VIOLENCE AGAINST SEPARATED WOMEN IN CANADA

BY

RAE SPIWAK

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

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Abstract

It is well known that women who separate from their partner are at an increased risk for violence. Research has often summarized potential risk factors and provided a description of separation violence without providing extensive statistical analysis. The following thesis fills this gap through an empirical examination of indicators derived from potential explanations for the relationship between separation and violence. Using Statistics Canada's 1999 General Social Survey (GSS), the thesis employs both descriptive and multivariate statistical analyses to examine the following indicators: continuation of previous violence; immigrant status; youth; power; jealousy and, Aboriginal status. These indicators accounted for over half of the variance in separation violence. This was largely due to the impact of age and Aboriginal status. The findings also showed that women without a previous history of violence were not protected from experiencing separation violence. The thesis concludes with implications for policy and research.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

It has been widely stated that women who leave their heterosexual partners are at an increased risk for violence (Adelman, 2000; Demaris, 2001; Easteal, 1993; Ellis & Dekeseredy, 1997; Fleury, 2000; Health Canada, 2002; Hotton, 2001; Johnson & Grant, 1999; Johnson, 1996; Johnson & Hotton, 2003; Kropp, Hart, Webster & Eaves, 1995; Kurz, 1996; McMurray, Froyland, Bell & Curnow, 2000; Mechanic, Weaver, & Resick, 2002; Sev'er, 1997; Shalansky, Ericksen & Henderson, 1999; Thompson, Saltzman, & Johnson, 2001; Wilson & Daly, 1992; Wilson & Daly, 1993). Although studies have confirmed that women are at an increased risk for violence post-separation, few studies have examined its extent, risk factors, and why separation violence occurs (McMurray et al., 2000).

Many studies have addressed violence against separated women from an atheoretical perspective, yet various theories can be applied to violence (Hanson & Wallace-Capretta, 2000; Kropp et al., 1995). The applications of theory to separation violence include separation violence as a function of power relations and family roles (Pagelow, 1993; Sev'er, 1997), attachment (Chornesky, 2000; Dutton & Painter, 1993), and sexual activity or male proprietariness (Donnely, 1993; Dutton, 1994; Wilson & Daly, 1993; Wilson & Daly, 1998). However, no study has attempted to empirically test any of these explanations for separation violence.

The purpose of the following research is to provide a new level of understanding of the causal dynamics and risk markers of separation violence. Various factors and characteristics that may differentiate victims and non-victims of separation violence are examined in an attempt to shed light on why some separated women experience violence

while others do not. Given that separated women have proven to be at an increased risk for violence, it follows that separated women would benefit from intervention programs aimed at the reduction and elimination of separation violence before it occurs. To maximize their efficacy, such programs should be based on theoretically driven research that provides an understanding of separation violence.

Defining Separation Violence

For the purpose of the present study, "separation violence" is defined as any occurrence of physical or sexual non-lethal violence perpetuated by a separated woman's former partner. The following study defines violence as physical assaults that may include beating, hitting, slapping, choking, biting, kicking, pushing or use of a weapon against women, as well as sexual assaults that involve being forced to engage in sexual activity.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will review the literature on separation violence and will discuss non-lethal and lethal forms of separation assault separately.

Spousal estrangement and non-lethal violence

Researchers have documented that there is a relationship between separation or spousal estrangement and non-lethal separation violence (Adelman, 2000; Butts-Stahly, 1999; Demaris, 2001; Ellis, 1987; Fleury, 2000; Hart, 1990; Health Canada, 2002; Hotton, 2001; Johnson, 1996; Johnson & Grant, 1999; Johnson & Hotton, 2003; Kropp, Hart, Webster & Eaves, 1995; Kurz, 1996; McMurray et al., 2000; Mechanic, Weaver, & Resick, 2002; Pagelow, 1993; Sev'er, 1997; Shalansky, Ericksen & Henderson, 1999; Thompson, Saltzman, & Johnson, 2001; Wilson & Daly, 1992; Wilson & Daly, 1995; Wilson & Daly, 1998). For example, Statistics Canada (2002) documented that 40% of Canadian women reported that partner violence occurred after they had separated from their partners. There is also evidence that separation violence has increased over time in Canada. Hotton (2001) documents an increase of reported separation violence incidents from 22% to 39% when a comparison was made between the 1993 Violence Against Women Survey (VAWS) and the General Social Survey on Victimization in 1999 (GSS).

Research has often summarized potential risk factors and provided a description of separation violence without providing extensive statistical analysis. Current research briefly discusses risk factors and applications of anecdotal findings, but does not engage in thorough analyses. Moreover, these studies typically assume the increased risk of violence against separated women and branch off to study related issues, such as the degree of violence, police intervention, child custody negotiations or mediation (Eriksson

& Hester, 2001; Hart, 1990; Hotton, 2001). An examination of separation violence victims versus non-victims has not been undertaken, and very little research has focused on separation violence using a random sample. In addition, most sources only provide commentary and most analyses are based on small non-random samples. For example, Sev'er (1997) provides a qualitative review, interviewing a non-random sample of women and states that her conclusions are difficult to generalize. With this caveat, Sev'er (1997) finds that elements of control on the part of the male are an important and essential part of understanding separation assault. Sev'er (1997) suggests violence by an ex-partner is similar to violence by a current partner, with respect to dynamics and aspects of control. However, until these dynamics are empirically verified we will not know if these hypotheses are supported.

Spousal Estrangement and Femicide

Research has focused intensely on wife killing, or femicide, and a large amount of data is available providing statistics on the high prevalence of femicide in Australia, the United States and Canada (Block & Christakos, 1995; Easteal, 1993; Ellis & DeKeseredy, 1997; Ho & Venus, 1995; Hotton, 2001; Johnson, 1996; Serran & Firestone, 2002; Wilson & Daly, 1992; Wilson & Daly, 1993; Wilson & Daly, 1998). Wallace (as cited in Ho and Venus, 1995) found that 46% of female victims of femicide in Australia were killed following separation or during the process of leaving. Wilson and Daly (1993) have suggested that the link between separation and murder is more than incidental. Wilson and Daly (1992) note that men frequently pursue, threaten, assault and even kill partners who have left them. Serran and Firestone (2002) note that, in Canada separated women are 26 times more likely than married woman to be killed by a spouse or partner. In addition,

Kong (1996) found that in Canada between 1974 and 1992 the rate of women killed by separated partners was six times higher than the rate for women killed by their husbands. It is evident there is something about separation that puts women at risk for violence, including violence in its most severe form.

Explanatory Background of Separation Violence

Why some women experience violence after separation and others do not remains to be understood. A number of factors that may be linked to separation violence can be applied to help identify differences between separation victims and non-victims. Previous history of violence, immigrant status, age and Aboriginal status are all factors that may be linked to separation violence. Risk markers or factors derived from theories can also be applied to see to what extent the factors increase the risk for separation violence.

