

Losing Control

Homicide Risk in Estranged and Intact Intimate Relationships

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Using data from Statistics Canada's Homicide Survey, this article explores the dynamics of intimate partner homicides in Canada between 1991 and 2000 among a range of relationships. The authors' findings are consistent with previous studies that document an elevated risk of intimate partner homicide for women who have separated compared to women in intact relationships. Using bivariate and multivariate techniques, the authors find that a number of incident characteristics set apart homicides that occur in intact and estranged intimate relationships for women but not for men. Similarly, this study finds that the circumstances and motivational contexts of intimate homicides differ for female victims depending on relationship type (legal marriages, common-law unions, and other intimate relationships). These results support recommendations from Dawson and Gartner (1998) that researchers continue to develop conceptually meaningful categorizations of intimate partner homicides.

Keywords: *homicide victimization; family homicide; family violence; intimate partner violence; separation violence*

Estimates vary but random sample surveys that interview women about their experiences with partner violence indicate that the problem is pervasive: A lifetime rate of 29% of married or cohabiting women 18 years of age and older was recorded in Canada (Johnson, 1996), 22% in the United States (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000a), 22% in Finland (Heiskanen & Piispa, 1998), 23% in

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Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996), and 26% of women 16 to 59 years of age in England and Wales (Mirrlees-Black, 1999).

Surveys that differentiate between current and past partners find that rates of violence reported to have occurred in relationships that ended are higher than in situations with current partners and that violence by past partners was more serious on average, more frequent, and more likely to result in injury and hospitalization (Johnson, 1996; Rennison & Welchans, 2000). This is not surprising given the natural tendency to remain in relationships in which violence is absent or happens infrequently and to leave relationships that are injurious. However, very often the violence and threats do not end with marital separation. Women are often assaulted, threatened, hunted down, and killed by extremely jealous and possessive partners who are desperate to maintain control over women who are equally desperate to escape them (Block, 2000; Campbell, 2001; McFarlane et al., 1999). In fact, homicide rates are higher for women who have separated than they are for women in intact relationships, and these tend to occur in the immediate aftermath of separation (Hotton, 2001; Wilson & Daly, 1993).

According to Statistics Canada's 1999 General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization, which contained an expanded module of questions on spousal violence, approximately 40% of women and 32% of men with a former violent marriage or common-law relationship reported violence after the couple had separated (Hotton, 2001). Among those women who experienced violence after leaving their partners, 24% indicated that the assaults became more serious, 39% reported that the violence first occurred after the separation, whereas 37% reported that the violence continued but did not increase in severity. Thus, there can be a risk of violence during a period of separation even when there has been no previous history of physical violence in the relationship, although most report experiencing some forms of emotional abuse (Hotton, 2001).

Leaving or threats by female partners to end the relationship have been cited in many studies as the event that triggers a violent response against female intimates (Campbell, 1992a, 1995, 2001; Wilson & Daly, 1993). As part of an 11-city case-control study, *The Chicago Women's Health Risk Study* (Block, 2000) compared

physically abused women with victims of intimate partner homicide to explore factors associated with significant danger of death or life-threatening injury in intimate violence situations. This study found that leaving or attempting to leave violent partners can be a particularly risky time for abused women and that leaving resulted in a lower chance of future violence only for those women who had experienced less severe assaults. Seventy-five percent of femicide victims in their sample, 85% of severely abused women, and 66% of women who experienced less severe abuse had left or tried to end the relationship in the previous year. In addition, leaving was a direct precipitating factor in 45% of the femicides.

In a study of police and coroners' records of 551 women killed by intimate partners between 1974 and 1990 in Ontario, Canada, Gartner, Dawson, and Crawford (1998) identified the offender's rage over the actual or pending separation as the motive for the homicide in 45% of cases in which a motive could be established. In another 15% of cases, the motive appeared to be the offender's suspicions about his partner's fidelity.

Although important similarities have been identified in intimate partner assaults and homicides (Wilson, Johnson, & Daly, 1995), researchers have identified a number of important differences in violence perpetrated by ex-partners compared to violence committed within intact relationships. Violence that continues after separation tends not only to be more serious and obsessive, but it is more likely to involve stalking, to involve female victims, and to lead to homicide.

Stalking as a Precursor to Homicide

Recent studies in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom have found a strong association between stalking and intimate partner violence (Hotton, 2001; Mechanic, Uhlmansiek, Weaver, & Resnick, 2000; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998), femicide, and attempted femicide (McFarlane et al., 1999). Police statistics indicate that women were the victims in 77% of stalking incidents reported to police in both Canada and Colorado Springs, and current or former husbands and boyfriends were the most commonly identified perpetrators of these incidents (Hackett, 2000; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000b).

Using data from the 1996 National Violence Against Women Survey, Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) reported that the vast majority (81%) of women in the United States who were stalked by intimate partners were also physically assaulted by the same partner. Men who stalked their ex-wives were more likely to engage in emotionally abusive and controlling behaviors (e.g., limiting contact with others, jealousy, and possessiveness) than were men who did not stalk their ex-wives. Of those women who reported being stalked by a former partner, 21% said that the stalking occurred before the relationship had ended, 36% said it occurred both before and after, and in the remaining 43%, stalking occurred only after the relationship had ended. Stalking behavior by current or ex-marital partners continued for 2.2 years on average.

