

Translated from...

VIOLENCE AGAINST WIVES

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Abstract: Two Statistics Canada data sources provide case information on violence against Canadian wives: the "Homicide Survey", an archive of all homicides known to police since 1974, and the 1993 national telephone "Violence against Women Survey". When combined with population-at-large information, these sources illuminate risk patterns for lethal and nonlethal violence, which are similar in most, but not all, particulars. Rates of both lethal and nonlethal violence against wives vary in relation to age, registered versus commonlaw status, separation, and autonomy-limiting behaviour by the husband. These risk patterns are discussed in relation to factors affecting the intensity of male sexual proprietariness. Risk patterns in Québec parallel those for Canada as a whole in most, but not all, particulars.

Statistics Canada has maintained an archive of basic information on all homicides known to police in Canada since 1974¹. Spousal homicides constituted 18.2% of all solved homicides in the country for the period 1974 through 1992; 17.3 victims per million couples each year were killed by their spouses (Wilson & Daly 1994). "Spouses" encompass persons in registered marriages, and those in commonlaw relationships².

¹ Since 1961, Statistics Canada maintained information on murders (the criminal charge initially assigned to a case by police which may have differed from the charge prosecuted), but the Homicide Survey was expanded in 1974 to include all homicides and not just murders.

² Statistic Canada's Homicide Survey² contains, among other things, information on the sex, age, and marital status of victim and killer, as well as their relationship, which has been categorized into many types including "commonlaw wife", "wife", "separated wife", "divorced wife", "girlfriend", "estranged lover", and "extramarital lover". In the case of "commonlaw" (i.e.

In Québec in this same period, 15% of all solved cases were spousal homicides, involving 319 wife victims and 50 husband victims, for a rate of 13.1 spouse victims per million couples per year for the period 1974-1992 (Wilson & Daly 1994). Québec's spousal homicide rate ranked third lowest of the 10 provinces and two territories. One feature of spousal homicides in Québec that is markedly different from the rest of Canada is the ratio of wife victims to husband victims. In Québec there were 6.4 wife victims for every husband victim (319 vs. 50). New Brunswick was like Québec in this respect with a ratio of 6.5 wife victims per husband victim (39 vs 6), but just the ratio was only 2.7 wife victims per husband victim (1077 vs 395) for the other 8 provinces and 2 territories.

According to the 1991 census, Québec is different from the rest of Canada, including New Brunswick, with respect to the proportion of all marriages which were common-law unions: 19% of all husband-wife couples were commonlaw unions in Québec compared with a range of 7-11% in the other nine provinces (Belliveau, Oderkirk & Silver 1994). The 19% figure for 1991 contrasts with 8% in 1981. However, Québec's exceptional ratio of wives to husbands as homicide victims cannot be interpreted as merely reflecting the large proportion of commonlaw unions, since New Brunswick, with a similar victimization ratio, was like the rest of Canada with respect to the percent of commonlaw unions. Moreover, this victimization ratio tends to be lower in commonlaw unions than in registered unions, not higher, in Canada as a whole and in other countries (Wilson & Daly 1992c). In Québec, men of registered marriages were 7.7 times more likely to kill their wives than the reverse, while men of commonlaw marriages were 5.1 times more likely. So, the much greater predominance of female victims in spousal homicides in Québec and in New Brunswick than elsewhere in Canada is a puzzle.

Marriage partners have presumably chosen one another out of mutual attraction. When attraction no longer prevails, desertion would seem the less costly way of ending the relationship. So whence the inclination to kill? It might be argued that spousal homicides are merely a byproduct of routine activity budgets in which spouses are often together. Goode (1969: 941), for example, has written "Why do intimates commit violence against one another? Perhaps the most powerful if crude answer is that they are *there*." However, there is evidence that risk to wives is greater than can be explained by mere opportunity. In a one-year sample of homicides in the city of Detroit, for example, coresiding spouses incurred more than eleven times the homicide risk of other coresiding relatives (Daly & Wilson 1982).

de facto) marital relationships, how police should code dissolved unions has been inexplicit, and ex-commonlaw is not a marital status code (neither in the Homicide Survey nor in the census). Thus, former commonlaw marrieds may sometimes have been coded by police as "estranged lover", "close friend" or even "acquaintance", and any such cases would have been excluded from our analyses of spousal homicides. "Girlfriends" and "lovers" are also excluded from the following analyses as it is not possible to compute homicide rates without the corresponding information on numbers of such relationships in the population-at-large.

