

# Departmental Coversheet

Femicide Coverage in El Salvador: An Analysis of Journalistic Practices Used by the  
Salvadoran Press to Report on Femicide

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Candidate Number: 1038488

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## INTRODUCTION

Up until 2017, El Salvador had the highest rates of reported femicide in the world (Alvazzi del Frate 2011; Yagoub 2016). Within that time frame, only a small portion of cases (59 out of 855) have resulted in conviction, pointing to high levels of impunity. Regardless, a large number of Salvadorans do not recognize the violence as a significant problem in the country (Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública 2019). Femicidal acts, impunity for them, and ignorance of their impact in the country have been attributed in other countries to the result of poor media coverage (Ananías Soto and Vergara Sánchez 2016; Angélico et al. 2014; Fairbairn 2008). This dissertation seeks to explore whether the same conclusions could be drawn about El Salvador. How does Salvadoran femicide coverage meet international standards – and where does it fall short?

Based on research on the media and femicide elsewhere, I assumed that the Salvadoran press was part of the problem. I expected to find femicide coverage that relied on sensationalism, victim blaming, and exoneration of the perpetrator. The results of my research, which replicated international studies, reveal the opposite. Because of that finding, the focus of this dissertation has changed from one of seeing the press as part of the problem to thinking of it as part of the solution. It suggests that the press has played a generally positive role that can help shape public opinion and official responses to the phenomenon. It further suggests that if this kind of reporting can occur in El Salvador, where investigative journalists are consistently hindered, attacked, and threatened by organized crime and government officials alike, then it could occur in the other countries of the region where femicide rates are high (Reporters Without Borders 2019).

I argue that Salvadoran journalists are engaging in positive reporting practices at higher rates, and engaging in negative reporting at lower rates, than those found in comparative studies conducted across North America, South America, and Europe. My dissertation unfolds as follows. First, I review the relevant literature in feminist media theory, specifically how feminist scholars address the relationship between the media and femicide. This literature establishes a measure for determining positive and negative reporting on femicide which I set out in the subsequent data and methods section. I then present the research findings and their implications based on the replication of analytical models used in other countries. I conclude with reflections on how the process in El Salvador could be adapted to other countries in Central America and beyond.

## LITERATURE REVIEW & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Feminist media studies applies basic feminist theory to media studies, analyzing media power structures through the lens of unequal gender relations (Steiner 2014).

### **From Traditional to New Wave Feminist Approaches**

Feminist scholars widely accept that the mass media are vital in framing, shaping, and dictating women's status in society, historically with a negative impact in the fight for equality. There are several ongoing debates as to *how* feminist media scholars should analyze these power structures. Traditional feminist approaches developed in the late 1970s and 1980s considered the mass media complicit in the promotion of gender norms and stereotypes upholding patriarchal society and normalizing violence against women (Fenton 2000; Hooks 2015). These views

espoused the idea of a universal female experience that was categorically harmed by passive, role-affirming media consumption (Fenton 2000). While this first wave of feminism helped bring attention to the misrepresentation of women in the media, these studies lacked a recognition of social context, location, and cultural history (Lumby 2011).

In the late 1990s, a new wave of feminist scholars, influenced by postcolonial feminists, began to challenge these traditional approaches. They criticized a white, middle-class interpretation of a “universal female experience,” emphasizing the intersectionality of class, race, and nationality that gave rise to feminist postmodernism (Humphries 2009). Postmodernists argue that plurality and diversity are fundamental elements of social research, whereby feminist analyses must take into consideration additional forms of oppression that may impact a woman’s experience, such as race and social class (Matos 2019; Krijnen 2017). Unlike first-wave feminism, where the media was a static image or object that reflected reality, postmodernism analyzes the media as a constant *creator* of reality (Bhattacharyya 2011).

### **Conceptualizing Femicide**

The very notion of ‘femicide’ grows from intersectionality and captures differentiation based on gendered relationships with the state. It was developed out of the concept of “femicide,” coined by Carol Olock in 1974 and developed by Diana Russell (1992, 2001). In feminist criminology, “femicide” refers to the “killing of females by males *because* they are females” (Russell and Harmes 2001, 3, emphasis in the original). Russell clarifies that “femicide” is not the female equivalent of homicide – a term which applies to the murder of a person, regardless of their gender. In Latin America, the term’s relevance surged in the wake of the brutal murders of women across the Mexican state of Chihuahua in 1993 (Toledo Vásquez

2012; Sanford 2008). Yet Mexican scholar and activist Marcela Lagarde suggested that the experiences of gender-based killing in Mexico was different from killings in the Global North. She adopted the term *feminicidio* or femicide to describe the brutal murders of female maquila workers in Ciudad Juarez, demanding that the crime be independently recognized, and not considered the female equivalent of homicide (Lagarde 2006). Her adaptation adds the complicity of the state in the killing – either directly (the act of killing) or indirectly (failure to investigate, provide redress, or bring perpetrators to justice) complicit (Bolla and Gómez 2017).

All Latin American countries, except Cuba and Haiti, have approved laws that penalize femicide (Deus and Gonzalez 2018). However, due to patriarchy, misogyny, gender inequality, and the disproportionate victims of gender-based violence among poor, non-white, young women, women in the Global South have been blocked from these institutional structures. Feminist scholars argue that feminicides then become a message condoned by the state that is directed toward women to subdue them into submission, especially in the instances where women are perceived to have been intruding on a man's traditional gender role in society (Bolla and Gómez 2017; Segato 2013; England 2014).

El Salvador provides an example. *Feminicidio* has been recognized as a crime in El Salvador's penal code since 2012 under the "Ley Especial Integral para una Vida Libre de Violencia para las Mujeres" (LEIV). The LEIV defines "femicidal violence" as the "extreme form of gendered violence against women, product of the violation of a woman's human rights in the public and private spheres, conformed by a conjunction of misogynistic behaviors that lead to social impunity or impunity of the State, culminating in a women's femicide and in other forms of violent death" (LEIV 2012, 25). Since the law was passed by the Legislative Assembly in 2012, until the end of 2019, the Institute for Legal Medicine registered 3,012 feminicides

(Instituto Salvadoreño para el Desarrollo de la Mujer 2019). Article nine of the LEIV outlines the other six forms of violence, which are economic, femicidal, physical, psychological and emotional, patrimonial, sexual, and symbolic.

Femicides are also different from homicides of women in the way the woman has been killed. The LEIV requires police to consider a murder a femicide if the death is preceded by another violent incident against the victim by the same perpetrator; the perpetrator took advantage of the woman's vulnerability or superiority afforded him by unequal gendered power dynamics; the perpetrator committed a violent act against a victim that violated her right to sexual liberty; or the death is preceded by mutilation (LEIV 2012).

