Article

She knew he would murder her': The role of the media in the reconstruction of intimate femicide

by

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Abstract

The media play a central role in the social construction of intimate femicide, and therefore the news coverage of femicide can contribute to social awareness and the response policies of institutions which deal with this crime. The current study analyses the differences in Israeli newspapers' framing of femicide committed by members of ethnic groups between the years 2005-2014. The analysis shows that the social construction of intimate femicide reflects the intersection between gender, social class and ethnic origin. The findings suggest that news coverage fills a key role in the perpetuation of the structure of dominance, gender and social class, and that the overall coverage of femicide is mainly episodic and described in personalized terms, rather than within a thematic frame. This study provides new insight into the media's role in shaping the social denial of this crime, and sheds light on how the prevalent discourse inhibits participants from taking responsibility.

Keywords: intimate femicide, news coverage, mass media, violence against women

Introduction

News coverage plays a powerful role in shaping the public's understanding of crime and victimization. Indeed, most people do not have direct or indirect exposure to violent crimes, and therefore the media are the primary source for gaining a perspective about these events (Chermak, 1995; Croteau & Hoynes, 1997).

Over the past two decades, news coverage of domestic violence has expanded and contributed to the construction of this crime in the public awareness (Sela-Shayovitz, 2010). Although there has been a growing corpus of literature on the manner in which the media frame violence against women, relatively little research has been conducted on the media construction of intimate femicide, which is defined as the killing of a woman by her intimate partner (Richards, Gillespie, & Smith, 2014). Furthermore, there is a marked dearth of studies on femicide in the research literature, which often stems from missing data and methodological difficulties. Despite these difficulties, it is important to expand

research in this field in order to increase the visibility of femicide as a social problem (Weil, 2016). This study aims to contribute to the existing literature by focusing on the differences in the way the media frame intimate femicide committed by different social groups in a society (e.g. citizens, immigrants and foreign workers). In addition, the study seeks to examine the hidden meanings of the coverage of intimate femicide within the context of social and cultural power relations.

By way of introduction, and in order to elucidate the theoretical framework of the current research, I will begin by reviewing the literature on intimate femicide and the media construction of intimate femicide. I will also elaborate upon the discussion of Israeli society. Next, I will delineate the mixed methodology employed in this study, which combines quantitative and qualitative designs. The quantitative stage includes a comparative analysis of the media portrayal of intimate femicide among different social groups in Israel. A discourse analysis is then conducted in the qualitative stage in order to explore the explicit and implicit meanings of the framing of intimate femicide within a certain social and cultural context. The quantitative analysis indicated there are significant differences in the press coverage of intimate femicide among various social ethnic groups. Also, the discourse analysis showed that the media perpetuate stereotypes about social groups, thereby reflecting the intersection between social inequalities, class and race. Finally, I discuss the findings while drawing attention to the broader implications of the role of the media in framing intimate femicide.

Intimate Femicide

The literature highlights the gender differences in intimate partner homicide in order to understand the nature and causes of this crime, as intimate femicide is the main cause of the murder of women. Moreover, women are most likely to be killed in the context of a continuing, physically abusive relationship. In contrast, men are more likely to be killed by strangers or acquaintances (Rosenfeld, 1997; Stöckl, Devries, Rotstein, & Garcia-Moreno, 2013). Findings show that 45% of female and 5% of male homicides in the United States are committed by an intimate partner (Cooper & Smith, 2011). In a similar vein, homicide data in the United Kingdom indicate that 54% of female and 5% of male homicides are

perpetrated by an intimate partner (Smith, Coleman, Elder, & Hall, 2011). In Canada, one-fifth of homicides involve the killing of an intimate partner. Furthermore, women are three times more likely than men to be victims of an intimate partner (Johnson & Dawson, 2011). The incidence of intimate partner homicide in Israel amounts to one-tenth of all homicides, and is mostly related to the killing of women, whereas cases in which men are victims are very rare (Sela-Shayovitz, 2010). Thus, although there is some variation in the rates of intimate femicide, research has consistently shown that women are the main victims across different countries and cultures (Fairbairn & Dawson, 2013; Johnson & Dawson, 2011).

