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The Different Dynamics of Femicide in a Small Nordic Welfare Society

Abstract In this study, all cases of femicide in Iceland over a thirty-year period were explored. A total of sixteen women and girls were killed during the years 1986-2015. Femicide was defined in this study as the murder of a woman by a partner, former partner, or because of passion. According to this definition, eleven femicide cases occurred during this time period. The data analyzed were court verdicts and news reports of the incidents. Qualitative methods were used for analysis. Interestingly, there was a different dynamic related to femicide cases, which included 1) sex femicide, 2) former partners and 3) current partners. Alcohol consumption and the willingness of the victim to end sex appear to be a dangerous mixture, judging from the results of the sexually-related femicide cases. Alcohol consumption was a factor in all current partner femicide cases in addition to low SES status; empathy was lacking, and patriarchal views were prominent in some of them. In former partner femicide cases, jealousy and possessiveness were major themes, but not alcohol consumption. It is important to study such dynamics and contextual factors in greater detail in larger studies.

Keywords Femicide; Intimate Partner Homicide; Ecological Theory; Gender Equality

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In the majority of homicide cases, both the victim and the perpetrator are males. A part of all murder cases are cases where the victim and the perpetrator are in an intimate relationship (Cooper and Smith 2011; Dobash and Dobash 2012). In a small portion of such homicide cases, a male victim is killed by an intimate partner. However, in the majority of such cases, it is a woman who is killed by an intimate partner (Cooper and Smith 2011). Thus, when homicides take place in intimate relationships, women are much more frequently killed than men (Devries et al. 2013; Stöckl et al. 2013; Smith, Fowler, and Niolon 2014). In some cases, others—such as family members, friends, or neighbors—who might intervene in interperson-

al violence, are killed (Dobash and Dobash 2012; Smith et al. 2014).

Some scholars view the killing of women by a partner or former partner as the murder of an intimate partner (Stöckl et al. 2013; The Violence Policy Center 2013; Smith et al. 2014). Others tend to consider this phenomenon as femicide (Beyer et al. 2015); this can be defined as the murder of a woman related to her gender (Weil 2016), comprising a broad definition that can include more than just male perpetrators, where there is violence against women which results in their death, while some include girls as victims in the definition, too (Marcuello-Servós et al. 2016). In this study, femicide was defined as the killing of a woman by a male partner, former partner, a boyfriend, a person with whom the woman had a sexual relationship, or where the murder could be considered a crime related to passion.

Several theories have been connected to the phenomenon, such as the feminist perspective (Elisha et al. 2010; Taylor and Jasinski 2011; Chon 2016), the general strain theory (Eriksson and Mazerolle 2013), including the backlash hypothesis (Chon 2016), social disorganization theory (Frye and Wilt 2001), and attachment theory (Elisha et al. 2010). In this paper, two theoretical perspectives are discussed briefly: the feminist perspective (Sörensen 1984; Smith 1990) and Belsky's (1980) ecological model.

Feminists define patriarchy as males dominating females leading to inequality (Smith 1990). Patriarchy has also been defined as the tendency of males to attain higher hierarchical positions and the tendency of women to remain under their authority (Gold-

berg 1973). Thus, males oppress women (Frye 1995) and have more privileges and power than women (Smith 1990). The key concept in patriarchy is power. Power has been defined as getting others to act in a preferred way. According to the feminist perspective, men have more power than women (Zimmerman 1995).

Belsky's (1980) ecological model is one he developed from Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological model, but he laid greater emphasis on micro level factors. Using his model, Belsky (1980) made an attempt to explain why child maltreatment occurs. However, the model can also be applied to violence against women in intimate relationships. According to this model, maltreatment occurs when risk factors are more prominent than protective factors in four main levels: a) individual factors, b) family factors, c) social factors, and d) cultural factors. These factors interact with each other, both within each level and between levels. An ecological model of femicide states that a woman is at risk of being murdered by a partner when the risk factors are more prominent than protective factors. The risk factors are related to: a) individuals involved, b) family dynamic, c) social context, and d) cultural factors. The risk factors in these levels are more prominent than respective protective factors. The ecological model can contain other theories in addition to various risk factors and protective factors (Freysteinsdóttir 2005). For example, the feminist perspective and patriarchy can be viewed as part of the cultural level. After all, cultural views reflect attitudes and behaviors in a given culture (Agathonos-Georgopoulou 1992). Public policies as macro factors can influence the rate of femicide,