## ANALYSIS OF FEMICIDE REPORTING

While the study of the media's coverage on femicide can be undertaken through a traditional feminist lens, postmodernism allows for the full exploration of the multiple contextual factors that influence coverage of a societal problem. Meloy and Miller (2009) argue that the media's criteria to determine newsworthy stories are skewed by the existing prevalence of male reporters in newsrooms worldwide. Although the field is trending toward a more equal balance, in many Latin American countries, including Argentina, Costa Rica, and Chile, male journalists outnumber women 2:1 (Byerly and International Women's Media Foundation 2011). "As a result, the working assumptions that male journalists have about gender, including ideas about female victims and offenders, play a role in the selection of events and in the framing of those events" (Meloy and Miller 2009, 10). According to Neira Mellado (2013), journalists and editors consciously and subconsciously frame coverage, which can influence negative perceptions of a

criminal process, trigger the audiences' recall process and reasoning, and alter a reader's final judgment on an issue (Palazzolo & Roberto, 2011, Valkenmurg et al., 1999, in Mellado 2013).

Juárez Rodríguez (2017) writes that acknowledging the meaning of the term "femicide" helps increase visibility of a silenced reality, adding that "the role of the media and journalists is fundamental to increase, or not, visibility of this reality; to give a voice to the silenced and name that which is hidden by the actors that hold power" (22). As such, the media must denounce human rights violations, contextualize larger social justice issues, develop nuanced methods to report on gendered issues, and provide victims and their family members with a platform through which their voices can be heard (Juárez Rodríguez 2017; Bolla and Gómez 2017; Angélico et al. 2014).

Reporting on femicide vastly differs from standardized crime reporting. Femicide is an expression of the wider problem of violence against women, making it a different type of crime that requires specific, inalienable journalistic standards. In March 2019, the Salvadoran Institute for Women's Development (ISDEMU) presented a decalogue indicating best practices for reporting on violence against women, developed in line with international standards. Two months later, the Association of Salvadoran Journalists (APES in Spanish) revealed a new code of ethics with three amended articles that dictate how to best report on femicides and other instances of violence against women. I have identified five broad categories that encompass bad journalistic practices identified by the literature and by the Salvadoran code of journalistic ethics that I will explain in depth: victim blaming, language, perpetrator exoneration, information sources, and contextualization. For each section, I refer to the studies carried out by Taylor (2009), Bullock and Cubert (2002), Richards et al. (2011, 2013), Neira Mellado 2013, or Fairbairn (2008) to analyze reporting in the United States, Chile, and Canada. These studies, with

the exception of Neira Mellado (2013), are undertaken in countries with vastly different legal frameworks and legal definitions of femicide. They grapple more with the concept of femicide and its role in intimate partner violence, thus using a different – yet comparable – legal and conceptual framework than the Salvadoran case.

### **Victim Blaming**

Victim blaming seeks to either consciously or unconsciously assign fault to a victim of femicide for her own murder, thus systematically exculpating the perpetrator (Meloy and Miller 2009). It is perhaps the most pervasive negative trope across all media reporting on femicide and other acts of gender violence, and one of the most detrimental. Bullock and Cubert (2002) found that in a content analysis of 230 articles from newspapers in Washington State for 1994, 17% blamed the victim for her femicide. Richards et al. (2011) outline two forms of victim blaming conducted by the media: direct and indirect. Direct victim blaming can include faulting the victim for failing to protect themselves, describing instances of infidelity preceding the femicide, or negatively characterizing the victim based on their deviation from traditional gender roles. Indirect victim blaming include highlighting a victim's mental health problems and sexual history, or referencing to past drug or alcohol abuses that can "explain" the murder, among others.

Positive coverage avoids using victim-blaming tactics and instead develops a "transversal gender perspective to obtain a complete and efficient reading of the facts" (Juárez Rodríguez 2017, 27, translation by author). The APES code of ethics recommends journalists avoid using information relating to the victim's sexual history or physical aspect that could lead to preliminary judgements of the victim (APES 2019).

## **Language**

Language, while tied in with the practice of victim-blaming, can be detrimental to accurately covering femicide in itself. Language can enhance sexist stereotypes and enable a continuation of toxic gender norms that make femicide acceptable (Hasan and Gil 2016). Negative language usage includes framing the story as a “crime of passion” or frames the female victim within her stereotyped gender role. This language minimizes, trivializes, and isolates the crime, which deflects attention from the larger cultural problem of violence against women and the state’s complicity in failing to prosecute it adequately (Juárez Rodríguez 2017).

Furthermore, as femicides in El Salvador are a judicialized process, journalists must abide by the use of legally correct language. The newly adapted code of ethics urges journalists to use the terms outlined by articles six through nine of the LEIV when describing a femicide. These articles provide detailed definitions of gendered terms, including misogyny, aggressor, revictimization, and sexism, among others.

## **Excusing the perpetrator**

Journalists can unconsciously excuse the perpetrator’s actions by providing explanations that reflect underlying assumptions about the permissibility of femicide. These explanations can portray the crime as necessary or inevitable, prompted either by mitigating circumstances out of the perpetrator’s control (Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1991). Under these characterizations, the femicide is depicted as an act that is out of character for the perpetrator, rather than a crime that is symptomatic of recurring violence against women (Fairbairn 2008). Moreover, this reporting practice shifts blame away from the perpetrator, making it harder for both prosecutors

and society to hold him accountable. Fairbairn (2008) conducted a quantitative content analysis on 276 articles retrieved from three Toronto newspapers, finding that 38% of these articles excused the perpetrator to some extent, which is slightly lower than a US study that found 48% of articles excused the perpetrator (Bullock and Cubert 2002).

### **Information Sources**

Scholars have found that journalists rely on official government sources, who can have an entrenched, patriarchal view of society and so will present a skewed version of events that may exonerate the perpetrator or blame the victim (Segato 2013; Richards, Kirkland Gillespie, and Dwayne Smith 2011). Richards et al. (2011) analyzed 995 newspaper stories for domestic homicides in North Carolina from 2002-2007. The study found that 57% of femicide articles used public sources, whereas only 37% used private sources such as family members and friends. Officers will rarely disclose the full extent of the perpetrator's relationship with the victim (Neira Mellado 2013). Positive practices dictate the inclusion of voices that will better channel the victim's voice, such as friends and family members, as well as experts and violence against women advocates (Mujkić Jukić 2016; Godoy-Paiz 2012; Richards, Gillespie, and Smith 2014; APES 2019).