Factors Potentially Linked to Separation Violence

Continuation of Previous Violence

Research suggests that post-separation violence may primarily be a continuation of pre-separation violence (Ellis, 1987; Kropp, Hart, Webster & Eaves, 1995). Of the estimated 40% of women who reported violence after separation in the 1999 GSS, in 61% of the cases violence occurred before separation, and in 24% of the cases the severity of violent incidents increased after relationship dissolution (Hotton, 2001). Kurx and Coughey (1989) also found that of women seeking divorce in Philadelphia, 89% of women experienced violence before and after separation. Previous violence is likely to be important in predicting occurrences of violence post-separation because, if a partner sees violence as an option during the relationship, he may use similar tactics when the relationship is over. Browne (1987) and Davis and Lungio (1997) note that just one

occurrence of violence can permanently modify the stability of marital power in the direction of a strong husband dominant pattern. This dominant pattern is evident in women who experience violence before leaving a relationship and then experience violence after relationship dissolution, indicating that separation attack may be due to a continuation of violence in these particular cases, as opposed to being due to separation itself. Although previous violence is likely to be important in predicting occurrences of violence post-separation, the true influence of this variable will not be known until this factor is tested in a multivariate model that accounts for other potential risk markers. Therefore, it may be that separation violence is largely predicted by a continuation of violence that occurred during the relationship.

Immigrant status

Women who are not born in Canada may be more likely to experience separation violence. Increased violence has been associated with female immigrant status (Brownridge & Halli, 2003). It is also possible that immigrant women are more likely than non-immigrant women to experience violence at separation. Adelman (2000) notes that Israeli women find getting divorced difficult and dangerous, and that the divorce process often involves violence. Amnesty International (1999) acknowledges violence associated with separation, and recognizes the influence of tradition and family pride in Pakistan. Family approval and tradition can be very important for women in developing countries as indicated by the following quote, "When she expressed her intention of seeking a divorce, both her parents refused to help and instead allegedly threatened to kill her. Her mother and her husband's mother are sisters and it was considered shameful for the family that the marriage had broken down" (Amnesty International, 2000, p. 1).

Women who have immigrated to Canada, particularly from developing countries, often have traditional values and may cite family approval as very influential in decision-making (Jaaber & DasGupta, 2003). Immigrant women may be more likely to experience violence after separation because their partners are more likely to espouse traditional cultural values and beliefs about male authority. Separation can be seen as a deliberate act of disobedience to the husband and/or an embarrassment to the family, and for these reasons may result in violence. Therefore, immigrant status may also help to increase the risk for separation violence.

Age

Research has shown that women who are young (under age 25) have the highest risk of spousal homicide (Caetano et al., 2003; Fitzgerald, as cited in the FREDA Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children, 2002; Indermaur, 2001; Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 2001). In addition, Canadian women aged 20 to 34 have the highest rate of domestic violence (Davis, Lurigio, & Skogan, 1997). Similar results have been found in the United States (Zawitz, 1994). A female's age is likely to reflect the age of her partner. Indeed, it has been said that women in their late teens and early adulthood are "most likely to be exposed to intimate partners who pose the strongest risk of violent behaviour" (Browning, 2002, p. 836). Canadian research has also shown that the risk of divorce peaks among individuals who have been married for four years, and the majority of divorces occur in couples married less than 15 years (Statistics Canada, 2002). Considering that the average age of marriage in Canada is between 28 and 30 years (Statistics Canada, 2003), it can be argued that the majority of separated individuals will also be young. Thus, it is possible that youth helps to increase

the risk for separation violence.

Risk Factors Derived from Theories

Power indicators

As it is applied to separation violence, power and control theory sees the male's use of violence as a tool or control mechanism to disrupt the power dynamics that were altered by the female at separation. Essentially, a woman's decision to leave her partner increases her power status. This high female power status results in the male retaliating in a violent manner as a mechanism to control the female after separation and reduce her power. Income, education, and employment are risk markers for violence that have underlying power dynamics (Caetano et al., 2003; Zawitz, 1994). When the relationship ends, the male may feel a loss of control, diminished power, and even diminished sense of masculinity (Butts-Stahly, 1999). As compensation for this loss of control and power, the male may use violent strategies either to frighten the woman to return or punish her for no longer being under his control (Butts-Stahly, 1999).

When power dynamics and indicators are examined, separation violence can be seen as an attempt to regain control. Although low power variables are generally associated with interpersonal violence, in the specific case of power and separation, high power status in various areas may exacerbate or increase the risk for violence.

Income.

Low income is generally associated with interpersonal violence (Caetano et al., 2003). The 1986-1987 National Survey on Families and Households found that Americans with a household income of less than $25 000 per year were 50% to 70% more likely to report inter-partner violence than individuals with higher income (Caetano et al.,

2003). Johnson (1996) also finds low household income to be characteristic of women who have experienced violence in Canada. However, high female income and having financial freedom equates to a high level of female power. Although it has been reported that an association exists between low income and violence, separation dynamics may transform this relationship, and it may be true that women with moderate to high incomes may be more at risk for separation violence. In these cases, in order to regain control over a female with high power, the male may feel forced to use violence. Therefore, moderate to high female income may be a power variable that increases the likelihood that women will experience separation violence.

Employment Status.

Unemployment is a power variable and risk marker for violence (Caetano et al., 2003). However, women who are employed would have a greater degree of power than unemployed women. Using the same logic outlined above, being employed may be a power variable that helps to increase the risk for separation assault.

Education.

A low level of female educational attainment has been correlated with an increased risk of domestic violence (Zawitz, 1994), and the 1986-1987 National Survey on Families and Households in the United States found that individuals with less than a high-school education were 40% more likely to report inter-partner violence than individuals with a high school diploma (as cited in Caetano et al., 2003). Brownridge's (2003) multivariate analysis of Statistics Canada's 1999 General Social Survey (GSS), showed that women's education did not have a statistically significant impact on the woman's odds of violence by a current partner. However, there may be a relationship

between education and separation violence. Women with more years of education are more likely to have power and independence than women with low levels of education. Women with a high school diploma, or a college/university degree would be likely to attain better employment, increased income, and more opportunities for advancement than women who have less education. Although lower levels of education have been correlated with inter-partner violence, following the logic of the application of power and control theory, an increased level of education may result in an increased likelihood of violence. A highly educated woman may have amplified knowledge, and as a result may have higher self-esteem and power than a less educated woman. From this perspective, being highly educated may be a power variable that helps to increase the risk for separation violence.

Although power and control theory can be applied to explain why women may be at an increased risk for violence if they are in a position of high power, feminist theory would argue alternatively that in the case of separation, it could be expected that women who are in a position of low power may be more susceptible to violence. Feminist theorists view the occurrence of violence against women as resulting from the unequal and lesser status and power of women (Johnson, 1996). Therefore, based on this application of feminist theory, it is also possible that women in a low position of power (income, employment, education) will be more vulnerable to separation assault.

Jealousy

Estranged partners often cite jealousy as one of the key motivators in attacks on women (Hotton, 2001; Kropp et al., 1995). Jealousy is a sizeable component of evolutionary psychology theory, a theory that is largely sexually and biologically based.

