The Effect of Relational Distance on Women’s Willingness to Seek Legal Help for Intimate Partner Violence

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ABSTRACT

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Female victims of intimate partner violence are not likely to seek legal help for their victimization despite legislative changes that were implemented to recognize this crime as a serious public issue. Various factors, such as persisting patriarchal ideologies and the victim-offender relationship, keep victims silent and reluctant to seek help from police and prosecutors. This is problematic since reporting rates of intimate partner violence remain low and victim cooperation is necessary for successful prosecution. Based on data from a small, Ontario city, bivariate and multivariate analyses revealed that the victim’s relationship to the offender was significantly associated with legal help-seeking. Specifically, women in intact relationships were less likely than women in estranged relationships to seek legal help, illustrating the philosophical idea that a public/private dichotomy still exists. Additionally, victims were not likely to cooperate with the prosecution if someone else reported their victimization. Implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research are discussed.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The relationship between a victim and an offender has traditionally been a major factor affecting legal help-seeking since the degree of intimacy between two people often predicts how much law is accessed and applied (Black, 1976). This current study will investigate the association between the victim-offender relationship and legal help-seeking to observe whether the degree of intimacy in a relationship reduces the likelihood that victims will make their victimization officially known. Two key legal help-seeking strategies available to victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) are contacting the police when violence occurs and cooperating with the prosecution if charges are laid. In this chapter, I discuss why contacting the police and cooperating with the prosecution within the context of IPV warrants additional research. Theories that have been used to understand and explain legal help-seeking are also discussed. Next, policy and legislative changes regarding the criminal justice system’s response to IPV are discussed, as well as how these legislative changes have affected subsequent help-seeking by victims. Finally, the details of this current study are outlined, followed by an overview of each chapter.

High rates of underreporting IPV to the police is an indication that research is needed to investigate why victims do not report so that actors in the criminal justice system, and policy makers, can encourage legal help-seeking (Kaukinen, 2004). IPV cases make up only a small proportion of all crimes that are actually reported to the police (Akers & Kaukinen, 2009). For instance, 97,451 of the 1,984,790 crimes reported in Canada in 2011 were cases of IPV (Perreault, 2013; Sinha, 2013b). Therefore, IPV only accounted for about five percent of all crimes reported to the police in that year.
Cooperating with the prosecution is another legal help-seeking strategy available to victims of IPV if charges result from their initial contact with the police (Liang, Goodman, Tummala-Narra, Weintraub, 2005). One goal of the Winnipeg Family Violence Court – the first specialized domestic court to be implemented in Canada – is to increase victim cooperation and reduce case attrition. Ursel (1995) interviewed prosecutors from this court who explained low rates of prosecution by highlighting that victims often change their minds about pressing charges or choose not to cooperate as witnesses for the prosecution. This is seen as problematic because victim cooperation with prosecutors in cases of IPV remains one of the key factors associated with the likelihood of prosecution (Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001; Hare, 2004; Patterson, 2011). For example, Dawson and Dinovitzer (2001) examined prosecution rates in a specialized domestic violence court and found that prosecutors were seven times more likely to pursue charges when the victim cooperated. This finding illustrates the importance of victim cooperation with the prosecution and why research on the topic is important – the results might have significant implications that might encourage victims to reach out and increases the likelihood of having the accused charged and prosecuted, thereby helping victims end the violence in their lives.

Several theoretical perspectives have been used to explain why, and when, victims will seek legal-help. For example, feminist theories suggest that victims of IPV are not likely to contact the police because victims recognize that police are unwilling to get involved and make arrests due to a patriarchal system that traditionally overlooked and ignored violence between intimate partners (Kaukinen, 2004). This non-response is a result of the contention that issues between intimate partners should remain private
without outside interference. Additionally, feminist theories suggest that victims of IPV are not likely to cooperate with the prosecution because patriarchy keeps women economically dependent on men and unable to support themselves if their abuser is convicted (Barrett & St. Pierre, 2011; Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1984; Kaukinen, Meyer & Akers, 2012; Tracy, 2007). The behaviour of law theory focuses on how law behaves rather than an individual’s behaviour and motivations (Black, 1976). Thus, a victim’s decision to seek legal help represents an increase in the quantity of law with various social structural characteristics, such as the victim-offender relationship, determining when, how much, and what style of law is likely to be used (Black, 1976).

**Legislative Reform and Legal Help-seeking**

By the 1870s, the topic of IPV in Canada started to gradually shift from being solely a personal issue to be dealt with in the confines of the home to also being a matter of public discussion (McLean, 2002). This shift was a result of the temperance movement in which the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, feminist advocates, and abused women lobbied to ensure women’s rights and women’s safety (McLean, 2002). Persistent lobbying and protesting resulted in various legislative and social changes that addressed IPV. For example, in 1869, the Chief Inspector of Ontario Jails recommended that men who abuse their wives should receive sentences that involve hard labour (McLean, 2002). Additionally, the Chief Inspector also proposed harsh punishments for recidivist abusers. Furthermore, beginning in the 1870s, Police Court Magistrates began to routinely issue fines, jail time, or both to men who abused their wives, which marked a significant change from protecting men to now punishing them (McLean, 2002). These efforts aimed at combatting IPV, specifically violence against one’s wife at that time, resulted in
legislative reform that addressed women’s rights. For instance, legislation\(^1\) that recognized wife abuse as a crime separate from common assault was implemented in 1909 (McLean, 2002). This change recognized the importance of highlighting IPV and treating it as an issue that warranted special attention.

Over the years, the feminist movement worked to ensure that political and social changes were made to address IPV (Lee, 2007; Siegal, 1996). Since 1909, legislative changes were made and an increasing number of services that recognized the seriousness of IPV were implemented. For example, shelters for abused women and their children were first opened in the mid-1970s as an option for women who wanted to leave the private sphere (Statistics Canada, 2006). However, the criminal justice response to IPV was still inadequate and insufficient despite decades of legal and social changes that are beyond the scope of this current study. Therefore, mandatory arrest laws were enacted in the 1980s (in part the result of the feminist movement focusing on this issue) due to apathetic police who were uninterested in, and indifferent to, IPV (Epstein, 1999).

However, mandatory arrests were not a sufficient public response to combating IPV since prosecutors were also passive and uninterested when dealing with IPV (Epstein, 1999). Prosecutors rarely pressed charges or followed through with IPV cases despite an increase in arrests and an increase in the number of victims involved with the justice system (Bell & Goodman, 2001). Traditional policies allowed victims to freely drop charges against their abuser at any time. Victims had this power since the likelihood of a conviction was smaller without their cooperation and testimony (Epstein, 1999). Thus, it was difficult to convict an abuser if a victim was not willing to cooperate. Prosecutors would attempt to differentiate between victims who genuinely wanted to

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\(^1\) Statutes of Canada, 8.9 Edward VII, chap. 9, sec. 292 (1909).
drop charges and victims who were coerced by their abuser to drop charges. However, trying to determine which victims sincerely wanted charges dropped versus which victims were forced to drop charges was difficult, and potentially dangerous (i.e., a victim who was forced by her abuser to drop charges might face more severe abuse if she decided to let the case proceed). Thus, prosecutors adopted a uniform approach and charges were dropped in nearly every case, which meant abusive partners were not being convicted and punished (Epstein, 1999). As a result, no-drop policies were established in the early 1980s so that IPV cases proceeded regardless of a victim’s wishes (if enough evidence existed to prove criminal conduct). This policy change contributed to the contention that IPV should be viewed as a public problem since criminal justice actors are now obliged to treat each case seriously rather than leaving victims to deal with the abuse privately\(^2\).

Nevertheless, criminal justice initiatives put forth to address IPV remain largely ineffective – one reason being that the rate of legal help-seeking by victims still remains low. Initially, between 1993 and 1999, there was an increase in the percentage of women who reported spousal violence to the police (Statistics Canada, 2006). This early upward trend was attributed to social changes and government and community interventions implemented to address IPV, such as the mandatory arrest and pro-charge policies (Statistics Canada, 2006). However, the rate of reporting eventually began to decrease and continues to remain low. For example, the percentage of women who reported experiencing spousal violence went from eight percent in 1999 to six percent in 2009.

\(^2\) This approach, however, might have some unintended consequences since it does not take into consideration the unique circumstances of each victim. For example, victims might be left financially disadvantaged without the economic support of their abuser, or they might suffer emotionally and psychologically from the social stigma associated with IPV (Ragusa, 2012).
(Perreault, 2013). Some reasons that victims still remain reluctant to seek legal help include: economic dependency (Kaukinen, 2002a; Kaukinen et al., 2012); the presence of children (Hare, 2010); and a history of violence (Bachman & Coker, 1995). Another important factor is that victims might believe failure, shame, and embarrassment are associated with IPV and legal intervention, so they might decide to keep the victimization private and away from public criticism (Gartner & Macmillan, 1995; Ragusa, 2012).

Furthermore, some women believe that the criminal justice system is unhelpful and ineffective in responding to their victimization (Zoellner, Feeny, Alvarez, Watlington, O’Neill, & Zager, 2000). Therefore, victims often attempt to resolve the issue or stop the violence on their own rather than seeking legal help since: 1) they view IPV as a personal matter that should not involve outside influence (Kaukinen, 2002b) or 2) they do not believe that seeking help from the criminal justice system will be beneficial or successful in ending their victimization (Bailey, 2013). Due to issues such as dual-arrest³ and victim-blaming, some women would rather avoid contact with the criminal justice system despite legislation created to address the indifference of police and prosecutors (Bailey, 2013).

This Current Study

Drawing from the above, the overall purpose of this study is to investigate what factors determine whether or not a female victim of IPV will seek legal help from police and prosecutors. Specifically, this study will investigate the effect of relationship state and status – measures of relational distance – on legal help-seeking. Wright and

³ Dual-arrest occurs when both the victim and abuser are arrested for the incident. Dual-arrest was not examined in this current study since one of the outcome variables is cooperation with the prosecution – it would be difficult to adequately examine this legal help-seeking method if both parties were facing charges.
Johnson’s (2009) research found that individual demographic factors, such as race/ethnicity and employment status, were not predictive of a victim’s use of the criminal justice system. Wright and Johnson (2009) then concluded that the focus of research investigating IPV should emphasize relational factors rather than individual factors.

The victim-offender relationship was found to be a significant factor affecting legal help-seeking decisions (Kaukinen, 2004). Generally, it is hypothesized that the criminal justice system is not likely to hear about, or respond to, violence the more intimate the relationship between the victim and offender (Gartner & Macmillan, 1995). Prior research has described relationship state as generally capturing whether the victim and offender are intact or estranged (Dawson & Gartner, 1998; Johnson & Hotton, 2003). Relationship status measures whether the victim and offender are legally married, living common-law, dating, or separated/divorced (Dawson & Gartner, 1998; Johnson & Hotton, 2003). The research questions investigated in this study are:

1) Do relationship state and status play a role in whether a female victim of IPV will contact the police?

2) Do relationship state and status play a role in whether a female victim of IPV will cooperate with the prosecution?

a) Does the identity of the person who contacted the police (i.e., the female victim or another individual) play a role in whether a female victim of IPV will cooperate with the prosecution?

b) Do relationship state/status and who initiated contact with the police have a combined effect on cooperation with the prosecution?
Despite the importance of this topic, little research has investigated the role of relationship state and relationship status on a victim’s likelihood of contacting police or cooperating with the prosecution. Further, there is a dearth of research that has examined the effect of who contacted the police on the likelihood of prosecution. This factor is important to study since female victims are usually unwilling to initiate contact with the police (Kaukinen, 2004). If victims are unwilling to contact the police then they are usually also unwilling to cooperate with the prosecution. Therefore, research should be conducted to examine whether female victims would be willing to cooperate with the prosecution if someone else contacts the police on their behalf and encourages them to seek further legal help. Additionally, the combined effect of the victim-offender relationship and who contacts the police also lacks prior investigation. Thus, this study will investigate whether, for example, a female victim who is married to her abuser and who reported the incident herself is more, or less, likely to cooperate with the prosecution compared to a married female victim who did not report the incident herself. This research will contribute to the criminological and sociological literatures, specifically the help-seeking literature, by examining further explanations as to why some female victims may or may not seek legal help. Once there is a comprehensive understanding of what factors inhibit some female victims from seeking legal help, more informed public policy initiatives can be taken to remedy this response.

Chapter Overview

Chapter Two integrates relevant theoretical perspectives and help-seeking literature. First, an in-depth discussion on the theories used to guide this study is presented. The radical feminist perspective, as it relates to Locke’s (1988) conception of
a public/private dichotomy, is discussed. This current study presents the idea that patriarchy is the primary cause of women’s abuse and the reason they might remain silent in the private sphere. In addition, Black’s (1976) theory of the behaviour of law is used to explain the association between relational distance (i.e., relationship state and status) and legal help-seeking. Furthermore, Black’s (1976) theory and how it relates to the public/private dichotomy provides another explanation as to why female victims of IPV remain within the private sphere. This chapter also provides a comprehensive review of the help-seeking literature as it relates to relationship state and status (the focal variables of this study) and other various factors that discourage or encourage legal help-seeking examined in past studies. Finally, the hypotheses of this study are presented.

Chapter Three describes the methodology used in this study including the research design, the sample, the dependent, independent and control variables, and the analytical procedures. Chapter Four presents the results of the quantitative analyses. First, the bivariate results of contacting the police are presented to illustrate the effect of each independent variable on this outcome variable. Next, the multivariate results from binary logistic regressions are presented illustrating the combined effect of the independent and control variables on contacting the police. Finally, the bivariate and multivariate results are presented for cooperation with the prosecution.

Chapter Five provides an in-depth discussion of the findings as they relate to the theoretical frameworks, past research studies, and hypotheses examined. Implications stemming from the results of this study, limitations, and suggestions for future research are also discussed.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Introduction

Various theoretical frameworks within psychology, sociology, criminology, and philosophy can be, and have been, used to help explain IPV and help-seeking. For the purpose of this study, a female victim’s decision to not seek legal help for IPV will be explained, in part, by first referring to Locke’s (1988) philosophical public/private dichotomy. This chapter discusses the public/private dichotomy as well as two complimentary theoretical perspectives, from sociology and criminology, used to investigate a female victim’s likelihood of entering the public sphere to seek legal help from criminal justice actors. IPV is arguably a global, social problem that requires social and political solutions in order to help alleviate, or end, the violence faced by many women (Barrett & St. Pierre, 2011; Johnson, 2010; Ragusa, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2006; Tracy, 2007); therefore, sociology and criminology are the most appropriate frameworks for this current study.

First, the radical feminist perspective (Hanisch, 1970) is used to explain how a history of patriarchy has resulted in, and continues to maintain, different gender roles that keep female victims of IPV dependent on their abusers and silent about their victimization – maintaining the public/private dichotomy. Second, Black’s (1976) theory of the behaviour of law is used to explain and predict how the presence of law varies based on relationship types, also highlighting the public/private dichotomy. A review of relevant literature related to these theories and their ability to explain help-seeking behaviour by IPV victims is also discussed in this chapter. Literature examining why relationship state and status are important variables warranting further research is
discussed. Furthermore, literature examining other factors that inhibit and encourage legal help-seeking is also discussed. Various factors can be used to explain why a female may or may not seek legal help; thus, control variables are included and discussed to determine the independent effect of the focus variables (i.e., relationship state/status and who contacted the police) on the outcome. This will increase the validity of the study and confidence in how much relationship state/status and who contacted the police independently affect legal help-seeking. Finally, the hypotheses of this study are presented.

