



Published in final edited form as:

J Health Commun. 2012 July ; 17(6): 733–744. doi:10.1080/10810730.2011.635778.

U.S. Tabloid Magazine Coverage of a Celebrity Dating Abuse Incident: Rihanna and Chris Brown

EMILY F. ROTHMAN

Department of Community Health Services, Boston University School of Public Health, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

ANITA NAGASWARAN

University of California, San Francisco, San Francisco, California, USA

RENEE M. JOHNSON

Department of Community Health Sciences, Boston University School of Public Health, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

KELLEY M. ADAMS

Department of Community Health Sciences, Boston University School of Public Health, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

JULIANE SCRIVENS

Department of Community Health Sciences, Boston University School of Public Health, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

ALLYSON BAUGHMAN

Department of Community Health Sciences, Boston University School of Public Health, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Abstract

Dating abuse is a prevalent adolescent health problem with substantial public health consequences. As many as 1 in 10 high school students in the US reports being “hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend” in the past year. We used the Rihanna-Chris Brown dating abuse incident of 2009 as a case study to conduct what is, to our knowledge, the first assessment of media framing of dating abuse. We reviewed the 20 leading U.S. single copy sales magazines published February–April, 2009 and identified 48 relevant articles which were all printed in seven “tabloid” magazines. We conducted a content analysis of the media frames of the articles using five frame categories: (1) Abuse is objectionable; (2) Victim-blaming; (3) Abuse is sexualized/romanticized; (4) Myths about abuse perpetration; and (5) Abuse is normalized. “Abuse is objectionable” was the dominant frame of 40% of articles, “victim-blaming” in 36%. Although the vast majority of articles reviewed (83%) made at least passing reference to the idea that abuse is wrong, a minority (40%) used a dominant frame that condemned abuse. Instead, the majority of articles communicated “mixed messages” about dating abuse, and many minimized the seriousness of partner abuse perpetration. Advocacy is needed to improve future tabloid media framing of dating abuse incidents.

Dating abuse is a prevalent adolescent health problem with substantial public health consequences. As many as 1 in 10 high school students in the U.S. reports being “hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend” in the past year, and

as many as 1 in 4 female U.S. college students reports experiencing dating abuse during her lifetime (Chan, Straus, Brownridge, Tiwari, & Leung, 2008; U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). Victims of dating abuse are at risk for a range of negative consequences, including injury, death, suicidal ideation, and depression (Chan, Straus, Brownridge, Tiwari, & Leung, 2008; Ellis, Crooks, & Wolfe, 2009; Foshee et al., 1996).

We lack information about how the news media represent adolescent dating abuse; to our knowledge, no studies have been published on this topic. How the news media represents violence, and violence against women, is important because it has the potential to influence people's decisions about "where to go, what to wear, how to act" in order to avoid violence, and because "it tells us how society views male acts of violence directed at women, delimiting what may be acceptable or unacceptable behavior." (Meyers, 1997). While the topic of media representation of adolescent dating abuse is as of yet unexplored, several analyses of media coverage of adult partner violence events have been conducted (Bullock, 2007; Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Carlyle, Slater, & Chakroff, 2008; Chancer, 2009; Heeren & Messing, 2009; Henley, Miller, & Beasley, 1995; Lamb & Keon, 1995; Meloy & Miller, 2009; Meyers, 1997). Taken collectively, their results suggest that most coverage perpetuates patriarchal myths that reinforce the subordination of women to men, for example by minimizing the illegality by referring to it as a "crime of passion," implicating victims in the crime (i.e., "victim-blaming"), attributing violence perpetration to psychopathology rather than social forces that support misogyny, and depicting domestic violence as "natural" or ordinary.