McFarlane et al. (1999) found a high correlation between violence and stalking for both femicide and attempted femicide victims. In their sample of women in the 11-city study who had been killed or survived a homicide attempt by their intimate partners, 76% of femicide victims and 85% of attempted femicide victims experienced at least one incident of stalking within 1 year of the violent incident. They also reported that rates of stalking were higher for former intimate partners (88%) than for current partners (63%).

Gender as a Risk Factor for Postseparation Homicide

Although similar proportions of women and men reported violence by intimate partners in the 1999 GSS, women reported more serious types of assaults, higher levels of injury, and hospitalization and were more likely to fear for their lives (Johnson & Pottie Bunge, 2001). Between 1979 and 1998, the annual rate of spousal homicide was more than 3 times higher for women (10 per million) than for men (3 per million) (Pottie Bunge & Locke, 2000). The gender stratification of risk is even greater for rates of spousal homicide perpetrated by former spouses. As few as 2.2 homicides per million separated men occurred in Canada between 1991 and 1999 as compared to 38.7 per million separated women (Hotton, 2001). In terms of number of homicides, women made up 75% of victims in homicides involving intact spouses and 91% of those in which spouses were estranged.

Theoretical Perspectives on Postseparation Violence

Several theories have been advanced to explain the elevated risk of violence after separation. Although acknowledging the influence of the larger culture and family environment on individual behavior, Dutton (1988, 1994) proposed that the root of separation violence is attachment-derived anger-identity problems. Dutton argued that the focus on why "men use violence" is misguided and that attention should be focused on the minority of men who actually do use violence as a tool to control their partners. He proposed that men with severe identity problems and intense dependency on women exploit aspects of patriarchal culture to direct and justify their abuse of women (Dutton, 1994, p. 176).

Feminist researchers denounce approaches that focus on the use of violence against women as exceptional case studies and argue that violence should be situated on a continuum of power and control with lethal violence at the far end of the spectrum. Most studies cited to support the argument that violence and control are used by a small minority of men ignore the use of other forms of emotional and financial abuse as more subtle means of coercive control. Furthermore, Sev'er (1997) argued that feminist theories that locate intimate abuse in the context of gender-based power differentials are the most viable framework to approach estrangement violence, "precisely because separations, especially when initiated by women, challenge the foundation of a male bastion: his power and control within his home" (p. 572). Mahoney (1991) suggested a renaming of violence that aims to prevent the woman from leaving, retaliate for her departure, or force her to return as "separation assault" (p. 6). She argued that this would help focus attention on the "ongoing struggle for power and control in the relationship" and would help "recast the entire discussion of separation in terms of the batterer's violent attempts at control" (p. 64).

Evolutionary theorists, most notably Wilson and Daly (1993, 1998), argue that "male sexual proprietariness" is at the root of spousal killings. Sexual proprietariness refers to a pervasive mind-set, encompassing not only episodes of jealousy but also presumptions of entitlement and the need to exercise control and prevent threats of usurpation (Wilson & Daly, 1998). This proprietariness is observable across cultures and in different

historical eras and is central to understanding how and why men use threats or violence to establish and maintain control over their partners, even to the point of killing them (Wilson et al., 1995). Sexual proprietariness is likely to be aroused by cues of the intensity of competition from other males and of one's own value vis-à-vis other rivals. In support of their claims, Wilson and Daly pointed to factors that elevate the risk of femicide, including female-initiated separation and divorce (in which the males' proprietary claims are challenged), common-law marital status (which is more prone to dissolution and thus infiltration by competitive males), and the young age of the woman (as young female partners will be more attractive to rival men).

Relationship Status and Risk of Homicide

Dawson and Gartner (1998) urged researchers to search for more conceptually meaningful ways to categorize homicides and question the logic of treating "spousal" or "family" homicides separately from those involving other intimate partners, such as dating partners. They set out to assess whether circumstances and characteristics vary across types of intimate partner relationships. Based on a study of 703 intimate femicides in the province of Ontario, Canada, between 1974 and 1994, Dawson and Gartner conceptualized intimate partner homicides according to relationship state (intact or estranged) and relationship status (legal marriage, cohabiting, or dating). They identified a number of factors that differentiate female and male intimate partner homicides. For example, they found that women killed by former partners were more likely to be employed, to be killed in public places, to be killed in front of witnesses, and to die by shooting, and they were less likely to be drinking at the time of their deaths. Their estranged killers were younger, more likely to have a criminal record, and more likely to be ex-dating partners rather than legally married or common-law spouses (p. 388).

Fewer factors differentiated common-law and dating relationships as compared to marriages and common-law unions or married couples and dating relationships. Perpetrators in homicides that occurred within the context of common-law or dating relationships were younger, more likely to be unemployed, more likely to have a criminal record, and less likely to have children as

compared to homicides of married partners (Dawson & Gartner, 1998). Perpetrators in dating relationships were more likely than those in marriages to be using alcohol or drugs at the time of the incident, to be motivated by jealousy, and to sexually assault their victims and were less likely to commit suicide. These authors suggest that the relational dimensions that differentiate risks and characteristics of violence in various types of intimate relationships center on expectations concerning reciprocity and relational distance.

The Present Study

The present study will examine important differences in the context and circumstances surrounding homicides committed by current and estranged intimate partners and by legally married, common-law, and noncohabiting intimate partners in Canada in the 10-year period between 1991 and 2000. The analysis will build on Dawson and Gartner's (1998) exploration of more refined conceptualizations of relationship status and state within intimate partner homicides. This study aims to build on previous work by including a gender dimension. This will enable an exploration of whether relationship status or state remains an equally important differentiation when women are the perpetrators of the homicides.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Data Source

The data presented in this article are drawn from Statistics Canada's annual Homicide Survey, which provides detailed data on all homicide incidents, victims, and accused persons since 1974 (and summary data on the annual number of homicides since 1961). Homicide Survey questionnaires are completed by police departments across the country following a homicide incident. In accordance with Canadian law, the Homicide Survey classifies criminal homicide as first-degree murder, second-degree murder, manslaughter, or infanticide. Deaths caused by criminal negligence, suicide, and accidental or justifiable homicide are not included in this classification.

