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# Elaboration within Compliance: Linguistic Patterns within Coercive Control in Sex Trafficking

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Elaboration within Compliance:  
Linguistic Patterns within Coercive Control in Sex Trafficking

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Masters in Forensic Mental  
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### Abstract

This study examines how the use of elaboration as a means of compliance, used by victims of sex trafficking in long-term relationships with their exploiters, supports the presence of chronic coercive control. A discourse analytical framework is used to capture the non-explicit coercive dynamics in conversations between sex workers and their exploiters. This study also employs the theoretical framework of coercive control to examine how victims use elaboration as a means of compliance to navigate the implicit and ongoing threats incorporated in an environment of coercive control. Linguistic analyses of the language that victims use with their traffickers compared to language used with other individuals are consistent with a chronically-engrained pattern of internalized coercive control. We found clear linguistic patterns that indicated an imbalance of power, which was maintained over a long-term exploiter-victim relationship.

Keywords: elaboration, sex trafficking, coercive control, linguistic analysis

## Elaboration within Compliance:

## Linguistic Patterns within Coercive Control in Sex Trafficking

Coerced compliance with an abusive partner without the use of explicit threats and restraint constantly proves difficult to demonstrate within the judicial system—standards of legal evidence usually require a simple causal chain with an explicit threat to harm and a demonstrable injurious outcome (Beck & Raghavan, 2010; Donocan & Barnes-Brus, 2011; Kim, 2006, Stark, 2012). However, in most ongoing abusive situations such as sex trafficking, non-physical threats and implied threats are sufficient to maintain high levels of control because of past aversive experiences when the victim attempted to disobey. The dynamic is often invisible to people outside the relationship, complicating victim's beliefs about her own agency, and his/her attempts to communicate abuse to legal authorities, or leave the relationship. This invisibility has also made the legal assessment of coercion in sex trafficking challenging (Herzog, 2008).

Prior research within intimate partner violence suggests that compliance due to past abusive experiences in the presence of current non-violent threats is common in abusive relationships (Barbaro & Raghavan, in press; Beck & Raghavan, 2010), and in sexual encounters (Cohen & Raghavan, 2014), through retrospective interviewing. Compliance in the presence of non-violent threats has also been recorded in sex trafficking contexts (Dalla, Xia, Kennedy, 2003; Morselli & Savoie-Gargiso, 2014) creating a critical confusion as to whether the victim was sexually trafficked or consented voluntarily to engage in prostitution. The goal of this study is to provide an analysis of this dynamic in a sex trade context using unusual data—that of longitudinal “real time” wiretap data and applying discourse analytical framework to these data. This study is important because identifying markers of voluntary versus coerced compliance are crucial for differentiating between sex trafficked victims and non-trafficked participants in the

sex trade—a hotly debated area with important implications for survivors (Kempadoo, Sanghera, & Pattanaik, 2015; Stark & Hodgson, 2004; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). Compliance can be revealed through a variety of impulsive responses, but for the purpose of this study, it will be discussed within the context of coercive control (Stark, 2007) in order to establish the presence of non-physical threats and risks in a sex trafficking contexts.

To address this complex issue, this study employs the theoretical framework of coercive control to examine how victims use differing word usage within instances of differential power dynamics. For the purpose of this study, the term victim will be used to discuss individuals who still remain at risk of harm, and the term survivor will be used to discuss those individuals who identify as seeking help or are no longer in the industry. In the following sections, I will begin by defining sex trafficking and its prevalence, followed by a brief conceptual review of coercive controlling dynamics. Following, I will briefly describe linguistic theories, as they apply to compliance within coercive control. Additionally, victims can be of any gender, but this research in alignment with a majority of the previous research, focuses on female victims (Anderson, 2005; Kendall & Tannen, 2001; Jadav & Suvera, N.d.).

### **Sex Trafficking: Definition and Prevalence**

In 2000, the Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (TVPA) was created to combat human trafficking. More specifically, the TVPA sets out “to combat trafficking in persons, a contemporary manifestation of slavery whose victims are predominantly women and children, to ensure just and effective punishment of traffickers, and to protect their victims” (pg. 114 STAT. 1466). The TVPA of 2000, as well as its re-authorizations in 2003, 2005, 2008, 2013 and 2017, also defines sex trafficking as any means to use a person as a purpose of commercial sexual exploitation (TVPA, 2000; US Department of State, 2009). Within commercial sexual

exploitation, elementary means of obtaining and retaining slaves can be used, such as kidnapping and force; however, the use of coercion appears to be equally if not more widespread than the consistent use of force and threats (Baldwin et. al., 2014, Donovan & Barnes-Brus, 2011; Stark, 2007; Stark, 2012). Not only may coercive control be more efficient in controlling the women, enforcing implicit methods to obtain individuals for the purpose of trafficking appears to be more psychologically gratifying for those in control (Reid, 2016). Finally, the ability to identify and prosecute commercial sexual exploitations increases in difficulty as the methods and tactics used by these exploiters are more implicit.