Manganello (2008) has proposed a conceptual model for the influence of media on dating abuse perpetration and victimization that gives primacy to portrayal of dating abuse in the media. Drawing upon Steele and Brown's media practice model, she argues that adolescents' dating-related attitudes and behaviors may be influenced by media exposure in at least three ways; via their selection of media, interpretation of media, and application of media to their own lives (Manganello, 2008; Steele & Brown, 1996). In other words, to some extent adolescents choose their media exposures, and their preferences may reflect and reinforce a consistency between their own values and those conveyed. Once exposed to a particular media story (or song, program, site, etc.), individuals will interpret what they read, or hear, differently based in part upon their own prior experiences, and the context of the exposure. Finally, the media exposure may compel some adolescents to alter their own behavior in reaction (*e.g.*, to become unlike the victim). Therefore, how the violence, victim, and perpetrator, are described or depicted has a potential to influence youth behavior. Manganello contends that because adolescence is a critical developmental period during which youth settle into relationship behavior patterns, understanding the media's role in influencing teen attitudes and behavior in dating relationships is important. She issues a call for studies that examine the media portrayal of dating abuse as a first step towards exploring both etiology and promising prevention strategies.

The present article responds to Manganello's call and focuses on a widely-covered celebrity dating abuse incident as a case study of how U.S. "tabloid" print media portrayed the issue. On February 6, 2009, Chris Brown, a 20-year old "double platinum" US pop music star, was arrested for assaulting and threatening his then-girlfriend, the equally popular singer Rihanna. Because adolescence is defined by several national health expert groups as including those ages 10–24 years old (Fine & Large, 2005), the Brown-Rihanna incident qualifies as adolescent dating abuse. In June, Brown pled guilty to one count of felony assault and was sentenced to community service, probation and counseling. The media coverage of the dating abuse incident was extensive, particularly in tabloid magazines, which are those that "feature stories of violence, crime or scandal in a sensational manner" in a "compressed" format (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, 2010).

In the immediate aftermath of the event, many U.S. teens expressed their beliefs that Brown was innocent, despite a public statement from Brown on February 15th apologizing for the incident, and the unauthorized release of a graphic police photo of Rihanna's injured face. A convenience sample survey of 200 Boston-area youth found that 46% believed that Rihanna was responsible for the violence (Boston Public Health Commission, 2009), and The Chicago Tribune quoted one high school student as saying that most of his peers felt Rihanna must have done something to provoke the assault (Twohey & Rubin, 2009). While there are multiple reasons why adolescents may have blamed Rihanna, it is possible that media coverage of the event affected their perceptions. Research suggests that “media are one of the most powerful influences in shaping public perceptions about crime and victimization” (Meloy & Miller, 2009). With regard to partner violence, specifically, two studies have found that news stories about adult partner violence can elicit different attitudes from adult readers about the culpability of the offender based on journalistic factors such as the use of passive instead of active voice, or reporting that implies that victims share responsibility for the violence (Henley, et al., 1995; Lamb & Keon, 1995; Meloy & Miller, 2009). The idea that youth attitudes about dating abuse may be affected by how dating abuse is covered in news media is critically important because of evidence that these attitudes are correlated with behavior. At least four studies have found that youth attitudes accepting of violence against women, accepting of dating violence, and accepting of what are known as “rape myths” (e.g., that girls wearing short skirts are asking for sex), and supportive of traditional gender roles are correlated with either dating abuse victimization or perpetration behavior (Bookwala, Frieze, Smith, & Ryan, 1992; Gray & Foshee, 1997; Malik, Sorenson, & Aneshensel, 1997; O'Keefe, 1997). While data are not available to test directly whether media coverage of the Brown-Rihanna incident influenced youth attitudes and behavior, we undertook the present analysis of selected media coverage of the event to explore whether, and to what extent, the media coverage suggested that Rihanna was at fault.

Thus, the present study had as its objective to investigate tabloid media framing of the Brown-Rihanna dating abuse incident. To keep the scope of the investigation feasible, we selected to analyze print magazines rather than Web site, television, or radio reporting. Thirty-five percent of 8–18 year olds read magazines every day (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). Although youth spend only 4% of their total daily media time reading print news, literate 8–18 year olds spend on average of 26 minutes per day reading print magazines, and girls spend on average 10 minutes more per day reading print media than do boys (Rideout, et al., 2010). According to King and Siegel, the proportion of 12–17 year-old youths who read or look into at least one of the top 38 consumer magazines in any given year is at least 95% (King & Siegel, 2001). Thus, our choice to make a case study of magazine coverage of the incident was appropriate. We focused on “single copy sales” magazines (that is, magazines sold in convenience stores, news stands, supermarkets, etc., rather than via subscription, and many of which are tabloids) for two reasons; (1) these magazines are those most likely to cover celebrity romance news, and (2) young females are overrepresented among the readership of many single copy sales publications. Youth age 12–20 years old represent approximately 15% of the U.S. population, but represent more than 15% of the readership of many of these publications, and females comprise the majority of tabloid readership (Table 1) (CAMY, 2010).