This evolutionary psychology theory is put forth to explain psychological links between violence and sexually rivalrous or possessive motives in men, such as jealousy (Wilson & Daly, 1998). Men often "perceive and treat women as reproductive resources that warrant protective investments against the risk of usurpation" (Wilson & Daly, 1998, p. 295). In other words, men may perceive a sense of entitlement or ownership over their partner and her reproductive capabilities and therefore will try to prevent the capturing of this resource by other males. Wilson and Daly (1998) also note that bonds of intimate partnership often involve feelings of entitlement and exclusiveness; these feelings arouse jealousy when they are perceived to be challenged. Violence can result as a function to punish or deter challenges or violations of the male's interest (Wilson & Daly, 1998). Male sexual proprietariness has been shown to be positively related to violence against women in Canada (Brownridge, 2002). Jealousy is also a factor that is related to feminist theory. Jealousy is consistent with traditional patriarchal beliefs; the idea that men are jealous of their ex-partner because of the patriarchal belief that they have the right to control their partner. Jealousy may therefore contribute to understanding why violence after separation occurs. The jealousy of ex-partners may then help to increase the risk for separation violence.

Aboriginal Status

Aboriginal status has been found to be a risk marker for violence. Indermaur (2001) and Brownridge (2003) find indigenous status as a predictor of higher rates of inter-partner violence. As indicated by Brownridge (2003), in the analysis of the 1999 General Social Survey on Victimization, 12.5% of Aboriginal women, as compared to 3.5% of non-Aboriginal women indicated that they had experienced violence by their

current partner within the 5 years preceding the interview. Brownridge (2003) also found that Aboriginal women were slightly more than five times more likely to report that they had experienced violence by a current partner in the year preceding the interview. Aboriginal status may also contribute to understanding why violence after separation occurs, and Aboriginal status may then help to increase the risk for separation violence.

The aforementioned factors of separation violence may independently or in some combination help to increase the risk for separation attack. Until we empirically examine the operation of these variables with separation violence, we simply will not know their ability to increase the risk for separation violence.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study are to test indicators derived from potential explanations for separation violence, and to determine whether specific indicators impact separated women's risk for violence.

Hypotheses

Based on the previous discussion it is expected that:

1. Previous history of violence will increase the risk for violence during separation.

2. Immigrant status will increase the risk for violence during separation.

3. Young age will increase the risk for violence during separation.

4. Employment status, income, and education, will impact the risk for separation violence.

5. Ex-partner jealousy will increase the risk for separation violence.

6. Aboriginal status will increase the risk for separation violence.

7. One or more of these factors will help to increase the risk of violence at separation.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The following study examines data collected through the 1999 General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization. In the following sections, the method of data collection used in the GSS, the selected sample, and the GSS items used to measure the explanatory variables will be discussed.

The Data Set

The 1999 GSS was released by Statistics Canada on July 25, 2000, and was designed to monitor changes in Canadian society, as well as providing information on policy issues of interest. Every year, the GSS has a different area of focus. The victimization cycle of the GSS was conducted for the third time in 1999. In 1999, the GSS focused on the nature and extent of crime and victimization, including spousal violence. Specific questions in the 1999 GSS were intended to aid in the understanding of, and test theories for, spousal violence (Statistics Canada, 2000).

The study included approximately 25 000 individuals aged 15 years and older who were asked questions about experiences with crime and violence. Households in the 10 provinces were contacted using random digit dialling techniques to ensure a random sample. Houses without telephone service were not included in the survey. The 1999 GSS had an 81% response rate. The GSS is a telephone survey that excluded respondents who did not speak any of the official languages, people with speech disabilities, homeless people, and poor people living in households without a telephone. This exclusion meant that women who were in transition may not have been included in the survey. It is therefore possible that the GSS underestimates violence, and prevalence estimates need to be considered with this caveat.

Despite its shortcomings, the GSS is a valuable tool to gather information on spousal violence. First, data were collected from a random sample of the Canadian population, so the findings can be generalized to Canadians in all 10 provinces. Second, the survey was administered anonymously, maximizing the likelihood of accurate responses. Questioning individuals about violent experiences has the potential of putting respondents in danger of further attacks by violent spouses, and it is for this reason that the GSS consisted of many yes, no, and categorical level questions. This is also beneficial for maintaining a high response rate, since women are less likely to stop the interview for fear of being overheard.

The Sample

Since the present study focuses on separation violence against women, the sample of the GSS used consists of 365 heterosexual women who reported their current marital status at the time of the interview as separated, and who had contact with an ex-partner within the five years preceding the interview.

Measures

Independent Variables

Eight variables are measured in the following study. Continuation of previous violence is measured by a question asking, *did any of the violence happen while you were living together?*

Immigrant status is derived from a question asking, *in which country were you born?*

Age refers to the respondent's age as measured in years. Age is determined by Statistics Canada and measured by the question, *what is your year of birth?* For the

descriptive analysis, respondents are categorized into one of four categories: 15 to 34; 35 to 44; 45 to 54; and 55 and over. For the multivariate analysis, the original age variable is used to meet the requirement of interval level data.

Annual income refers to the respondent's best estimate of their income over the last 12 months, which is measured by the question which asks, *what is your best estimate of your total personal income, before deductions, from all sources, during the past 12 months?* For the descriptive analysis, annual income is grouped into four categories: ($0-$19 999), ($20 000-$39 999), ($40 000-$59 999), and ($60 000 and higher). For the multivariate analysis, the original income variable is used to meet the requirement of interval level data.

Employment is measured by the question which asks, *during the past 12 months, was your main activity working at a paid job or business, looking for paid work, going to school, caring for children, household work, retired or something else?* Employment refers to whether the respondent's main activity in the last 12 months prior to the interview was working at a paid job or business (employed), or looking for work, caring for children or housework (unemployed).

Education refers to the highest level of education attained by the respondent. The education variable is grouped into the following categories: less than high school; high school; some post-secondary or community college; and university degree. For the multivariate analysis, the number of years of education are estimated according to the corresponding educational degree or attainment.

Past partner jealousy is measured by the question which asks if the following statement applied to their partner, *he or she was jealous and didn't want you talking to*

other men/women.

Aboriginal status is a derived question that asks about the ethnic background of the respondent, and is coded as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

Dependent Variable: Separation Violence

This study measures separation violence against women based on acts of physical and sexual assault perpetrated by the respondent's ex-partner within the 12 months preceding the interview. Therefore, if the respondent reported experiencing any of the physical or sexual assault items by an ex-partner within the 12 months preceding the interview, they are coded as having experienced separation violence. The specific items comprising violence are (a) pushing, grabbing or shoving respondent, (b) slapping, kicking, biting or punching respondent, (c) hitting respondent with an object, (d) threatening to hit respondent with fist or anything that could injure, (e) throwing object at respondent, (f) beating respondent, (g) choking respondent, (h) use or threatened use of a weapon on respondent, and (i) respondent being forced to engage in sexual activity. It is important to note that the study measures recent violence by an ex-partner against separated women at the time of the interview, and therefore this sampling is limited or restricted to separated women who experienced violence in a 12-month period. Women who may have been separated and experienced separation violence outside of this time period were not coded as experiencing separation violence for this study.