**The Public/Private Dichotomy**

Generally, the public/private dichotomy refers to both the literal and figurative separation of the private sphere (i.e., one’s home) from the public sphere (i.e., the greater community). Separate powers and rules exist within each sphere and there is very little interference or interaction between the two spaces. Locke (1988) explains that a ‘society’ can exist in a variety of ways when a political authority is established. The most common society, according to Locke (1988), is patriarchal when a family begins to take on the structure of a political society (i.e., a hierarchy is established and one party submits to the rule and decisions of the other) and the husband represents the head.

Historically, violence against women in North America, specifically in Canada, has been viewed as a private matter for several reasons. First, it frequently took place in the private sphere away from public knowledge and attention (Youngs, 2003). Therefore, the violence was considered the private affair of the couple. Second, even if a man attacked a woman within the public sphere, the private patriarchal power that he held may have kept others from interfering if it was perceived that he was her intimate partner.
Traditionally, Canadian law and societal ideologies did not regard violence that occurred between intimates as seriously as violence that occurred between non-intimates – illustrating the power a man had over a woman in their private relationship (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni & Rice, 2007). So, due to patriarchal systems, the power of authority that the male abuser held within the home kept him away from accountability and punishment (Youngs, 2003). Historically, judicial doctrine allowed men to physically control their wives as a means of exercising their legitimate authority within the home (McLean, 2002). Thus, legal authorities rarely learned about violence within the home since women were apprehensive to report such incidents and, when they did report the violence, or if it became known, the state was reluctant to intervene in what were perceived as private family matters (McLean, 2002).

Although violence against women began to become recognized as a public offence through institutional change and public legislation, many female victims still kept the issue within the confines of the home. Legislation that recognized wife-beating – the term used to refer to this phenomenon at the time – as a serious crime came into effect in Canada and the United States in 1909 and 1920, respectively. However, many may argue that the topic is still viewed as a private matter and victims continue to seek help only rarely (Bailey, 2010; McLean, 2002). Data from the Canadian Uniform Crime Reporting Survey in 2012 revealed that, generally, people are not likely to report their victimization to police (Perreault, 2013). The data show that the rate of crimes that are reported to police has declined since peaking in 1991 (Perreault, 2013). With regards to IPV, Statistics Canada reports that examine statistical trends in violence against women show that the majority of IPV victims do not report episodes of violence to the police (Statistics
Canda, 2006; Sinha, 2013a). This is relevant to the current study because it illustrates that, overall, IPV victims are not seeking legal help. The General Social Survey (GSS) also found a decline in the percentage of women who reported spousal violence between 1999 and 2009 (Statistics Canada, 2013) – illustrating a continued reluctance to seek legal help. These statistics demonstrate the importance of research to determine what contributes to the continued reluctance to seek help for one’s violent victimization, which has historically been attributed to, and influenced by, fear, dependency, and the traditional assumption that the state should play a minimal role in regulating matters within the family unit.

The public/private dichotomy can be used to explain the relations between various institutions (e.g. church/religion, school/education, and bank/economy) but feminist literature focuses on the one explanation that Locke (1988) argues is the most common – that between a family and the state (Boyd, 1997). That is, the most common understanding of the public/private dichotomy is, as mentioned, the literal and figurative separation of the home from the community. Male dominance in various public institutions faced much criticism from radical feminists in the late 1960s and early 1970s and what distinguishes radical feminists from earlier feminists (Fuller, 1843; Wollstonecraft, 1792) is their challenge to the private sphere as well. That is, radical feminists also criticize the private institutions of marriage, the family, and sexuality (Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1984). These criticisms stemmed from the contention that intimacy is potentially lethal to women and a contemporary ‘war’ is being fought within the private, domestic sphere (Tracy, 2007; Fineman & Mykitiuk, 1994). These institutions were criticized because patriarchy within the confines of the home resulted in
men imposing their power on women, which ultimately led to violence against women (Tracy, 2007). The family’s institutionalization of male power and authority is a result of traditional responses to IPV in which the criminal justice system did not handle the issue seriously (Barry, 1979). Husbands believed that it was acceptable to use violence as a means of asserting their power and authority over their wives since the criminal justice system did not formally punish these men. The criminal justice system’s lack of response to IPV meant that abuse was viewed as conventional within the family unit and it became normal practice for a man to demonstrate his authority in a violent manner.

Traditionally, men have been the sole financial providers within families, with women contributing to the family’s wellbeing through domestic work and child-rearing (Kaukinen, Meyer & Akers, 2012). His economic power and contribution to the family’s social and financial status defines a man’s position within the family power structure as breadwinner and head of the household (Kaukinen et al., 2012). Since the man makes the money, this illustrates a power imbalance within the family institution. This power imbalance then results in gender domination since the breadwinner would also control the money. This is dangerous for women because a lack of economic power often leaves them with fewer resources when experiencing and responding to IPV – women who are dependent on male partners for their economic wellbeing are less able to leave and end violent relationships (Barrett & St. Pierre, 2011; Kaukinen et al., 2012). However, not all homes or marriages are violent. Feminists argue that those with all the power in a patriarchal society (i.e., men) only resort to violence when their position of dominance is threatened (Tracy, 2007). Thus, violence is used as a systematic attempt to maintain dominance and control within the home. Barry (1979) emphasizes that across time and
culture a man’s home has been considered his castle. Whether it is a tribal hut, a rural
cottage, or a city apartment, each man’s home is his private sanctuary in which he has
power and strives to maintain that power.

The radical feminist perspective differs from other feminist perspectives in
several ways; however, both radical and Marxist feminists address the public/private
dichotomy as being a cause of oppression. Traditional Marxist feminists argue that
women’s oppression is a result of the physical separation of the household space from the
public space, which then results in a class system and inequality due to the woman’s lack
of economic resources (Hayden, 1981; Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1984). Special legal
privileges held by the bourgeois (a term used by Marxist feminists to describe a group
characterized by economic power) in the industrial, public world maintained oppression
of the proletariat (a term to describe a group characterized by economic oppression) and
inequality between the classes (Engels, 1942). Drawing from this, feminists argue that the
man is the bourgeois and the woman represents the proletariat within the context of the
family. This gives men a position of supremacy without any special requirements needed
to identify their power since it is known that the husband is traditionally obliged to earn a
living and support his family – whoever makes the money also controls the home.

Hanisch’s (1970) phrase “the personal is political” was an attempt to deconstruct
the notion that the home should remain personal and private. Specifically regarding IPV,
the feminist perspective considers it a social and a criminal problem rather than an
individual and family problem (Akers & Kaukinen, 2009). Feminists argue that many of
the problems faced by women, including violence, are caused by social, and political
factors (McPhail et al., 2007). As a result, change and action regarding women’s issues
must come from the policy level within the public sphere – demonstrating why ‘the personal is political’. Overall, feminists argue that one solution to IPV is for female victims to leave the private sphere and seek legal help within the public sphere, and for those within the public sphere to take necessary action against abusers within the private sphere.

The above discussion of the public/private dichotomy illustrates that freedom from the private sphere is necessary to overcome oppression; however, although individual liberty is the goal of feminism, Barry (1979) argues that the means of getting there is equally important because that is the basis for the type of society that is to be created. For instance, Barry (1979) argues that liberty loses its value and meaning when women are not able to independently change their situation. Women voluntarily contacting the police and cooperating with the prosecution to end their violence, for example, is more impactful than the violence ending in other ways (e.g. if someone else reports the victimization or if the woman is pressured into cooperating with the prosecution and leaving the relationship) since this gives women the freedom and autonomy to change their situations. The radical feminist model recognizes the strength, resilience, and agency that all women possess – specifically female victims of IPV – and strives towards the goals of female empowerment and self-determination (McPhail et al., 2007). Independently seeking formal, legal support has even been observed to be a step toward self-empowerment (Ragusa, 2012).

However, feminists recognize how difficult self-empowerment is given the current social situation with social and economic structures in place that perpetuate and maintain gender inequality. A binary sex/gender system in which males and females are
placed within a hierarchy still exists despite social progression (Grant, 2006). Patriarchal ideologies and assumptions sustain the belief that women are subordinate to men (Tracy, 2007). This makes it very difficult for women to take control of their lives and overcome IPV since patriarchy is seen as an overarching social construct that continues to keep them subordinated. There is a strong link that exists between patriarchy and abuse; thus, patriarchal beliefs and principles must first be addressed and overcome in order to combat IPV (Tracy, 2007). However, a contention exists that wives who attempt to take control of their own lives violate their subordinate position and deserve further abuse since they dishonour their husbands and partners (Tracy, 2007).

One reason IPV remains so prevalent is because of private matters not becoming publically known due to patriarchal ideologies. Politicizing what is considered personal and private is necessary for women to combat the effects of patriarchy (Lee, 2007). One way to politicize IPV is by seeking help outside of the home and involving the criminal justice system through arrest and prosecution of the abuser. Female victims should be encouraged to view their relationship as being built on power – in which the appropriate response is resistance rather than attachment (Lee, 2007). Only then, feminists argue, can patriarchal emancipation occur. Feminist theories help in understanding why IPV exists, Locke’s (1988) discussion on the public/private dichotomy helps in understanding why female victims do not seek legal help, and feminist theories then argue why it is important that they do seek help outside of the home. The following section discusses the other major theoretical framework guiding this study – Black’s (1976) theory of the behaviour of law. The association between Black’s (1976) theory and Locke’s (1988)
public/private dichotomy is discussed, as well as how the theory is used to predict legal help-seeking based on the victim-offender relationship.

**Behaviour of Law**

Drawing from Locke’s (1988) idea of a public/private dichotomy and from radical feminist theories explaining how patriarchy helps to maintain this dichotomy, it can be argued that the law behaves differently within the public versus private sphere. By definition, law is one kind of social control that increases and decreases based on the context, or sphere, in which it is applied (Black, 1976). Therefore, the amount of law present will differ between the private sphere and the public sphere. For example, formal law is absent within the private sphere unless a victim enters the public sphere to seek arrest and prosecution for her abuser. Within the public sphere, an arrest would be considered more law than no arrest, and an arrest with prosecution would be considered more law than an arrest alone, and so on.

Black’s (1976) theory of the behaviour of law remains a key sociological theory of law that explains and predicts the quantity and style of law in various settings (Akers & Kaukinen, 2009; Felson, Messner, Hoskin, & Deane, 2002; Gartner & Macmillan, 1995; Kaukinen, 2002; Dawson, 2006). Furthermore, this theory is used to predict and explain what various legal actors do. For Black (1976), legal actors are those who are involved in various aspects and stages of the criminal justice process – all influencing the amount of law. For example, legal actors include the police who make arrests, and prosecutors who file charges and prove guilt. The main focus of this study is victims as legal actors who may or may not call the police or cooperate with the prosecution. Black’s (1976) theory posits that various social characteristics of these legal actors,
including victims, can be used to explain their actions. Specifically, for this proposed study, the relational distance between the victim and offender can predict and explain the amount of law accessed, as outlined below.

*Morphology*

One main aspect of Black’s (1976) theory will be applied to this study – morphology of law. One characteristic of morphology is that people vary in the degree to which they participate in one another’s lives – this is considered their degree of intimacy, or relational distance (Black, 1976). Relational distance can be measured according to the scope (i.e., the seriousness), the frequency (i.e., how often), and the length of interaction between the individuals involved. In addition, the age or length of the relationship, the nature of the relationship, and how many people they know in common also affects the relational distance between two individuals. As Black (1976) argues, the relationship between relational distance and law is curvilinear: when the relational distance between the individuals is low (e.g. family members) the amount of law used would also be low, and as the relational distance increases (e.g. from friends, to acquaintances, to strangers), the amount of law used would also increase (Black, 1976). Law reaches its highest level among strangers. However, the amount of law used begins to decline as the relational distance continues to increase beyond strangers and the individuals live in entirely separate worlds, such as those of different cultures, tribes, or nations (Black, 1976).

Morphology demonstrates that different levels of intimacy result in various amounts of law. This aspect of Black’s (1976) theory relates to the idea of a public/private dichotomy since relationships that are more private (e.g. marriages within the home) have typically been shown to result in less criminal justice involvement during
an episode of IPV (Akers & Kaukinen, 2009; Kaukinen, 2002a; McLeod, 1983). However, as relationships become more public (e.g. a divorced couple no longer living together), an episode of IPV may result in greater involvement from the criminal justice system. Black (1976) argues that, although law may be absent among intimates, it will increase if or when that relationship is severed – so as relationships change over time, the formal social controls in that relationship will change as well. This not only relates to how much law is applied by the criminal justice system, but also relates to how much law a victim of IPV will seek. Thus, the criminal justice system will judge an abusive man more harshly when he is divorced compared to when he was married. Similarly, a female victim is more likely to have her abuser formally punished when they become divorced compared to when they were married.

The behaviour of law also changes depending on how long a couple has been together, or apart (Black, 1976). For instance, the length of a couple’s marriage would determine how much law is accessed by the victim and applied by the criminal justice system. Similarly, the length of a couple’s separation or divorce also determines how much law is accessed and applied. The length of a relationship is a measure of intimacy such that longer relationships would be considered more intimate than shorter relationships (Black, 1976). Therefore, law is less likely to be accessed and applied in longer relationships compared to shorter relationships. Conversely, law is more likely to be applied the longer a couple has been separated.

As illustrated, law rarely ever enters the private sanctuaries of intimacy and, in many ways, intimacy provides a sense of protection or freedom from law (Black, 1976). Although this is less true today than it was in the past, intimate partners still prefer to
keep the amount of law used for IPV to a minimum. Despite mandatory arrests and pro-charge policies designed and implemented to counter the contention that IPV is a private affair, some women legitimately remain unwilling to cooperate with criminal justice actors or use the law in their case (Brown, 2000). Although the police are obliged to arrest and charge the offender when victims do contact the police, a victim might later refuse to cooperate with the investigation of the case, lie to criminal justice authorities, or hide the offender, which decreases the likelihood of successful prosecution. A victim might do this in an attempt to shield the offender from the law or to protect herself and her children from poverty if she is emotionally and financially dependent on her abuser (Black, 1976).

Within morphology, another concept of Black’s (1976) theory that is pertinent to this study is that of radial location. Radial location is based on how much a person participates in social life, including various social functions such as recreation, reproduction, sociability, and production (Black, 1976). Someone who is considered to have more radial location would be fully integrated into different aspects of social life and someone who is considered to have less radial location would not be involved at all. Marital status might affect radial location, which in turn might affect a woman’s willingness to seek legal help. For example, in a sample of IPV victims, Gelles (1976) found that separated and divorced women were more likely to be employed (i.e., integrated into society) than were married women; and the divorced women were also more likely to seek legal help than were married women. Persisting patriarchal ideologies might leave a married woman isolated within the home with little financial resources and economic supports, which keeps her from easily escaping her victimization (Kaukinen et
Despite changing social trends, many couples remain in traditional relationship roles in which the male is the sole, or primary, contributor to the household income (Kaukinen et al., 2012). This illustrates that being married might increase a woman’s vulnerability to being less integrated into society and more economically dependent compared to a divorced/separated woman, which hinders her ability to seek legal help.

**Literature Review**

The following section is a review of prior research that has examined the effects of relationship state and status on legal help-seeking by IPV victims. Literature that has examined why female victims are not willing to contact the police themselves is also discussed. Finally, factors that may be related to, or confound, the relationship between these variables and the outcome variables are also discussed.

