

Welcome, Nau mai, Haere mai

***Recognising and responding
to coercive control and
systemic entrapment***



Unpacking Coercive Control

Rachel Smith, AUT

Coercive control in Australia: Where are we and where to next?

Heather Douglas, University of Melbourne

Systemic Entrapment and Recent Research

Denise Wilson, AUT

Q&A Panel – Rachel Smith, Heather Douglas, Denise Wilson, Julia Tolmie (UoA)

Welcome & close: Charlotte Moore

Facilitators: Nicola Gavey & Elisabeth McDonald



**TAUPUA WAIORA
RESEARCH CENTRE**

Unpacking Coercive Control

**NZFVC: Recognising and responding to
coercive control and systemic entrapment**

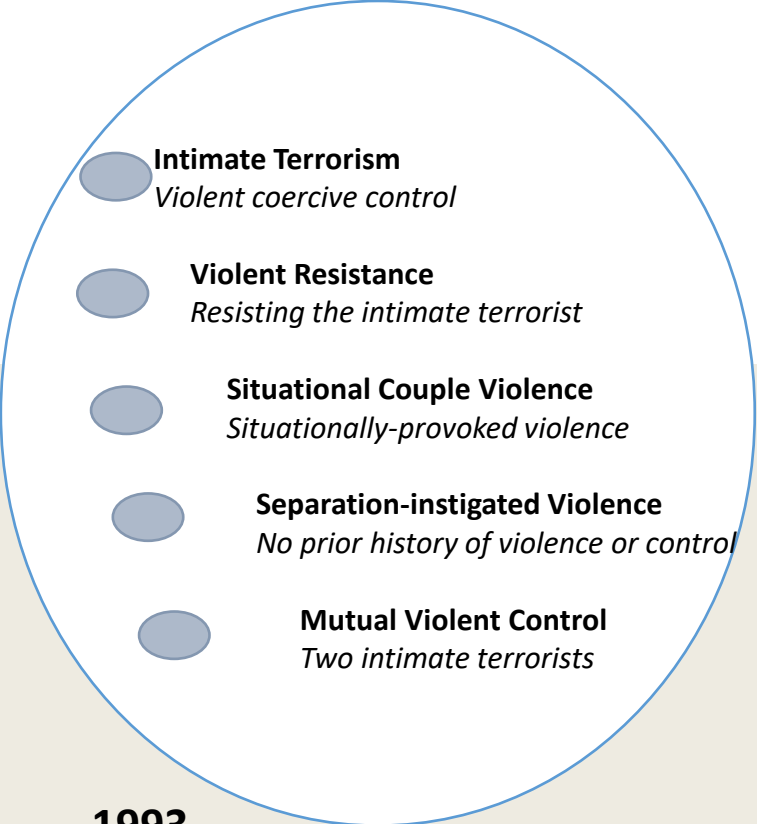
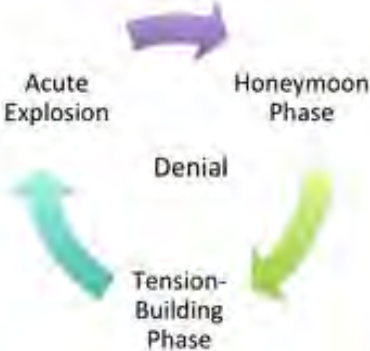
Rachel Smith, AUT
11 March 2024

Taupua Waiora Research Centre is part of the
AUT Public Health and Mental Health Research Institute.



From “learned helplessness” to liberty harms

The Cycle of Violence



1977
 Dr Lenora Walker
Battered Woman Syndrome

- Cycle of violence
- Learned helplessness

1984
 Dr Ellen Pence & Michael Paymar
Power & Control Wheel
 (Duluth Model)

1993
 Prof. Michael Johnson
Typology of Violence

2007
 Prof. Evan Stark
Coercive Control

COERCIVE CONTROL

UNDERSTANDING EVAN STARK'S APPLICATION OF THE PHRASE

 COERCION	 CONTROL
<p>Physical violence Includes beating, pushing, slapping, etc.</p> <p>Sexual coercion Abuser forces unwanted sexual activity.</p> <p>Intimidation Abuser threatens victim and instills a fear of disobedience, resistance or escape.</p> <p>Humiliation Abuser embarrasses victim in front of others.</p> <p>Degradation Abuser makes victim perform ritual enactments, generally focused on victim's insecurities.</p> <p>Isolation Abuser cuts victim off from sources of social support.</p>	<p>Deprivation Abuser strips victim of rights and basic resources, including food, money, transportation, etc. Victim becomes dependent.</p> <p>Exploitation Abuser treats victim like a servant and takes what is theirs.</p> <p>Regulation Abuser creates rules for how victim goes about daily life. Victim becomes captive.</p>



