MURDER-SUICIDE AND MORAL ORDER IN THE NEWS

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Is has been argued that in crime news, the newsworthiness is not created because readers want to get information on crime but because they want to problematize over the morals of everyday life. For instance, think about competences of different people. Why some topics get much attention and other are seen as routine? Why murder-suicide articles that involve husband as a perpetrator and his wife as a victim get so little attention compared with other types?

There are some features of violence, which are not much reflected upon in the crime news. For instance, the alcohol abuse is constructed as a problem in Finnish society, but it is so established that there is no need to think about it and homicides 'caused' by alcohol are not interesting. Also the cases of spousal argument are not interesting though problems in relationships, and speculation on the competencies of men and women, are a staple source of interest.

There is also evidence on the endurance of category ‘couple’. Common law couples who have moved to live separately are still categorised as couples. There are some counter discourses – that present events differently: but they demand re-establishment of those involved. Not couple, but a woman who has sought help and former cohabitant who have been violent.

The Finnish equality that is based on gender neutrality, it leaves the gendered morals untouched in many (official) contexts. When asked, man and women have the same rights and responsibilities in home and society, but when the topic is other than equality, rights and responsibilities are notably gendered. The gendered order can be even stronger when not discussed explicitly. Changing these moral constructions demands efforts on behalf of the journalists. The demands of good journalism, the objectivity and ethical rules considering suicides and rules that are made to protect victim’s relatives, seem to silence the violence in heterosexual relationships. Even though, otherwise people

1 In Aamulehti: A new communicator has been developed, it makes it easier for women to call their children and husband to meals. (18.2.2003).
are quite interested in speculating over rights, responsibilities and competences of women and men in intimate relationships.

The presupposition that crime news is a venue of everyday moral considerations seems to be not quite accurate. People in crime news are not seen purely as representatives of their everyday categories but the violent contexts make a difference. Discussions about men and women and heterosexual relationships are not based on crime news.