



From Awareness to Action

BRIEF

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Taking Seriousness Seriously: Revisiting Gender Symmetry and Mutual Violence in Intimate Partner Violence through Role Types in IPV Events Reported to the Police





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FOREWORD

This learning brief is a synopsis of the information and findings presented in Jackson, M., Giles, C., & Davies, G. (2024). Taking Seriousness Seriously: Revisiting Gender Symmetry and Mutual Violence in Intimate Partner Violence through Role Types in IPV Events Reported to the Police. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 66(2), 46-66.

INTRODUCTION

The study discussed in this learning brief examines gender symmetry, asymmetry and mutual violence in intimate partner violence (IPV) events reported to the police. A large database of police recorded IPV was analysed over a four-year period (2009-2012), to examine the patterns of intimate partner violence. The analysis centres on roles (as victims and perpetrators) in police reported IPV with a specific focus on repeat perpetrators and victims.

THE BEGINNINGS

Gender symmetry or equivalence remains a controversial concept in intimate partner violence (IPV) research. It holds that males and females are equally likely to initiate and perpetrate violence in the context of relationships against their intimate partners (Straus and Mickey 2012). Historically, as more public attention came to be paid to IPV in the 1970s, it was more frequently criminalized by the police (Cross 2022). The two primary sources came to be relied upon to capture IPV information were the victimization surveys (VS-IPV) and police-based statistics (PR-IPV).

A significant amount of research based in victimization designs has indicated that men and women are equally likely to perpetrate violence in their relationships (Archer 2002; Desmarais, Reeves, Nicholls, Telford and Fiebert 2012a; Desmarais, Reeves, Nicholls, Telford and Fiebert 2012b). This finding emerges despite the recognition that although females may initiate violence, they are more likely to experience more severe victimization than males. In an English study, for example, the violence used by men against female partners was much more severe than that used by women against men (Hester 2013).

The findings that more severe forms of intimate partner violence are perpetrated by men against women victims is present in police reported IPV (PR-IPV) in Canada (Statistics Canada 2022). Burczykca (2016) also found notable differences in 2014 between the severity of violence experienced by women as compared to men. Women were twice as likely as men to experience being sexually assaulted, beaten, choked or threatened with a gun or knife (34% versus 16%, respectively).

The controversial nature of the victimization survey (VS-IPV) findings, on the other hand, professing that men and women commit and experience IPV equally, has resulted in a series of critiques of both the victimization approach itself and the use of the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS) or the CTS2 (a more advanced form of the original CTS) which are often used to analyze that victimization (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 1998; Johnson 2011; Kimmel 2002; Michalski 2005).

The two approaches produce different accounts of IPV (see Neilson 2020; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2010). While police data indicate that men are disproportionately the perpetrators in the majority of PR-IPV cases, victimization surveys (VS-IPV- such as those used in family conflict studies) suggest that men and women tended to be equally likely to initiate violence toward each other in intimate relationships (Desmarais et al. 2012a). Strauss in his 2011 paper, argues that “ordinary” violence, such as slapping, shoving and throwing things at a partner, is prevalent in the general population and is symmetrical, whereas “severe” violence such as choking, punching and attacks with objects, is rare in the general population, but male dominant.

Lysova, Dim and Dutton (2019), using data from the 2014 Canadian General Social Survey (GSS) on victimization, measured physical, including sexual, violence utilizing a revised version of the CTS2 method.¹ Two of the gender symmetric findings were, first, that 35% of male and 34% of female victims of VS-IPV experienced high controlling behaviours – defined as the most severe type of abuse known as intimate terrorism.² As well, 22% of male victims and 19% of female victims of VS-IPV were found to have experienced severe physical violence along with high controlling behaviours. As far as gender asymmetric findings, however, the authors conclude that women were more likely than men to be reported as victims of intimate partner homicide, sexual assaults, criminal harassment, and uttering threats in the intimate relationship. This is indicative of the more serious nature of VS-IPV offence types against women (Lysova et al., 2019).

