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Failed Femicides Among Migrant Survivors

Abstract Femicide—the killing of a female because of her gender—is becoming an increased object of sociological enquiry, rectifying years of invisibility. The article presents results from ethnographic interviews with three migrant women who survived "failed femicides." A "failed femicide" is defined as an attempted femicide where the medical examination of the victim confirmed a life-threatening event, the victim had been hospitalized in emergency, and she or the perpetrator had described the event as an attempted murder. It is argued that failed femicides should be added to the growing literature on domestic violence, on the one hand, and femicide, on the other. The article presents narratives from three survivors of failed femicide attempts among Ethiopian female migrants in Israel. They present an interesting contrast to large-scale, quantitative, ethnocentric, male-oriented studies of femicide focusing on Western women. Since few women actually survive femicide attempts, the nature of the small sample should not deter the scholar from the depth of migrant women's plights.

The survivor narratives were analyzed by means of thematic analysis. The analysis produced five key categories: village society in Ethiopia; cycle of domestic violence; motive; weapon; and recourse to authorities. The themes provided understanding into these migrant women's subjective experiences and the ways they understood events. While no generalizations can be made, the article may encourage comparisons with other failed femicide survivor narratives from other migrant women originating and residing in different settings. With the increase of migrants the world over, non-Western survivor narratives may become an increasingly important tool for policy-makers and for academics to understand how femicides occur, how migrant women perceive them, and how they can be combated.

Keywords Femicide; Intimate Partner Violence; Migrants; Murder; Thematic Analysis; Narratives

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This article presents results from ethnographic interviews with three migrant women who survived femicide attempts. The female migrants reside in Israel and originate in highland villages in North-West Ethiopia. They present an interesting contrast to large-scale, quantitative, ethnocentric, male-oriented studies of femicide focusing on Western women.

Femicide—the killing of a female because of her gender—is becoming an increased object of sociological enquiry, rectifying years of invisibility (Weil 2016). While the study of domestic violence has become commonplace in the social sciences, femicide *per se*, which represents the most extreme form of interpersonal violence, had been relegated to the margins. That situation is changing rapidly as advocacy organizations, such as ACUNS (Academic Council on the United Nations System) and COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology), are now campaigning not just against gender violence but also against the final lethal act of femicide. Similarly, academic frameworks are now beginning to provide legitimation to study and publish on femicide and its effects. In the past year alone, two major books (Dobash and Dobash 2015; Ellis, Stuckless, and Smith 2015) have forwarded our understanding of the phenomenon; and a Special Issue explaining the social challenge of femicide will be published in a sociological journal for the first time (Marcuello-Servós et al. 2016).[1] As Corradi and colleagues (2016) argue, femicide must be understood as a social phenomenon that demands an interdisciplinary approach. Prevention requires a systemic approach, grounded in coherent and consistent theoretical foundations.

The vast majority of the research that exists on femicide is quantitative (e.g., Campbell et al. 2003). Most studies ignore the cultural/ethnic background of the murdered women, which is often not recorded by the police. There are almost no records of what actually goes on when a woman is murdered, and women's voices are few and far between. This is both because few women live to tell the tale, and because, with rare exceptions, the experiences of women from minority or migrant groups who have survived a femicide attack are of little interest to the general public.

The data upon which this article reports are rare in that they highlight the experiences of Ethiopian migrant women in Israel who have survived an extreme form of gender-based violence, namely, a "failed femicide." A "failed femicide" is defined here as an attempted femicide where the medical examination of the victim confirmed a life-threatening event, the victim had been hospitalized in emergency, and she or the perpetrator had described the event as an attempted murder. The survivor narratives are analyzed here by means of thematic analysis.

Femicide: A Leading Cause of Female Death

Femicide, or the intentional murder of a woman or girl because she is female, is the seventh leading cause of premature death for women globally. The Vienna Declaration on Femicide in the United

[1] A forerunner is a Special Issue edited by Campbell and Runyan (1998).

Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice proposed a wide definition of femicide, including torture and the misogynist slaying of women, "honor" killings, targeted killing of women and girls in armed conflict, dowry-related killings, murder of aboriginal and indigenous women, female infanticide, genital mutilation, witchcraft, and other phenomena (Laurent, Platzer, and Idomir 2013:4). Originally, the designation "femicide" was used by Radford and Russell (1992:3) who claimed that this was an act motivated by a patriarchal and misogynist culture. In 2001, Russell redefined the term to refer to the killing of females by males *because* they are female (Russell and Harmes 2001). In recent years, the designation has become accepted, although feminicide, uxoricide, and other terms are still current.