Over the past three decades, intimate femicide rates have substantially declined (30%) in the United States. This decrease is primarily related to changes in response policies, such as restricting the abusers' access to guns (Campbell, Glass, Sharps, Laughon, & Bloom, 2007). However, the general decline in femicide varies according to the victim's gender and race. The decline was greater for males, African Americans and married victims than it was for females, whites and unmarried intimates (Maguire, 2007). The data in Canada show that between the years 1991-2004 there was a sharp decline in male victims of intimate partner homicide (59%), whereas female victims decreased by 39% during this period (Johnson, 2006).

In Israel, rates of intimate femicide have not declined over the last few decades, despite changes in response policies. Additionally, findings indicate that immigrant vitims and perpetrators from the former USSR and Ethiopia are highly overrepresented (Sela-Shayovitz, 2010). Indeed, victim patterns of intimate femicide reflect the convergence of gender inequality, economic deprivation and racial inequality (Della-Giustina, 2005; Sela-Shayovitz, 2010).

News Media Construction of Crime
Crime news is a dominant and favorite topic among both the public and the media. A media organization prefers to cover crime events since this type of coverage is convenient, newsworthy and contributes to sales, while the public requires these reports in order to obtain a view about this problem (Chermak,

1995). Yet, the news media commonly highlight certain types of crime, and tend to ignore or refrain from reporting other offences. Violent crime, and particularly homicide, is a favorite subject, since it evokes public fear and curiosity (Chermak, 1995; Meyers, 1997; Sela-Shayovitz, 2014). Thus, the news framing of criminal events is distorted, and consequently affects public perceptions of crime and social response (Surette, 2007).

Shanto Iyengar (1991) identified two fundamental types of framing news which may impact public opinion about the event in different ways. The *episodic* frame focuses on the immediate, isolated news event, while the *thematic* frame addresses the general issue and also presents trends over time in order to give a broader social context. The thematic frame is essential since it can contribute to public awareness, and may promote social response. However, studies indicate that the coverage of crime news events predominantly features the episodic frame type (Warwick, Blood, Putnis; & Pirkis, 2002; Iyengar, 1991).

Another important aspect relates to the role of the media in reproducing the dominant social structure. Analyses of the racial typification of crime on news media indicate that blacks are noticeably portrayed as suspects of violent crime, whereas, white suspects are more often portrayed as suspects of nonviolent crime (Chermak, 1995; Chiricos & Eschholz, 2002; Dixon & Linz, 2000). Findings indicate that blacks are 2.4 times more often portrayed as crime suspects than whites in television programmes, and Hispanics are 5.6 times more likely than whites to be characterized in this fashion. In addition, blacks and Hispanics appeared four times more as suspects than victims, while whites are frequently featured as the crime victim (Chiricos & Eschholz, 2002). These findings suggest that the media play a key role in the view of ethnic minorities as criminals and as a "social threat" to the public order. After the above review of the literature on the media construction of crime events, the following discussion elaborates the framing of intimate femicide.

Framing Intimate Femicide

The media play a central role in the social construction of intimate femicide and the prospects of prioritizing an agenda for prevention. News coverage can

contribute to public awareness by shifting the coverage from episodic to thematic framing, and by presenting this crime within a wider social context (Fairbairn & Dawson, 2013). However, the coverage of femicide is often characterized by sensationalized and dramatic reporting that diverts public attention away from important information and the social context (Blood, Putnis, & Pirkis, 2002). In addition, journalists commonly rely on official sources, and in particular the police for information, which may introduce a bias in coverage (Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Richards, Gillespie, & Smith, 2011).