Homicide Survey questionnaires remained virtually unchanged from 1974 to 1990. In 1991 and later in 1997, the survey was revised and expanded to include additional data elements including a more detailed breakdown of the relationship between victims and accused persons and other data elements related to domestic homicide. In this study, we will investigate intimate partner homicides involving 846 female victims and 210 male victims recorded in the Homicide Survey between 1991 and 2000. The estimates may be affected by the fact that 20% of homicides recorded by the police over this 10-year period were unsolved, and this percentage ranged from a low of 17% in 1992 to a high of 26% in 2000. In less than 1% of solved homicides, the relationship between the victim and perpetrator was unknown (a total of 46 homicides over this period). The database included 11 same-sex partner homicides, which were excluded in the bivariate and multivariate analyses. Cases with multiple perpetrators were retained.

Variables in the Analysis

A major limitation to using administrative data for research purposes is that the variables contained in the survey are established in advance of the research study and are not selected to test specific theories or hypotheses. There are also limitations related to possible bias in police coding for some of the more subjective variables, such as the motive of the accused person and whether the victim was the first to use force. In addition, survey forms are completed shortly after the homicide incident, and data are not updated with new information gained through investigation or at trial.

The relationship types coded in this survey are shown in Table 1. They include three categories of intact relationships (legally married, common law, boyfriend/girlfriend/extramarital lover), four categories of estranged relationships (estranged/separated marital partner, divorced partner, estranged/separated common-law partner, estranged lover), and same-sex lovers. These categories are subject to a degree of bias, especially the differentiation between common-law unions and boyfriend/girlfriend/lover, as they are based on the perception of police at the time of the incident.

TABLE 1
Characteristics of the Sample

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Female Victims</i>		<i>Male Victims</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Location</i>						
Joint residence	448	53.0	139	67.1	587	55.8
Victim's residence	204	24.1	24	11.6	228	21.7
Accused's residence	50	5.9	18	8.7	68	6.5
Other location	143	16.9	26	12.6	169	16.1
Total	845	99.9	207	100.0	1,052	100.1
<i>Cause of death</i>						
Shooting	293	34.6	42	20.0	335	31.7
Stabbing	261	30.9	132	62.9	393	37.2
Beating	125	14.8	16	7.6	141	13.4
Other	167	19.8	20	9.6	187	17.7
Total	846	100.1	210	100.1	1,056	100.0
<i>Motive</i>						
Argument	337	39.8	138	65.7	475	45.0
Jealousy	223	26.4	19	9.0	242	22.9
Other	286	33.7	53	25.2	339	32.1
Total	846	99.9	210	99.9	1,056	100.0
<i>Accused committed suicide</i>						
Yes	248	29.3	6	2.9	254	24.1
No	598	70.7	204	97.1	802	75.9
Total	846	100.0	210	100.0	1,056	100.0
<i>History of domestic violence in the family</i>						
Yes	374	57.5	116	64.8	490	59.0
No	277	42.5	63	35.2	340	41.0
Total	651	100.0	179	100.0	830	100.0
<i>Victim first to use force</i>						
Yes	27	5.3	48	40.7	75	12.0
No	481	94.7	70	59.3	551	88.0
Total	508	100.0	118	100.0	626	100.0
<i>Accused had previous conviction</i>						
Yes	391	47.1	71	34.0	462	44.5
No	439	52.9	138	66.0	577	55.5
Total	830	100.0	209	100.0	1,039	100.0

SOURCE: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

NOTE: Excludes cases with missing information.

Other incident characteristics available on the Homicide Survey selected as most relevant to this study included

1. location of the incident—responses collapsed into joint residence, victim's residence, accused's residence, or other location;

2. cause of death—the victim died as a result of shooting, stabbing, beating, or other (strangulation, suffocation, poisoning, lethal injection, other);
3. motive—based on the perception and initial investigation of police, the accused was motivated by an argument, jealousy, revenge, frustration/anger/despair, financial gain, during the commission of another offense, other;
4. accused committed suicide—the accused committed suicide immediately following the homicide;
5. history of domestic violence—police had knowledge of a history of domestic violence in the family (sex of the perpetrator and the relationship to the victim are not specified);
6. victim was the first to use force—based on the perception and initial investigation of police, the victim of the homicide was the first to use violence (and presumably the accused was acting in self-defense); and
7. accused had a previous conviction for a violent offense—based on official police records.

Table 1 shows the frequency distribution of these variables for intimate partner homicides involving male and female victims.

Homicide Rates

For the calculation of homicide rates, the 1991 and 1996 censuses and annual population estimates were used to estimate the number of women and men aged 15 and older who were married, in a common-law union, separated or divorced from legal marital partners, and single. The relationship categories used in the Homicide Survey since 1991 are detailed but do not always match the marital status categories in the census. For example, in the Homicide Survey, the category of “separated” includes both victims who were separated from legal marital partners and common-law partners, but the census only has population estimates for those separated from legal spouses. Because estimates of the number of ex-common-law partners are not available, these cases are included with boyfriends/girlfriends and lovers, and together, rates for this group of “other intimate partners” are calculated on the basis of the number of single people in the population.

