COVERING THE DEAD

Death images in Israeli newspapers – ethics and praxis[*]

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This paper explores the meeting point of photojournalism and death and maps the tensions involved. Most of the literature on news-media and death explores the problematics of covering death during wartime. Less attention has been given to violent death in civic settings (as opposed to war zones) and to mundane deaths. The civic death scenes are not subject to military or governmental censorship, and the moral and professional burden to report such events falls on the journalists' shoulders. This paper aims to fill this gap by studying the representation of death in Israeli news-media. Findings from interviews and a quantitative content analysis shed light on the journalistic practices, and show how the news-media self-regulated their working practices. Lastly, the paper identifies the breakdowns of this self-regulated mechanism as it points at two different approaches to presenting death images according to the national affiliation of the dead. The paper argues that these practices delineate and maintain the distinction between Israelis and "the Other".

Introduction

On the morning of October 19, 1994, a Palestinian suicide bomber boarded a line number 5 bus in Tel-Aviv and blew himself up near the *Dizengoff Center* shopping mall (henceforth: "line-5 attack"). This was the first major suicide bomb in Tel-Aviv and one of the deadliest in recent Israeli history – twenty-two people lost their lives in the attack. The event was covered live on the public national TV station, *Channel 1*, and also on the then-new commercial *Channel 2*. Israel's most popular newspaper, *Yedioth Aharonoth* (Hebrew: "Latest News"), issued a second edition at 9:00 AM that day covering the event. The images that emerged from the scene were horrific and included bleeding bodies and body parts. The Israeli public had never before witnessed such graphic images on television or in the newspapers. Many viewers resented the display of horror photographs on television, as noted in *Haaretz* on October 20, 1994, and a public and professional discussion commenced among journalists and public figures

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about the appropriate way to cover mortal events. The main dispute was whether the reports should present the reality "as is" and thus serve the public's right to know about the horrifying events; or whether the explicit depiction of dead bodies is voyeuristic and does not serves the public interest. The public debate about the media's depiction of death demonstrates the centrality of death and its representation to core values of democratic societies such as human dignity, freedom of the press and freedom of information. Retrospectively, as this paper shows, the debate that followed the line-5 attack changed the depiction of death events in the Israeli news-media.

Most of the literature on news-media and death explores the problematics of covering death during wartime (see for example Griffin 2010). Less attention has been given to violent death in civic settings and to mundane deaths. This paper aims to fill this gap by studying the representation of death in Israeli news-media. In the course of its short history, Israel has been involved in a number of wars and has experienced high numbers of casualties given its small population. However, the violent reality in Israel in the mid-1990s and 2000s confronted the Israeli public with a different kind of death – mass civic death – in which civilians were exposed to terror attacks in a civic environment, in city centers, close to home rather than in remote battlefields. Thus, although death has been part of the journalistic diet in Israel for many years, the most challenging death events of the 1990s and 2000s in Israel were mass civic deaths, rather than military deaths. This changed the power relations between the journalists and the state. The civic death scenes were not subject to military or governmental censorship, and the moral and professional burden to report such events fell on the media's shoulders – the media became the institution to filter mass-death events to the public. The media had to decide how to convey the horrific reality – in language and images – from the streets to the living-rooms.

This paper explores the meeting point of photojournalism and death, and maps the tensions involved. By interviewing photojournalists and news editors and by conducting visual content analysis, this paper addresses the challenges news-media face when covering death events. It also explores how the Israeli news-media coped with covering mass violent death events and shows how the news-media self-regulated their working practices. Finally, the paper points out the breakdowns in this self-regulated mechanism, as it identifies two different practices of covering death events in visual terms, each in play according to the national affiliation of the dead. The paper argues that these norms function to reinforce a binary of "us" and "them". This practice is subtle and sometimes goes unnoticed, but it maintains a division and stratification among members of the society.

The Newsworthiness of Death

"Death – and especially hard, undeserved, brutal and often unexpected, that is 'bad', death – is a key feature of news" (Seaton 2005, 183). The occurrence of death meets a number of news criteria and news values, as it is usually unexpected, breaks the regular order of things, bears social significance, and generates responses from a number of social institutions (Harcup and O'Neill 2001). Moreover, since death events are usually negative, their likelihood of being reported is high (Hanusch 2010). Many key events in human history are death-related stories and often stories on death are the leading stories in

the news (Hanusch 2010; Seaton 2005). Of course, not all death events make it to the news, but the death of public figures and the public – often violent – death of private citizens are part of our daily news diet (Hanusch 2010; Seaton 2005; Walter, Littlewood, and Pickering 1995).

