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Framing Responsibility: An analysis of local news media's representation of sexist
violence

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Abstract

This study critically analyzes the representation of sexist violence in news articles from the *Reading Eagle*, a local newspaper for the Reading, Pennsylvania area, during a time span of four years (2008-2011). The focus of the study is on intersections of gender, race and class as reflected in the journalistic choices in these articles. This critical examination of representations of sexist violence explores how worldviews (such as patriarchal ideologies, myths and stereotypes) are regular elements of local news media's portrayal of violence against women. Victim responsibility and perpetrator blame alleviation are both prevalent in the articles examined, aligning with extant research done by critical feminist scholars, which suggests that the media's representation of violence against women perpetuates a hegemonic structure of patriarchy and male dominance.

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Introduction and Justification

The 2010 United States Census Bureau revealed Reading, Pennsylvania as the nation's poorest city with a population over 65,000 people. The statistics showed that 41.3 percent of Reading's residents were living in poverty. In Berks County, where Reading is located, the poverty rate is 14.1 percent. An article in the *Reading Eagle*, the primary local newspaper source for the Reading area, particularly the English speaking population, noted, "most troubling may be that things were actually worse in Berks (County) in 2011 than they were in 2010, when the census data was gathered" (Brudereck, Jan 1, 2012). An article printed a week later was titled "Berks homicides hit 6-year high" (Henshaw, Jan 8, 2012). The direct relationship between poverty and violent crime has been repeatedly discussed in the *Reading Eagle* (Spatz, Jan 11, 2008; Hambright, Nov 22, 2010; Kahl, Jan 27, 2011; Henshaw, Jan 8, 2012). By January 27, 2011, there had already been four homicides linked to domestic violence for the year in Berks County. In the same article discussing the four homicides, the author notes, "Christine A. Gilfillan, prevention education director for Berks Women in Crisis, said domestic homicides do not happen more often in Berks than in other communities. However, she said, tough economic times can make the problem worse" (Kahl, Jan 27, 2011). In a city where poverty and violent crime are consistently reported as underlying stressors on the health of the city and greater community, it is important to critically assess how local media cover instances of sexist violence, in order to discover whether a shift in language and representation needs to be made to improve the community dialogue regarding serious issues of rape and domestic violence.

The idea that the news media shapes how we view and understand the world around us and ultimately affects how we live our lives has been well documented by media theorists (see for example Gerbner and Gross, 1979; McCombs and Shaw, 1972). While the research on media effects in general is copious, there have not been as many studies on local news, particularly regarding how local news sources interact with local communities in their representations of sexist violence. There is even less research that addresses these topics from a feminist standpoint.

Meyers' (1997) *News Coverage of Violence Against Women: Engendering Blame* is a study that was implemented in the Atlanta area analyzing the media's representation of sexist violence. She explains, "how the news media represent violence against women is important not only because the news shapes our view and understanding of the world around us but also because it affects how we live our lives" (p.2). Meyers' perspective on local news media holds particularly true because, as Entman (1990) proves, events described within one's own community are more likely to intrude upon the sense of well-being far more so than stories depicting events occurring in faraway places.

The local news warns women of the dangers of being alone at night, how to dress and act, and generally what behaviors are considered appropriate for a woman to keep herself 'out of danger'. This type of local depiction of anti-woman crime "tells all of us how society views male acts of violence directed at women, delimiting what may be acceptable or unacceptable behavior for both women and men" (Meyers, 1997, p.2).

Using a feminist theoretical lens, the focus of this research will be on the intersections of gender, race and class based on how they are reflected in the journalistic choices of sexist violence coverage in the *Reading Eagle*. This research will replicate the

study done by Meyers (1997). Meyers analyzed the representations of sexist violence as it related to gender, race and class, in several papers in the Atlanta area. With regard to race, her study focused primarily on the differences in representation between the African American community and the Caucasian community. There are two major differences that will make my analysis of the Reading, Pennsylvania area's local newspaper, the *Reading Eagle*, unique. First, Reading is a much smaller city than Atlanta, with far fewer local news outlets. The *Reading Eagle* is the primary paper outlet for the community, although not necessarily garnering a readership population from the Spanish-speaking portion of the community. The second major difference is that due to the demographics of Reading, the focus on race will incorporate the large Latino/a population in the community.