Scientific research shows that motives for homicide and perpetrator's profiling are very different from murder to murder. Femicide is also distinct from other forms of gender violence, which have been widely studied and reported. Rates vary across regions and cross-national variations have been reported widely (Corradi and Stöckl 2014; WHO, UNODC, and UNDP 2014). During the period 1985-2010, female homicide victimization increased in some countries in Europe (e.g., Switzerland, Slovenia, Portugal), remained relatively stable in others (e.g., France and Italy), while some countries, such as Norway, had extremely low rates of femicide. Accounting for macro-level variations in female homicide victimization requires knowledge of socio-political trends, such as post-communism, as well as an understanding of different criminological theories (Stamatel 2014).

Intimate femicide is one form of homicide perpetrated by a familiar person, usually a family member. It is the final act of intimate partner violence and is often the ultimate result of years of suffered violence. It includes intimate partner femicide and a whole area of study relating to so-called "honor killings," which occur when a woman is killed by a male family member for dishonoring family status (Gill, Strange, and Roberts 2014). 39% of all femicides (and 6% of all homicides) are intimate partner murders; in high-income countries, the percentage rises to 41% of all femicides (Stöckl et al. 2013). The number of failed femicides varies from region to region and period to period, and is generally not included in femicide research.

Femicide Survivors

Studies of survivors of failed femicides are quite scarce. Surprisingly, of the few studies that do exist, most are quantitative. McFarlane and colleagues (1999) studied 141 femicide cases and 65 attempted femicide survivors, in order to examine the phenomenon of stalking prior to an attack. The data were gathered in 10 U.S. cities from 1994-1998. The victims were identified from closed police records and contacted by mail. Once they consented to be interviewed, trained doctoral students ran a questionnaire, including an 18-item stalking survey; the interview took one hour. The results neither contain quotations from the victims, nor do they convey the quality of the lethal experience. Campbell and colleagues (2003) carried out a large survey of proxies of 220 intimate partner femicide victims identified from police or medical examiner records, along with 343 abused control women. The researchers concluded that pre-incident risk factors included the perpetrator's access to a gun or a previous threat with a weapon, the perpetrator's stepchild residing in the home, and estrangement, especially from a controlling partner.

Qualitative data on femicide survivors are less common. One study interviewed 30 women aged 17-54 who had survived an attempted homicide by an intimate partner with in-depth interviews in 6 cities, as part of an 11-city case-control study, to determine the risk factors of actual and attempted intimate partner femicide (Nicolaides et al. 2003). Victims participated in an audiotaped semi-structured in-depth interview which enabled women to describe, in their own words, their relationship with the partner who had attempted to kill them, and their perceptions of the activities and events that had led up to the attempt (Nicolaides et al. 2003:2). In the World Human Organization report on femicide (WHO 2012), the authors were keenly aware of the untenable situation in which survivors find themselves and advocated adopting legal reforms globally to protect them. The report added: "Studies are also needed to investigate cases of near-fatal intimate partner violence, not only to understand the needs of survivors and characteristics of perpetrators but also to shed light on the factors that may prevent femicide" (WHO 2012:6).

If qualitative studies of survivors of failed femicide attempts are rare, they are even less abundant among women from non-Western countries. There is growing information on domestic abuse, which does not necessarily culminate in lethal murder, among non-Western women. An example is a study of displaced survivors of conflict-related gender violence, which focuses upon African women's experiences as forced migrants in New York City, and their attempt to rebuild their lives in a new social setting (Akinsulure-Smith 2014). However, studies of the narratives of female migrants who have actually survived femicide attacks are lacking.

This article, then, despite the small number of interviewees it represents, brings forth the voices of the near-silenced twice over: once because they are women, and twice because they are migrants. It provides a rare glimpse into survivors of failed femicide attempts and highlights their experiences.

Ethiopian Migrants in Israel

Ethiopian diasporas are found in the United States, Canada, Italy, Great Britain, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere. After the U.S., Israel is the second-largest Ethiopian diaspora with 135,000 Ethiopian immigrants and Israeli-born Ethiopians. In some countries, the Ethiopian migrants are refugees or asylum seekers, who compulsorily fled their country at different points in history due to civil or political unrest. In Israel, the migrants opted to identify as Jews and immigrate to "Jerusalem,"[2] where Ethiopian Jews are entitled to economic benefits and housing as Jews, according to Israel's Law of Return.

