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MALE PERPETRATORS' ACCOUNTS OF INTIMATE FEMICIDE

A Global Systematic Review

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Background

Intimate femicide, the gender-based killing of a woman by a current or past intimate partner, is an extreme form of intimate partner violence (IPV) and a distinct type of intimate partner homicide (IPH). While femicide is frequently used interchangeably with IPH the terms are used differently across state governments, international organisations, and researchers (UNODC, 2019). Despite a clearer delineation between these terms being needed, the data suggest that most female homicides are femicides. Of the 87,000 women murdered worldwide in 2017, more than half (58%) were femicides committed by intimate partners or family members making intimate femicide the most common form of the phenomena (UNODC, 2018, 2019). Globally, at least one in seven homicides and more than a third of female homicides are intimate femicides, suggesting that neither cultural nor socio-economic context is a significant determinant in this phenomenon in the presence of a global patriarchy (Duff, Nampweya, and Tree, 2020; Stöckl et al., 2013).

By definition, gender plays a role in femicide perpetration. While intimate femicide perpetrators may be of any gender, males are far more likely to be perpetrators than females (Spencer and Stith, 2020). Gender-based power imbalances in relationships are predictive of IPH (Spencer and Stith, 2020). Thus, male-perpetrated intimate femicide is a gendered phenomenon rooted in gender norms and expectations (Campbell et al., 2007; Corradi, et al., 2016; Smith et al., 1998; UNODC, 2019; Weizmann-Heneliu et al., 2012). Yet one of the most important drivers of intimate femicide – namely, male perpetrators – remains understudied (Di Marco and Evans, 2020).

Theories and explanations of intimate femicide perpetration span over 50 years. Frye (1957) described four narrative typologies used by femicide perpetrators to explain their behaviour: the hero, the revenger, the victim, and the professional. This work was followed by Scott and Lyman (1968) who described, from a sociological perspective, four excuses – appeal to accidents, defeasibility, biological drives, and scapegoating. More recently, resource theory has posited that in the context of heterosexual relationships, when a woman's resources (e.g., education, income, job security) are greater than that of a man's, violence may shrink the apparent status difference (Atkinson et al., 2005; Campbell et al., 2007). Against this backdrop, men's inability to meet patriarchal societal expectations leads to an increased risk of intimate femicide (Campbell et al., 2007). General

recidivism and justice system involvement correlate with intimate femicide (Dobash et al., 2004; Dobash, et al., 2009; Lien and Lorentzen, 2019); a study of the Canadian Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System found that before committing femicide, 76% of male intimate femicide offenders had prior contact with mental health or carceral systems (Eke et al., 2011). Prior offences, including a history of relationship violence, and substance abuse, particularly alcohol abuse, are risk factors for extreme relationship violence and IPH (Dobash et al., 2009; Dobash and Dobash, 2015: 26; Fals-Stewart et al., 2003). Most work on femicide perpetrators has been based on secondary analysis of documents like police reports, medical examiner reports, and psychological assessments. These analyses have identified some perpetration risk factors and psychosocial characteristics (Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2012). Additionally, a small group of publications examined perpetration through qualitative methodologies (Harden et al., 2019; Graham et al., 2020; Kivisto, 2015). Prior reviews on intimate femicide have explored theoretical models of IPH perpetration (Campbell et al., 2007) and demographics, motivations and psychiatric characteristics (Kivisto, 2015) providing adequate grounding for an in-depth examination of perpetrators' perspectives.

