

# Reproductive Coercion, Partner Violence and Unintended Pregnancy Among Marginalized, Vulnerable Populations

Elizabeth Miller, MD, PhD

Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC



# Disclosures

I have no disclosures



Intimate partner  
violence increases  
young women's risk for

## **Unintended Pregnancies**

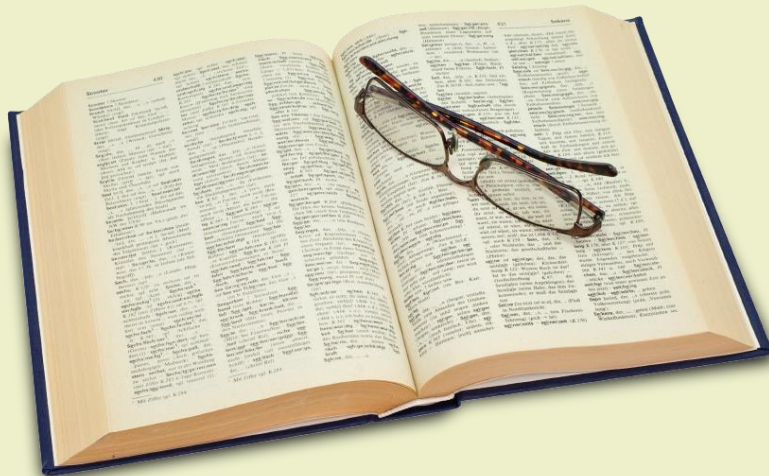
(Sarkar, 2008)

Young women  
tell us that  
controlling  
reproductive  
health is used  
as a tool for  
abuse

“ He [used condoms] when we first started, and then he would fight with me over it, and he would just stop [using condoms] completely, and didn't care. He got me pregnant on purpose, and then he wanted me to get an abortion.”

## Definition: Reproductive and Sexual Coercion

Behaviors to maintain power and control in a relationship related to reproductive health by someone who is, was, or wishes to be involved in an intimate or dating relationship with an adult or adolescent.



- Explicit attempts to impregnate a partner against her wishes
- Controlling outcomes of a pregnancy
- Coercing a partner to have unprotected sex
- Interfering with birth control methods

# A Community-Based Family Planning Intervention to Reduce Partner Violence

A pilot community-based research study conducted in partnership with family planning clinics in Northern California

Miller E, Decker MR, McCauley HL, Tancredi DJ, Levenson RR, Waldman J, Schoenwald P, Silverman JG. A family planning clinic partner violence intervention to reduce risk associated with reproductive coercion. *Contraception*. 2011 Mar; 83 (3):274-80. PMID: PMC3052939



NICHD R21HD057814

Age	% Sample
16-19	42.8
20-24	33.2
25-29	24.0
Race/Ethnicity	
White	22.3
Black/African American	28.6
Hispanic	29.8
Multi-racial/More than one race	7.0
Other	12.4