*Relationship State and Status*

Relationship state and status are variables that warrant further investigation when examining help-seeking for IPV. Shannon, Cole, and Logan (2007) argue that with a significant change in relationship trends (i.e., an increase in cohabitation and a decrease in marriage), it is important to understand IPV in different types of relationships. Canadian statistics demonstrate this trend with the national marriage rate consistently declining from 7.7 in 1981 to 4.4 in 2008\(^4\) (Milan, 2013). A similar trend has been identified in the United States – the percentage of women who reported getting married for the first time decreased from 44 percent in 1982 to 36 percent between 2006 and 2010 (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012). Furthermore, the percentage of women who reported cohabiting increased from 3 percent in 1982 to 11 percent between 2006 and 2010 (Copen et al., 2012). Therefore, research should be conducted to determine what

\(^4\) Rate per 1000.
social and political adjustments need to be made to address IPV in different relationship categories since there are changing relationship trends.

The social relationship between an offender and a victim is an important determinant as to whether the police will be contacted when an assault occurs (Felson, Messner, & Hoskin, 1999). Specifically, incidents of IPV that involve closer intimate partners (i.e., intact couples versus estranged couples, married couples versus dating couples) were observed as being largely hidden from police (Gartner & Macmillan, 1995; Felson et al., 1999; Felson, Messner, Hoskin, & Deane, 2002; Felson & Paré, 2005; Akers & Kaukinen, 2009). Akers and Kaukinen (2009) found that married women were the least likely to contact the police compared to women in other intimate relationships, such as common-law and dating, because married women had stronger emotional and financial ties to their abuser causing them to feel trapped. On the other hand, victims were more likely to call the police when the abuser was their ex-spouse (Felson et al., 1999). This supports Black’s (1976) theory that law is less likely to be accessed in cases where the relational distance between two people is low, and more likely to be accessed in cases where the relational distance is greater.

However, Meyer’s (2010) results contradicted results found in other research (Gartner & Macmillan, 1995; Felson et al., 1999; Felson et al., 2002; Felson & Paré, 2005; Akers & Kaukinen, 2009). Meyer (2010) found that married women were more likely to seek formal avenues of support (e.g. seeking help from law enforcement), compared to women in other relationship categories. However, formal help-seeking was observed in conjunction with informal help-seeking (Meyer, 2010). Thus, informal supports may have played a role in the victim’s formal help-seeking behaviour, which
would then confound any effect between relational distance and legal help-seeking. In addition, married women were only compared to dating women, so conclusions cannot be made regarding relationship state (i.e., intact versus estranged). Meyer (2010) reasoned that married women may be more likely to seek legal help compared to dating women since the latter relationship type lacks a legal commitment and is easier to sever.

With respect to cooperating with the prosecution, results from prior research have been mixed. Dinovitzer and Dawson (2007) examined the effect of relationship state on the outcome of a case and found that the victim-offender relationship was not significantly related to whether or not an offender was charged and sentenced unless the victim sustained a serious injury. Thus, an offender was more likely to face charges if the relationship was intact and the victim was seriously injured. Victim cooperation was included as a control variable but did not have a significant effect on the independent and dependent variables. Dawson and Dinovitzer (2001) examined relationship status on a victim’s likelihood of cooperation and found that these variables were not significantly related. Similarly, McLeod (1983) also examined relationship status on a victim’s likelihood of cooperation at four different points in the criminal justice process: police intervention, signing a formal complaint, at the prosecutor’s office filing a charge, and the preliminary hearing. The relationship status of the couple was found to have a significant effect on a victim’s participation during all four stages. Specifically, victims who were separated or divorced were more likely to cooperate with the prosecution than were victims in other relationship categories. Similar to Akers and Kaukinen (2009), McLeod (1983) reasoned that separated and divorced women were more willing to
cooperate with the prosecution because they had fewer emotional or economic dependencies on their abuser.

This section discussed literature that has examined the effect of the focal independent variable (i.e., relational distance) on legal help-seeking. The following section will discuss literature relating to the other independent variable examined in this study – contacting the police. Specifically, the following section will examine several unintended consequences that exist when a victim uses this legal help-seeking method. These factors play an important role in explaining why female victims are hesitant to contact the police themselves. Next, the association between contacting the police and cooperation with the prosecution is discussed to examine whether the identity of the person who reports the incident affects victims’ cooperation with prosecutors.

Contacting the Police

Some victims believe that involving the criminal justice system does more harm than good, so they refrain from contacting the police. When female victims make the decision to seek legal help, subsequent responses from the criminal justice system often disregard the needs of the victim with mandatory arrests, charges, and prosecution forcing engagement that results in negative consequences for her (Epstein, 1999; McPhail et al., 2007). Female victims are discouraged from reporting due to police being more legalistic and insensitive to the specific needs of IPV victims as a result of mandatory arrest policies (Ragusa, 2012). Mandatory arrest policies give police no option but to adhere to the law by arresting the accused in IPV cases. As a result, police are not able to assess each situation differently and make a decision based on the needs of the victim or her specific circumstances (Ragusa, 2012). Therefore, the police are considered more
legalistic than they were in the past, which may discourage some victims from reporting
crime since the outcome of their call is pre-determined (i.e., an arrest will be made).
Oftentimes, female victims might only contact police if she is seeking temporary
separation (i.e., wanting to teach the abuser a lesson, wanting ‘some peace and quiet’ at
that moment, or just wanting the police to calm the abuser down) rather than permanent
prosecution (Ellsberg, Winkvist, Pena & Stenlund, 2001; Hirschel & Hutchinson, 2003;
Hoyle & Sanders, 2000). Therefore, mandatory arrests and pro-charge policies may go
against the true desires of the victim if she is only seeking temporary separation.
Furthermore, female victims who are only seeking temporary separation are
reluctant to assist in the criminal prosecution of an abusive partner despite wanting the
abuse to end; therefore, no-drop policies are another reason they might refrain from
contacting the police. Immediate action that occurs as a result of mandatory arrest
policies might not take into consideration various factors, some of which include: 1) the
possibility of retaliation from her abuser 2) cultural or religious ideologies about breaking
up a family and 3) economic dependency (Epstein, 1999).
Social stigma is another unintended consequences that occurs when female
victims seek legal help. Ragusa (2012) found that her sample of IPV victims were
discouraged from contacting the police because of the shame associated with being a
victim of abuse. Victims perceived a lack of privacy when information was shared as
their case was being processed by numerous individuals, and also in settings (e.g. police
stations) where others were able to overhear a victim discuss the details of her case
(Ragusa, 2012) – this resulted in shame and embarrassment. Jaggar and Rothenberg
(1984) argue that a female victim may feel ashamed or disgraced if, or when, the public
were to learn about the violence in her home; thus, she remains silent and isolated instead. Shame and disgrace were also found to affect female victims who were economically independent and had the financial resources to leave an abusive relationship (Kaukinen et al., 2012). These independent women feared the consequences to her employment and economic standing; thus, this caused her to remain silent about the abuse.

Finally, being blamed and held responsible for the violence is another unintentional consequence. Frontline workers in the violence against women movement (e.g. women’s shelter or IPV call-centre workers) suggest that victims remain in isolation if they are afraid of being blamed for the abuse (McPhail et al., 2007). This can be seen in the way that mandatory arrest laws have resulted in more women being arrested along with their abuser – a dual-arrest practice (Chesney-Lind, 2002; Miller, 2014).

Furthermore, involving the criminal justice system results in further isolation and guilt if a female victim initially believes that she deserves the abuse and legitimately believes that she is to blame (McPhail et al., 2007). If a female believes that she is responsible for her abuse and then believes that she is responsible for the abuser’s punishment, this might result in shame that may lead to further isolation (McPhail et al., 2007).

Taken together, women may reason that it is better to remain silent in the private sphere rather than face the consequences of seeking legal help – too little action and too much action from the criminal justice system both have negative consequences for female victims (Chesney-Lind, 2002; Epstein, 1999; McPhail et al., 2007). Feminists argue that it is overly simplistic and harmful to think forced engagement is the same as an effective public response (Boyd, 1997). While it is necessary to seek public solutions in order to
challenge traditional ideologies of male entitlement and privilege, the aggression and force of the criminal justice system deters female victims from actually leaving the private sphere (McPhail et al., 2007). In addition, the state represents patriarchal domination which female victims are seeking to overcome and this adds to their reluctance in seeking outside help (Bailey, 2010).

It is important to investigate why a female victim might be reluctant to initiate contact with the police because those reasons might subsequently affect further legal help-seeking, such as cooperation with the prosecution. Research should be conducted to determine whether a female victim will be more or less likely to cooperate with the prosecution if she contacts the police herself, compared to cases in which someone else reported the victimization, since victim cooperation is necessary for successful prosecution (Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001; Goodman, 1999; Ursel, 1995). However, overall, victims of IPV are less likely to personally report their experiences of violence to the police than are victims of other crimes (Kaukinen, 2004). Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the majority of female victims who do call the police themselves are only seeking temporary separation rather than permanent prosecution (Ellsberg et al., 2001; Gillis, 2006; Hoyle & Sanders, 2000; Hirschel & Hutchinson, 2003). Two primary reasons female victims may choose not to cooperate with the prosecution after personally initiating contact with the police are because: 1) they feel dependent on the abuser and 2) they feel isolated from other social supports (Hoyle & Sanders, 2000). Thus, female victims believe prosecution will have more negative consequences, such as financial and social difficulties, than just remaining in the violent relationship (Hoyle & Sanders, 2000). As a result, victims might completely refrain from calling the police since
mandatory arrest and pro-charge policies mean that legal action will be taken once police are contacted.

Furthermore, various types of help-seeking operate within a pathway. For example, research conducted in domestic violence shelters suggests that informal help from family, friends, and social service agencies facilitate legal help-seeking and encourage the help-seeker to obtain professional help from the criminal justice system (Kaukinen, 2002a). Thus, if one of these informal supports was to take initiative and contact the police on behalf on the victim, perhaps the encouragement this support provides might convince the victim to follow through with the criminal justice process. Feminists argue that male domination and power imbalances within the home make women less likely to speak up and seek help (Fineman & Myktiuk, 1994). Therefore, it is more likely a female victim will agree that the appropriate response is resistance rather than attachment if someone else initiates the help-seeking process for her (Lee, 2007).

The past two sections examined research pertaining to the key independent variables of this study. The next two sections will discuss control variables that might be related to, or confound, the independent variables. First, control variables that discourage a female victim from seeking legal help are discussed. Next, control variables that encourage a female victim to seek legal help are examined.

*Other Factors that Discourage Female Victims from Seeking Legal Help*

Female victims are reluctant to leave the private sphere despite encouragement to exercise their agency by seeking legal help. There are several reasons that a female victim of IPV chooses to keep the abuse private rather than seek help. Below, I discuss economic dependency, various relationship factors (i.e., the presence of children, a
history of violence, and relationship length) and age as inhibitors to seeking legal help since they were included as control variables within this study.

**Economic Dependency:** Traditionally, men have held the role of sole or primary provider of a family’s income. A man’s role within the family was clearly defined because of his economic power and his contribution to the family’s social status, financial status, and well being (Kaukinen et al., 2012). Women with increased economic power and associated status have greater access to resources that can help them when experiencing IPV (Kaukinen et al., 2012). On the other hand, women without economic power who are financially dependent on their abuser have fewer resources available to them when experiencing IPV, and this has been identified as a barrier to seeking help and terminating abusive relationships (Kaukinen, 2002a; Kaukinen et al., 2012). Research by Kaukinen et al. (2012) found that unemployed female victims who are dependent on their employed abusive partner are less likely to seek legal help and call the police, compared to employed female victims. Even if a female victim was not financially dependant on her abuser, he may have provided other forms of support such as transportation, food, or shelter (Goodman, Bennett, & Dutton, 1999). Seeking legal help would cause these women to lose whatever support they received from their abuser. Meyer (2010) found contradicting results in that female victims who were unemployed were more likely to seek formal, legal help despite being economically dependant on their abuser. However, formal help was observed in conjunction with informal help; so, it is possible that these unemployed victims received financial help from an informal source (e.g. family or friends) to help alleviate the financial dependency they had on their abuser.
The presence of children within the home has been found to affect women’s economic ability to seek legal help (Ragusa, 2012). Many women are required to stay at home to take care of children, subsequently affecting their ability to seek, obtain, and maintain employment. This resulted in the female victim being economically dependent on her abuser since she was not able to make her own money and provide for herself. Additionally, sometimes a female victim was the family’s breadwinner and the abuser stayed home since he could not work due to a past incarceration (Ragusa, 2012); thus, the abuser would provide childcare for the children (Hare, 2010). In this case, the female victim was still dependent on the abuser because she would probably not be able to afford babysitting/childcare costs. Therefore, economic dependency still remained the primary cause of staying in the private sphere above other factors.

Children: The previous section discussed how the presence of children economically affects a woman and why she might stay in an abusive relationship in order to financially support herself and her children. Aside from its association with economic dependency, the presence of children has been found to have other effects on legal help-seeking. On one hand, research has found children limited a woman’s ability to end an abusive relationship (Kalmuss & Straus, 1982; Pagelow, 1981; Straus & Gelles, 1986; Strube & Barbour, 1983). This was usually described as staying for the sake of the children to protect them or keep them happy (Strube & Barbour, 1983). Female victims wanted to protect their children from the negative effects of court procedures and the stress associated with the criminal justice system (Hare, 2010). A female victim would also refrain from seeking legal help as a way to protect her children from possible abuse. For instance, a female victim would be reluctant to seek help if her abuser had threatened
to kill or harm the children if she left (Zoellner et al., 2000). Thus, the victim would remain in the relationship if leaving meant possible harm for her children. Hare (2010) found that female victims refused to seek legal help in an effort to avoid animosity from their children. One female in Hare’s (2010) study said that her abuser tried to convince the children that it was her fault he was being put in jail – this made the children angry with their mother. Therefore, a female victim might avoid having the abuser punished in order to keep the family intact and to keep the children happy. Children are an example of an investment within a relationship and Black (1976) argues that relational distance is affected by the amount of investments within a relationship – greater investments results in less relational distance. When relational distance is low, law is less likely to be sought or applied (Black, 1976).

Although the presence of children has been found to deter some female victims from seeking legal help, in other instances children are important for encouraging female victims to seek help and leave abusive relationships. Akers and Kaukinen (2009) and Meyer (2010) found that women with children in the household were more motivated to seek help in order to end the violence, and this was especially true if the child witnessed the violence. A female victim would seek help and leave an abusive relationship to protect her child from emotional and psychological harm (Erez & Belknap, 1998). Female victims did not want their child witnessing them being abused, nor did they want their child in an environment of drugs and alcohol, which is the greatest risk factor associated with IPV (Hein & Ruglass, 2009). The child’s safety was also an important factor encouraging female victims to seek legal help. Aside from the psychological consequences that may ensue from a child witnessing their mother being assaulted, a
child witnessing IPV is at a greater risk of being physically harmed either accidentally or while trying to intervene to protect their mother (Epstein, 1999). Additionally, a woman would fear that sooner or later her abuser’s temper would get so bad that he would begin to abuse the child as well (Erez & Belknap, 1998). Thus, the female victim would seek help and leave the abusive relationship to protect her child from abuse. This demonstrates a victim’s protective attitude towards her children since she may not seek help for her own physical and emotional wellbeing, but would do so for her children (Meyer, 2010). Nonetheless, inconsistencies in past and current research regarding the effect children have on a victim’s likelihood of seeking legal help demonstrates the complexities of this variable (Meyer, 2010).