Reliable rates of sex trafficking have proven difficult to estimate for a few different reasons. Sex trafficking is a crime and therefore conducted under the radar of law enforcement and the public's eye (Hom & Woods, 2013). Also, the definition of sex trafficking is complex and there are conflicting perspectives on who is coerced and who entered prostitution willingly (Kim, 2006; Morselli & Savoie-Gargiso, 2014; Reid, 2016) leaving the public perception of the victim confused. Lastly, the identity of traffickers is the least researched area. Research suggests that a significant number of sex trafficking rings are run by either families or independent entrepreneurs (Morselli & Savoie-Gargiso, 2014; Raymond et al., 2001; Weitzer, 2011) making tracking of these rings more complex than large visible organized crime networks and therefore dampening the efforts to identify victim prevalence. Nonetheless, the issue is with an estimated 14,500 to 17,500 people arriving into the United States each year for labor or sexual exploitation purposes. It is important to note that these numbers do not include domestically trafficked individuals as it is more difficult to obtain statistics on domestic trafficking (Belser, 2005; Estes & Weiner, 2001, TVPA, 2017). In addition, between 20 and 30 million people are trafficked

across the world currently (UNODC, 2016), with an estimated 4.5 million people estimated to be introduced into the global slave trade annually (ILO, 2015).

### **Coercive Control and Long-Term Abuse**

Coercion is both a legal and a psychological concept, with the psychological concept of coercive control having been used widely in the domestic violence literature (e.g., Cohen & Raghavan, 2015; Stark, 2007; Loveland & Raghavan, 2017; Myhill, 2015). The formalization of trafficking law specifies coercion as one identifying condition of sex trafficking, which has led to an increased interest in using coercive control to explain sex trafficking dynamics and this literature is slowly growing (Doychak & Raghavan, 2015; Mahan, 2017; Reid, 2016). From a psychological perspective, coercive control is an abuse dynamic, which intends to control a victim by denying, challenging, and limiting her liberty, autonomy, and equality (Barbaro & Raghavan, in press; Johnson, 2006; Kelly and Johnson, 2008; Loveland & Raghavan, 2017; Tanha, Beck, Figueredo, & Raghavan, 2009; Beck & Raghavan, 2010; Stark, 2006; Stark, 2007). Common domains used to achieve coercive control include surveillance, microregulation, manipulation/exploitation, isolation, intimidation, deprivation, and degradation (Beck & Raghavan, 2010; Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Johnson, 1995; Lehmann, Simmons, & Pillai, 2010; Stark, 2007; Raghavan et al, 2016). An important feature of coercive control tactics is that the abuser uses privileged knowledge of the vulnerabilities of the victim to coercively control; accordingly, each set of abusive tactics are unique. Further, Dutton and Goodman (2005) theorize that in order for coercive control to be effective, there needs to be both a demand for subservience from the abuser and a threat to enforce compliance. The threats are intended to create constant fear that allows the perpetrator to more efficiently maintain control to achieve his goals. In ongoing sex trafficking contexts, in which the pimp and the victim(s) are well-known to

each other, the demands for subservience may change over time, once authority and boundaries of authority have been established.

Coercive controlling tactics and behaviors are varied and the intersections of these create an ongoing threat to elicit compliance from the victim(s). Different tactics can be used to elicit the same kinds of coerced outcomes, and some outcomes can facilitate or maintain other outcomes. Among the different coercive dynamics, we suggest that the microregulation of the victims' everyday life contribute to the exploitation and vulnerabilities of the victim (Beck & Raghavan, 2010). Because the victim's everyday activities are monitored and controlled, forced compliance without explicit threats becomes a routine occurrence. These aspects of abuse are used to inculcate the totality of the victim's life in order to elicit isolation and dependence. Existing data support how traffickers' coercive tactics, while appearing subtle or even invisible to outsiders, create conditions for submission. Some data on coercive control and sex trafficking demonstrate the coercive nature of the work correlated with the coercive interpersonal dynamic between the trafficker and their victim(s) (Baldwin et. al., 2014; Kim 2006; Morselli & Sovoie-Gargiso, 2014; Reid, 2016; Williamson, 2010).