It is important to note Reading's demographic makeup, particularly compared to Berks County as a whole. As was already noted, the 2010 Census listed the city of Reading as having a 41.3 percent poverty rate, while Berks County had a 14.1 percent poverty rate. Another troubling statistic when placed aside the poverty rates, is that according to the 2010 United States Census, 58.2 percent of Reading identifies as Latino/a while only 16.4 percent of Berks County identifies as Latino/a. These statistics suggest a link between socio-economic class and race in the Reading area. The representation of sexist violence in the local news media has the potential to perpetuate sexist, classist, and racist stereotypes already in place in a struggling community. This study will seek to determine if journalistic practices ultimately reify these and other stereotypes when discussing instances of sexist violence.

A study by McManus & Dorfman (2005) challenges the findings of critical scholars like Meyers. The study analyzes how violence was reported during the timespan of one year in the *San Jose Mercury News* and the *Los Angeles Times*. Although their research concludes that, as agreed upon by varying critical scholars, sexist violence was reported disproportionately to other types of violent crime, they did not find that victim blaming occurred significantly more than in other crimes, or that there was any perpetrator blame alleviation through the representation of violence in the articles. Since their findings aligned with the findings of critical feminist scholars with regard to intimate partner violence being reported less often than other types of violence, this study will not focus on that issue.

This study will critically examine representations of sexist violence and examine to what extent worldviews (such as patriarchal ideologies, myths and stereotypes) are inherent in *The Reading Eagle's* portrayals of violence against women. The goal of the study is to raise awareness regarding issues of framing and representation in the news. Ultimately, the research could further the cause of representing sexist violence in the news in a way that does not create further victimization.

Meyers (1997)

Meyers (1997) examines how patriarchal ideologies are inherent in traditional gender roles and behaviors considered ‘appropriate,’ and how these ideologies are portrayed through the news media’s depiction of violence against women. She argues that these “notions are rooted in patriarchy, which is the systemic institutionalization of women’s inequality within social, political, economic, and cultural structures. The book also illustrates how qualitative, textual analysis can be used to disclose the underlying ideology, myths, and assumptions within the news” (Meyers, 1997, p.3).

Meyers’ (1997) study attempts, through original research, to answer the following questions:

- How are women who are the victims of male violence represented?
- How are women who successfully defend themselves against men portrayed?
- How do journalists negotiate the overwhelming flood of violent crimes against women to determine which ones are worth reporting and which are not?
- How can news coverage be improved? (p.3)

Meyers examines the above questions while working through linked inequalities between gender, race and class. She seeks to define how these depictions mirror and perpetuate dominant ideologies within society. The media’s representation of violence against women maintains a hegemonic structure of patriarchy and male dominance. The underlying ideologies relate to male entitlement and female responsibility.

Meyers focuses her study on physical acts of violence directed at women by men. Specifically, she investigates acts of physical assault that result in bodily harm to women,

including battering, rape, and murder. In the study, she refrains from using the terms *family violence* and *domestic violence*. According to Meyers (1997):

the term *sexist violence* underscores the institutional and social nature of this violence, placing it within the context of misogyny, patriarchy, and male supremacy. It acknowledges that the violence is, in fact, sexist, that it assumes women are subordinate to men and acts on the assumption. The term *anti-women violence* also appropriately places violence against women within a social context of patriarchy and male supremacy (p.7).

The current study will use the terms used by Meyers when possible, although ‘domestic violence’ will also be used when analyzing certain articles, since it is the language used in various articles.

