict "dangerousness" consider few abusive tactics other than physical and sexual violence (Campbell et al. 2003).

However, a growing body of research shows that the form of subjugation that drives most abused women to seek outside assistance is *not* encompassed by the violence model and that, therefore, interventions predicated on this model are ineffective in protecting women and children from this type of abuse. These women have been subjected to a pattern of domination that includes tactics to isolate, degrade, exploit and control them as well as to frighten them or hurt them physically. This pattern, which may include but is not limited to physical violence, has been variously termed 'psychological or emotional abuse, patriarchal or intimate terrorism (Tolman, 1992; Johnson, 2008), and coercive control (Stark, 2007), the term I prefer.

Some countries have either included "psychological" or "emotional" abuse in their definitions of domestic violence or, as in France, created a separate criminal statute prohibiting "psychological abuse." In September 2012, England expanded its cross-governmental definition of domestic violence to encompass coercive control. The new definition recognizes that patterns of behavior and separate instances of control can add up to abuse – including instances of intimidation, isolation, depriving victims of their financial independence or material possessions and regulating their everyday behavior.

The terms "psychological" and "emotional" abuse can be applied to certain aspects of coercive control, including acts designed to intimidate victims where threats remain implicit. But they are vague and easily manipulated by offenders who claim emotional abuse by victims. In addition, if a woman claims

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psychological violence, in order to access legal remedies in some countries, she may be required to produce the 'expert' testimony of a psychologist to prove damages or harm.

Some of the tactics used in coercive control are criminal offenses, such as stalking, while others are crimes only if committed against strangers such as economic exploitation or deprivation, enforced isolation or sexual coercion. But most tactics used in coercive control have no legal standing, are rarely identified with abuse and are almost never targeted by intervention. These tactics include forms of constraint and the monitoring and/or regulation of commonplace activities of daily living, particularly those associated with women's default roles as mothers, homemakers and sexual partners and run the gamut from their access to money, food and transport to how they dress, clean, cook or perform sexually.

By ignoring or minimizing the tactics used in coercive control, current domestic violence laws also miss many of its most devastating effects. There is mounting evidence that the level of "control" in abusive relationships is a better predictor than prior assaults of future sexual assault and of severe and fatal violence. This is because coercive control targets a victim's autonomy, equality, liberty, social supports and dignity in ways that compromise the capacity for independent, self-interested decision-making vital to escape and effective resistance to abuse. Moreover, in a significant minority of abuse cases, offenders are able to subjugate and entrap female partners without the use of violence. Arrest for assaults, the provision of shelter or legal protections against violence are vital for short-term safety. But the long-term safety and independence of battered women can only be secured if current protections against domestic violence are extended to encompass coercive control.

This contribution argues that reliance on the violence model limits the efficacy of current interventions because it masks the scope of most partner abuse and minimizes the harms it causes. Adopting the coercive control model would broaden our understanding of partner abuse to more closely resemble what most victims are experiencing and so greatly improve intervention.

I have divided my discussion into three parts. Part I identifies the shortcomings of the violence model as the exclusive framework for responding to partner abuse. The violence model applies to only the minority of situations where abuse is limited to physical assaults and threats of physical abuse. It ignores the large majority of cases where physical assaults are accompanied by multiple non-violent tactics that can be both more devastating and more salient to victims.

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Section II outlines the alternative model of coercive control, cites evidence from the U.S. and England to document the relative prevalence of its various components and shows that the presence of 'control' tactics predicts a range of harms, including sexual, physical and fatal violence, far better than prior assault (Glass et al., 2004; Beck and Raghavan, 2010). The major outcome of coercive control is a hostage-like condition of *entrapment* that arises from the suppression of a victim's autonomy, rights and liberties through coercive control. Assessments based on coercive control identify the victim's vulnerability to serious injury or psychological trauma as a function her objective or structural subordination rather than of the level of physical violence.