Microregulation is one of the most prevalent tactics within abusive relationships, as it is embedded into daily life and hidden amongst so-called mundane every day activities. In order to enforce compliance, abusive tactics are used to regulate a multitude of aspects in the victim's life including what they eat, who they communicate with, and their location. A few studies in sex trafficking note the importance of coercive control, including microregulation. Baldwin, Fehrenbacher, and Eisenman (2015) apply Biderman's (1957) theory of coercion to understand how various tactics that might seem mundane can induce submission and how to measure them, utilizing a sample of 12 previous victims of trafficking. Similarly, Reid (2016) noted that

“enmeshment and entrapment” scripts were frequently used by traffickers/pimps to ensnare victims within a review of 43 cases. Finally, Mohandie (2002) refers to undue influence, coercion, and manipulation as necessary elements of human internment. Each of these studies focuses on different aspects of the coercion process, but they all note how coercive control can look different within each relationship and still be measured empirically.

A primary issue within the identification of the previously mentioned domains of coercion, such as microregulation, is that they can often be difficult to recognize, especially in the absence of explicit threats to harm (Raghavan & Cohen, 2013). Two reasons can contribute to decreased use of actual threats of harm or physical violence to obtain compliance. One, past resistance may have been met with punitive retaliation that had severe consequences. Thus, victims learn not to disobey in order to avoid punishment and comply when she recognizes early signs of threat (e.g., a raised voice). The second—and more directly related to surveillance and microregulation—revolves around behaviors that may have previously been presented as signs of affection from both parties (Morselli & Savoie-Gargiso, 2014; Reid, 2016). For example, during early courtship, checking in frequently and asking regularly about activities may be viewed as caring and romantic. However, over time, the checking in and surveillance may transition from one of purported affection to one of surveillance and microregulation. Because this transition is gradual, the victim may not be aware of the change (Reid, 2016). Within microregulation, the exploiter typically alternates between punitive or degrading behaviors for noncompliance and positive and rewarding behaviors for submission. This behavior creates constant approval seeking behavior from the victim, as she never knows what response she might receive (Dutton & Painter, 1993; Reid, 2016). Due to this increase in approval-seeking behavior, physical tactics become less necessary to elicit compliance and reminders of the potential of abuse via

microregulation become sufficient (Stark, 2009, Herman, p. 76-78; Moorselli & Savoie-Gargiso, 2014). As such, high levels of compliance can be maintained through less explicit intimidation tactics and lower level controlling behaviors in long-term abusive relationships (Baldwin, Fehrenbacher, & Eisenman, 2014; Kim, 2007).

In concert with microregulation and surveillance, isolating and manipulating the victim ensures that the victim has few opportunities to recognize or challenge her own entrapment effectively. Because of the inherent invisibility in microregulation, third party observations also have similar difficulty in recognizing or challenging the entrapment effectively. One alternative view to understanding such complex data has been third party linguistic analysis, which has shown positive to better understanding the dynamic between the exploiter and victim (McHugh & Hambaugh, 2010; Pennebaker et. al., 2003).

### **Linguistic Theories within Gender Violence**

Within discourse analysis, overcompensation in the form of elaboration has been demonstrated to be a sign of coping with trauma (Jadav & Suvera, N.d.). Overcompensation is one's need to amplify one's own behaviors in order to seek approval from others. Elaboration is defined as the process of adding more information or detail than is deemed necessary. The theory underlying this mechanism focuses on how the strong desire to seek approval can be exposed both through action and verbiage. Through discourse analytical framework, research has shown significant gender differences; women use a larger word count, whereas men have typically maintained shorter sentences with less variation of word use. Within interpersonal dynamics, a way of asserting dominance and power is through language strategies, whether it be intentional or subconscious (Kendall & Tannen, 2001).

Research has shown that even before the perpetrator uses isolation tactics, the victims have often already exhausted their social support and have little emotional room for handling confrontation or threats (Dalla, Xia, & Kennedy, 2003). One coping strategy used by trafficked individuals is overcompensation, applicable both in the initial appeasement of the trafficker and for the duration of the relationship to maintain approval (Jadav & Suvera, N.d., p.1). In this context, trafficked women provide extensive explanations about what they are doing, where they are, and who they are with before ever being asked. Through these explanations, these individuals develop linguistic ways to avoid confrontation within their relationship.

An examination of word usage, especially within deception literature, has shown three prominent identifiers: “pronoun use, emotion words, and markers of cognitive complexity” (Pennebaker, Mehl, & Niederhoffer, 2003, p.564). Using these identifiers, it can be evidenced that words inducing manipulation remain significantly present in order to elicit compliance. While it is necessary to be able to identify words that elicit specific implications, much of discourse analysis is contextual (Kendall & Tannen, 2001; Pennebaker, Mehl, & Niederhoffer, 2003). Therefore, looking at the entirety of the dynamic is equally significant in understanding the roles each tactic plays in the relationship between the exploiter and victim and how victims respond to perpetrators, both in instances of explicit threats and non-forced compliance.