Meyers (1997) observed that there are gender myths deeply rooted in the framing of domestic violence. For example, one of the predominant myths is that the woman provokes the man, with another common myth being that domestic violence primarily occurs in the lower classes (Meyers, 1997). Furthermore, journalists tend to use both direct and indirect tactics in order to shift the blame from the offender to the victim. An example of direct blaming would be a focus on the refusal of the victim to leave her partner or a negative characterization of the victim. An indirect victim-blaming might be the implication of the *reasons* for the femicide, such as the perpetrator's loss of control or state of depression due to the victim's wish to separate from the perpetrator (Richards, Gillespie, & Smith, 2011). Findings confirm Meyers' (Meyers, 1994, 1997) theory, and indicate that the coverage of intimate femicide sustains gender myths and stereotypes. In some cases, journalists tend to blame the victim by implying that 'bad' girls get involved in 'bad' things, and accordingly get what they deserve (Bullock & Cubert, 2002). Hence, the media perpetuate gender inequality and avoid conceptualizing femicide as part of the gender structure of the male control and abuse of women. Moreover, intimate femicide is commonly reported in terms of individual pathology, or as just another case of murder (Fairbairn & Dawson, 2013). Consequently, the media contribute to the public perception, which views it as a personal problem and not as a social problem (Richards, Gillespie, & Smith, 2011). An analysis of the coverage of intimate femicide among Ethiopian immigrants in Israel shows that the press reinforces social images of poor and criminal black immigrants. This stereotypical portrayal of immigrants suggests that the media draw a boundary between the dangerous and the normal, and absolve society from taking responsibility (Shoham, 2013).

Another important aspect is related to the absence of the voices of social service providers and women's organizations in the coverage of intimate femicide (Fairbairn & Dawson, 2013). Indeed, these above-mentioned factors are essential for promoting public discourse about this problem within a sociopolitical context.

Israeli Society

Israel is considered a migration and multicultural society, and its population is currently about 8.7 million people. Jews are the dominant group (74%), with Arabs comprising a minority (20.8%). In addition, there are approximately 200,000 foreign workers (primarily from Romania, Thailand and China) and refugees from Africa (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018). During the 1990s, Israeli society experienced major social and economic changes, mainly due to massive migration processes. Approximately 1,000,000 immigrants came following the collapse of the Soviet Union, as well as 70,000 immigrants from Ethiopia. These migration processes, along with the government's economic policy, have led Israel to become a highly stratified society (Adva Center, 2015; Semyonov, Raijman, & Maskileyson, 2016). The two immigrant groups have very different social and cultural characteristics. Ethiopian immigrants have experienced a traumatic migration process, including the loss of family members, family roles and sense of identity (Lerner, Mirsky, & Barasch, 1994). Furthermore, many of them are still suffering from economic hardship and unemployment due to the lack of professional skills (Sela-Shayovitz, 2010; Weil, 2004). The former USSR immigrants are characterized by a high level of education, as approximately two-thirds have a college degree and professional occupations (Naon, King, & Habib, 1993; Semyonov, Raijman, & Maskileyson, 2016). However, the income gap between them and Israeli-born citizens has not fully closed, and they are still considered a distinct social group within Israeli society (Gorodzeisky & Semyonov, 2011; Semyonov, Raijman, & Maskileyson, 2016). An examination of income and education achievements in Israeli society show that the lowest rates are among Ethiopian immigrants and Arabs, whereas the rates of immigrants from the former Soviet Union are average, with the highest rates among Israeli-born Jews (Adva Center, 2015).

In summary, news coverage of intimate femicide sustains gender myths and social stereotypes. Nonetheless, there has been a lack of insight in regard to whether the media cover intimate femicide differently among various social ethnic groups. The current study contributes to the field by analysing differences in the newspaper representations of intimate femicide when committed by members of different ethnic groups in Israel. The study employs a discourse analysis approach in order to explore the underlying meaning of the representation of intimate femicide in the context of social and cultural power relations.

Two questions have guided this study:

1. Are there substantial differences in the newspaper representations of intimate femicide when committed by members of different ethnic groups in Israel?
2. Does the representation of offenders and victims of femicide in the newspapers perpetuate the structure of dominance and gender in Israeli society?

Methods

This study employs a mixed method design, both quantitative and qualitative methods for analysing the coverage of femicide in Israeli newspapers. This strategy is based on the theoretical assumption that each method reveals different aspects of the phenomenon, which can strengthen the validity of the results (Babbie, 2001). The examination addressed the profiling of femicide among five social ethnic groups in Israel: Israeli Jews, Israeli Arabs, immigrants from Ethiopia, USSR immigrants from the former USSR and refugees.