My focus is on what perpetrators do *to* their partners. But the political significance of coercive control in the typical case derives from what abusive men prevent women from doing for themselves. The coercive control model defines abuse as a "liberty" crime and sets the use of violence in the context of the abrogation of women's human rights, the realization of which is critical to overall social and economic development as well as their ability to fulfill their purposes in the world. Women can be controlling as well as men. When the offender is a male, however, coercive control exploits and reinforces sexual inequalities in the larger society in ways that make it far more devastating than when women are controlling.

Section III addresses some implications of adapting a coercive control for improved intervention. The priority on 'safety' is complemented with an emphasis on liberty, autonomy, dignity and equality. To fully grasp how the forms of subjugation harm women, we must first imagine they have the same rights to personhood as men.

I. The Limits of the Violent-Incident Model of Abuse

Since the first programs for battered women opened in the l970's, many countries have criminalized physical abuse by partners, held offenders accountable through some combination of sanctions and counseling, offered victims emergency shelter and provided legal and social support for victims and their children. Arrest for domestic violence now occurs in many countries. But almost none of those arrested go to jail. Nor is there compelling evidence that BIPs significantly improve victim safety (Stark, 2007).

The Violence Model

Drawn from criminal justice, the violence definition of abuse targets discrete episodes of assault whose seriousness is measured by the degree of injury or other harm inflicted or intended. Protection orders, BIPs and other interventions are predicated on the belief that there is sufficient time "between" assaultive episodes for victims and perpetrators to contemplate their options and make self-interested decisions to end their abuse or exit the abusive relationship.

The first problem with this model is the well documented fact that physical abuse almost never consists of an isolated incident, with almost half of all reported cases involving "serial" abuse and many involving daily assaults. Meanwhile, evidence from the U.S. shows that the average abusive relationship lasts between 5.5 and 7.3 years. Thus, a large number and perhaps a majority of abused women have been assaulted dozens and many hundreds or thousands of times. For the victims in these cases, abuse has much more in common with a chronic problem, like HIV-AIDS, than the sort of acute, time-limited assaults anticipated by our current laws and court interventions.

A second problem with the violence model is the weight it assigns to injury. Between 95% and 99% of domestic violence involves non-injurious assaults: pushes, shoves, grabs, punches, kicks and the like. This is true even in cases where police or emergency medical responders are involved (Stark, 2007; Stark & Flitcraft, l996). The significance of these seemingly "trivial" incidents only becomes clear in their historical context as part of a pattern of physical intimidation that is typically "ongoing" and has a cumulative effect based on all that has happened to this victim before.

When interventions are guided by laws or policies that target discrete incidents, the typical pattern of physical abuse is trivialized. If resources are rationed based on injury, over 95% of all domestic violence will be missed. But even if most reports of domestic violence lead to arrest as they do in England and in some US jurisdictions, punishment will be minimal or nonexistent, even when an offender commits multiple offenses.

Thus, when researchers followed 692 offenders arrested in Northumbria for assaulting partners, perpetrators were charged and convicted in only 120 (5%) of 2,402 incidents, an attrition rate from report to conviction of 95%. Abuse was chronic in Northumbria, with half of the offenders re-arrested within the three-year study period and many arrested multiple times. Because each incident was treated independently, however, and no injury occurred in the vast majority, there was no correlation between the

likelihood that a perpetrator would be arrested and either the number of his domestic violence offenses or even whether he was judged "high risk." Interviews confirmed that offenders recognized their assaults would not be taken seriously. (Hester, 2006; Hester & Westmarland, 2006).[1]

Because abuse is typically "ongoing," victims seek help repeatedly. Given the assumption that victims and offenders can exercise decisional autonomy 'between' episodes, however, service providers stigmatize persistent help-seekers. They attribute victims' apparent inability to 'leave' to character deficits and consider their escalating expressions of fear exaggerated, fabricated or as the byproduct of mental illness. Thus, many abused women appear in family court, child welfare or health systems carrying pseudo-psychiatric labels that imply *they* are the problem, not the abuser. As a victim's entrapment becomes more comprehensive, the service response may actually become more perfunctory, a process termed "normalization." It seems inevitable that women of this "type" will continue to be abused.