### **Study Overview**

Prior research on coercive control has focused on broader tactics and behaviors, as well as incidents to better understand how coercion is enacted. Adding to this body of research, this study seeks to explore the ways in which coercion is enacted using non-abusive and abusive language within long-term abusive relationships through the analysis of linguistics patterns within a discourse analytical framework. By using actual conversations between perpetrators and

victims, this study is able to directly examine the linguistics patterns used to communicate on a daily basis.

More specifically, longitudinal data is used to examine elaboration under explicit and implicit verbal solicitation, as a step towards validating the use of linguistic pragmatics to detect chronic coercive control. Using wiretap data that captures linguistic nuances, we hypothesize that linguistic patterns can be used to demonstrate instances of unsolicited elaboration in response to coercive control, especially as it pertains to the tactic of microregulation. Although all tactics are important in the scheme of coercive control, elaboration is hypothesized to be most prevalent within microregulation and daily routine activities, which are especially relevant to longer-term relationships in which there has been continual abuse. Because verbal interactions between the perpetrator and the victim have not been studied at this nuanced level, this research has the potential to add significant new knowledge to our understanding of coercion dynamics.

## **Methods**

### **Research Design**

The present study used an archival design, examining wiretap recordings of multiple perpetrators and their victims of sex trafficking, which were acquired in a police investigation over a two-year period. Through qualitative and linguistic analysis, the data was examined for the presence of coercive control and instances of implicit elaboration as a coping strategy. The first steps in the procedure of this study included the transcription of the wiretap data. Then the data was coded by analyzing the transcripts for coercive control tactics (See Appendix B) and victim's response tactics (See Appendix C) in order to identify how non-abusive tactics play out within long-term abusive relationships. By looking at the exploiter and victim tactics independently, we will identify verbal inconsistencies within the interpersonal dynamic, used to

investigate which will demonstrate non-abusive control tactics. The data was then analyzed again by exploring the verbiage used between the perpetrators and the victims using a discourse analytical framework by creating a power differential marker dictionary (Appendix F) in order to assess for elaboration under explicit solicitation. It compared the use of power differential markers used by the victims in conversations with the trafficker and conversations with others.

### **Participants**

The sample, provided by a government agency in full confidentiality, consisted of two male exploiters and four female prostitutes. Wiretapping was authorized for reasons unrelated to the actual sex trafficking. For confidentiality purposes, the names of all participants have been changed. Due to the fact that the data was retrieved via a prior police investigation, demographics (age, race, socioeconomic status, etc.) of the individuals were unavailable for this study. The participants worked in a large metropolitan area and lived in the surrounding area. For the purpose of this study, the women will be referred to as victims as they were still actively being abused when the data was collected.

### **Procedure**

Researchers had access to a four-month subset of communications over a two-year investigation. The conversations ranged from 45 seconds to 60 minutes. All calls over the course of this time period were recorded, including personal phone calls involving friends and family members. The data include recordings of two enforcers communicating with each other and the women working for them, as well as conversations with others (family members, johns, drug dealers, etc.).

Once the data was obtained from the original source, the audio files were then translated into text files. The audio data was transcribed verbatim by trained research assistants. The

transcripts were organized by date of call, then by individual whose phone was being tapped. Word documents were created, each consisting of all the calls on that individual phone per day. For linguistic analysis, the transcripts were then organized by conversational dyad in order to compare language of each dyad. We then identified unique and common linguistic markers of power differential by creating a concordance.

Materials include a qualitative analysis software (MAXQDA), the coercive control codebook, the victim response codebook and the power differential marker dictionary. To assess the occurrence of coercive control, a coding scheme was developed by a panel of field experts and graduate student research assistants. This 8-item instrument assessed the presence of coercive control tactics, in order to demonstrate the manifestation of the domains. To assess for the emotional effects of coercive control on the victims, a 5-item instrument (See Appendix C) was also designed by field experts and graduate student research assistants that asks about the interaction styles and emotional tones of the victim, in instances of interaction with their exploiter. Lastly, the power differential marker dictionary was designed to distinguish markers of control, persuasion and coordination within interactions, both with victims and their exploiters, as compared to markers used in conversations with others.

### **Data Processing and Analysis**

**Grounded Theory.** Using thematic analysis through grounded theory to analyze the data, we explored the presence of coercive control and victim's responses within a single data set of exploiter/victim transcripts. Over a period of nine months, a panel of experts and a panel of graduate student research assistants met to identify categories of coercive control and victim responses, both through prior literature and the audio recordings. Through editing a total of twelve progressive versions, the final coding book was developed.