Statistics Canada reported on the results from a survey which intended to assess victims’ experiences of VS-IPV, as well as the frequency and consequences of the violence. More than 1 in 10 (12%) female victims of VS-IPV reported experiencing at least one abusive behaviour on a daily basis in the past 12 months. This was the case for a smaller proportion of male victims (6%). Fear is considerably more common among women who experience IPV—nearly 4 in 10 (37%) women who were IPV victims said that they were afraid of a partner at some point in their life because of their experiences, well above the proportion of men (9%) (Cotter 2022).

Among the most important issues with regard to the CTS and CTS2 are: the exclusive focus on acts, which does not take into account the likely inaccuracy of retrospective reports of the past year’s events, especially for those with repeated exposure to VS-IPV; and the formulaic distinctions between minor and severe violence (Dobash, Dobash, Wilson and Daly 1992). An addendum should be added with an issue raised by Kimmel (2002), who points out two statistical anomalies which question gender symmetry findings in VS-IPV. Kimmel (2002: 1336) suggests there needs to be an accounting of why there is a dramatic disproportionate number of women in shelters and emergency care facilities and, the fact that the claims of gender symmetry “must be squared with” the fact that “men are far more disproportionately likely to use violence than are women” in all other types of violent crime.

POLICE-BASED INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE DATA

Police-based crime statistics consistently show the gendered nature of PR-IPV. Data from Statistics Canada (2023) on police-reported family violence and intimate partner violence show that these categories are significant social issues with rates of 337 victims per 100,000 population for family violence and 346 per 100,000 for intimate partner violence incidents reported to the police. Within these overall rates, data indicate that the rates for females aged 12 years or older are more than two times higher for family violence and more than three times higher for intimate partner violence as compared to males.

The empirical evidence indicates that greater harm is caused to women in a greater number of incidents of PR-IPV. In the early 1990s, Dobash et al. (1992: 75) reference the results of a US National Crime Studies report by Schwartz (1987), noting that there are “more than 13 times as many women [than men] seeking medical care from a private physician for injuries received in a spousal assault”.

However, police-reported crime statistics are limited by several factors. A primary factor being that the event has to be reported to the police. The 2019 General Social Survey on Canadians’ Safety data indicates that the vast majority (80%) of spousal victims said the violence they experienced was not reported to the police. Given the complex nature of relationships, the report suggests intimate partner violence is particularly susceptible to underreporting. The reasons victims could be reluctant or unable to report to police could in part be because there are shared children involved and/or financial dependence (Conroy 2021). On the other hand, research on reporting indicates that women victims of VS-IPV were three times more likely to report violent IPV incidents to the police than men victims of IPV (Brennan 2011). Qualitative research has noted that men who had been physically abused by their partners indicate that they failed to report because they felt they had failed to achieve culturally defined masculine characteristics, such as independence, strength, toughness and self-reliance. As a result, the men felt emasculated and marginalized (Hine, Bates, and Wallace 2020; National Clearing House on Violence 2002: 6).

CONTEXT NEEDED FOR BOTH VICTIMIZATION AND POLICE-BASED STUDIES

Therefore, it is argued that both approaches, victimization studies (e.g., CTSs) and police data-based studies, could benefit from more contextual information. Nonetheless, research indicates women are less likely to over-report the behaviour of partners (Martinson and Jackson 2017). Kimmel (2002: 1345) notes that women, in addition to overestimating their own violence, also tend to discount or normalize their partner’s violence or even excuse their partner’s violence because they (themselves) ‘deserve it’. Moreover, Kimmel (2002: 1345) indicates that men may overestimate their partner’s violence for the same norms of masculinity, as hold true for women.³ Although not the focus of the present learning brief, a variation on the gender symmetry issue arises from a consideration of mutual violence or bi-directional violence in which the behaviour is described as co-occurring between the two partners (Ahmed, Helmus and Lysova 2024).⁴

The debate over gender symmetry in intimate partner violence continues to be highly salient for a number of reasons. First, the debate is not just theoretical or ideological, rather, it also has important practical implications. Second, the debate carries with it broader social repercussions as well. It can influence the kinds of interventions that get developed (Brown 2012; Lysova et al. 2019) as well as the ways males and females are impacted and interventions available to address the immediate and long-term needs of these victims (Lysova et al. 2019).