The third problem with the violent incident model is that between 60% and 80% of the victims who seek outside assistance are experiencing multiple tactics to frighten, isolate, degrade and subordinate them as well assaults and threats. These tactics run the gamut from sexual exploitation, material deprivation and imprisonment to the imposition of rules for how victims carry out their daily affairs. Some of these tactics are crimes (such as stalking or sexual assault) and some are crimes when committed against strangers (such as harassment or taking a partner's money). But most of these tactics are not crimes and almost none are included in current domestic violence laws, assessments or charges.

II. An Alternative Model: Coercive Control

The coercive control model was developed to encompass the ongoing and multifaceted nature of the abuse which research shows is experienced by the 60% to 80% of victimized women who seek outside assistance from shelters, police or other sources of assistance. Coercive control may be defined as an ongoing pattern of domination by which male abusive partners primarily interweave repeated physical and sexual violence with intimidation, sexual degradation, isolation and control. The primary outcome of coercive control is a condition of *entrapment* that can be hostage-like in the harms it inflicts on dignity, liberty, autonomy and personhood as well as to physical and psychological integrity.

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[1] Some US States have responded to this dilemma by increasing penalties for repeated offenses, sometimes known as the "three strikes and you're out" policy.

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Women as well as men physically assault their partners. But coercive control is "gendered" because it is used to secure male privilege and its regime of domination/subordination is constructed around the enforcement of gender stereotypes. "Domination" here refers to both the power/privilege exerted through coercive control in individual relationships and to the political power created when men as a group use their oppressive tactics to reinforce persistent sexual inequalities in the larger society.

<u>The Technology of Coercive Control</u>

Coercive control has identifiable temporal and spatial dimensions, typical dynamics and predictable consequences. For the purposes of assessment, these may be subdivided into tactics deployed to hurt and intimidate victims (coercion) and those designed to isolate and regulate them (control). Perpetrators adapt these tactics through trial and error based on their relative benefits and costs in particular societies and cultures and the perceived vulnerabilities of their partners. Hostage-taking, kidnapping, torture and other 'capture' crimes share many of the same tactics. The 'particularity' of coercive control derives from its gendered focus: the unique access intimacy affords perpetrators to personal information about a partner; widespread normative support for male "control" (even where violence is condemned); and a host of situational factors such as whether women can access resources independently through employment or dowry arrangements, for instance.

COERCION:

Coercion entails the use of force or threats to compel or dispel a particular response. In addition to causing immediate pain, injury, fear, or death, coercion can have long-term physical, behavioral, or psychological consequences.

(a) Violence

Partner assaults frequently involve extreme violence. In a British survey of 500 women who sought help from Refuge UK (referred to as 'the 'Refuge UK sample'), 70% had been choked or strangled at least once, 60% had been beaten in their sleep, 24% had been cut or stabbed at least once, almost 60% had been forced to have sex against their will, 26.5% had been "beaten unconscious," and 10% had been "tied up." As a result of these assaults, 38% of the women reported suffering "permanent damage." (Rees, Agnew-Davies and Barkham, 2006).

Even so, the vast majority of assaults used in coercive control are distinguished by their frequency and duration, not by their severity. Johnson (2008) reported that men using coercive control assaulted women six times more often on average than men who used physical violence alone. In the Refuge UK sample, the women reported that "often" or "all the time," their partners "shook" or "roughly handled" them (58%); pushed or shoved them (65.5%); slapped or smacked them or twisted their arm (55.2%) or kicked, bit or punched them (46.6%) (Rees et al. 2006). To many of these men, assault was a routine, like using the toilet, and not the byproduct of overt anger or a "conflict."

