

Short Commentary

Different Scripts, Different Casts: A Crime Script Analysis Indicating Intimate Partner Violence is Not All the Same

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The endemic nature of intimate partner violence continues to pose a significant challenge to government policy makers and those on the frontline charged with responding to calls for help. Whilst not a panacea, innovative approaches may help reduce the burden of intimate partner violence. The study by Christine Carney, Mark Kebbell, Li Eriksson and Regan Carr, titled “Different Scripts, Different Casts: A Crime Script Analysis Indicating Intimate Partner Violence is not all the Same,” used a novel approach to understanding intimate partner violence reported to police [1].

Theoretical Framework

Crime script analysis tells the story of how a crime is committed from the initial decision of the offender to act through to exiting the scene of the crime and disposing of the evidence [2] Differing levels of analysis can be used ranging from the generic to the specific (Table 1).

Table 1: Crime Script Levels of Analysis.

Level of Abstraction	Label	Description	Example
Generic	Universal	Generic	Any offense
	Metascript	Offense type	Interpersonal violence
	Protoscript	Offense subgroup	Intimate partner violence
Specific	Script	Specific offense characteristics	Male-perpetrated intimate partner violence against female victims
	Track	Specific circumstances of specific offences	Intimate partner violence between ex-de facto male offender and female victim in the victims' residence

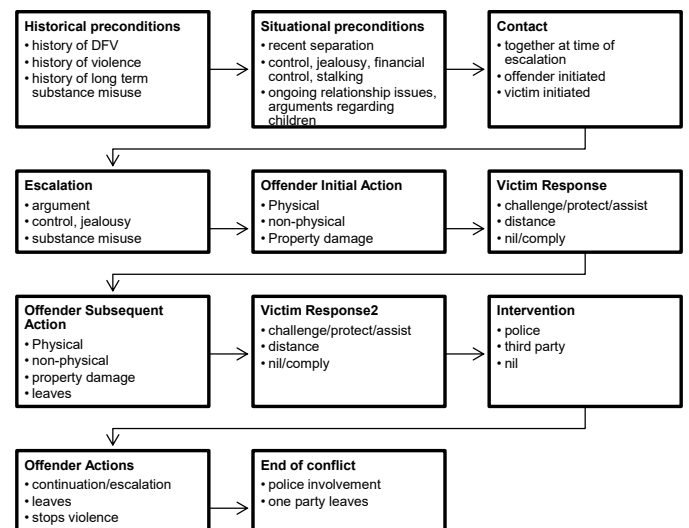
Crime script analysis has been used to understand violent crimes such as sex crimes but the utility of this approach has rarely been used to explore intimate partner violence [3,4].

Methodology and Key Findings

Qualitative thematic analysis of police administrative data was used to develop a Protoscript of intimate partner violence. This Protoscript identified commonality across offender criminal histories and recent situational factors identified in the extant literature as precursors to high risk and/or lethality. These factors included a history of violence, recent substance use, recent or pending separation and ongoing relationship

issues. The location of contact between offender–victim, precursors to escalation (such as an escalating argument and accusations of infidelity immediately prior to violence), followed by the actions of the offender and victim were also captured (Figure 1) [5,6].

Figure 1: Intimate Partner Violence Protoscript.



Cluster analysis was then used to identify distinct script tracks from the data, with Bonferroni’s Post-Hoc Test to determine statistically significant differences between the clusters. The analysis identified four distinct script tracks of intimate partner violence, ‘Escalating Jealousy’, ‘Persistently Possessive’, ‘Controlling Victim Agency’, and ‘Enduring Argument’ (Table 2).

Table 2: Cluster Analysis - Script Tracks.

Measures		Cluster 1 Escalating jealousy %	Cluster 2 Persistently possessive %	Cluster 3 Controlling victim agency %	Cluster 4 Enduring argument %	(X ²) p
Historical precondition	DFV	57.1	100.0	100.0	75.0	(4.95) .138
	Violence	28.6	37.5	40.0	15.0	(2.86) .364
	Substance misuse	28.6	25.0	20.0	20.0	(0.69) .641
	Separation	0.0 ^a	87.5 ^b	60.0 ^{ab}	35.0 ^{ab}	(12.91) .003