Visual documentation of a death event increases the likelihood of the event to be reported, since this documentation offers viewers a glimpse of an exciting and voyeuristic "theatre of violence" (Griffin 2010, 8). However, the visual documentation of death events is often controversial. Photographs help us better understand the world we live in, and journalists often value the ability of photographs to render reality in an authentic and telling way. Visual documentation has a very strong claim to truth, and it bolsters the journalists' authority as eyewitnesses and storytellers (Zelizer 1995; Zelizer 2005a). But the power of visual images can turn against them when documenting death events, since death, to a large extent, is a taboo (Walter 1991), and its public appearance is a sensitive matter carrying a good deal of cultural baggage. Unlike other topics that their visual representation makes it easier to engage with, the engagement with visual depiction of death – especially violent death – is often experienced as overwhelming and disturbing. Therefore, seeing representations of death is preferred only in certain circumstances, and more often than not, explicit death images are replaced by mitigated representations (Zelizer 2010, 23). This is the paradox of death in the news – death is a leading news topic, but its actual display is scarce (Hanusch 2008b; Fishman 2001). Even when the media cover mass death stories such as wars and natural disasters, the actual depiction of their human cost is very limited (Aday 2005; Griffin and Lee 1995; Fahmy 2010; Silcock, Schwalbe, and Keith 2008; Griffin 2004; Fahmy, Kelly, and Yung Soo Kim 2007; Fahmy and Neumann 2012; Parry 2010).

The discussion about what the public needs to see in order to make sense of war is fairly limited, and does not always fully address what is at stake when refraining from confronting the public with the human cost of war (Zelizer 2005b, 27). In Israel, such discussions did take place, but in relation to the coverage of terror attacks rather than wars. The Israeli discussion sheds light on the challenges of reporting from death scenes. Accordingly, I shall first look more carefully at the tensions around images of death and then turn to the public discussion in Israel.

The Tension around Images of Death

Images can assist the public in understanding the news. And yet, in death cases, victims never chose to become the subject of a public spectacle. Moreover, the violent nature of a newsworthy death usually means that its visual documentation can be gory and horrifying. Such visual depiction might dishonor the dead and distress their families. Therefore, even if the need to report such events is not in question, the way in which to deliver the news is indeed in question, and journalists need to choose whether to present the whole truth or to respect the victims (Keith, Schwalbe & Silcock, 2006). Put differently, the challenge journalists face is how to balance between two core democratic values – human dignity and the public's right to know.

The Public's Right to Know

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Death that is not "natural death" but the unexpected ending of life deserves public attention, as it may bear moral, social, political and sometimes criminal meaning. Whether it is war, violent death or a negligent death, the public has the right to learn about such stories and the news-media have the duty to report them (see also Keith, Schwalbe, and Silcock 2006; Shipman 1995). The circulation of information regarding violent death facilitates the public's right to oversee its government and to assess whether the government fulfills its duty to protect the lives of citizens. Moreover, the mediation of such death manifests the solidarity between people and their civil duty to care for one another. In this regard, Azoulay argues that "the familiar slogan regarding 'the public's right to see' only partially expresses what is at stake... It is not simply the right to see, but the right to enact photography free of governmental power, and even against it" (Azoulay 2008, 105). A violent death of innocent civilians is in fact a renunciation by their government, and its documentation is proof of that injustice. And yet, photographing injured or dead civilians might violate their privacy and human dignity, and thus complicates the coverage of death events.

Human Dignity and Privacy

What information does the public need to know about violent death? More specifically, what does the public need to see? A public presentation of a private citizens photograph without their consent might violate their privacy and thus violate their dignity, especially if the image depicts the person in a dishonoring fashion (Gross, Katz, and Ruby 1991). The newsworthiness of a death conflicts with values of human dignity and privacy, since the reports expose private citizens in their hardest moments. Newton (2001) argues that a violent death which occurred in public is insufficient ground for violating the human dignity of the victim. Similarly, Wischmann (1987) argues that if one has the misfortune to die in public, his or her right to privacy should not be suppressed by the public's right to know. The difficulty, thus, in covering violent death events stems from the visual depiction rather than the factual information about the event.

In this regard we need to consider not only the violation of the victims' dignity, but also the feelings of their next of kin. In many respects, the deceased's next of kin carry his or her right to privacy and human dignity as the victim is already dead. They form a secondary circle of persons who might be offended by the circulation of graphic images. The news-media need to consider the potential value of showing such images.