We hypothesized that the majority of articles would frame the Rihanna-Chris Brown incident in a manner that blamed Rihanna, normalized abuse, or made abuse sound glamorous and romantic. The term “frame” is used here to mean “the way events and issues are organized and made sense of, especially by media” (Reese, 2008). In other words, journalists are “consciously or unconsciously” selective about what information they include in their stories; their own biases color their presentation, which in turn may affect how readers interpret the issue (Schwartz & Willis, 2010). Therefore, through an analysis of top

single copy sales magazines, we sought to identify the dating abuse-related frames, and the dominant frame, appearing in each identified magazine article that covered the incident.

METHODS

Sampling

Our goal was to take a complete sample of articles from the 20 U.S. leading magazines in single copy sales that were printed between February 16 and April 6, 2009 in order to obtain information on the framing of the dating abuse incident in its immediate aftermath. The roster of magazines was obtained from the Magazine Publishers of America website (Magazine Publishers of America, 2008). We then obtained copies of each issue from supermarkets, libraries, magazine publishers, internet sites, and ebay.com. Of the top 20 magazines (listed in a note to Table 1), 96 issues met our inclusion criteria, and of these we were unable to obtain 14. After obtaining and scanning for relevant content 82 issues, we found that 46 issues covered the incident in a total of 48 articles. These 48 articles were from 7 of the magazines reviewed (Table 1). The analytic sample of articles for our analysis was thus 48, ranging from 6 in *People* and *Life & Style* magazines to 9 in *In Touch Weekly*. Demographic information about the readership of each magazine was compiled via the magazines' online media kits and from a 2010 report from the Center for Alcohol Marketing to Youth and is presented in Table 1 (CAMY, 2010).

The text of each article was hand-transcribed into a word processing file. We used the software program *Atlas.ti* to apply codes to the text; each article was coded independently by two trained coders, who subsequently compared their versions of the coded text and came to consensus where there were any discrepancies. The inter-coder reliability rate—that is, 1 minus the proportion of discrepancies out of the total number of coding decisions—was greater than 95%.

The code list was generated according to the systematic list of frames method recommended by Tankard (Tankard, 2008). Each research team member read through the articles to “get a sense of the whole,” and contributed explicit codes to a manifest list through this inductive process (Feldman, 1994). The list was then refined by the lead and third authors after two articles had been pilot-coded. The following five codes were applied to the text for the content analysis: (1) Abuse is depicted as wrong and objectionable; (2) Abuse is depicted as the victim's responsibility (*i.e.*, victim-blaming); (3) Abuse is sexualized or romanticized; (4) Myths about abuse perpetration; (5) Abuse is normalized. Definitions are available in Table 2. Each code represented one media frame. We counted the number of times each frame appeared in our collection of articles, and we counted the number of times each frame appeared as an article's dominant frame. We classified frames as dominant if they were the sole frame for an article, or if the majority of article text was coded into that frame; seven articles were not assigned a dominant frame because it was not possible to determine a majority code. Finally, we selected two to three particularly illustrative quotations per frame for presentation.

RESULTS

The most frequent code that was applied was “abuse is objectionable or wrong”; in other words, the majority of text reviewed depicted dating abuse as objectionable, and this was the dominant frame in 40% of the articles (Table 2). However, the “victim-blaming” code was applied almost as frequently, and was the dominant frame in 36% of the articles (Table 2). We applied the “abuse was normalized” code in 30% of the articles, although this was rarely the dominant frame of an entire article (2%) (Table 2). Similarly, we applied the “abuse was sexualized or romanticized” code in 40% of the articles, but found that it was the dominant

frame in only 6% (Table 2). Finally, we applied the “myths about perpetration” code in 38% of the articles; these perpetuated the idea that violence by a dating partner is attributable and excused by the perpetrators' childhood experiences, anger control problems, or the victims' behavior (Table 2). Quotations that exemplify each of the media frames are presented below:

Abuse is wrong and objectionable

The majority of articles (83%) referenced the idea that dating abuse was wrong and objectionable, even when they also included victim-blaming language or normalized abuse. In 40% of the articles, the “abuse is wrong” frame was dominant. One quotation that clearly and unequivocally condemns dating abuse is presented below:

One rumor has it that Chris hit Rihanna, 21, because she had cheated on him with artist The Dream. Another blog wildly claimed she gave Chris herpes. Whatever the truth turns out to be, it could never justify physical abuse. –*In Touch*, February 23

Other passages not only characterized the incident as abusive, but underscored the idea that relationship violence is the responsibility of the perpetrator alone, and that victims deserve a chance to determine for themselves if or when to end the relationship:

“Leaving any relationship, especially an abusive one, is often a process,” Esta Soler, president of the Family Violence Prevention Fund, tells *In Touch*. “Rihanna must weigh numerous factors and decide what is her best course of action. Nobody should blame Rihanna if she has not yet left this relationship. We should instead be asking why Chris may have resorted to violence.” –*In Touch*, March 23

Victim-blaming

Thirty-eight sections of text suggested that Rihanna was responsible for the dating abuse incident. Some stated directly that she may be the responsible party, while others contained references to speculation that she gave Chris Brown a sexually transmitted infection (STI), hit him first, or expressed jealousy. The first quotation is an example of a direct suggestion that she could be to blame for the violence, while the second example uses more subtle language (“she can't allow this to happen”) to convey the idea that Rihanna had the capacity to control whether or when she was assaulted.

It's not just because she's hopelessly in love with him; it's also because she may have provoked the attack – *Star*, March 16

“If a woman doesn't get out of an abusing relationship, it doesn't stop,” psychologist Dr.-----, who doesn't treat the stars, tells *In Touch*. “She can't allow this to happen again.”—*In Touch*, February 23

Abuse is sexualized or romanticized

There were 19 instances where abuse, or its aftermath, was depicted as erotic, loving, sensual, passionate or romantic. The quotation below both eroticizes and romanticizes the relationship between the abuser and victim; Rihanna is described in sexual terms and Brown is described as tender. The language used to characterize the scene makes it sound emotionally-thrilling and intimate:

When Rihanna walked through the gates of Diddy's \$14.5 million Miami mansion for a face-to-face meeting with Chris Brown, Chris literally fell to his knees. Clad in a sexy, tight dress and four-inch heels, Rihanna stood silently weeping as Chris clung to her legs, tearfully apologizing and begging for forgiveness. “When Chris stood up, tears were running down Rihanna's cheeks,” an insider tells *Star*, “He

tenderly wiped them away and kissed her face, which was still slightly bruised. He just kept whispering, 'I'm sorry, I'm sorry.'" –*Star*, March 16

Myths about batterers

In 18 instances, the magazine articles reinforced common misperceptions about dating abuse perpetrators, including the idea that they all “snap” or “lose control,” or that when they use violence they are mentally incapacitated. The following quotation reinforces the idea that perpetrators of dating abuse are “set off” (*i.e.*, like a bomb), and also the widely-held but erroneous belief that witnessing inter-parental partner abuse is the strongest risk factor for dating abuse perpetration. In fact, experiencing child abuse is more consistently supported as a predictor (Foshee & Matthew, 2007):

In the heat of the moment, Rihanna struck a deep, dark chord in Chris when she blurted out at him: “Stop it! I'm not your mother!” referring to the abuse he witnessed his stepfather unleash on his mom, Joyce Hawkins. “That just set Chris off,” says the source. –*Star*, March 2

Abuse is normalized

In 14 instances, dating abuse was described as a normal, common, unremarkable or acceptable occurrence. The quotation below not only normalizes physical violence by a dating partner, but underscores the idea that people who are “in love” should remain together even if the relationship has become physically violent:

“It's no problem,” the Barbados fish-market operator tells *Us*. “I have had boyfriends who beat me and then I took them back. I stayed with them because I was in love.”-- *Us Weekly*, March 16

