

Power and Violence in Marriages and Families

Nobody has ever before asked the nuclear family
to live all by itself in a box the way we do.
With no relatives, no support, we've put it in an
impossible situation.

Margaret Mead

Outline

- What is Power?
- The Dynamics of Marital Power
- Some American Couples
- Power Politics Versus No-Power Relationships
- Family Violence

Power

- **Power** is the ability to exercise one's will.
- Power exercised over oneself is **personal** power.
- **Social** power is the ability of people to exercise their wills over the wills of others.
- **Parental** power is power between parents and children.
- **Marital** power is power between married partners.

Marital Power Involves:

- Decision making
- Division of labor
- Partners' sense of empowerment
- Objective measures of power
- Subjective measures of fairness

Six Bases of Power

- **Coercive power** - based on dominant partner's ability to punish partner with psychological, emotional or physical abuse
- **Reward power** -- based on ability to give material or nonmaterial gifts and favors

Six Bases of Power

- **Expert power** -- stems from dominant partner's superior judgment, knowledge or ability
- **Informational power** -- based on the persuasive content of what the dominant partner tells another individual

Six Bases of Power

- **Referent power** -- based on less dominant partner's emotional identification with the dominant partner
- **Legitimate power** -- based on individual's ability to claim authority

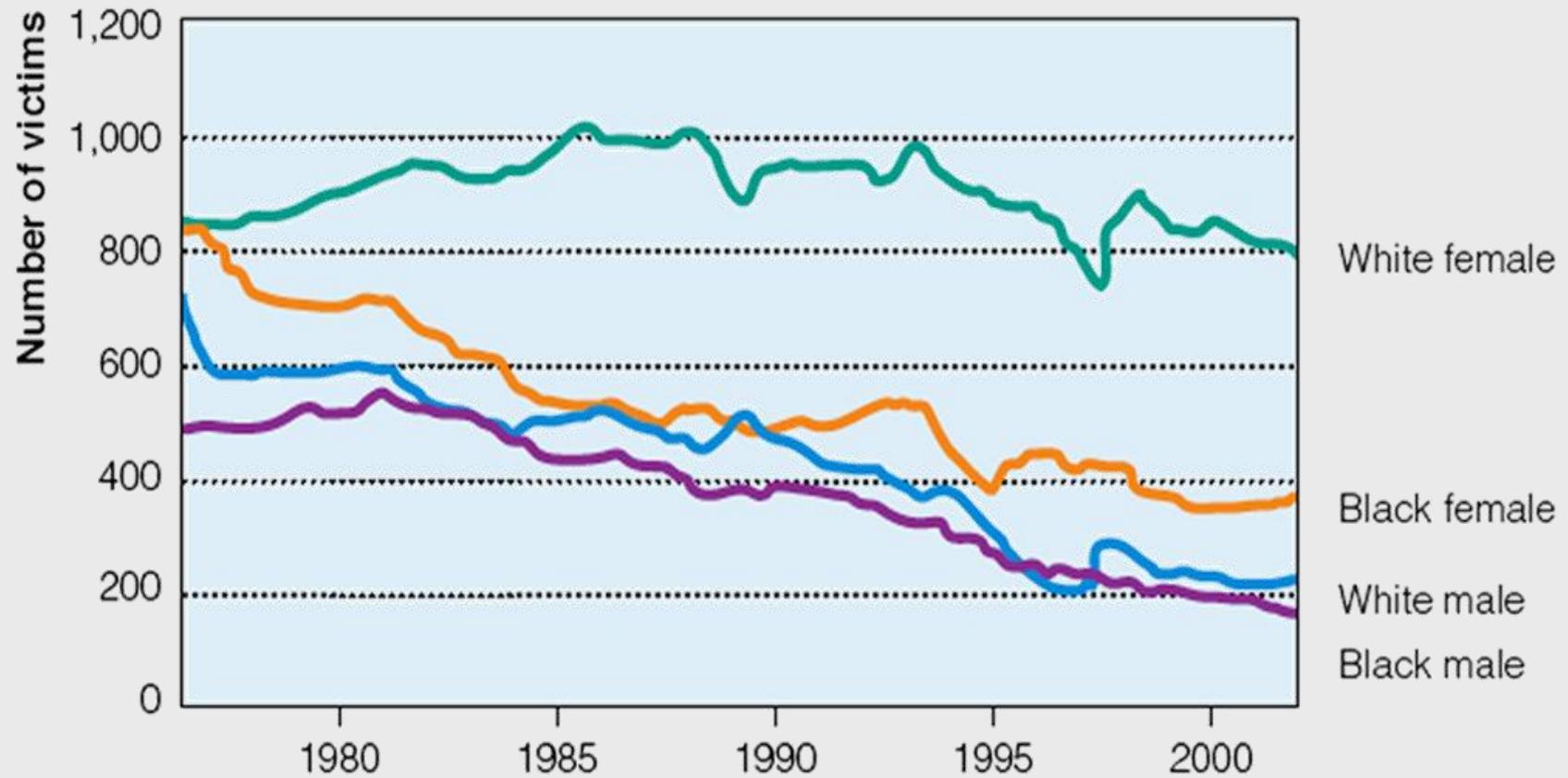
How Resources and Legitimate Power Affect Conjugal Power