N=1299 sexually active women

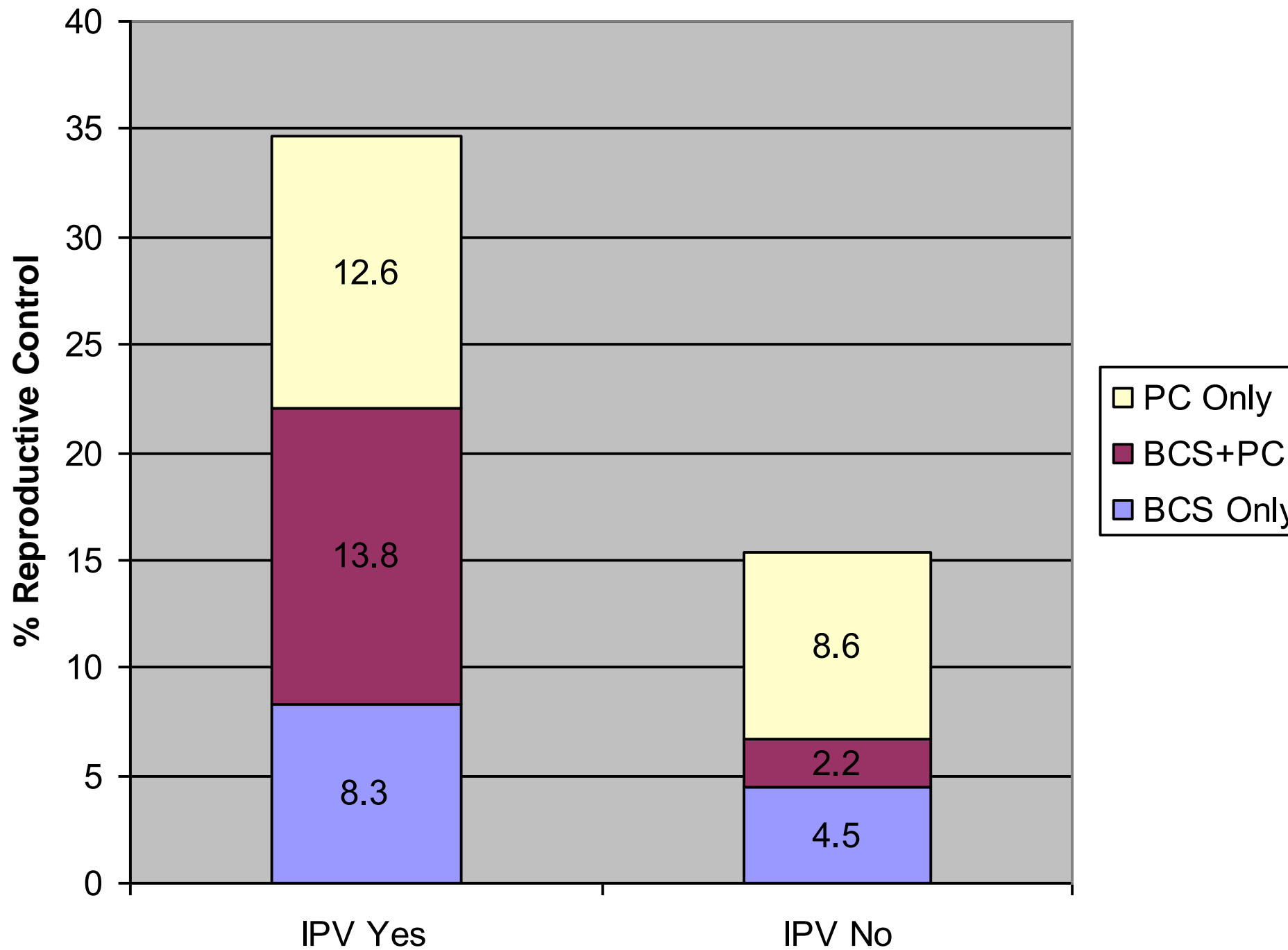
- 53% of women reported a lifetime experience of physical or sexual violence by a partner
- 17.6% reported violence in the past three months.

N=1278 sexually active women (16-29)



- 25.7% of women reported a lifetime experience of *reproductive coercion* by a partner
- 19.1% reported *pregnancy coercion* from a partner
- 15.0% of women experienced *birth control sabotage*

N=1278 sexually active women (16-29)



# IPV, Reproductive Coercion and Unintended Pregnancy

Among women reporting reproductive coercion  
(pregnancy coercion and birth control sabotage)  
(Miller 2010):

- **IPV increases risk for unintended pregnancy two-fold**

Recent reproductive coercion is associated with  
past year unintended pregnancy (Miller 2013)

- **Reproductive coercion increases risk for unintended pregnancy (AOR 1.8, 1.06-2.03), independent of IPV exposure**

- Risk for reproductive coercion among black women is nearly three times that of white women, in unadjusted models
- Even after considering confounders, risk for unintended pregnancy, based on reproductive coercion exposure, was higher among white women than black women

# SHARP: Main Study

Cluster-randomized trial in 8 school health centers in California -- School Health Center Healthy Adolescent Relationships Program (SHARP)

## ***Intervention components:***

- healthy relationships card distributed with every clinic visit
- direct assessments for sexual health related visits
- school-wide youth advisory-led relationship abuse awareness