DISCUSSION

The results of this content analysis provide the first systematic description of media frames used to describe a dating abuse incident publicized in tabloid magazines. We found that the majority of articles contained laudable anti-violence messages, such as “physical abuse is never justified” and “nobody should blame Rihanna if she has not yet left this relationship.” On the other hand, consistent with our hypothesis and with the results of prior framing studies of adult partner violence news coverage, the dominant frame for the majority of articles (53%) was that abuse is romantic, erotic, normal, or the victim's fault. We interpret these results as indicating both that the anti-domestic violence movement has achieved some of its original messaging goals, which were to promote the idea that domestic violence is inexcusable and not a private matter (Advertising Educational Foundation, 2003), and also that additional advocacy efforts are needed to make those messages dominant.

Although the vast majority of articles reviewed (83%) made at least passing reference to the idea that abuse is wrong, a minority (40%) used a dominant frame that condemned abuse. Instead, the majority of articles communicated “mixed messages” about dating abuse; it's wrong, but also sexy, potentially deserved, and often a component of supposedly loving relationships. Because at least one study has found that adolescent girls value sexuality information that they receive from magazines on par with advice from parents and friends, an investigation into how the primarily female, and disproportionately young, tabloid readership interprets these mixed messages and applies them to their own lives is an important and logical next step for the field (Treise & Gotthoffer, 2002). We can speculate that a portion of those exposed to the contrary frames may emerge with a sense that while it is important to give “lip service” (*i.e.*, support that lacks conviction) to the dangers and illegality of abuse, that abuse in dating relationships is actually a sign of passion, depth of

feeling, and perhaps to be expected—particularly from those who have witnessed interparental violence themselves. Our study did not assess the impact of the media frames on tabloid readers, however, so this hypothesis should be tested in future empirical research.

Consistent with prior studies that have found that news coverage of adult partner violence in US newspapers “supports the status quo...by creating a consensus that appears grounded in everyday reality,” and frequently blames the victims, we found that 40% of the reviewed articles contained sections of text that victim-blamed and exonerated the perpetrator (Bullock, 2007; Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Carlyle, Slater, & Chakroff, 2008; Meyers, 1997). Some have argued that because the field of journalism is dominated by males, and that the masculine perspective disallows the perception of partner abuse as a significant social problem connected to gender-based power, that this may explain, in part, why news reports frequently suggest that victims are culpable for the violence against them (American Society of News Editors, 2010; Heeren & Messing, 2009; Meloy & Miller, 2009). Others assert that because media outlets can be careless in the way that they link the perpetrators of crime with cultural or racial groups to which they belong, individuals often have a defensive reaction to widely-publicized cases and demonize the victim as a way of reshaping the discourse (Chancer, 2009). The reason notwithstanding, we found that many of the articles that we reviewed minimized the seriousness of partner abuse perpetration, made excuses for the crime, blamed the victim, and ignored the broader social dimensions of this incident, just as other researchers have found to be true of news reports of incidents involving adults (Bullock, 2007; Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Carlyle, et al., 2008; Lamb & Keon, 1995; Meloy & Miller, 2009; Meyers, 1997). An example of how a tabloid article could address the broader social dimensions of an incident would be to present a sidebar with statistics about the prevalence of dating abuse around the world, to present a graphic featuring movie or TV characters who have grappled with dating violence in popular films or shows, or to include a photo and caption of a celebrity who supports an important piece of violence-related legislation. In other words, there are ways that the tabloid treatment of this topic could have remained concise, entertaining, even sensational, and still have focused reader attention on how this incident typified a problem that is prevalent and has social implications. However, given that ours was a sole study, additional analyses of media framing of adolescent dating abuse incidents are needed, and will help further inform Manganello’s proposed framework of how dating abuse coverage may influence adolescent behavior.