CURRENT STUDY

The current study focused on understanding PR-IPV in the context of repeat perpetration and repeat victimization in police IPV data. The present study analyses these dynamics in terms of victim and perpetrator role sequences by creating role histories (defined below) for each person in the data. Police data linking PR-IPV events to individual persons provides an appropriate source for this research because the dates attached to each incident of IPV allow for *role histories* (i.e., victim and perpetrator roles) to be constructed for each person. In doing so, this research seeks to address some of the limitations of victimization-based research, such as the difficulty in analysing repeat incidents and the limitations of studies based on official police data, which focus primarily on IPV events and not role histories. Person role histories constructed from police recorded IPV incidents provide an opportunity to examine several questions pertaining to IPV research generally, and the gender symmetry/asymmetry debate specifically. The research questions that guide this study are:

1. What are the observed patterns of symmetry/asymmetry in the context of IPV police events for males and females with repeated police contacts (over time)?
2. Do the number of police recorded events associated to persons affect the patterns of victim and perpetrator role associations for subsequent repeat PR-IPV contacts (the history of the contacts)?
3. What are the sequence patterns of IPV in the role histories for males and females with different counts of PR-IPV contacts?

METHOD

Database

The data for this research are comprised of all IPV events and associated persons from 2009 to 2012 from a large police force in British Columbia. In the four-year period, this police force recorded 31,721 IPV events.⁵ These are associated with 31,922 perpetrator roles and 34,907 victim roles for a total of 66,829 roles with valid entries for gender of the persons associated to the IPV events. Of the 66,829 roles, 50,833 unique persons (25,720 males and 25,113 females) had one or more victim and/or perpetrator roles in the data. The structure of the records management system (RMS) allows for more than one perpetrator (i.e., multiple charges) and more than one victim (i.e., multiple victimizations) role association to each event. The definitions of each of these roles are described below.

Data Description

The data were retrieved from the records management system (RMS) of a large police force in British Columbia that services several communities.⁶ Persons in the RMS are assigned a unique identification number and are associated to events through a role type code (discussed in the Measures section). Unique identification numbers for persons allow separate IPV events to be associated to unique persons from their respective role type associations, such as victim roles or perpetrator roles or both. For example, in a PR-IPV event where a male is the victim, the event would be linked to the person through a victim role with an associated reported date.

Measures

The primary unit in this study is the role history type of each person associated to IPV events in the police data. A role history is the sequence of victim and perpetrator role type associations for each person ordered by the dates of each IPV event. There are two role types of importance to the research. *The first are the victim roles, which are all roles where a person is defined by the police as a victim in the context of the IPV event. The second are termed perpetrator roles, and it includes arrested, charged, charges recommended, suspect chargeable and suspect (e.g., the victim declines to proceed) role associations.* The vast majority of perpetrator role types are people who are charged (86.1%) or suspect chargeable (12.1%).

This study also presents counts of role types for persons with multiple IPV roles to analyse mutual, symmetrical and asymmetrical violence in repeat perpetration and victimization. The data include a field for the gender of all persons associated to an IPV event as a victim or perpetrator. This allows for an examination of the influence of gender on victim and perpetrator role histories.

Results

In keeping with past research, the findings show an overall pattern of gender asymmetry for IPV offences for women generally and across repeat IPV police contacts. Across repeat contacts with the police, the results indicate that the probability of being victimized repeatedly is much greater for females, although there is a notable amount of symmetrical and mutual violence, gauged by similar levels of victim and perpetrator roles counts in the histories of females as well. In addition, as the number of associated events increases, a greater proportion of females have one or more perpetrator role associations in their histories. The results indicate that in the context of mutual violence, females are also likely to have a small number of (i.e., one) perpetrator roles within a more substantial history of victimization.

