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Understanding 'Passion Killings' in Botswana: An Investigation of Media Framing

By Deinera Exner¹ and Wilfreda E. Thurston²

Abstract

In Botswana, local news media outlets have documented the prevalence of so-called 'passion killings'; however, no published studies have been conducted that examine these intimate partner homicides. Using ethnographic content analysis informed by a theory of framing, this study investigated the characteristics of these crimes, and societal attitudes, myths and stereotypes regarding intimate partner homicides and passion killings. Articles from four Botswana newspapers were analyzed. The information derived from this analysis is used to develop future directions for the study of intimate partner violence and homicides in Botswana.

Keywords: intimate partner homicide; passion killings; Botswana; media framing

Introduction

Despite increasing attention from the international community, violence against women (VAW) remains a global public health and human rights issue, and continues to impact the physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health of women (Green, 1999; World Health Organization, 2005). According to the World Health Organization (2005), one of the most common forms of VAW is that committed by a male husband or partner. This intimate partner violence (IPV) is not limited to violent acts or threats—intimate partner homicide (IPH) comprises a subset of this violence. In Botswana, a country in sub-Saharan Africa, these homicides are locally referred to as 'passion killings,' and are increasingly prevalent (Alao, 2006). Despite their brutal nature, little attention has been paid to the so-called passion killings in the research literature; however, media reports provide information about, and insight into, these crimes. This study endeavored to investigate the portrayal of IPH and passion killings in Botswana³ news media, in order to expand understanding of IPV in Botswana.

Intimate Partner Violence in Botswana

Though limited, the published research literature provides some discourse around IPV in Botswana (Becker, 2003; Macdonald, 1996; Maundeni, 2002; McCall & Resick, 2003; Wilson & Daly, 1993). According to this literature, IPV is widespread, and in part

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³ Botswana refers to the people of Botswana.

stems from the patriarchal gender role system of traditional Tswana culture,⁴ where this violence was considered acceptable and commonplace (Macdonald, 1996; Maundeni, 2002). Phaladze and Tlou (2006) identify the important role of past Batswana cultural norms in understanding the current situation of women in Botswana. For example, under Batswana customary law,⁵ women were traditionally considered a minor and under their husband's sole guardianship. Though this law no longer stands, it has consequently continued to "entrench women's subordination to men" (Phaladze & Tlou, 2006, p. 27), and must be considered when investigating the prevalence of IPV. Maundeni (2002) continues this discourse in his study of wife abuse in Botswana. In his discussion of the social stigma attached to women experiencing domestic violence, he postulates that among other things, cultural factors not only play a key role in ongoing IPV, but are also primary reasons why women stay in abusive relationships; that is, women are socialized to accept their inferior status in society and their subordination to men. Several authors emphasize the importance of recognizing the impact of conservative gender norms on cultural acceptability of partner abuse in patriarchal societies; in Botswana, as in other sub-Saharan African countries, women's violation of these norms is seen as justification for the perpetration of IPV (Maundeni, 2002; Rani, Bonu, & Diop-Sidibe, 2004).

Only one published study was found to discuss the trend of passion killings in Botswana. According to Alao (2006), passion killings are "viewed as a sign of patriarchal crisis" (p. 341), and are "directed at females, where either a husband or boyfriend decides to kill the female partner" (p. 341). Again, the role of patriarchy is emphasized. From this definition, it appears that the importance of the term 'passion killings' may lie in its social, as opposed to definitional, significance. In order to explore this, it was decided to examine the media framing of passion killings and IPH in Botswana.

Media Framing of Intimate Partner Violence

Several authors have discussed the importance of news media in bringing awareness to social issues, and in forming the social construction of a problem (Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Hubbard, DeFleur, & DeFleur, 1975; Meyers, 1997). According to Pan & Kosicki (1993), news media frame stories so as to provide central organizing thoughts; Entman (1993) adds that these central thoughts serve to "promote a particular problem, definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (p. 52), and that framing involves "select[ing] some aspects of perceived reality and mak[ing] them more salient in a communicating text" (p. 52). Through this process of framing, the media influence the issues citizens are concerned about, and how urgent they view the problem to be (Sacco, 1995; Terkildsne & Schnell, 1997).