Reliability

The reliability of the dependent variable was examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to determine if the variable generated from a set of violence related questions was a reliable measure. Cronbach's alpha is "an index of reliability associated with the

variation accounted for by the true score of the underlying construct" (Santos, 1999). Alpha coefficients range in value from 0 to 1 and the higher the score is, the more reliable the generated scale is. Nunnaly (1978) has indicated 0.7 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient. For the dependent variable in this study, the Cronbach's alpha score is .991, which indicates that the separation violence variable is a reliable measure.

Methods of Data Analysis

Analyses were conducted in two stages. The prevalence of separation violence and predictor variables were examined using bivariate descriptive analyses; crosstabulations with chi-square test of significance examine relationships between separation violence victims and non-victims. The second component of the analysis involved a multivariate analysis to test the predictive power of each independent variable. The technique used for the analysis was logistic multiple regression. Logistic regression is the appropriate technique because the dependent variable in this study is dichotomous.

Inter-correlations among Potential Risk Marker Variables

Pearson product-moment correlations and Spearman's Rho correlations were run on the risk marker variables to determine if any of the variables were inter-correlated at a .8 level or higher. Tables 1 and 2 provide the findings from these correlations. None of the variables were found have a correlation coefficient of .8 or greater, therefore multicollinearity is not a problem. Interested readers should refer to Appendix A for tables.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis

An initial examination of frequency distributions showed that 11% of the sample experienced separation violence. Table 3 displays the results from the frequencies of types of violence experienced by victims of separation violence. The majority of separation violence victims were threatened to be hit, or were pushed, grabbed or shoved.

Table 3

Separation Violence Categorized by Type

Type of Violence	Separation Violence (n=39)	%
Threatened to hit	32	82.1
Thrown thing that could hurt	19	50.0
Push/grab/shove	34	89.5
Slapped	20	51.3
Kick/bit/hit with fist	18	47.4
Hit not with fist	9	23.1
Beaten	16	42.1
Choked	16	41.0
Used gun/knife	3	7.9
Forced unwanted sex act	12	30.8

The results in Table 4 show that 57% percent of separated women who had indicated that they experienced violence, experienced no violence before separation, and 29% of women

had a previous history of violence before separation[1] (see Figure 1). Immigrant status did

Table 4

Crosstabulations with Chi-square Test of Significance between Separation Violence and Risk Marker Variables

Independent Variables	Separation Violence	*n*	No Separation Violence	*n*
Previous Violence				
Previous violence	28.7	31	71.3	77
No previous violence	57.1**	8	42.9	6
Immigrant status				
Immigrant	12.7	8	87.3	55
Canadian	10.6	30	89.4	254
Age				
15-34	19.0	16	81.0	68
35-44	14.2	19	85.8	115
45-54	4.5	4	95.5	84
55 and older	.0***	0	100.0	46

*p≤ .10 **$p < .05$ ***$p < .01$

[1] The previous violence variable in the 1999 GSS was only asked to separated women that indicated they had experienced partner violence at some point during their last relationship (with ex-partner). This variable therefore only targets victims of violence; not necessarily victims of separation violence. Women who indicated they had experienced violence during their last relationship were asked if this violence occurred while living together.

Independent Variables	Separation Violence	*n*	No Separation Violence	*n*
Woman's income				
$0-19 999	12.0	14	88.0	103
$20 000-39 999	12.5	14	87.5	98
$40 000-59 999	5.5	3	94.5	52
$60 000 and higher	18.5	5	81.5	22
Woman's employment				
Unemployed	11.5	15	88.5	116
Employed	10.6	23	89.4	193
Woman's education				
Less than high school	8.9	5	91.1	51
High school	23.1	12	76.9	40
Some post-sec	9.3	15	90.7	147
University	8.2**	6	91.8	67
Jealous ex-partner				
Jealous	19.1	30	80.9	127
Not jealous	4.6***	9	95.4	185
Aboriginal status				
Aboriginal	45.5	5	54.5	6
Non-Aboriginal	9.8***	33	90.2	304

*p≤ .10 **$p < .05$ ***$p < .01$

not have a significant relationship with separation violence. Thirteen percent of immigrants experienced separation violence, as compared to 11% of women who were women born in Canada (see Figure 2). The results of the descriptive analysis found that age did have a significant relationship with separation violence, and this relationship is clearly negative. Nineteen percent of women who were between the ages of 15 and 34 experienced separation violence. An additional 14% of women between the ages of 35 to 44 experienced separation violence, and 5% of women between the ages of 45 to 54 experienced separation violence. No women above the age of 55 experienced separation violence (see Figure 3). Unlike age, the descriptive analysis determined that income does not have a significant relationship with separation violence[2]. Twelve percent of women who earned between $0 and $19 999 in the year before the survey experienced separation violence. An additional 13% of women that earned between $20 000 and $39 999 experienced separation violence, and 6% of women that earned between $40 000 and $59 999 experienced separation violence. Nineteen percent of women who earned $60 000 a year or more experienced separation violence (see Figure 4). The descriptive analysis found that employment did also not have a significant relationship with separation violence. Twelve percent of unemployed women experienced separation violence, as compared to 11% of women who were working (see Figure 5). Unlike employment and income, the descriptive analysis found that education does have a significant relationship with separation violence. Twenty-three percent of women who had a high school

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[2] It was determined that the income variable in this study was not found to be statistically significant in the chi-square test, and because of a significant portion of missing cases, was left out of the multivariate analysis.

education experienced separation violence, as compared to 9% of women that had less than a high school education, 9% that had some post-secondary or community college, and 8% that had a university degree (see Figure 6). Ex-partner jealousy was also significantly related to separation violence. Nineteen percent of women with a jealous ex-partner experienced separation violence, compared to 5% that did not have a jealous ex-partner (see Figure 7). As well, Aboriginal status was found to be significantly related to separation violence. Fourty-six percent of separated Aboriginal women experienced violence by their ex-partner, as compared to 10% of separated non-Aboriginal women (see Figure 8). Table 5 provides actual chi-square values and probability levels.

Table 5

Chi-square Values and Probability Levels

Independent Variables	Value	*df*	*p*
Previous Violence	4.609	1	.036**
Immigrant status	.241	1	.381
Age	16.265	3	.001***
Woman's income	3.396	3	.335
Woman's employment	.054	1	.474
Woman's education	9.012	3	.029**
Jealous ex-partner	18.394	1	.000***
Aboriginal status	13.928	1	.003***

*p≤ .10 **$p < .05$ ***$p < .01$

Multivariate Analysis

Table 6 provides the findings of the logistic regression on the relationship between separation violence and the independent variables. Variables were entered into the model in a standard or direct method. The dependent variable for the model was separation violence. The Nagelkerke pseudo R^2 of the logistic regression model is .536. In other words, all the variables in the model explain 53.6% of the variance in separation violence.

The results show that controlling for all variables in the model, previous violence is negatively linked to separation violence. Women who experienced violence while living with their ex-partner are 81% less likely to experience separation violence. Age was found to be negatively related to separation violence. For each additional year of age, women are 7% less likely to experience separation violence. Aboriginal status, when controlling for all variables in the model, was found to be positively linked to separation violence. Aboriginal women were 696% more likely to experience separation violence than non-Aboriginal women.

