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

Elizabeth Miller, MD, PhD
Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC
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


NICHD R21HD057814
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<th>Age</th>
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<td>20-24</td>
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<table>
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<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
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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)
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
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

- 74% Neither RC nor physical/sexual ARA
- 13% physical/sexual ARA only
- 9% RC only
- 4% Both RC 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 2nd 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
Reproductive Coercion: Interference with Contraception and Pregnancy Planning
Native American women (data collection in progress)

Preliminary findings -- Ages 17-37 (24.6 ± 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

NICHD R21HD077101
“[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

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