The Jews of Ethiopia used to be known as "Falashas," although in the last two decades they have eschewed this appellation, with its stigmatic connotation of "stranger," implying low, outsider status. In

[2] "Jerusalem" is viewed by the immigrants as the whole of Israel (see: Weil 2012).

Israel, they tend to be called Ethiopian Jews, while in Ethiopia they often referred to themselves—and are designated in the academic literature—as Beta Israel (Weil 2008). They lived in North-West Ethiopia, in hundreds of villages scattered throughout the Simien region, Dembeya, Begemder province, Tigray, Lasta, and Qwara. They spoke two principal languages of the regions in which they resided: Amharic and Tigrinya. The Beta Israel were monotheistic and practiced a Torah-based Judaism, without observing the Oral Law, known to other communities of Jews. Ethiopic Christians influenced their religious practices and many elements were in common to both religions, such as praying to Jerusalem, the liturgical language of Geez, and the longing for Israel and Zion.

The origins of the Ethiopian Jews are shrouded in mystery. According to some Ethiopian traditions, certain inhabitants of the Kingdom of Aksum were Jewish before the advent of Christianity in the 3rd to 4th century. A popular legend relates that the Beta Israel were descendants of Israelite henchmen, who had arrived with Menelik, the son of the union of King Solomon and Queen Sheba in the Kingdom of Israel. A theory which has gained exceptional importance in Israel is that the Beta Israel are descendants of the tribe of Dan, one of the Ten Lost Tribes, which was exiled by the Assyrians in the 8th century BCE. In 1973, in Israel, the Sefardi Chief Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, basing himself on a reference by Rabbi David ben Zimra (1479-1573), claimed that the "Falashas," as they were then called, are from the tribe of Dan, thereby paving the way for their mass *aliya* (immigration) to Israel. In 1984-1985, 7,700 Beta Israel were airlifted from the Sudan to Israel in Operation Moses, but the operation was abruptly ceased. International pressure built up culminating in Operation Solomon, which brought an additional group of 14,310 Jews out from Ethiopia to Israel in 36 hours, during May 24-25, 1991. Since 1991, thousands of Ethiopians belonging to a group called "Feresmura," whose ancestors had converted to Christianity, have also immigrated to Israel (Seeman 2010). Their integration into Israeli society has been marked by social successes, such as Israeli Ethiopian Members of Parliament, singers, actors, doctors, and lawyers, side by side with social failures. In May 2015, Ethiopian Jews in Israel organized violent demonstrations in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv against racial discrimination and police brutality.

Femicide Among Ethiopian Jews

There are no statistics on femicide among the Beta Israel in Ethiopia; data are scarcely available on this subject in Ethiopia in general. It is known that domestic violence rates in Ethiopia are among the highest in the world. According to a statement put out in 2008 by Ethiopia's Justice Minister, Dimegn Wube, *half of Ethiopian women are victims of domestic violence*. An academic study demonstrated that 8 out of 10 Ethiopian women in their sample had suffered from domestic abuse by their partner; according to the authors, severe domestic violence is an impediment to Ethiopia's growth and development targets (Semahegn, Belachew, and Abdulahi 2013). Many cases of female abuse go unrecorded and research into domestic violence and femicide is in its infancy or non-existent. Legislation against gender abuse is not implemented and the punishment for femicide offenders is unclear or non-existent. In the case of a homicide or femicide, the perpetrator is not put behind bars, but his family is asked to pay compensation to the victim's family (Donovan and Assefa 2003).

In Ethiopia, where the status of women was clearly defined vis-à-vis their husbands, beating one's wife was often considered de rigueur. It was considered the duty of males to discipline rebellious or defiant wives. In a study conducted among Ethiopian migrants in the U.S., participants reported that domestic violence is much more common in Ethiopia, compared to the U.S. However, men's violent behavior is not necessarily viewed as problematic and the abuser, rather than the abused, is generally supported (Sullivan et al. 2005).