Berns (2001) discusses the importance of analyzing media framing because "individuals draw on these sources when constructing their understanding of issues" (p. 263); in her study, she demonstrated that the media served to resist attempts to place domestic violence within a patriarchal framework by degendering the problem. Furthermore, the construction of a problem can affect whether or not the public believes it is a social problem worthy of change (Loseke, 1999). Several studies have examined

⁴ According to Maundeni (2002), traditional Tswana culture refers to the "period before missionaries and other white people came to Botswana" (p. 273), which is the period prior to 1802.

⁵ Customary law is based on the particular beliefs and customs of a certain tribe (Maundeni, 2002), and in this case refers to the laws of the Tswana tribes in traditional Tswana culture.

media framing of domestic violence, and all generally agree that women, the probable victims, are portrayed as being at fault for the violence (Berns, 1999; Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Consalvo, 1998; Maxwell et al., 2000; Meyers, 1994). Meyers (1997) suggests that the media encourage the continuation of IPV by maintaining the idea of male supremacy.

Given the role media framing plays in how particular issues are constructed and understood, it is critical to investigate how the local media portray IPH and passion killings to the Batswana public. Specifically, this study set out the following research objectives: 1) determine how IPH are characterized by the Batswana media (e.g., what cases were presented? who was involved?); 2) explore the media framing of these homicides by analyzing articles discussing specific cases of IPH; and 3) explore the label 'passion killings,' in order to determine when and how it is used, and if these killings differ from IPH in any important way.

Methods

The research team, not being located in Botswana, was reliant on Batswana newspapers that were electronically available and that had electronically available archives. As such, four newspapers – *Botswana Guardian*, *Daily News (Botswana Press Agency (BOPA))*, *Midweek Sun*, and *Mmegi* – were selected because they had electronic archives accessible within the public domain.⁶ A six month sampling timeframe (August 1, 2006 to January 31, 2007) was selected as a half year was considered sufficient for the purposes of exploration.

Criteria were developed to aid in the selection of media articles from within the determined timeframe for inclusion in the study. Articles were selected if they discussed a specific case of IPH (Objectives 1, 2 and 3), or were an opinion or general information article that specifically discussed passion killings (Objective 3). To be included as a case specific article, the article had to discuss a death, an attempted murder or a reported threat-to-kill (included as it appeared to be a precursor to cases of IPH), and the persons involved in the violence had to be current or former romantic partners, with the relationship specified in the article. The homicide could have involved a male perpetrator and female victim; a female perpetrator and male victim; a male perpetrator and male victim; or a female perpetrator and female victim. However, it was expected that no articles would be found on same-sex violence, as homosexuality is illegal in Botswana (Baffour-Awuah, 2004). Cases that fit the above criteria were selected whether or not the article contained the phrase *passion killing(s)*. Including cases that fit the criteria of IPH but were not labeled as a passion killing allowed for a determination of any critical differences between the two. To be included as an opinion article, the article had to contain the phrase *passion killing(s)* or a clear reference to these killings (alternate labeling such as *love killings*), and the primary focus of the article had to be on this subject. General information articles also had to contain the phrase *passion killing(s)*, or a clear reference, but the article did not have to focus on passion killings specifically (e.g., could briefly mention prevalence).

Each edition of the four selected newspapers published within the sampling timeframe was reviewed for articles that fit the study criteria. Some newspapers

⁶ At the time of the study, two other Botswana papers, *The Voice* and *The Botswana Gazette*, were also electronically available but neither included archives, and thus could not be used for this study.

published daily and some weekly. For case specific articles, both initial reports on the case, as well as information about the trial, if applicable, were included.