It was possible to identify homicides perpetrated by a former common-law partner through a review of narratives recorded by police for each incident and to recode them. The review of

homicide narratives not only enabled us to cross-check the accuracy of the victim-offender relationship, but it was used to supplement other information absent in the data files, for example, the approximate length of separation at the time of the incident.

RESULTS

In Canada, spousal homicide rates for both women and men have fluctuated over the past two decades and have generally declined (see Figure 1). The spousal homicide rate for women (including legal marriages, common-law unions, separated and divorced from legal marriages) declined 62% between 1974 and 2000 (from 16.5 to 6.3 per million couples) and dropped by half between 1991 and 2000 (from 12.4 to 6.3 per million couples). The rate for men declined 54% over the longer term (from 4.4 to 2.0 per million couples) and 44% since 1991 (from 3.6 to 2.0 per million couples). Similarly, overall rates of intimate partner homicide, which includes spouses as well as boyfriends, girlfriends, and lovers, decreased from 10.2 to 5.4 per million adults (15 and older) for women and from 2.4 to 1.5 per million for men during the 10-year period from 1991 to 2000. Intimate partner homicide has also declined in the United States but more noticeably for men than for women (Rennison & Welchans, 2000).

The ratio of women to men killed in intimate partner homicides between 1991 and 2000 ranged from 2.8:1 to 5.5:1 with an average of 4.0:1. In addition, intimate partner homicides accounted for a larger share of all homicides involving female victims than those with male victims: 35% of all perpetrators in killings of females compared to just 6% of homicides involving male victims. By contrast, men are more likely to be killed by acquaintances and strangers than by intimate partners or family members.

Gender Stratification of Postseparation Homicide

Consistent with previous studies, these data show that being female is a risk factor for intimate partner homicide, and separation is one of the most important predictors of homicide of female partners. Ex-partners (marital, common law, and lovers) were responsible for 31% of all intimate partner homicides perpetrated

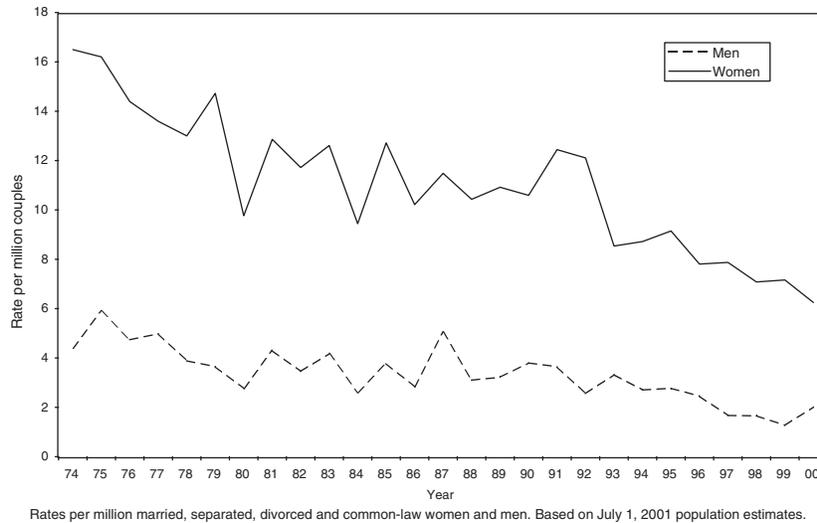


Figure 1: Rates of Spousal Homicide in Canada

SOURCE: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

NOTE: Rates per million married, separated, divorced, and common-law women and men. Based on July, 1, 2001 estimates.

against women but only 11% of those involving male victims (see Table 2). In addition, women victims made up 80% of all intimate partner homicides and more than 90% of those involving estranged or divorced marital partners and estranged lovers. Only among same-sex partners were female victims in the minority.

Although spousal killings that occur after separation are fewer in actual number than those that occur in intact unions, when calculated as a rate per million separated and intact couples, between 1991 and 2000 women were killed by estranged partners at a rate of 38.0 per million. In comparison, 26.5 per million women were killed by current common-law partners, 4.4 women per million by current husbands, 2.6 per million by divorced husbands, and 3.5 per million¹ by other intimate partners (see Figure 2). These figures do not include those who had threatened or attempted to separate from abusive partners and were killed in the process, details of which are not recorded in the Homicide Survey.

Information available from the narratives of a subset of 73 cases shows that 49% of femicides occurred within 2 months of separation,

TABLE 2
Number of Intimate Partner Homicides by Sex of Victim, 1991-2000

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Female Victims</i>		<i>Male Victims</i>		<i>Total</i>		<i>Percentage Female Victims</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	
Legally married partner	255	30	60	29	315	30	81
Common-law partner	226	27	101	48	327	31	69
Boyfriend/girlfriend, extramarital lover	101	12	16	8	117	11	86
Estranged married partner	138	16	9	4	147	14	94
Divorced partner	15	2	0	0	15	1	100
Estranged common- law partner	32	4	9	4	41	4	78
Estranged lover	76	9	7	3	83	8	92
Same-sex partner	3	0	8	3	11	1	27
Total	846	100	210	100	1,056	100	80

SOURCE: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

32% after 2 to 6 months, and 19% more than 1 year after the dissolution of the relationship (Hotton, 2001). Risk of homicide diminishes with the length of the separation and is lowest for divorced women. There were no cases of women killing their divorced male partners. Several studies cite the man's inability to accept the termination of the relationship and his obsessive desire to maintain control over her as the cause for killings of female partners during separation (Campbell, 1992a, 1995; Wilson & Daly, 1993). Wilson and Daly (1993) also found that the early months of separation are a particularly risky time for women. Among women killed by estranged husbands in Chicago and New South Wales, Australia, approximately 50% were killed within 2 months, and 87% were killed within 1 year of leaving the relationship.