too. For example, murders are committed in various ways, but a gun is most commonly used when there is a gun in the home. An example is the U.S., where the regulations on gun ownership are liberal (The Violence Policy Center 2013). Women are in fact twelve times more likely to be killed if a firearm is involved in interpersonal violence (Smith et al. 2014). Furthermore, other factors can be contained in the ecological model, such as low income or public policy factors that direct formal social support (Freysteinsdóttir 2005) and men's failure to maintain control as a source of strain (Eriksson and Mazerolle 2013). In addition, the ecological model can include attachment (Elisha et al. 2010), social disorganization, such as the disruptive effects of urbanization, immigration, which reduce social bonds (Frye and Wilt 2001).

There has been a longstanding debate on the issue of whether gender equality reduces the risk of violence against women (Bograd 1988:12 as cited in Taylor and Jasinski 2011:342), or whether equality intimidates men with patriarchal views who want to be in superior roles, compared to women (Chon 2016). Gender equality has reached a high level in the Nordic countries, by comparison with other countries. However, the rate of gender based violence has not been lower in these countries (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2014; Gracia and Merlo 2016). It might be theorized that gender equality reduces the risk of violence against women, when gender equality has been reached and is a natural phenomenon in societies and cultures. However, while we are striving to attain greater gender equality, that might not be the case, since a higher level of education or higher salaries

among women might prove intimidating for men who experience a push for the role of provider.

Studies have shown that gender equality or inequality issues do not appear to fully explain the rates of violence against women. Low socio-economic status, however, seems to offer a better explanation (Kivivuori and Lehti 2012; Chon 2016), supporting the ecological model rather than the feminist perspective. However, social support and gender equality are extensive in the Nordic countries (Kamerma and Kahn 1995), so intimate partner violence and cases of femicide should be low in these countries. Thus, other factors, such as extensive alcohol consumption, might be more pertinent to the explanation (Gracia and Merlo 2016).

However, we need to bear in mind that cultural factors, such as patriarchal views, constitute certain risk factors within the ecological model. Men who kill women might be more likely to hold such views, regardless of the society in which they live. In fact, results from one quantitative study showed that men who adhered to an ideology of familial patriarchy were more likely to beat their wives than other husbands (Smith 1990). According to a recent study on cases reported to child protection services in Iceland, a higher ratio of those who were violent to a partner were migrants. In most of the cases, the perpetrator was a man and the victim a woman (Árnadóttir 2013). The high number of migrants as perpetrators might explain high numbers of domestic violence in Iceland (Karlsdóttir and Arnalds 2010), despite a high level of gender equality and an extensive social support system. However, that does not explain why domestic violence rates are

lower in other European countries than in some of the Nordic countries. But, it is important to bear in mind that even though violence against women in the Nordic countries is higher than might be expected (Gracia and Merlo 2016), the incident rate of women killed by an intimate partner is low in the Nordic countries, ranging from 0.7 to 1.0 per 100,000 in Denmark, Norway, and in Sweden. But, it is higher in Finland, or 2.3 per 100,000. The highest homicide rate is in Central and South America, where it is 68.5 per 100,000, whereas in Europe it is 14.9 per 100,000 (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2011). Thus, a social policy which supports women who try to leave a violent relationship (Johnson and Hotton 2003) might be important in reducing the rates of murders of women, although women are at more risk while they are leaving and shortly after it. As noted, the Nordic countries provide extensive formal social support to families (Kamerma and Kahn 1995). That support benefits women who are less likely to be economically dependent upon men and thus more likely to leave a violent partner.