Why are spouses slain more often than other relatives? To answer this, one would like to elucidate the substantive issues in marital conflicts. Although the identification of homicide "motives" is admittedly controversial (Daly & Wilson 1988b: 170-174), nevertheless, there seems to be a remarkably short list of issues that give impetus to lethal marital violence, according to police files, psychiatric reports, case law, ethnographic accounts, and interview studies. In well-described samples of wife-killings from a variety of societies there is apparently a universal prevalence of the following motives: (a) the husband's accusing the wife of sexual infidelity, and/or (b) his non-acceptance of her decision to terminate the relationship, and/or (c) conflict over his more general efforts to control her (e.g., Allen, 1990; Barnard et al., 1982; Bohannon 1960; Campbell 1992; Chimbos 1978; Counts et al. 1992; Crawford & Gartner 1992; Cusson 1994; Daly & Wilson 1988b; Daly, Wilson & Weghorst 1982; Dobash & Dobash 1979; Elwin 1950; Levy, Kunitz & Everett 1969; Mahoney 1991; Polk 1994; Polk & Ranson 1991; Saran 1974; Showalter, Bonnie & Roddy 1980; Tanner 1970; Varma 1978; Wilson 1989; Wilson & Daly, 1993a, 1993b). These motives are not mirrored in cases where wives killed husbands. Women who kill their husbands usually do so in self-defensive action (whether or not the circumstances and prior history of victim and killer match the legal self-defense criteria) or in defense of children (e.g., Bacon & Lansdowne 1982; Bowker 1983; Browne 1987; Campbell 1992; Dobash, Dobash, Wilson & Daly 1992).

For the remainder of this paper we will focus on men's use of physical violence against their wives as wives are the more likely victims, and because in the majority of cases the violent conflicts are best understood as the result of the man's impetus to use violence. This paper covers (1) evidence for the psychological associations between male sexual proprietariness and the use of violence against wives, (2) evidence for patterns of risk of lethal and nonlethal assaults against wives in relation to demographic variables, and (3) demographic risk patterns for nonlethal violence against wives in Québec based upon a Statistics Canada national survey in 1993.

Psychological Links Between Male Sexual Proprietariness and Violence

In the majority of uxoricides (killing of wives) the ostensible motivating circumstances reflect what might be called "male sexual proprietariness". In studies of nonlethal violence against wives, ostensible rationales are more diverse than in the lethal cases, but the dominant motive is apparently the same. When asked what are the primary issues around which violent incidents occurred, both beaten wives and their assailants nominate "jealousy" above all else (e.g., Brisson, 1983; Dobash & Dobash, 1979, 1984; Rounsaville 1978).

"Jealousy" (as distinct from envy) is best characterized as a complex psychological state or operating mode, which is activated by a perceived threat that a third party might usurp one's place in a valued relationship, and which generates a diversity of circumstantially contingent responses, ranging from vigilance to violence, aimed at countering the threat (Daly et al., 1982; Wilson & Daly 1996; Mullen 1991). Jealousy is sexual if the valued relationship is sexual. Sexual jealousy

is a relatively dynamic mental state of attentional focus and readiness to act, normally aroused by imminent cues of rivalrous threat. It is likely to be experienced and described, by both the jealous party and others, as a transitory emotional/motivational state like anger or fear, but a jealous state can also be relatively chronic. "Sexual proprietariness" refers to a more pervasive mindset, encompassing not only episodes of jealous arousal but also presumptions of entitlement and inclinations to exercise control and prevent threats of trespass or usurpation.

Sexual proprietariness and violent motives are closely connected. The idea that the discovery of wifely infidelity is an exceptional provocation, likely to elicit a violent rage, is cross-culturally ubiquitous, perhaps universal (Daly & Wilson, 1988b). Indeed, such a rage is often considered irresistible, mitigating the responsibility of violent cuckolds (Daly et al., 1982). In Anglo-American common law, for example, killing upon the discovery of a wife's adultery has been deemed to be the act of a "reasonable man" and to warrant a reduced penalty (Edwards, 1954). Violent sexual jealousy is considered normal or at least unsurprising both in societies in which the cuckold's violence is seen as a reprehensible loss of control (e.g., Dell, 1984) and in those where it is seen as a praiseworthy redemption of honour (e.g., Safilios-Rothschild, 1969; Besse, 1989). The ubiquity of laws granting sexual jealousy the status of a mitigating rationale for violence against wives not only speaks volumes about the law but also about the links between jealousy and male violence.

But granting that adultery is an exceptionally potent elicitor of men's anger, it need not follow that the woman should be the target. Assaults against rival males are also likely consequences, and are also likely to be treated leniently, as having been "provoked". Nevertheless, although a large proportion of male-male violence is motivated by sexual rivalry (Daly & Wilson, 1988b), "errant" wives are targets of violence, too, and if violent inclinations toward the wives are to be understood as functionally coercive, an implication is that the sexually proprietary male psyche responds to an adulterous event as predictive of further infidelities unless the woman's inclinations are deterred.

We consider that uxoricides are epiphenomena of male motives whose function is coercion and deterrence. This stance implies that lethal and nonlethal violence share commonalities of motive, of causal dynamics, of circumstance, of marital history, and of factors which exacerbate or mitigate the severity and frequency of violence by men against their wives. This presumption is testable, and evidence presented below and by Wilson, Johnson & Daly (1995) supports the conclusion that uxoricides are indeed largely, although not entirely, "the tip of the iceberg" of nonlethal violence against wives.

Male Sexual Proprietariness and Nonlethal Violence against Wives

As noted above, battered women nominate "jealousy" as the most frequent motive for their husbands' assaults. Granting the motivational relevance of jealousy to transitory rages and hence to the violent incidents themselves, however, one may still ask whether those husbands who are especially proprietary and controlling are also the husbands who are especially violent.