To supplement the research and ensure that Objective 3 was fully explored, an additional search was performed for historical opinion/general information articles written between January 1, 2003 and July 31, 2006 and containing the phrase *passion killing(s)*. An academic paper on passion killings in Botswana suggested there was an increase in the annual number of killings beginning in 2004 (Alao, 2006), so the start date for the 'historical' search was chosen to collect information from just before this period through to the start date of the 'current' search, to potentially allow an exploration of reasons for the increase in these crimes. To conduct the historical search, the term *passion killing** was entered into Google™ Botswana,⁷ and articles returned in this online search that fell within the desired date range and fit the criteria for an opinion/general information article were selected. Although this search was initially intended to find opinion/general information articles, it was noted that several of the articles also mentioned specific cases. The research team decided that additional information about these cases might provide data relevant to the study, and thus allow a more thorough response to the research objectives. Therefore, the name(s) of victims and/or perpetrators of a passion killing mentioned in the historical opinion/general information articles were also put into a search performed in Google™ Botswana, and articles returned that fit the criteria for either a case specific article or an opinion/general information article, and fit within the historical search dates, were selected. This iterative search process was intended to identify all relevant articles.

From the current search (i.e., articles written between August 1, 2006 and January 31, 2007), 32 articles were found: 18 case specific articles and 14 opinion/general information articles. The historical search (i.e., articles written between January 1, 2003 and July 31, 2006) returned an additional 17 articles that fit the study criteria: 6 case specific articles and 11 opinion/general information articles.⁸ In total then, 49 articles (case specific (n=24) and opinion/general information (n=25)) were included in the sample for this study. The majority of articles (n=45) came from two of the newspapers, *Daily News* and *Mmegi*. All the articles were imported into the QSR N6[®] computer program for qualitative data analysis and coding was done by one of the research team members. Each article was coded as a whole (i.e., titles and subheadings were not coded separately), and a sentence was designated a text unit. In total, 993 text units were coded.

Articles were analyzed through ethnographic content analysis (ECA) informed by a theory of framing. As described by Altheide (1987), ECA is a "reflexive analysis of documents" (p. 65) that "supports a theoretically informed account of media content" (p. 74). According to Entman (1993), content analysis informed by framing "avoid[s] treating all negative or positive terms...as equally salient and influential" (p. 57). For this study, it was important to determine the framing of the articles, as content analysis without framing may have missed key media messages that are perceived by the audience. ECA was performed on all selected articles to determine what words and themes were common to the discussion of IPH and/or passion killings. Prior to coding, two templates, a facts template and a frames template, were created by the research team

⁷ <http://www.google.co.bw>

⁸ The 17 articles found in the historical search were from four sources: *Daily News*, *Mmegi*, *News from Africa* and *The BBC (Gaborone)*.

based on previous research in media framing, and applied to both sets of articles (case specific and opinion/general information). During coding, the facts template remained as initially developed, while the frames template developed through an iterative process.

Results

Objective 1: The Characterization of Intimate Partner Homicides

Characteristics. In the 24 case specific articles analyzed, a total of 23 cases of IPH were reported (see Table 1). All cases except two involved a single male perpetrator and a single female victim. In the cases that deviated, one included male and female perpetrators and female and male victims (i.e., the perpetrators killed their ex-intimate partners – his girlfriend and her boyfriend). In the other, the female victim committed suicide, as opposed to being murdered by the male perpetrator. While suicide was not originally included in the criteria for IPH, this suicide appeared to be the result of ongoing IPV by the perpetrator. Furthermore, while the article described the death as a suicide, it was not entirely clear that this was actually the cause of death; it may have been a homicide reported as a suicide. Therefore, it was decided that this death would be included as a case of IPH. In 4 of the 23 cases, the perpetrator committed suicide following the murder.