This heightened risk of homicide victimization following separation was not found for men. Instead, men are at greater risk of homicide by a current common-law spouse than an ex-spouse. An average of 11.9 men per million were killed by a current common-law partner, almost 6 times the rate of ex-marital partner killings (2.9 per million). Men were killed by other intimate partners at a rate of 0.5 per million.

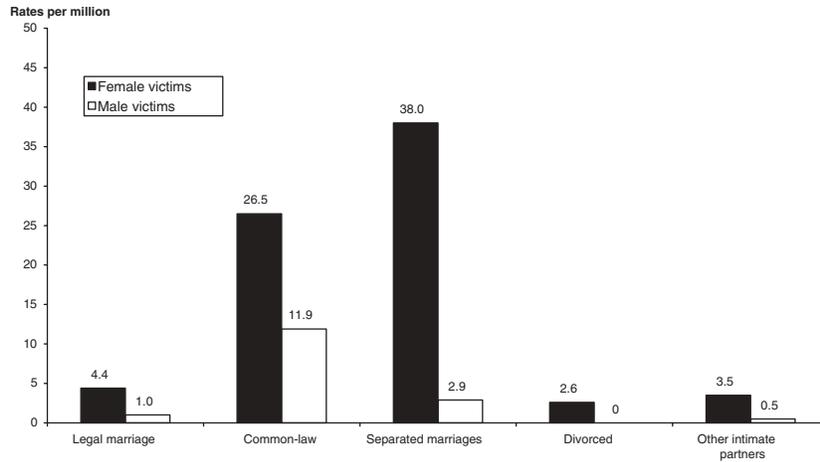


Figure 2: Rates of Intimate Partner Homicide by Type of Relationship, 1991-2000

SOURCE: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

NOTE: Common law includes only intact unions. Other intimate partners include boy-friends, girlfriends, estranged lovers, and separated common-law partners. Rates for other intimate partners are based on the number of single people aged 15 and older in the population so may underestimate the true rate, as a proportion of single people are without intimate partners and some have multiple partners. All population estimates are derived from 1991 and 1996 censuses and annual population estimates for other years.

The higher rates of spousal homicide among common-law couples may be explained by a combination of demographic characteristics found to be more common in this group (such as unemployment, low income, problems with alcohol, and less structured leisure time due to fewer children in these relationships) and in terms of the level of commitment to the relationship. Dawson and Gartner (1998) argued that common-law couples are susceptible to problems experienced in dating relationships as well as conflicts common to married couples. Like dating relationships, common-law relationships may be more prone to frustration and fear over perceived asymmetry in the level of investment and commitment to the relationship and potential for dissolution. At the same time, by cohabiting, couples are also exposed to the daily frustrations of negotiating financial and domestic responsibilities. These factors may combine to increase daily conflict as well as jealousy, controlling behaviors, and violence in common-law relationships (Wilson et al., 1995).

Comparisons of Intact and Estranged Partner Killings: Relationship State

Table 3 presents several factors that differentiate homicides of women and men in intact and estranged relationships. Chi-square tests assess the significance of the relationship between these factors and the sex of the victim, within-relationship state, as well as between-relationship states for female and male victims. Important differences are highlighted between male and female victims and between homicides occurring in intact and estranged relationships, primarily for female victims.

As determined by police reports, male perpetrators were more than twice as likely as female perpetrators to be motivated by jealousy when killing partners in intact unions. Jealousy was also more prevalent for male perpetrators in estranged unions, although the difference between women and men is nonsignificant. Jealousy was a more important motivator for both male and female perpetrators in estranged compared to intact unions. This was the only significant differentiating factor for female perpetrators—a heightened level of jealousy in the case of estranged partner killings.

An important contextual variable related to the question of motive is the killing of others during an intimate partner homicide. When women kill their current or ex-marital partners, it is very rare for harm to come to others during the incident. Between 1991 and 2000, less than 1% of husband killings involved multiple victims. Men, on the other hand, killed others in addition to their spouses in 7% of incidents involving intact relationships and 12% involving estranged partners.² The targets of these homicides differed. Men who killed others in the course of a homicide involving a current partner were most likely to kill the victim's children (75%) followed by other family members (12%). By comparison, multiple victims in the context of estranged relationships were more likely to involve the woman's new partner (48%), child (23%), or family member (19%). Wilson and Daly (1993) argued that often violence against female partners is used to control and deter partners from pursuing other romantic involvement. When this attempt at control is unsuccessful, new partners may also become victims of jealous ex-partners.