**History of Violence:** Bachman and Coker (1995) argued that it was logical to assume a history of violence within a relationship would affect a female victim’s legal help seeking behaviour. Research found that legal help was more likely sought if there was no history of violence within the relationship (Bachman & Coker, 1995). That is, female victims were more likely to contact the police in response to their first episode of IPV compared to female victims who had been abused in the past. Although many female victims of IPV eventually leave their abusive relationships, their first attempts are usually unsuccessful (Zoellner et al., 2000). Several attempts are made before the victim actually ends the relationship. This illustrates that a female victim is less likely to seek help and leave an abusive relationship once a pattern of abuse has developed, compared to when the abuse is an isolated incident. Psychological theories such as learned helplessness, attachment, and commitment have been used to explain the difficulties these female victims have in seeking help and leaving relationships with a history of abuse. The
female victim may initially put forth efforts to end the violence, but will become withdrawn, passive, and helpless if these efforts produce no results (Hein & Ruglass, 2009). Thus, female victims in relationships with repeated violence might no longer seek help since her previous efforts had failed. In addition, attachment and commitment make it difficult for a female victim to sever ties with her abusive partner, especially if she expresses great love for him (Hein & Ruglass, 2009). Relatedly, factors such as attachment, commitment, investments, and religious values/beliefs might cause a female victim to endure repeated victimization before she ever seeks legal help for the first time (Anderson & Saunders, 2003). Contrary to Bachman and Coker (1995), some women are victimized multiple times before they first attempt to end the violence, especially if they experienced prior violence as a child or an adult (Anderson & Saunders, 2003; Gillis, Diamond, Jebely, Orekhovsky, Ostovish, MacIsaac, Sagrati, & Mandell, 2006).

Coker (1992) found that female victims who had experienced repeated victimization and were in relationships with a history of violence were more likely to sustain an injury, compared to women with no history of violence in their relationship. Several studies have found that increased severity and injury are associated with legal help seeking (Ansara & Hindin, 2010; Bachman & Coker, 1995; Barrett & St. Pierre, 2011; Kaukinen, 2002a; McLeod, 1983; Meyer, 2010;). Therefore, female victims in relationships with a history of violence should be more likely to seek legal help since they are more likely to become injured, according to Coker (1992). However, this contradicts the notion that female victims in relationships with a history of violence do not seek help because they have become passive and attached (Bachman & Coker, 1995; Hein & Ruglass, 2009).
Relationship Length: Law is less likely to be applied in cases where two people have spent significant time together and have invested a lot into their relationship. Black (1976) argued that relational distance could be measured by the frequency (i.e., how often) and length of interaction between people. Thus, the more frequently two people interact and the longer their interaction and relationship, the smaller their relational distance. Attachment and commitment levels are usually greater when the victim has been with her abuser for a longer period of time. Therefore, longer relationships resulting in greater attachment would also mean less law applied. Length of time in a relationship is considered a measure of commitment, resulting in the victim remaining silent amidst the violence (Black, 1976; Hein & Ruglass, 2009).

On the contrary, relationship length is also associated with a history of violence, which can also predict whether legal help will be sought (Hein & Ruglass, 2009). There is a greater likelihood that a female victim of IPV has suffered abuse for a longer period of time if she has been with her partner for a longer period of time. Thus, longer relationships usually result in a history of violence (Hein & Ruglass, 2009). Meyer (2010) found that victims with relationships of longer durations were more likely to seek informal and formal support – this may be a result of a history of violence within that long relationship.

Age: Studies that examined the effects of age on a female victim’s help-seeking behaviour have yielded inconsistent results. Some research has found that older victims were more likely to report violence to the police compared to younger victims (Block, 1974; Felson & Messner, 2000; Felson et al., 2002, Felson & Paré, 2005; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1980; Kaukinen, 2002a). However, other research has found that older
victims feel trapped in abusive relationships for financial and physical reasons; therefore, older victims are less likely to seek legal help from police and prosecutors compared to younger victims (Barrett & St. Pierre, 2011; Hare, 2010; Hirschel & Hutchinson, 2003; McLeod, 1983). Furthermore, other research has observed a curvilinear relationship between legal help-seeking and age in which police reporting increased as the victim’s age increased, but then decreased into older age (Akers & Kaukinen, 2009; Skogan, 1976). Additionally, despite these contradicting results, some studies have found no relationship between age and legal help-seeking (Hutchison & Hirschel, 1998; Kingsnorth & Macintosh, 2004; Sansone, Wiederman, & Sansone, 1997). Therefore, the effect of age on legal help-seeking for female victims of IPV has yet to be determined, especially since age differences could be due to various factors such as the financial or maternal situation of older women compared to younger women (Barrett & St. Pierre, 2011).

Other Factors that Encourage Female Victims to Seek Legal Help

Severity of Violence and Weapon Use: The reporting of criminal victimization to the police is largely incident-specific (Skogan, 1984). That is, a victim’s decision to call the police is largely based on the conditions of the offence, such as whether a weapon was used or if an injury was sustained. Although all violence has the potential to cause psychological and physical harm, there was an increased level of danger faced by women who experienced intimate terrorism⁵, making them more likely to seek formal help from a counsellor, medical agency, or police (Ansara & Hindin, 2010).

Physical injury was found to be a significant factor in a female victim’s decision to call the police and cooperate with the prosecution (Bachman & Coker, 1995; Barrett &

⁵ Intimate terrorism is characterized by a chronic and severe pattern of violence, abuse, and control.
St. Pierre, 2011; McLeod, 1983; Meyer, 2010). However, aside from physical indicators such as an injury or the presence of a weapon, formal help-seekers also reported a greater perception that their victimization was serious in nature (Meyer, 2010). Crimes in which a female victim perceived danger, feared for her life, or was threatened with future violence were more likely to be reported to the police (Barrett & St. Pierre, Folkes, Hilton & Harris, 2012; Kaukinen, 2002a). Thus, female victims were likely to seek help not only if they were in grave danger, but also if they subjectively believed their victimization was severe.

Goodman et al. (1999) noted in their research that the association between legal help-seeking and the severity of the violence was only found with misdemeanour cases. Felony victims, who endure the most severe and injurious assaults, may be more passive and less likely to seek legal help. These victims may reason that staying in the relationship is safer if they believe that leaving was associated with a greater risk of more lethal violence (Goodman et al., 1999). Nonetheless, the severity of an assault, the use of a weapon, and sustained injuries are all factors that increase the likelihood of a female victim seeking legal help. Overall, female victims who have experienced severe forms of violence are more likely to seek both informal and formal help, compared to female victims who did not experience severe violence (Barrett & St. Pierre, 2011).

**Use of a Victim/Assistance Worker:** One goal of victim/assistance workers is to make it easier for a victim of IPV to leave their abuser and survive on their own. The worker does this by providing referrals to community organizations and government agencies that will help support the victim in various ways (Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001). Victim/assistance workers also provide victims with information about the court process,
offer support during meetings with the prosecutor, and offer escort and support at trial. Dawson and Dinovitzer (2001) found that victims who received these supports and guidance from victim/assistance workers were more likely to cooperate with the prosecution in their case. Victim/Assistance workers are to support a victim despite her decision to cooperate in the court process or testify, yet their presence increases the likelihood that a victim will cooperate.

Hypotheses

The research discussed above argues that victims who are more intimate with their abuser are more reluctant to involve the legal system in cases of IPV than are victims in estranged relationships. Some feminist notions support this argument since patriarchy leaves women dependent on men and reliant on them for emotional and financial support (Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1984; Tracy, 2007). Akers and Kaukinen (2009) further point out that emotional and financial dependency is greater for married women than dating women. Additionally, this is supported by Black’s (1976) theory since female victims who have more distant relationships with the accused (i.e., divorced versus married) want more law applied, arguably because they have fewer attachments and dependencies. Drawing from this, my hypotheses are as follows:

Reporting to the Police

H₁: Female victims who are in estranged relationships will be more likely to contact the police, compared to female victims who are in intact relationships.

H₁ii: Among those in estranged relationships, female victims who are legally separated/divorced will be more likely to contact the police, compared to those who are previously common-law and previously dating.

H₁iii: Among those in intact relationships, female victims who are dating will be more likely to contact the police, compared to those who are married and common-law.
Cooperation with the Prosecution

H2i: Female victims who are in estranged relationships will be more likely to cooperate with the prosecution, compared to female victims who are in intact relationships.

H2ii: Among those in estranged relationships, female victims who are legally separated/divorced will be more likely to cooperate with the prosecution, compared to those who are previously common-law and previously dating.

H2iii: Among those in intact relationships, female victims who are dating will be more likely to cooperate with the prosecution, compared to those who are married and common-law.

As mentioned previously, victims of IPV are less likely to personally report their experiences of violence to the police than are victims of other crimes (Kaukinen, 2004). Furthermore, when victims of IPV do initiate contact with the police, the majority are only seeking temporary separation rather than permanent prosecution (Ellsberg et al., 2001; Gillis et al., 2006; Hoyle & Sanders, 2000; Hirschel & Hutchinson, 2003). In addition, since help-seeking for IPV operates within a pathway, it is more likely that a female victim will be encouraged to pursue additional criminal justice help if someone else initiates the legal help-seeking process for her. As a result, additional hypotheses are as follows:

H2a: Cases involving female victims in which a third-party took the initiative to report the incident to the police will have a greater likelihood of the victim cooperating with the prosecution, compared to female victims who reported the incident themselves.

H2b: Relationship state/status and who reported the incident to the police will have a combined effect on cooperation with the prosecution. That is, cases in which a female victim was divorced/separated from her abuser and someone else initiated contact with the police are the most likely to cooperate with the prosecution.

Conclusion

The theoretical perspectives that were discussed are important for this study since it is hypothesized that the highly-held notion in which private matters should remain private still keep victims who are close to their abuser (i.e., married/common-law) from
seeking legal help compared to victims who are not relationally close to their abuser (i.e., divorced/separated). Several studies (Buzawa, Austin & Buzawa, 1995; Gartner & Macmillan, 1995; Felson & Messner, 2002; Kaukinen, 2002; Dawson, 2006; Akers & Kaukinen, 2009; Clay-Warner & McMahon-Howard, 2009) have used Black’s (1976) theory to investigate reporting patterns of IPV episodes and the response of the criminal justice system. It is clear from these studies that fewer arrests are made in cases involving intimates than strangers. While Black’s (1976) theory does a good job of theorizing how the law will behave given various factors (e.g. the gender of the parties involved, their relationship with each other, and their status in society), feminist perspectives dig deeper to the root of the issue.

Radical feminists would argue that the reason violence against women, specifically IPV, is underreported and kept private is because of male patriarchy and women’s dependence on men (Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1984). Tracy (2007) argues that patriarchy is an overarching social construct and a systematic attempt to maintain male dominance in the home and society. As a result, since patriarchy is everywhere and encompasses every aspect of a woman’s life, it is difficult for her to escape subordination and abuse. However, feminists do critique Locke’s (1988) public/private dichotomy and believe that women can escape the harmful effects of patriarchy; thus, feminists encourage women to overcome their isolation and publicize this very serious issue of violence. Furthermore, feminists have been providing women with ways of overcoming their isolation and making the process bearable. For these reasons, feminist perspectives are very important when investigating IPV and legal help-seeking. Black’s (1976) theory
uses testable propositions to demonstrate that abused women within the home are not seeking the legal help they need – which can be explained by feminist theories.

While Black’s (1976) theory and feminist ideologies are used here as complimentary theories, they do rest on different assumptions. For example, when the victim chooses not to cooperate with the prosecution, Black (1976) describes this as the victim willingly shielding the abuser from the law and using intimacy as a form of protection. However, feminists would argue that this occurs because patriarchy has left the victim dependent on the abuser and isolated within the private sphere (Akers & Kaukinen, 2009; Hanisch, 1970; Lee, 2007). Black (1976) generally examines factors such as relational distance, one’s status in society, and financial earnings to determine in which situations the law is most likely to be applied – feminists focus specifically on male domination and female oppression.

Although the state has worked to improve its role in dealing with IPV, feminists do not believe that changing the law will have, or has had, a great impact since traditional family ideologies cause inequalities within the home to persist. As Lipsky (1980) notes, ‘law on the books’ is often different than ‘law on the ground’. In addition, laws are made to be patriarchal in nature in order to protect the abuser, especially within the private sphere (Pagelow, 1981; Dawson, 2003). Black (1976) supports this proposition with his theory by saying deviant behaviour (i.e., violence against women) is accepted or ‘normalized’ when it occurs between intimates. Therefore, in the confines of their home where it remains a private matter, IPV is viewed as less heinous and may even be ignored than if it occurs between distant partners. Even when an incident is reported, many women still refuse to participate in the criminal justice process.
The following chapter discusses the methodology used to conduct this research study. Specifically, the research design, the sample, the variables, and the analytic procedures are explained.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This study uses secondary data to examine what factors influence a female victim’s likelihood of seeking legal help in cases of IPV. This chapter describes the methodology used to investigate this study’s research questions. First, data collection procedures, the limitations and strengths of the research design, and the sample included in the study are discussed. Next, the operationalization of the dependent, independent, and control variables are described. Finally, the analytical procedure used to test each model is discussed.

Research Design

Data Collection

This study examined data that were collected as part of a project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada\textsuperscript{6} and made available by Dr. Myrna Dawson, the lead investigator on that project. The data were collected from a Crown Attorney’s office in a small, central Ontario city that operates under the Ontario Domestic Violence Court Program using a specialized court process and designed specifically to respond to domestic violence.\textsuperscript{7} All cases of domestic violence that occurred from 2003 to 2009 were made available by Crown Attorney staff. Each case was assigned a case number for that project and a case-tracking sheet was used to record specific information relating to the nature of the offense, the steps taken through the criminal justice process, and the outcome of the case. Identifiers were removed from the

\textsuperscript{6} SSHRC Standard Research Grant Number: 410-2004-134.
\textsuperscript{7} Domestic violence cases incorporated incidences of violence that occurred between parties of any type of relationship within the domestic household including violence towards children, siblings and the elderly.
primary dataset so that confidentiality and anonymity of those involved in the cases were maintained. For this current study, the secondary dataset was uploaded into StataSE statistical software for analysis.

**Limitations and Strengths of the Study’s Research Design**

Limitations: Although conducting secondary research using existing data was the most appropriate method for this research study due to its efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and convenience, there were still limitations to consider. Researchers using secondary data must be concerned with the validity and reliability of their study (Kraska & Neuman, 2012). Since the data have already been collected, the researcher has no input regarding the data collection process and is often unaware of any problems that might have occurred during that stage that could potentially skew their final results. Therefore, the researcher must assume that data in the original dataset were collected, organized, and inputted correctly and accurately. Another limitation with using existing data is that the researcher is limited to the variables present and the categories within each variable. For instance, since primary data collection has already occurred, a researcher conducting secondary analysis is not able to investigate other variables of interest that were not captured in the original dataset; thus, the researcher is restricted to certain variables and research questions. For example, race/ethnicity was examined in prior research studies and was found to affect whether or not victims of IPV will seek legal help (Akers & Kaukinen, 2009; Bachman & Coker, 1995; Hirschel & Hutchinson, 2003; Felson & Messner, 2000; Felson et al., 2002; Felson and Paré, 2005). In addition, socio-economic status and the victim’s highest level of education were also found to be significant variables affecting legal help-seeking behaviour (Akers & Kaukinen, 2009; Meyer,
2010). However, these variables were not included in this current study as control variables because this information was not available in the records from which data were collected.