Subjective narratives from perpetrators have been examined in a group of important studies (Adshead et al., 2015; Dobash and Dobash, 2015; Johnson and Hearn, 2001). Hearn's work is the foundation for considering subjective narratives, including perpetrators' denials, justifications and rationalisations (Hearn, 1998: 107–108). Likewise, Dobash and Dobash observed practices of deflection and lack of remorse and empathy, noting that such individuals pose a risk to future partners (Dobash and Dobash, 2015: 85–91). Harden, Spencer, and Stith recently synthesised studies that included qualitative interviews with victims of attempted IPH, family or friends of victims, and perpetrators of attempted or completed IPH. While this review highlighted the need to bring perpetrator analyses to the forefront of femicide discussion, a key theme was female-perpetrated IPH as a form of self-defence (Harden et al., 2019; Spencer and Stith, 2020); we believe self-defence to be fundamentally different to the motives of male-perpetrated intimate femicide. To date, no review has aggregated data on the insider perspective of male-perpetrated intimate femicide. The purpose of this systematic review was to synthesise the published evidence on intimate femicide perpetration with a focus on the perspectives of male perpetrators, including their sense-making.

Methodology

The review was global in nature and focused exclusively on male-perpetrated intimate femicide; peer-reviewed studies of any design type were included as were analyses of primary and secondary data, published during any time, in any discipline, and written in English, Spanish, or Portuguese. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework was used to conduct this review and included the following components: records from database searching, duplicate removal, abstract screening for relevance, full-text eligibility assessment, qualitative and quantitative data extraction, and synthesis.

In May 2021, we executed a comprehensive search of ten databases including: PubMed, Embase, PsycInfo, Web of Science Core Collection, KCI-Korean Journal Index, Russian Science Citation Index, SciELO Citation, Scopus, African Index Medicus, and Latin American and Caribbean System on Health Sciences Information.

We searched using a combination of concepts and keywords. Search concepts included any of the following terms: homicide, murder, femicide, feminicide, honour killing, honor killing, spousal homicide, spouse homicide, perpetration, partner homicide, partner murder, partner kill★ or domestic homicide combined with the “AND” Boolean operator alongside sexual partner, spouse, husband, wife, domestic partner, abuser, partner, boyfriend, girlfriend, victimiser, lover, perpetrator, partner violence, IPV, or IPH. Searches were limited to published articles, articles in press, or reviews in English, Spanish, or Portuguese. Our multilingual team reviewed articles based on language fluency.

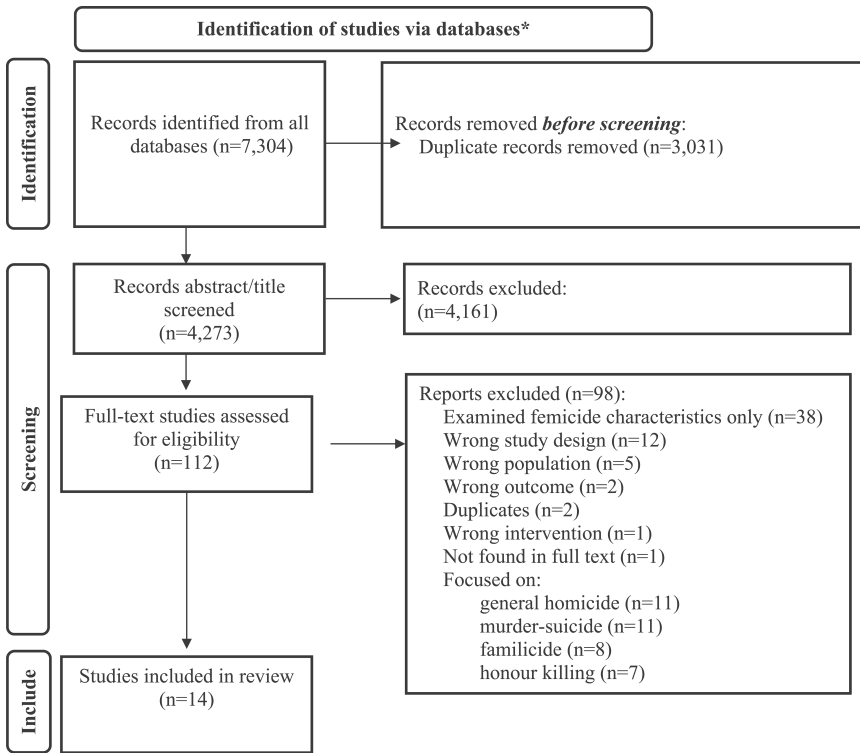


Figure 49.1 PRISMA diagram for male-perpetrated intimate partner femicide.