Data were collected from two daily widely-read newspapers in Israel: Yedi'ot Aharonot and Ma'ariv. These two major privately-owned newspapers have daily circulation rates of 40% (TGI, 2015). The majority of the articles appeared on the front pages of the two newspapers. Furthermore, no substantial differences were found in the presentations of the victims and the perpetrators between the two newspapers. The sample included 289 articles, and comprised all articles about intimate femicide from 1 January 2005 to 31 December 2014. Hence, by examining the total population of articles over a period of 10 years, the external validity of the study was enhanced. In order to include all cases of intimate

femicide, a list of victims was also obtained from the organization, "No to Violence Against Women" (174 cases of femicide for the period of study). In the second stage, an electronic search of news articles was conducted by using the keywords: 'femicide', 'murder', 'victim's name' and 'perpetrator's name'. The next step was to check whether newspapers report about *all* cases of femicide. The examination revealed that the vast majority of cases were covered by the newspapers. Even so, two femicide cases were not reported, and these were related to incidents in which the victim was an Israeli Arab or a refugee. The ethnic group was determined based on the information about the victim in the article.

The analysis was based on criteria formulated by Fairbairn and Dawson (2013), and includes 12 variables: femicide followed by suicide (yes or no); motive (wish for separation, infidelity, argument); method (stabbing, shooting, strangling, other); the victim's age; victim background attributes (no background attributes, good, problematic); indirect victim blaming (yes or no); perpetrator age; perpetrator background attributes (no background attributes, good, problematic); prior intimate violence (yes or no); affiliation to the upper-middle class classification was determined based on the victim's education, work and residential area (yes or no); use of alcohol or drugs (yes or no); sources of information (police, neighbours or family, women's organizations) and minimizing the femicide by concentrating on a crisis or aspect other than the murder (yes or no).

Following the initial coding, four more categories were added:
1. headline imagery and meaning (sensational or stating factual information), the size of the headline (a large and prominent headline, or standard headline);
2. type of coverage— dramatic (using emotional and sensational language), episodic coverage (i.e. focusing on an immediate isolated event) or thematic coverage (concentrating on the issue within a broader social context);
3. length of the article—short (i.e. less than 500) or long (i.e. more than 500 words); and
4. picture of the victim.

In this context, it is important to note that both newspaper headlines and pictures play a central role in framing the event that attracts the reader's attention (Sela-Shayovitz, 2014).

Analytical strategy—The following description elaborates on the analytical approaches.

1. Quantitative comparative analysis - This examination aimed to determine whether there were significant differences in the coverage of femicide among several social ethnic groups in Israel. Accordingly, chi-square tests were conducted for the nominal variables, while ANOVA tests were employed to compare the means of the ages of victims and perpetrators.

2. Qualitative content analysis - A discourse analysis technique was used to examine the role of the media in framing femicide among different social ethnic groups. The methodological decision was based on the assumption that this analytical approach critically targets the relations among discourse, power, dominance and social inequality as they are being enacted and reproduced by the text (Van Dijk, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

In view of the above, the current analysis seeks to explore the explicit and hidden meanings in the femicide articles by focusing on the following aspects: language and expression in the headlines and main text; use of rhetorical figures (e.g. metaphors, images and hyperbole), which are likely to emphasize certain opinions; localized meaning (constructed within the boundaries of the community's knowledge and beliefs) and the implicit meanings rooted in the social and cultural context of the situation (Van Dijk, 2001).

Results

Quantitative Analysis

Table 1 presents the manner in which the press portrays differences in intimate femicide between social groups in Israeli society:

Table 1: Characteristics of femicide-suicides in newspaper coverage

Variables	Values	Israeli Jews (N=116)	Ethiopian (N=64)	Former USSR (N=56)	Israeli Arabs (N=26)	Refugees (N=8)	Sig.
Femicide followed by suicide	Yes	30.1	46.8	16	15.3	0.0	$\chi^2 = 21.1$**
	No	69.9	53.2	84	84.7	100.0	
Method#	Stabbing	47.0	78.7	58.2	44.0	100.0	
	Shooting	28.7	11.5	12.7	24.0	0	$\chi^2 = 8.08$(*ns*)
	Other	24.3	0.8	29.1	32.0	0	
Motive or reason#	Wish for separation	18.1	12.7	10.7	3.8	0.0	$\chi^2 = 11.6$(*ns*)
	Infidelity	12.9	14.3	10.7	23.1	0.0	
	Argument	43.1	41.3	42.9	34.6	50.0	
	Unknown	25.9	31.7	35.7	38.5	50.0	
Victim's age	*M*	40.0	32.3	41.3	26.6	28.2	F=7.07**
	SD	17.0	12.6	18.6	14.9	14.2	
Perpetrator's age	*M*	42.1	37.1	42.6	28.4	31.1	F=8.51**
	SD	18.7	12.6	18.8	19.6	15.0	
Prior IPV	Yes	23.1	20.6	26.8	11.5	12.5	$\chi^2 = 2.98$
	No	76.9	79.4	73.2	88.5	87.5	

