

Intimate Partner Homicides in Serbia: Phenomenological Characteristics, Risk Factors and Gender (A)symmetries

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This paper presents findings from an empirical study of heterosexual intimate partner homicides, based on secondary data collected from the criminal case files of the Higher Court and the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade. The primary aim of the research was to identify risk factors of intimate partner homicides. Furthermore, we examined the universality and consistency of intimate partner homicide risk factors found in previous studies, and indirectly assessed the scope and relevance of some current theoretical models of this problem. One of the specific aims was to determine gender differences concerning motivation for partner homicide. The results confirmed consistency of a number of characteristics of partner homicide: women are considerably more likely to be victimized; attacks committed by women more often result in attempts of homicide/murder; many perpetrators of both sexes suffered from some mental disorder; the majority of offences are committed by men, and half of those committed by women, was preceded by chronic abuse by the male partner; the majority of male perpetrators had previously threatened to kill their victims; separation from violent male partners is the risk indicator for victimization of women. The decision to "punish" a woman for leaving the relationship is the dominant motivation of male perpetrators. However, punishing the estranged partner, although much less pronounced, is the motivation of women. The findings exposed factor complexity of control in partner relationships, thereby further research on gender symmetries and asymmetries concerning intimate partner violence and homicide are needed.

Key words: intimate partner homicides, intimate partner violence, risk factors, typology of homicide offenders

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