To code the data, two trained research assistants separately coded the data for coercive control tactics and two different trained research assistants coded the data for behaviors and emotional tone of the victims. This included both the tactics employed by the abuser and the resulting outcomes for the victim. The four coders were part of the student panel used to develop the coding definitions; they also participated in the practice coding sessions over a period of five months, meeting once a week. Each coder was provided with the audio recording of the conversation and the written transcripts, as well as the coding definitions for clarification. While listening to each clip, the date of the call, the number assigned to the audio clip and the coder's responses were recorded. In instances where the two raters concluded conflicting codes, a panel consisting of trained research assistants and an expert psychologist were assembled to determine a "tie-breaking" response, which was then recorded as well.

**Linguistic analysis.** Using a conversation analytic approach in order to effectively evaluate the transcripts, prior research was evaluated parallel to reviewing transcripts. The analysis of the data involved careful listening and reading of the transcripts, creating a linguistic dictionary of power markers and applying the dictionary to conversations between the victim and exploiter and the victim with other individuals. This data was then carefully examined by word use, making note of discursive indiscretions within each conversation dyad. In accordance with the word count within each individual response, frequency of temporal and spatial markers was sorted.

## **Findings**

### **Coercive Control**

The goal of the current study was to explore the ways in which coercion is enacted using non-abusive and abusive language within long-term abusive relationships. Also, this study aimed

to further the support for more effective empirical tools to aid in the identification of coercive control. To do this, the wiretap data was used to organize and categorize the interaction styles of the abusers and victims. Specifically, in order to assess the individual verbal response within each statement rather than the overall theme of conversation between the exploiters and the victims, both the exploiters' control methods and the victims' responses were individually coded using separate coding schemes (See Appendix B and C).

To determine whether the various victim responses differed in reaction to various coercive control methods, a chi-squared test for independence revealed a significant difference between the type of victim behavior or interaction style and the coercive control method used by the exploiter. More specifically, the victim was most like to employ over-explanatory responses in conversations deemed routine surveillance (33.33%) than any other method of coercive control expended by the exploiter (See Appendix D). The relationship between these variables was significant,  $X^2(1, N=79)=0.028, p<.05$ .

In addition to our hypothesis, we also found a significant relationship between victim's "standard business as usual" behavioral style and the exploiter's use of routine surveillance (25.32% of total interactions) and microregulation (7.59% of total interactions). It is also worth noting that the exploiters' responses were coded positively in 0.0% of the 79 total interactions (See Appendix D).

### **Linguistic Analysis**

In order to identify the ways in which coercion is employed within long term abusive relationships, we analyzed linguistics patterns of persuasive and controlling language within a discourse analytical framework. We also compared the language use by victims in their conversations with traffickers and other individual communications (i.e. family, johns, drug

dealers, each other, etc.), which revealed distinct differences in both discursive topics and styles. Unsolicited elaboration, whereby the victim gave the trafficker an account of her whereabouts, actions, intents, and timeline without the trafficker explicitly asking for it, was common in the language of victims (See Appendix E). From this framework, we established a functional dictionary (See Appendix F) to distinguish words of control and persuasion.

In the first example (Appendix E), it is shown how the exploiter used ambiguity with a simple “K”, which then caused the victim to elaborate. Finally, at the end of the conversation, the exploiter shows appeasement by using “Alright”, a term of acceptance. In the second example, a similar ambiguous “Ohh” was used by the exploiter in order to induce elaboration within the victim. The same acceptance term of “Alright” was used again to terminate the conversation. The conversation is able to cease at both of those points, as the victim has received conciliation. Similarly, computerized linguistic analysis (Appendix H) showed that words that serve as discursive markers of persuasion (e.g. *only, reason, trying to, that's why*) and self-disclosure for control and surveillance purposes (e.g. markers of location, such as *((traffic)) light*; of activity, such as *check in, drinking, promise, text/ed/ing*; of timing, such as *soon*; and of state, such as *done, tired, was*, etc.) were significantly higher in conversations with her trafficker as compared to conversations with anybody else. In fact, even discursive coordination markers (e.g. *a'ight, gotcha, nah* or *chuckles*) that the victim used with her trafficker were mostly unique to those conversations. As a word that may be used both for persuasion and for self-disclosure for external control, the first person pronoun ‘I’ was particularly frequent in the language of the victims with their trafficker as compared to their conversations with anybody else.