Importantly, there are measures that can be taken that might improve domestic violence news reporting. In 1997, the Berkeley Media Studies Group produced a handbook for journalists that equips them to report on violence as a preventable public health problem (Stevens, 1997), and in 2000 and 2002 the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence each produced guides to assist journalists to cover domestic violence homicides and assaults (Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2000; Starr, 2002). Relatedly, in 2007, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center began funding journalist-activist pairs to attend seminars on writing responsibly about sexual violence at the Poynter Institute journalism school (Poynter Institute, 2007). Similar handbooks and seminars on covering dating abuse could be developed and made widely available. Although news coverage is produced by more than journalists alone, it is individual reporters, their editors, and supervisory decision-makers within media companies who decide what gets reported as news and how it is reported. For this reason, training journalists to frame violence in a manner that is victim-supportive and does not perpetuate myths about causes of perpetration is a reasonable first step towards improving what we suspect could be an entrenched dating abuse framing problem.

Our results are limited by several factors. First, our analysis was limited to magazines. Magazine coverage may not reflect media coverage overall, so results cannot be generalized.

Our decision to restrict this study to magazines with leading single copy sales maximized efficiency because these publications tend to cover celebrity relationship news stories in the most depth and to have relatively young readerships. Second, the generation of codes and application of these codes to sections of text is an inherently subjective process. While the inter-coder reliability was high, there is a possibility that coders who were not part of the coding development process nor trained in the same manner as our research team's coders would have made different judgments about particular sections of text. Third, there was subjectivity involved in the determination of a dominant frame for each article. We attempted to assign a dominant frame only in cases where we were able to distinguish clearly that a particular frame fit the majority of an article's text. However, it is possible that other coders may have made different determinations. Finally, we did not assess whether the media coverage of the Rihanna-Chris Brown incident had a direct affect on individuals' attitudes or behavior. We note that research on other celebrity news stories have found an association between the coverage and public behavior (Kelaheer et al., 2008; Langer, Zimmerman, Hendershot, & Singh, 1992; Nattinger, Hoffmann, Howell-Petz, & Goodwin, 1998). Additional data about how the media coverage of this incident affected youth and adults would be informative.

Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge Drs. Michael Siegel and William DeJong for their assistance with manuscript preparation.

REFERENCES

- Advertising Educational Foundation. Domestic violence prevention: 1994-present. 2003. Retrieved October 21, 2010, from http://www.aef.com/exhibits/social_responsibility/ad_council/2472
- American Society of News Editors. Newsroom Census. 2010. Retrieved October 21, 2010, from http://asne.org/key_initiatives/diversity/newsroom_census/table_1.aspx
- Bookwala J, Frieze IH, Smith C, Ryan K. Predictors of dating violence: A multivariate analysis. *Violence Vict.* 1992; 7:297–311. [PubMed: 1308437]
- Boston Public Health Commission. 2009. Retrieved September 8, 2009, from <http://www.bphc.org/Newsroom/Pages/TopStoriesView.aspx?ID=60>
- Bullock C, Cubert J. Coverage of domestic violence fatalities by newspapers in Washington State. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence.* 2002; 17(5):475–500.
- Bullock CF. Framing domestic violence fatalities: coverage by Utah newspapers. *Women's Studies in Communication.* 2007; 30(1):34–63.
- CAMY. Youth exposure to alcohol advertising in national magazines, 2001-2008. Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth; Baltimore, MD: 2010.
- Carlyle K, Slater M, Chakroff J. Newspaper coverage of intimate partner violence: skewing representations of risk. *Journal of Communication.* 2008; 58(1):168–186. [PubMed: 21297889]
- Carlyle KE, Slater MD, Chakroff JL. Newspaper coverage of intimate partner violence: skewing representations of risk. *Journal of Communication.* 2008; 58(1):168–186.
- Chan K, Straus M, Brownridge D, Tiwari A, Leung W. Prevalence of dating partner violence and suicidal ideation among male and female university students worldwide. *J. Midwifery Women Health.* 2008; 53(6):529–537.
- Chan KL, Straus MA, Brownridge DA, Tiwari A, Leung WC. Prevalence of Dating Partner Violence and Suicidal Ideation Among Male and Female University Students Worldwide. *J. Midwifery Women Health.* 2008; 53(6):529–537.
- Chancer, L. Victim-blaming through high-profile crimes: An analysis of unintended consequences. In: Humphries, D., editor. *Women, violence and the media.* Northeastern University Press; Lebanon, NH: 2009.
- Ellis WE, Crooks CV, Wolfe DA. Relational aggression in peer and dating relationships: Links to psychological and behavioral adjustment. *Soc. Dev.* 2009; 18(2):253–269.