### **Contextualization**

Negative media coverage of femicide tends to describe feminicides as individualized and isolated events and fails to contextualize it as symptomatic of a larger societal problem. In El Salvador, that problem is violence against women (APES 2019). Contextualizing can be achieved by adding statistics showing the scope of the problem, quoting non-profit organization

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workers or activists, providing resources for other victims of violence, including the perpetrator's criminal record, and contextualizing previous instances of violence between the victim and the perpetrator (APES 2019). Naira Mellado's 2013 study comparing U.S. and Chilean coverage of femicide between 2009-2012 found that 8% of Chilean news articles included fatality statistics, consequences, protection, support, or advocacy, whereas 13% of U.S. articles included the same concepts, suggesting Chilean journalists were contextualizing the issue less than their US counterparts.

I have replicated these existing studies to explore journalistic practices in El Salvador, and will describe the methodology in greater detail below.

## DATA AND METHODS

I found no study addressing how the Salvadoran press reports on femicide. This study seeks to bridge that gap by better understanding the role the media is currently playing in reporting on femicide in El Salvador and elucidating positive lessons from one of the few countries in Latin America to include specific clauses on how to report on femicide in a journalism code of ethics.

Research suggests that when reporting on femicide, reporters will consciously or subconsciously engage in the negative practices outlined previously. This dissertation examines the extent to which Salvadoran reporting on femicide confirms this assumption. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, it replicates the methodology used by feminist scholars discussed in the above-cited literature. I collected 247 articles by conducting a keyword search for newspaper articles covering femicide on the embedded search engines of three Salvadoran

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newspapers for 2019. I chose to study 2019 to see contemporary forms of reporting. The project recognized that journalism in El Salvador had adopted various significant institutional changes prior to this year. By selecting the previous year for analysis, the study reflects current reporting practices after these institutional arrangements had been adopted in the country.

I codified the content and calculated the frequency that each of the previously outlined practices were used, then calculated a simple and weighted mathematical mean to compare the average frequency among the newspapers and with other countries as found by the literature. The analysis I conducted was mostly comprised of content analysis using NVivo coding software.

#### Content analysis

requires careful consideration of data to link codes with words or passages within the text in order to explore overarching themes and/or patterns. Researchers have the ability to learn about how subjects or authors of textual materials view their social worlds through the use of content analysis (Berg, 2004), (Richards, Kirkland Gillespie, and Dwayne Smith 2011, 185)

I also conducted semi-structured interviews with Salvadoran journalists who work covering femicide and with the directors of programs designed to train journalists on how to report on violence against women. These interviews provided contextual knowledge of the decisions journalists made while reporting on the subject.

I drafted four research sub-questions to help guide the focus of my study:

RQ 1: To what extent do print articles reflect best journalistic practices as outlined by the APES code of ethics and the literature?

RQ 2: How often do journalists engage in negative reporting practices (exonerating the perpetrator and victim blaming) when reporting on femicide?

RQ 3: Did different news sources do a better job at reporting on femicide than others?

RQ 4: What factors evident in the sources appear to influence the quality of femicide coverage?

### **Content Analysis: Data collection**

I chose three news organizations for the content analysis: *El Diario de Hoy (EDH)*, *La Prensa Gráfica (LPG)*, and *Diario El Mundo (DEM)*. These three newspapers were chosen because they are the most established print papers in El Salvador, counting with the highest subscriptions and having been in circulation more than 50 years. Thus, their coverage of events would have the largest reach and impact on national audiences.

I collected articles by conducting a keyword search on the three newspapers' online database and downloading the text. For LPG and DEM, there were five keyword searches conducted, using the following keyword phrases: "feminicidio," "cadáver de mujer," "asesinan a mujer," "matan a mujer," and "feminicida." I applied the same process to EDH, but their online databased did not extend as far back. Due to this setback, I visited the newspaper's archive to conduct a similar keyword search. The archivist insisted on using a larger list of keywords, which are included in Appendix A, due to the requirements of the archival software<sup>1</sup>. I had planned on conducting the same archival research with the other newspapers to replicate the same process, but the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent nation-wide quarantine prevented me from doing so.

Once I collected the articles, I excluded those originally written by wire services or about femicides in another country, limiting included articles only to those written in 2019 by that

<sup>1</sup> I filtered out the extraneous articles obtained by the expanded keyword search to replicate the same search in each setting.

publication's staff about a national feminicide. Articles had to meet at least one of the following criteria to be included in the content analysis: a) it explicitly labeled a murder a feminicide; b) there were elements of intimate partner violence in the relationship between the victim and a suspect; c) the murder was conducted with clear misogynistic intentions (Godoy-Paiz 2012). I included complementary news articles, such as articles providing feminicide statistics and coverage of perpetrator trials from feminicides conducted in previous years, but excluded opinion pieces. After applying these filters, I collected a total of 247 articles to use in the final sample ( $n=247$ ). The distribution of articles was as follows:

Table 1: Article distribution

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Number of articles</b>	<b>Percentage of sample</b>
<b>LPG</b>	129	52.2%
<b>DEM</b>	56	22.7%
<b>EDH</b>	62	25.1%
<b>Total</b>	247	100.0%

### **Content Analysis: Coding technique**

I analyzed the articles in two phases. In the first phase, I uploaded articles to NVivo, a qualitative data coding software and coded the content in five main categories: victim blaming, language, perpetrator exoneration, information sources, and contextualization.

The second phase involved crafting a detailed coding sheet that incorporated elements from multiple similar content analyses (Taylor 2009; Neira Mellado 2013; Richards, Kirkland Gillespie, and Dwayne Smith 2011). A section of the coding sheet can be found in Appendix B. I

used the sheet to evaluate 62 criteria in each article, and employed a numeral system to keep track whether the article presented each criterion or not on an Excel spreadsheet. If an article had the criterion, it was coded at a 1. If it did not, it was coded at a 2. At the end of the coding process, I analyzed the results using R-Studio software to generate descriptive statistics about the data, including frequency, average, and weighted average.