In a study of male interviewees in Israel, Ethiopian males blamed their womenfolk for instigating their anger and pushing them to violent acts so that the police could arrest them, and at the same time, they blamed Israeli society, which pitted women against men as part of a democratic system of law (Geiger 2013). In a study conducted in Israel with 23 male and female immigrants, participants noted that traditional institutions, such as conflict-solving mechanisms and codes of honor, disintegrate and contribute to increased abuse (Kacen 2006). Femicide among Ethiopian immigrants has also made headlines in the Israeli media (cf. Shoham 2013), even though a percentage of the murders remain unreported (Weil 2009). In a longitudinal study on femicide in Israel covering the years 1995-2007, Sela-Shayovitz (2010a) noted that the number of femicides among Ethiopian immigrants was 21 times higher than their proportion in the total population. In a three-year study of femicide among Ethiopian immigrants in Israel carried out between the years January 01, 2005-December 31, 2007, when the Ethiopian population in Israel numbered 120,000, police recorded 11 femicide cases in the Ethiopian community out of a total of 36 recorded cases in Israeli society (Weil 2009).[3] The number of intimate partner femicides perpetrated in Israel by Ethiopian males amounted to 28.9% of the total number of femicides carried out in the general population (including Jews and Arabs), and was totally disproportionate to their numbers in Israeli society (1.6% of the total population in the same period). There was not a single case of an Ethiopian woman in Israel murdering a man, such that all the cases of homicide were, in fact, femicides (Weil 2009).

The Study Method

The study reported upon in this article concentrates on the narratives of three women from the Ethiopian immigrant community in Israel, who survived femicide attempts during 2005-2008. The narratives were an offshoot of commissioned research on femicide among Ethiopian immigrants in Israel.[4] The research received ethical clearance at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, after it was ascertained that it was in line with the university's ethical conduct code and did not present any conflict of interest.

[3] From 2005-2007, there were two additional cases of female victimization, which had been closed due to lack of witness reports.

[4] Research on femicide among Ethiopian immigrants 2005-2008 was supported by a grant from the Department of Social Services, the Ministry of Aliyah and Immigrant Absorption, Israel. The narratives collected from survivors reported upon here were beyond the scope of the original commissioned research.

After obtaining consent from all the interviewees and elucidating their right to withdraw if they so wished, all the interviews were taped by this researcher in Hebrew interspersed with Amharic words, accompanied by handwritten notes. The taped interviews were later transcribed and translated into English. There was no questionnaire, although there was an interviewer checklist to ensure that major points were not missed. The focus was entirely on the failed femicide. The victims were happy to narrate freely, and readily gave permission to be recorded. The narratives constituted monologues, with mere prompting from the interviewer, excerpts of which are presented here. The survivor narratives were supplemented by interviews with social workers and perusal of case profiles, where available.

The researcher at no time tried to coerce the informant to participate in the research. On the contrary, in one case, the researcher was summoned by the survivor, a family friend, to the casualty wing of a hospital only a day after the attack requesting that her story be recorded. The second survivor was interviewed within weeks of the attempted femicide in an "absorption center," an institution for new immigrants that is designed to provide support and services until they move to permanent dwellings; and the third survivor was interviewed in her home with her complete consent. All three knew this researcher either personally or had heard of her long-time acquaintance with Ethiopians in Ethiopia and in Israel. No participant was exposed to risk or harm of any sort. Each survivor was thankful for the opportunity to tell her story, and there was neither personal nor cultural embarrassment.

The purpose of the interviews was to allow women to describe in their own words their relationship with their husbands who had attempted to murder them; their perceptions of the events that led up to the attempt to kill them; the attempted killing itself; and the motivations for the attacks. In addition, it was important to hear their attitude towards the host society's services. Although the ability of a non-Ethiopian to elicit information from victims on such a sensitive subject has been challenged, as an "anthropologist-at-home" (cf. Jackson 1987) with the Ethiopian Jewish community for over three decades, there was no problem of field access. Each interview lasted several hours, accompanied by the ritualized Ethiopian coffee (*buna*) ceremony. As Palmer (2010) has shown among Ethiopian forced migrants in the United Kingdom, the *buna* ceremony, enacted solely by women, is seen as an integral part of Ethiopians' social and cultural life in exile, and provides the appropriate setting to determine personal well-being, improve mental health, and reduce isolation in a migratory situation. In the narrations, the women re-enacted the attack, sometimes in the present tense, incorporating question-answer sessions with their spouses in a distinctively "Ethiopian-here-and-now" type of argumentation.