The data used in this research study are official criminal justice records, which have often been observed to contain limitations. First, criminal justice agencies generally collect data for their use, not for the use of researchers (Maxfield & Babbie, 2011). In addition, criminal justice agencies focus on keeping track of individual cases rather than examining patterns (Maxfield & Babbie, 2011). As a result, researchers often find it difficult to adapt official criminal justice records to their specific research studies since record-keeping procedures and practices reflect internal needs and directives. Second, clerical errors increase as the number of cases increase (Maxfield & Babbie, 2011). Thus, there is a greater likelihood of mistakes being made and data being flawed when there are numerous cases to process. It has been recognized that problems exist with the completeness, consistency, and accuracy of criminal justice records (Geerken, 1994). On a large scale, with hundreds or thousands of cases being tracked, these deficiencies are highly problematic and might affect the validity or reliability of a research study. Human error associated with collecting and entering criminal justice data undermines the objective and standardized procedures used (Palys, 1997). However, the objectiveness of official data from criminal justice agencies is also a limitation since this often means that their validity and reliability are less scrutinized (Palys, 1997).

Strengths: Availability and convenience are two common benefits associated with secondary research and the use of existing data that were important factors in this study (Kraska & Neuman, 2012). First, the availability of existing data makes secondary
research time-efficient (Neuman & Robson, 2009). It is important that all components of a graduate program are completed within a certain allotted time. The availability of secondary data makes it efficient when used for a graduate thesis since time is not devoted to data collection. Survey design, ethical approval, data collection, and data input are often time-consuming components of a research project (Kraska & Neuman, 2012). These steps were avoided with the availability and use of existing data.

Second, the availability of existing data makes secondary research cost-effective (Neuman & Robson, 2009). Researchers conducting primary research must consider the cost of materials, the cost of transportation, the cost of paying research assistants, compensation for research participants, and other miscellaneous costs that might be associated with their particular study (Neuman & Robson, 2009). Most of these costs are avoided when conducting secondary research since the data have already been collected and are available for use – this is especially beneficial when a large sample is needed. The cost-effectiveness associated with existing data was important since funding for this particular study was limited and only available for a certain amount of time.

Third, the use of secondary data is ethically responsible. Survey research and the collection of primary data can often be emotionally and psychologically upsetting (Neuman & Robson, 2009). Intrusive questions might be asked, depending on a study’s focus and objectives, which results in discomfort for the participant. The investigation of IPV and a woman’s experience with abuse are examples of studies that would contain questions that are emotionally and psychologically upsetting. Therefore, a responsible researcher utilizes and maximizes secondary data in order to avoid further upsetting vulnerable populations.
Finally, legal, policy, and administrative restrictions are bypassed by conducting secondary research since the data on difficult-to-access populations have already been collected and are available for analyses. A purposive sample might be needed depending on a study's research questions and objectives. It might not always be reasonable, or possible, to study a specific population since the researcher might have difficulties accessing and gaining the cooperation of those participants (Neuman, 2011). It would very likely have been difficult and time-consuming to independently gain access to court records or IPV victims in order to investigate the research questions of this current project. Thus, the use of existing data was convenient and helpful.

One advantage of quantitative research is its emphasis on objectivity and standardized methodological procedures (Kraska & Neuman, 2012). This increases the validity within a study and allows for the results to be generalizable (Neuman & Robson, 2009). Validity refers to the trustworthiness of the study and its results. Objective, standardized procedures can be trusted, with results generalizable to a larger population. Another advantage of quantitative research is the ability to cover large populations and a range of topics in a short amount of time (Neuman & Robson, 2009).

**Sample**

Since the original data included all cases of domestic violence, those cases involving intimate partner relationships were isolated from other types of domestic relationships for analysis in this study. Intimate partners included married, common-law, dating, divorced/separated, previously common-law, and previously dating partners. Furthermore, only cases involving female victims were analyzed. This was done since IPV is primarily committed by men against their female partners, and because the vast
majority of victims who seek legal help are females (Johnson, 2010; Rhodes, Dichter, Kothari, Marcus, & Cerulli, 2011). In addition, only heterosexual intimate partner relationships were included in this study. Barnish (2004) points out that while IPV can also occur in same-sex relationships, it is more prevalent among heterosexual couples. Moreover, some feminists argue that violence in intimate relationships is rooted in gender and power and represents men’s continuous attempt to maintain dominance and control over women (Bailey, 2010; Grant, 2006). Feminists do acknowledge that patriarchy and power struggles can also exist in same-sex relationships; however, McPhail et al. (2007) argue that same-sex couple violence is weakly explained by the feminist model. Thus, only cases involving a female victim and a male offender were included for analysis so that these specific feminist contentions could be explored and applied to this sample. Lastly, several studies have excluded same-sex couples from their analyses, so a similar approach was taken in this study to ensure consistency when comparing results (Johnson & Hotton, 2003; Trainor, 2002; Epstein, 1999). After isolating only those cases that involved heterosexual female victims who were abused by their current or former husband, common-law partner or boyfriend, the sample consisted of 1,524 cases.

**Variables and Measures**

**Dependent Variables**

Two dependent variables were examined in this study. The first dependent variable captured who reported the incident to the police. The outcome variable was categorical and dichotomous, coded 1 if the victim called the police and coded 2 if someone other than the victim reported the incident to police. Table 1 shows that women contacted the police themselves in approximately 71 percent of the cases, while someone
else contacted the police for them in 29 percent of the cases. Please refer to Table 1 for how all variables are coded and for all descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations).

The second dependent variable captured whether or not a female victim cooperated with the prosecution. Again, the outcome variable was categorical and dichotomous and coded 1 if the victim did not cooperate with the prosecution and coded 2 if she did. Forty-one percent of the victims in this study did not cooperate with the prosecution, while approximately 59 percent did cooperate.

*Independent Variables*

A victim’s decision to report victimization can vary according to such characteristics as gender, race, socio-economic status, age, the victim-offender relationship, and violence severity (Akers & Kaukinen, 2009). Since only a small percentage of crimes committed are reported to police, especially if it is between intimates, it is important to determine which of these various factors hinder victims from seeking legal help (Felson & Paré, 2005). For this study, the victim-offender relationship is being investigated as the key, focal independent variable. As discussed in the previous chapter, Black’s (1976) theory of the behaviour of law emphasizes that the relational distance between a victim and an offender affects the amount of law that will be used to resolve a situation. Of particular interest for this current study, Black’s (1976) theory argues that female victims who are more intimate with their abuser would be less likely to contact the police and less likely to cooperate with the prosecution compared to female victims who are less intimate with their abuser.
TABLE 1. Coding and Descriptive Statistics for Independent, Dependent, and Control Variables (N=1524)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description/Coding</th>
<th>N^8</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim made contact</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td>1474</td>
<td>1041</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another person made contact</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim Cooperation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim did not cooperate</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td>1336</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim cooperated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>797</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship State</td>
<td></td>
<td>1524</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intact</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td>1524</td>
<td>1046</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estranged</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>478</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intact Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1046</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td></td>
<td>342</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common-law</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>434</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>270</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estranged Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>478</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced/Separated</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td></td>
<td>115</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex common-law</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>146</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex dating</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>217</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Contact</td>
<td></td>
<td>1474</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim made contact</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1041</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another person made contact</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
<td>1469</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No children</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td></td>
<td>588</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>881</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injury</td>
<td></td>
<td>1524</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim was not injured</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td></td>
<td>811</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim was injured</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>713</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Violence</td>
<td></td>
<td>1249</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No previous violence</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td></td>
<td>254</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous violence</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>995</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of a Weapon</td>
<td></td>
<td>1521</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No weapon used</td>
<td>1 (Reference)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1343</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapon used</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>178</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim age (Mean/SD)</td>
<td>Years</td>
<td>1482</td>
<td>32.38</td>
<td>11.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Length (Mean/SD)</td>
<td>Months</td>
<td>1413</td>
<td>70.77</td>
<td>86.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with VWAP (Mean/SD)</td>
<td>Number of meetings</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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8 The number of cases (N) for each variable might change depending on the existence of missing cases.
9 The reference category is the group in which other groups will be compared to.
10 Includes verbal and physical violence.
To investigate the effect of relational distance, or degree of intimacy, on the dependent variables being examined in this study, three independent variables were used. First, relationship state was measured using a categorical, dichotomous variable that compares intact relationships (which includes married, common-law, and dating partners) and estranged relationships (including divorced/separated, previously common-law, and previously dating partners). Intact relationships, which made up 69 percent of the sample, are those in which the victim and the offender shared an intimate relationship at the time of the incident (Dawson, 2003; Dawson & Gartner, 1998). Estranged relationships, which made up 31 percent of the sample, are those in which the victim and the offender had terminated their relationship prior to the incident occurring (Dawson, 2003; Dawson & Gartner, 1998).

Second, two variables examining relationship status were used to exhaustively observe and compare categories within each of the intact and estranged relationship groups to determine what type of intimacy appears to matter most. The first variable compared only intact relationships to see if there was a significant difference in victims’ reporting behaviour and victims’ cooperation with the prosecution depending upon whether the woman was married, common-law, or in a dating relationship. The second variable compared only estranged relationships to see if there was a significant difference in victims’ reporting behaviour and victims’ cooperation with the prosecution based on whether the woman was divorced/separated, previously common-law, or had been previously dating the offender.

The goal of examining relationship type using the above comprehensive measures was to determine whether there were differences in the state of a relationship and in
different relational statuses within each state. Dawson (2003) argues this might be important because some intact relationships arguably involve greater investment (i.e., marriage) and might more likely lead to lethal violence than intact relationships with arguably less investment (i.e., dating partners).

A secondary independent variable that was examined was who contacted the police. This variable was previously treated as a dependent variable; however, it became an independent variable when examining victim cooperation with the prosecution. It was hypothesized that female victims would be more likely to cooperate with the prosecution if someone else took the initiative to contact the police and report the incident. It could be argued that having another person report their violence might make a victim resentful and refuse to cooperate since victims typically do not want the criminal justice system involved, nor do they want their abuser permanently arrested and prosecuted (Ellsberg et al. 2001; Gillis et al, 2006; Hoyle & Sanders, 2000; Hirschel & Hutchinson, 2003; Kaukinen, 2004). However, this current study argues that third-party involvement will make a victim more likely to cooperate with the prosecution since help-seeking usually operates within a pathway. For example, informal help from family, friends, and social service agencies facilitate legal help-seeking and encourages the help-seeker to obtain professional help from the criminal justice system (Kaukinen, 2002a). Thus, if one of these informal supports were to take the initiative and contact the police on behalf of the victim, perhaps the encouragement this support provides may convince the victim to follow through with the criminal justice process.
Control Variables

There are numerous factors that affect a female victim’s willingness to seek legal help in a case of IPV. Skogan (1984) suggested that reporting victimization to the police is primarily incident-specific. That is, a victim is more or less likely to report an episode of violence based on the characteristics of the abuse (e.g. if an injury occurred or if a weapon was used) rather than personal, demographic factors (e.g. race or socio-economic status). In addition, crimes in which a female victim perceives imminent danger and fears for her life are more likely to result in legal help-seeking (Kaukinen, 2004). Further, investments within a relationship (e.g. children, shared finances, age of the relationship) vary, with fewer investments resulting in greater relational distance, and thus, a greater desire to have the law applied – as argued by Black (1973). With so many different factors that could explain why a female may or may not seek legal help, it is important to isolate variables of interest to determine their independent effect on the outcome. This will increase the validity of the study and confidence in how much relationship state/status and who contacted the police independently affect legal help-seeking. Thus, various control variables will be included in this study.

Incident Specific Variables

Injury: Research has shown that an incident of IPV that was severe in nature and in which a female victim sustained an injury was more likely to result in a female victim contacting the police and cooperating with the prosecution (Bachman & Coker, 1995; Kaukinen, 2004; McLeod, 1983). To capture these characteristics in this study, a dichotomous, categorical variable captured whether or not the victim sustained an injury (coded as 1 for no injury and 2 for injury). Dawson and Gartner (1998) and Johnson and
Hotton (2003) found that women in estranged relationships were at a greater risk of experiencing more severe abuse. Thus, it is important to isolate whether it is relationship state or the severity of the abuse that influences a victim’s decision to seek legal help.

**Use of a Weapon:** Additionally, research has shown that an incident of IPV in which the victim was assaulted with a weapon was also more likely to result in a female victim contacting the police and cooperating with the prosecution (McLeod, 1983; Meyer, 2010). As a result, a dichotomous, categorical variable was used to capture whether or not a weapon was used (coded as 1 for no weapon used and 2 for weapon used).

**Relationship Factors**

**Children:** Children are an example of an investment within a relationship; thus, the presence of children requires special attention and was included as a control variable in this study. Women with children may often base their decision to stay in, leave, or return to an abusive relationship on what it would mean for their children (Ansara & Hindin, 2010; Erez & Belknap, 1998; Hare, 2010; Rhodes et al., 2011). For example, Akers and Kaukinen (2009) found that women with children in the household were more motivated to seek help in order to end the violence, which was especially true if the child witnessed the violence. On the other hand, other research found that children limited women’s ability to end the relationship (Kalmuss & Straus, 1982; Pagelow, 1981; Straus & Gelles, 1986; Strube & Barbour, 1983). In addition, certain relationships (i.e., married) are more likely to involve children compared to other relationship types (i.e., dating). Shannon et al. (2007) found that more married women had a dependent child with their abuser, compared to women who were not married to their abuser. Furthermore, dating
women do not consider children a primary reason as to why they stay in abusive relationships; however, married women do consider children a primary reason as to why they stay in abusive relationships (Viano, 1992). This could be because married couples are more likely to share a child compared to dating couples. Thus, it is important to control for the presence of children to isolate the affect of relationship type on the dependent variables. The variable examining the presence of children was a categorical, dichotomous variable, coded as 1 if children were not involved and coded as 2 if children were involved. Forty percent of the victims reported not having children, while 60 percent of the victims reported that they did have children.

History of Violence: Bachman and Coker (1995) found that victims with no history of violence in their relationship were more likely to contact police, compared to victims who had experienced past victimization. A perceived sense of helplessness from previous episodes of violence may make women with a history of abuse less likely to seek help, compared to women who are experiencing abuse for the first time (Bachman & Coker, 1995). However, women who have experienced repeated victimization are more likely to sustain injuries than are women with no history of violence (Coker, 1992). Therefore, while one variable (i.e., injury) may make a victim more likely to seek help, adding another variable (i.e., a history of violence) decreases the effect of the first variable. As a result, it is important to control for both of these variables together. History of violence was a dichotomous, categorical variable that measured whether or not the victim had been victimized by this offender in the past (including verbal and physical abuse). This variable was coded as 1 if there was no previous history (which accounted
for 20 percent of the cases) and as 2 if there was a history of violence in the relationship (which accounted for 80 percent of the cases).

**Relationship Length:** Black (1976) argues that relational distance can be measured by the frequency and length of interaction between people. Therefore, less time spent together and a shorter relationship may result in greater relational distance between two people – and a greater desire to have the law applied. Thus, length of the relationship between a victim and offender was controlled since this variable may also have an additional influence on cooperation, independent of the relationship state and status of the couple. This variable was measured in months with the average relationship length being 70.77 months.