Respecting The Public's Feelings and Protecting the Audiences

Another consideration regarding the visibility of death is the feelings of the greater public. These are the viewers and readers that might be distressed by the exposure to gruesome images. Thus, news-media need to take into consideration questions of taste and propriety, and respect the feelings of their audiences (Silcock, Schwalbe, and Keith 2008; see also Zelizer 2010). Moreover, the news enters the

living rooms of almost every household in the West. The public has control whether or not to watch or read the news, but it does not have control over the news it receives. The public may find gory images of violent death offensive or inappropriate, especially if young children are exposed to the news or if the news is "consumed" during breakfast or dinner (Keith, Schwalbe, and Silcock 2006).

Research Questions

Given the tensions regarding the visibility of death, this study investigates the visual coverage of death events in Israel and the changes it has undergone in the aftermath of the line-5 attack. The following analyses examine whether Israeli news-media were attentive to the public and professional demand to change the mode of covering such events. In addition, the analyses ask whether there were points in which the news-media diverted from the ethical guidelines. Hence, the following research questions are:

RQ1:   How did the media in Israel cope with the coverage of mass civic death events?
RQ2:   What kind of photographed death-stories are frequent in Israel?
RQ3:   How has the visibility of death changed in Israeli press after the line-5 attack?
RQ4:   When do Israeli media breach the ethical codes in relation to the visual coverage of death events?

Methods

The study had two components – interviews and visual content analysis – which were applied to answer the above questions. The author conducted semi-structured interviews (Shkedi 2005) with leading Israeli photojournalists and news editors.[1] All interviews were conducted in Hebrew and focused on the work of the photojournalists on the death scene and the work of the news editors at the newsroom.

In addition, quantitative visual content analysis (Bell 2001) was conducted. Two images that accompanied news stories on death cases were randomly selected for each month beginning in December 1987 (the outbreak of the first Palestinian Intifada) until the end of 2008. During this period terror attacks were frequent and took place in civic settings rather than in remote battlefields. Overall, a total of 506 photographs were analyzed.

The unit of analysis was the individual photograph. Each photograph depicting dead bodies – uncovered, covered or placed in coffins – was coded according to relevant parameters following the discussion above and as emerged from the interviews. The parameters included the display or concealment of the dead body; the closeness and openness of the shot; the identifiability of the deceased; and the national affiliation of the dead. I shall elaborate on these parameters below.

Inter-coder reliability was checked for 100 photographs (19.7% of total). The inter-coder reliability of the concealment of the body was 90% (Krippendorff's Alpha: 0.847). The inter-coder reliability of the

shot in use was 79% (Krippendorff's Alpha: 0.565). The inter-coder reliability of the identifiability of the deceased was 97% (Krippendorff's Alpha: 0.917). The inter-coder reliability of the national affiliation was 95% (Krippendorff's Alpha: 0.918). Chi-squares were then computed to test differences between the coverage before and after the line-5 attack, and between the coverage of Israeli death cases and non-Israeli death cases.

The newspaper that was selected – *Yedioth Aharonoth* – was the leading tabloid in Israel during the examined period, holding the largest readership among the Hebrew newspapers. Between 1995 and 2010 Yedioth Aharonoth was declared a monopoly in the Israeli Hebrew newspaper market by Israel's Antitrust Authority, with a market share of more than 50% (Tadmor 1995; see also Kan 2012). This newspaper is considered as catering to the mainstream of the Israeli public. As a tabloid, this newspaper has a relatively high number of images to illustrate its stories.

Findings

Most of the literature on the visual depiction of death in the news focuses on the proliferation of death images from battlefields and the interplay between the state and journalists. However, as table 1 shows, most of the images depicting death stories in Israel emerged from civic death scenes, rather than military ones. In fact, only 17.2% of the death images in *Yedioth Aharonoth* between December 1987 and December 2008 were of military deaths. The most frequent stories depicting death were stories on terror attacks. Such death cases took place in city centers and their coverage was less controlled by the state. Therefore, journalists are the main gatekeepers with regard to how to inform the public on such deaths. Let us turn, then, to the journalistic discussion on these issues.