Survivor no. 1 was 42 years old and her husband was 58. They had 5 children. She had migrated to Israel in 1990 from a village near Gondar. She was Jewish; her husband was Christian. By Israeli law, her children are Jewish in matrilineal descent. They lived in a central coastal town in Israel. Survivor no. 2 was 35 years old and her husband 48. They had 6 children, all from the husband's previous marriages, except the last. She had migrated from a village to Israel in 2005 as part of the "Feresmura" (see above) migration, but in the interview with me, she admitted that she had been Christian in Ethiopia. Her husband was also Christian, but he has some Jewish "blood." She continued to live in an absorption center after the failed femicide. Survivor no. 3, who came from a village with no Jews in Northern Ethiopia, was designated "Feresmura" by the Israeli authorities, but her husband was registered as "Christian." They came to Israel in 2004. She was 41 years old and her husband was 47, but of the 7 children, only 2 were common. They resided in a town in the center of Israel after moving out of an absorption center the previous year.

Thematic Analysis

The study of narrative provides understanding into human experience and meaning. Bruner (1990) argued that narrative is an essential aspect of human nature through which we "naturally" make sense of our experiences in the world. He presented an antithesis to the positivist-scientific bias, still prevalent in psychology. His subjective approach is applicable, in that the narrator is the one who inserts sequentiality into the narrative and makes sense of the unique sequence in which events are narrated. It is true that the narrative may be used as a tool for social negotiation, for example, to forge empathy with the listener, but it remains a subjective reality for the narrator. In the case of this study, the narrative analysis was entirely inductive, with no attempt to fit into a pre-existing model or theory. Interviewees spoke in near monologues with prompting from this author, the interviewer; the sequences were set by the narrator and there was little or no attempt to interpret.

The data from the narratives were examined and several distinct repetitive themes emerged spontaneously (cf. Riessman 2008). The technique utilized is similar to Katz (2013) who employed thematic analysis to identify key categories within children's narratives of femicide. The emerging themes provided insight into the female migrants' subjectivities, and although only three survivor narratives were surveyed, the data revealed clear patterns. In the thematic analysis, the chronology was changed, since the narratives were neither narrated in a lineal time frame nor categorized according to themes, but the narrations remained unaltered. It is worth commenting that, despite the fact that the survivors do not know each other, the form of the survivors' rhetoric was common to all the narratives.

Five key categories were identified based on the failed femicide survivor narratives. These were: village social structure in Ethiopia; the cycle of domestic violence; the motive; the weapon; recourse to authorities.

Village Social Structure

Life in the villages in North-West Ethiopia was simple. Division of labor between males and females was clear. Men worked outside; women were to be found in the vicinity of the domestic sphere, or literally at home in huts, except when they would draw water from the nearby river.

Survivor no. 1 recalled:

> Down the road from our village, a river divides the village from the old cemetery. Here we used to draw water and bring it home. Beta Israel used to immerse themselves in water as they crossed from the pollution of the dead to the people living in the villages. The names of the dead are not recorded; there are just piles of stones near shrubs and trees. A farmer threshes the *tef* [*Eragrostis tef* or William's lovegrass] around our village, and a young boy tends to the herds. The *tef* stacks are piled high. We make *enjera* [bread like pitta] from the *tef*, as you know. It is very healthy.

It is significant that in the narrative, the survivor spontaneously recalls the dead and how they were buried in the cemetery across the river.

In the village, women looked after the children at an early age. A mother would strap the smallest baby on her back while drawing water from the stream or cooking. Women prepared the stew (*wat*), commonly made of lentils, chicken, or meat, stoking the open hearths upon which they cooked the basic bread (*enjera*), which also provided warmth. Young boys would join their fathers in the field, while girls were expected to help their mothers and take care of the younger children until they married, around the age of first menstruation. Utmost importance was attributed to purity, avoiding pollution from women's blood and pollution from the dead (Weil 2004). The Beta Israel in Ethiopia lived in a bilineal kinship unit called *zemed*; marriage was exogamous outside the *zemed*. Masculinity was an ultimate value. While marriage officially was monogamous, Beta Israel men in practice sometimes entered into polygamous unions with a second wife or had relations with a common-law wife, a concubine, a slave (*barya*), a divorced woman, or a woman on her own (*galamota*), who was seeking "protection," in Ethiopian terms. An older man could marry a younger bride, a teenager and a virgin, thus proving his status and wealth to society at large. None of the survivors in this small sample married out of "love," which is a Western concept in their eyes.