(b) Intimidation

Intimidation is used to keep abuse secret and to instill fear, dependence, compliance, loyalty and shame. Offenders induce these effects in three ways primarily—through threats, surveillance, and degradation. Intimidation succeeds because of what a victim has experienced in the past or believes her partner will or may do if she disobeys, the "or else" proviso. If intimidation sufficiently undermines a partner's will to resist, violence may not be deemed necessary. In a Finnish population survey, a subgroup of older victims who had not been physically assaulted for l0 years or more reported significantly higher levels of fear than younger women who were experiencing ongoing assault (Piispa, 2002).

In the Refuge UK sample, 79.5% of the women reported that their partners threatened to kill them at least once, and 43.8% did so "often" or "all the time." In addition, 60% of the men threatened to have the children taken away, 36% threatened to hurt the children, 32% threatened to have the victim committed to a mental institution, 63% threatened their friends or family, and 82% threatened to destroy things they cared about (Rees et al., 2006). Few threats are reported. The destruction of property is another common intimidation tactic. Intimidation extends to subtle warnings whose meaning eludes outsiders or may even seem like expressions of love, such a demand that the victim continually report her whereabouts

Another class of threats creates the "battered mother's dilemma," where a victim is made to choose between her own safety and the safety of a child. Many of the same tactics used to extract information or compliance from hostages are deployed in coercive control, including withholding or rationing food, money, clothes, medicine, or other things. Thirty-eight percent of the men in the Refuge

UK sample stopped their partners from getting medicine or treatment they needed and 29% of the men in a US study did so (Rees et al., 2006; Tolman, 1989; 1992). Passive-aggressive threats such as emotional withdrawal, disappearing without notice or the 'silent treatment' can be equally devastating. In the Refuge UK sample, more than half of the men threatened to hurt or kill themselves if the woman left, and 35% used the same threat to get her to obey (Rees et al., 2006).

Another class of threats, illustrated by the meticulously organized cabinets in the American film *Sleeping with the Enemy* (1991), involves anonymous acts whose authorship is never in doubt. Men using coercive control leave anonymous threats on answering machines, sabotage electronic communication, remove pieces of clothing or other memorabilia from the house, cut telephone wires, steal their partners' money or their mail or remove vital parts from their cars. Abusers also exploit secret fears to which they alone are privy or play "gaslight" games to make their partners feel "crazy" (such as moving their car in the night or removing car keys from their pocketbooks). In the Refuge UK sample, 75% of the women reported that their partners had tried to make them feel crazy "often" or "all the time" (Rees et al. 2004). To remind partners that any challenge is dangerous, perpetrators will tell transparent or outrageous lies or say or do things in a public setting that insult or embarrass them. The more transparent the offense, the more humiliating is compliance.

Stalking is the most prevalent form of surveillance used in coercive control. It is distinguished by its duration (lasting 2.2 years on average, twice the typical length of stalking by strangers), its link to physical violence, and its combination with complementary forms of intimidation and control.   Of the 4.8 million women in the U.S. who reported being stalked by present or former partners, 81% were physically or sexually assaulted (31%), 6l% received unsolicited phone calls, 45% were also threatened verbally or in writing, and roughly 30% had their property vandalized or received unwanted letters or other items (Tjaden & Thoennes. 2000).

Designed to convey the abuser's omnipotence and omnipresence, stalking falls on a continuum with a range of surveillance tactics that include timing partners activities (calls, toileting, shopping trips, etc.); monitoring their communications; searching drawers, hand-bags, wallets or bank records; cyber-stalking with cameras or global positioning devices or having partners followed.   Eight-five percent of the women in the U.S. study by Tolman (l989) and over 90% of the Refuge UK sample (Rees et al. 2006)

reported that their abusive partners monitored their time. Surveillance tactics allow abusers to 'cross social space,' making physical separation ineffective.