Detailed Discussion

The breakdown of role associations in the PR-IPV sample in Figures 1 and 2 for all victims and perpetrators shows that 75.6% of victims identified as female (Figure 1) and 78.8% of perpetrators identified as male (Figure 2). In this sample of PR-IPV overall, males are almost four times as likely as females to be perpetrators of IPV, and females are more than three times as likely as males to be victims of IPV. These findings are comparable to past research based on UCR data (see Brennan, 2011).

Figure 1: *Proportion of Victim Roles by Gender in PR-IPV.*

Victim Roles of Male and Female Persons (n=34,907)

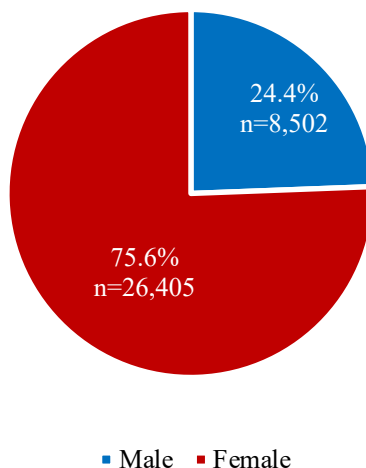
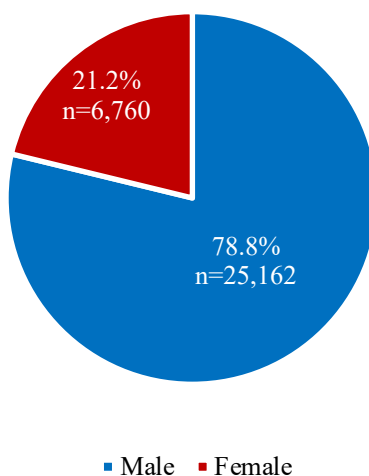


Figure 2: *Proportion of Perpetrator Roles by Gender in PR-IPV.*

Perpetrator Roles of Male and Female Persons (n=31,922)



An important means for assessing the patterns of PR-IPV victimization is to consider victim and perpetrator role association totals linked to each person in their role histories. Table 1 presents frequencies of victim and perpetrator role associations within each gender. Considering multiple victimizations, 10.3% of females were victimized twice, while 2.3% of males were victimized twice. The proportion of females victimized three or more times is even greater at 4.1% as compared to 0.6% of males. Over 14% of female victims are subject to multiple victimizations (as opposed to 3% of males). As expected, an opposing pattern is evidenced for repeat perpetrators of PR-IPV in this sample.

Table 1: Count of Victim and Perpetrator Roles for Persons with 0, 1, 2 and 3+ Role Associations by Gender.

Role Count	Victim Roles						Perpetrator Roles					
	Total		Males		Females		Total		Males		Females	
	N (50,833)	%	N (25,720)	%	N (25,113)	%	N (50,833)	%	N (25,720)	%	N (25,113)	%
0	22,078	43.4	18,158	70.6	3,920	15.6	24,840	48.9	5,609	21.8	19,231	76.6
1	24,405	48.0	6,817	26.5	17,588	70.0	21,817	42.9	16,613	64.6	5,204	20.7
2	3,174	6.2	595	2.3	2,579	10.3	2,991	5.9	2,465	9.6	526	2.1
3+	1,176	2.3	150	0.6	1,026	4.1	1,185	2.3	1,033	4.0	152	0.6
Average	0.69		0.33		1.05		0.63		0.98		0.27	
t = -122.33, p < 0.001						t = 120.52, p < 0.001						

Another means for assessing gender symmetry, asymmetry and mutual violence in role types is to examine the proportion of victim and perpetrator roles for repeat persons with different numbers of total role associations. It is possible to examine different PR-IPV groups in males and females with multiple roles for patterns of victimization and perpetration, such as victim-only (no perpetrator roles), perpetrator-only (no victim roles), mutual violence (one or more victim and one or more perpetrator roles) and symmetrical violence (an equal number of victim and perpetrator roles). This is assessed in this study by examining changes in the proportion of males and females who have perpetrator roles as the number of roles in their histories increase. Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 present the proportion of perpetrator roles for all males and females who have two, three, four, and over five total roles.⁷

Table 2 : Proportion of Perpetrator Role Counts for Males and Females with 2 Roles in PR-IPV Events.