		Husband's resources are greater	
		Yes	No
The culture gives husbands absolute legitimate power	Yes	Husband dominant	Husband dominant
	No	Husband probably dominant (unless egalitarian cultural norm for marriage is completely accepted)	Equalitarian marriage or wife-dominant (if she has the greater resources)

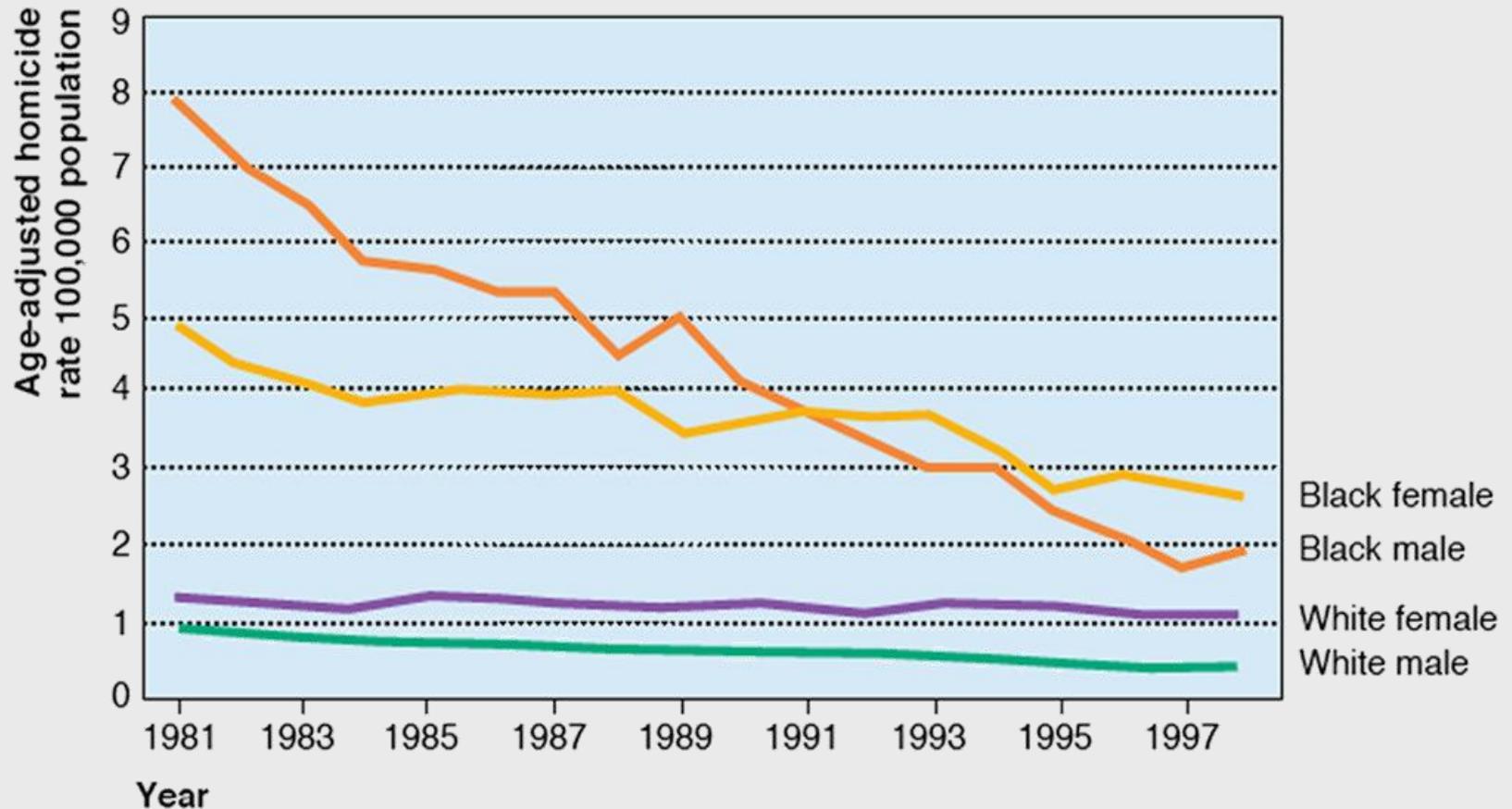
The Resource Hypothesis

- Spouse with more resources has more power in the marriage.
- Focuses on background characteristics and doesn't consider how partners interact.
- Explains marital power only when there is no overriding egalitarian or patriarchal norm.

Number of Homicides of Intimate Partners



Intimate-Partner Age Adjusted Homicide Rates



Love, Need and Power

- Each partner brings resources to the marriage and receives rewards from the other partner.
- One partner may be gaining more from the marriage.
 - This partner is more likely to comply with the other's preferences.

Equalization of Marital Power

- Women attain equal status in the public world and develop resources that are equal to men.
- Society values women's resources of caring and emotional expression more highly.
- Norms of equality become so strong that men and women have equal power.

Three-Phase Cycle of Domestic Violence

1. **Tension** from a minor altercation builds over time.
2. The situation **escalates**, eventually exploding into a violent episode.
3. Husband becomes genuinely **contrite**, treating his wife lovingly.

% of Persons Physically Assaulted by an Intimate Partner in Lifetime

Type of Assault	Women (n=8,000)	Men (n=8,000)
Total physical assault by intimate partner	22.1	7.4
Threw something	8.1	4.4
Pushed, grabbed, shoved	18.1	5.4
Pulled hair	9.1	2.3
Slapped, hit	16.0	5.5
Kicked, bit	5.5	2.6

% of Persons Physically Assaulted by an Intimate Partner in Lifetime

Type of Assault	Women (n=8,000)	Men (n=8,000)
Choked, tried to drown	6.1	0.5
Hit with object	5.0	3.2
Beat up	8.5	0.6
Threatened with gun	3.5	0.4
Threatened with knife	2.8	1.6
Used gun	0.7	0.1
Used knife	0.9	0.8

Why Do Men Do It?

- Attempt to compensate for feelings of powerlessness or inadequacy
- Attempt to maintain control over partners trying to become independent of the relationship