Degradation establishes abusers' moral superiority by denying self-respect to their partners. Virtually all of the women in the Refuge UK sample reported that their partners called them names (96%), swore at them (94%), brought up things from their past to hurt them (95%), "said something to spite me" (97%), and "ordered me around" (93%). In more than 70% of these cases, this happened "often" or "all the time" (Rees et al., 2006). The insults used in coercive control target areas of gender identity from which the woman draws esteem such as cooking or child care.   Insults are devastating in coercive control because the woman cannot respond without putting herself at risk.

Common *shaming tactics* involve using a tattoo, burns or bites to "mark" ownership; forcing a partner to submit to sexual inspections or participate in sexual acts she finds offensive; or demanding she engage in other rituals around personal hygiene, toileting, eating or sleeping she finds degrading. In the Refuge UK sample, 24% of the women reported being forced to engage in anal intercourse at least once (Rees et al., 2006). My clients have been denied toilet paper or the right to cut their hair (in one case, for two years); made to sleep standing up; or to steal money from their boss or their children. Other abusers force partners to obey rules that would be used to discipline a child, such as staying at the table until they've eaten all their food.

CONTROL

Perpetrators use control tactics to compel obedience indirectly by depriving victims of vital resources and support systems, exploiting them, dictating preferred choices and micro-managing their behavior by establishing "rules" for everyday living. These rules remain in play even when the perpetrator is absent physically, such as when a partner is shopping, at work or with her friends or family. Because of their portability, control tactics make victims feel their abuse is all-encompassing and their partner is omnipresent.

(a) Isolation

Controllers isolate their partners to prevent disclosure, instill dependence, express exclusive possession, monopolize their skills and resources, and keep them from getting help or support. In a study of women in shelter, 36% had not had a single supportive or recreational experience during the previous

month (Forte, Franks, Forte & Grigsby, 1996). By inserting themselves between their victims and the world outside, controllers become their primary source of information, interpretation and validation. Eighty-one percent of the Refuge UK sample reported they had been kept from leaving the house with almost half (47%) reporting this happened "often" or "all the time (Rees, et al. 2006).

To isolate a partner from her support system, abusers have assaulted and threatened family members, friends and coworkers; forbidden calls or visits; forced victims to chose between "them" and "me;" called them repeatedly at work or showed up unexpectedly; denied partners funds to travel for visits; or forced them to steal from friends, family or employers; showed up drunk or otherwise embarrassed their partners at family gatherings. Over 60% of the women in the US Sample and 48% in the UK Refuge sample said their partners kept them from seeing their families (Rees et al., 2006; Tolman, 1989). Immigrants and fundamentalists can be particularly vulnerable to isolation because many traditional cultures are typically patrifocal, reject divorce or separation, assign custody in a marital dispute to the father, discourage women from working, and ostracize women who reject their obligations as wives.

Isolation tactics also include denying women access to phones or cars—as in more than half of abusive relationships in the United States and UK Refuge samples. Among teens, a common isolating tactic is to sabotage birth-control and use unwanted pregnancies to force a girlfriend to drop out of school.

Isolation tactics are often designed to keep women from working or to isolate them at work, significantly impacting their employability as well as their performance or chances for promotion. More than a third of women in the U.S. study by Tolman (l989) and Refuge UK sample (Rees et al. 2006) were prohibited from working and over half were required to "stay home with the kids." To keep women from going to work, men in my practice have blocked in their partner's cars, taken their keys or items of clothing, demanded sex just as they were going to work, blackened their eyes, forced them to call in sick and suddenly found they could not babysit or transport a child to day care.

(b) Deprivation, Exploitation and Regulation

Control tactics also foster dependence by depriving partners of the resources needed for autonomous decision-making and independent living, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain and gratification, and regulating their behavior to conform to gender stereotypes.