With almost three times the words used as her exploiter, the victims demonstrated a much higher word count in these conversations than conversations with anyone else. In addition, we

are able to see the significantly higher level of markers of persuasion, self-disclosure for control and surveillance, and coordination when the women are engaging in conversations with the exploiter versus anyone else they are speaking with.

### **Discussion**

This study aimed to understand the linguistic mechanisms present within the coercive control dynamic by establishing elaboration within a population of sex trafficking victims. Overall, my results indicate that the coercive control framework, along with a discourse analytical framework, support the dynamics found within the sex trafficking context. More specifically, the presence of persuasion and control within the language of exploiters and their victims, respectively, compared to that used with other individuals supports understanding of coercive control. This is especially significant because it removes the focus from the presence of explicit physical abuse, in order to focus on the implicit controlling language (through interaction and expression) (Williamson, 2010). For these individuals, learning to live in a situation of constant emotional abuse, after instances of physical abuse, often becomes normal to the victim (Baldwin, Fehrenbacher, & Eisenman, 2014; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). This research demonstrates that although this abuse is seemingly normalized, there is empirical evidence to support the presence of chronic coercive control and its linguistic effects on the victim.

Linguistic Analyses (both informal and computational) of the language that victims use with their traffickers are consistent with a chronically-engrained pattern of internalized coercive control. Among the linguistic patterns of internalized coercive control that this study found are unsolicited elaborations and differential language use. Unsolicited Elaboration can be described as when the victim elaborates on her location, activities, intents and timeline promptly upon hearing his voice, and without the trafficker asking for it explicitly. This is especially significant

because overexplanatory responses were found to have a significant presence in the most “routine” calls. The need for the presence of a routine surveillance code was due to the abundance of mundane, standardized calls constantly checking the activities and whereabouts of the victim. Therefore, the exploiter has conditioned the victim over time, making the prompting questions no longer necessary. Differential language use is whereby the victim consistently used different language with her trafficker than with others. As shown in Appendix H, differential language use furthers the idea that communications between the exploiters and anyone else differs in significant ways. Furthermore, as expected, the words which were found more frequently in the conversations with the trafficker consisted of control, coordination, and persuasion markers– which are often encountered in language of subordinates, identifying that a power imbalance is present. Identifying a power imbalance is important to establishing that these individuals are not partners in business, but sit in different power roles within the context of their intimate relationship.

Necessary to establish the presently used categories for coding, prior research has actively investigated coercive control domains within interpersonal dynamics and their effects on the victim (Anderson, 2009; Baldwin et al., 2014; Beck & Raghavan, 2010; Biderman, 1957; Williamson, 2010), as well as the public perception (Donovan & Barnes-Brus, 2011; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). Verbal interactions analysis? have been predominately conducted using interviewing procedures, but the exploiter and the victim have rarely been observed (Baldwin et al., 2015; Dalla et al., 2003; Hardesty et al., 2015; Hom & Woods; 2013; Morselli & Savoie-Gargiso, 2014). With access to transcripts between exploiters and victims, this study is able to directly examine the linguistics patterns used to communicate on a daily basis. Using the framework of coercive control allows researchers to explore the abusive relationship over an

extended period of time, instead of incident specific situations—which is ecologically more valid. Therefore, this study continued exploration into the ways in which these non-abusive domains play out within long-term abusive relationships through assessment for presence of coercive control methods victims' responses, as well as analysis of linguistics patterns. The qualitative data is used to examine elaboration under explicit and implicit verbal solicitation, as a step towards validating the use of linguistic pragmatics to detect chronic coercive control.

The way the victim responded in each specific communication is important for a greater understanding of coercive control, as this study is a step towards focusing closer on the responses elicited within specific instances of coercive control, specifically through microregulation and routine daily activities. By establishing that particular verbal usage within the control of everyday activities has the ability to elicit long-term compliance helps explain how coercive control can be maintained within someone with independence. The invisibility of coercive control is persistently considered inadmissible, but with physical evidence of its presence, coercive control becomes factual. Both within the judicial and clinical settings, the ability to transform a previously invisible state into a physical observation allows for credible standing.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

While the current study presents an original way of analyzing this type of data by using both grounded theory coding and linguistic analysis, it is necessary to point out the limitations. Although the methods used in this study present high inter-rater reliability, alternative methods reliability is not present as these codebooks were designed within this study. This allows for further research to apply different data into the various domains established. Though two years of transcripts is an extensive length of data, this study only showed a mere snapshot in the scheme of the entire relationship between the exploiter and the victim. In regards to the totality

of the relationships, the courting period of each victim remains unknown, which would be incredibly helpful in identifying how the behaviors found present within the current data were established.