Table 1: Characteristics of 23 cases of IPH reported in Batswana news media, January 1, 2003 to January 31, 2007

Perpetrator		Victim		Relationship ^a	Crime		
Age	Sex	Age	Sex		Location	Date	Type ^b
NL	M	18	F	BG	Lobatse	1997	Murder and hanging
NL	M	17	F	BG	Gaborone	2003	NL
28	M	25	F	NL	NL	2003	Stabbing (of victim)/ suicide (of perpetrator)
NL	M&F	NL	F&M	Ex-boyfriend of the female perpetrator and ex-girlfriend of the male perpetrator	Francistown	2003	Burned to death (victims)/ suicide (of male perpetrator)
NL	M	NL	F	E	Kumakwane	2003	NL
NL	M	NL	F	BG estranged	NL	Dec 2005	Burned to death
54	M	NL	F	BG - LT - CH	Francistown	Jan 2006	TTK
21	M	18	F	BG - LT	Francistown	Aug 2006	Stabbing
NL	M	NL	F	BG - CH	Francistown	Aug 2006	TTK

NL	M	NL	F	BG	Gaborone	Aug 2006	Killed with axe
35	M	NL	F	BG	Francistown	Oct 2006	TTK
32	M	21	F	BG - LT	Moshupa	Nov 2006	Stabbing
29	M	24	F	L	Gaborone	Nov 2006	Stabbing (A)
NL	M	NL	F	BG - LT	Nkoyaphiri	Dec 2006	Victim suicide (burned to death) ^c
50	M	NL	F	MM	Thangane	Dec 2006	TTK
NL	M	NL	F	MM	Kweneng	Dec 2006	Shooting (of victim)/ suicide (of perpetrator)
50	M	NL	NL ^d	L	Mokgenene	Dec 2006	Stabbing
NL	M	NL	F	MM (for 10 days)	Malhalapye	2006	Murder (of victim)/ suicide (of perpetrator)
33	M	NL	F	BG	Francistown	2006	Stabbing (A)
29	M	NL	F	BG - LT	Gaborone	Jan 2007	Stabbing
26	M	NL	F	BG	NL	Jan 2007	Stabbing (A)
NL	M	29	F	Former BG	Gaborone	Jan 2007	Stabbing

Legend

NL = not listed; M = male; F = female; BG = boyfriend/girlfriend; LT = lived together; E = engaged; MM = married; L = lovers; CH = had a child together; TTK = threat to kill; A = attempted murder

Notes

(a) Relationship between perpetrator and victim as identified in article; (b) Type of crime refers to how victim was murdered (unless otherwise specified); (c) In this case of victim suicide, the perpetrator was not a perpetrator of IPH, but rather a perpetrator of IPV (the article discussed that IPV occurred prior to the victim's suicide); (d) In this case, the article did not specify the sex of the victim. However, as it stated that that the perpetrator and victim were lovers, and since homosexuality is illegal in Botswana (Baffour-Awuah, 2004), the victim is presumed to be female.

Reasons for lack of intervention prior to IPH. From the analysis of these articles, it became clear that there existed a general lack of intervention to protect these victims of violence either prior to or during an IPH. Reasons for this lack of intervention were interpreted as stigma, social silence and fear. Twenty-four of the 49 total articles contained some allusion to stigma, either surrounding the crimes themselves (e.g., do not occur in Botswana) or around the perpetrators and victims. Victims were the most heavily stigmatized, and allusions to victim provocation (e.g., she terminated the relationship, she spent too much money) were found in 12 of the 24 case specific articles. The theme of social silence, or unwillingness to discuss or acknowledge the existence of IPH, was found in 5 of the 49 total articles. Examples of social silence included the beliefs that “Botswana culture...does not permit the type of killings that have been witnessed here” (Owino, 2005) and that Botswana is a “nation of peace and tolerance” (Letlhogile, 2005). Finally, 3 of the 49 total articles discussed fear as a reason why a person who either witnessed or was told about the violence, or the victim herself, did not intervene. Persons outside the violence discussed fear of repercussion as a reason for lack of intervention (i.e., killer would come back and kill them if they intervened), whereas the victim’s fear of repercussion resulted in withdrawal of cases reported to the police.