**Other Factors**

**Age:** Prior research has found that a female victim’s age impacts her willingness to call the police and have her abuser prosecuted; however, results have been mixed. Block (1974) and Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1980) found that younger victims were less likely to report violence to the police, while McLeod (1983) found that younger victims were more likely to want prosecution. Akers and Kaukinen (2009) and Skogan (1976) observed a curvilinear relationship between legal help-seeking and age (i.e., police reporting increases as the victim’s age increases, but then decreases into older age). The variable examining the victim’s age in this current study was a continuous variable measured in years with the average age being 32 years.

**Use of a Victim/Assistance Worker:** Dawson and Dinovitzer (2001) found that victims who met with a victim/assistance worker were more likely to cooperate with the prosecution due to the guidance they received from this worker. One goal of
victim/assistance workers is to provide referrals to community organizations and government agencies, making it easier for the victim to leave the abuser and survive on her own. In addition, victim/assistance workers provide victims with information about the court process, offer support during meetings with the prosecutor, and offer escort and support at trial (Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001). Although the main objective of victim/assistance workers is to support the victim despite her decision to cooperate in the court process or testify, victims who get this support are more likely to cooperate. Thus, it was important to control this variable since participation in VWAP has a large effect on legal help-seeking. This variable was only included in the second model (i.e., cooperation with the prosecution) since participation in VWAP is only relevant at that stage. The variable examined how many times the victim met with a victim/assistance worker from VWAP with the average being less than one.

Analysis

A bivariate analysis using the Pearson chi-square statistic investigated any significant preliminary associations between each independent variable and each dependent variable. At this stage, regardless of a variable’s level of significance, the decision to keep all the variables in the analyses was based on theoretically-driven support and past research. A multivariate analysis, specifically a binomial logistic regression, is then used to investigate the combined effect of the key independent variables and the control variables on legal help-seeking. This analysis is used since the dependent variables are dichotomous, categorical variables (i.e., whether the female victim contacted police or not; whether the female victim cooperated with the prosecution or not) (Acock, 2010). Past research has used this analytic technique when investigating
similar outcomes (Dawson, 2003; Dawson & Gartner, 1998; Johnson & Hotton, 2003). A total of six\textsuperscript{11} binary logistic regressions are conducted to examine the effect of each independent variable with police contact and cooperation with the prosecution. Three additional binary logistic regressions were conducted to examine the interaction effects between relationship type (i.e., relationship state, intact relationships, and estranged relationships) and police contact on cooperation with the prosecution. More specifically, the following logistic regression models were examined:

1) Relationship state and police contact, with control variables
2) Relationship status of intact relationships (e.g. legal marriage, common-law, dating) and police contact, with control variables
3) Relationship status of estranged relationships (e.g. divorced/separated, previously common-law, previously dating) and police contact, with control variables
4) Relationship state and cooperation with the prosecution, with control variables
5) Relationship status of intact relationships and cooperation with the prosecution, with control variables
6) Relationship status of estranged relationships and cooperation with the prosecution, with control variables
7) The interaction effect of relationship state with police contact and cooperation with the prosecution, with control variables

\textsuperscript{11} Because of the possible multicollinearity given that the variables are constructed from the same measure, relationship state will be examined separately from the two measures of relationship status.
8) The interaction effect of intact relationships with police contact and cooperation with the prosecution, with control variables

9) The interaction effect of estranged relationships with police contact and cooperation with the prosecution, with control variables

**Missing Data Procedures**

Missing data were removed using complete-case analysis, which is a method that only uses the available cases for each variable analyzed (Bland & Altman, 2007; He, 2010). Using complete-case analysis is beneficial because it is an unbiased method, which means that actual data are used and values are not invented or substituted (He, 2010). A case is removed from analysis if it does not contain a value for a specified variable – this is done rather than predicting what a value might be or substituting it with the mean. However, this method is limited because it is less efficient than other methods since cases are being dropped (He, 2010). Discarding cases that have no values subsequently makes the sample size smaller and increases variance and inefficiency. An increase in variance means that there is a larger difference between cases since there are so few of them, and an increase in inefficiency means that statistical power is lost (Bland & Altman, 2010). A loss in statistical power means that it is more difficult to detect a significant effect between variables. However, despite the limitations, complete-case analysis is a common method used for handling missing data and is the default for most statistical software programs; thus, it was used for this study (He, 2010).
Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the methodology used in this study, such as the research design, the sample, the dependent, independent, and control variables, and the analytical procedures. The following chapter discusses the results of the study by examining the bivariate and multivariate relationships.
Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Previous chapters have highlighted that various factors play an important role in determining whether or not female victims of IPV will seek legal help. More specifically, a review of prior literature revealed that some variables encourage, but others discourage, contacting the police and cooperating with the prosecution. It is important to further clarify whether, and how, various factors increase a female victim’s likelihood of seeking legal help since feminists have underscored the importance of women exercising their autonomy to escape violence within the private sphere (Lee, 2007; McPhail et al., 2007). In addition, Dawson and Dinovitzer (2001) demonstrated that the successful prosecution of IPV cases often relies heavily on victim cooperation. This chapter describes the results from a quantitative analysis that examined various measures of legal help-seeking and, particularly, the victim-offender relationship at time of the incident. The results of each of the two models are discussed separately. First, the bivariate and multivariate results for contacting the police are presented. Second, the bivariate and multivariate results for cooperation with the prosecution are discussed. Finally, this chapter concludes by reviewing the study’s hypotheses.

Contacting the Police

Bivariate Analysis

Table 2 presents the results from the bivariate analysis of the key independent variables and the first dependent variable – contacting the police. First, consistent with Hypothesis 1, the state of a victim’s relationship was significant in predicting who contacted the police. Women in estranged relationships were significantly more likely to
TABLE 2. Bivariate Relationships: Independent and Control Variables by Who Contacted Police (N = 1,474)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Victim contacted police (%)</th>
<th>Another person contacted police (%)</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship State</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intact</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15.12</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estranged</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intact Relationships</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26.59</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common-law</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estranged Relationships</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced/Separated</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>.149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex common-law</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex dating</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.49</td>
<td>.002**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No children</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Injury</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim was not injured</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18.28</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim injured</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>History of Violence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>.806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No previous violence</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Previous violence</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of a Weapon</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>.359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No weapon used</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapon used</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Victim age (years)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship Length</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(months)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<0.05; ** p<0.001; *** p<0.001
report their intimate partner victimization to police than were women in intact
relationships (77 percent versus 67 percent, respectively). Second, women in each type of
intact relationship – married, common-law, and dating – were significantly more likely to
contact the police themselves than have another person report their intimate partner
victimization. Specifically, 74 percent of married women contacted police versus 26
percent of married women who did not contact police, 70 percent of common-law women
contacted police versus 30 percent of common-law women who did not, and 55 percent
of dating women contacted police versus 45 percent of dating women who did not.
Furthermore, married and common-law women were significantly more likely to contact
the police compared to dating women (74 percent and 70 percent versus 55 percent,
respectively). This was determined by conducting three separate cross-tabulation analyses
using the Pearson chi-square statistic that compared married to common-law women,
made to dating women, and common-law to dating women. There was no significant
difference found in the first comparison, but significant results were found in the two
latter comparisons. These results are inconsistent with past research that examined intact
relationships and found that women in relationships with less relational distance (i.e.,
made versus dating) were significantly less likely to contact police for their
victimization (Akers & Kaukinen, 2009; Felson & Paré, 2005).

Four of the six control variables yielded significant results. First, women with
children were significantly more likely to contact the police than were women without
children (74 percent versus 66 percent, respectively). Second, women who were
uninjured were significantly more likely to report their victimization themselves
compared to women who were injured (75 percent versus 65 percent, respectively). Next,
women who reported their own victimization were significantly older than women who had a third-party report their victimization (33 years versus 31 years, respectively). Although this is a small difference, this illustrates that victims who report their own victimization are slightly older than those who do not. Finally, the average relationship length for victims who contacted the police themselves was significantly greater than the average relationship length for victims who had another person contact the police (74 months versus 64 months, respectively).

**Multivariate Analysis: Binary Logistic Regressions**

Table 3 presents the binary logistic regressions that predict contacting the police. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the variables investigating relationship state, intact relationships only, and estranged relationships only were examined separately due to possible multicollinearity. Thus, three separate logistic regressions were conducted to investigate the association between relationship type and contacting the police. In Model 1, four of the seven independent variables yielded significant results. First, supporting Hypothesis 1i, female victims in intact relationships were significantly more likely to have had another person contact the police to report their victimization compared to victims in estranged relationships. This is consistent with past research which found that women in intact relationships were not likely to independently seek help from the police in cases of IPV (Gartner & Macmillan, 1995; Felson et al., 1999; Felson et al., 2002; Felson & Paré, 2005; Akers & Kaukinen, 2009). Models 2 and 3, which investigate intact relationships and estranged relationships, respectively, did not yield significant results when looking at differences in reporting for the various relationship statues. These results rebut Hypothesis 1ii and Hypothesis 1iii.
TABLE 3. Logistic Regressions: Independent Variables and Control Variables on Predicting Third-Party Police Contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship state</td>
<td></td>
<td>Intact relationships only</td>
<td></td>
<td>Estranged relationships only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>e^b</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship State</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estranged</td>
<td>-.33*</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Common-law</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dating</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estranged</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex common-law</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex dating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Present</td>
<td>-.35*</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>-.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Injury</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim Injured</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>History of Violence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous violence</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of a Weapon</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapon used</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>-.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Victim age (years)</strong></td>
<td>-.02**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.01**</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship</strong></td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length (months)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1,088</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>741</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-.36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square</td>
<td>34.18***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26.24*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-likelihood</td>
<td>-604.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-425.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<0.05; ** p<0.001; *** p<0.001
When the control variables were examined, the presence of children remained significant from the bivariate analysis with results demonstrating that women with children were significantly more likely to report their victimization themselves. This finding is consistent with work done by Akers and Kaukinen (2009) and Meyer (2010) who found that women with children in the household were more motivated to seek help in order to end the violence. Second, results found that victims who sustained an injury were significantly more likely to have their victimization reported by another person. This finding contradicts other studies which have shown that physical injury is a significant factor in a female victim’s decision to seek legal help by reporting an episode of IPV to police (Bachman & Coker, 1995; Barrett & St. Pierre, 2011; McLeod, 1983; Meyer, 2010). Finally, a victim’s age was a significant variable that demonstrated that younger victims were significantly more likely to have their victimization reported by someone else. This supports research that found that older victims were more likely to report violence to the police compared to younger victims (Block, 1974; Felson et al., 2000; Felson et al., 2002, Felson & Paré, 2005; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1980).

**Cooperation with the Prosecution**

*Bivariate Analysis*

Table 4 presents the results from the bivariate analysis of the key independent variables and the second dependent variable – cooperating with the prosecution. First, the state of a victim’s relationship was significantly related to who cooperated with the prosecution. A result that supports Hypothesis 2, was that women in estranged
TABLE 4. Bivariate Relationships: Independent and Control Variables by Cooperation with the Prosecution (N = 1,336\(^{12}\))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Victim did not cooperate (%)</th>
<th>Victim cooperated (%)</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship State</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intact</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>94.74</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estranged</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intact Relationships</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>.544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common-law</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estranged Relationships</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced/Separated</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>6.82</td>
<td>.033*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex common-law</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>77</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex dating</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Police Contact</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim contacted police</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>31.59</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another person contacted police</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Children</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No children</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Injury</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim was not injured</td>
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<td>64</td>
<td>14.47</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim injured</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>History of Violence</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No previous violence</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>59</td>
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<tr>
<td>Previous violence</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>64</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Use of a Weapon</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No weapon used</td>
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<td>59</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>.532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapon used</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Victim age (years)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship Length (months)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of meetings with VWAP</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<0.05; ** p<0.001; *** p<0.001

\(^{12}\) The number of cases (N) for each outcome variable is different due to missing data.
relationships were significantly more likely to cooperate with the prosecution than were women in intact relationships (79 percent versus 51 percent, respectively). More specifically, among all women in estranged relationships, women in divorced/separated relationships were significantly more likely to cooperate compared to previously common-law and previously dating women (87 percent versus 77 percent and 75 percent, respectively). This was determined by conducting three separate cross-tabulation analyses using the Pearson chi-square statistic that compared divorced/separated to previously common-law women, divorced/separated to previously dating women, and previously common-law to previously dating women. There was no significant difference found in the latter comparison, but significant results were found in the first two comparisons. This finding supported Hypothesis 2_{ii}. Hypothesis 2_{iii} was not supported since there was no significant difference in cooperation for women in intact relationships. Contacting the police, which was previously treated as a dependent variable, became an independent variable in the models examining cooperation with the prosecution. The bivariate analysis revealed that women who contacted the police themselves were significantly more likely to cooperate with the prosecution compared to women whose victimization was reported to the police by a third-party (65 percent versus 48 percent, respectively) – this finding contradicts Hypothesis 2_{a}.

Two of the seven control variables yielded significant results in this preliminary analysis. First, those who were uninjured were significantly more likely to cooperate with the prosecution compared to those who were injured (64 percent versus 54 percent, respectively). Finally, the average number of meetings with a victim/assistance worker was significantly greater for women who cooperated with the prosecution compared to
women who did not cooperate with the prosecution (1 meeting versus approximately half of a meeting, respectively).

**Multivariate Analysis: Binary Logistic Regressions**

Table 5 presents the binary logistic regressions predicting a female victim’s likelihood of cooperating with the prosecution. Similar to the previous models that examined contacting the police, three separate logistic regressions for relationship type (i.e., relationship state, intact relationships only, and estranged relationships only) were conducted to avoid possible multicollinearity. In Model 4, which examined relationship state, estranged victims were significantly more likely to cooperate with the prosecution compared to victims in intact relationships – consistent with the findings of McLeod (1983). No significant results were found for Model 5, which examined intact relationships only. Therefore, being in an intact relationship has no effect on legal help-seeking when controlling for other variables.

Model 6, as well as Model 4, Model 7, and Model 9, revealed that a victim’s age was also a significant factor – older victims were significantly more likely to cooperate with the prosecution compared to younger victims. This is consistent with Kaukinen (2002a) who found that older victims were more likely to use substantial help-seeking strategies, but inconsistent with other research which found that older victims did not want formal prosecution (Hare, 2010; McLeod, 1983).

Table 6 presents the logistic regressions for the interactions between relationship type and contacting the police on cooperation with the prosecution. In Model 7, which examined the interaction between relationship state and contacting the police, only the
TABLE 5. Logistic Regressions: Independent Variables and Control Variables on Predicting Cooperation with the Prosecution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 4 Relationship state</th>
<th>Model 5 Intact relationships only</th>
<th>Model 6 Estranged relationships only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>e^b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship State</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estranged</td>
<td>.91***</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common-law</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estranged Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex common-law</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex dating</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another person</td>
<td>-.26</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contacted police</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Present</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injury</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim Injured</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Violence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous violence</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of a Weapon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapon used</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim age (years)</td>
<td>.03*</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Length (months)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Meetings with VWAP</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>574</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-1.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square</td>
<td>41.09***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-likelihood</td>
<td>-362.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<0.05; ** p<0.001; *** p<0.001
main effect of relationship state was significant – demonstrating that women in estranged relationships were significantly more likely to cooperate with the prosecution regardless of who contacted the police to report their victimization. No significant results were found for the interaction or main effects in Model 8 or Model 9. These results rebut Hypothesis 2b, which predicted an interaction effect between relationship state/status and police contact on cooperation with the prosecution.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the results from the quantitative analyses, specifically from bivariate analyses and binary logistic regressions. The bivariate analyses illustrated which independent variables were significantly related to the dependent variables, and the logistic regressions demonstrated the effect of relationship type on legal help-seeking while controlling for other important factors. Only one hypothesis that related to contacting the police was supported by the findings. Hypothesis 1i was correct in predicting that victims in estranged relationships were more likely to personally contact the police to report their victimization compared to victims in intact relationships. Hypothesis 1ii and Hypothesis 1iii were not supported since no significant differences were found among women in various estranged or intact relationship categories, respectively.