### **Interviews: Data Collection**

I had initially planned on conducting in-person interviews with multiple Salvadoran journalists and had traveled to El Salvador to conduct the interviews in early March. Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic promptly led to the implementation of strict quarantine and social distancing measures that made in-person fieldwork impossible. Thus, I conducted my interviews virtually, using WhatsApp video call or Skype. I obtained a sample of journalists by combining random sampling and snowball sampling methods, as I asked participants to refer other journalists. I also sent out emails to a random sample of journalists who had bylined articles I was analyzing in my content analysis, asking if they would like to participate in the investigation. During the interview, I asked a series of questions based on a semi-structured questionnaire about their experiences with reporting on feminicides. I then transcribed the interviews and used NVivo software to extrapolate common themes and issues. All the journalists I interviewed mentioned taking part in at least one training program on how to report on violence against women, so I used semi-structured interviews to talk to two course providers about the professional formation journalists obtain. I have used a pseudonym for each participant for safety and ethical concerns and translated parts of their interviews.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, many journalists and course programmers either canceled their previously scheduled interviews or failed to answer email requests as they worked overtime to cover the effects of the pandemic in El Salvador. As a result, I was able to interview six journalists – three from EDH and three from LPG. Because the sample was small, the qualitative information obtained from the interviews is not representative. However, it can still provide meaningful insight into the realities these individuals faced when covering femicide.

### **Limitations and weaknesses**

This dissertation presents limitations and weaknesses, some of which are hinted at above. COVID-19 placed undue constraints on the research. Because of the quarantine in place in El Salvador, I was unable to meet with some journalists and course providers, as they were burdened by having to report on the pandemic. For financial reasons, I was unable to hire independent coders to train, increase coverage, and reduce single-coder bias. By limiting the project to one year of coverage, it was impossible to test the hypothesis in the literature that better journalistic standards alter reporting practices. By only analyzing the three most significant newspapers in the country, I cannot make generalizations about the broader forms of reporting on femicide in other forms of media (e.g., broadcast and digital-only journalism), or even to other newspapers in the country.

Despite these limitations, this dissertation draws significant conclusions. It shows that even in a country like El Salvador with high levels of femicide and a patriarchal culture that discriminates against women, reporters have treated victims of gender-based violence in positive ways. This suggests that such standards could be achieved in other countries, and hints at what might make the diffusion of this kind of reporting possible.

## FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

I fully expected that in replicating the coding mechanisms and analytical framework used in studies of media reporting on femicide, that El Salvador would fall behind most other countries. The findings suggest the opposite. Salvadoran journalists appear to be conscious of and adhere to international standards of femicide reporting. Specifically, they generally avoid victim blaming, attempt to contextualize the social problem, and do not excuse the perpetrator.

I have organized the presentation of findings into four subsections. The first describes some general characteristics. The second analyzes the types of victims covered by the press in this sample. The next section explains how the five criteria used to measure the quality of reporting (victim blaming, language, perpetrator exoneration, information sources, and contextualization) influence in positive and negative practices. The last section considers explanations for the unexpected positive findings on Salvadoran reporters' coverage of femicide, such as training programs, legal changes that alter the reporting environment, and the impact of certain high-profile cases.

### **General**

General information about the articles, including type of article and length, can help understand how these structural elements can influence quality of reporting.

I found four main categories of articles that included femicide reports: murder reports; court reports; general studies on violence against women; and the location of suspected perpetrators. The residual 'other' category includes articles about miscellaneous topics, such as

protests and government initiatives related to femicide. A summary of the findings are included in Table 2.

Table 2: Type of articles published about femicide

<b>Article Type</b>					
<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Murder</b>	<b>Court Case</b>	<b>Statistics</b>	<b>Capture</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>LPG</b>	31.01	46.51	5.43	9.30	7.75
<b>DEM</b>	42.86	33.93	5.36	8.93	8.93
<b>EDH</b>	17.74	54.84	9.68	8.06	9.68
<b>Weighted Average</b>	30.36	45.75	6.48	8.91	8.79

Comparing across the three newspapers does not paint a uniform picture of the types of articles commonly used to cover femicide. Yet, overall the emphasis seems to incline toward court cases rather than the incidence of violence against women. The high percentage of court case coverage suggests that journalists are highly attuned to judicial proceedings, which can hint at a commitment to combatting impunity – the ultimate goal for positive reporting.

The articles also varied in terms of length and depth of the article. Overall, DEM tended to have shorter stories that were more factual and evidence-based, with an average of 5.7 paragraphs. EDH tended to have longer features that contextualized the issue of gender violence more, as shown by their higher percentage of “Statistics” articles published and their average length of 11.7 paragraphs. “Statistics” articles tended to be longer and more detailed, at times including more than one case of femicide and describing the social problem behind them.

Journalists stressed that being able to write longer, more detailed articles was crucial. Javier, journalist, said: “the less we write about why an event happened, or how it happened, or how long it had been happening for, the authorities are going to be less obligated to deepen their investigation.” These types of articles were published least frequently across all three papers, suggesting journalists need to engage more with proactive, investigative reporting.

### **Type of victim**

All three papers covered a wide range of victims with moderate overlap. However, I found significant overlap in the coverage of four femicide cases, which can be used to study *how* the press described and engaged with victims.

#### *Overview*

Not surprisingly, the primary victims – the first and main victims mentioned – in all three newspapers were overwhelmingly female (93.9%) or were not identified at all (5.2%). The victimizer was identified as male in 72% of all articles, female in only 0.81%, and 19.4% were not identified. This leaves about a quarter of all cases without a named suspected perpetrator, that may lead to greater impunity. In 66% of the known cases, women were killed by their partner.

The sample of articles covered a total of 139 primary victims, defined as the main case covered. It is common practice for journalists to include references to one or more related cases within one article, thus, the total number of victims covered during the year of analysis is much higher than 139. For the purpose of this dissertation, however, I will focus solely on the primary case covered in the sample. LPG covered 69 primary cases, DEM 37, and EDH 33. The findings

show, however, that there were four cases that were covered the most (see Table 3 for frequencies), suggesting that certain types of victims or crimes are more likely to be covered than others.

Table 3: Primary victims

<b>Number of articles this victim was the primary victim in</b>				
<b>Case</b>	<b>LPG</b>	<b>DEM</b>	<b>EDH</b>	<b>Total</b>
Carla Ayala	13	3	7	23
Karla Turcios	11	6	5	22
Fernanda Nájera	5	4	4	13
Rosa Maria Bonilla Vega	7	4	1	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>70</b>

*Concentration of Cases*

The six cases that received the most coverage represent the types of cases most likely to attract news attention. In four of the six cases, the victims were middle class, professional women, five of whom were killed by current or former partners.