Men, and especially estranged male partners, were more likely than women to use a firearm against their victims and to take their

TABLE 3
Comparison of Intimate Partner Homicides of Women and Men in Estranged and Intact Relationships, 1991-2000 (in percentages)

Characteristic of Homicides	Intact Relationships			Estranged Relationships ^a		
	Female Victims (n = 582)	Male Victims (n = 177)	χ^2	Female Victims (n = 261)	Male Victims (n = 25)	χ^2
Weapon firearm	31 ^b	20	8.55***	43	20	5.08**
Motive jealousy	21 ^b	8 ^c	16.62***	40	26	1.85
Accused committed suicide	27 ^b	3	46.24***	36	0	13.20***
History of domestic violence ^d	50 ^b	65	9.84***	75	61	1.83
Victim first to use force ^e	7 ^b	41	70.15***	2	36	32.14***
Accused had conviction for violent offense	46	33	9.32***	50	36	1.74

SOURCE: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

a. Includes estranged marital partners, common-law partners, boyfriends/girlfriends, and estranged lovers.

b. The difference between intact and estranged relationships for female victims on this variable is statistically significant ($p < .05$).

c. The difference between intact and estranged relationships for male victims on this variable is statistically significant ($p < .05$).

d. Police do not report whether there is a history of domestic violence for "other intimate partners." These proportions therefore omit victims who have never cohabited with their perpetrators.

e. A large proportion (40% of cases) had missing information for this variable.

** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

own lives following the killing of a spouse. In both cases, percentages were significantly higher for men who killed estranged partners. In the majority of intimate partner killings, the lethal assault marked the end of a pattern of violence in the relationship. In intact relationships, police were aware of previous domestic violence in a higher percentage of homicides against men, whereas in estranged unions, female victims were more likely to have a history of domestic violence, although the latter difference is not significant. It is important to note, however, that it is not clear from police statistics who was responsible for the previous domestic assaults, the victim or the perpetrator of the homicide. Some homicide offenders are acting in self-defense when the homicides occur, and it is the victims who are responsible for a history of domestic assaults (Block, 2000; Browne, 1986; Smith, Moracco, & Butts, 1998).³

Where police had knowledge of how the incident began, they reported that compared to male victims, women were very unlikely to have used force first against the aggressor. This suggests that in a certain percentage of male partner homicides, the female perpetrator was acting in self-defense to protect herself against a violent male. Percentages of male victims who used force first were similar in intact and estranged partner homicides.

Related to the question of self-defense is the location in which these events occur. Estranged partner homicides take place more often in the homes of the women involved, regardless of whether they were victims or perpetrators. Ex-partner killings took place in the female victim's residence in 56% of these cases and in the residence of the male accused in 13% of cases. When men were killed by estranged partners, 36% occurred in the male victim's home and 40% in the home of the female accused. This suggests the greater likelihood that women will be hunted down and killed by ex-partners in their own homes, whereas the same is not true for men.

Substantial proportions of both male and female homicide perpetrators had a previous conviction for a violent offense. Nonsignificant differences were found for both female and male victims comparing intact and estranged unions, and the differences were significantly higher for male than for female perpetrators within intact unions only.

Comparisons of Legal Marriages, Common-Law Unions, and Other Intimate Partners: Relationship Status

Table 4 presents factors that differentiate homicides of women and men killed in the context of marriage, common-law unions, and other intimate relationships. Differences in the killings of women and men are much more pronounced within legal marriages and common-law unions as compared to within other intimate partner killings. Again, differences are significant for female victims among these three relationship types for four out of six variables, whereas for male victims only one—victim-initiated violence—is significant.

Female victims were more likely than male victims to be killed with a firearm, especially within legal marriages. Women were also more likely than men to be killed by partners motivated by

TABLE 4
Comparison of Intimate Partner Homicides of Women and Men in
Legal Marriages, Common-Law Unions, and Other Intimate Relationships, 1991-2000 (in percentages)

Characteristic of Homicides	Legal Marriages			Common-Law Unions			Other Intimate Relationships ^a		
	Female Victims (n = 408)	Male Victims (n = 69)	χ^2	Female Victims (n = 258)	Male Victims (n = 110)	χ^2	Female Victims (n = 177)	Male Victims (n = 23)	χ^2
Weapon firearm	42 ^b	25	7.62***	26	16	4.83**	31	26	0.24
Motive jealousy	24	8	8.82***	28	8	16.43***	34	22	1.33
Accused committed suicide	39 ^b	3	34.71***	20	3	17.88***	21	0	5.89
History of domestic violence ^c	55	59	0.41	62	68	1.02			
Victim first to use force ^d	2 ^b	32 ^e	56.12***	11	55	43.12***	6	7 ^f	0.02
Accused had conviction for violent offense	32 ^b	29	0.19	65	33	32.29***	57	48	0.65

SOURCE: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

a. Other intimate relationships include boyfriends/girlfriends/lovers, estranged common-law unions, and estranged lovers.

b. The difference between legal marriage, common law, and other intimate partners for female victims on this variable is statistically significant ($p < .05$).

c. Police do not report this information in the case of other intimate partners.

d. A large proportion (40% of cases) had missing information for this variable.

e. The difference between legal marriage, common law, and other intimate partners for male victims on this variable is statistically significant ($p < .05$).

f. Based on only one case.

** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

jealousy. Men, and especially those who killed legal marital partners, were more likely than women to take their own lives following the killing of a spouse. A very small number of women committed suicide following the homicide of male partners in legal marriages or common-law unions, and there were no female suicides following the killing of other intimate partners.

Similar proportions of female and male homicide victims had a history of domestic violence in the relationship within both legal marriages and common-law unions,⁴ although it should be reiterated that information on who was responsible for earlier incidents is not available from the Homicide Survey.

Male victims were much more likely than female victims to have initiated the violence in killings involving both legal marriages and common-law unions. Again, this suggests a certain element of self-defense when women kill, especially those involving common-law partners. Victim precipitation was rare in cases involving other intimate partners. Men who killed their partners were more likely than women to have a previous conviction for a violent offense, although the difference was only statistically significant for those in common-law unions.