Note: *Databases included: PubMed, Embase, PsychInfo, Web of Science Core Collection, KCI-Korean Journal Index, Russian Science Citation Index, SciELO Citation, Scopus, African Index Medicus, and Latin-American and Caribbean System on Health Sciences Information.

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Our search was delimited to peer-reviewed literature, and thus grey literature and dissertations were excluded. There were no limits on publication date. Our searches resulted in the identification of 7,304 records. After the removal of 3,031 duplicate records, 4,273 records were included in the initial title and abstract review.

Two authors independently assessed all titles and abstracts for inclusion. Publications focused exclusively on IPV, nonfatal or attempted femicide, and the perspectives of victims or survivors were excluded at this stage. Inclusion discordance and review criteria refinement were resolved by consensus in team discussions; following these discussions, the first or second author included or excluded articles. After this process, 112 articles were forwarded for full-text review.

The full-text review followed the same process to determine eligibility for extraction. Here, we focused on the primary perspectives of perpetrators. Articles excluded at this stage were those where the killing was not an intimate femicide (e.g., honour killings), individuals apart from the female intimate partner were killed (e.g., cases of murder-suicide or familicide), or the article did not include analysis of the perspective of intimate femicide perpetrators. The decision to exclude honour killings was grounded in the fact that most honour killings are perpetrated by family members (e.g., fathers) and not intimate partners. After reviewing the full text of these articles, we viewed honour killings to be a tangibly different phenomenon. Likewise, at this stage we chose to focus exclusively on single-victim femicides in keeping with our emphasis on the female victim–male

perpetrator dyad. Ultimately, we extracted information from fourteen ($n = 14$) articles. Two authors extracted data independently from each article. Extracted information included language of the publication, publication year, theoretical foundation, the purpose of the research, country and setting, data source (primary or secondary), methodology (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods), domains of inquiry, data collection instrument, population, sampling technique, sample size, methodological challenges, analytical approach, and main results.

Results

Using qualitative content synthesis, we identified the use of terminology and theories, as well as common themes across studies – namely, perpetrator biographical and predisposing factors, self-narratives, and sense-making within papers. The 14 papers we examined were published between 1980 and 2021. All 14 papers were published in English despite robust work on femicide in the Latin American region; apart from Asia, all regions of the world were represented.

Intimate Femicide Terminology and Theories

Femicide is a relatively new concept; as its study has evolved, debates over the definition continue (UNODC, 2019). Among the studies, terminology was inconsistent. Six papers explicitly used the term “femicide,” including some with descriptive qualifiers (e.g., intimate femicide, or intimate partner femicide) (Di Marco and Evans, 2020; Goussinsky and Yassour-Borochowitz, 2012; Johnson et al., 2017; Mathews et al., 2011 & 2015; Podreka, 2019). Other terms included conjugal violence, intimate partner homicide, intimate partner murder, men who killed their wives or girlfriends, passion killing, spouse killing, spouse homicide, and uxoricide. Seven articles used only one of the aforementioned terms, while the other half used multiple terms within their studies. Bach (1980) used language that relied on outdated notions of gender and sex whereas other papers were consistent with more recent conceptualisations of gender equality. While Stout (1993) used the term “intimate femicide” early on, all other authors publishing between 1993 and 2010 used the term “intimate partner homicide” (Adams, 2009; Dobash, et al., 2009; Elisha et al., 2010). In 2011 a discernible shift in terminology took place with most authors publishing after that time using the terms “femicide” or “intimate femicide” (Di Marco and Evans, 2020; Goussinsky and Yassour-Borochowitz, 2012; Johnson et al., 2017; Mathews, 2011 & 2015; Podreka, 2019).