Coercive Control

- A liberty crime
- Pattern based
- Constricted ‘space for action’
- Uniquely targeted to her/they/him
- Victim-survivor is bearing the ‘weight of multiple harms’

Stark, E. (2012). *Re-presenting Battered Women: Coercive Control and the Defense of Liberty*, paper prepared for Violence Against Women: Complex Realities and New Issues in a Changing World Conference:, Montreal, Québec, Canada, Québec, Les Presses de l’Université du Québec.

Sharp-Jeffs, N., Kelly, L., & Klein, R. (2017). Long Journeys Toward Freedom: The Relationship Between Coercive Control and Space for Action – Measurement and Emerging Evidence. *Violence Against Women*, 24(2), 163-185.

Coercive Control: Who & What is Left Out & Why it Matters?

- Analyses of power *beyond gender inequity*
 - Status quo: privileging individual narratives of violence
- Going *beyond intersectionality*
 - Decolonising & intersectional conceptual frameworks are required to effect structural changes
- Making visible the responsiveness of the family violence system *over time*
- Is criminalisation an equitable strategy for achieving safety and restoration from violence in Aotearoa?



Hon Member of the Far Black
@DrMLongbottom

Let's also not forget that Indigenous families and communities are the first responders for Indigenous women and children who experience violence. Not the police. Not white women refuges. Not white women DV support services
[#seewhatyoumademedo](#)

9:41 PM · M



Debbie Kilroy #FreeHer
@DebKilroy

1/2

The state casts Indigenous women as perpetrators of [#coercivecontrol](#) when it is the state itself who exercise this control & occupies the role of perpetrator. Which kind of women can avail themselves of this law to their benefit?

7:23 PM



Boneta-Marie Mabo
@Mabolouss

Replying to [@jessradio](#)

So why do think that criminalising coercive control will change anything for black women if you understand how police criminalise black victims of violence? We are disproportionately criminalised and imprisoned

9:51 PM · May 12, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

Jones, B., & Anyieth, A. K. (2023). CALD Communities as "Collateral Damage" in the Criminalization of Coercive Control: An Argument for Prioritizing Civil System Reform Over Further Criminalization in Victoria. *Violence Against Women*: 10778012231214775.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012231214775>;

Tolmie, J., Smith, R., & Wilson, D. (2023). Understanding Intimate Partner Violence: Why Coercive Control Requires a Social and Systemic Entrapment Framework. *Violence against Women*, 10778012231205585. Advance online publication.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012231205585>;

Watego, C., Macoun, A., Singh, D., & Strakosch, E. (2021). Carceral feminism and coercive control: when Indigenous women aren't seen as ideal victims, witnesses or women. *The Conversation*, 25 May. <https://theconversation.com/carceral-feminism-and-coercive-control-when-indigenous-women-arent-seen-as-ideal-victims-witnesses-or-women-161091>

IPV: a form of social & systemic entrapment

Makes visible the inseparable and mutually reinforcing dimensions of power victim-survivors are responding to:

- 1) How the infrastructure of **colonial violence, the operation of state sanctioned violence, and structural inequities** shape the quality of responses available to particular groups of people and can compound abusive partners' violence
 - 2) The efficacy of social responses and **responsiveness of the family violence safety system** to victim-survivors, their (ex) partners, their families, kinship networks, and communities
-
- 3) The **abusive partner's pattern of coercive controlling behaviour** and how this constricts the victim-survivor and their children's ability to be self-determining (Tolmie et al., 2023, pp.8-9)



Systemic change: trickle-up or trickle-down approaches?