Table 1: Photographed news stories: frequency and percentage of news stories accompanied by images of dead bodies in *Yedioth Aharonoth* between December 1987 and December 2008 (N=506)

Cause of death	Frequency and percentage
Terror attack	114 (22.5%)
Murder	103 (20.4%)
War	87 (17.2%)
Car accident	45 (8.9%)
Natural death	26 (5.1%)
Police related death	22 (4.3%)
Disaster	19 (3.8%)
Suicide	16 (3.2%)
Accident	15 (3.0%)
Other	59 (11.7%)
Total	506 (100.0%)

The Journalistic Debate over the Coverage of Death Events in Israel

As noted earlier, the 1994 terror attack on bus line number 5 in Tel-Aviv was a milestone in the coverage of death events in Israel. The public responses to the coverage of the attack entailed internal discussions within the news organizations regarding the proper way to cover such events (Dr. Yuval Karniel and Ziv Koren, interview, 2009). Interviews I conducted with photojournalists and news editors shed light on the main issues.[2]

The image that was at the center of the discussion after the line-5 attack was a photograph of the bus driver, lying dead over the steering wheel.[3] Yoel Esteron, the deputy editor of *Haaretz*, the leading Israeli broadsheet newspaper , told me in an interview:

> That picture shocked us in the newsroom and afterwards we thought that we should not provide images of people in such circumstances. I formulated a rule in *Haaretz* that we shall not publish photographs of people – dead or alive – that can dishonor them. The unwritten guideline for the editors was to think how they would have felt had they been depicted in that manner, and to publish or not to publish such images accordingly (Esteron, interview, July 13, 2009).[4]

The main concern of the news editors was, then, to respect the dead, and not to depict them in a dishonoring manner. In addition, careful attention was given to public feelings, and the news editors looked for the appropriate way not to confront them with horrific images. A former news editor in Israel's Channel 2 News, Anat Saragusti, explained what was at stake: "the news need to provide the public with the information so the public can make informed decisions. The question is, however, what is the news value of graphic images? What is its added value? What can the viewers learn from this depiction?" (Saragusti, interview, June 1, 2006). Saragusti believes that the contribution of graphic images is minimal, unless they are properly contextualized and serve as triggers for a rigorous discussion on questions of accountability for the citizens' well-being. Graphic images should not, in her view, replace a discussion on the core issues of public interest. "Snuff" or "pornographic" images of death, as Saragusti describes gory and bleeding images, "hits the audience in the belly", but do not confront them with the context that enabled the crime. Thus, questions of responsibility and accountability are left untouched.

Esteron recounts the decision making process in *Haaretz*:

> It was all summed up in a discussion in the newsroom of whether you want your relatives to be depicted that way or not… Eventually the test is very simple – can the family identify the dead person? Is it pornographic? Do you see mutilated body parts? It becomes very macabre and you end up with a "body-parts catalog" and a discussion about the distance from the object (Esteron, interview, July 13, 2009).[5]

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More specifically, the guidelines at *Haaretz* were not to publish images of dead bodies and body parts; in cases when dead bodies were captured in the photograph, the dead should not be identifiable; and to prefer long-shot images over close-ups. Similar discussio*n*s took place in other news organizations in Israel, as noted in *Haaretz* in July 25, 1995.[6] It was widely agreed that such images do not have any news value and they can only offend the viewers and readers. This became the prevailing practice and the guidelines were even stricter in relation to Israeli victims (Levi 2002). I shall return to this point later.

The new guidelines were applied in subsequent major terror attacks. Instead of explicit death images, the news-media used implicit images that insinuated what had happened. Such images included weeping survivors and images of wreckage and destruction. These metonymies of death offered an alternative way to engage the public with the horror, urging the readers and viewers to use their imagination in order to envision what they could not see (see also Zelizer 2010). Eyewitnesses' testimonies describing the carnage were also in use. the verbal testimonial described horrific reality, and although that practice replaced, to a large extent, the use of visual materials, it too was criticized by newspaper television reviewers that found the illustrative language disturbing (for example see Orit Shohat in *Haaretz*, October 21, 1994 and Haim Tal in *Haaretz*, March 4, 1996).

And still, some journalists believed that the mitigated coverage of deadly attacks and their censored depiction fail to fulfill the journalistic duty to deliver the happening and inform the public. Esther Zandberg, a columnist in *Ha'ir*, Tel-Aviv's local weekly newspaper, wrote after a suicide attack in Jerusalem in 1995: "despite the horror… the photogenic politeness undermines the *raison d'être* of television. The elementary duty of a documentary camera is to convey exactly what happened there" (*Ha'ir*, July 28; see also Alpher 2003). Ziv Koren, a leading photojournalist who covered most of the major events in Israel in the last two decades, expressed a similar view in an interview with me. He believes that the role of journalism is to satisfy the public's right to know:

> The public's right to know is more important than respect towards the dead. We need to bring the reality to the public "as is". If twenty-four people were killed in the middle of Tel-Aviv one morning – if it ruins somebody's coffee in the morning – then tough luck. That's the reality. That is how it looks (Koren, interview, May 6, 2009).