Studies theoretically grounded their work in two major categories: (1) gender and power and (2) psychology or social development. Most employed theories describing power relative to gender hierarchy, including patriarchy, hegemonic masculinities, male sexual proprietariness, and male dominance. These theories assert that intimate femicide is explained through male-female power imbalances, where men hold power and take actions to maintain dominance over women (Campbell et al., 2003). Dobash et al. (2009) used a feminist perspective to explain contextual and situational factors for both intimate relationships and femicide drawing on gender and power theory.

Psychological and social development theories explained femicide through childhood victimisation or experiential learning. Notably both fields attend to the effects of early childhood experiences on later behaviour. Adams (2009) employed the social learning theory of IPV, which asserts that violence is learned behaviour modelled by parents and subsequently reinforced by social endorsement of male dominance within relationships. Several studies ($n = 4$) linked insecure parental relationships to the extreme attachment perpetrators felt to their intimate partners (Adams, 2009; Elisha et al., 2010; Mathews et al., 2011 & 2015). Several studies described volatile, violent, unpredictable, or neglectful relationships with mothers as creating early negative attitudes towards women, which ultimately extended to perpetrators' adult relationships with their female partners (Adams, 2009; DiMarco and Evans, 2020; Elisha et al., 2010, Mathews et al., 2011 & 2015). Notably absent from

Table 49.1 Fourteen Articles on Male-Perpetrated Intimate Femicide, Including Perpetrators' Perspectives, by Year

<i>Year</i>	<i>Authors</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Data Type/Source</i>	<i>Method</i>	<i>Sampling Approach (n = # males)</i>
1980	Bach	Greece, Germany, England, French Polynesia, USA	Psychology/sociology	Primary/unstructured individual interviews, unspecified group interviews, and questionnaires	Mixed methods	Unspecified (n = 38)
1993	Stout	USA	Criminology	Primary and secondary/semi-structured interviews and case files	Qualitative	Simple random sampling (n = 23)
2009	Adams	USA	Criminology	Primary/structured interviews	Qualitative	Purposive sampling (n = 31)
2009	Dobash et al.	UK	Criminology	Secondary/semi-structured interviews and case files	Quantitative	Multiple strategies (n = 104)
2010	Elisha et al.	Israel	Criminology	Primary and secondary/semi-structured interviews and court verdicts	Qualitative	Purposive sampling (n = 15)
2011	Dobash & Dobash	UK	Criminology/sociology	Secondary/case files	Qualitative	Systematic sampling after a specified number (n = 104)
2011	Mathews, Jewkes & Abrahams	South Africa	Psychology/sociology	Primary/semi-structured interviews	Qualitative	Purposive sampling (n = 20)
2012	Goussinsky & Yassour-Borochowitz	Israel	Criminology	Primary/semi-structured interviews	Qualitative	Purposive sampling (n = 18)
2014	Dilmon & Timor	Israel	Criminology	Primary/semi-structured interviews	Qualitative	Unspecified sampling (n = 12)
2015	Matthews, Jewkes & Abrahams	South Africa	Criminology	Primary/semi-structured interviews	Qualitative	Purposive sampling (n = 20)
2019	Johnson et al.	Australia	Criminology	Secondary/unspecified interviews and questionnaires	Mixed methods	Purposive sampling (n = 68)
2019	Podreka	Slovenia	Psychology/sociology	Secondary/case files	Qualitative	Unspecified sampling (n = 24)
2020	Di Marco & Evans	Argentina	Criminology	Primary/unstructured interviews	Qualitative	Purposive sampling (n = 12)
2020	Duff, Nampweya & Tree	Namibia	Violence studies	Primary/semi-structured interviews	Qualitative	Purposive sampling (n = 10)

the studies included in this review were theories from the disciplines of criminology and masculinity studies. Of the 14 publications reviewed, only three discussed perpetrator typologies; the concept of the perpetrator perceiving himself as a victim was present in eight of the studies (Dilmon and Timor, 2014; Di Marco and Evans, 2020; Duff et al., 2020; Elisha et al., 2010; Goussinsky and Yassour-Borochowitz, 2012; Johnson et al., 2017; Mathews et al., 2011 & 2015).