“In the face of enormous violence it is only right to start with those under the worst and most dangerous conditions. It is also strategic.

We have seen again and again that when those who are the least vulnerable of the targeted constituency are prioritized, the declared victories do not trickle down.”

(Spade quoted in Nicholas, 2013, p. 48).



Nichols, R. (2013). Toward a critical trans politics: An interview with Dean Spade. *Upping the Anti: A Journal of Theory and Action*, 14. <https://uppingtheanti.org/journal/article/14-dean-spade/>

Coercive control in Australia: Where are we and where to next?

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MELBOURNE



CEVAW

ARC Centre of Excellence for the
Elimination of Violence Against Women

Australian debate on coercive control

A criminal
offence?

Qualitative
research

First Nations
people

Culturally and
linguistically
diverse people

Definitional and
operational
problems

A new offence

NSW

Qld

SA

The contribution of
criminal law to ending
gender based violence?

Case study: Work on the
strangulation offence.



A set of coercive control principles.

National Principles on a page

A shared understanding of coercive control and its impacts

The Australian Government and state and territory governments agree the following National Principles about coercive control and its impacts.

1 Shared understanding of the common features of coercive control

A shared understanding of the common features of coercive control is foundational to effectively identifying, preventing and responding to family and domestic violence.

2 Understanding the traumatic and pervasive impacts of coercive control

Coercive control has traumatic and pervasive immediate and long-term impacts on victim-survivors, their families and communities. A common understanding of these impacts should be used to inform policies and practices across the domains of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing.

3 Taking an intersectional approach to understanding features and impacts

Victim-survivors are not a homogenous group, and have diverse personal identities, backgrounds and experiences. An intersectional approach, which recognises these differences and the role of multiple and compounding forms of structural discrimination and inequality, should underpin policies or initiatives to address coercive control. Such an approach should also recognise the strength and resilience of diverse identities.

4 Improving societal understanding of coercive control

Limited or incomplete understanding of coercive control within society, and community attitudes and behaviours that condone, minimise or excuse coercive control, can limit the effectiveness of interventions, impact how victim-survivors recognise and understand their experiences, and compromise safety. Improved societal understanding of coercive control is an important part of policies and initiatives to address coercive control.

Guiding considerations to inform effective responses

The Australian Government and state and territory governments agree the following National Principles should guide the development of effective responses to coercive control.

5 Embedding lived experience

Centring the diverse lived experiences of victim-survivors by embedding their views and experiences in policy development, service design and delivery, and evaluation is critical to ensuring that initiatives to address coercive control are effective for all victim-survivors.

6 Coordinating and designing approaches across prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing

Approaches addressing coercive control are more effective when roles and responsibilities in each part of the service system are clearly understood and services are coordinated to support victim-survivor safety, hold perpetrators to account and provide avenues for behaviour change.

7 Embedding the National Principles in legal responses to coercive control

The development and implementation of legal responses, including any specific coercive control offence, should be underpinned by the shared understanding of coercive control established by the National Principles. Considerations of whether to undertake legislative reform is a matter for individual governments to determine, and should include steps to mitigate potential adverse consequences.

What we need to work on

Reduce reliance of criminal law.

If criminal law is utilised – better & more future focussed approaches to sentencing and safety.

Consistency – in definition and response across systems (legislative reform, training).

Join up systems (e.g. information sharing – where safe and appropriate; courts one stop; health, support, legal etc).

MARSDEN FUND

TE PŪTEA RANGAHAU
A MARSDEN



**TAUPUA WAIORA
RESEARCH CENTRE**

Systemic Entrapment and Recent Research

Expert Panel on Coercive Control & Entrapment
NZ Family Violence Clearinghouse - Auckland

11 March 2024

Dr Denise Wilson, Associate Dean Māori Advancement | Professor Māori Health

Taupua Waiora Research Centre is part of the
AUT Public Health and Mental Health Research
Institute.