However, the prevailing perception that became the prevalent practice was that the news-media should mitigate the deadly reality and not use explicit gory images. While acknowledging the public's right to know, the dominant view was that explicit coverage causes unnecessary panic amongst the viewers and violates the human dignity of the victims. Asa Kasher, a prominent Israeli philosopher summarizes the main arguments: "It is not within the public's right to know how this and that looks, when he or she is bleeding" (in Levy-Barzilai 2005, 337). Dr. Yuval Karniel, at the time, the head of the ethics committee of the Israel Broadcasting Authority, who was a member of the Israel Press Council and of the Second Authority for Television and Radio's ethics committees, told me in an interview:

The reality is clear to everybody. When you have a terror attack in the center of town, of course the facts need to be delivered. But more than that – bringing images of body parts, spilt blood on the street, identifiable people – is not only a violation of privacy and human dignity. That's pornography (Karniel, interview, June 22, 2009).

These views eventually shaped the guidelines for covering death events, as they are reflected in the ethical codes of the Israeli news-media.

The Codes of Ethics

The discussion after the line-5 attack in Tel-Aviv resulted in some amendments to the code of ethics of the Israeli press council and the Israeli television channels (Karniel, interview, June 22, 2009). The code of ethics provide journalists with some basic guidance on how to address ethical dilemmas in their work, and in the case of Israel and its violent reality, these codes include references to casualties.[7] The rules of professional ethics of the Israeli Press Council ("Rules of Journalistic Ethics" 2008) include a special section on casualties (section 9). This section advises journalists to refrain from publishing any identifying details of casualties before the persons' next of kin was informed by an authorized person (sub-section A). Sub-section B advises that "the publication [of death images – TM] shall be appropriate in manner, extent and sensitivity", but the question as to what is deemed "appropriate" remains. To help answer this question, let us look at the codes of ethics of the television channels as well, as they include a more detailed reference to the visual aspect, which is the main difficulty in covering death events. The latter codes include similar guidelines to those found in the press council's code (Karniel 2009; "Rules of the second authority for television & radio (ethics in television and radio braodcast)" 2007). Yet they elaborate on the depiction of violence and suffering: "We shall not show severe violence and human suffering, unless they are integral to the subject… when the public interest demands showing horror images such as corpses, mutilated body parts and blood, it needs to be shown briefly and in the appropriate context" (Karniel, 2009b, section 16).[8]

To sum up, the key guidelines of the Israeli news organizations' ethical codes address the feelings of the next of kin of the deceased and recommend that they be consulted before any identifying information about the dead, including photographs, is released to the public. When images are published they need to be respectful and not go beyond the need to satisfy the public interest. In the following section I shall explore the changes in the visual coverage of death stories in Israel and examine when the news-media's self-regulation was breached.

Changes in the Visual Depiction of Death

The study examined the changes in the depiction of death events in the following aspects: the explicit display of dead bodies; the distance from the body in terms of the shot in use; and whether or not the deceased person was identifiable. The study compared death coverage before and after the line-5 attack.

The display of corpses. As demonstrated earlier, the question regarding the actual display of the dead body is most problematic, as it might be in conflict with respect towards the dead and might offend their next of kin. The analysis examined how the corpses were presented. Each photograph sampled was coded according to the display of the corpse in the image – whether it was uncovered, covered by sheets or shrouds, placed in a coffin or digitally blurred.

Table 2: Display of corpses: frequency and percentage of reports accompanied by images of dead bodies in *Yedioth Aharonoth* before and after the line-5 attack (N=506)

Display of the corpse	Frequency and percentage		
Time	Before the line-5 attack	After the line-5 attack	Total
Uncovered body	77 (46.4%)	78 (22.9%)	155 (30.6%)
Covered body	70 (42.2%)	189 (55.6%)	259 (51.2%)
Body in coffin	19 (11.4%)	56 (16.5%)	75 (14.8%)
Digitally blurred body	0 (0.0%)	17 (5.0%)	17 (3.4%)
Total	166 (100.0%)	340 (100.0%)	506 (100.0%)

Chi-Square = 34.138, P < 0.001; Cramer's V = 0.260

Table 2 shows that following the line-5 attack the display of uncovered corpses dropped down from 46.4% to 22.9%. In other words, after that attack and the discussions on the subject, 77.1% of the images of corpses that accompanied death-related stories depicted corpses covered by shrouds or placed in coffins, and images depicting digitally blurred corpses.