Funding: National Institute of Justice

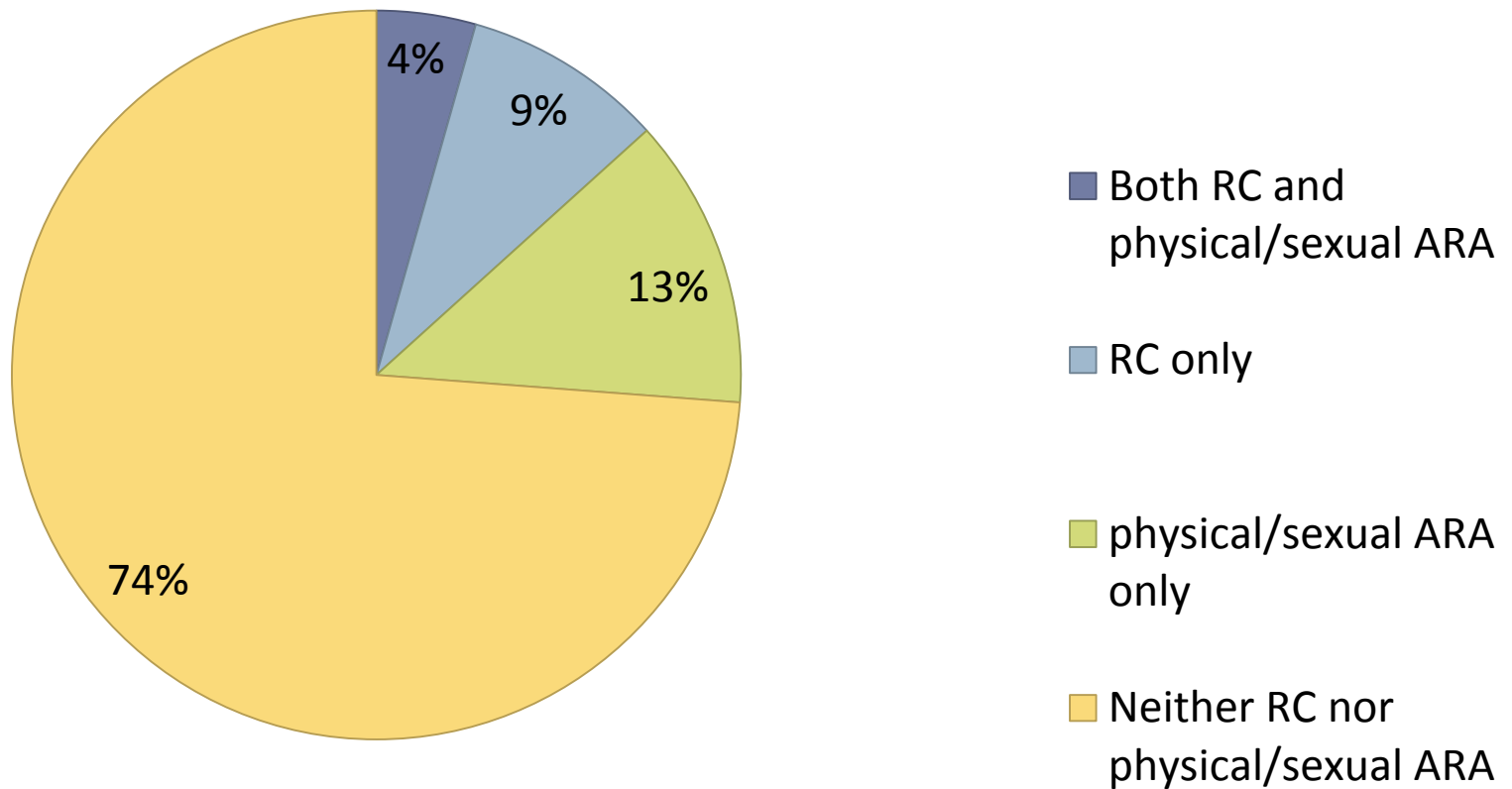
2011-MU-MU-0023

# Futures Without Violence Safety Card for Adolescent Relationship Abuse

(Funding: DOJ and  
HHS, ACF and OWH)