Counts of Proportions of Roles	The proportion of perpetrator role totals for males and females					
	Males		Females		All Persons	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
0 Roles (0 %)	329	9.3	2,147	62.1	2,476	35.4
1 Role (50%)	1131	32.0	1,066	30.9	2,197	31.4
2 Roles (100%)	2074	58.7	242	7.0	2,316	33.1
Total	3,534	100	3,455	100	6,989	99.9
$\chi^2 = 2785.40, p < 0.001$						

Table 3: Proportion of Perpetrator Role Counts for Males and Females with 3 Roles in PR-IPV Events.

Counts of Proportions of Roles	The proportion of perpetrator role totals for males and females					
	Males		Females		All Persons	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
0 Roles (0 %)	46	4.4	500	49.1	546	26.5
1 Role (33.3%)	149	14.3	329	32.3	478	23.2
2 Roles (66.6%)	304	29.1	146	14.3	450	21.8
3 Roles (100%)	545	52.2	43	4.2	588	28.5
Total	1,044	100	1,018	99.9	2,062	100
$\chi^2 = 929.16, p < 0.001$						

Tables 2 to 5 demonstrate a broad pattern of gender asymmetry in victim and perpetrator roles in PR-IPV for males and females with multiple roles. As indicated in Table 2, the majority (62.1%) of females with two roles, have no perpetrator roles, while 9.3% of males with 2 roles have no perpetrator roles. In contrast, 58.7% of males and 7.0% of females with two roles have solely (100%) perpetrator roles in PR-IPV.

Table 4: Proportion of Perpetrator Role Counts for Males and Females with 4 Roles in PR-IPV Events.

Counts of Proportions of Roles	The proportion of perpetrator role totals for males and females					
	Males		Females		All Persons	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
0 Roles (0 %)	11	3.1	162	40.2	173	22.9
1 Role (25%)	28	7.9	118	29.3	146	19.3
2 Roles (50%)	62	17.5	83	20.6	145	19.2
3 Roles (75%)	100	28.2	26	6.5	126	16.6
4 Roles (100%)	153	43.2	14	3.5	167	22.1
Total	354	99.9	403	100.1	757	100.1
$\chi^2 = 347.76, p < 0.001$						

Table 5: Proportion of Perpetrator Role Counts for Males and Females with 5+ Roles in PR-IPV Events.

Counts of Proportions of Roles	The proportion of perpetrator role totals for males and females					
	Males		Females		All Persons	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
0%	3	1.1	84	30.1	87	15.8
1% to 25%	7	2.6	76	27.2	83	15.1
26% to 49%	29	10.7	67	24.0	96	17.5
50%	17	6.3	13	4.7	30	5.5
51% to 75%	64	23.7	26	9.3	90	16.4
76% to 99%	62	23.0	12	4.3	74	13.5
100%	88	32.6	1	0.4	89	16.2
Total	270	100	279	100	549	100
$\chi^2 = 292.16, p < 0.001$						

These overall trends are evident across Tables 2 through 5, except that as the number of total role associations increase, females are more likely to have one or more perpetrator roles. The proportion of females with no perpetrator roles decreases from 62.1% for females with two roles, to 30.1% for females with five or more role associations. Taken together, these data suggest that as the number of role associations increases, the proportion of females having one or more perpetrator roles increases. Males with repeat role associations, by contrast, have a lower percentage of victim only roles. 9.3% of males with two role associations have no perpetrator roles, as compared to 1.1% of males with five or more role associations. In addition, the percentage of males with solely perpetrator roles decreases as the number of role associations increases. The proportion of males with 100% perpetrator roles decreases from 58.7% for males with two roles, to 32.6% for males with five or more role associations.