Objective 2: Media Framing of Intimate Partner Homicides

Blame Frame. One broad frame, referred to here as the blame frame, was consistently used to convey the problem of IPH in Botswana. This frame, which served to assign responsibility for the existence of these crimes, and in so doing diagnose the cause of the problem, was used in 44 of the 49 total articles. Within this overarching frame, several underlying sub-frames were found: a frame that blamed gender or gendered structures⁹; a frame that blamed broader social structures; and a frame that blamed outside factors without implicating the victim or perpetrator specifically. The number of articles assigned to each sub-frame is listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of articles using the Blame Frame, by sub-frame and type

SUB-FRAME	TYPE OF ARTICLE		TOTAL
	<i>Case Specific</i>	<i>Opinion / General Information</i>	
Gender	13	10	23
Social	1	3	4
Other	1	1	2
Gender & Social	2	8	10
Gender & Other	1	1	2
Social & Other	0	0	0
Gender, Social & Other	0	3	3
TOTAL	18	26	44

⁹ For the purposes of this study, gender is defined as both a “culturally specific set of characteristics that identifies the social behavior of women and men and the relationship between them...and the way [the relationship] is socially constructed” (Status of Women Canada, 2005, p. 57) and a social institution that “establishes patterns of expectations for individuals, orders the social processes of everyday life, [and] is built into the major social organizations of society” (Lorber, 1994, p. 1).

As stated previously, all of the cases involved female victims (one by suicide), and all but one perpetrator was male; thus, victim and perpetrator blaming appeared to represent blaming of females and males, respectively. As such, it was felt that the victim and perpetrator blaming most appropriately fell within the gender frame. Of the three sub-frames, the gender frame was used most often, and was found almost equally in both sets of articles (Table 2).

Victim blaming occurred not only in the majority of articles using the gender frame, but also in just over half of the total articles (n=25). Victims were blamed explicitly for terminating the relationship, or 'ditching' their partners, and implicitly for causing an argument or misunderstanding that led to the murder. In one case, the article discussed an argument the victim had supposedly caused, as the perpetrator "had seen his girlfriend talking to another man and this could have stirred the trouble" (BOPA, 2006 Nov 22), and in another, the victim's "uncontrolled expenses" had led to a "running misunderstanding with her boyfriend" (Ditshipi, 2006). In a case involving arson of the victim's home, where the victim survived but five other family members were killed, the victim was blamed by her relatives for having a relationship with a "criminal" (Piet, 2005). These articles also tended to exonerate the perpetrator, by blaming victim provocation for the perpetrator's actions. As stated by one article, "[the perpetrators] often make the decisions because they fail to handle rejection. Sometimes it is not all about the fear of rejection but they wonder how they would cope after being left by their lover" (Setsiba, 2005).

Several articles using the gender frame did blame the perpetrator, either in combination with the victim, or on his/her own. However, articles that seemingly blamed the perpetrator generally spent more time discussing why perpetrators committed these crimes (e.g., due to anger management issues, impulse control, emotional stress) than what he or she did. In this way, articles that 'blamed' the perpetrator represented another way to excuse the perpetrator for his or her actions. Articles using this frame also blamed gendered social institutions, such as the family unit (e.g., not counseling children well, encouraging children to live together prior to marriage) and traditional culture, as well as power relations between the perpetrator and victim.

Articles using the social structure frame (n=4) primarily blamed civil society as a whole for the existence of this violence; for example, for not "tak[ing] the issue of passion killings seriously" and for not coming up with strategies to "eliminate all these gruesome killings" (Modiega, 2005; BOPA, 2006 Nov 21). The police and justice systems were also blamed for the continuation of this violence, primarily due to lack of protection of victims. Two of the articles discussed cases in which either the victim or her family had tried to protect themselves by reporting the perpetrator to the police; however, in both cases, the perpetrator was released and the victim killed shortly thereafter. In these cases, the police were blamed for not preventing the violence. In addition to the police and justice system, other social structures blamed for both the violence and the lack of protection of victims included the government, the West, economics and development, and the media.