Carla Ayala was a police agent killed by her coworker in 2017, according to media coverage of the murder and trial. Her body was found 9 months later. The main perpetrator shot her at close range in the back of a police car driven by two other police agents, who have been arrested as accomplices and testified that the perpetrator used a police vehicle to dump Ayala’s body (Escalante 2019b). He then fled and has not been arrested. Twelve others, including 10 police agents and two civilians, have been arrested and were on trial for aiding the perpetrator. According to the prosecutor, Ana Graciela Sagastume, the crime was motivated by misogyny

(Redacción Web DEM and Vásquez 2019). Most of the 2019 coverage of Ayala's case was focused on coverage of the legal process to try the implicated parties.

Karla Turcios was a journalist who worked for LPG. Her femicide occurred on April 18, 2018, when her body was found dumped on the side of a highway (Cornejo and Vásquez 2019). Her husband, Mario Huevo, was recently found guilty of murdering her in their home, and is serving 50 years in prison (Jurado and Marroquín 2020). The main trial was conducted at the end of 2019, and the legal battles leading up to the trial were avidly covered by the media. One of her former coworkers mentioned in an interview that the personal connection between Karla and the media may have encouraged the press to pursue persistent coverage of the case. Sonia, a course provider, talked about the impact the case had on coverage: "It hurt us a lot and that made us be more aware of how justice was executed in this case and gave it coverage. A lot of cases probably don't get that much follow-up, but this one, maybe because it was closer and we felt it more, made us feel obligated to follow it up."

Fernanda Nájera was murdered January 31 by her ex-partner in a coffee plantation in rural Apaneca (Calderón and Marroquín 2019). Her 1.7-month-old son was abandoned near the corpse and found alive four days later with severe signs of dehydration, bug bites, and malnutrition (Calderón and Marroquín 2019). The perpetrator fled the country with help from his family members, one of whom was an ex-prosecutor (Barahona and Marroquín 2019). While he was not apprehended, coverage centered around the arrest of the main perpetrator's accomplices, possibly spurred by the sensational element that the accomplices were professional, middle-class citizens who are not stereotypically associated with crime in El Salvador.

Rosa Bonilla Vega was a doctor who worked at the Ministry of Health, killed in January 2018. The main suspect was her partner, who was said to exert financial and psychological abuse

on her (Jurado 2019). He was found guilty in April 2019 and sentenced to 50 years in prison for aggravated femicide (Jurado 2019).

Many of the journalists I interviewed said that at least two of these cases had impacted them deeply. Javier said, “These are events that have happened that have touched public opinion, so that has had a big impact on journalistic coverage.” With the exception of Fernanda Nájera, these women were urban and middle-class. Sonia said the Turcios and Bonilla cases shattered the national assumption that violence against women only happened to low-income women, as they helped “show that violence transcends to even professionals.” The way in which the press describes and covers these victims will be analyzed further in the following section.

### **Measures of positive and negative coverage**

My first sub-research question looked to figure out the extent to which Salvadoran journalists were implementing measures of positive coverage, which I evaluated using the language, information sources, and contextualization criteria.

Research Question 1: To what extent do print articles reflect best journalistic practices as outlined by the APES code of ethics and the literature?

#### *Language*

As part of the language criterion, I analyzed whether femicides were framed as such in headlines and positive use of descriptors. How an article is headlined is crucial, as a mislabeled headline cannot just mislead readers, but minimize and normalize a femicide. Sonia said training sessions that explained legal terminology better helped reporters write more informative articles that were labeled correctly as femicides and not “crimes of passion,” a term which has been proven to lessen the perceived gravity of the crime. A weighted average of

38.9% of headlines used the word “femicide” to describe the story, showing significant variation among newspapers, with EM using it up to 60% of times and EDH as low as 19.35% of times – and no article used “crimes of passion” in the headline. While this seems like a low number, Neira Mellado (2013) found that 31% of Chilean articles published on femicide had the word explicitly in headlines, making the Salvadoran results comparable, and even slightly better, to the Chilean ones.

Use of descriptors can influence the way readers perceive victims, either empathetically or with disdain and skepticism. I undertook a qualitative lens to analyze the way in which victims were described in the articles. Table 4 show the number of articles that included positive and negative descriptors of the victims. In 40% of articles, the victims were described as responsible members of society – meaning they had a job, or some other responsibility to take care of. 20.3% were described in function of their gender role – as a mother, sister, daughter. These type of descriptions can negatively perpetuate *machista* gender norms and stereotypes.

Table 4: Positive and negative descriptors for victim

Newspaper	Does the author use positive descriptions for the victim?				Does the author use negative descriptions for the victim?			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	<i>n</i>	Percentage	<i>n</i>	Percentage	<i>n</i>	Percentage	<i>n</i>	Percentage
<b>LPG</b>	73.0	56.6	56.0	43.4	17.0	13.2	112.0	86.8
<b>DEM</b>	35.0	62.5	21.0	37.5	5.0	8.9	51.0	91.1
<b>EDH</b>	52.0	83.9	54.0	16.1	8.0	12.9	54.0	87.1

The percentage of articles using negative descriptors for victims is low and the percentage for positive descriptors is high, showing journalists are avoiding using language that could enhance victim blaming attitudes and are instead attempting to humanize the victim, which is a reflection of a positive practice. However, analyzing those words through a feminist postmodernist lens, you encounter a problematic issue. Victims who were described as middle-class, professional, responsible women – like Carla Ayala, Karla Turcios, and Rosa Vega – received more coverage than lower class women, who are the stereotypical victims of violence. Providing increased coverage only to middle-class victims can alienate poorer sections of society where violence against women can be even more prevalent. Journalists mentioned in their interviews that their coverage helped fight impunity, but if middle-class women are receiving the greatest share of coverage, there may be higher levels of impunity for low-income victims.

### *Information Sources*

Sources of information can skew reporting against the victim, so scholars and the APES code encourage the inclusion of private sources, experts, and advocates to paint a well-rounded picture of the victim (APES 2019). I identified six types of sources that are the most likely to be used by journalists leading to positive detrimental or effects on coverage. An extra category, “other,” was left open to account for alternative sources, which mainly comprised court officials, witnesses, and politicians. My findings suggest that this is a positive practice that journalists are not employing as consistently.