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The "materiality of abuse" is rooted in a partner's control over basic necessities such as money, food, housing and transportation, sex, sleep, toileting and access to health care. Seventy-nine percent of the Refuge UK sample (Rees et al. 2006) and 58% of Tolman's (l989) U.S. sample were denied access to money or had it taken from them through threats, violence or theft. Conversely, 54% of the men charged with assaulting their partners acknowledged they had taken their partner's money (Buzawa & Hotaling, 2003). Financial exploitation extends from denying victims credit cards or money for necessities to forcing them to account for and justify even small expenses.

Complementing material control is the micro-regulation of women's behavior in everyday life. While micro-management often extends to the most trivial activities (such as what women watch on TV or which internet sites they visit), its main targets are women's default responsibilities for housework, child care and providing sexual pleasure. Abusive men regulate how women emote, dress, wear their hair, clean, cook and discipline their children. Rules given to women have extended to how the carpet was to be vacuumed ("till you can see the lines") and the height of the bedspread off the floor to the heat of the water in the bath drawn each night for a husband. Here, too, there is the relationship between the pettiness of the rules perpetrators impose and the shame associated with compliance. Since the only purpose of the rules is to exact obedience, they are continually being revised. As Mrsevic and Hughes (l997, P. 123) put it, "As men's control over women increases, the infractions against men's wishes get smaller, until women feel as if they are being beaten for 'nothing.'"

Assessment

Advocates have long identified "power and control" as the aim of physical abuse. But a growing body of evidence shows that the presence of control sets the stage for violence and injury, including fatal injury. A large, well-designed, multi-city study showed that the level of control in an abusive relationship increased the risk of a fatality by a factor of nine. (Glass, Glass, Manganello & Campbell, 2004). Neither the frequency nor the severity of violence was predictive. In a study of over 2000 individuals referred to mediation in Arizona during divorce, the presence of coercive control was more than four times more likely than the presence of violence to explain the post-separation escalation of violence (81% vs. 20%), threats to kill (80% vs. 17%) and forced sex (76% vs. 24%) (Beck & Raghaven, 2010). These findings show that women's vulnerability to physical and sexual abuse is typically a byproduct of an *already*

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established pattern of domination that has disabled their capacity to mobilize personal, material and social resources to resist or escape.

III. Implications for Intervention

Reframing domestic violence as coercive control changes everything about how we respond to partner abuse, from the underlying principles guiding intervention to the ways we evaluate "success." Intervention to combat coercive control is guided by our opposition to subjugation of any kind, not merely the prohibition against violence. This is the same principle used to combat discrimination, "hate" crimes or other acts used to dominate members of a class who are already unequal and so are assumed to be harmed in a different and more socially consequential way than when the same acts are used against equal persons. The reasoning is that persons should be treated as having innate dignity whose individual sovereignty deserves our fullest support.

A first step is to 'name' coercive control. By fixing attention on behaviors, dynamics and harms that have been invisible, naming brings a new class of 'bad' acts and victims to the fore and instigates a corresponding reallocation of justice and other resources. Even where governments are wary of complicating their definitions of domestic violence, naming coercive control provides a broad ground for public education.

Changes in law, policy and other types of practice follow from the fact that coercive control is "ongoing" and its effects cumulative. It includes multiple tactics and has a gendered focus on exploiting sexual inequalities and enforcing gender stereotypes. Recognition of coercive control entails defining a new 'course of conduct' crime with sanctions appropriate to the rights and liberties that are jeopardized.

Such a crime will include elements such as psychological and economic abuse, along with stalking, harassment and isolation, among others. However, for a coercive control law to be effective, it must be written and implemented in a way to avoid manipulation by offenders who claim emotional abuse by victims. That said, with an effective coercive control law in hand, police can assess whether a seemingly trivial incident is an isolated event or part of the pattern typical of the most serious cases.

When abuse is reframed as a pattern or course of conduct, police, clinicians and other providers learn to anticipate, even to encourage repeat visits and to interpret expressions of fear of 'staying' as indicative of the severity of the entrapment involved, even when there is little or no violence. Recognizing

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that abuse is typically chronic shifts a court's attention from why victims don't "leave" to the challenge of denying perpetrators continued access. Against this background, protective orders, awards of funds to support victims, arrests and other interventions can be reframed as part of the long-term strategy to end abuse rather than as a one-time antidote.