The shot in use. What was the perceived distance from the corpse, as it appeared in the frame? How near or far was the corpse from the reader? In professional terms, this analysis examines the closeness and openness of the shot, which means the space the corpse occupies in the photographic frame. As emerged from the interview, the perceived distance from the corpse is closely related to the properness of the image. The closer the frame is, the more it discloses details of the corpse and its condition, and hence longshot images are preferred over close-ups (see also Hanusch 2008b).

Table 3: Shot in use: frequency and percentage of reports accompanied by images of dead bodies in
Yedioth Aharonoth **before and after the line-5 attack (N=506)**

Shot in use	Frequency and percentage		
Time	Before the line-5 attack	After the line-5 attack	Total
Close-up or medium close shot	21 (12.7%)	8 (2.4%)	29 (5.7%)
Medium shot	110 (66.3%)	90 (26.5%)	200 (39.5%)
Long shot	35 (21.1%)	242 (71.2%)	277 (54.7%)
Total	166 (100.0%)	340 (100.0%)	506 (100.0%)

Chi-Square = 116.454, $P < 0.001$; Cramer's V = 0.480

Table 3 shows that before the line-5 attack, most of the images used medium shots (upper torso), while 12.7% of the images used medium-close shots (shoulders and face) or close-ups (face only), and 21.1% used long shots. However, after the attack the practice changed dramatically, as close-ups and medium-close shots were rarely used - only in 2.4% of cases. Instead, the vast majority of the images – 97.6% – used long shots (71.5%) or medium shots (26.1%). The guideline advising preference of long shots over close-ups was followed meticulously.

Identifiability. To what extent could readers identify the dead person in the photograph? Given the sensitivity of such images to the deceased's next of kin, and given the questions regarding the respect towards the dead, this guideline aims to protect the human dignity of the deceased and to respect the feelings of their next of kin.

Table 4: Identifiability: frequency and percentage of reports accompanied by images of dead bodies in
Yedioth Aharonoth **before and after the line-5 attack (N=506)**

Identifiability	Frequency and percentage		
Time	Before the line-5 attack	After the line-5 attack	Total
The person in the photograph is identifiable	33 (19.9%)	47 (13.8%)	80 (15.8%)
The person in the photograph is not identifiable	133 (80.1%)	293 (86.2%)	426 (84.2%)
Total	166 (100.0%)	340 (100.0%)	506 (100.0%)

Chi-Square = 3.073, $P < 0.1$; Cramer's V = 0.078

Table 4 shows a change is this aspect as well, although the change is less dramatic, compared to the other aspects. Before the attack, about fifth of the images showed an identifiable person. After the attack, this percentage decreased to 13.8%.

As these three tables show, the 1994 line-5 attack was indeed a milestone in covering death events in the Israeli press. The findings indicate that the journalists' self-regulation took effect. The news-media self-censored their reports according to the guidelines regarding respect towards the dead and towards public feeling. They did so after considering what was at stake and chose to self-censor their reports out of free will and based on professional values. This practice also met the expectations of their viewers and readers to mitigate the horror. In fact, these findings show that the news-media managed to change their practice in light of the challenges they faced and to obey their own codes.

However, the findings also indicate that the guidelines for covering death events were not always followed, as on some occasions the newspaper published images of uncovered corpses, identifiable corpses or images that positioned the readers close to the corpse. In the interviews I conducted with photojournalists and news editors I raised the hypothesis that the Israeli press employs one mode of coverage for dead Israelis and another mode for "others". They all confirmed that the Israeli press treats dead differently based on their identity (Miki Kartsman [May 2], Koren [May 6], Saragusti [June 1] and Uriel Sinai [May 26], interview, 2009). The hypothesis, then, was that identity plays a pivotal role in the way the stories were visually depicted. Another set of analyses was conducted, this time, while controlling the national identity of the dead. These analyses focused on images that were published after the line-5 attack, after the public and internal discussion about the proper way to cover death events and after the ethical guidelines were amended.

The display of corpses according to national affiliation. As table 5 indicates, the display of uncovered bodies was frequent when the depicted dead were not Israelis, even after the line-5 attack. In 50.8% of the non-Israeli cases, an uncovered body was displayed, whereas in the cases of dead Israelis, only 7.1% displayed an uncovered body.