Femicide has not been studied previously in Iceland. This study was conducted following a participation in a COST project on femicide (femicide.net). Rates for domestic violence in Iceland have been shown to be nearly 14% in the 1990s (Dóms-og kirkjumálaráðuneytið 1997) and considerably higher in a recent study, or 22% (Karlsdóttir and Arnalds 2010). Qualitative studies have shown examples of physical consequences of brutal violence as well against women (Ólafsdóttir, Júlíusdóttir, and Benediktsdóttir 1982; Freysteinsdóttir 2006). It should be noted that Iceland has a fairly small population of only 336,000 (Hagstofa Íslands 2016). In this quali-

tative study, all the cases of murdered women were explored over three decades in Iceland and contextual factors were analyzed. The research question was the following: What are the dynamics, such that cases of femicide occur in a small Nordic welfare society?

Method

Sixteen women and girls were killed in Iceland by an intimate person during this thirty-year period, compared to three men who were killed by their intimate partner over the same time. Since only two girls were killed during this period, and only one of them could be considered a femicide case, murders of girls were excluded from the analyses.

Design

In this qualitative study, a case study design was used, where the content of existing documents was analyzed qualitatively in depth (Rubin and Babbie 2005).

Data Collection Procedure

All verdicts that included the murder of a woman over a thirty-year period from 01.01.1986 to 31.12.2015 were analyzed; furthermore, written media coverage covering the cases were analyzed, too. First, a list of all murders in Iceland appearing on Wikipedia was examined, to find cases for this study. When it was clear that this list did not yield all the murders, the Fons Juries search machine was used to generate a list of all the verdicts for this period. Verdicts included covered all those relating to

the murder of a woman, according to paragraphs 211 (murder) of the Penal Code. Verdicts were also incorporated if they fell under paragraph 218, which includes aggravated physical assault, according to general criminal law no. 19/1940 [Almenn hegningarlög nr. 19/1940], where the consequences of the physical assault resulted in the death of a woman. However, it cannot be ruled out that other women or girls were murdered during this period without extant verdicts existing on these cases, or where cases were dismissed. Finally, media coverage about the femicide incidents was retrieved from the Internet and all written media coverage concerning those cases was studied. The data collection took place from 2015 to 2016. The results rely primarily on the verdicts; a note appears if they are from the media.

Sample/Participants/Data

Eleven cases out of sixteen were analyzed, as noted. None of the cases included same sex partners. The cases excluded involved the following: a) A woman who was mentally retarded and was stabbed to death by her friend, who also was mentally retarded. According to witnesses, they had been friends for many years and had never had a romantic or sexual relationship. b) An 80-year-old woman, who was killed by a 26-year-old perpetrator who did not seem to know her personally. c) An 11-year-old girl, who was killed by her psychotic mother who tried to kill her brother, too. He survived, but was severely wounded. d) A woman who was killed by a man with whom she was not in a romantic or sexual relationship. It appears that the motive was related to the fact that he had robbed her and she was going to press charges against him. e) An infant girl who was

killed by her father while her mother was at work. That case was excluded because it was the only case of femicide involving an infant girl and was, thus, different from other cases.

Methodological Limitations

The main limitation of this study is the small number of cases, in part due to low incidence of femicide in Iceland. However, a strength of this study is that it includes all registered femicide cases involving murders of women that can be traced to their gender. Thus, this study covers the entire population, not just a sample. A further important limitation of this study is that it is possible that cases have not been included, if there were no verdicts related to cases, or if they were dismissed.

Results

First, the incidents and the social contexts are described. All names of perpetrators and victims have been changed.

Arnfríður in 1986

Event: Arnfríður, aged 31, was murdered by Axel, aged 30 years. The event took place in Arnfríður's apartment. Arnfríður had a physical disability and used a wheelchair. Axel pushed her onto the floor, beat her head repeatedly against the floor, removed her clothes, and tried to rape her. When he saw that Arnfríður was having her period, he decided not to rape her and left her severely injured on the floor. Arnfríður was found dead from head injuries about 26 hours later.