Within the Linguistic Analysis, conversational face threat and lower status is consistent with vulnerability, but the linguistic patterns cannot establish the presence of coercive control. Furthermore, absent explicit evidence for long term inculcation for self-disclosure for the purposes of external control, the linguistic patterns found here can only presume that such overtly coercive conditioning period indeed took place, but cannot indicate it.

### **Conclusion**

Despite the limitations presented here, the current study evolves the study of coercive control, specifically in regards to the interpersonal dynamics between the exploiter and the victim and long-term relationships requiring less explicit tactics of coercion. Through this exclusive data set, categories of individual linguistic response are able to be established that may not previously have been able to be accessed. Therefore, this study contributes significant research towards the ability to create a concrete sub-field within a previously invisible situation, involving coercive control within interpersonal dynamics involved in the sex trafficking industry.

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## Appendix A

Table 1. Biderman's Framework of Coercion, with Application to Human Trafficking

<b>Method of Coercion</b>	<b>Purpose of Tactic</b>
Isolation	Deprives victim of all social support. Victim develops an intense concern with self. Victim becomes dependent on trafficker/ abusive boss.
Monopolization of perception	Fixes victim's attention on immediate predicament. Eliminates stimuli competing with those controlled by trafficker. Frustrates action not consistent with compliance.
Induced debility and exhaustion	Weakens mental and physical ability to resist.
Threats	Cultivates anxiety and despair.
Occasional indulgences	Provides positive motivation for compliance
Demonstrating omnipotence	Suggests futility of resistance
Degradation	Makes cost of resistance more damaging to self-esteem than capitulation. Reduces victim to "animal level" concerns.
Enforcing trivial demands	Develops habits of compliance.

*Note:* Biderman's theory of coercion domains (presented above) were the framework for the coercion control coding scheme created for this study.

## Appendix B

## Coercive Control Codes

## Surveillance

- monitoring location and/or activities of target

## Microregulation

- controlling aspects of target's everyday life, daily tasks, and/or daily functioning

## Routine Daily Activities

- control of daily activities that does not meet requirement for micro, yet still involves regulation of day-to-day behaviors

## Manipulation/Exploitation

- using intentional deceit, misrepresentation, or existing vulnerabilities to induce compliance and/or alter the target's perception

## Isolation

- restricting or denying access to family, friends, people, or places

## Intimidation

- engaging in behaviors to induce fear, self-blame, or compliance, with or without the threat of physical harm

## Deprivation

- denying target basic necessities and/or fundamental needs
  - physical or physiological (e.g., denial of medicine, food, sleep, etc.)
  - emotional (e.g., denial of warmth, support, etc.)

\*\*\*\* *For use when she explicitly asks/requests or states a need, or by a reasonable person standard*

## Degradation

- using directly degrading language

## Relevant subcodes:

- Routine Surveillance – nonviolent, non-threatening, seemingly “normal” checkins
  - Initiated by: Male or Female

\*\*\*\**Helpful to consider how “routine” codes are a mirror—rather than a subcategory—of surveillance and microregulation*

## Appendix C

## Victim Response Codes

1. Initial Topic: \_\_\_\_\_A\_\_\_\_\_

1a. Shift 1 (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_A\_\_\_\_\_

*Under 3 minutes, only 1 topic/no shifts\*\*\*\**

## List A:

- Check in – when callers check in (no other content)
- Drugs – any call with dealer or about drugs
- Financial – when any topic of money arises
- Food – when the callers discuss eating
- Group – when callers discuss things pertaining to the group of women working for Greg
- Location – when location of either caller is discussed or daily tasks
- Police – calls about authorities, arrest, etc.
- Johns/Sex/Dates – calls about dates, johns, etc.
- Conflict – conflict between callers or within group
- Prostitution – “work” related calls/topics, *possible summary code*
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. He was: Positive/ Other

Positive must *be clear, verbal, linguistic, explicit\*\*\*\**

2a. If Positive: \_\_\_\_\_B\_\_\_\_\_

## List B:

- Praise
- Compliments
- Social support
- Warmth
- Reward
- Apology
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. She was:

Behavior/ Interaction Style: \_\_\_\_\_C\_\_\_\_\_

## List C:

- Submissive- (Begging, Pleading, Need to Please)
- Apologetic
- Compliance (Obedient, Following Orders)
  
- Defensive (Self-Blame present)
- Blame others
- Blame the self

- Over-explanatory – *Level of detail reasonable by the reasonable person's standard?\*\*\*\**
- Justifying – *reasonable explanation by the reasonable person's standard?\*\*\*\**
- Resistant (Absence of Self-Blame)
- Defiant
- Standard “Business as Usual”
- Expressing Accomplishment/ Achievement

4. Emotional Tone/ Expression: \_\_\_\_\_D\_\_\_\_\_

List D:

- Tearful
- Regressive/Infantile
- Nervous/Anxious
- Disengaged
- Angry
- Assertive
- Matter-Of-Fact
- Hesitant/ Guarded
- Neutral
- Proud
- Cheerful
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4a. Confidence Rating:

← Not at all --- Somewhat --- Very →

Appendix D  
Statistical Results

Table 2. Cross-tabulation between coercive control codes and victim’s behavior or interaction style response.