- Feldman, MS. Strategies for interpreting qualitative data. Sage; Thousand Oaks, CA: 1994.
- Fine, A.; Large, R. A Conceptual Framework for Adolescent Health: Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs and the National Network of State Adolescent Health Coordinators. 2005.
- Foshee, V.; Matthew, R. Adolescent dating abuse perpetration: A review of findings, methodological limitations, and suggestions for future research. In: Flannery, D.; Vazonsyi, A.; Waldman, I., editors. *The Cambridge Handbook of Violent Behavior and Aggression*. Cambridge University Press; New York: 2007. p. 431-449.
- Foshee VA, Linder GF, Bauman KE, Langwick SA, Arriaga XB, Heath JL, Bangdiwala S. The safe dates project: Theoretical basis, evaluation design, and selected baseline findings. *Am. J. Prev. Med.* 1996; 12(5):39-47. [PubMed: 8909623]
- Gray HM, Foshee V. Adolescent dating violence - Differences between one-sided and mutually violent profiles. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence.* 1997; 12(1):126-141.
- Heeren, J.; Messing, J. Victims and sources: Newspaper reports of mass murder in domestic contexts. In: Humphries, D., editor. *Women, violence and the media*. Northeastern University Press; Lebanon, NH: 2009.
- Henley N, Miller M, Beasley J. Syntax, semantics, and sexual violence. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology.* 1995; 14(1-2):60-84.
- Kelaher M, Cawson J, Miller J, Kavanagh A, Dunt D, Studdert DM. Use of breast cancer screening and treatment services by Australian women aged 25-44 years following Kylie Minogue's breast cancer diagnosis. *Int. J. Epidemiol.* 2008; 37(6):1326-1332. [PubMed: 18515324]
- King C, Siegel M. The Master Settlement Agreement with the tobacco industry and cigarette advertising in magazines. *New England Journal of Medicine.* 2001; 345:504-511. [PubMed: 11519505]
- Lamb S, Keon S. Blaming the perpetrator: Language that distorts reality in newspaper articles on men battering women. *Psychol. Women Q.* 1995; 19(2):209-220.
- Langer LM, Zimmerman RS, Hendershot EF, Singh M. Effect of Magic Johnson's HIV status on HIV-related attitudes and behaviors of an STD clinic population. *Aids Educ. Prev.* 1992; 4(4):295-307. [PubMed: 1472415]
- Magazine Publishers of America. Average single copy circulation for top 100 ABC magazines. 2008. Retrieved from http://www.magazine.org/consumer_marketing/circ_trends/index.aspx
- Malik S, Sorenson SB, Aneshensel CS. Community and dating violence among adolescents: Perpetration and victimization. *J. Adolesc. Health.* 1997; 21(5):291-302. [PubMed: 9358292]
- Manganello JA. Teens, dating violence, and media use: A review of the literature and conceptual model for future research. *Trauma Violence Abus.* 2008; 9(1):3-18.
- Meloy, M.; Miller, S. Words that wound: Print media's presentation of gendered violence. In: Humphries, D., editor. *Women, violence and the media*. University Press of New England; Lebanon, NH: 2009.
- Merriam Webster Online Dictionary. tabloid. 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tabloid>
- Meyers, M. News coverage of violence against women. Sage; Newbury Park, CA: 1997.
- Nattinger AB, Hoffmann RG, Howell-Petz A, Goodwin JS. Effect of Nancy Reagan's mastectomy on choice of surgery for breast cancer by US women. *JAMA, The Journal of the American Medical Association.* 1998; v279p762(n10)(765)
- O'Keefe M. Predictors of dating violence among high school students. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence.* 1997; 12:546-568.
- Poynter Institute. Reporting & writing about sexual violence. 2007. Retrieved September 21, 2009, from <http://www.poynter.org/seminar/seminar.asp?id=4276>
- Reese, S. Prologue: Framing public life, a bridging model for media research. In: Reese, S.; Gandy, O.; Grant, A., editors. *Framing public life*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.; Mahwah, NJ: 2008. p. 7-32.
- Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence. *Domestic Violence: A handbook for journalists*. Warwick, RI: 2000.