Methodological Approaches

Most of the articles in this review utilised qualitative approaches (N = 11) from primary sources (N = 10), all in incarcerated settings (N = 14). Most authors collected data through semi-structured interviews (N = 8). Only two papers utilised unstructured formats; Di Marco and Evans (2020) relied on a one-time interview, while Bach (1980) employed an unstructured individual interview followed by a semi-structured group interview in a prison therapy support group. Interviews across multiple papers covered four broad dimensions of inquiry: (1) perpetrator's biographical background (childhood and adolescent adverse experiences, social trajectories, social network, meaningful events); (2) descriptions of the relationship between the perpetrator and victim; (3) circumstances of the femicide, including social and emotional experiences; and (4) narrative explanations, justifications, and rationalisations.

Appraisal of the analyses in qualitative studies revealed three main techniques: inductive analysis (n = 5) (Adams, 2009; Dilmon and Timor, 2014; Di Marco and Evans, 2020; Mathews et al., 2011, 2015), phenomenological analysis (n = 3) (Dilmon and Timor, 2014; Duff et al., 2020; Elisha et al., 2010), and content analysis (n = 2) (Dobash and Dobash, 2011; Goussinsky and Yassour-Borochowitz, 2012; Podreka, 2019). One study in our review employed descriptive statistics (Johnson et al., 2017) and one used bivariate analyses of association (e.g., odds ratios, chi-square goodness of fit statistics) (Dobash et al., 2009).

Emergent Themes

Common themes were present in intimate femicide perpetrators' accounts and remained relatively constant across studies.

Biographical and Predisposing Factors

Biographical factors were examined in nearly a third of the included studies (Adams, 2009; Dilmon and Timor, 2014; Dobash et al., 2009; Duff et al., 2020). Dilmon and Timor (2014) aptly described how crises – in this case the act of intimate femicide – necessitated a “radical reinterpretation of the significance of past events or characters in one's biography” (p. 1130). By contrast, Di Marco and Evans (2020) found that intimate femicides are not always interpreted as biographical turning points by perpetrators themselves. Past biographical experiences were seen as influencing the present and future. Likewise, Dobash et al. (2009) pointed out how explanations for murder were frequently attributed to the perpetrator's biography. Notably, there is significant overlap between the predisposing factors for IPV and intimate femicide, including substance abuse, mental illness, and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

The most salient biographical factor among perpetrators were traumatic or troubling childhood experiences. These experiences include abandonment, neglect, physical abuse, parental rejection, lack of supervision, disrupted caretaking, and prior contact with criminal justice or other social systems (Adams, 2009; Dobash et al., 2009; Elisha et al., 2010). Adams (2009) quantified these experiences finding that half of femicide perpetrators in their study had experienced child abuse at the hands of one or both parents, 55% had witnessed violence between their parents, and 42%

reported that their parents had divorced or permanently separated during their childhood; one-third had grown up without their father or a father figure. One perpetrator shared, “[M]aybe because of my father, we was so scared and mentally beaten” (Adams, 2009: 224). Dobash et al. (2009) noted the cumulative effects of such experiences and their contribution to femicide perpetration risk. Several studies noted how adverse childhood experiences contributed to attitudes towards women and related violent behaviours. Adams (2009) and others noted generalised misogyny among perpetrators as well as hypermasculinity. Lack of emotional control and poor problem-solving skills were also observed as contributing factors (Dobash et al., 2009; Duff et al., 2020).