Social context: Arnfríður lived in an apartment in a building for disabled people. She had difficulties in motor control. She also had a severe hearing problem and language difficulties. However, she had been a good student and had completed secondary school. The two of them barely knew each other before the incident took place. Axel worked as a driver for disabled people. Axel was married; he and his wife had experienced long term and severe financial difficulties and had recently lost all assets including their apartment. On the evening before the murder took place, Axel had been upset without a significant reason. Both Axel and Arnfríður had gone out with several other people the evening before the murder and then they had continued partying in the building where Arnfríður lived. They had been seen kissing each other during that evening. According to Axel and two witnesses, Axel was heavily under the influence of alcohol that night; however, no substances were found in Arnfríður's body, except caffeine. Arnfríður, Axel, and one other man had taken the elevator, first to the second floor, where the other man went to his apartment. Arnfríður and Axel then went up to the fifth floor to Arnfríður's apartment. A neighbor had woken up and heard a couple arguing in the hallway. The investigation showed that attempted rape had taken place. Axel confessed that he had tried to force Arnfríður to have sex with him.

Guðrún in 1988

Event: Guðrún, aged 26, was murdered by 51-year-old Benedikt. The event took place in the small apartment where they lived. According to Benedikt, they got into a verbal argument because he had gone

to a small convenience store where he met a girl and invited her to their apartment; he said that it had made Guðrún jealous. Various injuries were found on Guðrún's body, both recent and old. She had been stabbed in one eye, either shortly before she died, or few minutes after she passed; her cheekbone had also been broken. No injuries were found on Benedikt. According to Benedikt, he kicked Guðrún in the head before strangling her with ropes. At first, Benedikt denied having killed Guðrún and said she had hanged herself; he later admitted to having killed her.

Social context: Both Guðrún and Benedikt had serious alcohol and drug abuse problems. Both were intoxicated when the event took place and other drugs were also found in their bodies. They had been using alcohol and other drugs for days before the incident and, according to Benedikt, he had not slept for four days. They had first met when Guðrún was 17 years old and had been living together for four years when Guðrún was murdered. According to Guðrún's father, brother, and stepmother, Benedikt had abused Guðrún repeatedly, especially when they were using alcohol and drugs. The violence included serious incidents, such as cigarette burns. Guðrún had repeatedly called them while Benedikt was sleeping, complaining about his violence. They had seen injuries and bruises on her following the abuse. According to both Guðrún's stepmother and Benedikt, Guðrún had also abused Benedikt in the past, for example, by throwing alcohol in his eyes, cutting his arm with a knife, and by kicking him repeatedly in the scrotum. Hospital records showed that Guðrún had sought assistance twice for violence-related injuries. However, according to

witnesses, the couple seemed to get on well when they were sober. They had moved home repeatedly because of their alcohol and drug consumption. Information relating to their education or employment was not found in the verdict. Interestingly, Benedict was later killed by a man after serving his jail sentence; that incident was unrelated to this case.

Robin in 1988

Event: Robin was killed by her husband, Tómas, in their home. Both were 27 years old. Tómas shot Robin and then himself, which resulted in his own death, too.

Social context: Robin was from another country. Tómas was a fisherman, but it is not known if Robin had a job. Robin and Tómas had two children together, aged 5 and 10 years. The children were staying with extended family members at the time of the incident. According to the media, they had been at a dance hall until 2:30 a.m. before the incident took place. At 3:35 a.m. Tómas called the police and asked for help. The police heard a gunshot while Tómas was on the phone. Neighbors living near their apartment woke up when they heard the gun being fired. Since Tómas had committed suicide, there was no verdict following Robin's murder. According to the media, other people had not noticed any signs of violence that evening, nor did the taxi driver who drove them home, who had not been aware of anything unusual in their presence. Unfortunately, there are no reports from relatives or friends about their relationship. They had been consuming alcohol that evening, but it is not known how much alcohol they had consumed. Earlier in-

cidents of violence are unknown, prior to this incident. In the media, it was speculated that jealousy might have been the motive for this murder.

Agnes in 1988

Event: Agnes, aged 25, was killed by Gunnar, aged 20. Agnes was murdered in her bed in her apartment while her son was sleeping in his bed which was located next to hers. According to Gunnar, he squeezed her neck until she was unconscious, punched her on the left side of her chin, and finally grabbed a knife in the kitchen and killed her by stabbing her three times over the abdominal area.