The distribution of sources can be seen on Table 5. Only an average of 17.4% of articles quoted or mentioned the opinions of family and friends of the victim, and even fewer, 15.4%, quoted an expert that could contextualize the larger issue of violence against women. These

results are admittedly lower than those found in the literature, suggesting that journalists are struggling to access these sources, which can be crucial in fleshing out the potential history of abuse between the perpetrator and victim (Richards, Kirkland Gillespie, and Dwayne Smith 2011). Scholars see family and friends as an important way to give victims a voice, even when they have been fatally silenced (Bolla and Gómez 2017; Angélico et al. 2014). Relatively few course providers mentioned ways to approach and treat these sources, and some journalists expressed reluctance to push family members too hard during their time of grief, which may help explain why this criterion is slightly lacking. In terms of expert and advocate voices, only one journalist, Monica, made an explicit reference to looking for information from women's organizations: "sometimes civil society or feminist associations can link together all the elements of the topic, it's just a better investigation. I mean, it's not about just taking their opinion into account, but it is about knowing their opinion." However, there is evidence that journalists are trying to contextualize their articles in different methods, explored in the following section.

The weighted averages on Table 5 demonstrate that the sources journalists rely on most are the prosecutor's office (Fiscalía General de La República, FGR), and police officers (Policía Nacional Civil, PNC). High use of public sources like these is generally regarded as a negative practice, but qualitative data suggests that there is a marked difference in the way FGR sources and PNC sources talk about feminicides, thus, this may mitigate the negative effects of relying on public officials.

Table 5: Table showing the percentage of articles using each particular source

	Source used													
	Police		Perpetrator		Prosecutor		Defense attorney		Family or friend of victim		Expert		Other	
Newspaper	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>LPG</b>	61.2	38.8	4.7	95.3	56.6	43.4	5.4	94.6	15.5	84.5	15.5	84.5	29.5	70.5
<b>DEM</b>	58.9	41.1	5.4	94.6	48.2	51.8	8.9	91.1	8.9	91.1	14.3	85.7	21.4	78.6
<b>EDH</b>	53.2	46.8	9.7	90.3	75.8	24.2	6.5	93.5	29.0	71.0	16.1	83.9	45.2	54.8
<b>Weighted Average</b>	58.7	41.3	6.1	93.9	59.5	40.5	6.5	93.5	17.4	82.6	15.4	84.6	31.6	68.4

FGR officials were more likely to contextualize the issue and attribute the violence to misogyny and machismo, whereas PNC officials were more likely to echo negative tropes that could suggest victim blaming. In one article, Giancarlo Vega, the main prosecutor for Rosa Vega’s case, said: “we were trying to prove a misogynistic conduct (hate toward women). Our proof was designed to show that violence of the economic character existed. He exerted control over the doctor’s personal finances” (Jurado 2019, translation by author). In contrast, another reads, “The [police] officer on duty of the La Unión delegation informed that Santos Alvarenga was drunk at the time he murdered his life partner, blinded by jealousy” (Ávila 2019, translation by author). Clearly, the statement issued by the police excuses the perpetrator, whereas Vega tried to contextualize the crime. Michelle, who works at the FGR training school, said all prosecutors received ongoing training on how to talk about femicide cases using a gendered perspective. Starting in 2017, the FGR has focused on conducting media outreach programs so that the media “understands and knows about our work, understands the legal backing that we

have to work with, and so that they can be our allies in prevention, detection and prosecution that is done for violence against women,” she said. Because of this, journalists may see FGR sources akin to expert sources and a way of balancing out different institutional narratives.

### *Contextualization*

The extent to which a reporter places a femicide within the wider issue of violence against women plays a significant role in positive reporting practices. The content analysis coded for four contextualization cues: violence against women, past forms of physical violence in the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, past forms of verbal or emotional abuse in the relationship, and the perpetrator’s criminal history. The results suggest that many Salvadoran journalists *do* attempt to contextualize their articles in some way.

An article was either coded at a 1, which meant the reporter tried to contextualize poorly; at a 2, which meant the reporter contextualized the issue well, or at a 3 if there was no contextualization at all. An example of an article that was coded at a 1 is: “According to statistics from the National Civil Police, between 1 January and 24 November of this year 208 murders of women have been committed” (Redacción Web DEM 2019, translation by author). In contrast, a well-contextualized article tries to include more information. For example:

“The police reports 149 feminicides this year. According to authorities, 34 cases have occurred in January; in February 25; 19 in March; in April 31; in May, 19; in June, 18; and during the first 10 days of July there have been three cases. In 2018, the tendency of feminicides skyrocketed. By September, the authorities were counting 293 violent crimes against women committed by their partners or former partners; however, for the former Security authorities, the number represented 12% of the violence that happened daily in El Salvador. The Salvadoran Institute for the Development of

Women (ISDEMU) said that 67 of every 100 women suffer violence in the country.” (Arévalo 2019, translation by author).

Three of the reporters spoke about the importance of contextualization, and fewer than 50% of articles included contextualization elements as shown by Tables 6 and 7. Despite this apparently low number, the results below show that generally Salvadoran journalists are more aware of the importance of framing femicide cases within a broader social context in comparison to other countries. Bullock and Cubert (2002) found that only 10% of U.S. articles placed domestic violence in a wider context, and Neira Mellado (2013) found that only 8% of Chilean articles contextualized femicide by providing survivor support, statistics, and advocacy. Both of these figures are much higher than those found in the present study, hinting that while most Salvadoran journalists are not contextualizing well enough, they are doing so at higher rates than other international journalists.

Table 6: Violence against women contextualized

<b>Percentage of articles</b>			
<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Poorly</b>	<b>Well</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
<b>LPG</b>	24.0	17.1	58.9
<b>DEM</b>	23.2	8.9	67.9
<b>EDH</b>	14.5	16.1	69.4
<b>Weighted</b>	21.5	15.0	63.6
<b>Average</b>			

Table 7: History of abuse in the relationship

Physical violence in the relationship contextualized				
Percentage of articles				
Newspaper	Poorly	Well	Not at all	N/A
<b>LPG</b>	9.3	9.3	60.5	20.9
<b>DEM</b>	1.8	1.8	53.6	42.9
<b>EDH</b>	19.4	14.5	61.3	4.8
<b>Weighted Average</b>	10.1	8.9	59.1	21.9
Verbal/emotional abuse in relationship contextualized				
<b>LPG</b>	10.9	12.4	55.8	20.9
<b>DEM</b>	12.5	3.6	41.1	42.9
<b>EDH</b>	16.1	14.5	64.5	4.8
<b>Weighted Average</b>	12.6	10.9	54.7	21.9
Criminal history of perpetrator				
<b>LPG</b>	7.0	1.6	71.3	20.2
<b>DEM</b>	0.0	0.0	57.1	42.9
<b>EDH</b>	4.8	3.2	87.1	4.8
<b>Weighted Average</b>	4.9	1.6	72.1	21.5

Research Question 2: How often do journalists engage in bad reporting practices when reporting on femicide?