Table 6

Logistic Regression Statistics for Risk Factor Variables

Covariate	*Odds Ratio* (*n=340*)
Previous Violence	
Violence while living together	.187**
No violence while living together	1.000

*p≤ .10 **$p < .05$ ***$p < .01$

Covariate	*Odds Ratio* (n=340)
Immigrant Status	
Immigrant	1.535
Canadian born	1.000
Age	.932**
Employment	
Unemployed	.762
Employed	1.000
Education	1.122
Jealousy	
Jealous ex-partner	1.070
Not jealous ex-partner	1.000
Aboriginal Status	
Aboriginal status	7.963*
Non-Aboriginal status	1.000

*p≤ .10 **$p < .05$ ***$p < .01$

Covariate	*Odds Ratio* (n=340)
Constant	4.243
-2 log likelihood	129.830
χ^2	106.316***
Nagelkerke R^2	.536

*p≤ .10 **$p < .05$ ***$p < .01$

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

An examination of frequency distributions showed that 11% of the sample experienced separation violence. This prevalence rate is slightly lower than other reported rates of violence, specifically homicide, during separation. For instance, prevalence rates for spousal homicides during separation are 21% for Canada, 21% for New South Wales and 14% for Scotland (Wilson & Daly, 1992). Hotton (2003) also found that 16% of estranged married partners were victims of female homicides in Canada. Additionally, a study by Johnson and Sacco (1995) found that the prevalence rate for separated wives that were physically abused by their former spouse was 19%. The slightly lower prevalence rate in this study is reflective of the selection process, specifically because the study only focused on currently separated women who experienced violence within the last year. It is possible currently married or divorced women may have also experienced separation violence within last year, or within the last 5 years, however to ensure accuracy in reporting separation violence cases, the selection process only focused on currently separated women, and therefore the actual prevalence rate is likely higher than reported.

After the comparison of separation violence victims and non-victims on several risk markers for violence, it is clear that women who do not experience violence before relationship dissolution are not protected from experiencing violence after relationship dissolution.

Hypothesis One: Previous History of Violence

Research has documented that a previous history of violence may predict future violence (Ellis, 1987; Kropp, Hart, Webster & Eaves, 1995). Although the previous history of violence variable has a significant relationship with separation violence, it is a

negative relationship. Recall hypothesis one predicted that women with a previous history of violence would be most at risk for violence after relationship dissolution, therefore this hypothesis is not supported. This particular finding opposes the rationale used to support the idea that separation violence is simply a continuation of previous violence. Although many women suffer from violence during their relationship and experience separation violence, it needs to be added that separation violence is not just a phenomenon of women who experience violence during a relationship. It appears that in many cases, separation violence is not due to a previous history of violence, but in fact may be due to the separation itself. Separation is an effective way for victims to escape violence. Approximately one in three victims experienced violence after separation. This means that two in three victims did not experience violence. On the other hand, approximately two in three separated women whose partners were not violent while living together experienced violence by their partners after separation. Therefore, separation is a particularly risky time for previously non-violent men to become violent. Perhaps there is something about the act of separation that makes women more susceptible to violence, or something that causes men who were not violent while living with their partners to lash out in a violent manner. Research has noted that violence changes power differentials in relationships (Browne, 1987; Davis & Lungio, 1997). It may be possible that much of violence after separation is an attempt by men with no previous history of violence to regain control after relationship dissolution has taken place. Based on these analyses, it appears there are a select few risk markers that may differentiate such men that do and do not lash out in violence.

Hypothesis Two: Immigrant Status

Although it was hypothesized that women of immigrant status would be more likely to be victims of separation violence because their partners were more likely to have traditional beliefs and values about male authority, the descriptive analysis found that immigrant status did not have a significant relationship with separation violence. The results of the multivariate analysis showed that immigrant women had over a 50% increased chance of experiencing separation violence as compared to Canadian born women, but the relationship was not statistically significant, and therefore this hypothesis is not supported. Perhaps the results imply that immigrant and Canadian-born women are more similar than different where separation violence is concerned. Previous research has noted that women from 'developing' countries may have a more difficult time getting divorced and separating from their partner (Adelman, 2000). If these women are unable to separate, the violence they experience would not be classified as separation violence.

Hypothesis Three: Age

Past research has shown that youth is often associated with violence (Caetano et al., 2003; Davis, Lurigio, & Skogan, 1997, Fitzgerald, as cited in the FREDA Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children, 2002; Indermaur, 2001; Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 2001; Zawitz, 1994). Age is a variable that has a significant relationship with, and is a significant predictor of separation violence. The multivariate analysis suggests that age has an effect on separation violence independent of any other measured variables. As a result, hypothesis three is supported. It appears that the majority of separation violence victims in this sample were between 15-34 years of age. These findings are consistent with past research, and imply that

separation violence predominantly affects younger women. In this study, there were no reported cases of separation violence among women over the age of 55. The age of women and men at separation reflects the young age of men and women at marriage in Canada. It appears it is mostly young men whose issues of control after separation lead them to lash out in violence.

Hypothesis Four: Income, Education and Employment

Income, education, and employment are indicators that may reflect the relationship between power and separation violence. Income and employment status were not found to have significant relationships with separation violence.

The findings from this study did not provide support for power and control theory, or feminist theory because the variables tested were not significant predictors of separation violence. It would appear that assessing power levels based on these three variables might not have enough merit to warrant a complete explanation of the power dynamics in separation violence, and therefore the aforementioned theories may have been supported if other variables were chosen. Both power and control and feminist theories provide a valuable framework to help understand the relationship between separation and violence, however the risk markers chosen and tested in this study did not find support for risk markers that reflect these theories.

Hypothesis Five: Jealousy

Ex-partner jealousy and male sexual proprietariness have been discussed in previous violence literature as a potential explanation for violence against women (Brownridge, 2002; Hotton, 2001; Kropp et al., 1995, Wilson & Daly, 1998). The results from the descriptive analysis support these findings and imply that ex-partner jealousy

does have a significant relationship with separation violence. However, the multivariate analysis revealed that jealousy did not significantly increase the risk for separation violence. Although the relationship between separation violence and jealousy was positive, controlling for all other variables in the model, women with a jealous ex-partner were only 7% more likely to experience separation violence. These findings are inconsistent with evolutionary psychology theory, feminist theory, and ideas of male sexual proprietariness. It is clear that there is a significant association between separation violence and jealousy, and that jealousy does have a positive relationship with separation violence, but jealousy is a variable that has its influence removed when other risk markers are controlled. Considering that the age at first marriage is two years apart for men and women (Statistics Canada, 2003), it is likely a young woman's partner is also young. It could be possible that younger men are more jealous than older men, who may be more self-assured and have a secure lifestyle. It seems likely that youth accounts for the influence of jealousy. That is, jealousy does not have an impact on separation violence independent of age; it is youth that increases the risk for violence, rather than jealousy per se.