Self-Narratives

The presentation of self was a crucial domain in most reviewed papers ($n = 8$). Three main aspects emerged: childhood experiences, identity, and notions of masculinity. Perpetrators’ upbringings stood out in narratives. In some papers, perpetrators’ life stories were analysed not for biography but as a neutralisation tactic. Adams (2009) indicated that some men attributed their “toughness” to their abusive fathers and emulated this violent conduct. Dilmon (2014), Duff (2020) and Di Marco and Evans (2020) found that some perpetrators explained the femicide by referencing their “macho” upbringing and the patriarchal nature of society. Several authors indicated that self-narratives were not only shaped by biographical experiences but perpetrators’ desire to be seen as benevolent men, by presenting themselves as situational victims or explicitly talking about their “good nature” (Adams, 2009; Goussinsky and Yassour-Borochowitz, 2012; Stout, 1993).

The management of perpetrators’ identities was a frequent subject of inquiry. As Goussinsky and Yassour-Borochowitz (2012) noted, some perpetrators did not consider themselves “violent men” with one perpetrator stating, “[I]t wasn’t under my control at all . . . it was like somebody else. Not me” (p. 560). Di Marco and Evans (2020) augmented capturing how perpetrators distanced themselves from violence and/or the femicide, portraying themselves positively or as “normal” during the interviews, but described themselves as in an “exceptional state” during the femicide; Dilmon and Timor (2014) shared a similar finding.

Notions of masculinity and “being a man” was a theme across nearly half ($n = 6$) of papers (Di Marco and Evans, 2020; Duff et al., 2020; Goussinsky and Yassour-Borochowitz, 2012; Mathews et al., 2011, 2015; Podreka, 2019). Abandonment, control, punishment, and superiority appear in most of the papers ($n = 8$), linked to perpetrators’ sense of masculinity and self-worth. Mathews et al. (2011), Di Marco and Evans (2020), and Duff et al. (2020) pointed out that perpetrators’ presentations of themselves as strong men were linked to their stories about defending honour, power struggles, and coercive control. Mathews (2011) concluded that these hypermasculine “breadwinner” presentations were associated with an increased emotional vulnerability. Perpetrators also noted how submissive behaviours by female partners early in the relationship made feel them “like men”; later non-normative gender behaviours resulted in deadly repercussions. “Beating and cheating” was an acceptable way to respond to a woman’s behaviour when it was viewed as a provocation (Duff et al., 2020: 11–12; Mathews et al., 2011). One perpetrator shared, “My former wife is guilty for everything. If she has behaved as a wife should behave, everything would have been alright. . . . In many countries, adulteress, like my wife is, would be stoned to death” (Podreka, 2019: 20).

Sense-Making

Sense-making is the process of ascribing meaning by employing available symbolic resources to the femicide. This was focal to most studies as a way for perpetrators to explain the crime. Three domains of sense-making emerged: perpetrators rationalised the femicide and deflected responsibility, viewed themselves as the victim while vilifying the actual victim, and adhered to strict gender norms.

The papers showed a consistent array of rationalisations for femicide. The main narratives included (1) describing a crisis, where they were provoked by their partner and, therefore, femicide was an act of self-defence; (2) presenting the femicide as a punishment for some action by their partner; (3) stating that the crime was a spontaneous consequence of uncontrolled rage; (4) accepting responsibility for their violent actions, but not for the femicide; (5) indicating that killing was a way to overcome their sense of helplessness and regain control of their lives; and (6) explaining that the event was accidental (Adams, 2009; Bach, 1980; Dilmón and Timor, 2014; Di Marco and Evans, 2020; Duff et al., 2020; Elisha et al., 2010; Stout, 1993). One perpetrator illustrated,

She went to the bedroom and started to pack her things, while I began to feel more and more threatened. My anxiety was increased, all my body was shaking. I've seen her as a threat, as someone who's hurting me and can kill me. I've seen her as someone who came to take my life, and I strangled her.