Battered women often maintain that their husbands are not only violently jealous about their interactions with other men, but that they are so controlling as to curtail even the wives' contacts with female friends and family. In a study of 60 battered women in rural North Carolina, for example, Hilberman & Munson (1978) reported that 95% of the batterers were so proprietary that "leaving the house for any reason invariably resulted in accusations of infidelity which culminated in assault" (p. 461).

Table 1. Evidence of Links Between Nonlethal Violence and Men's Proprietary Control.

The 1993 Canadian national survey on Violence Against Women (Statistics Canada 1994) included a section focusing on women's marital experiences with their current husbands/partners. The women were interviewed about their perceptions of their husbands' autonomy-limiting behaviours and then subsequently asked about their experiences of violence.

The five autonomy-limiting statements were introduced thus:

"I'm going to read a list of statements that some women have used to describe their husband/partner. Thinking about your husband/partner, I'd like you to tell me whether or not each statement describes him."

1. *He is jealous and doesn't want you to talk to other men.*
2. *He tries to limit your contact with family or friends.*
3. *He insists on knowing who you are with and where you are at all times.*
4. *He calls you names to put you down or make you feel bad.*
5. *He prevents you from knowing about or having access to the family income, even if you ask.*

These autonomy-limiting statements were followed by questions about violence which were prefaced with the following remarks:

"We are particularly interested in learning more about women's experiences of violence in their homes. I'd like you to tell me if your husband/partner has ever done any of the following to you".

1. *Has your husband/partner ever threatened to hit you with his fist or anything else that could hurt you?*
2. *Has he ever thrown anything at you that could hurt you?*
3. *Has he ever pushed, grabbed, or shoved you?*
4. *Has he ever slapped you?*
5. *Has he ever kicked, bit, or hit you with his fist?*
6. *Has he ever hit you with something that could hurt you?*
7. *Has he ever beaten you up?*
8. *Has he ever choked you?*
9. *Has he ever threatened to or used a gun or knife on you?*
10. *Has he ever forced you into any sexual activity when you did not want to, by threatening you, holding you down, or hurting you in some way?*

In 1993, Statistics Canada conducted a national survey on violence against women in which 8,385 wives (7,363 in registered marriages and 1,022 in de facto marriages) were interviewed about, among other things, their experiences of threats and sexual and physical violence by marital partners (Johnson & Sacco, 1995; Statistics Canada 1994). Immediately before these women were asked about their experiences of violence by marital partners, the women were asked a series of statements for which they were to indicate affirmation or not. The

five statements were designed to assess the respondents' perceptions of whether their husbands engaged in controlling, denigrating, and proprietary behaviours, which we refer to collectively as "autonomy limiting". Eighteen percent of the 8,385 respondents affirmed that their husbands/partners engaged in one or more of the five "autonomy-limiting" behaviours. In Québec just 9% of 1,921 interviewed wives affirmed one or more of these behaviours, suggesting that the women in Québec were either less likely to be "controlled" by their husbands or less likely to interpret their husbands' behaviour in this way.

Table 2. Percent of wives in Québec affirming the applicability of "autonomy limiting" items (Table 1) to the behaviour of their coresident husbands (registered and commonlaw unions combined), in relation to perpetration of violence by the husband.

Reports of Violence:	None	Nonserious	Serious
Number of Wives:	1121	120	42
Autonomy-limiting item:	Percent	Percent	Percent
1. Jealousy	3.3	11.7	33.3
2. Limiting social contacts	2.1	9.2	33.3
3. Knowing whereabouts	5.4	19.2	42.9
4. Derogation	1.9	15.8	40.5
5. Financial constraints	0.9	5.0	14.3

Note: Serious violence refers to affirmations of any of items 7 through 10 (Table 1). Nonserious violence refers to affirmation of any of items 1 through 6, but not 7 through 10 (Table 1). The validity of this criterion of "seriousness" is supported by injury data: among Canadian women who were interviewed further about one incident of violence perpetrated by a coresiding spouse, 72% of those affirming serious violence reported having incurred an injury requiring medical attention, compared to 18% of those who reported an incident meeting only the criterion for nonserious violence (Wilson, Johnson & Daly 1995). Moreover, wives more often reported fearing that their lives were in danger in incidents meeting the criterion of serious violence (56%) than in incidents of nonserious violence (9%).

For the national sample, the autonomy-limiting behaviours varied systematically with the severity and chronicity of violence experienced by wives (Wilson, Johnson & Daly 1995). An autonomy-limiting index was calculated as the number of affirmations to the five statements so index values for a woman might range from 0 to 5. Table 2 shows that reports of each of these behaviours were more prevalent among Québec wives who had experienced more severe violence. For Québec wives who had not experienced violence in their current marriage (registered and commonlaw unions combined) the average (\pm Standard Deviation) autonomy-limiting index value was $0.09 \pm .40$; for wives who experienced non-serious physical violence the value was $0.61 \pm .97$ and for wives who reported serious violence the value was 1.64 ± 1.43 . Table 3 shows that reports of these autonomy-limiting behaviours were also systematically associated with the chronicity of violence against wives in Québec. The results in Tables 2 and 3 parallel the results for the nation (Wilson, Johnson & Daly, 1993). We interpret these results as supporting the hypothesis of psychological links between men's efforts to control and monopolize their wives and violence against wives, that is, as parallel manifestations of certain husbands' efforts to exert coercive control.