Logistic Regression Analysis

These independent variables were entered into logistic regression models to predict the odds that the homicide victim was in an estranged relationship (coded 1) versus an intact relationship (coded 0), net of the effects of other variables in the model (see Table 5). Incidents involving male victims and female victims were first modeled together and then separately to illustrate differences in the circumstances and motivations at work.

For female victims, the variable with the highest partial odds ratio predicting homicide with an estranged partner as opposed to a partner in an intact relationship is a known history of domestic violence in the relationship (3.466), motivation of jealousy (2.961), followed by the use of a firearm in the commission of the offence (1.593) and the suicide of the accused (1.576). In the case of male victims, none of the five predictors was significant, suggesting that different circumstances and motivations are at play for male perpetrators compared to female perpetrators and that estrangement plays a different role. These characteristics of male-

TABLE 5
Logistic Regression Analysis Predicting Homicides
With Estranged Partners (1) Compared to Intact Relationships (0)

Variable	Partial Odds Ratios		
	Total (N = 780)	Female Victims (n = 612)	Male Victims (n = 168)
Weapon firearm	1.561**	1.593**	1.059
Motive jealousy	3.260***	2.961***	2.032
Accused committed suicide	1.877***	1.576*	0.002
History of domestic violence ^a	2.991***	3.466***	1.128
Accused had conviction for violent offense	1.134	1.048	0.867
-2 log likelihood	773.378	649.805	104.17
$\chi^2(5)$	92.706***	80.90***	1.499

SOURCE: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

NOTE: Excludes the variable victim was first to use force because of the high percentage of cases with missing information.

a. Police do not report whether there is a history of domestic violence for "other intimate partners." This regression model therefore omits victims who have never cohabited with their perpetrators.

* $p < .1$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

perpetrated homicides signal a level of desperation not found among female perpetrators, an attitude of "If I can't have you, no one can" (Campbell, 1992a).

Logistic regressions were also conducted for the three categories of relationship status (see Table 6). The results identify fewer factors that differentiate common-law and other intimate partners compared to either marriages and common-law unions or married couples and other intimate partners, which is comparable to the results of Dawson and Gartner's (1998) study. Comparing those in common-law unions to married couples, male perpetrators were less likely to commit suicide and more likely to have a conviction for a violent offense. Female perpetrators were less likely to use a firearm, although the overall model was nonsignificant for male victims. Comparing other intimate relationships to married couples, both male and female perpetrators had higher odds of being motivated by jealousy, and male perpetrators had lower odds of committing suicide and higher odds of having a prior conviction for a violent offense. Again, the model was not significant for male victims.

TABLE 6
Logistic Regression Analysis Predicting Homicides by Type of Intimate Relationship

<i>Characteristics of Homicides^a</i>	<i>Common-Law Partners (1) Compared to Married Partners (0)</i>			<i>Other Intimate Partners (1) Compared to Married Partners (0)</i>			<i>Other Intimate Partners (1) Com- pared to Common-Law Partners (0)</i>		
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
	<i>(n = 779)</i>	<i>Victims (n = 612)</i>	<i>Victims (n = 167)</i>	<i>(n = 737)</i>	<i>Victims (n = 550)</i>	<i>Victims (n = 87)</i>	<i>(n = 540)</i>	<i>Victims (n = 411)</i>	<i>Victims (n = 129)</i>
Weapon firearm	0.624***	0.703	0.425**	0.840	0.838	0.986	1.345	1.156	2.597*
Motive jealousy	0.789	1.211	1.205	1.821***	1.658***	4.293**	1.665**	1.317	3.471*
Accused committed suicide	0.416***	0.496***	0.712	0.474***	0.463***	0.001	1.000	0.877	0.003
History of domestic violence ^b	0.991	0.857	1.368						
Accused had conviction for violent offense	2.530***	3.888***	0.998	2.533***	2.554***	2.196	1.015	0.718	1.582
-2 log likelihood	976.48	724.94	215.69	720.09	623.54	93.25	690.05	549.56	112.98
χ^2	91.34***	92.09***	5.65	54.56***	50.09***	7.24	9.19*	4.92	7.97*
	(5 df)	(5 df)	(5 df)	(4 df)	(4 df)	(4 df)	(4 df)	(4 df)	(4 df)

SOURCE: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

a. Excludes the variable victim was first to use force because of the high percentage of cases with missing information.

b. Police do not report this information in the case of other intimate partners.

* $p < .1$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

Few factors differentiate common-law relationships from other intimate partner relationships. This may be due to the similarities between these two types of unions in terms of reciprocity and asymmetry in the level of investment in the relationship (Dawson & Gartner, 1998), or it may be due in part to the difficulty that police may have in trying to accurately distinguish between common law and other types of intimate relationships. Living arrangements may change over the course of a dating relationship, and couples may move in and out of common-law relationships, making it difficult to classify at a given point in time.

DISCUSSION

This study contributes to our understanding of the relative risk men and women face in intact and estranged marital relationships and also in various types of intimate relationships, including legal marriages, common-law unions, and other intimate relationships. The heightened risk of homicide for recently separated women is a trend not found among male homicide victims. In fact, men have lower rates of intimate partner homicide in separated than in common-law unions and lower rates than women in all relationship states and statuses. An important research question in this study is whether relationship status or state remains an equally important differentiation when women are the perpetrators of partner homicides. The results of this study suggest they do not. Although most variables distinguished among relationships status and state for female victims, the same predictive power was not demonstrated for males. The fact that most estranged partner homicides occur in the woman's home, regardless of whether she is the victim or the perpetrator, and that male victims frequently precipitate their own demise lends support to the results of many studies that violent males frequently stalk and kill their ex-partners and sometimes are killed in the process. The likelihood of a woman killing a spouse is considerably lower after separating from the relationship, but the opposite is true for men.