Social context: Agnes lived in a small apartment next to her parents' home. She was a single mother and had a 7-year-old son. Agnes and Gunnar first met outside a dance hall around 3:30 a.m., just before the incident took place; they had both been consuming alcohol. Agnes was with her friend. According to the latter, the two of them did not have any money; Gunnar invited them to take a taxi, saying that he would pay. All three of them went to Agnes' apartment. Her friend left shortly afterwards. According to Agnes' friend, Agnes had recently entered a relationship, a few weeks earlier. Her friend did not believe she wanted to get involved with someone else at that time. Agnes' brother came by, after noticing a light in her apartment during the night, and asked if everything was OK. She said it was. After that, she fixed herself a meal and asked Gunnar if he wanted to eat, but he declined. Then she took off her clothes and they started to make love. According to Gunnar, Agnes suddenly wanted to stop having intercourse before

Gunnar had reached orgasm; she rolled over and went to sleep. According to Gunnar, he then lost control of his actions. Following the murder, Gunnar said that he had tried to kill himself, first by cutting his wrist and then by trying to hang himself with an electric cord. Gunnar reported the incident at a police station at 7:20 that same morning.

Ásta in 2000

Event: Ásta, aged 19, was murdered with a knife by 21-year-old Ragnar in the bathroom of her apartment. There were 28 stab wounds on her body, as well as bruises.

Social context: Ásta's best friend, Silla, had been living with Ragnar and his parents for nearly two years. They broke up two and a half months before Ásta's murder. Following the break up, Ragnar had forced Silla to give him a blow job and later he raped Silla when she was babysitting his younger siblings at his parent's house. He forced her to have anal sex, vaginal sex, and oral sex, after having abused her emotionally and physically, including asphyxiation to the point that it was difficult for her to breathe. He filmed the rape and told her that if she would try something, he would be able to use the film. Silla pressed charges following the rape. Her friend, Ásta, was her witness because she had contacted her right after the former incident and she had picked Silla up from where Ragnar had left her. The police got hold of the film and the judge concluded that this was indeed a rape. Ragnar had told his friend that if he would be convicted, it would be because of Ásta's statement and that he would take revenge. The evening of

the murder, Ragnar had dinner at his grandma's house. After that, he left and saw Ásta and her boyfriend. He told his friend that he was going to beat up her boyfriend for fun. Later that night, he went to their house, broke open the door to their apartment, killed Ásta, and got into a physical fight with her boyfriend when the boyfriend tried to stop him. Then Ragnar went to an acquaintance's house and told the acquaintance that he needed a glass, so he could say his wounds were because he had cut himself on a broken glass. Ragnar was intoxicated when he killed Ásta.

Anna in 2000

Event: Anna, who was 21 years old at the time, was killed by Adam, aged 23. Adam pushed Anna over a balcony railing in an apartment building.

Social context: Anna met Adam for the first time late in the evening of the day she was killed. They were both intoxicated and she was looking for a party where she could get drugs. They went to Adam's sister and asked if they could sleep there, but his sister refused. They took the elevator to the 10th floor in her building. When they reached it, they had sex in the stairway near a balcony. During the intercourse Anna wanted to stop having sex and wanted to take drugs, according to Adam. Adam lost his temper and called her names. It is not clear exactly what happened, but it seems that Adam pushed her over the balcony railing. Anna fell down and landed on the walkway. She died instantly. Her ruined underwear was found in Adam's pocket. At autopsy, a tear was found on her vagina. Thus, it seems that Anna might have been raped, but Adam claimed they had

had rough sex. After Adam had been arrested and was waiting for a doctor's examination, he called out racial insults to a female cleaner and the police had to prevent him attacking her. He also threatened to kill police officers and their children after serving his prison sentence.

Susanne in 2004

Event: Susanne, aged 34, was killed by Henry, aged 45. Henry hit Susanne four times in the head with an iron implement. He then strangled her with a belt. Susanne is believed to have lost consciousness following the first blow.