		Victim Response C							Total	
		Apologetic	Compliance	Defensiveness	Expressing Accomplishment	Overexplanatory	Resistant	Standard		Submissive
Coercive Control Code	Degradation	1	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	5
	Deprivation	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	3
	Intimidation	1	1	1	0	2	4	0	0	9
	Manipulation/ Exploitation	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	3
	Microregulation	0	1	0	1	3	2	6	1	14
	Routine Daily Activity	1	1	0	1	0	0	2	1	6
	Routine Surveillance	1	2	0	1	4	0	20	0	28
	Surveillance	1	3	0	0	2	1	4	0	11
Total		5	9	3	3	12	12	33	2	79

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	69.846 <sup>a</sup>	49	.027
Likelihood Ratio	72.341	49	.017
N of Valid Cases	79		

<sup>a</sup>. 0 cells (.000%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .44.

Table 3. Cross-tabulation between victim's over explanatory behavior or interaction style response and coercive control tactic, routine surveillance.

**Overexplanatory \* Routine Surveillance**

**Crosstab**

Count

		Routine Surveillance		Total
		0	1	
Overexplanatory	0	43	24	67
	1	8	4	12
Total		51	28	79

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.028 <sup>a</sup>	1	.868	1.000	.573
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	.000	1	1.000		
Likelihood Ratio	.028	1	.868		
Fisher's Exact Test					
Linear-by-Linear Association	.027	1	.869		
N of Valid Cases	79				

a. 1 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.25.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 4. Frequency table for exploiter tone in victim response codes.

**Victim Response B**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Other	79	100.0	100.0	100.0

## Appendix E

Unsolicited Elaboration of the Victim's Whereabouts

E: Hey, what's up baby?

V: Nothing, just calling to check in.

E: Oh okay. How's it looking out there?

V: Um, nothing yet. I mean there's a few people out here and there, but I don't know.

E: K.

V: I was just basically, um, was offered to take someone to Jersey for 4-500, not even service him. Just drop him off at home to their wife. And he gets in the car, he's got like more than that on him, and then he's like "oh no, this is a bad decision," and gets up.

E: He did, he did what?

V: He did, basically counted all his money and all that. And I'm like okay, well you gotta give me a little bit up front. He's like, I know I just don't know what I wanna do yet. And by the time I got the light, he's like this is a bad decision. I'm just gonna get out. I'm like, great already. But I'm fine.

E: Alright, well give me a call. Let me know what's Gucci.

Unsolicited Elaboration in Marker of Timing

"E: You don't bother call me?"

V: I did call you, I called you at 8:30 and I didn't get an answer I got your voicemail.

E: Ohh.

V: It was 8:22 to be exact cause I just looked at my phone to see what time we had to check in.

E: Oh, okay. Alright, cuz I was wondering like what the fuck I ain't get no call, go ahead alright...

V: Oh, Yeah ... I was gonna check in in about another half hour anyway.

Greg: Alright, just call me two hours from now"

## Appendix F

Table 5. Functional dictionary for words control and persuasion

<b>DICTIONARIES</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Coordination</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Timing</b>
	ASK	FINE	AWAY	*:30
	CALL*	I will	BAD	*CLOCK
	GOTCHA	IGHT	BELIEVE	BEFORE
	CARE	MEAN	DOWN	EIGHT
	DRINK*	NAH	FAR	FIRST
	EAT*	NICE	HOME	FOUR
	FOOD	SUPPOSE*	HOUSE	HANG
	GOTTA	TALK*	NEXT	hurry
	GRAB*	TEXT*	over there	LAST
	KEEP*	THINK*	STATION	LATER
	OFF	UNDERST*	THROUGH	little bit
	PHONE	YEA	WENT	LONG
	PUT		get there	MONTH*
	SEND*		LEAVE	NIGHT
	SIT*			READY
	STOP*			right away
	TAG			SHOWER
	TOLD			SITTING
	TRIE*			SOON

TRY*	START
WHATEVER	TEN
GET*	TRAFFIC
	TUNNEL
	UNTIL
	WAITING
	WEEK*
	WORK
	YEAR*
	YET
	TOMORROW

Appendix H

Differential Language Use of Victims