- Rideout, V.; Foehr, U.; Roberts, D. Generation M2: Media in the lives of 8 to 18 year olds: Kaiser Family Foundation. 2010.
- Schwartz J, Willis A. Coverage of Methamphetamine in GLBT Newspapers. *Mass Communication and Society*. 2010; 13(1):30–47.
- Starr, K. *Covering domestic violence: A guide for journalists and other media professionals*. Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Seattle, WA: 2002.
- Steele JR, Brown JD. Adolescent room culture: Studying media in the context of everyday life. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. 1996; 24(5):551–576.
- Stevens, J. Reporting on violence: A handbook for journalists. 1997. Retrieved September 21, 2009, from <http://www.bmsg.org/pcvp/INDEX.SHTML>
- Tankard, J. The empirical approach to the study of media framing. In: Reese, S.; Gandy, O.; Grant, A., editors. *Framing Public Life*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.; Mahwah, NJ: 2008. p. 95-105.
- Treise, D.; Gotthoffer, A. Stuff you couldn't ask your parents: Teens talking about using magazines for sex information. In: Brown, J.; Steele, J.; Walsh-Childers, K., editors. *Investigating media's influence on adolescent sexuality*. Lawrence Erlbaum; Mahwah, NJ: 2002. p. 173-189.
- Twohey, M.; Rubin, B. Many teens blame Rihanna, say dating violence normal. *Chicago Tribune*. Feb 20. 2009 Retrieved from <http://www.chicagotribune.com/features/chi-teen-domestic-violence-20-feb20,0,7647229.story>
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. YRBSS: Youth online, comprehensive results. 2009. Retrieved July 7, 2009, from <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/yrbs/index.asp>

Table 1

Top single copy-sale U.S. magazines with Rihanna-Chris Brown coverage between February 16 and April 6, 2009, by issues reviewed and readership demographics*

Publication Name	No. Eligible Issues	No. issues reviewed	Articles with relevant content [†]	Pct. of audience 12–20 yrs.	Pct. of audience female
People	9	7	6	15%	67%
In Touch Weekly	9	7	9	13%	84%
US Weekly	9	8	6	17%	76%
Star Magazine	9	9	6	16%	77%
National Enquirer	9	7	7	--	70%
OK! Weekly	9	9	8	15%	85%
Life & Style Weekly	9	7	6	--	83%

Note: Top single copy-sale magazines reviewed but with no articles about the incident included: *All You*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Family Circle*, *Figure*, *First for Women*, *Glamour*, *Good Housekeeping*, *In Style*, *Men's Health*, *O*, *The Oprah Magazine*, *People Stylewatch*, *Woman's Day*, and *Woman's World*

* Top single copy-sale magazines identified by Audit Bureau of Circulation magazines and available from Magazine Publishers of America; Proportion of audience female as reported by magazine media kits; Proportion of audience 12–20 years old from 2010 Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) report; "--" indicates data not available

Table 2

Media frames in magazine coverage of the Rihanna-Chris Brown indictment, February 16-April 6, 2009

Frames	Frame definition	Articles in which frame appeared % (n)	Articles in which frame was dominant* % (n)
Abuse is wrong	Violence against an intimate is described as absolutely inappropriate, abnormal, wrong or objectionable.	83 (39)	40 (19)
Victim-blaming	Violence against a dating partner is depicted as the fault of the person who sustained severe injuries; abuse is justified if the victim infected her partner with sexually transmitted infection, grabbed his phone, called him a name, or continues to date him following abuse.	81 (38)	36 (17)
Abuse sexualized or romanticized	Violence against an intimate, or the aftermath, is depicted as erotic, loving, sensual, passionate or romantic.	40 (19)	6 (3)
Myths about abuse perpetration	The perpetration of violence against a dating partner is attributed to and excused by drunkenness, insanity, anger control problems, witnessing inter-parental violence as a child, or verbal goading.	38 (18)	2 (1)
Abuse is normalized	Violence against an intimate is described as a normal, common, unremarkable, or acceptable occurrence, and to be expected in dating relationships.	30 (14)	2 (1)

* A dominant frame could not be determined for 7 articles, therefore this column does not sum to 100%