Table 3. The mean autonomy-limiting index values (number of affirmations to the five statements quoted in Table 1 so values for a woman might range from 0 to 5) for Québec wives who have experienced different numbers of violent incidents during their current marriages (registered or commonlaw).

Number of Violent Incidents Reported by Women	Mean \pm S.D.
No Violence (N=1112 women)	$0.13 \pm .49$
Single Incident (N=109)	0.65 ± 1.07
2-10 Incidents (N=47)	0.91 ± 1.06
11 or more incidents (N=12)	2.67 ± 1.15

Lethal and Nonlethal Violence Against Wives: Demographic Risk Patterns

Most criminological studies of homicide focus on variations in gross homicide rates between places or times. Our more epidemiological approach focuses on demographic patterns of risk with respect to particular kinds of relationship categories such as the marital relationship. Our prior analyses of spousal homicides in Canada (Daly & Wilson 1988a, 1988b; Wilson 1989; Wilson, Daly & Wright 1993; Wilson, Johnson & Daly 1995) revealed these previously unidentified spousal homicide risk patterns: (1) victimization of both wives and husbands occurred in several-fold higher rates in de facto marital unions than in registered marital unions; (2) the youngest wives incurred the greatest risk in registered unions, whereas in de facto unions risk was

greatest for middle-aged wives; and (3) increasing age disparities of husband and wife -- in either direction -- were associated with increasing rates of homicide victimization of both parties, in both registered and de facto marital unions. Mercy & Saltzman (1989) found that these Canadian homicide patterns of risk in relation to age and age disparity were replicated in registered marriages in the United States.

The logic underlying our expectation that certain demographic variables would be associated with uxoricide risk derives from considering violence's utility as a coercive tool (without any implications about whether the violent person has any awareness of this utility). If the coercive use of violence is best understood as one means by which uxorial proprietary claims are maintained, then one would expect that male sexual proprietariness and use of violence might covary with such demographic variables as estrangement, type of marital union, and age of the woman.

Estrangement

If violence and threats of violence by husbands indeed function to limit female autonomy, then men's minds are likely to be such that violent inclinations are aroused specifically by a wife's desertion or by probabilistic cues of her likelihood or intention of desertion. It follows that resolving to leave one's husband may be associated with elevated risk of violence, including risk of being killed. Because the decision to leave is covert, however, it is difficult to compare the incidence of violence against wives considering or intending to leave with the violence experienced by other coresiding women. What one can do is to assess the violence incurred by those who actually do leave, and their risk of being slain. Wilson & Daly (1993a) found that the risk to separated wives was indeed substantially elevated in Canada, in the state of New South Wales in Australia, and in the city of Chicago, despite the separated woman's lesser availability to her assailant (Figure 1). Rate estimations were computed only for registered marriages. Similar analysis for commonlaw marriages would also be of interest, but there is no available basis for estimating the numbers of estranged commonlaw couples in any of these three populations-at-large.

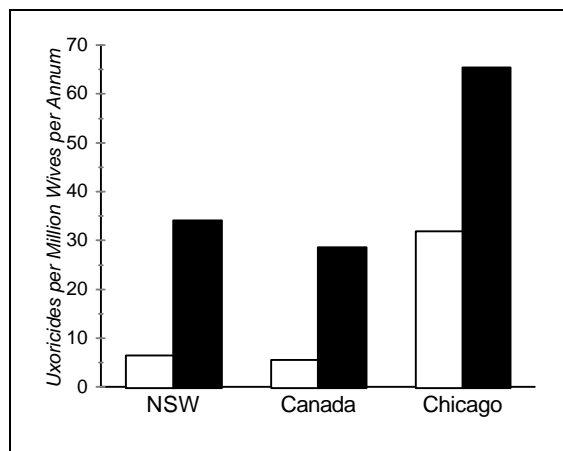


Figure 1. Uxoricide rates in Canada (1974-1990), New South Wales, Australia (NSW, 1968-1986), and Chicago (1965-1990) for registered marriages. Open bars represent homicides per million coresiding wives per annum. Filled bars represent homicides per million separated wives per annum. Data from Wilson & Daly 1993a.

For the period 1974-1992 in Québec, registered-married men killed 171 coresident wives and 39 still-married wives who were no longer coresident. According to the 1991 census there were 1,343,815 husband-wife coresident (and present on census day) registered married couples in Québec (Statistics Canada 1993, Table 8) and there were 73,395 married but separated wives (Statistics Canada 1992, Table 5). If we use these census numbers as a per annum estimate of the number of coresident or separated wives for the 1974-1992 period covered by the homicide statistics, the uxoricide rate for coresident couples was 6.9 wife victims per million wives per annum and the rate for separated wives was 28.0 uxoricides per million wives per annum. These estimated rates are fairly similar to the rates computed for the entire country (Figure 1) and they replicate the finding that there is an elevated uxoricide risk associated with separation.