Tables 2 to 5 show that a significant degree of symmetrical and mutual PR-IPV is present in the sample. Although PR-IPV is disproportionately perpetrated by males with multiple roles, there is a significant proportion of female perpetrated IPV across the tables. For females with two roles, 37.9% have 50% or more perpetrator roles as compared to 18.7% of females with five or more roles. The tables show evidence of gender symmetry in role types for males and females who have equal numbers of victim and one perpetrator roles. Moreover, the tables demonstrate that there is a significant amount of mutual violence for females with multiple roles. Taken together, these tables show that although there is a significant amount of mutual violence in the sample, there is a disproportionate amount of perpetrator dominant role histories for males and a disproportionate amount of victim dominant role histories for females with repeat role associations.

FINAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings in this study, based on role histories in police recorded IPV events supports past research on the asymmetrical nature of PR-IPV in the overall sample and for persons with multiple role associations. The most prevalent category for females with multiple role associations are histories defined exclusively by victim roles. As noted in the results of this study, while it is true that repeated intimate partner violence as observed by police is primarily perpetrated by males, at the same time, *there is a smaller but notable proportion of female repeat perpetrators, and a small but notable proportion of males with a preponderance of victim roles (exclusively victims or victim dominated) in their histories.*

The results also indicate that there is a notable level of female perpetrated violence as evidenced through an analysis of symmetrical violence and mutual violence in role histories. For persons with repeated IPV contacts, a significant proportion of violence can be classified as symmetrical, where a 50-50 split exists between perpetrator and victim roles for males and females. In addition, there is a significant proportion of mutual violence defined by having a mix of victim and perpetrator role in their IPV histories. *Although there is a significant level of mutual violence defined in this way, there is a substantial portion of females who have only one perpetrator role within a larger history of victimization. In contrast, males defined as mutually violent have one or a low number of victim roles within a history defined by a substantial number of perpetrator roles.*

Similarly, while the analysis of repeated role associations demonstrates that the sampled males are much more likely to have repeatedly perpetrated PR-IPV, the analysis of repeated IPV contacts in the police data suggests that as the number of associated events increases, a greater portion of women acquire at least one or a small number of perpetrator role associations. *This may suggest that women are more likely to be identified as the perpetrator when the number of events increases even though they may be primarily a victim as defined by their role histories.*

The analyses of PR-IPV are important for several reasons. *The first is that police contacts for IPV tend to represent more serious forms of IPV on average and it is important to understand different types of PR-IPV encountered by the police. The second is that police are first responders to IPV incidents and an important point of first contact for formal and informal IPV interventions.* The fact that there are different groups present in this data suggest that police could use role histories to assist with their process of determining victimization in PR-IPV incidents (for example in the determination of primary aggressors), and their role as an entry-point to different support services for male and female victims. There is a need for IPV policy and services to account for these different groups of victims and perpetrators within their PR-IPV histories and different interventions.

Supplemental information should include information about previous incidents, role histories, and the seriousness of harm involved, in order to make informed decisions about mandatory charging, dual charging, and primary aggressor policy outcomes (see Government of British Columbia, 2010; Pollack, Battaglia and Allspach 2005). *In addition, there is the need to have more information about the social and systemic intersectional realities involved, that is, more information on factors such as ethnicity, health (mental and physical), fiscal stability, age, and patterns of IPV in the past. In the latter regard, the actual context and experiences of victims and perpetrators also need to be considered.*

As far as implications for broader policy and procedures for IPV cases, it is concerning that the concept of gender symmetry appears to remain prominent in both the legal system and social services decision making (Martinson and Jackson 2019: 66). This can affect decision making at every level of the justice and social justice process; in police decision making about who the primary aggressor is when attending an IPV incident, to whether protection orders are required, to parenting time allocation as well as issues of custody and access for the children (Martinson and Jackson 2021).