Instead of stigmatizing victims, judges, police, shelters and hospitals can respond to repeat requests for help as signaling they have done something right. They can expand the scope of prohibited behaviors to encompass controlling acts and provide the resources women need over time to get free. Conversely, in the context of attempts to quash their freedom, dignity and autonomy, women's retaliatory violence can be seen as a liberatory response to progressive entrapment similar to the response we would expect from a man who had been held captive.

The multiple tactics deployed in coercive control imply that the scope of identification and intervention must be broadened. These tactics must encompass routine, but minor violence; subtle forms of intimidation and forms of surveillance or monitoring that "cross social space' by extending abuse to the workplace or school, for instance; a range of sexually coercive acts. The tactics must also include patterns of isolation; and the explicit and implicit "rules" that govern everything from a woman's access to money and other material necessities to how she sleeps, dresses or talks on the phone.

If taken alone, many tactics used in coercive control could typify a "bad" marriage. So it is critical to recognize that it is the combination of these tactics into a pattern of domination that comprises the offense, not the acts themselves. Front-line responders will determine appropriate interventions based on the particular combination of violence, intimidation, humiliation, isolation and control they encounter. They will emphasize safety where injury is prominent, for instance, empowerment where control is key, and help build support networks for those whose isolation is the major source of vulnerability.

Adopting a coercive control model also has far-reaching implications for community-based services such as shelters and programs for abusive men. Safety should remain a paramount concern. But given the fact that women's autonomy and liberty are also being targeted, shelters should balance safety concerns with programs that help restore freedom, autonomy, dignity and equality. On the one side, this will require offering 'empowerment' strategies at all the points where autonomy has been

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denied. This requires looking beyond shelter to opening up zones of safety and independent decision-making in women's extended families and where they work, attend school or shop.

Ending the violence may do little to end coercive control unless programs for men challenge the foundations of gender-based authority in homes, relationships and beyond. Because coercive control is so tightly linked to systemic sexual inequalities, even the most gender conscious programs are unlikely to succeed apart from a combination of much stiffer sanctions for abuse and broader challenges to sexual inequalities in society-as-a-whole.

Refocusing on male domination rather than male violence alone may cost the movement to end violence against women important allies. This is particularly likely to be true where governmental or voluntary sector organizations oppose violence as a matter of public order or morality and endorse male authority over women so long as it is enforced without violence. Reframing partner abuse as a crime against liberty and equality and insisting that women can only be safe when they are also free and equal may also seem too radical in some contexts.

In these contexts, I propose a three prong strategy: (1) joining the anti-violence agenda more closely to the equality and human rights agendas; (2) incorporating those facets of coercive control that are already criminal such as stalking and harassment into domestic violence statutes; and (3) extending the scope of offenses to partners or former partners that are currently crimes only when committed against strangers. The first step entails recognizing that coercive control is a crime that is both predicated on and that extends gender inequality. At a minimum, gender equality language should be included in anti-violence statutes as well as language making it explicit that emphasizing protections for women against violence is *not* to be interpreted as a form of sex discrimination (as in Turkey).

Equally important would be to extend protections from strangers to partners for a range of acts designed to isolate, exploit, frighten, degrade or control them. These include taking their money, keeping them from leaving the house, denying them access to means of communication or transport, forcing them to endure sexual inspections and other forms of sexual harassment and coercion. Wherever possible, arguments supporting the extension of these protections should emphasize how we would respond if men were subjected to these tactics. Our hope is that broadening the definition of domestic violence to encompass coercive control will win new allies across the broad spectrum of the women's, civil rights,

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labor and human rights communities as well as support from the millions of women who have insisted from the start that "violence isn't the worst part" of the abuse they experience.

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