Finally, several articles used a frame that blamed outside factors, and not any particular person, group, institution or system, for the occurrence of IPH (Table 2). These factors included witchcraft, alcohol and mental illness. Of these, alcohol was blamed most often.

Upon analysis of the different frames used by the articles, it was noted that several articles used a combination of the gender, social or outside sub-frames when assigning blame. Primarily, both gendered and social structures were blamed (e.g., the victim and the police and justice system) (Table 2). In one article, perpetrators were blamed for letting their anger reach the “boiling point,” while the media were blamed for portraying the “perpetrators of violence as heroes” (BOPA, 2006 Nov 21). Overall however, the gender frame alone was used in the overwhelming majority of articles included in this study.

Police Frame. The five articles not using the blame frame used what Bullock and Cubert (2002) refer to as the “police frame” (p. 490). As they describe it, the police frame conveys a “just the facts approach” (p. 490), where there is “no speculation about the nature of the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim and no indication that the killing or its attempt was part of a larger problem between those involved” (p. 490). This frame was only used in articles discussing specific cases of IPH, and blame was not placed on either party.

Stigma Frame. Finally, a stigma frame, that is, the perception that this violence only happens to certain people, was evident in several of the articles (n=2). Rather than explicitly specifying what type of people would be expected to experience this violence, however, the articles using this frame presented two homicides as shocking or surprising because of who was involved. In one, the perpetrator was a respected Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) councilor, described as a “humble person who was slow to anger,” and the victim his wife (Setsiba, 2007). In the other, the victim was portrayed as a promising young university student who was engaged to her perpetrator. By their focus on the shock that these women could be murdered, the articles suggested that IPH is unexpected among those who are successful, or those in a committed relationship.

Objective 3: Passion Killings

In the case specific articles (n=24), the phrase *passion killing(s)* was not used in any of the current articles, but was used in 4 of the historical articles. In these 4 articles (number of text units=98), the phrase *passion killing(s)* was found in 11.2% of text units (n=11). This finding is important as neither the current nor historical case specific search criteria required that the case be described as a passion killing, so any use (or non-use) of this phrase in these articles represents a choice by the author, and not a result biased by search methods. The percentage of text units containing the phrase *passion killing(s)* in opinion or general information articles was not determined, as, to be included in the study, these articles had to contain either this or a similar phrase (e.g., love-related killings).

Common Beliefs. Common beliefs about the nature of passion killings were identified by analyzing the 25 opinion/general information articles. In these articles, passion killings were often associated with love, and were referred to as “love-inspired” (Owino, 2005), “love-related” (Letlhogile, 2006), “love killings” (Dube, 2003), and as “love turning sour” (BOPA, 2006 Oct 9). Only one article discussed the discord of the association of these crimes with love, and with characterizing them as a crime of passion (Dingake, 2006). Despite the strong association of these crimes with love, they were also described negatively throughout the articles, using terms such as *brutal*, *femicide*,

disturbing, inhumane, cynical, barbaric, horrific, gruesome, cruel, ghastly, sadistic, outrageous, fiendish, painful and abominable.

Eighteen of the 25 opinion/general information articles acknowledged the increasing prevalence or occurrence of passion killings in Botswana. Two of the 25 articles compared the severity of passion killings to the HIV/AIDS pandemic that is currently affecting Botswana. Though statistics were not available from any national agency, statistics about the number of passion killings per year were reported in news articles (via a member of the local police and a member of the Botswana government's Men's Sector) and in a recently published academic paper (Alao, 2006) (Table 3). Finally, all articles that provided a definition for a passion killing characterized the crime as being perpetrated by a male, where the victim was almost always female, and where the killer was likely to commit suicide following the crime.