The fact that separation is temporally associated with increased lethal risk does not necessarily mean that the link between the two is directly causal, however. If women were to leave assaultive husbands when the frequency and severity of assaults become intolerably dangerous, then the immediate post-separation period might be a time of elevated uxoricide risk regardless of whether men respond violently to separation *per se*. Moreover, the simple fact that separated couples constitute a subset of marriages with a history of discord might in principle explain their higher homicide rates. However, case descriptions often make it clear that the link between separation and murder is more than incidental. Homicidal husbands are often noted to have threatened to do exactly what they did, should their wives ever leave them, and they often explain their homicides as responses to the intolerable stimulus of the wife's departure (e.g., Allen 1990; Campbell 1992; Crawford & Gartner 1992; Mahoney 1991; Wallace 1986; Wilson & Daly 1993a). Still, the wife's desertion and the husband's assault may sometimes coincide not because one caused the other, but because both were precipitated by the same episode of marital conflict. Although direct evidence of the risks to wives who did or did not leave as a function of equivalent conflicts is not available, some evidence suggests that separation *per se* is associated with incurring more severe violence (e.g. Johnson 1995).

When a wife is pursued and killed by a husband she has left, the killer's motive is obviously not merely to be rid of her. Yet if keeping her is his aim, killing is even more clearly counterproductive. We propose that such homicides are the dysfunctionally extreme products of violent inclinations whose lesser manifestations are effective in coercion, for although uxoricide may seldom serve the interests of the killer, it is far from clear that the same can be said of nonlethal wife abuse. A credible threat of violent death can very effectively control people, and the evidence in Figure 1 suggests that such threats by husbands are often sincere. Women confronted with such threats are often cognizant of the dangers they would face if they left and are deterred from doing so. Moreover, unlike assaults or threats directed at strangers, violence against wives has had a legitimacy that has enhanced the coercive power of proprietary husbands' threats. Until recently, husbands were legally entitled under Anglo-American law to confine wives against their will (e.g. Dobash & Dobash 1979, 1984; Edwards 1985; Wilson & Daly

1992a). Persons who gave sanctuary to a fleeing wife, including even her relatives, were legally obliged to give her up or be liable for the tort of "harbouring", and Englishmen remained entitled to restrain wives intent on leaving them until a 1973 ruling made such acts kidnappings (Atkins & Hoggett 1984).

Type of Marital Union

There is reason to suppose that husbands may be less secure in their proprietary claims over wives in de facto unions than in registered unions. Until relatively recently, uxorial entitlements and obligations within registered marital unions were firmly reinforced in legal, religious and other social institutions (e.g. Dobash & Dobash 1979; Wilson & Daly 1992a). Perhaps, in part, because of values and expectations associated with the socially and legally enforced commitments that marital registration entailed in the past, de facto marriages may be less committed to the alliance. In fact, de facto unions are often trial marriages with relatively short durations and a relatively high incidence of break-ups (e.g., Booth & Johnson 1988; Bumpass & Sweet 1989; Wu & Balakrishnan 1992) . Moreover, there is some direct evidence for a greater incidence of conflicts within de facto couples than within registered couples (e.g., Macklin 1972; Sarantakos 1984).

In Canada, the uxoricide rate has been about eight times greater in coresiding commonlaw unions than in coresiding registered unions (55.1 vs. 7.2 uxoricides per million wives per annum, respectively; Wilson, Johnson & Daly 1995). The 1993 national survey on violence against women revealed that coresiding wives in commonlaw unions were 4.5 times more likely than their counterparts in registered unions to have experienced physical violence by husbands in the past year (9.0 vs. 2.0 assaults per hundred wives, respectively; Wilson, Johnson & Daly 1995). Table 4 shows similar differences for wives in Québec.

Table 4. Rates of violence against wives in Québec by coresiding marital partners according to the type of marital union.

Type of Marital Union:	Registered	Commonlaw
Uxoricides per million wives per annum ¹ :	6.3	24.6
Nonlethal assaults in past year per 100 wives per annum ² :	1.6	7.8

¹ Uxoricide rates based on estimate of number of wives in Québec living with husband in a registered or a commonlaw union from census tabulations averaged for the 1981, 1986 and 1991 census years which are the only censuses in which registered unions and commonlaw unions were distinguished.

² Weighted estimates based on a weighting factor which reflected the sex and age structure of the stratified probability sample for Québec (Statistics Canada 1994).