Table 5: National affiliation: frequency and percentage of reports accompanied by images of dead bodies in *Yedioth Aharonoth* after the line-5 attack by the display of the corpse (N=333)

Display of the corpse	Frequency and percentage		
National affiliation	Israeli[9]	Non Israeli and non-Jewish[10]	Total
Uncovered body	15 (7.1%)	62 (50.8%)	77 (23.1%)
Covered body	156 (73.9%)	32 (26.2%)	188 (56.5%)
Body in coffin	36 (17.1%)	17 (13.9%)	53 (15.9%)
Digitally blurred body	4 (1.9%)	11 (9.0%)	15 (4.5%)

| Total | 211 (100.0%) | 122 (100.0%) | 333 (100.0%) |

Chi-Square = 104.211, P < 0.001; Cramer's V = 0.559

The shot in use according to national affiliation. Table 6 shows that close-up and medium-close shots were almost never in use when depicting a dead Israeli. When the depicted dead were Israelis, in 3 out of every 4 cases (74.9%) the images were taken with long-shots, compared with 2 out of every 3 (63.1%) cases when the depicted dead were not Israelis.

Table 6: frequency and percentage of reports accompanied by images of dead bodies in *Yedioth Aharonoth* after the line-5 attack by the shot in use and by national affiliation (N=333)

Shot in use	Frequency and percentage		
National affiliation	Israeli	Non Israeli and non-Jewish	Total
Close-up or medium close shot	1 (0.5%)	7 (5.7%)	8 (2.4%)
Medium shot	52 (24.6%)	38 (31.1%)	90 (27.0%)
Long shot	158 (74.9%)	77 (63.1%)	235 (70.6%)
Total	211 (100.0%)	122 (100.0%)	333 (100.0%)

Chi-Square = 11.642, P < 0.005; Cramer's V = 0.187

Identifiability according to national affiliation. Lastly, table 7 shows that in about a third of the images depicting non-Israelis (34.4%), the dead were identifiable, whereas the cases of identifiable dead Israelis were very rare (1.9%), but in about a third of the images depicting non-Israelis (35.2%), the dead were identifiable. Drawing on the significance of this visual trope and its relation to human dignity, we can find a clear distinction between the ways in which the Israelis were presented and the way "Others" were presented.

Table 7: Identifiability and national affiliation: frequency and percentage of reports accompanied by images of dead bodies in *Yedioth Aharonoth* after the line-5 attack (N=333)

Identifiability	Frequency		
National affiliation	Israeli	Non Israeli and non-Jewish	Total
The person in the photograph is identifiable	4 (1.9%)	43 (35.2%)	47 (14.1%)
The person in the photograph is not identifiable	207 (98.1%)	79 (64.8%)	286 (85.9%)
Total	211 (100.0%)	122 (100.0%)	333 (100.0%)

Chi-Square = 70.928, P < 0.001; Cramer's V = 0.462

The fact that we can identify two distinct modes of covering death events based on national identity is telling in many respects. It indicates that despite the sensitivity of death images and their reference to core values such as human dignity and the respect towards the dead, the Israeli news-media allowed themselves to breach their own decisions and not to follow the ethical guidelines that attempted to balance the public's right to know with respect towards the dead. By respecting the human dignity of those who matter to "us" and disrespecting the dignity of others, the news-media reflect deeper perceptions prevailing in Israeli society, regarding whose dignity needs to be protected and whose dignity can be neglected. In this sense, the norms governing the coverage of death events in visual terms manifest what the news-media see and understand as the "us". This further shows how death and its imagery facilitate the organization of society and help to establish hierarchies between different groups.

Conclusions

The reports on violent public death events manifest society's values as they reaffirm the ties between its members (Seale 1998; Walter, Littlewood, and Pickering 1995). Stories on violent death need to be delivered to the greater public – and they often are. However, unlike many other news stories that their visual depiction makes them easier for public engagement, the visual depiction of death stories is more problematic. Images of death can be disturbing as they confront the viewers with gore and the vulnerability of the human body. Moreover, such images can be upsetting and dishonor the depicted person and his or her next of kin. Thus, there is an intrinsic contradiction in covering death events between the need to report them in a clear and tangible fashion and the use of visual images to achieve this purpose.

The engagement with death is subject to control by different social institutions. Violent death scenes are usually controlled by state institutions like the military or the police, and mediated to the public by the media. The reality of Israel during the last two decades was different from that of many

other Western countries, as Israel suffered from serial terror attacks that took place in civic settings. These death scenes were close to home and less controlled by the state. The journalists that covered these events were free to operate on the scene, until it was closed by the police (Koren and Sinai, interview, 2009). And yet, as this paper shows, the Israeli journalists realized they needed to cope with the challenges of bringing these stories to the public without upsetting it and so they self-censored their reports.