Table 3: Number of Reported Passion Killings (January 2003 – Nov 2006)

Year	Number of Reported Murders		
	Total	Women	Men
2003	54	46	8
2004	56	54	2
2005	85	74	11
2006 (Jan 1-Nov 19)	53	51	2
TOTAL (Jan 2003- Nov 2006)	248	225	23

Notes: Number of reported murders are from Alao (2006), Chwaane (2006), BOPA (2005 Feb 25) and BOPA (2006 Nov 28). All articles reported numbers of "passion killings," except BOPA (2006 Nov 28), which reported the number of "relationship murder cases."

Discussion

The analysis of the selected articles provided a consistent pattern of IPH in Botswana, and aided in clarifying the label 'passion killing.' In this study, no characteristic was found that distinguished a passion killing from an IPH; therefore, this label appears to represent a particular social construction.¹⁰ This is discussed in further detail below.

In terms of the characteristics of IPH in Botswana, the analysis of case specific articles suggested that they generally occur between current, or recently separated, non-married intimate partners, and are perpetrated by the male. Many of the partners were listed as living together at the time of the killing, but further study would be required to determine if this is a significant correlation. The finding that most IPH occur between non-married partners was also interesting, but again, cannot be determined as significant here as it is possible that a husband killing a wife (or vice versa) is less likely to gain media attention due to stigma. In the future, police records of all reported crimes could be looked at to determine if either of these findings is significant. Contrary to the common and strongly held Botswana social belief that perpetrators of IPH commit suicide following the murder, the majority of perpetrators in the case specific articles were not reported to have committed suicide. Due to the social stigma surrounding suicide

¹⁰ Since the term 'passion killing' was found to be a unique social, and not definitional, label for IPH, the remainder of the discussion will use the term IPH to describe the killing of an intimate partner, unless the label 'passion killing' is specifically being explored.

(Jenkins, 2002), it is possible that cases involving a suicide are less likely to be reported, or that media reports would mask this trend within their reporting of cases. This represents an important topic for future study, as the occurrence of perpetrator suicide may be a defining characteristic of a 'passion killing' and a reason for the use of this label, while also a characteristic that may keep passion killings out of public documents. Finally, no articles discussed a previous history of physical violence between the two partners prior to the IPH, an exclusion that likely serves to represent these cases as isolated incidents of 'passion.' As discussed by Bullock and Cubert (2002), making incidents isolated removes association of these crimes with a larger social problem.

Based on statistics found in this study, one to two killings occur each week; however, the majority of these cases are not reported in the media. The under-reporting of IPH in Botswana newspapers is significant. Due to the lack of information typically given about perpetrators and victims in the articles, it cannot be validly discerned why some cases are reported, while others are not; however, based on common themes found in the analysis, it is likely that the overall lack of reporting revolves around stigma, patriarchy and social silence. Stigma is entrenched in social myths and stereotypes, including the belief that IPV is the fault of the victim (Meyers, 1997). Because myths and stereotypes blame the victim for her death, they in turn make IPH less newsworthy, and hence less likely to be reported (Maxwell et al., 2000). In addition to victim blaming, the patriarchal gender role system found in Botswana likely represents a key reason why these crimes are so rarely covered. Globally, the majority of victims of IPH are women, and the perpetrators men (World Health Organization, 2005); as was shown by cases of IPH in the articles analyzed, this trend is no different in Botswana. Since, in traditional patriarchal Botswana culture, men are the dominant sex, violence against women may not be considered especially newsworthy (Denbow & Thebe, 2006). Indeed, two of the most heavily reported cases involved violence against a man. In one, a mob beating of the perpetrator occurred following the killing of his pregnant ex-girlfriend (Baputaki, 2007 Jan 11; Baputaki, 2007 Jan 18; BOPA, 2007 Jan 18), and in the other, a female and male had killed their former partners (BOPA, 2005 Jan 13; BOPA, 2005 Feb 1; Tutwane, 2005). Finally, social silence is likely implicated in the lack of reporting. Several of the articles discussed portraying Botswana as "a nation that other nations would envy" (BOPA, 2005 Oct 26) and one that is "healthy and responsible" (BOPA, 2006 Dec 1). If IPH were widely publicized, this would disrupt the desire to portray Botswana as a nation of "peace and tolerance" (Letlhogile, 2006). These possibilities for the under-reporting of IPH deserve the attention of future research, as reasons for lack of reporting may also be implicated in lack of protection of victims.