Social context: Susanne was from Asia and had lived in Iceland for seven years. Susanne and Henry had met in Asia in 1998. Susanne and Henry had lived together for a short time, but Susanne had ended their relationship before their child was born. They had a 2-year-old child and she had two older children, aged 15 and 13 years when she died. According to Henry, Susanne had disappeared repeatedly for weeks while they were in a relationship and when she came back she had money. He believed she was a prostitute. Susanne had denied him contact with their child, whom he had only occasionally seen since its birth. They had been fighting about this when the incident happened. Susanne accused him of abusing her, which he denied. Henry was not under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of the incident, but had been abusing alcohol and drugs (amphetamine was found in his urine). According to the media, a journalist who wrote a book about Susanne said she had been abused repeatedly by Henry.

Sigrún in 2004

Event: Sigrún, aged 25, was killed by her husband, Mundi, aged 29, in their home; he strangled Sigrún with a cord. Their two children were sleeping at home when the event took place. The younger one was in a crib in the master bedroom; the other child was in another room. The perpetrator called friends and relatives and told them what he had done. One of his friends notified the police. Mundi also called the police afterwards.

Social context: According to Mundi, they had been in a relationship for ten years and had been married for three years. They were living in an apartment building with their two children, aged four and one. Sigrún had a secondary school diploma and worked as a cleaner; Mundi was an engineer. According to Mundi, the couple was in the process of getting a divorce. Mundi had moved some of his things from their home to his father's house and planned on living with his father. However, he was still sleeping at the apartment. They had been having problems in their relationship for a while and had sought support from two priests without success. According to a psychiatric evaluation, Sigrún had suffered from depression before she had the children and a postpartum depression, as well as having suicidal thoughts prior to the incident. During the divorce, Sigrún was involved with other men and two of them were witnesses in this case. Sigrún was planning to live with one of them; that man had killed someone a few years earlier. Mundi knew she was involved with at least one other man, but was hoping that their relationship would not last. According to Mundi, Sigrún had told him

about her sexual relationship with other men and described them in detail. She had asked him to help her end her life since she did not want to live anymore, which he had done. However, the evidence and testimony by one witness did not support that. The witness, a female neighbor, said she had heard a woman screaming repeatedly, asking someone else to leave her alone. Furthermore, evidence at the crime scene did not indicate that Sigrún had tried to strangle herself, as Mundi claimed. It seemed rather that she had tried to remove the rope from her neck. Neither of them was under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

Þuríður in 2011

Event: Þuríður, aged 21, was murdered by Arnar, aged 25. Arnar choked Þuríður, first with his hands, then with a belt; the incident took place outside their car, at a recreation area close to the city. According to Arnar, he could not remember choking Þuríður. He remembered that the three of them went to a swimming pool, ate in a restaurant, and then drove out to the nature site. Then he left the car to smoke a cigar, and he next remembers himself sitting on top of Þuríður, holding down her arms with his knees, so that she was unable to move and her face had turned blue. According to Arnar, their young child was sleeping in the back seat of the car while the incident took place. He placed her body in the trunk of the car and reported the incident at a hospital shortly after.

Social context: Þuríður and Arnar were living together and had a young child. The media reports that their child was two years old when the murder

took place and that Arnar also had a 6-year-old child from a prior relationship. Þuríður had been working at a pre-school, but had lost her job for health reasons. The media reports say that Þuríður had earlier been a student at a trade school. No information about Arnar's work or education was found in the verdict. However, according to the media, Arnar had been working on a sanitation crew, but had left that job about one month prior to the incident. Both of them were sober when the incident took place. Neither of them had an alcohol or drug abuse problem, according to the media. The verdict notes that, according to three psychiatrists, Arnar had been diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia three weeks before the incident. He had been hospitalized at a psychiatric unit after assaulting Þuríður's assistant director at her workplace.

Þorbjörg in 2012

Event: Þorbjörg, aged 35, was stabbed 27 times in her head, face, chest, and both arms and both legs by Steinþór, aged 23. The murder took place at Steinþór's home, at his father's house. Both Steinþór and Þorbjörg were using amphetamine and other drugs at the time of the incident. She had an 18-year-old son with another man before she met Steinþór and had repeatedly phoned him and complained that Steinþór had taken money from her and wanted his help to get the money back.