Two survivors talked of their abductions from the village. Survivor no. 3 said:

> **Survivor:** My husband arrived in our village and I understood what would be.
> **Interviewer:** Did you want to immigrate to Israel? Why did you go with him?
> **S:** I didn't want to immigrate with him, but I wanted to come [to Israel]. Both of us come from a village in a rural region of Ethiopia. He is from the same area.
> **I:** So why did you come to Israel? [I repeat the question]
> **S:** *Rasu* [Because of him (the husband) in Amharic]. He made me come with him.

Then she continued with a long description of their journey to Israel.

Survivor no. 1 related about her forced marriage, which crossed religious lines:

> Today, I'm approximately forty-two years old. My husband should be around fifty-eight. I was young. I went to school and he saw me. He was a soldier in the army of Mengistu Haile Mariam [who overthrew the Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974]. I didn't want him, but he took me by force. He went to my parents and said he would kidnap me. It was in the village. He wasn't Jewish. I would go every day for two hours to school. He would come to work in the village. In the end, my parents agreed. He was strong and they were afraid. We got married in the village and he said he would convert with a *kes* [Beta Israel religious priest]. The *kes* said: "If you want, I will bless him." But, my husband didn't agree to convert because he had succeeded in marrying me by force. In Addis Abeba, I became pregnant. We were on our way to Israel.

Survivor no. 2 narrated the following:

> **I:** Why did you marry him?
> **S:** It's the parents who marry us. That's the mentality. There is no choice. For him, I'm the seventh [wife], he is my second [husband].
> **I:** Where are the children from the other marriages?
> **S:** I divorced. I didn't have any children. I was a *galamota*. He has many children.

It should be pointed out that the social worker who had been assigned to this case had no idea that this was not the first marriage for the husband and had no clue as to the whereabouts of other children from previous liaisons or marriages.

Cycle of Domestic Violence

For all survivors, the attempted femicide was just a more extreme form of the domestic violence they had been suffering for years. The abuse had been continuous, and they had suffered physical injury beforehand. In two of the three cases, the social worker had no idea of previous intimate partner violence. Survivor no. 2 reported:

> In Ethiopia, he bothered me, as well as in Israel. All the time he would ask: "Where are you going?" He would beat me. It is impossible to count how many times.

It should be pointed out here that the social worker wrote in the case file that this survivor had never complained of physical abuse, only of verbal violence.

All three survivors described the failed femicide as just one in a series of femicide attempts.

> Death—I saw death three times [said survivor no. 1]. I fled with the older children because he beat me so hard. I fled to another village [in Ethiopia], to family, but he pleaded that I would return.

Survivor no. 1 described a femicide threat in Israel after immigration:

> There were several previous attempts to strangle me. It was Purim [a carnivalesque Jewish festival]. I went out to the lawn below. He asked: "Why are you going outside?" He grabbed my hand and took my telephone away. The same day, he stayed at work all night. I prepared him breakfast. He arrived and said he didn't want to eat. He prepared a suitcase and started saying, "I'll kill you." I trembled. He said: "I'll kill you, I'll kill you."

The response to abuse was inevitably a return to the abuser. In village Ethiopia, the situation of

a divorced woman was even more difficult than in the West, where social benefits provide economic assistance, and shelters may protect the woman from further violence. The *galamota* was also open to sexual advances and virtually had to accept other men, in order to receive protection (Weil 1991). Survivor no. 3 narrated:

> I didn't want to, but I had no choice. I didn't want him to take the children or another father would raise them, so I returned. He has another daughter from a previous marriage in Israel. My father, of blessed memory, pleaded: "Don't go back to him. He will take your life and your soul." But, a *galamota* can't exist alone in Ethiopia.

Motive

Sela-Shayovitz (2010a) recorded that the dominant motives for femicide among Ethiopian immigrants were economic problems (45.8%) and depression (25%). These may have emerged from the transition from a patriarchal society in Ethiopia to a more egalitarian one, and be caused by psychological and cultural transition stresses (Edelstein 2013). A rare glimpse into the attitude of Ethiopian immigrant males to these issues, including domestic abuse and femicide, can be found in Azezehu-Admasu (2011). Undoubtedly, male motivations have to be taken into consideration. In this paper, however, the focus is upon the female survivors' own narratives and interpretations. In this study, it emerges from the women that a prominent cause of femicide is perceived jealousy or infidelity on behalf of the men. According to the women, the perception that the wife is unfaithful plagues the husband, particularly if she goes out to work.