News reports frame violence against women with the effect of supporting, sustaining, and reproducing male supremacy. The representation of sexist violence creates a hegemonic influence, where “coverage is rooted in cultural myths and stereotypes about women, men and violence, the links between sexist violence, social structures, and gendered patterns of domination and control are disguised” (Meyers, 1997, p.8). In other words, the perpetuation of patriarchy and male supremacist ideology in the news media means that it is ultimately encouraging this type of violence.

News reports act as warnings to women about the impending consequences of disregarding traditional gender roles that work to keep women ‘in their place’. Meyers (1997) argues, “the dangers of violating the codes of behavior are gender specific, positioning all women as vulnerable to male violence and in need of protection” (p.9).

Since female victims of violence are consistently represented in the media as inherently vulnerable, the news promotes the idea that true safety can only be provided by those not similarly vulnerable (i.e., men). As noted in her analysis, “therein lies the primary, underlying contradiction in the representation of women as victims of violence: women are made vulnerable by men, but they can be made safe only by men” (Meyers, 1997, p.9). The dichotomy plays directly into systemic patriarchy, because although the danger is due to men, society says that the only way to be safe from this danger is through protection by men.

When the news is portrayed in a specific way as to make media consumers believe that the victim is to blame or that the perpetrator should be excused for the act, it is shaping the consumers’ understanding of the world:

The news is not neutral, in either its representation or its effects. It shapes our understanding of the world around us in subtle and not so subtle ways, and we act on those understandings. When the news portrays female victims of male violence as responsible for their own abuse, when it asks what a woman has done to provoke or cause the violence, when it excuses the perpetrator because he was ‘obsessed’ or ‘in love’ or otherwise ‘could not help himself,’ when it portrays him as a monster or a psychopath while ignoring the systemic nature of violence against women, the news is part of the problem (Meyers, 1997, p. 117).

When women defend themselves against male violence, they are judged by society based on their own behavior. When ‘appropriate’ behavior is violated, through

intoxication, age-inappropriate relationships, walking alone at night, etc., the women are far more likely to be viewed as responsible, at least partially, for the violence. However, women who are seen as following society's rules for female behavior are far more likely to be viewed as having justification in their use of self-defense (Meyers, 1997). The focus on female responsibility is particularly troublesome considering that,

In reality, the rules of socially appropriate behavior for women do not protect them from male violence. Even women who appear to take every precaution-- locking doors and windows, not venturing out unescorted at night, avoiding 'dangerous' neighborhoods and activities-- may be raped, battered, and murdered. The rules merely serve to reinforce traditional gender roles and keep women in a subordinate position (Meyers, 1997, p. 118).

Another way patriarchy is perpetuated is by pitting different groups of women against each other. By framing the victims as having broken societal rules, women who believe they follow all the behavioral rules required for their safety can also believe the myth that it can be the victim's fault. According to Meyers (1997), "the solution to sexist violence lies now in exposing the rules for what they are and dismantling the ideology of anti-woman violence" (p. 118).

When non-flattering details of the victim not specifically related to the crime are discussed, usually it serves to place a portion of the blame on the victim while removing a portion of the blame from the perpetrator. When similar peripheral details are discussed in nonsexist crimes, they do not mean the same things because they do not carry the weight of cultural stereotypes behind them. Meyers (1997) notes that a man that is

mugged would most likely not be judged or blamed for being attacked while alone on the street at night (p. 120). According to Meyers, “the damage done by bad news coverage is twofold. At the macro-level, it contributes to the social problem of violence against women by perpetuating myths and stereotypes that are misogynistic and hostile to women. On the micro-level, it directly hurts the victim and those who care about her” (p.120). This problematic message not only leaves many women feeling at fault regarding their victimization, but it also leaves many of them without the full support of their friends and family (or other social support structure) because society ideologically pushes people to assume the victim must have done something to attract the attack. Justice is often not served due to this problem as well. Police, juries, judges and attorneys traditionally do not take the side of the victim because they assume that she was in some way to blame until it is proven otherwise (Meyers, 1997).