Commonlaw and registered marital unions differ in many ways, and the higher risk of homicide and assault in the former may be attributable to a combination of correlated factors. De facto marital unions are generally more prevalent among the poor and the young (e.g. Belleview, Oderkirk, Silver 1994; Bumpass & Sweet 1989; Carmichael 1984; Khoo 1987; Norland 1985; Roussel 1978; Spanier 1983; Turcotte 1988; Wu & Balakrishnan 1992), and poverty and young adulthood are both associated with higher homicide rates (e.g., Daly & Wilson 1988b, 1990). Another difference between de facto and registered unions is that de facto unions are more often childless than are registered unions for a given duration of marriage (e.g., Statistics Canada 1987). Joint offspring promote solidarity between spouses, and childlessness is associated with higher spousal conflict and divorce (e.g., Rasmussen 1981). Homicide risk may parallel divorce risk with respect to the effects of children. Moreover, whereas couples in de facto unions are less likely than those in registered unions to have children of the present marriage, they are more likely to have stepchildren (e.g., Bumpass & Sweet 1989; Khoo 1988), and the presence of stepchildren is itself a risk factor for spousal conflict and violence (Daly, Singh & Wilson, 1993; Daly & Wilson, 1996; White & Booth 1985; Wilson & Daly 1987). Whether adultery, desertion and loss of control are greater sources of conflict in de facto unions than in registered unions is unknown, and whether the elevation of homicide rates associated with de facto marital status is mediated by steprelationships, poverty, and/or other factors is a question for future research.

Age of Woman

A woman's youth is one cue that is likely to be associated with the probability that she will desert her husband permanently or temporarily, even if there is no explicit indication of her intention to do so. All else equal, youth makes a woman more attractive to men (e.g., Cunningham 1986; Deutsch, Zalenski & Clark 1986; Kenrick & Keefe 1992; Mathes 1985; Symons 1979); men more than women express a desire for young spouses (e.g., Townsend 1989; Buss 1994); and the younger a divorcee the greater her likelihood of remarriage (Glick & Lin 1987; Trost 1984). These age-related "opportunity" and "motivational" considerations, as well as other factors including childlessness, suggest that young wives -- all else equal -- may be more likely than older wives to terminate an unsatisfactory marriage, more likely to form new sexual relationships, and to be attractive to potential rivals of the husband. It follows that men may be more jealous, proprietary and coercive toward younger wives.

Uxoricide risk is indeed maximal for the youngest registered-married wives in Canada, Australia, England and Wales, and the United States (Daly and Wilson, 1988a,b; Mercy and Saltzman, 1989; Wilson 1989; Wilson, Daly & Scheib 1996; Wilson, Daly and Wright, 1993; Wilson, Johnson & Daly 1995). Rates of nonlethal physical violence against wives showed a similar pattern of declining rate with increasing age of wives in the 1993 Canadian survey (Wilson, Johnson & Daly 1995). The high risk of uxoricide incurred by the youngest wives may strike the reader as evidence against the proposition that men value young wives maximally. But the paradox disappears when one views the lethal assaults as the dysfunctional extremes of "normal", nonlethal coercive violence, which occurs in thousands of marriages for every one that ends in uxoricide, and which, like uxoricide, is incurred at the highest rates by the youngest wives.

The direct relevance of wives' youth to husbands' violence remains questionable, however. Many other variables are correlated with wife's age, including parity and childlessness, duration of the union, economic circumstance, and the man's own age. The information that would be needed to sort out the separate impacts and priorities of these factors is as yet unavailable for any sample of uxoricide cases, although Wallace's (1986) data on Australian cases suggest that short marital duration and youth are each predictors of risk when the other is controlled. Something can also be said about the relevance of the husband's age. Since young men are the most violent age-sex class generally (e.g. Daly & Wilson 1990; Wilson & Daly 1985, 1994b), an obvious hypothesis is that the reason why young wives are relatively often assaulted and slain is simply that they are usually married to young men. It is unlikely that this is the whole story, however: in Canada, a wife victim's youth is more strongly related to uxoricide risk than the husband perpetrator's. Moreover and more generally, age disparity between husband and wife is a major risk factor for uxoricide (Daly & Wilson 1988a,b; Mercy & Saltzman 1989; Wilson & Daly & Wright 1993; Wilson & Daly 1994a), such that young wives married to older husbands actually incur greater risk than those married to young husbands (Wilson, Daly & Wright 1993). It is noteworthy that in the case of nonlethal assaults, age disparity does not exhibit the U-shaped pattern found for uxoricides (Wilson, Johnson & Daly 1995).

In Québec the risk of nonlethal assault by husbands in the past year is greatest for young wives in registered as well as commonlaw unions (Figure 2). However, in the case of uxoricide the risk is greatest for middle-aged wives in both registered and commonlaw unions (Figure 2). The national data show a similar age-related risk pattern for nonlethal assaults, but only the commonlaw unions show the inverted U-shaped risk pattern for uxoricides as the uxoricide risk pattern in registered marriages declines with increasing age of the woman (Wilson, Johnson & Daly 1995).