Social context: According to Steinþór, he and Þorbjörg had been good friends for years and had also had a sexual relationship, but they had not been a couple. According to a woman witness in the case and Þorbjörg's relative, Þorbjörg and Steinþór had

been a couple. According to three witnesses, there had been prior violent incidents between Þorbjörg and Steinþór. Both Þorbjörg's relative and the father of her child said that they had seen injuries on Þorbjörg. In addition, Þorbjörg's relative claimed that she and Þorbjörg had been afraid of Steinþór.

Mary in 2014

Event: Mary, aged 26, was strangled with a strap by her husband Michael, aged 28. Their two children, aged two and five years, were in the apartment when the event took place. Michael denied having killed Mary and claimed this had been a suicide. A witness told the police that Michael had called him right after the incident and told him that he had killed his wife. When the police arrived, Michael came to the door with his son on his arm. His wife was lying on the bathroom floor and was clearly dead. The perpetrator was under mild influence of alcohol, but no alcohol or other substances were found in his wife's body.

Social context: Mary and Michael were immigrants. Information about their jobs are unclear in the verdict; however, Michael had a job and Mary worked as a cleaning lady. Witnesses said that he had been drinking a lot of alcohol during the days before the incident took place. According to their older son, a few days before the incident, Michael had been walking around the apartment with a knife. According to Michael, his wife had hanged herself on the bathroom door. The investigation showed that his wife did not hang herself: she was choked by a strap. Michael had been exhibiting severe psychiatric symptoms before the incident. He had been di-

agnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, according to a psychiatrist, and had been hospitalized in a psychiatric ward. He believed his wife was having an affair and he also thought that someone was spying on him. Both were believed to be symptoms of paranoid schizophrenia.

Summary

As can be seen in these eleven cases of femicide, three of them were sex-related. In all these, the perpetrator was intoxicated and hardly knew the victim. In two of those cases, the incident happened when the perpetrator and the victim had started to have sex and the victim wanted to stop the sex. In one of the cases, the perpetrator attempted to rape the victim before he killed her.

In another case, a woman was killed by a man with whom her friend had been in an intimate relationship. The perpetrator had raped the friend after their relationship had ended and the victim testified against him. Thus, it was a passion-related crime.

In four of the seven remaining cases, the perpetrator was the current partner, and in three cases a former partner or the couple was in the process of ending their relationship. The perpetrator had been violent to the victim before the femicide incident took place in four of those seven cases.

In two cases, the couple was in the process of ending their relationship. In those two cases, the motive seemed to be jealousy in one, and possessiveness in the other. However, one of those two perpetrators had earlier been diagnosed with severe psychiat-

ric illness, paranoid schizophrenia. The perpetrator who had acted mainly in terms of jealousy did not have alcohol or drug problem. He was the only perpetrator known to hold a university degree and a professional job. The other perpetrator, who had acted mainly out of possessiveness, held a blue collar job. All three perpetrators were sober when the femicide incidents took place.

In a third case, the perpetrator was a former partner, but they appeared to be seeing each other occasionally. The motive in that case appeared to be related to jealousy and to the fact that they had a child whom the perpetrator had not been allowed to see. The mother might have been protecting the child from a violent father. The perpetrator was self-employed, sober at the time of the incident, but had a history of drug use.

Interestingly, in each of the remaining four of those seven cases, the perpetrator and the victim were a couple; the perpetrator was under influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. In these cases, alcohol and/or drug abuse appear to be the main contextual factors, together with lack of empathy and even cruelty, in half of those cases. In one of those four cases, the perpetrator had previously been diagnosed with a severe psychiatric illness, paranoid schizophrenia, not long before the incident took place.

Discussion

Eleven women were killed in Iceland during a thirty-year period from 1986 through 2015, according to the definition of femicide used in this study. Thus,

taking population into account (Hagstofa Íslands 2016) the femicide cases involving women in Iceland during these thirty years were 0.267 per 100,000, which is considerably lower than in many other countries (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2011).