## Overlap between Reproductive Coercion and Physical/Sexual ARA









## Demographics (N= 20)

- ages 18-34
- 14 identified as Mexican, 2 as Hispanic (El Salvadoran), others unknown
- 11 U.S. born, 8 born in Mexico, 1 unknown
- 15 have ever been pregnant; 11 pregnant 2+ times
- 18 have had childhood exposure to violence
- 17 have had partner physical or sexual violence
- 11 reported pregnancy coercion

**“I didn’t want to have a baby at that time. I didn’t want to have sex after what I went through but I don’t know why I did. My bf would hit me if I didn’t have sex with him. At 17, he would force me to have sex, have oral sex with him, and I didn’t want to. ... I didn’t know about (contraception) at the time. I didn’t know nothing about the pill, about condoms. I would let him just do whatever he wanted to...because of what I went through I thought that that was normal. I was 17 when I had my 2<sup>nd</sup> child. I didn’t want to be pregnant then either. I knew about contraception then, but it was the same thing. I don’t think he tried to stop me from having it, I just don’t remember why I didn’t. I don’t remember saying I’ll get on the pill. For me it was just like, I won’t have sex. But then most of the time it was forced.”**

***- Isabel, age 24, 4 children, first at age 14,***

**“One of my boy friends wanted to get me pregnant. He did it on purpose. He didn’t wear a condom on purpose. I was just like ‘what did I get myself into?’ He’d start with a condom on and then take it off. I’d be very mad and upset but it was an on-off relationship while he went to jail. I always ended up going back to him. I lost his virginity to him and I think he was obsessed with me. He still didn’t leave me when I was with another person. He was trying to get me pregnant to keep me and make me stay with him.” -- Cecilia, age 22, born in LA**



# We Are

# Sacred

**FUTURES**  
WITHOUT VIOLENCE™

*Formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund*

## Reproductive Coercion: Interference with Contraception and Pregnancy Planning

# Native American women (data collection in progress)

Preliminary findings -- Ages 17-37 ( $24.6 \pm 5.64$ ) (n=10)

- 90% of women reported a lifetime experience of physical or sexual violence by a partner
- 40% reported a recent (past 3 month) experience of physical or sexual violence by a partner
- 60% of women reported a recent (past 3 month) experience of *reproductive coercion* by a partner
- 40% reported a lifetime experience of abortion coercion by a partner

# Unintended Pregnancy

**“[the pregnancy]was not pre-planned. And I didn’t want to keep, to keep my daughter...he already had three kids prior to you know, me getting pregnant, so it sucks that I didn’t get to have that, you know, special first time, being a young parent, get to have that person you know, have that wow factor, as much as I did, it was really... really affected too, sucked to see how he wasn’t even interested at all when labor, when I was in labor with it, it was like “Oh I’m going to head out then, come back, you know, tomorrow” even though your baby is probably coming in a few hours, just gonna go hunting, go over the hill... ”**

*–age 24 (pregnancy occurred when she was 18, her partner was 25)*



**“I allowed the drugs to rule me and my life, so I was pretty numbed out, you know, where I didn’t have feelings, or spiritually I was bankrupt, you know, I... and... but, I guess I did allow... control over sex issues, but, um... then I probably felt really weak—but now, in my shoes, I could say I’d be strong enough to say when I feel comfortable enough to, but... then when I had no voice, you know what I mean, I had no say, it was all controlled.”**

*—age 26*

# Acknowledgments

- Heather McCauley, Rebecca Dick, Kelley Jones, Daniel Tancredi, Jay Silverman, Johanna Jetton, Lisa James, Samantha Blackburn, Sandi Goldstein
- Futures Without Violence
- California Adolescent Health Collaborative
- California School Health Centers Association
- Catrina Virata, Heather Anderson, Rebecca Dick, Hillary Darville, Jill Etienne, Angela Hicks, Sarah Zelazny, Tarrah Herman, Claire Raible, Sam Ciaravino, Laura Yantz, Janice Korn

Funding: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; William T. Grant Foundation, BIRCWH, DOJ, CDC, Nike Foundation, Waitt Institute for Violence Prevention, DHHS Office on Women's Health, National Institute of Justice, DHHS Administration for Children and Families



THANK YOU!