This is of particular importance for police with the first-responders' reality, but also, and similarly, for the criminal justice systems more broadly, such as in the consideration of bail release with any special restrictions for protection/restraining orders, as well as for those making assessments and decisions for family court matters, such as custody and access (or, as now referenced, "parenting time" in the amended Canadian Divorce Act). Further research on gender symmetry and asymmetry IPV using person role history data should examine additional attributes of IPV events, such as offence seriousness and location characteristics (e.g., rural and urban). With regard specifically to the rural setting issue, the lack of resources and supports are barriers which contribute to rates of police-reported IPV that can be significantly higher in rural communities (Allen 2021).

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The primary limitation of this research concerns the finding that a fraction of IPV victimizations is reported by victims to the police. Although this means that police data will yield underestimates as compared to victimization studies, it is important to repeat the reality that events reported to the police tend to be more serious than unreported events (Burczycka 2021). Taken together, though, this means that it is possible the unreported events alter the patterns of repeat IPV presented here. This is true in spite of the fact that the aggregate patterns of PR-IPV victimization and perpetration are similar to other official police data (Burczycka 2021).

The focus of this brief has been primarily upon victims and perpetrators of IPV encountered by police. This study shows that there are different types of female and male victims of IPV in police data whose

needs deserve to be accounted for in the provision of appropriate IPV supports and services for victims of IPV.

The nature of the data presented here provides additional avenues for future research on the issue of offence specialization and escalation within a repeat PR-IPV sample. Research on specialization and escalation has demonstrated that escalation is a focal concern for law enforcement responding to IPV events (Nesset, Bjorngaard, Nottestad, Whittington, Lynum, Psychol and Palmstierna 2020; Robinson, Pinchevsky and Guthrie 2018). *Future quantitative IPV research should also include qualitative information surrounding the IPV incidents. As stated earlier, the perceptions and experiences of victims and perpetrators themselves can provide valuable contextual intersectional information of incidents, especially in gaining insight into the patterns of repeat victimization and offending.* That information can be captured from qualitative interviews with these individuals themselves.

In conclusion, as far as implications for policy and procedures for intimate partner violence cases, the asymmetry outcomes from the police-based data analysis should be highlighted. *These outcomes can relate to the greater level of seriousness of the offence for women, which could in turn translate into a greater need for services and support for the harm experienced by women, such as medical and child care for their own and their children's safety, health and well-being.* Gender asymmetry in PR-IPV cases overall and the charging of women with multiple victim contacts is potentially problematic in women's decisions to seek assistance or intervention. Therefore, in order to make better informed decisions for just outcomes about mandatory charging and primary aggressor policies, as well as procedural outcomes related to decision making associated with those policies, *an understanding of the dynamics of the behaviours and contexts clearly should be secured for victims.*

Notes

- 1 See Neilson (2020), Supplementary Reference 1: In large scale statistical studies (which the Canadian GSS data set on Victimization constitutes), Neilson comments that the majority of acts reported are isolated acts of minor violence during conflict, not reflecting patterns of violence or acts of violence in defense.
- 2 Intimate terrorism is the most serious category of intimate partner violence in the typology of Johnson (2011).
- 3 Straus et al. (1996: 303) note that when using couple data where there are conflicting reports, the higher of the two scores be used to capture the number of incidents of violence.
- 4 A recent study used vignettes about violence in relationships with subjects to analyse how bi-directionality in IPV cases impacts public perceptions about the victims and perpetrators in such cases. The authors conclude that “when violence was bidirectional, participants generally perceived lower offender risk, lower physical and psychological harm to victim, and higher victim responsibility (Ahmed et al. 2024: 11).
- 5 It is important to note that the event data presented here are not equivalent to Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR) statistics reported to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS). The data for this study are the raw anonymized event and person information.
- 6 Ethics approval provided by the Research Ethics Office on August 8, 2012.
- 7 The specific Chi-square statistics and p-values are noted in each table.

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