Based exclusively on statistical data, these police reports tell a story. They support the views of Wilson et al. (1995) and Wilson and Daly (1998) that there are distinct patterns of intimate partner homicide for male and female perpetrators grounded in sexual

proprietaryness and entitlement over female partners when men kill, and self-defense against a violent and often highly controlling partner when women kill. Men are more often motivated by jealousy, especially in estranged and other intimate partner relationships, when commitment to the relationship is challenged or seen as tenuous. Estranged male perpetrators are more likely than estranged female partners to track down and kill ex-partners in their own homes, and to target friends and new dating partners of the victim. The higher rate of suicide among male perpetrators also suggests extreme attempts to control the woman's contacts with others, even in death. Sev'er (1997) argued that seeking out those close to the victim reflects sometimes calculated and other times frantic attempts to regain control over the woman who has recently pulled away. Similar behavior is not found when women kill, as successfully separating from the relationship has in most cases removed the need to use violence for self-protection.

The majority of homicides occurred within highly conflictual situations, regardless of the type of relationship. However, there is no evidence from these data files of which of the partners was responsible for the violence. This is a limitation of the study.

CONCLUSION

This study helps to further delineate important differences among intimate partner homicides based on the sex of victims and the status and state of the relationship. The results of this study reinforce recommendations by Dawson and Gartner (1998) that researchers need to continue to search for conceptually meaningful ways to categorize and study intimate partner homicides. The cases examined in this study tended to occur within different context and motives, depending on the sex of perpetrators and victims and both the status and the state of the relationships. Factors were less likely to differentiate relationship status and state when victims were male, likely due to the relatively high percentage of cases that appear from these data to be acts of self-defense when committed by women. This study found that most factors differentiated relationship status and state for female victims but not for male victims.

For professionals responding to intimate partner violence, this knowledge can help identify dangerous situations and provide protection and support to women at high risk of homicide, especially separating women. Threats of violence during separation and signs of increasing violence and emotional abuse need to be taken seriously by police and others providing help to battered women. Women who fear their lives are in danger from an abusive partner, particularly an estranged partner, need support and protection to leave safely. This would include implementation and enforcement of protection orders, expansion of outreach programs, legal advocacy, and flexible services (Stanko, 1997). This and other studies show mounting evidence that already violent relationships can become potentially life threatening and that simply leaving the relationship is neither simpler nor always the safest route. Women should be aware of ways to protect themselves before a decision to separate, including not telling their partners of plans to leave and knowing to take any threats against themselves or their loved ones very seriously (Campbell, 2001; Mahoney, 1991; Sev'er, 1997).

Although statistical risk factor assessments are inevitably incomplete in estimating the risks women face from intimate partners, they do offer clinicians some valuable tools to assist women in practical ways. The research of Campbell (1992a, 1992b, 1995, 2001) has contributed a great deal to this area with the establishment of the Danger Assessment Instrument. Campbell (2001) has identified several variables that are significant predictors of femicide risk, including estrangement, unemployed perpetrator, prior arrest for domestic violence, access to guns, having a step-child in the home, forced sex, prior threats to kill, or threats with a weapon—especially under conditions of a highly controlling partner and in cases in which the woman had a new partner.

In addition, there is the importance of identifying extraordinarily controlling partners, even with no history of physical assaults. Results of the 1999 GSS show that 37% of women in contact with an ex-spouse were assaulted for the first time after the separation and that the majority of these incidents (57%) involved very serious forms of violence (Hotton, 2001). Furthermore, one quarter of intimate femicides perpetrated by ex-partners in this study had no known history of violence. In future research, emotional abuse must be better understood on the continuum of

power and control tactics used in intimate relationships to fully identify the array of risk factors in postseparation intimate violence.

NOTES

1. The homicide rate reported for "other intimate partners" likely underestimates the homicide risk for this subpopulation. We used the single population for our denominator, and given that there are many people not engaging in dating relationships at any given time, our denominator is inflated to some degree. Unfortunately, exact population estimates for women and men in dating relationships and those recently separated from common-law unions cannot be extracted from Canadian census data. Nevertheless, patterns in intimate partner homicide involving women and men are of interest here, and these figures show that the rate at which women are killed by other intimate partners exceeds the rate for men by a factor of seven.

2. This proportion is an underestimation of the number of third parties victimized, as it does not take into account the attempted murder of third parties. In addition, if following the homicide the perpetrator kills a third party in a different location, it is most often classified as an incident distinct from the spousal homicide.

3. Block (2000) identified risk factors for women becoming the offender as opposed to the victim in an intimate partner homicide. Compared to women victims, women who killed intimate partners had experienced more severe violence in the past year, the violence was more likely to have been increasing in frequency, the women were more likely to be in long-term legally sanctioned relationships, and the women had fewer material resources. She found that recent violence usually preceded lethal assaults among the women in her sample, regardless of whether they were the homicide victims or the perpetrators: Half of the femicide victims and 75% of the female homicide perpetrators had experienced spousal assaults within 30 days of the homicide, some within a day or two. This study also documented that female offenders were less likely than men to use a firearm, less likely to commit suicide, and less likely to have pursued the victim.

4. Police do not record this information in the case of other intimate partners.

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