Two hypotheses relating to cooperation with the prosecution were supported by the results of this study. First, Hypothesis 2i was supported with a logistic regression revealing that victims in estranged relationships were more likely to cooperate with the prosecution compared to victims in intact relationships. Additionally, Hypothesis 2ii was
### TABLE 6. Logistic Regressions: Interactions Between Relationship Type and Police Contact on Cooperation with the Prosecution (with Control Variables)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 7</th>
<th>Model 8</th>
<th>Model 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship state x Police contact</td>
<td>Intact relationships x Police contact</td>
<td>Estranged relationships x Police contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>( \hat{e}^b )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estranged</td>
<td>1.09***</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship State</td>
<td>Estranged</td>
<td>-.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intact Relationships</td>
<td>Common-law</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dating</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interactions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact*Estranged Status</td>
<td>Other Person*Ex common-law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Person*Ex dating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Present</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victims Injured</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injury</td>
<td>Previous violence</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Violence</td>
<td>Weapon used</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of a Weapon</td>
<td>Victim age (years)</td>
<td>.03**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship Length (months)</td>
<td>-.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Meetings with VWAP</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-1.69</td>
<td>-1.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<0.05; ** p<0.001; *** p<0.001
supported with a bivariate analysis revealing that divorced/separated women were more likely to cooperate with the prosecution compared to women in other estranged categories (i.e., previously common-law and previously dating). Hypothesis 2a, Hypothesis 2b, and Hypothesis 2c were not supported by the results of this study.

Injury and a victim’s age remained fairly consistent in predicting who contacted the police. Additionally, a victim’s age was also fairly consistent in predicting cooperation with the prosecution. The following chapter will discuss the significance of these findings, as well as policy implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

The findings of this study add to the growing body of research examining what factors affect a female victim’s likelihood of contacting the police following an episode of IPV. In addition, these findings contribute to the limited body of research examining the likelihood of victim cooperation with the prosecution. Past research has found several factors that affect a female victim’s chances of seeking legal help (e.g. the presence of children, victim’s age, severity of the violence, etc.). Among these various factors, there are fairly consistent findings regarding relationship state and status. Research within the help-seeking literature and the feminist framework argue that women in estranged relationships are more likely to seek legal help from the criminal justice system for IPV compared to women in intact relationships (Akers & Kaukinen, 2009; Hanisch, 1970; Felson et al., 1999; Felson et al., 2002; Felson & Paré, 2005; Gartner & Macmillan, 1995; Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1984; Lee, 2007; McLeod, 1983). Black (1973) argues that this occurs because of the way law behaves, while feminists argue that a history of patriarchy continues to keep women who are in close, intimate relationships dependent on their abuser (Hanisch, 1970; Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1984; Lee, 2007).

The two key objectives of this study were to, first, investigate whether relationship state and status affected contacting the police and, second, investigate whether relationship state and status affected cooperation with the prosecution. Two additional objectives of this study were to investigate whether personally contacting the police affected cooperation with the prosecution, and if there was an interaction effect between contacting the police and relationship type on cooperation with the prosecution.
This chapter discusses the significant findings related to each of the stated objectives, as well as how each finding can be explained using the theories and extant literature presented in Chapter Two. Next, the implications of this study are discussed, with an emphasis on how the findings might help criminal justice actors and informal sources (i.e., family and friends) that provide support to IPV victims. The limitations of this study are then discussed, followed by suggestions for future research. Finally, a brief conclusion will end this chapter.

Contacting the Police

Relationship State and Status: In support of Hypothesis 1, this study found that women in intact relationships were significantly less likely to contact the police themselves compared to women in estranged relationship. This is consistent with several past research studies that found that women in intact relationships were less likely to seek help from the police in cases of IPV than those women estranged from their abusers (Akers & Kaukinen, 2009; Felson et al., 1999; Felson et al., 2002; Felson & Paré, 2005; Gartner & Macmillan, 1995). Black’s (1976) theory of the behaviour of law explains that the relational distance between an offender and victim can predict and explain the amount of law accessed or delivered. As discussed earlier, when relational distance between the individuals involved is low (e.g. an intact couple) the amount of law used would also be low. As the relational distance increases (i.e., the relationship becomes more estranged and less intimate), the amount of law used would also increase. The results of this study demonstrate that relational distance can predict the amount of law accessed. The amount of law accessed in intact relationships would be less than the amount of law accessed in
estranged relationships since victims in the latter category are significantly more likely to seek legal help.

The significant relationship that was observed between relationship state and contacting the police allows for speculation that a public/private dichotomy might still exist. It appears that little has changed regarding the private nature of IPV despite historical legislative and social changes implemented to encourage help-seeking by IPV victims. Between 1993 and 1999, not long after the implementation of mandatory arrest and pro-charge policies, there was an increase in the percentage of women who reported spousal violence to the police (Statistics Canada, 2006). However, the rate of reporting then began to decrease between 1999 and 2009, and continues to remain low (Statistics Canada, 2013). The results of this study exemplify the continued reluctance of women in intact relationships to report IPV victimization.

Hypothesis 1_iii was rebutted through bivariate and multivariate analyses. A bivariate analysis, which conducted separate cross-tabulations that specifically looked at within group comparisons, revealed that married and common-law women were significantly more likely to contact the police compared to dating women. These results contradict the hypothesis since they cannot be explained using Black’s (1976) theory of the behaviour of law. However, these results do support research done by Meyer (2010) who found that married women were significantly more likely to seek formal avenues of support (e.g. seeking help from law enforcement) compared to women in other intact relationship categories. Meyer (2010) reasoned that married women might be more likely to seek legal help compared to dating women since the latter relationship category lacks a legal commitment and is easier to sever. Therefore, perhaps women who were dating
their abuser attempted to end the violence and the relationship in more informal ways, rather than contacting the police, since their relationship was already informal (i.e., not legally binding).

The multivariate analysis found no significant difference in reporting behaviour for women in various intact relationship categories, which does not support Hypothesis 1_{\text{iii}}. This might indicate that once other factors are taken into consideration (e.g. the presence of children, the age of the victim, the length of the relationship, etc.), married and common-law women are no longer more likely to contact the police compared to dating women. In general, intact women are not willing to contact the police regardless of their specific relationship status.

**Children:** Theoretically-driven and relevant control variables were also investigated to determine their effect on legal help-seeking in relation to the victim-offender relationship. The presence of children was found to be associated with contacting the police in both bivariate and multivariate analyses – women with children were significantly more likely to contact the police themselves compared to women without children. Prior research that investigated the effect of children on women’s help-seeking behaviour have yielded mixed results; however, this study’s finding is consistent with research done by Akers and Kaukinen (2009) and Meyer (2010). Typically, the child’s safety was an important factor that encouraged female victims of IPV to seek legal help. The woman would seek to protect her child from physical abuse if she was concerned that her abuser might direct his anger towards the child (Erez & Belknap, 1998). In addition, children who intervened to protect their mother from being abused were at risk of being physically harmed (Epstein, 1999). The child’s emotional and
psychological well-being were also important factors if the child witnessed the abuse or if the home was ridden with drugs and alcohol.

Given that a multivariate analysis also found that female victims in estranged relationships were significantly more likely to contact the police compared to female victims in intact relationships, it might indicate that being in an estranged relationship is related to the presence of children. Perhaps the reasons listed above (i.e., a woman wanting to ensure the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of her children) might have been the primary reasons that a female victim ended the relationship with her abusive partner. As the violence continued post-separation, the estranged woman might be more willing to contact the police, not necessarily because of the children, but because the relationship had already been severed and there was now greater relational distance between her and her abuser – making her more willing to have the law applied. Thus, wanting to protect her children might be the reason that a woman is willing to end an abusive relationship, and the lack of commitment might be the reason that she is now willing to contact the police.

The presence of children has been identified as a risk factor for increased violence for women in estranged relationships (Brownridge, 2006). Increased violence among estranged couples with children may occur because the man becomes upset if he loses a custody battle, the man fears that the woman is sabotaging the father-child relationship, or simply because scheduled visits with a child means that the man and woman must interact, thereby increasing the opportunity for violence to occur (Brownridge, 2006). This increased level of violence might also explain why women in estranged relationships
who have children are more likely to contact the police compared to women in intact relationships or women who do not have children.

**Injury:** The findings pertaining to injury were surprising since they were not consistent with results found in several past research studies. This study found that women who sustained an injury were significantly more likely to have their victimization reported by another person. This is inconsistent with many past research studies that found that physical injury was a significant factor in a female victim’s decision to seek legal help by reporting an episode of IPV to police (Bachman & Coker, 1995; Barrett & St. Pierre, 2011; McLeod, 1983; Meyer, 2010). One possible explanation for this inconsistent finding might be a victim’s fear of retaliation. Fear of retaliation was found to significantly discourage a woman from seeking legal help for IPV (Erez & Belknap, 1998). If a woman contacted the police for her victimization and her abuser was not arrested, jailed, or charged (even if he was charged, he would eventually be released), she feared that he might punish her by retaliating with more severe violence (Liang et al., 2005). Additionally, past studies have found that victims of IPV are not likely to seek legal help if there was a history of violence in their relationship (Bachman & Coker, 1995; Zoellner et al., 2000). Thus, despite the severity of the violence and injuries a woman might have sustained, a victim is likely to become withdrawn and passive if she initially attempted to seek help but her efforts were unsuccessful and only resulted in more violence (Barnish, 2004; Hein & Ruglass, 2009).

The seriousness of the injury, which was not captured in this study, might also have a significant effect on legal help-seeking behaviour. This study only observed injury as a dichotomous variable – whether the victim sustained an injury or did not sustain an
injury. Prior research has found that the likelihood of female victims seeking legal help from the police and prosecutors increases as the severity and perceived dangerousness of the violence increases (McLeod, 1983; Goodman et al., 1999; Felson et al., 2000; Felson et al., 2002; Felson & Paré, 2005; Ansara & Hindin, 2010). Therefore, a victim is not likely to contact police if she perceives the incident and injuries as being minor. This explanation is related to relationship state since female victims who are in estranged relationships are more likely to experience more severe violence compared to women in intact relationships, which might explain why the former group is more likely to contact the police (Brownridge, 2006).

**Age:** Consistent with past research studies, this study found that older victims were more likely to seek legal help by contacting the police, compared to younger victims (Block, 1974; Felson et al., 2000; Felson et al., 2002, Felson & Paré, 2005; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1980). One explanation for this finding might be that estranged couples are more likely to be older than married couples. National Canadian data revealed that the average age at divorce for women in 2008 was 41.9 years (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2014). On the other hand, the average age for first marriage in 2008 was 29.1 years (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2014). Nonetheless, both the intact and estranged categories in this current study also include victims who were dating or previously dating their abuser. Therefore, although the national trend suggests that women in estranged relationships are older than women in intact relationships, those statistics do not factor in women at the dating stage who might be younger than those who are in more formal/serious relationships (i.e., marriage).
Another explanation for why older women might be more likely to seek legal help for IPV is because older women might be more likely to have children compared to younger women, and the results of this study indicated that women with children were more likely to contact the police compared to women without children. National Canadian data revealed that the average age for women giving birth for the first time in 2010 was 29.6 years, which was an increase over the past three decades (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2014). On the other hand, the number of births to teenage mothers has decreased constantly over the past three decades (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2014). This trend suggests that women are waiting longer to start having children; thus, children may be a factor only relevant to older victims compared to younger victims. Barrett and St. Pierre (2011) suggested that perhaps the maternal situation of older women affects their legal help-seeking behaviour compared to younger women.

Cooperation with the Prosecution

Relationship State and Status: In support of Hypothesis 2, and consistent with McLeod’s (1983) findings, the results of this study revealed that women in estranged relationships were more likely to cooperate with the prosecution compared to women in intact relationships. Similar to the discussion on contacting the police, Black’s (1976) theory on the behaviour of law can be used to explain these results. In addition, as discussed above, the results exemplify that a public/private dichotomy might still exist since women in intact relationships are not likely to seek legal help by cooperating with the prosecution. Victims of IPV still have the choice of refusing to cooperate in the prosecution of their abuser despite the existence of mandatory arrest and pro-charge
legislations. Although the police might have been contacted and a case made it to the prosecution stage, this is not an indication that female victims want law applied and will continue to seek legal help. Prosecutors have indicated that low rates of prosecution in IPV cases are a result of victims changing their minds about pressing charges or refusing to cooperate as witnesses (Ursel, 1995). Therefore, women in intact relationships might choose to remain in the private sphere for various reasons (e.g. economic dependency, the presence of children, fear of retaliation, etc.) despite the pressure to cooperate or the assumption that prosecution is the only/best option for her. On the other hand, women in estranged relationships might be more willing to seek legal help within the public sphere because they are less economically and emotionally dependent on their abuser (McLeod, 1983).

In support of Hypothesis 2\textsubscript{ii}, bivariate results revealed that divorced/separated women were more likely to cooperate with the prosecution compared to previously common law and previously dating women. Statistics show that separated women typically face the greatest risk of homicide from abusive intimate partners (Trainor, 2002). Therefore, if a female’s relationship status affects the amount of violence she experiences, it seems reasonable that her relationship status might also affect her experiences in seeking help. However, the multivariate analysis found no significant difference in cooperating for women in various estranged relationship categories, which does not support Hypothesis 2\textsubscript{ii}. This might indicate that once other factors are taken into consideration (e.g. the presence of children, the age of the victim, the length of the relationship, etc.), divorced/separated women are no longer more likely to cooperate with the prosecution compared to previously common-law and previously dating women. In
general, estranged women are willing to cooperate with the prosecution regardless of their specific relationship status.

**Contacting the Police:** Contrary to Hypothesis 2b, a bivariate analysis revealed that women who contacted the police themselves were more likely to cooperate with the prosecution compared to women in which a third-party reported their victimization. Two possible explanations could be used to understand these results. First, there was no variable in this study indicating how many times a victim might have had prior contact with police. If a victim had already contacted police for IPV several times in the past, that might explain why she was willing to cooperate with the prosecution this time. In the past, she might have contacted police only for temporary separation but not for legal, formal punishment – as suggested by Hoyle and Sanders (2000). However, the victim might decide to finally have her abuser prosecuted the more frequently she reports episodes of IPV.

Second, as mentioned earlier, various types of help-seeking operate within a pathway such that informal help from family, friends, and social service agencies facilitate legal help-seeking and encourage the help-seeker to obtain professional help from the criminal justice system (Kaukinen, 2002a). This study initially hypothesized that reporting by one of these supports would encourage the victim to follow through with the criminal justice process. However, the results indicated instead that maybe those informal supports encouraged and motivated the female victim to independently seek legal help from the criminal justice system. The victim might be more willing to contact the police herself and cooperate with the prosecution once she has gone through the help-seeking pathway and consulted with family and friends. This study, however, did not measure or
investigate informal help-seeking behaviour so conclusions cannot be made.

