

On Coercion

One might object to the claim that threatening to shoot someone if they don't give up their wallet is an act of coercion because the act of parting with one's wallet is a voluntary choice. I think that's true, as far as it goes, but that's not what makes the threat coercive. What makes the threat coercive is the aggressive removal of options from which to voluntarily choose. The option to keep one's wallet has been aggressively removed by the potential shooter. Because the wallet holder values his life more than death, he chooses to part with his wallet. Had his options not been coercively reduced, he would have kept his life and his wallet. The coercive removal of options is not necessarily aggressive; it may also be manipulative, as when a parent dislikes his child's behavior and instead of using love and persuasion to bring about its change, he uses threats, like when he says that if the child doesn't change, the parent will take away a privilege. This kind of threat is not aggressive, but it is manipulative, and so is a coercive reduction in the child's options. Should parents practice coercing their children? In my opinion, not if they value their relationship with their child and his emotional and mental development. And that's today's two cents.

Skyler.