To answer this question, I analyzed the results obtained from the perpetrator exoneration and victim blaming criteria. These practices both play important roles in assigning blame for a femicide. Misattributed blame can make it harder to hold perpetrators accountable and normalizes the crime.

#### *Perpetrator exoneration*

The press can play an important role in excusing a perpetrator, and in isolating the crime to make it seem like an anomaly. If an article made the perpetrator or the event seem “weird,” or

“abnormal,” it was coded as isolating the perpetrator. In the Salvadoran context, mentioning a perpetrator’s gang affiliation is another form of isolation, as the femicide is seen as a result of exceptional gang warfare. A weighted average of 10.9% of articles described the event as exceptional, and 12.2% of articles mentioned a perpetrator’s gang affiliation.

Five criteria coded for phrases that sought to shift the blame away from the perpetrator: the death was accidental (A weighted average of 5.2% of articles were coded); it was due to separation or divorce (8.5%); it was attributed to the use of alcohol or drugs (10.5%), the perpetrator’s physical or mental problems (4.5%), or a fight (15.4%). Table 8 shows a combined percentage of how often newspapers resorted to these tactics. EDH stands out as having a higher average of perpetrator exoneration, especially when compared to DEM, suggesting that EDH journalists may be misattributing blame more often in coverage.

Table 8: Combined percentage of perpetrator justification

<b>Does the article excuse the perpetrator’s actions? (%)</b>			
<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>LPG</b>	6.7	78.6	14.7
<b>DEM</b>	3.9	66.4	29.6
<b>EDH</b>	17.7	75.8	6.5
<b>Weighted average</b>	8.8	75.1	16.0

These results are still low when compared to those found in the literature. Bollock and Cubert (2002) found that 47.8% of all the articles examined excused the perpetrator. In interviews, journalists mentioned they were wary of normalizing or justifying the act of violence,

and course providers agreed that those were some of the main problems they tried to address. Fernando, a reporter, mentioned that one of his biggest ethical challenges was knowing which details added value to the narrative, and which ones did not. For example, it may be factually accurate to report that the perpetrator was drinking alcohol, but this could imply that the femicide was committed *because* of the abuse, thus detracting attention from the perpetrator's active role in the violent act itself (Fairbairn 2008).

### *Victim blaming*

As mentioned in the introduction, I expected that Salvadoran journalists, like their counterparts in other countries, would employ victim blaming techniques at moderately high levels. The results for this criterion, however, show the opposite. I coded seven criteria for victim blaming:

1. The article mentioned the victim's gang affiliation (A weighted average of 6.5% of articles were coded at this criteria). In one LPG article, the victim's gang affiliation was phrased as follows: "a police source pointed out that the young woman had ties to a criminal structure, since her father, who was head of a gang, died last year in a standoff with the police that occurred in the Cuscatancingo municipality" (Salguero 2019, translation by author).
2. The death was attributed to the victim's mental or physical health problems (2.8%). One example published by LPG described how a victim had had a miscarriage, which "provoked Diaz Ramirez's [perpetrator] anger against his partner" (Barahona 2019, translation by author).

3. The article directly blamed the victim (4.9%). One EDH article read: “Her mother warned Keni to tell him [perpetrator] to come and talk to her. Despite her mother begging her to not go, Keni decided to go” (Marroquín 2019, translation by author).
4. The article suggested the death was attributed to the victim’s drug or alcohol use (2.4%).
5. The article mentioned the victim was partying (8.1%). Journalists used this description often with Carla Ayala, as she was killed after an office end-of-year party, where the “guests drank liquor,” (Escalante 2019, translation by author).
6. The article mentioned the victim’s physical characteristics, like a tattoo or the clothes she was wearing (3.24%).
7. The article mentioned the victim’s sexual history (3.24%).

I combined these weighted averages to find a final score for victim blaming across all three newspapers, shown in Table 9. These rates for victim blaming are astoundingly low, especially when compared to the results obtained in the literature.

Table 9: Combined percentage of articles blaming the victim

<b>Do the articles blame the victim?</b>			
<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>LPG</b>	4.7	89.9	5.4
<b>DEM</b>	3.3	91.3	5.4
<b>EDH</b>	5.1	91.7	3.2
<b>Weighted average</b>	4.5	90.7	4.9

Victim blaming is one of the most harmful to the memory of victims and the perpetuation of the cycle of violence. Bullock and Cubert (2002) found that 175 articles engaged in victim blaming. Richards et al. (2011) found that 10% of a 992-article sample engaged in direct victim blaming, and Taylor (2009) found instances of victim blame in 25% of her sample. Clearly, El Salvador's weighted average of 4.45% is significantly lower (see Table 9). Through interviews, journalists consistently reaffirmed they were conscious about not revictimizing victims and families. This is crucial, because it indicates that Salvadoran journalists are attempting to change the narrative that victims of femicide are responsible for their murders. This change can encourage other victims of violence against women to speak up, and holds institutions accountable for taking complaints seriously.

## **Discussion**

The data and analysis answer the four sub-questions presented in this dissertation.

*To what extent do print articles reflect best journalistic practices as outlined by the literature?*

Based on the results obtained from my analysis of 247 articles on femicide, print articles reflect best practices to a medium extent. Salvadoran journalists are employing positive practices at higher or equal rates than their Chilean and North American counterparts when it comes to use of language and contextualizing the issue. Still, journalists must ensure to use positive descriptors even when describing low-income victims, which need to be given coverage equal to the coverage given to middle-class, professional victims. Salvadorans are also falling behind in including private and expert voices. The negative effect of this exclusion may be

slightly mitigated by the FGR's commitment to using gender theory to talk about femicide cases, but regardless, this is still a criterion that requires improvement.

*How often do journalists engage in bad reporting practices when reporting on femicide?*

Journalists were far less likely to engage in negative reporting practices than their international counterparts identified in the literature. Both criteria used to answer this research question – perpetrator exoneration and victim blaming – indicated surprisingly low frequencies. However, the results showed higher indices of excusing the perpetrator by attributing the murder to a fight between the couple or his alcohol use. They also showed higher indices of blaming the victim by mentioning her gang affiliation or partying behaviors. Reporters must take care to avoid relying on these tropes that can misattribute blame.