*p < .01. **p < .001

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#The frequencies are less than 5 in a cell in >20% of the cells, so therefore significance tests were not conducted.

The data in Table 1 show a significant difference for femicide followed by suicide between the social groups (x^2 = 21.1, df = 4, p = .00). Almost half of the items relating to femicide followed by suicide were attributed to Ethiopian immigrants in comparison to about one-third of the reports, which were associated with Israeli Jews (46.8% vs. 30.1%, respectively). No significant difference was found for the method of femicide between groups. The dominant method was stabbing (57.8%), with the second most common method being shooting (20%). Results show that the primary motives for femicide were arguments and/or the victim's desire to separate from the perpetrator. Infidelity by the wife was associated with one-fourth of the cases among Israeli Arabs. However, the unfaithful wife is perceived in the Muslim tradition as 'desecrating the nuclear family honor', and therefore deserves the death penalty, which must be carried out by a member of her parental nuclear family (Landau & Rolef, 1998). Thus, although most femicide cases of Israeli Arab women in Israel occurred in this particular sociocultural context, the current findings suggest that there is a trend of some change in this traditional custom.

The analysis shows that no significant difference between groups was found for prior intimate violence, and this factor was mentioned in approximately one-fifth of all the items (21.9%). A significant difference was found in the mean age of victims between groups (F (4.270) = 12.6 p < .01). The average age of femicide victims among Israeli Arabs and refugees was younger than that of other groups (*M 26.6, SD 14.9, and M 28.2, SD 14.2,* respectively). In a similar vein, the mean age of offenders was significantly different between groups *(F (4.270) = 4.48 p < .01*). The average age was older among Israeli Jews and offenders from the former USSR *(M 42.1, SD 18.7, and M 42.6, SD 18.8,* respectively). Table 2 presents the differences in the media framing of femicide between the social groups:

Table 2: Framing intimate femicide (in percentages)

Variables	Values	Israeli Jews (N=116)	Ethiopian (N=64)	Former USSR (N=56)	Israeli Arabs (N=26)	Refugees (N=8)	Sig.
Sensational headline	Yes	41.9	76.6	18	5	25	
	No	58.1	23.4	38	21	75	χ^2 = 38.1*
Huge headline	Yes	51.3	85.9	32.1	11.5	25	χ^2 = 57.5**
	No	48.7	14.1	67.9	88.5	75	
Type of coverage#	Dramatic	17.1	56.3	21.4	11.5	-	
	Episodic	77.8	31.3	78.6	80.8	100	χ^2 =
	Thematic	5.1	12.5	-	7.7	-	56.3(ns)
Length of article	Long	46.2	71.9	33.9	11.5	-	χ^2 = 39.8**
	Short	53.8	28.1	66.1	88.5	100	
Minimization#	Yes	13.2	20.6	12.7	23.1	12.5	χ^2 =3.1(ns)
	No	86.8	79.4	87.3	76.9	87.5	
Picture of victim	Yes	71.6	78.1	78.6	57.7	87.5	χ^2 =5.83
	No	28.4	21.9	21.4	42.3	12.5	
Sources of information	Family/ neighbours	50.5	75.4	54.7	39.1	0.0	χ^2 = 37.4(ns)
	Police	49.5	17.5	43.4	60.9	100	
	Women's organiza-tion	0.0	7.1	1.9	0.0	0.0	

*p < .01. **p < .001

#The frequencies are less than 5 in a cell in >20% of the cells, so therefore significance tests were not conducted.