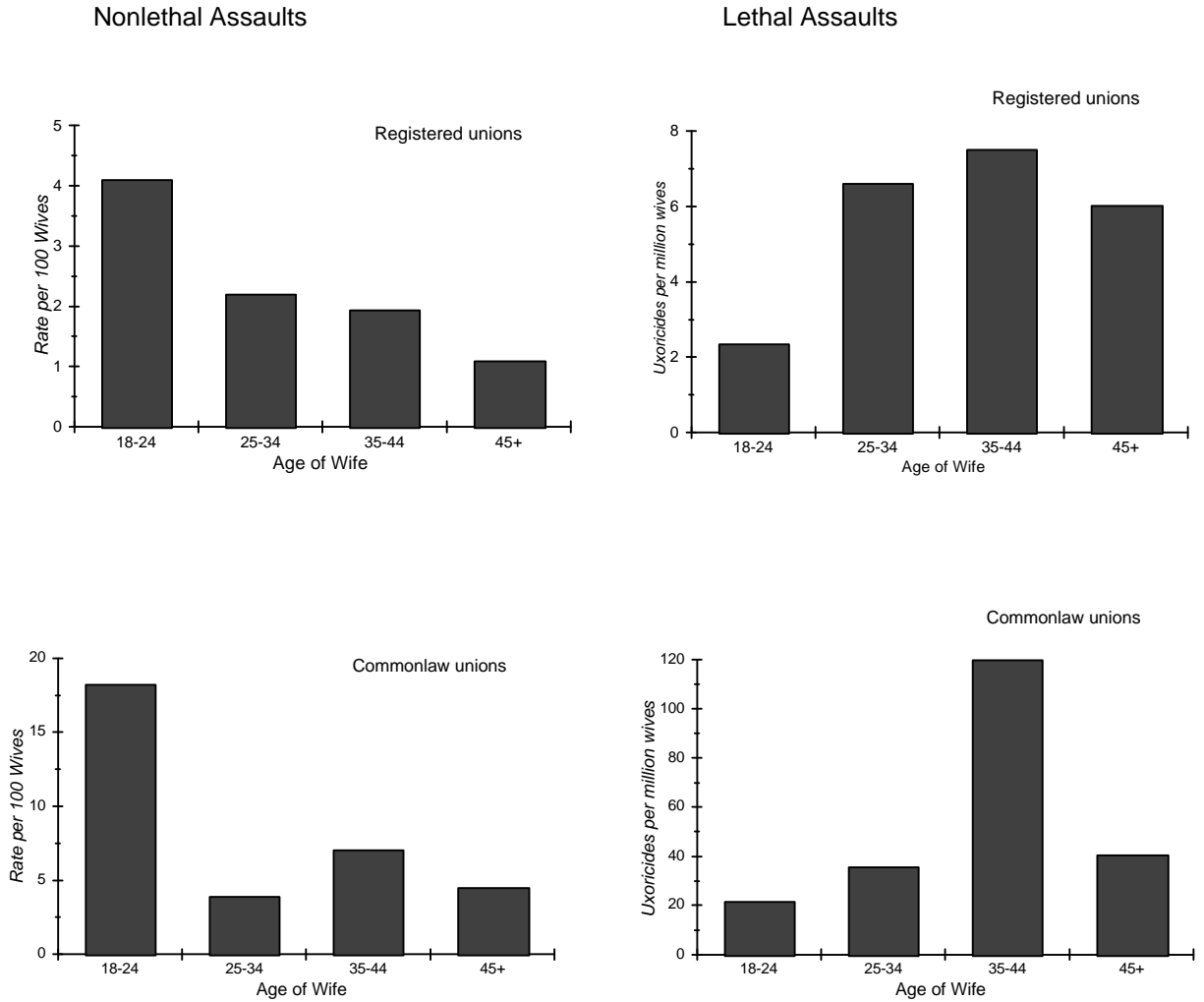


Figure 2. Age-specific rates of lethal and nonlethal assaults in registered and commonlaw marriages as a function of the wife's age. Uxoricides per million wives per annum in Quebec 1974-1992. Rates per hundred wives of nonlethal assault in the past year in Quebec in 1993.

Are Demographic Risk Markers Merely Correlates of Household Income?

The circumstance that is perhaps most frequently invoked as a correlate or cause of violence is poverty, and the hypothesis that poor socioeconomic circumstances are conducive to marital violence is appealing. It is obvious that family financial strains are generally stressful, and they are often a major source of marital conflict (e.g., Messinger 1976; Conger et al. 1994). Moreover, there is considerable evidence that women prefer men with good financial prospects as husbands (Buss 1994), and that, while wealth increases a man's likelihood of marrying, poverty elevates the risk of divorce (Guttmann 1993; Gibson 1994). In societies which permit polygamy, only affluent men can afford multiple wives (Betzig 1986; Borgerhoff Mulder 1988), and even in monogamous societies well-to-do men are especially likely to have multiple wives successively (Glick & Lin 1987; Pérusse 1993). In general then, poor economic circumstance is a cue of some genuine risk of losing one's wife, and may therefore be expected to arouse sexually proprietary and, perhaps, coercive feelings in a husband.

Young couples are poorer than older couples and commonlaw unions are poorer than registered unions, both in the Canadian population-at-large (e.g., Norland 1985) and in the sample of women responding to the 1993 Violence against Women Survey (Johnson & Sacco 1995). Thus, one might hypothesize that socioeconomic status is of primary importance, and that patterns of risk as a function of age and type of union merely reflect disadvantaged economic circumstance. However, this hypothesis gains little support from further analyses of the 1993 Violence against Women Survey (Wilson, Johnson & Daly 1995). In general, those wives who reported violence tended to have somewhat lower household incomes than those who did not, and those who had experienced violence within the last year tended to have somewhat lower incomes than those who had experienced violence only in the more distant past. But these economic differences between assaulted and other wives were not large across the sample as a whole, nor were there significant distinctions between assaulted and other wives as a function of demographic factor except perhaps for commonlaw marriages, and for the youngest wives.