Hypothesis Six: Aboriginal Status

Aboriginal status has been found to be a predictor of violence in previous research (Brownridge, 2003; Indermaur, 2001). The descriptive and multivariate analyses for this study found that Aboriginal status has a significant relationship with separation violence, and significantly increases the risk for violence. The previous finding is consistent with literature conducted on violence and Aboriginal status, and therefore hypothesis six is supported. Almost half of separated Aboriginal women experienced separation violence,

as compared to 10% of separated non-Aboriginal women, and Aboriginal women were 696% more likely to experience separation violence than non-Aboriginal women. These findings imply that Aboriginal women are at a significant disadvantage with respect to separation violence. The descriptive and multivariate analysis suggests that Aboriginal status has an effect on separation violence independent of any other measured variables, which leads one to question why Aboriginal women are more likely to experience separation violence independent of these factors? Colonization theory has been put forth to explain differences in violence rates among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal status women (Brownridge, 2003; Dieter & Otway 2001). The idea of colonization, or colonization theory, states that the experience of colonization and residential school placement plays a large role in the increased likelihood of violence against Aboriginal women (Brownridge, 2003). Because of colonization, Aboriginal women's roles changed, and male dominance resulted in the emergence of the patriarchal nuclear family and violence (Dieter & Otway 2001). Dieter and Otway (2001) indicate that "the high incidence of family violence among Aboriginal women is one of the most tragic results of the residential schools" (p. 6). The authors note that the loss of traditional values, poverty and alcohol play a large role in the abuse of Aboriginal women. Additionally, the occurrence of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse in residential schools may result in feelings of lack of control and low self-esteem in Aboriginal people. Moreover, children who were subjected to abusive treatment in schools are more likely to have learned poor parenting skills and to pass that violence on to their families. A term that has been referred to as "colonization in action" is the sixties scoop (Reder, 2004). The sixties scoop is a term that refers to the removal of aboriginal children from their families to white

homes in the 1960's. The sixties scoop resulted in the loss of cultural identity, loss of contact with aboriginal birth families, loss of access to medical and personal histories, and the loss of Aboriginal status among aboriginal children (Reder, 2004). Indeed Brownridge (2003) has shown that Aboriginal women have an increased risk for partner violence even after controlling for established risk markers such as income, education, and alcohol abuse. It is likely that the role of colonization that has been linked to Aboriginal women's violence by partners also extends to violence by partners after separation.

Hypothesis Seven: Risk Markers will Predict Occurrence of Separation Violence

It was hypothesized that at least one of the risk markers would help increase the risk for violence at separation. It is clear that age, previous violence, and Aboriginal status significantly increase the risk for separation violence. The Nagelkerke pseudo R^2 is .536 indicating that 53.6% of the variance in separation violence can be explained by the model. It is therefore evident that the risk markers being tested are responsible for over half of the variation in separation violence. Therefore, this hypothesis was supported, and these variables do help to increase the risk for separation violence.

Although the model in this study explained just over half of the variance in separation violence, there is a remaining 47% that is unexplained. Many other risk factors could be responsible for separation violence, including male-based factors, situational factors, and various female characteristics. A risk marker for violence that involves both men and women is the victimization or exposure to family violence as a child. The intergenerational transmission of violence, or social learning theory has also been applied to help explain the occurrence of violence against women by their current or former partners (Sev'er, 1997). This theory suggests that both men and women would be more

likely to experience or be victims of violence based on witnessing and learning violence as a child (Sev'er, 1997). Additionally, some situational factors surround the occurrence of violence. Substance abuse is a male-based factor that can increase the risk of partner violence (Kropp et al.,1995). Studies have shown offenders with a history of family violence are more likely to abuse substances, and alcohol abuse has been noted as one of the three most prominent risk factors associated with domestic violence (Kropp et al., 1995). It is clear that the intergenerational cycle of violence and substance abuse, specifically alcohol, may play a large role in separation violence.

Psycho-dynamic theory may also help explain violence after separation. This theory suggests that mental illness and recent suicidal ideation are male factors that increase the risk of assault (Kropp et al., 1995). Personality disorders, behavioural instability and attachment derived anger-identity problems have been found to be very common in offenders, specifically where wife abuse is concerned (Johnson & Hotton, 2003; Kropp et al., 1995). Men with severe identity problems have been found to exploit women and attempt to control their partners by using violence (Dutton, 1994). It is possible that men with personality disorders, fears of intimacy and abandonment would be more likely to abuse their partner after separation.

The presence of children and issues related to child custody access may also increase the risk of separation violence (Shalansky, Ericksen, & Henderson, 1999). It has been noted that policies regarding children and separation have ignored the safety of mothers (Hart, 1990). For instance, custody hearings, mediation, and child visitations put women in further contact with ex-partners, and this contact may put women at risk for violence during separation. It could also be likely that women with children may be more

likely to experience separation violence because of the increased amount of contact after separation. Child-support payments may also increase the tension and amount of contact between ex-partners, thereby increasing the risk of separation violence.

This study is limited by its inability to test additional risk markers that may account for the remaining unexplained variance in separation violence. The data set also had other limitations, including that data were collected via telephone. Women who may be most at risk for violence or have experienced various forms of violence, such as women in transition, living in shelters, or living in poverty without a telephone, were not contacted and included in the survey. This exclusion may suggest that the GSS underestimates violence, and prevalence estimates need to be considered with this caveat. Also, data were based on self-reports, so it may be possible that some women may not have confided about experiences of violence to the interviewer out of shame, embarrassment or fear. In addition, construct validity, or establishing if the measuring instrument is tied to the concepts and theoretical assumptions being employed in this study is also a limitation. Given the limited theory employed in the present study, it would be difficult to assess the construct validity. The risk markers derived from theory in the study do seem to logically reflect the concepts, such as power and control, feminist theory and male sexual proprietariness, however using only one or two variables to test a theory is not an accurate measure of that theory. The Conflict Tactic Scale (CTS), which was used as the base for questions in the 1999 GSS, has been found to be a valid and reliable measure of violence (Straus, 1990). Some of the critiques or limitations of the CTS as relates to the present study include that the measure of separation violence has a limited set of violent acts, ignores the context of violence, ignores who initiates violence, and

does not measure the meaning or impact of behaviours that may be important to understanding separation violence. Although the use of a one-dimensional method like the CTS does not allow researchers to gather data on the entire picture of violence, as compared to using multiple measures to examine violence, most surveys of male-to-female abuse often use of some version or modification of the CTS (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998). In addition, there are other limitations with respect to the issue of construct validity of the dependent variable, or separation violence measure. Specifically, the measure focuses on ex-partner violence within the previous year. Although the selection process targets separated women, it could be possible that some women may have experienced violence by their spouse while they were married, and if they had been separated for only a few months, they may have been coded as experiencing separation violence inaccurately. The length of separation was not available in the data set, however a one-year time period for violence was used instead of the five year time period to increase the probability that the violence being captured occurred during separation. The frequency of violent acts and context of violence during separation are important areas of investigation for future research. An additional limitation of this study is that the continuation of violence variable was asked only to victims of violence, and therefore the sample size for this variable is less than half of the sample used in this study. This variable does not include non-victims of violence, and therefore the background of non-victims is not available. Lastly, findings pertaining to Aboriginal status need to be taken with caution because of the small number of Aboriginal women in this study. Although findings must be interpreted cautiously, the indication of violence reflected in this study is

consistent with what would be expected theoretically, and is reflective of previous research.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