The findings in *Table 2* show a significant difference in headline imagery between groups (χ^2 = 38.1, *df* = 4, *p* = .00). Most of the headlines addressing

Ethiopian victims featured sensational expressions (76.6%) compared with less than half the headlines depicting Israeli Jewish victims (41%). In contrast, sensational expressions appeared in less than one-fifth of the headlines relating to victims from the former USSR and Israeli Arabs (18% and 5%, respectively). A significant difference was found in the use of large headlines among the various social groups (χ^2 = 57.5, df = 4, p = .00). Large and prominent headlines characterized most of the articles about Ethiopian victims (85.9%) in comparison to items relating to Israeli Jewish victims (51.3%), and less than one-third of reports about other groups. The results show that, overall, the coverage of femicide is mostly conducted in an episodic manner, and that only a few articles are thematic-oriented (5.9%). The use of dramatic reporting was mainly evident in cases in which victims were Ethiopian (56.3%). Similarly, reports about Ethiopian victims were significantly longer (71.9%), whereas only 11.5% of the items about Israeli Arab victims were long, and not even a single article about refugee victims was of considerable length. No significant difference was found for the minimization of femicide between groups (15.5% of all the items). Most reports included the victim's picture (73.7%), and no significant difference was found between groups. The findings indicate that there is a lack of representation of women's organizations and other sources in the news: Only 3.1% of the articles included the opinions of women's organizations. The main source of information about victims who were Israeli Jews, Ethiopians and former residents of the USSR was family members or friends, whereas among Israeli Arabs and refugees the main source was the police.

Table 3 presents the differences in the profiling of victims and perpetrators between the social groups:

Table 3: Framing victims and perpetrators (in percentages)

Variables	Values	Israeli Jews (N=116)	Ethiopian (N=64)	Former USSR (N=56)	Israeli Arabs (N=26)	Refugees (N=8)	Sig.
Victim background attributes	No	82.9	79.7	85.7	92.3	100	χ^2=0.78
	Good	16.2	18.8	14.3	7.7	0	
	Problematic	0.9	1.6	0	0	0	
Indirect victim blaming [#]	Yes	3.4	1.6	1.8	3.8	0	χ^2=11.96
	No	96.6	98.4	98.2	96.2	100	(*ns*)
Perpetrator background attributes	No	71.2	59.4	73.1	80.8	87.5	χ^2=11.87
	Good	26.1	29.7	23.1	15.4	0	(*ns*)
	Problematic	2.7	1.9	3.8	3.8	12.5	

*$p < .01$. **$p < .001$

#The frequencies are less than 5 in a cell in >20% of the cells, so therefore significance tests were not conducted.

The data in *Table 3* show that, overall, there is an invisibility of victims in most of the articles. A good attribute appeared in less than one-fifth of the reports about victims who were Israeli Jews, Ethiopians and former residents of the USSR. Moreover, the portrayal of Israeli Arab victims is almost entirely missing (7.7%), and there is an invisibility of refugee victims. The findings indicate that news coverage which employed indirect victim-blaming tactics amounted to relatively less than 5% of the articles. However, there were considerable differences in the portrayal of a 'good' background of the perpetrator between groups. About one-fourth of perpetrators among Israeli Jews, Ethiopians and immigrants from the former USSR were depicted in this manner, while one-sixth of Israeli Arabs and none of the refugees were described this way. These findings suggest that there is an interrelation between gender and ethnic origin.

Qualitative Analysis

The results of the discourse analysis are presented according to the categories of the research variables.