Feminists have argued that female autonomy and empowerment are important factors to strive for when combating IPV (Barry, 1979; Lee, 2007). It is important for women to independently change their situations in order to live as free and autonomous individuals. Perhaps this is one explanation for these unexpected results. Perhaps women who contact the police themselves feel more liberated and empowered, which makes them more willing to later cooperate with the prosecution. Regardless of the motives or intentions a female victim might have for seeking help, these results are a great example of female empowerment, which is important for patriarchal emancipation. However, these results were not observed in a multivariate analysis; thus, when other factors are introduced, cooperation with the prosecution is no longer affected by who contacts the police.

**Age:** Similar to contacting the police, it was found that older victims were more likely to seek legal help by cooperating with the prosecution compared to younger victims. Although this is inconsistent with research that found that older victims did not want formal prosecution (Hare, 2010; McLeod, 1983), it supports research done by Kaukinen (2002a) who found that older victims were more likely to use substantial help-seeking strategies. Since these results were consistent with the results pertaining to contacting the police, this study demonstrates that, overall, older victims are more likely to seek legal help in various forms compared to younger victims. The significance of age on cooperation with the prosecution was only observed through a multivariate analysis, which means that the presence of another variable interacts with the victim’s age to affect her legal help-seeking. Relationship state was the only other significant variable in the
model which might illustrate that, as discussed previously, women in estranged relationships are more likely to be older than are women in intact relationships; thus, older women and women in estranged relationships have the greatest likelihood of cooperating with the prosecution.

**Implications of this Current Study**

McLeod (1983) believed that prosecution in cases of IPV should be an option for all female victims despite their different characteristics and variances in their cases. It is the responsibility of researchers and criminal justice actors to determine what obstacles exist for victims and what factors affect their decision-making; this will help to develop methods that maximize victims’ cooperation with the prosecution. In addition, Black (1976) believed that his theory could be used to develop “innovative ways to equalize outcomes across cases” (xi). Thus, by using Black’s theory of the behaviour of law to illustrate that victims who are relationally closer to their abuser are least likely to contact police and cooperate with the prosecution, methods and policies can be established to ensure that legal help-seeking occurs regardless of a female’s relationship state and status.

**Educating Criminal Justice Actors**

The way the police respond to victims of IPV can directly affect the victim’s next steps in the criminal justice process since police officers are gatekeepers into the system (Wright & Johnson, 2009). Thus, the implications of this study extend to criminal justice actors (i.e., police officers and prosecutors). Police may have to adjust their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours depending on the victim-offender relationship, which was the focal variable of this study. Traditionally, police were reluctant to intervene in an IPV
case since they did not perceive it as a public matter and did not think victims were serious in wanting their abuser arrested (Hirschel & Hutchinson, 2003; Patterson, 2010). Despite the implementation of mandatory arrest policies, some police officers still prefer not to respond to IPV cases (Feder, 1997). For example, research conducted by Feder (1997) found that the police’s belief regarding a woman’s role in the family was highly related to how they viewed IPV and female victims. Police who had traditional views felt that it was not their role to respond to violence within the home and they felt negatively about having to make an arrest (Feder, 1997).

Experiences with the police vary widely; however, some women have reported negative occurrences. Some female victims have stated that they were discouraged from pursuing further legal interventions because the police were insensitive, impersonal, dismissive, and did not treat the case seriously (Gillis et al, 2006). Additionally, delayed police response also discouraged women from continuing in the criminal justice process (Gillis et al, 2006). Furthermore, police with traditional family views might unconsciously participate in victim-blaming, which might result in the female victim feeling guilty and unwilling to cooperate in the prosecution of her abuser.

Police who respond to IPV calls should always make an effort to be compassionate and sensitive regardless of the specific circumstances of each case. However, since this current study found that certain women (i.e., women in intact relationships) are less likely to cooperate with the prosecution compared to others (i.e., women in estranged relationships), the police should consciously make an additional effort to ensure that women in intact relationships are encouraged to seek further legal help. It would be important to educate the police on which group of women are less likely
to seek legal help since the likelihood of cooperation increases if a female victim receives positive treatment and compassion from the police (Patterson, 2010).

Educating the police alone is not sufficient when addressing IPV since the role of prosecutors after the offender is taken into custody is also important in the criminal justice process (Mignon & Holmes, 1995). Victim cooperation with prosecutors is critical for successful prosecution in cases of IPV (Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001; Carlson & Nidey, 1997; Goodman et al., 1999). Thus, it is important to educate prosecutors on factors that affect cooperation with victims so that they can act accordingly to increase the success of the case.

Victims’ experiences with prosecutors also vary greatly; however, some women have also reported negative occurrences at this stage in the criminal justice process. Some female victims have reported that prosecutors provide very little guidance, support, and information leading up to the court date (Gillis et al., 2006). Additionally, female victims described court proceedings as intimidating and impersonal, and they felt unprepared to participate (Gillis et al., 2006). For reasons such as these, female victims might be unwilling to cooperate with the prosecution. Prosecutors and court officials may also have to adjust their attitudes and behaviours depending on the victim-offender relationship in order to ensure that a woman feels comfortable enough to cooperate in the court proceedings. Although criminal justice actors should always make an effort to treat IPV cases with seriousness and sensitivity, they should be better educated on what variances might hinder a case’s success, and then respond accordingly.

Although there are several factors that affect why female victims in intact relationships do not want to seek legal help, criminal justice actors can do their part by
ensuring that their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours do not further affect a woman’s decision. Traditionally, during the early stages of the battered women’s movement in the 1970s and 1980s, feminists were wary about turning to the state for help since it represented patriarchal domination that they were seeking to overcome (Bailey, 2010). Therefore, it is important that criminal justice actors do not further perpetuate patriarchal ideologies that female victims are trying to escape by treating them with little empathy and not taking their cases seriously. It is important that women in intact relationships who felt trapped in the private sphere are supported and treated with sensitivity as they enter the public sphere. Women have stated that they would have done things differently in the court process if criminal justice actors were more informative and compassionate (Gillis et al., 2006).

The results of this study might also encourage criminal justice actors to utilize strategies known to increase cooperation. For instance, the bivariate results in this study support research conducted by Dawson and Dinovitzer (2001), which found that victim/witness assistance workers increase a victim’s likelihood of cooperating with the prosecution. Criminal justice actors can then introduce a victim/witness assistance worker into the case as a way of increasing cooperation between victims and prosecutors, especially if the victim is in an intact relationship. In British Columbia, The Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General’s report entitled Referral Policy for Victims of Power-Based Crimes: Family Violence, Sexual Assault, and Criminal Harassment directs police to refer victims of IPV to community-based victim services in order to increase victim safety and cooperation with the criminal justice system (Rossiter, 2011). The
results of this current study could be used to ensure similar directives are implemented across Canada.

**Educating Family and Friends**

This study also has important implications for the family and friends of female victims facing IPV. This study found that female victims are less likely to cooperate with the prosecution if a third-party reports their victimization compared to if the victim reported the incident herself. Although the support and encouragement from family and friends is important and necessary, they should know when their actions might not have the desired outcome. Family and friends should encourage and motivate a victim to independently contact the police rather than intervening and contacting the police on the victim’s behalf. The results of this study show that third-party reporting does not help with further legal help-seeking. Additionally, family and friends of victims would need to know which relationship state results in the lowest likelihood of legal help-seeking in order to effectively support those victims who might need more encouragement. Campaigns such as Neighbours, Friends and Families (2010) which help raise awareness for those who are close to abused victims might benefit from the results of this study. This program strives to increase public accountability for preventing and intervening in cases of IPV through educating individuals on specific strategies they can use to assist women being abused (Barrett & St. Pierre, 2011). However, further research is needed on this topic since the effect of third-party reporting was only found in a bivariate analysis.
**Contribution to the Help-seeking Literature**

The main findings of this study are that female victims in intact relationships are significantly less likely to seek legal help by contacting the police and cooperating with the prosecution, compared to female victims in estranged relationships. These findings contribute to the help-seeking literature in several ways. First, the results support what has been found in numerous past research studies that have investigated the association between the victim-offender relationship and contacting the police (Gartner & Macmillan, 1995; Felson et al., 1999; Felson, Messner, Hoskin, & Deane, 2002; Felson & Paré, 2005; Akers & Kaukinen, 2009). Second, the results of this current study add to the limited, and mixed, body of literature that examines the association between the victim-offender relationship and cooperation with the prosecution. Third, these results are a significant contribution to the current help-seeking literature within a Canadian context.

Finally, this study’s main findings are important to the help-seeking literature overall, rather than just areas that examine police and prosecution separately. This study used one sample and demonstrated that female victims in intact relationships are less likely to contact police and cooperate with the prosecution, compared to victims in estranged relationships. This is significant because it illustrates that women in intact relationships are not willing to seek any form of legal help. It would appear that these women do not want the law applied in their relationships regardless of what stage they are at in the criminal justice process.
Limitations

Despite this study’s results that contribute to the existing body of literature regarding factors that influence legal help-seeking for female victims of IPV, it is not without its limitations. First, although a common and unbiased method was used to manage missing data, its inefficiency was a limitation. Discarding cases from analyses resulted in smaller sample sizes for some variables, thereby limiting the significance of the findings and making it difficult to generalize to a larger population.

Second, relevant control variables were not included in the analyses since secondary data was used. As mentioned earlier, past research has found that a victim’s race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, and highest level of education were factors that significantly affected legal help-seeking by female victims of IPV (Akers & Kaukinen, 2009; Bachman & Coker, 1995; Hirschel & Hutchinson, 2003; Felson et al., 2000; Felson et al., 2002; Felson and Paré, 2005; Meyer, 2010). For example, Bachman and Coker (1995), Felson et al. (2002), and Felson and Paré (2005) found that Black victims were more likely to report their victimization to police compared to White victims. In addition, Meyer (2010) found a greater proportion of female victims with a high school education or lower were more likely to seek formal and legal help compared to victims with post-secondary education. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, there was no variable in the original dataset measuring how many times a victim might have had prior contact with the police. This information might have been useful in explaining why women who contacted police themselves were more likely to seek permanent prosecution, which was contrary to past research findings (Ellsbergs et al., 2001; Hoyle & Sanders, 2000; Hirschel & Hutchinson, 2003). It is unknown what effect these variables would have had.
on this current study with the specific sample used; however, the results of this study were still significant and pose important implications with other relevant controls used to ensure validity.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

First, future research should continue to examine the association between relationship type and cooperation with the prosecution. Aside from McLeod’s (1983) study, no recent research has been done specifically looking at the association between a victim’s relationship status and her likelihood of cooperating with the prosecution in a case of IPV. Furthermore, future research should look at the effect of being a male victim on cooperation with the prosecution. Again, only McLeod’s (1983) study has examined this in-depth, but that study was conducted over 30 years ago using an American sample. Future research should examine relationship type on cooperation with the prosecution using a male-only sample across various nations.

Second, future research should re-examine the affect of who contacted the police on cooperation with the prosecution. Although this current study found that female victims were more likely to cooperate with the prosecution if they contacted the police themselves, compared to female victims who had another person report the incident to police, this was only observed in a bivariate analysis. Future research should try to examine which control variables cause this relationship to disappear so that family members and friends of IPV victims can be properly educated on the effects of their assistance.

Third, no recent research has investigated the effect of victim/assistance workers on a female victim’s likelihood of cooperating with the prosecution for IPV. Although
this was not the focus of this study, it is interesting to note that this variable was only significant in a bivariate analysis but not in a multivariate analysis. Therefore, while meetings with a victim/assistance worker is an important factor predicting continued help-seeking (i.e., cooperation with the prosecution), the effect of this variable is lost once other variables are introduced – namely, relationship state and status. Future research should examine the association between a victim’s relationship to her offender and how that specifically affects her use of a victim/assistance worker. This is important to study since Dawson and Dinovitzer (2001) suggested that increased funding should be put into advocacy agencies to offer greater support to victims. Thus, it would be important to know which victims are more likely to use these programs and services (i.e., are women in estranged or intact relationships more likely to use victim/assistance programs?). In addition, rather than being treated as an outcome variable, the use of a victim/assistance worker could be observed as an intervening variable between relationship type and cooperation with the prosecution to determine which cases are more likely to benefit from these services (i.e., are women in estranged or intact relationships more likely to cooperate with the prosecution as a result of using a victim/assistance worker?).

Future research that investigates the use of victim/assistance workers is useful because of the support these workers offer to victims. As Dawson and Dinovitzer (2001) argued, victim/assistance workers present various options to abused women who might be dependent on their abusers and who will be left financially disadvantaged if he is prosecuted. These workers also help victims through the criminal justice system and criminal justice proceedings so that the victim is less likely to change her mind about
cooperation due to nervousness and anxiety. Overall, victim/assistance workers help victims make an informed decision to leave the violence within the private sphere and to exercise their autonomy (Bell & Goodman, 2001; Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001). Although the goals of advocacy workers are limited to only helping victims navigate through the criminal justice system and plan for safety, encouragement to overcome isolation within the home is an important unintended consequence (Bell & Goodman, 2001).

Fourth, future research should use a multidisciplinary approach to investigate why relationship state and status even matter. This study, and past studies, found that women in intact relationships were less likely to seek legal help compared to women in estranged relationships. Theoretical frameworks within psychology, sociology, criminology, and philosophy should discuss the differences between women in these relationship categories to investigate what specifically might explain the differences in their legal help-seeking behaviour. Such research will direct public policy initiatives to focus on the specific needs of women and address the characteristics that limit legal help-seeking.

Fifth, future research should examine different viewpoints regarding the public/private dichotomy and attempt to investigate why this dichotomy appears to still exist despite historical legal and social changes relating to IPV. Research should examine to what extent, if any, patriarchal ideologies continue to cause victims in intact relationships to remain silent, offenders to abuse their partners, and criminal justice actors to treat IPV cases with little seriousness. Although there are many factors that cause female victims to remain silent when they experience IPV, it would appear that the effects of patriarchy might still play a large role, and be an underlying issue, in why
victims in intact relationships do not seek legal help.

Finally, future research should continue to investigate the effect of variables that yield contradicting or inconclusive results as it relates to legal help-seeking. For example, this study found older victims were more likely to seek legal help compared to younger victims, which was consistent with some past research studies (Block, 1974; Felson et al., 2000; Felson et al., 2002, Felson & Paré, 2005; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1980) but inconsistent with others (Barrett & St. Pierre, 2011; Hare, 2010; Hirschel and Hutchinson, 2003; McLeod, 1983). Therefore, future research should continue to observe such variables to add to the continued debate within the help-seeking literature.

Conclusion

Female victims of IPV continue to remain in the private sphere and do not seek legal help for their victimization despite various laws and legislations that were created to make IPV more widely recognized as a public issue. Specifically, women in intact relationships are less likely to contact police and cooperate with the prosecution compared to women in estranged relationships. Black (1973) argues that this occurs because of the way law behaves and because less law is sought and applied when two individuals are relationally close to one another. On the other hand, feminists argue that this relationship exists because a history of patriarchy continues to keep women who are in close, intimate relationships dependent on their abuser (Hanisch, 1970; Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1984; Lee, 2007). This dependency makes women reluctant to participate in the arrest and prosecution of their abuser; thus, they remain in the private sphere and keep their victimization hidden from the public. Along with these two theoretical perspectives explaining why women in certain relationship categories might be more or less likely to
seek legal help, various factors such as a victim’s age and whether an injury was sustained further added to the debate. As mentioned, it is the responsibility of researchers and criminal justice actors to determine what obstacles exist for victims and what factors affect their decision-making in order to help develop methods that maximize cooperation.
References