Survivor no. 1 recounted that her husband had told her: "It is forbidden to go out after the sun sets." The husband felt that he was not in control during the evening hours when it was dark and he suspected his wife's whereabouts.

Survivor no. 2 narrated:

> One night, he came from work. He said: "You go with boys." He threatened me. He said he'd kill me. After that, he wept. He went to sleep. His friend called and asked why I'm frightened.

Similarly, survivor no. 3, a woman looking after 7 children (of which only 2 were hers biologically), was accused of being unfaithful.

> I knew. I ordered a van and moved to another town. He called all the time on the telephone. "Come back." Each day on the phone he would say: "I want to see the children." I didn't have a good feeling. I had a high temperature. I went to the doctor and he said: "You've dehydrated. You don't drink water." I was cold. Slowly, I took pills and I felt better. Then he phoned and said: "I'm coming with a friend," but in the end, he came alone. The two girls were at home. I didn't speak to him. I couldn't sleep all the night. When he got up at five in the morning to go to work, I got up, I heard him and I sat on the bed. He sat down next to me and said: "I'm going." I said: "Then go." He said: "Tell the truth, you go with men."

A similar picture of sexual jealousy has been reported by Adinkrah (2008) for Ghana.

Weapon

Among Ethiopian migrants in Israel, in 87% of the cases, femicide occurs in the domestic sphere. The lethal act is perpetrated by two major means: gun shooting and knife stabbing. During periods of security-related national stress, like the Second Intifada in Israel, the incidence of intimate femicide rises, according to Sela-Shayovitz (2010b). In the 2005-2007 Ethiopian study, stabbing the victim with a knife was the most prevalent means of femicide, and accounted for 69% of all femicides and failed femicides during the period of study (Weil 2009), even though firearms are readily available in Israel. Gun shots constituted a mere 12% of all cases of Ethiopian migrant femicides. This could be attributed to the relatively high average age of the perpetrator, who usually did not serve in Israel's Defense Forces, and who did not have access or a license to hold firearms.

Survivor no. 1 narrated:

> He bought a knife. I hadn't seen it. He had hidden it and then he started to stab me in the stomach. I got hold of him from behind and then I saw that inside my stomach I had a knife, and I pulled it out. I fell down. Nothing. I don't see anything.

In line with the subjective experiences of narratives noted above, this survivor is virtually re-enacting the event and the last sentence is recounted in the present tense.

The description of the attempted killing is similar in the narrative of survivor no. 2:

> One day, I saw the knife and I asked him about it. He said it was nothing. I saw it under the bed and I took it to the kitchen. He was very angry and he hit me. That night, he hid the knife under the bed. He planned the whole thing. He got up in the middle of the night and grabbed me by the neck. He said: "Get out!" And then he began to stab me.

In her turn, survivor no. 3 described an almost identical scene in which her husband brought out a knife.

> He hid it from me. I saw it when he brought the knife home. One day I said to him: "What's that?" He said: "I'll show you, you'll yet see. I'll make you sorry that they spoke about you."

This survivor was only saved from death by her son, present at the attack, who wrestled with his father and prevented the murder. She had a premonition that something lethal would happen:

> I felt something, superiority from his part, something abnormal was going to happen. I said to him: "What's the matter with you?" He played, he spoke to the children. He came back from work. I thought that this is strange, that he's sitting and playing with the children. Usually, he doesn't play with them. He went into the bedroom to sleep. And I went to sleep with the two youngest children after I took a shower with the children. He went to sleep before me. And then he got up in the middle of the night. All the children were at home. Two children who were asleep didn't hear. My son saved me. He prevented him [the husband] from stabbing me with the knife.

Recourse to Authorities

In Ethiopia, the battered woman would return to her natal family, but in Israel, two of the women had no parents because their kin was not Jewish and therefore remained in Ethiopia: only people of Jewish descent are allowed to receive rights as immigrants according to Israel's Law of Return. In the case of survivor no. 1, her natal extended family lived in another city. It was her who made a complaint with the police after a violent attack on her.

A social worker visited survivor no. 2 at the absorption center several times a week, but the survivor did not confide in her.