The headline—The analysis shows that the femicide of Ethiopian victims commonly grabs large and prominent headings that often appear in bold colours (the dominant colour is red, which symbolizes blood and danger). These headlines typically constructed femicide with emotional and threatening phrases such as: 'Dadde, Stop Stabbing, Mom Is Bleeding' (Glikman, 2008), with another example: 'A Nine-Year-Old Boy to Police Operator: Come On, Mom and Dad Are Not Moving' (Meital, 2006). By using the children's voice in the headlines, a sense of anxiety is evoked and the event is constructed as horrific. Additional messages of danger and family pathology associated with Ethiopian victims can be observed in the following headlines: 'Sisters of Tragedy: Two Sisters Were Killed by Their Husbands, Five Years Apart' (Glikman & Turgeman, 2006) and 'Killing is Contagious' (Ronen & Regev, 2006). Another strategy is to cast indirect blame on the victim: 'She Knew He'd Kill Her' (Abeba & Ben-David, 2005). This headline implies that the victim could have potentially prevented her own death by leaving her partner. Yet, headlines of femicide committed by members of the upper-middle class tend to frame the incident as a consequence of unexpected insanity: 'They Were a Model Couple and No One Knew That an Argument Could Lead to this Madness' (Turgeman & Barkan, 2008) or: 'Femicide and Suicide in the Perfect Family' (Turgeman, 2007). In contrast, the femicide of Israeli Arab victims is often characterized by minimal factual information: 'Mother of Three Was Murdered in the Village of Nahf' (Bano, 2009) or: 'Killed his Girlfriend Because She Refused to Marry Him' (Arnon, 2012b). Even so, some of the headlines describing refugee victims highly stressed the danger and horror of the event: 'Slashed His Wife's Throat and Stabbed Her to Death' (Arnon, 2012a) or: 'Body in a Suitcase: Turkish Man Killed His Friend' (Senyor, 2013). Hence, by framing the headlines in this manner, the media play a key role in shaping public perceptions of risk and foreign threat.

Representation of femicide victims—Overall, the analysis shows that the victim's personality is granted a low visibility. Ethiopian victims are often described in

accordance with traditional gender perceptions, e.g., as a quiet woman who worked hard and was dedicated to her family: 'She was an amazing, smiling woman, who worked three jobs to support her family' (Glikman & Turgeman, 2006). Additionally, journalists tend to provide an extensive description of vulnerability, incompetence and hardship in association with Ethiopian immigrants: 'Her story is tragic. Last year she lost her mother, sister and brother left behind in Ethiopia, and also the story of the immigration to Israel is tragic' (Abeba & Ben-David, 2005). In contrast, the depiction of victims from the former USSR hardly refers to difficulties in the immigration process, and portrays the victims according to gender stereotypes. Therefore, it seems that the media highly stress the difficulties and distress of Ethiopian immigrants, while simultaneously ignoring the hardships of former USSR immigrants.

The examination reveals that there are very brief descriptions of Israeli Arab victims, yet these correspond with traditional Muslim gender-role expectations: 'Fadiyeh was a homemaker, a quiet woman who raised her daughters' (Bano, 2009). As noted, no reference to foreign victims was found. This lack of visibility of foreign victims, and the sketchy depiction of Israeli Arab victims, fits the conception of 'other' women who are affiliated to minority groups that are socially marginalized. In contrast, Israeli Jewish victims are extensively covered, particularly those who are assigned to the upper-middle class. Moreover, the press reinforces social class perceptions of modern and successful careers, as demonstrated in the following examples: 'She was really beautiful, tall and blond, very gracious…Even when she was pregnant she looked great. She was always happy'" (Avni, 2008). 'She was really a familiar figure in the contemporary nightlife of Tel Aviv, who owned some venues of leisure in the city' (Senyor, 2014). Consequently, the coverage of femicide victims represents the intersection of gender, class and ethnicity.

Representation of perpetrator—The analysis shows that coverage of the perpetrator is affected by social class and ethnic origin. The newspaper accounts highly emphasize the distress and prior violence of Ethiopian perpetrators. Furthermore, the coverage widely expanded upon those perpetrators who committed murder in a bout of unexpected rage and violence.