In addition to consideration of these demographic factors, household income may also be relevant to variations in the autonomy-limiting index values (Wilson, Johnson & Daly 1995). A man's poverty, all else equal, reduces his attractiveness as a marital partner and co-parent; chronic economic failure increases the probability of divorce and reduces the probability of remarrying. If control and denigration of a wife are effective in deterring her personal autonomy and if economically disadvantaged husbands are at risk of marital desertion then efforts to limit a wife's autonomy may occur. A logistic regression analysis in which the dependent variable was affirmation of one or more autonomy-limiting items revealed that low household income was the strongest predictor ($P < .0001$), with additional significant effects of wife's youth ($P = .0007$), commonlaw as opposed to registered marital union ($P = .0069$), and absolute age disparity ($P = .0124$).

Attempts to Limit Autonomy and Demographic Patterns of Coercive Control

The logic of our rationale for considering violence against wives as a manifestation of coercive control of wives suggests that reports of autonomy-limiting behaviours will vary systematically in relation to reports of violence and the demographic variables analyzed above. There are two relevant conclusions from the 1993 survey (Wilson, Johnson & Daly 1995). First, within each demographic category, the mean index value was highest for those women who reported violence in the past year, intermediate for those who reported violence by current husbands prior to the past year, and lowest by far for women who had not experienced violence in the present relationship. Secondly, within each of the three groups of women categorized according to their experience of violence, autonomy-limiting efforts varied relatively little between demographic categories. However, these autonomy-limiting indices did vary in relation to age, age disparity, and type of union within the total sample of wives, and the patterns of variation were consistent with those for violence.

A logistic regression was conducted to assess predictors of the distinction between marriages in which violence had occurred in the past year and those in which it had not. Autonomy-limiting behaviour, wife's youth and commonlaw status each made highly significant ($P < .0001$) separate contributions to the prediction of violence within the past year, whereas age disparity and household income made no further significant contributions to prediction. The fact that household income is a highly significant predictor of autonomy-limiting behaviour but not of past violence is puzzling, since violence and autonomy-limiting behaviour were themselves significantly associated. Autonomy-limiting efforts may actually be more strongly affected by socioeconomic status than is violence, but it may also be the case that there are differential income-related biases in the interpretation or divulgence of these two sorts of experience.

The husband/partners' efforts to limit wifely autonomy was by far the best predictor (i.e., the strongest correlate) of the violence, but its treatment as an independent variable does not of course imply that it is causally prior to violence. Instead, we interpret these correlated affirmations of the autonomy-limiting behaviours and of violence as parallel manifestations of certain husbands' efforts to exert coercive control.

Concluding Remarks

We have proposed that violence against wives varies in relation to demographic and situational variables which reflect potential threats to men's exclusive marital entitlements. If, for example, registration of marriage provides a cue of a wife's commitment and/or of social recognition of the union, then men's sexually proprietary concerns are likely to be less frequently or less intensely aroused in registered marriage than in commonlaw marriage.

The psychological link between jealousy and anger suggests that cues of imminent threat of loss of sexual exclusivity may be manifested in violent action. Violence against wives and other

expressions of male sexual proprietariness vary systematically both within and between societies. Our claim of the links between jealousy and violence in men in response to social cues of imminent threat of loss of sexual exclusivity suggests that wherever the relevant cues are salient, recurring and prevalent, manifestations of male sexual proprietariness -- including violence -- are expected to be diverse, culturally elaborated, and frequent (Wilson & Daly 1992a; Wilson & Daly 1993b).

It is an implicit assumption of those who study and deal with violence against wives that lethal and nonlethal violence share commonalities of motive and causal dynamics, and of the circumstances, attributes of marital history, and other factors exacerbating or mitigating risk. Comparisons of the demographic risk patterns for lethal and nonlethal violence against wives show parallel risk patterns for type of marital union (commonlaw unions greater than registered unions), and age of wife (young wives greater than older wives), but not with respect to age disparity (U-shaped pattern for uxoricides but not for nonlethal violence against wives). However, it is not known whether age disparity or other demographic factors are reliable markers of mortally dangerous violence against wives.

The demographic risk patterns for violence against wives in Québec appear similar to those for the national data with respect to greater risk for wives in commonlaw unions than in registered unions, elevated risk of uxoricide associated with separation, and greatest risk of nonlethal assault for the youngest wives. Québec differs from the national patterns with respect to risk of uxoricide as a function of the wife's age: middle-aged wives are at greatest risk and not the youngest wives. Québec and New Brunswick also differ from the other provinces and territories with respect to the ratio of female perpetrators to male perpetrators in the killing of spouses. Further research is needed to understand regional variations in risk patterns.

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