There was only one case that involved a victim other than a partner, a former partner or sexual partner, but that incident was a passion-related crime. That type of crime is much less common than the killing of an intimate partner, as the studies conducted by Liem and colleagues (2011) and Smith and colleagues (2014) have shown. The results show that there are three main types of femicide cases in Iceland: 1) Sexual femicide, where the perpetrator has consumed a lot of alcohol and the victim withdraws from sex after it has already started, or does not want to have sex after the couple has been making out. The perpetrator does not know the victim and loses control of his action when the woman does not comply with his sexual desires. 2) Former partner femicide, involving a former partner or a couple in a separation process, where the perpetrator is sober, but is jealous or possessive. Jealousy and possessiveness also seemed to be key factors in a qualitative study conducted by Weil (2016). 3) Current partner femicide, where the perpetrator is intoxicated and is likely to show lack of empathy, and even cruelty, towards the victim.

The perpetrators showed a degrading attitude towards the victims, according to some of the verdicts. Information about such patriarchal views might be lacking in some of the other verdicts. The majority of the perpetrators had been violent

towards the victim before the femicide incidents took place. This supports the feminist perspective. However, it might be concluded that the ecological model is supported in this analysis, too. Most of those perpetrators did have a low SES status, reflected in a low education level and a blue collar job, and the majority of them were under the influence of alcohol and/or drug abuse when the incidents took place. However, the ecological model can explain the lower rate of incidents as an outcome of a welfare society that strengthens the protective factors, thus resulting in the absence of femicide cases among higher educated and higher SES sectors of the population.

Conclusion, Policy, and Practical Implications

This study provides insight into the phenomenon of femicide and the social context in which it occurs in a small Nordic welfare society. The results cannot be generalized to other countries, since this is a qualitative study of a few cases. However, it does provide rather detailed information about the social context in which the femicide cases have occurred. One of the eleven femicide cases over three decades involved a friend of the perpetrator's former girlfriend. In all other cases, the victim was a current or former partner, the couple was in the process of separating, or they were dating and had just met each other. More women were killed by an intimate partner than men, since only three men were killed by an intimate partner during the same time period. None of the cases involved same sex partners. Although the domestic violence rate is quite high in Iceland, the femicide rate is relative-

ly low, compared to other countries. In only one of the cases, was the woman killed by a gun and the perpetrator killed himself after the incident, demonstrating more risk of suicide-homicide when guns are involved (Large, Smith, and Nielsens 2009). Immigrant status was slightly higher among the perpetrators than among residents in general, but not among the victims.

Femicide was defined in this study as a woman being killed by an intimate person or related to passion. Since only one eligible case involved a child, it was decided not to analyze that case. Three types of femicide cases emerged from the data, which take place in different dynamics and social contexts. It is important to study such dynamics in greater detail in larger studies. Ecological factors, such as low socio-economic status, alcohol problems, patriarchal views, former violence, jealousy, and possessiveness, seem to be warning signs, especially alcohol/drug abuse problems in long-term relationships and in dating relationships. It might be important for societies to de-escalate these factors and to provide their citizens with equal opportunities and value them, whatever path they may take in education and employment. It might also be important to educate young people about imminent risk when sex takes place under the influence of heavy alcohol consumption. Ecological factors, such as low SES status and alcohol and/or drug abuse, do appear to be key factors when current partners were killed, but did not, however, seem to be the key element in femicide cases when a former partner was killed. Possessiveness and jealousy seem to be the key factors in those cases, and thus feminism better explains cases when former part-

ners are killed. It can be argued that jealousy and possessiveness are feelings that have their roots in inferiority.

The rate of femicide cases is very low in Iceland, by comparison with other countries. However, in order to reduce it further, it might be important to increase social support even further and to work on minimizing patriarchal concepts, especially among children, in order to prevent femicides in the future.

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Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the COST Action *Femicide across Europe* in supporting the editing costs of this article and Dr Shalva Weil, Chair of the Action, for the help and support in editing this article.

Thanks also to two master level students and assistants, Elísa Óðinsdóttir and Dóra Ingibjörg Valgarðsdóttir, for helping me in finding verdicts and professional articles involving femicide.

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