This manner of profiling Ethiopian perpetrators reinforces public perceptions of risk and dangerousness about Ethiopian immigrants. However, the danger factor also features in the coverage of perpetrators from the former USSR. The media frame femicide as brutal and emphasize cases of drinking alcohol, as demonstrated in the following example: 'He came back with the police to the scene of the murder and showed them how he stabbed his girlfriend all over her body no less than 86 times, and then went to sleep after drinking a large amount of alcohol' (Levi, 2006). By constructing femicide in this way, journalists demonize perpetrators and contribute to the labeling of immigrants from the former USSR as 'others' who threaten the moral order of society. In contrast, the coverage of Israeli Jewish perpetrators who are presumed to be upper-middle class highlights explanations such as a mental crisis or insanity that cannot be comprehended: 'Michael was a peaceful person, and even a little indifferent. To get him mad there was a need to work hard, to find just something huge, a super-astronomical event' (Abramov & Barkan, 2008). This depiction fits the codes of the upper-middle class, namely, a quiet, non-violent and diplomatic personality. Moreover, this formulaic text obscures the perpetrator's responsibility and the implicit message is that it is illogical, since femicide only happens in poor or problematic families. The findings indicate that there are only a small number of depictions of Israeli Arab perpetrators, with the cause of the crime primarily attributed to mental problems. In addition, no reference to foreign offenders was found, but the framing of the murder is described in detail as very brutal and relentless: 'Demirhan, a father of two, came from Turkey; the murder of his girlfriend took place after an argument about the rent of the apartment. He killed her, cut and placed the parts of her body all over Tel Aviv' (Ofer, 2013). This rhetorical and dramatic reporting aims to provoke social anxiety, and also highlights the 'monstrosity' of foreign offenders. Indeed, the media play a central role in the demonization and 'otherness' of alien offenders, which leads them to be perceived as 'enemies within' who pose a noticeable threat to society (Greer & Jewkes, 2005).

Discussion

The mass media are a key arena in which public perceptions about crime, offenders and victims are shaped and reshaped. Recently, there has been a

growing number of studies on the media coverage of intimate femicide. This paper has aimed to contribute to the existing literature by extending the focus to the differences in the framing of femicide among various social groups in Israel. Several common themes emerged.

First, the quantitative analysis showed that there are significant differences in the construction of intimate femicide between the respective social groups. The coverage of Ethiopian femicides was more dramatic, and included more sensational and emotional expressions than the reporting of femicide in other social groups. The discourse analysis shows that this manner of coverage highlights the distress of the Ethiopian immigrants, but at the same time perpetuates social stereotypes of being 'others', i.e., poor, incompetent and unpredictably violent.

Second, the findings indicated that the coverage of femicide is mainly episodic, and that only a small fraction of the articles are thematic-oriented. The preference for dramatic coverage meets the criteria of 'newsworthiness', which is advantageous for newspaper sales. The analysis also indicated a lack of voices and opinions from women's organizations and sources. Indeed, one earlier study indicated an absence of women's organizations in the media (Fairbairn & Dawson, 2013). Hence, although the media are a key arena in which social problems are debated and reconstructed, newsmakers fell short in reshaping femicide within a wide social context, which would also help raise public awareness. Furthermore, the press framing of intimate femicide in an episodic manner contributes to a social denial of this crime, and inhibits public discourse from taking responsibility in confronting it.

The third motif relates to the way in which the media profile the victims. The analysis revealed that the representation of the victims is deeply rooted within stereotypes of gender, social class and ethnic origin. Israeli Jewish victims are widely covered, primarily those associated with the upper-middle class. The conception of these victims in the press interweaves gender and social class typecasts who fit both feminine and successful career standards. In contrast, Ethiopians and Israeli Arab victims are mostly profiled in terms of traditional

patriarchal stereotypes, and there is a general misrepresentation of foreign victims. All these suggest that the news coverage plays a key role in the perpetuation of the structure of dominance, gender and social class.

In a similar vein, the study shows that the depiction of perpetrators reflects the social and cultural structure. The framing of offenders who are presumed to be upper-middle class sustains the social perceptions of a 'good partner' who failed due to a mental crisis or an act of madness. While, on the other hand, the coverage of immigrant offenders marginalizes them through the use of images of unemployment, incapacity and an alcoholic drinking problem. This process of 'othering' reinforces social perceptions that immigrants are a social burden on society. Moreover, by demonizing foreign offenders and highlighting femicide as a highly brutal act, the media draw a distinct boundary in regard to foreign people who are perceived as 'enemies within, and who threaten the moral order of society. These findings are consistent with Meyers' theory (1997), and indicate that the coverage of intimate femicide reflects the intersection between social inequalities, class and race. Thus, the media framing of intimate femicide serves as a mechanism for maintaining and reinforcing the social structure of society.

This study is not without its limitations. The analysis was restricted to news coverage of intimate femicide in Israeli newspapers. Furthermore, in some of the ethnic groups the number of cases was small, which may have limited the generalizability of the results. Expanding the analysis to the coverage of different countries and social groups, as well as to additional sources of media coverage, will add to the existing knowledge on the subject.

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