*Did different news sources do a better job at reporting on femicide than others?*

I found that there were two types of reporting, one of which was more conducive to better coverage. Episodic, or reactive, reporting occurred in response to a murder, capture or court result. These articles tended to be shorter, less researched, and relied on official sources. This kind of reporting can be constrained by tight deadlines, and is thus not as conducive to investigative efforts. DEM relies more on this type of reporting, as evidenced by their shorter articles, smaller range of sources used, and high percentage of murder articles. While this is necessary reporting, if femicide coverage is left at this superficial level there are fewer chances of educating the public about the problems of gendered violence and limiting impunity (Mujkić Jukić 2016). In contrast, both LPG and EDH engaged in a mix of episodic reporting and proactive investigative reporting. These are the articles that tended to contextualize the issue

better, present the victim in a humane way, and exposed the cycle of violence that ultimately lead to the victim's death.

### **Explanation**

In this subsection, I seek to answer my fourth research question: what factors influence the quality of femicide coverage?

Neither the traditional nor postmodern feminist media analyses would have a good explanation for El Salvador's relatively high achievement of journalistic standards regarding reporting on femicide. They would assume that female reporters would imbue articles with diversified perspectives on gender, and thus better reporting was the result of more female journalists. The study cannot confirm this finding without further research, but based on qualitative analysis, just as many male journalists reported positively on femicide as female journalists. A weighted average demonstrates that within the sample, 40.5% of the primary authors – the author listed first on the byline of a news article – were women. 45% of articles were written by men, whereas 14.6% of authors were unknown or unlisted.

Instead, two factors seem to explain this outcome. First, certain cases, like the Karla Turcios case, shocked journalists into recognizing the extent of the problem. Second, these journalists seemed to have gained greater awareness of femicide in training sessions. These trainings themselves may have emerged from other factors such as changes in Salvadoran criminal law with regard to femicide and the establishment of international standards for reporting on femicide.

### *Emblematic cases*

Both journalists and course providers mentioned the effect the Karla Turcios case had on the field. Seeing one of their own be victimized by her partner may have increased awareness among journalists about the impact of their coverage, while simultaneously shattering the illusion that violence against women happened only to low-income victims. According to various journalists, this illusion was shattered not just for members of the press, but across all sectors of Salvadoran society. This could have led to increased reader demand for high-quality coverage on these issues. LPG and EDH journalists expressed that since violence against women became a national issue, they have had ample support from editors in keeping the topic on the agenda, pointing to the importance of editorial support and advocacy.

### *Training*

Five of the six journalists interviewed mentioned having received specific training on how to report on feminicides. According to them, trainings were hosted by third-party organizations, like like Riesgo Cruzado, the United Nations, or even the FGR itself. The courses were voluntary, free of cost and offered on a regular basis. One journalist said the number of courses offered had increased in recent years due to the high levels of femicide in the country. When speaking about training, Javier said: “We have been trained to be able to use more adequate language, avoid justifying the fact. We try to be as neutral as possible, and not establish any type of justification, for example jealousy, crimes of passion.”

Training courses vary slightly, but contain similar core elements taught to journalists. Two trainers mentioned emphasizing the history of gender inequality, stereotypes, roles, and biases through the lens of gender theory. According to Michelle, this is done to deconstruct the

patriarchal formation that societal norms have instilled, and to prevent its replication in the media. Providers also teach journalists about the cycle of violence against women, stressing the importance of the media's cooperation in educating the general population. They mentioned that their courses taught journalists to avoid victim blaming, re-victimization, and normalizing or justifying the femicide. Michelle also mentioned the importance of familiarizing journalists with legal issues, including LEIV-defined terminology, crime scene processing procedures, prosecution procedures, and legal recourses for victims.

Both trainers mentioned that their courses had been developed with help from international and domestic actors, like the Salvadoran branch of UN Women, Plan International, ISDEMU, UNICEF, and other Latin American journalists. Journalists William and Monica said they attended courses in Argentina and Mexico, respectively. This implies a high degree of international collaboration and diffusion of ideas between other Latin American courses.

## CONCLUSION

I started this dissertation with the assumption that the Salvadoran press would employ higher levels of negative journalistic practices, and lower levels of positive practices while covering femicide than their international counterparts. My results demonstrate the opposite – a higher percentage of Salvadoran journalists avoided negative practices while implementing some positive practices. Reporters must continue improving on proactive implementation of these positive practices, specifically employing personal and expert information sources and a continued commitment to contextualizing femicides. Regardless, the results provide a promising outlook on the future of reporting in El Salvador.

This dissertation contributes to the literature by situating the Salvadoran press within the realm of gender media studies and presenting a model that can be adapted to other Latin American countries that are struggling to instill positive femicide coverage. This model relies on extensive collaboration between the press, state institutions, international organizations, and judicial framework to create ongoing training programs for journalists. These programs attempt to deconstruct internalized patriarchal norms, teaching journalists to report using a gendered perspective that avoids re-victimization, victim blaming, and normalizing violence against women. These programs are easily replicable in other countries, and may already be implemented. What may set Salvadoran journalists apart from their international counterparts is a sense of commitment to what they learn at these seminars. This commitment could be attributable to the high visibility and personal ties journalists have with some of the country's most emblematic cases. The impact these cases have had on journalists, combined with the training programs, call journalists to a higher purpose that goes beyond reporting the news: that of education, prevention, and battling femicide impunity.

My analysis of the Salvadoran case also provides an interesting challenge to other countries: if a country that has historically tolerated high instances of violence against women can work to change the institutional and social narrative surrounding femicides, other countries should be able to do so as well. Future research would test the explanations outlined in this study – the importance of training and the exposure to cases of middle class and professional victims – in shifting journalists' views and skills.

## APPENDIX

### **Appendix A: Keywords used for EDH expanded archival search**

"feminicidio"

"femicidio"

"violencia contra la mujer"

"violencia domestica"

"homicidio de mujeres"

"asesinar a mujer"

"asesinan a mujer"

"asesinato de mujer"

"mujer asesinada"

"cadáver de mujer"

"matar a mujer"

"matan a mujer"

"feminicida"

"mata novia"

"asesina novia"

"mata esposa"

"asesina esposa"

"Karla Turcios"

"feminicidio"

"violencia contra la mujer"

"violencia domestica"

## **Appendix B: Sample section of the coding sheet used**

### Victim Blaming

1. Bad victim: Gang affiliation of the victim
  - a. Does the article mention the victim's affiliation with a gang? Can include family affiliations, conjectures, and speculation.
2. Bad victim/brought it on herself
  - a. Does the article or a source seek to blame the victim for her murder by referencing to one of the following:
    - a. Mental or physical health problems
    - b. Victim directly blamed for it (i.e. the perpetrator claimed it was in self-defense)
    - c. Victim used drugs or alcohol
    - d. Victim was partying, dressing inappropriately
    - e. Mentions victim's past sexual history

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