The findings from this study indicate that separation violence is a relatively common problem in Canadian society. Separation is best used as an effective means to get rid of violence, however, for many women separation is a time when a previously non-violent man becomes violent. These results show particularly young women and Aboriginal women are at risk for separation violence. These findings have important public health and policy implications. First, because these three groups of women were identified as being at greater risk for separation violence, young women, Aboriginal women, and women with no prior history of violence need to be targeted for special services and programs. Aboriginal women need to be targeted for services because they are at such an increased likelihood for separation violence. Programs run by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal women need to be informed of Aboriginal women's particularly high risk and need to be supported to protect women and take action to maintain their safety. Programs based on traditional values of Aboriginal culture are an essential part of protecting and preventing violence against Aboriginal women. It is clear that women without a previous history of violence with their ex-partner are not immune from separation violence, and need to be included in education, awareness and programming to reduce the risk of violence. Stakeholders such as government, Aboriginal groups, physicians, lawmakers and other professionals who see women at times of separation need to be made aware of the dangers of separation. Second, public education campaigns in existence need to have information about separation and violence added to existing curricula to help inform junior high and high school students about the prevalence of separation violence, and the factors and warning signs that denote partner violence.

Allowing a forum for women's voices to be heard by giving them the opportunity to be involved in planning and facilitating educational presentations and awareness sessions for students is one way to create a personalized message about the seriousness and reality of violence. Allowing separation violence victims to help educate society is an essential component of helping victims heal, and creating public awareness of separation violence. Third, risk assessments need to be developed based not only on men's characteristics, but also on female characteristics to help identify women most at risk. Identifying female risk factors could be an important aid to help women protect themselves both before and after leaving their partner. Fourth, the legal system, specifically where child custody and visitation is involved, needs to protect women going through separation and divorce from violence, and help prevent abusive partners from having continued access to their partners. Laws that allow abusers to be in regular contact with their ex-partner are dangerous to women's health and need to be addressed and modified considering the prevalence of separation violence in Canada. Future research needs to consider a variety of additional factors and risk markers to further understand the phenomenon of separation violence. Studies that examine past history, male characteristics, female characteristics, situational factors and family dynamics, including the presence of children, may allow researchers to understand separation violence more in depth, and therefore allow professionals to intervene in an effective way to eliminate the potentially dangerous and devastating effects of separation violence.

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The research and analysis are based on data from Statistics Canada and the opinions expressed do not represent the views of Statistics Canada.

Appendix A

Table 1

Pearson Product–Moment Correlations between Potential Risk Markers

	Educ.	Employ. Status	Aborig. Status	Jeal.	Immig. Status	Incm.	Age	Prev. Vio.
Education	--	-.316**	-.019	-.085	.034	.455*	-.055	.156
Employment		--	.011	.022	.026	-.460**	.196**	.051
Aboriginal Status			--	.099	-.046	-.058	-.105*	.000
Jealousy				--	.055	-.176**	-.255**	.005
Immigrant Status					--	-.069	-.087	.107
Income						--	.102	.217*
Age							--	-.072
Previous Violence								--

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$ (two-tailed)

Table 2

Spearman's Rho Correlation between Ordinal Potential Risk Markers

	Educ.	Employ. Status	Aborig. Status	Jeal.	Immig. Status	Incm.	Age	Prev. Vio.
Education	--	-.213**	-.032	-.101	.017	.475*	.085	.186*
Employment		--	-.026	.011	.051	-.492**	.101	.071
Aboriginal Status			--	.090	-.048	-.047	-.081	-.028
Jealousy				--	.068	-.144*	-.258**	-.023
Immigrant Status					--	-.155**	-.101	.121
Income						--	.126*	-.207*
Age							--	-.075
Previous Violence								--

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$ (two-tailed)

Figure Caption

Figure 1. Results of the crosstabulations with chi-square test of significance for the previous history of violence variable and separation violence.

Figure 2. Results of the crosstabulations with chi-square test of significance for the immigrant status variable and separation violence.

Figure 3. Results of the crosstabulations with chi-square test of significance for the age variable and separation violence.

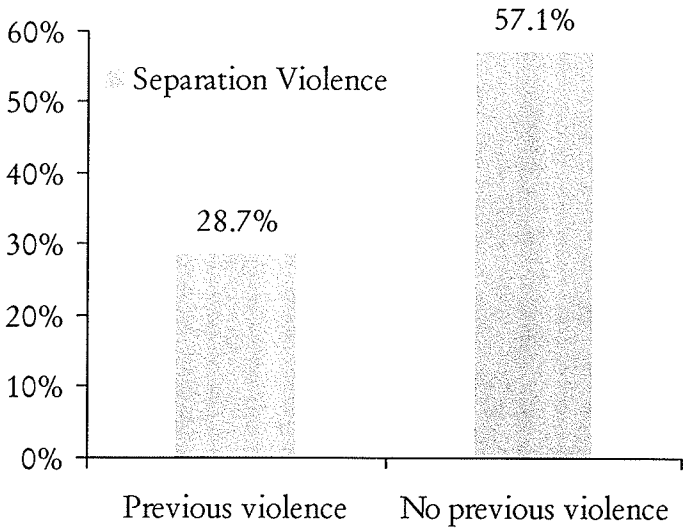
Figure 4. Results of the crosstabulations with chi-square test of significance for the income variable and separation violence.

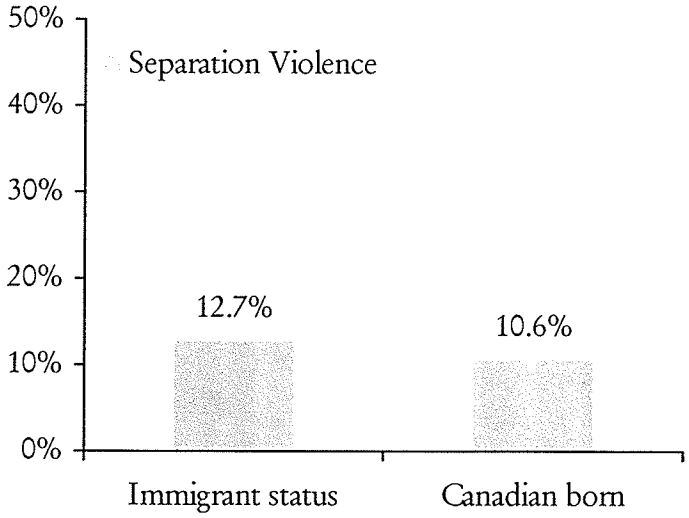
Figure 5. Results of the crosstabulations with chi-square test of significance for the employment variable and separation violence.