Historical precondition	Jealousy/control	14.3 ^{ab}	62.5 ^b	20.0 ^{ab}	0.0 ^a	(13.67) .001
	Strangulation	0.0	37.5	20.0	5.0	(5.72) .072
Situational precondition	Substance misuse	57.1	62.5	40.0	55.0	(0.81) .932
	Ongoing conflict	85.7	62.5	80.0	50.0	(3.32) .370
	Stalking	0.0 ^{ab}	37.5 ^b	40.0 ^b	0.0 ^a	(10.32) .005
Incident characteristics	Strangulation	28.6	12.5	20.0	20.0	(0.92) .882
	Use of weapon	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.0	(1.87) .712
	Explicit threats to kill	14.3	25.0	0.0	5.0	(3.07) .262
	Sexual assault	0.0	0.0	20.0	0.0	(4.85) .125
Escalation	Jealousy	57.1 ^a	50.0 ^a	20.0 ^a	10.0 ^a	(8.18) .027
	Control	71.4 ^{ab}	87.5 ^b	100.0 ^b	20.0 ^a	(17.69) .000
	Financial	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0	(1.51) 1.000
	Argument	0.0 ^a	12.5 ^{ab}	0.0 ^{ab}	65.0 ^b	(15.05) .001
	Suicidal/attempts	0.0 ^{ab}	37.5 ^b	0.0 ^{ab}	0.0 ^a	(7.90) .010
Offender initial action	Physical violence	28.6	62.5	20.0	45.0	(2.77) .491
	Property damage	14.3	0.0	40.0	20.0	(3.36) .341
Victim initial response	Challenge/protect/assist	71.4 ^a	0.0 ^b	100.0 ^a	60.0 ^a	(15.07) .001
	Distance	14.3 ^a	100.0 ^b	0.0 ^a	40.0 ^a	(16.81) .000
	Nil/comply	14.3	0.0	0.0	5.0	(2.12) .551
Offender subsequent action	Physical violence	71.4	62.5	100.0	45.0	(5.35) .143
	Property damage	14.3	37.5	40.0	25.0	(1.66) .684
	Leave	14.3	0.0	0.0	15.0	(1.65) .784
Victim subsequent response	Challenge/protect/assist	0.0	12.5	40.0	30.0	(3.74) .296
	Distance	42.9	50.0	40.0	20.0	(3.33) .345
	Nil/comply	14.3	0.0	20.0	10.0	(2.01) .613
Intervention	Police called/intervene	14.3 ^a	75.0 ^{ab}	60.0 ^{ab}	75.0 ^b	(8.27) .035
	Third party called/intervene	85.7 ^a	12.5 ^b	0.0 ^b	20.0 ^b	(12.48) .003
	Nil intervention	0.0	0.0	40.0	5.0	(5.35) .107
Offender Action	Continue/escalate	28.6	62.5	60.0	25.0	(4.69) .194
	Leave	14.3	25.0	20.0	50.0	(3.69) .286
	Stop violence	57.1 ^a	0.0 ^{ab}	0.0 ^{ab}	5.0 ^b	(9.88) .006
End of Contact	Police involvement	85.7 ^{abc}	100.0 ^c	20.0 ^b	100.0 ^{ac}	(15.87) .000
	One party leaves	14.3 ^{abc}	0.0 ^c	80.0 ^b	0.0 ^{ac}	(15.87) .000
% of total incidents		17.5	20.0	12.5	50.0	

Note. Each superscript letter (e.g., ^a) indicates a subset of group categories (i.e., clusters) whose proportions do not differ from one another at the .05 significance level. Percentages that are not statistically different share superscript letters, while percentages that are statistically different do not share superscript letters.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The clusters identified in this study found that half of all intimate

partner violence incidents were associated with ongoing or escalating arguments as opposed to jealous or controlling behaviors – an important distinction given prior research has shown that jealousy and controlling behaviors are high risk factors for future harm and lethality. This suggests that of all incidents attended by police, it is likely that 50% of incidents involve potentially high risk factors that must be identified and effectively addressed. For incidents such as those within the persistently possessive cluster, where several high risk factors including history of control, jealousy, separation, and ongoing jealous, controlling, and stalking behaviors are evident, more punitive responses may be required. The remainder of incidents that do not display controlling behaviors may require a different response, such as support to referral services, anger management, financial support or other more generalist support options [7].

Understanding diversity within intimate partner violence may support policy and procedural changes designed to better identify specific behaviors evident within incidents that police attend. It could also provide guidance on the most appropriate action to take at the scene and following an intimate partner violence incident.

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