This paper showed how following the line-5 attack in 1994, a prominent mainstream Israeli newspaper established journalistic norms for covering death events. It recounted how journalists debated the need to deliver the deadly reality to the public and their wish not to violate the human dignity of the dead and not to enhance the pain of their next of kin. The paper explored the methods employed to balance between the two contradicting values: Explicit images were replaced by more subtle, implicit images; close-ups were replaced by long-shots, and verbal descriptions, rather than images, accounted for the disturbing sights. Indeed, the findings show that once these decisions were accepted, they were largely followed.[11]

However, while the findings indicate that the news-media's self-regulation was effective, they also indicate that the news-media allowed themselves to divert from these guidelines. As the findings show, the newspaper strictly followed the Israeli news-media's ethical guideline to mitigate coverage of death events when the victims were Israelis, but it was less keen to do so when the dead were others. This practice resonates with Nossek's (2004) argument regarding the primacy of national values over professional norms in news coverage. At times, especially when covering violent news, news outlets adopt national frames of reference in a way that gives precedence to national values over professional values. The findings discussed here indicate that the coverage of death events is yet another example of this phenomenon.

But these findings are meaningful not only in relation to professional journalistic norms. Considering the reference to human dignity embedded in the visual coverage of death events, the findings reveal a hidden perception regarding whose dignity deserves to be respected and whose does not. Given that the way in which the dead are treated manifests profound perceptions regarding human dignity, the practice described here demonstrates a hierarchy of lives, and different ways to dignify the dead, based on their national identity. Thus, the coverage of death events operates as a mechanism to distinguish between "us" and "them" and establishes a hierarchy between these two groups.

Epilogue – Representation of Death in Israeli News-Media After 2008

Since the data collection for this study was concluded, the Israeli Parliament (The Knesset) has amended the Privacy Protection Act (adding section 2(4A)) (*Privacy Protection Act* 2011, sec. 2). The amendment aims to address the norms governing the coverage of death events by the Israeli press. The discussion in Parliament dealt with the issues that were discussed here. The minutes of the committee discussions indicate that the Israeli legislators do not trust the press to regulate itself, and therefore supported the amendment of the act.

On March 11, 2011, two Palestinians form Awarta invaded the Jewish settlement of Itamar in the West Bank, and killed five members of the Fogel family. The butchered bodies of the Fogel family were documented by a local photographer and once again, a public debate on whether to publish these images began as noted in *Ynet* (a website affiliated with *Yedioth Aharonoth*) articles on March 14, 2011. This time there was another argument in the debate – the use of these images in the service of the Israeli *Hasbara* (Israel's public diplomacy) against the Palestinians. Ministers and other politicians advocated for the release of the images to "force the international community to come face to face with the cruelty of Palestinian terrorism" (*Ynet*, March 14, 2011). All the news organizations in Israel refused to publish the images (Tausig 2011), asserting that such images violate the human dignity of the victims and do not follow the code of decency the news organizations all adopted in relation to gory death images. However, as the discussion around the circulation of the images of the dead Fogel family shows, sometime it is the ministers and legislators themselves who are more eager to publish ghastly images and the journalists need to restrain them. This shows the different motivations that may underlie the decision to circulate and utilize death images and the negotiation over the engagement with violent death in the public sphere.

Notes

1. Interviews were conducted with the photojournalists Miki Kartsman, Ziv Koren and Uriel Sinai; and the news editors Yoel Esteron and Anat Saragusti. Another interview was conducted with Dr. Yuval Karniel that served as a member of a number of media ethics committees.
2. All interviews were conducted in Hebrew and were translated by the author.
3. Images from that attack can be found in Ziv Koren's website: http://www.zivkoren.com/#/.%20News/-%20Conflict/-%20Israeli%20Palestinian%20conflict/img_3
4. Similar guidelines can be found in ethical codes of American news organization (Keith, Schwalbe & Silcock, 2006).
5. See similar reference to such 'catalogue' in Keith et al. (2006).
6. This was also supported by Karniel and Saragusti, interview, 2009.
7. For the ways American codes of ethics addressed these issues see Keith et al. (2006) and Shipman (1995). For the ways Australian and German codes of ethics addressed these issues see (Hanusch 2008a).
8. Citations from "Israel Broadcasting Authority's code of ethics" were translated by the author.
9. This category refers both to Israeli-Jews and non-Jewish Israelis (i.e. Palestinian citizens of Israel).

10. Due to small number of cases referring to non-Israeli Jews in the sample, this category was not included in the analysis.
11. For a more detailed account on different framings of death stories and the regimes of pity they establish see Morse (2013).

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