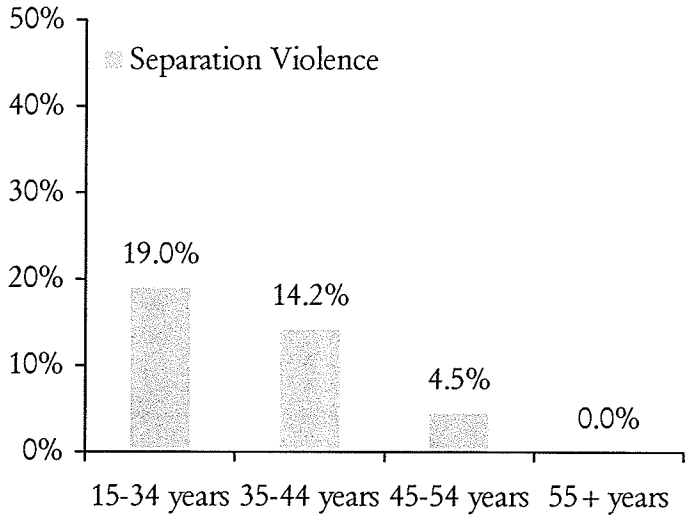
Figure 6. Results of the crosstabulations with chi-square test of significance for the education variable and separation violence.

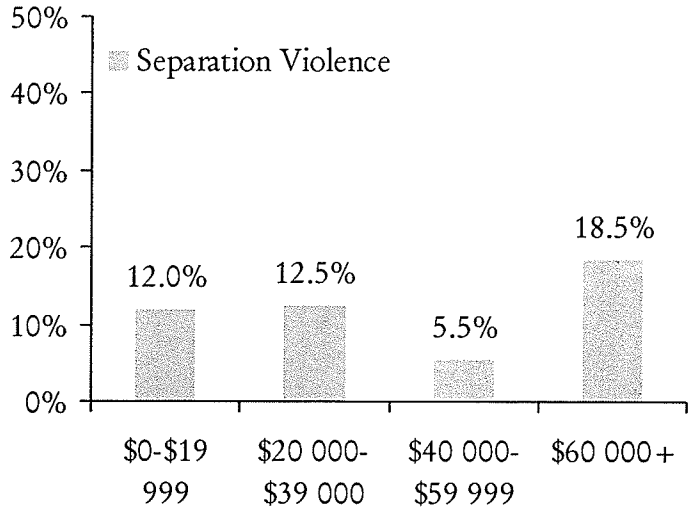
Figure 7. Results of the crosstabulations with chi-square test of significance for the jealousy variable and separation violence.

Figure 8. Results of the crosstabulations with chi-square test of significance for the Aboriginal status variable and separation violence.

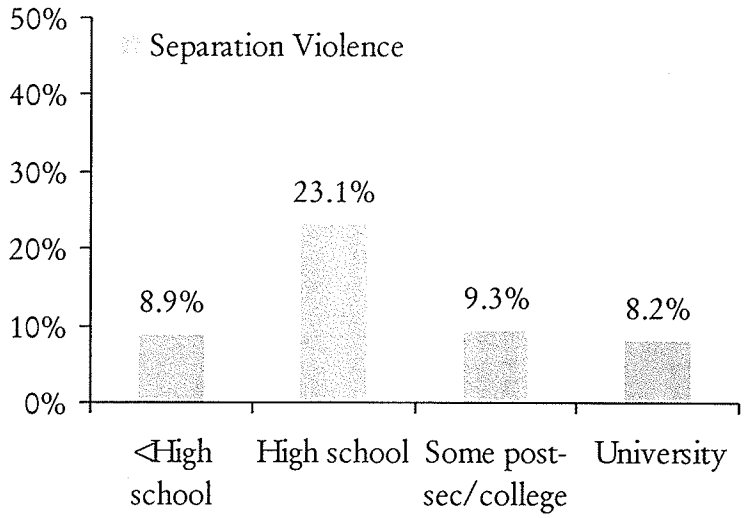

60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
Separation Violence
28.7%
57.1%
Previous violence
No previous violence

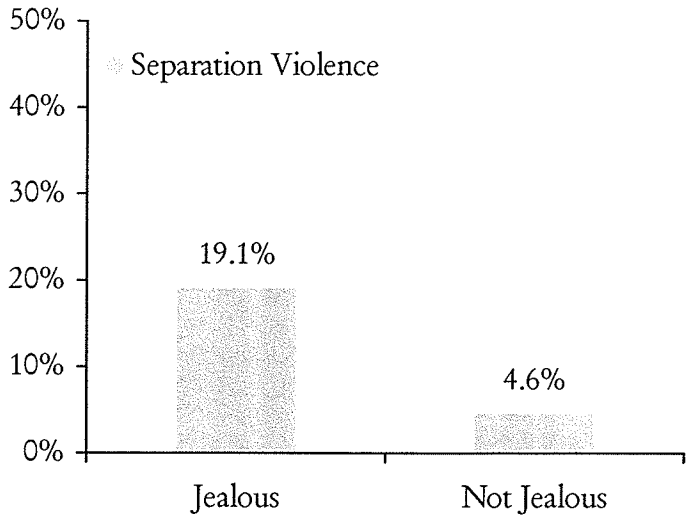

50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
Separation Violence
12.7%
10.6%
Immigrant status
Canadian born

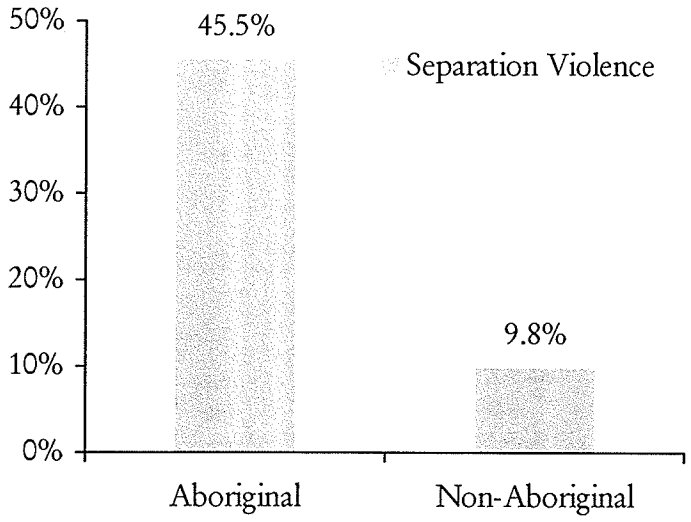

50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
Separation Violence
19.0%
14.2%
4.5%
0.0%
15-34 years
35-44 years
45-54 years
55+ years


50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
Separation Violence
12.0%
12.5%
5.5%
18.5%
$0-$19 999
$20 000-$39 000
$40 000-$59 999
$60 000+


50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
Separation Violence
10.6%
11.5%
Employed
Unemployed


50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
Separation Violence
8.9%
23.1%
9.3%
8.2%
<High school
High school
Some post-sec/college
University


50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
Separation Violence
19.1%
4.6%
Jealous
Not Jealous


50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
45.5%
9.8%
Separation Violence
Aboriginal
Non-Aboriginal