> **I:** Did you ever complain?
>
> **S:** No. I never told the social worker. Nobody knew. My sisters were not with me in the absorption center.

Indeed, this particular femicide attempt, which took place only a few yards away from the main office of the absorption center and the office of the social worker, had taken the center's employees by total surprise. I was allowed access to the social worker's files. It was recorded that the Ethiopian woman had suffered from occasional verbal violence, but no physical violence. I interviewed the social worker. She said:

> **SW:** From the file that I received, the survivor refused to speak with the previous social worker and with anyone at the beginning. I consulted with a local psychiatrist who specializes in the Ethiopian community, and the woman was referred to a post-trauma unit. She came only a few times, providing excuses other times, but basically I think it might have been helpful and had an effect.
>
> **I:** Do you know of any incidents of physical assault prior to the murder attempt?
>
> **SW:** There were no unusual relations between husband and wife. There may have been some verbal violence.

There is little question that a trigger in bringing on some femicides is recourse to authorities on the part of the woman. Campbell and colleagues (2003) pointed out, with reference to severe domestic violence, that one of the highest risk factors is complaining to the police or other authorities. In the case of survivor no. 1, she had issued a complaint with the police, after her husband had threatened her in a violent incident, and the husband was taken to prison. From that day on, the writing was written on the wall. She narrated:

> Until 5 a.m., or 6 a.m. he kept saying: "I'll kill you." I said to my daughter: "Don't go to school." At 6.30 a.m. he went to work. I went to the police. They took him to prison. One day, on a holiday from prison, he tried to kill me.

Conclusions

This paper has introduced a new phenomenon that is worthy of research—"failed femicides"—which should be added to the growing literature on domestic violence, on the one hand, and femicide, on the other. This article reported upon three survivors of failed femicide attempts among Ethiopian female migrants in Israel. It is unusual in that in the scientific literature, if domestic violence is reported among migrants, it is usually confined to gender conflict and not extended to failed femicides. Here, the study focused on the survivors of femicide attacks, who have suffered the most extreme form of interpersonal violence. Earlier research among Ethiopians in Israel had revealed that a disproportionate number of femicides were perpetuated in their community compared to their size in the general population. While three case studies do not in any way constitute a representative sample, the narratives elicited provide insight into the plight of migrant women who have survived a lethal attack.

Studies of femicide tend to be quantitative, often under the guise of neutrality or objectivity. Through thematic analysis, there is an attempt to go beyond impartiality to reach an intersubjective understanding of the viewpoint of marginal, migrant women. While most studies of femicide have ignored the ethnic or cultural background of the murdered women, in this study, a window is opened into the worlds of migrant women and their suffering. Since few women actually survive femicide attempts, the nature of the small sample should not deter the scholar from the depth of migrant women's plights.

The thematic analysis of the survivors' narratives produced five key categories: village social structure; the cycle of domestic violence; the motive; the weapon; and recourse to authorities. The survivors narrated similar stories, born, as they were, in small Ethiopian rural villages. The women were forced to marry their husbands or were abducted by them, and suffered severe domestic violence, both in Ethiopia and after their emigration, of which social workers and kin appeared to be unaware. In all cases, the husband suspected that his wife was unfaithful to him. All three women were stabbed with a kitchen knife in a country, Israel, where the use of firearms is rampant. They were all nearly killed in the domestic arena, in the apartment in which their children were present. In two of the three cases, the social workers who constantly visited had no idea of the violence; in one case, the survivor had issued a complaint with the police and knew that "the writing was on the wall."

The narratives represent rare testimonies of what actually happened on the night of the failed femicide. The study of narrative provides understanding into women's subjective experiences, the ways they understand events, and the episodes they are trying to organize in their heads. Interestingly, the distinction made by Squire (2008) between event-centered and experience-centered narratives appears to be less pertinent among Ethiopian migrants than among Westerners: in the narratives recounted in this paper, the event *is* the experience. While no generalizations can be made, the article may encourage comparisons with other failed femicide survivor narratives from other migrant women originating and residing in different settings. Until now, the voices of femicide survivors have not been sufficiently heard and the experiences of migrant women in a lethal male attack are unknown. With the increase of migrants to Europe and other parts of the world in recent times, non-Western survivor narratives may become an increasingly important tool for policy-makers and for academics to understand how femicides occur, how migrant women perceive them, and how they can be combated.

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