As shown in the results of the article analysis, victims, who are primarily female, are most commonly blamed for this violence. This finding was not surprising, and is corroborated by previous studies (Berns, 1999; Bullock and Cubert, 2002; Consalvo, 1998). However, the emphasis on gendered blaming further affirmed the key role of gender in understanding these killings. Several articles cited changing gender roles, stemming from an increased emphasis on gender equality, a shift from patriarchal beliefs, and increased socio-economic freedom and opportunities for women, as reason for the increase in IPH in Botswana. Within this context, Denbow and Thebe (2006) discuss how Botswana men still consider themselves the head of the household, and "remain uncomfortable if their wives have more education, earn more money, or hold more

prominent positions in the workforce than they do” (p. 153). From this theory, it can be hypothesized that changing gender roles, and women becoming more central in society, may leave men feeling that their authority is threatened; in response to this threat, violence is used to regain power and control. While this idea represents an overly simplified explanation for killings that are the result of complex and interacting issues, it should nonetheless be explored in future research as a key component of IPH in Botswana.

Finally, this study attempted to understand the unique label ‘passion killings.’ In general, there appears to be a persistent association of these crimes with love. By constructing these crimes as love-related, the media not only remove culpability from the perpetrator, as the crime is committed out of his great passion for the victim, but also may affect how the public views their role in the prevention of these crimes. If these crimes are the result of passion and love, positive and private emotions, what place does the public have to intervene? Furthermore, the media present these crimes as occurring with no warning signs of prior violence, further constructing passion killings as a problem outside the reach of public intervention because there is no signal of need or opportunity. While the media do use negative adjectives to describe these crimes, their underlying connection with love and passion underwhelm these descriptors. Since the use of the label ‘passion killing’ by the media provides a particularly detrimental construction of IPH to the public, it is of utmost importance that these killings are reframed as crimes of violence and control.

Given the media’s construction of IPH as a love-based crime, the lack of use of the term ‘passion killing’ when describing specific cases is noteworthy. Despite the fact that cases of IPH as described in current case specific articles fit the definition of a ‘passion killing’ (as presented in opinion/general information articles and given by Alao (2006)), none of these articles used this term. A discord exists, then, between willingness to discuss passion killings and willingness to apply this label to actual murders; the same newspapers that wrote opinion and general information articles about passion killings never labeled specific IPH cases as such. Why this discord exists, and what it represents, remains to be explored. As several historical case-specific articles did use the term passion killing to describe cases of IPH, it may be that a shift in the use of this term has occurred; however, more historical case articles would need to be examined before any definitive conclusions can be drawn.

The results of this study must be considered in light of its limitations. Firstly, the inability to access Botswana newspapers that were not electronic, or that did not have electronic archives, may have led to a biased sample. Several newspapers, inaccessible at the time of the study, now have electronic archives (*The Voice*, *The Ngami Times* and *The Sunday Standard*), and so should be included in future studies. Secondly, because a fairly short, convenience sampling timeframe was used, important articles may have been missed. However, due to the iterative nature of the search, as well as the inclusion of historical articles, it is felt that the sample was robust for that particular time period, and that the sampling frame did not negatively impact the results.

In spite of the aforementioned limitations, these findings have implications for both future studies and prevention programming. Firstly, further investigation into social beliefs surrounding this violence is warranted, and, if gender is found to be central as predicted by this study, it must be incorporated into programming. Specifically,

programming focused on gender roles, both traditional and changing, should be considered potentially important to the prevention of this violence. Secondly, the construction of IPH as a love-based crime, and specifically the use of the label 'passion killings,' must be halted, so that a proper construction of these crimes, specifically one that presents them as the violent acts they are, is presented to the public.

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