(Elisha et al., 2010: 507)

Responsibility, or lack thereof, was another element of sense-making. Lack of agency was used to explain the crime and to structure the story, by referencing “losing control” or “snapping” (Di Marco and Evans, 2020; Mathews et al., 2011). Perpetrators routinely presented themselves as victims across several studies ($n = 6$). However, the source of their victimisation varied – either the perpetrator's partner or other external forces (unemployment, alcohol, etc.) (Duff et al., 2020; Di Marco and Evans, 2020; Dilmón and Timor, 2014). Violent punishment of female partners was viewed as a “logical” response to perpetrators' feelings of victimisation (Di Marco and Evans, 2020; Elisha et al., 2010; Mathews et al., 2011). Two studies cited socio-cultural differences. Duff et al. (2020) mentioned that some men used witchcraft as a culturally acceptable explanation for the crime. Another study indicated that interviewees referenced Argentinean anti-femicide movements as a contextual explanation for their action while one participant used a soccer analogy to defer responsibility, “You look back at this and you just can't understand how such a thing happened. It's like a fight in a soccer match: it's sudden, nobody knows how it started and it's disastrous” (Di Marco and Evans, 2020: 13). Additionally, perpetrators used victim vilification to further distance themselves from the femicide, by portraying their partners negatively (Duff et al., 2020). Only Di Marco and Evans (2020) showed men “erased” the victims from the narratives. The practical results of these neutralisation narratives included normalising violent behaviour (Dilmón and Timor, 2014), neutralising or minimising one's actions (Di Marco and Evans, 2020), and distancing oneself from the femicide (Goussinsky and Yassour-Borochowitz, 2012). These papers coincide with sense-making attempts to achieve redemption, or to deny or reduce culpability.

Gendered identities and norms were another salient theme in the accounts. Possessiveness, objectification, and the inability to meet unrealistic relationship expectations were all routes taken within the sense-making process (Bach, 1980; Di Marco and Evans, 2020; Mathews et al., 2015). The desire for control was a consistent topic in several studies (Dobash et al., 2009; Elisha et al., 2010; Podreka, 2019). Underlying notions of femininity and masculinity were directly linked to the storytelling: if the hopes of the abuser failed to be met, the victim would merit a penalty, an extreme consequence being death. One participant stated,

My friends used to tell me that beating her is the only way to show her how to respect you, don't let her answer you back, she will get used to it and see you as weak. A little beating once in a while doesn't hurt.

(Duff et al., 2020: 4950)

Two disagreements stand out in the papers. First, the definitions of and findings about pre-meditation differed between the studies. For instance, Goussinsky and Yassour-Borochowitz (2012)

pointed out that most men planned the crime in advance, while other studies found that most of the femicides occurred spontaneously, although prior violence was often present in the relationship (Di Marco and Evans, 2020; Duff et al., 2020; Elisha et al., 2010). Second, jealousy was interpreted differently in the studies. Stout (1993), Dobash et al. (2009), Mathews et al. (2015), among others, stated that mistrust and fear of losing female partners resulted in controlling behaviour and, ultimately, femicide. However, Goussinsky and Yassour-Borochowitz indicated that profound despair was the primary emotion of concern (2012: 561).

Discussion and Conclusions

We synthesised 14 papers on the perspectives of male perpetrators of intimate femicide, including their sense-making. Papers spanned 11 countries representing all regions of the world except Asia; papers primarily employed qualitative interviews and were drawn from non-representative incarcerated samples. Notably all 14 papers were published in English despite robust work on femicide in the Latin American region; this finding highlights a bias towards the English language in academic publishing and the need for open-access publications in languages other than English, as well as support for scholars from low- and middle-income countries. In addition, increased dialogue between academics and anti-femicide activists would strengthen the study of femicide with implications for practice and policy.

The terms employed to refer to the intentional killing of a woman by her former or current partner varied greatly across studies. The variability in terminology highlights the need for clearly defined unifying language so that researchers and advocates can accurately describe various types of femicide with nuance to measure and compare across studies. Precise terminology which clarifies the relationship between the perpetrator and victim (e.g., intimate femicide) adds necessary nuance.