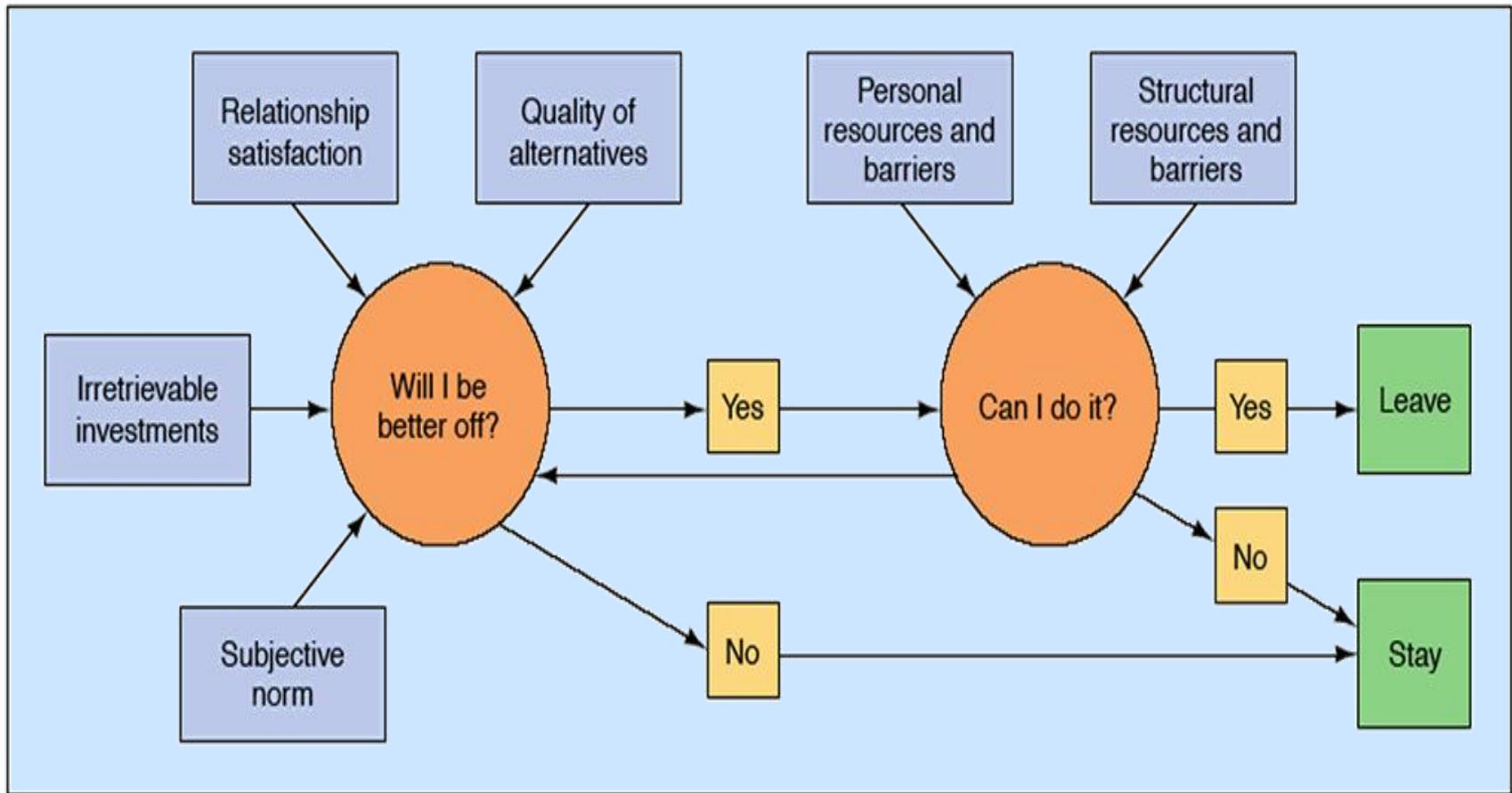
Why Do Women Live With It?

- Fear
- Cultural norms -- Women are encouraged to put up with abuse.
- Love
- Economic dependence

Why Do Women Live With It?

- Hope for change
- Belief that it's a woman's responsibility to keep a relationship from failing
- Childhood experiences with domestic violence
- Low self-esteem

Conceptual Model of Abused Women's Stay/Leave Decision-Making Process



Husband and Male Partner Abuse

- Common couple violence appears to be perpetuated by women as well as men.
- Women are overwhelmingly victimized more often and more severely than men.

Risk Factors For Child Abuse

1. A belief in physical punishment.
2. Parents may have unrealistic expectations about the child's capabilities.
3. Parents who abuse were often abused or neglected as children.
4. Parental stress and feelings of helplessness.

Quick Quiz

1. Which type of power refers to the ability of people to exercise their wills over the wills of others?

- a) personal
- b) marital
- c) social
- d) objective

Answer: c

Social power refers to the ability of people to exercise their wills over the wills of others.

2. Which of the following is NOT one of the bases, or sources, of power discussed in the text?

- a) informational
- b) referent
- c) legitimate
- d) sexual

Answer: d

Sexual is NOT one of the bases, or sources, of power discussed.

3. Which theory involves the point of view that each partner brings resources to the marriage and receives rewards from the other partner?

- a) resource
- b) the principle of least interest
- c) relative love and need
- d) conjugal power

Answer: c

The **relative love and need theory** involves the point of view that each partner brings resources to the marriage and receives rewards from the other partner.

4. _____ involves a parent's often being overly harsh and critical, failing to provide guidance or being uninterested in a child's needs.

- a) Sexual abuse
- b) Child abuse
- c) Emotional child abuse or neglect
- d) Incest

Answer: c

Emotional child abuse or neglect involves a parent's often being overly harsh and critical, failing to provide guidance, or being uninterested in a child's needs.