**E Tū Wāhine, E Tū Whānau – Māori Women Keeping Safe in
Unsafe Relationships**

Navigating Being Safe & Unsafe



THE CONTEXT

Constant threats | Surveillance |
Control | Isolation | Bearing the burden |
Daily, episodic, unpredictable risk

BEING UNSAFE

VIOLENCE:

- Partner +/- whānau
- Partner's coercive control

AGENCIES

- Unhelpful people
- ↓ Trust ↑ Fear for safety & life

SOCIETAL

- Stigma
- Systemic & interpersonal racism

BEING SAFE

PROTECTION & SAFETY

- Tamariki 1st
- Others

STRATEGIES

(Adaptive & Maladaptive)

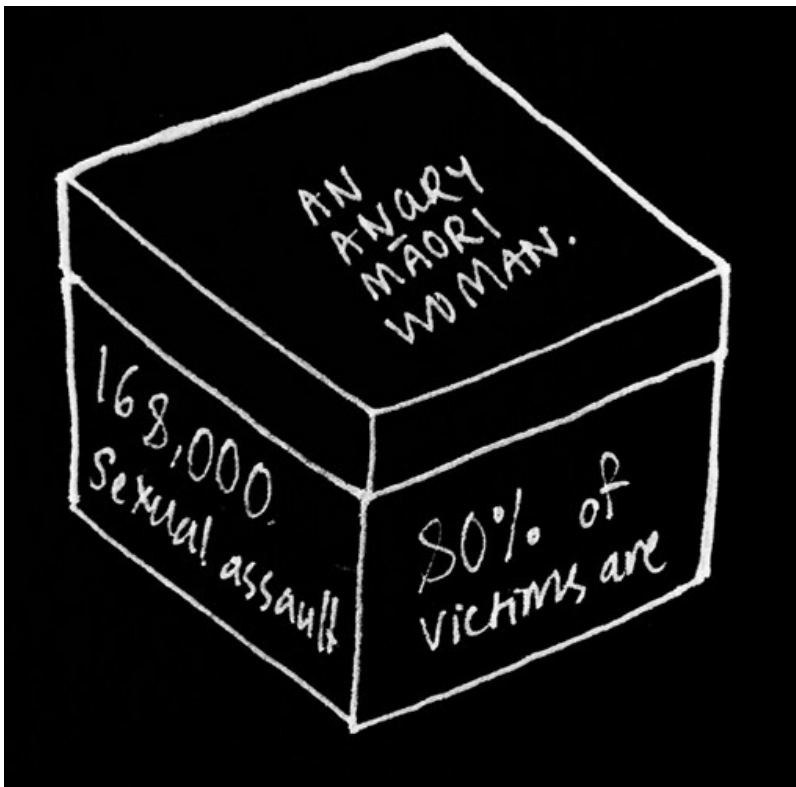
- Knowing, monitoring & managing partner's triggers
 - Children's safety
 - Being prepared
 - Protecting others
- Isolation, silence & compliance
 - Use of violence

Strength

Primal intelligence

Knowing safe people,
places, spaces

The Nexus



Communicating new understandings: Entrapment

- coercive control is just one dimension of wāhine Māori women's entrapment in a violent relationship

Systemic Entrapment

The role of the family violence system has in entrapping Māori women in violent relationships:

- **Fear their tamariki will be removed**
 - A fear based on reality
- **Fear they will be treated judgmentally, disrespectfully, and in racist ways**
 - Accused of being mad, bad, and angry OR on the offensive expecting to be treated badly?
- **Encountering unhelpful people**
 - Denied entitlements
- **Fragmented and ineffective services that do not meet their needs**
 - Refuge | Police | Income support | Housing | Health

Profound lack of trust that others will keep them safe



Disrupting Systemic Entrapment & Support Wāhine Māori Better

- **Understanding whakapapa** is central to wāhine decision-making
- **Taking time to listen** – these wāhine may be just finding their voices
- **Understanding it takes a lot of courage to leave** a violent partner – you may be the one chance to make a difference for a wāhine.
- **Attitudes of kindness, understanding their situation, and genuinely helping** their whānau to be safe.
- Wāhine Māori experiences of **intergenerational violence** are not always restricted to their own whānau – this **makes seeking help more complex**
- **Understanding family violence**, its dynamics, coercive control, and the many faces of entrapment

Hearts and Minds Please...

- When wāhine ask for help, they need it – they have exhausted their strategies for keeping safe
- People who make a difference are kind, caring, and take time to listen
- It is the seemingly small things that make a big difference