As in other reviews, authors utilised gender and power theories, and psychological or social development theories underscoring the predominance of these conceptual framings in the study of IPV broadly and femicide specifically (Harden et al., 2019; Campbell, 2007). All theories focused on individual or interpersonal interactions while none focused on engagement with formal social systems (e.g., carceral systems) or structural factors. This indicates a greater need to understand both the intergenerational and societal/social transmission of violence. Possibly because of the qualitative methodologies employed, papers included theoretical references as a broad frame but did not ground analysis in those theories. Likewise, the relative absence of criminological and masculinities theories is noteworthy. This absence was striking given that many of the papers appeared in criminology journals. Given that femicide has been criminalised in many contexts and that most perpetrators are male, scholars in these fields are well positioned to contribute knowledge to the study of femicide.

Papers emphasised the need to understand perpetrator rationalisations to address femicide as a gendered social phenomenon. The management of identity and responsibility was a significant feature of the narratives. Sense-making and self-narratives were consistent across studies. Sense-making involved two simultaneous processes; first, perpetrators distanced themselves from the intimate femicide, and second, they presented themselves as victims, even blaming their partners. An additional paradox was how perpetrators could both commit femicide and, at the same time, present themselves as not being “violent men.” Here, perpetrators were engaging in neutralisation, the management of personal identity, harkening the social legitimisation of violence. Abandonment, betrayal, control, and punishment appeared in most research indicating how the phenomenon itself is experienced similarly by perpetrators across settings – namely, notions of hegemonic masculinity (Kimmel, 2017). Hence, male perpetrators of femicide are not merely individual bad actors; instead, they are a manifestation of a global patriarchy that poses mortal threats to their female partners.

Across studies two aspects emerged. Male perpetrators managed their identities by deflecting blame for the femicide to external factors, and perpetrators’ perspectives and narratives about their

lives, the femicide, and the victim were consistent across studies. These observations underscore the fact that femicide is present worldwide as evidenced by the growing availability of femicide data. Indeed, the phenomenon appears universal in nature – likely as a result of the global patriarchy. While cultural particularities and contextual nuances may exist, just two papers presented such factors as explaining femicide (Di Marco and Evans, 2020; Duff et al., 2020). Attention to contextual particularities without obscuring commonalities across settings is among the tasks that interdisciplinary researchers must undertake in future femicide research.

Femicides occur in several different scenarios including single and multiple victims perpetrated by intimate, non-intimate, and unknown perpetrators. This work focused exclusively on studies of single-victim intimate femicide – namely, female victim–male perpetrator dyads; as a result, other intimate femicide gender dyads and non-intimate partner femicides were excluded. While female victim–male perpetrator dyads are the most common type of intimate femicide this dyad may differ fundamentally from other gender dyads, such as same-sex or gender non-binary couples. Thus, additional work is needed to understand alternate dyadic structures. Likewise, non-intimate-partner femicides, like honour killings perpetrated by family members and gang-related femicides, warrant examination. While grounded in the same system of patriarchy as intimate femicide we viewed these femicides as including additional layers of interpersonal and community relationships not necessarily present in intimate femicides. Likewise, we limited our research to single-victim femicides; murder-suicides and familicides were excluded from this work, though both also merit examination independently and together with single-victim femicides. Because we were focused on perpetrators perspectives, we excluded papers that did not include perpetrators' accounts; however, many papers included demographic and psychological profiles of perpetrators, and these profiles could be quantitatively synthesised adding additional insights into what is known about femicide perpetrators. Finally, the papers we reviewed all included samples of incarcerated perpetrators who had completed a femicide. Additional work among perpetrators who were not charged, convicted, or incarcerated and perpetrators who attempted but did not complete femicide may add additional insights.

This review highlights the importance of and heretofore absences in work focusing on intimate femicide perpetrator's perspectives across diverse methodologies and disciplines. As perpetrators are the main drivers of femicide, information about their risk factors, motivations, and rationalisations is necessary for effective policy and programmatic intervention to prevent dangerous behaviours by men and actions to save women's lives.

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