Not only can details that allow the victim to own the blame be included in stories unnecessarily, but also details that cause embarrassment or damage to the character of the victim are often included. The inclusion of these types of details points directly to the perpetuation of male domination. By de-incentivizing the speaking out process, these details can also deter other victims from standing up to violence. What must be focused on, then, “is for journalists to place violence against women within its social context of misogyny and a man’s attempt to control, humiliate, dominate, and hurt a woman” (Meyers, 1997, p.121).

One problem inherent in journalistic representations of sexist violence is that journalists have been trained to “objectively” seek balance in every story. The trouble with this unattainable goal is that in most cases of anti-woman violence no balance can be

reached. When an attack is one-sided, “attempting to (find balance) denies the seriousness of violence against women and raises questions about the woman’s behavior in provoking the attack” (Meyers, 1997, p. 122).

Another goal inherent in the journalistic inquiry is to establish the ‘why’ of the story. Usually the ‘why’ is created around the context of the victim’s actions, or the stability of the abuser’s psyche, however, “this belief is steeped in patriarchal notions of appropriate gender roles and reflects male supremacist ideology” (Meyers, 1997, p. 123). In reality, the ‘why’ of most of these stories of sexist violence is due to men believing they are entitled to control women. Meyers argues, “until journalists refuse to excuse men for their violence, until they point to misogyny and patriarchy as the why of anti-woman violence, the news will continue to blame women for their victimization while absolving men of responsibility” (p. 123). Although most research agrees with Meyers’ findings, there is one study, done by McManus & Dorfman (2005), which diverges from Meyers’ conclusions on a few important points.

McManus & Dorfman (2005)

A study conducted by McManus & Dorfman (2005) claimed to test the critiques made by critical feminist scholars regarding the idea that,

Journalism assumes reporters are able to pursue ‘functional truth’--

an account of issues and events reliably describing social reality. But researchers have often found systematic bias. In reporting about cross-gender violence, critical feminist scholars contend that news media

devalue violence against women and often blame the victim while

mitigating or blurring the perpetrator’s responsibility (p. 42).

Although McManus & Dorfman concluded that, “consistent with the critique (of critical scholars), intimate violence was covered much less often and with less depth than other violence of similar gravity,” they contend that “the newspapers studied very rarely blamed female battering victims or mitigated suspect blame” (p. 43). The diversion of the results of the McManus & Dorfman study, compared to the results of previous studies by critical scholars, will be addressed in the present study, with attention being paid to victim blaming and mitigation of suspect blame more than the lack of coverage of sexist violence compared to other types of violence, although this was a noticeable factor in the present study as well.

McManus & Dorfman (2005) note that critical feminist scholars, such as Meyers, argue that journalists do not, and possibly cannot, accurately depict the truth because they are “caught up in institutions that reflect, reinforce and legitimize viewpoints that privilege men over women” (p. 44). The patriarchy McManus & Dorfman describe is a

systemic problem that they seem to devalue in their apparent denial of specific ideological problems inherent in the findings in their study.

The language used in the study speaks to the idea that every story, journalistically, has two sides. The authors explain the premise of two-sidedness as an aspect in creating what they describe as “the core assumption of journalism that reporters and editors can discern and provide ‘functional truth’ against the critique put forth by feminist scholars that the news media systematically devalue violence against women and distort it by blaming the victim and mitigating blame for the perpetrator” (McManus & Dorfman, p. 44, 2005). The term ‘functional truth’ is semantically problematic in that it implies that expediency is more important than accuracy, which almost proves that the real truth might inherently be sidestepped for a cleanly described story, or a story that humors both sides of an attack.

Although the findings of their study seek to dismantle the findings of various critical scholars, including Meyers (1997), they do acknowledge the importance of potential issues in representing sexist violence in the local news media. They note that “how this topic is portrayed matters both as a public health issue and as a challenge to the fundamental professional standard of journalism” (McManus & Dorfman, p. 45, 2005).

McManus & Dorfman (2005) did not find a significant number of articles that imply victim responsibility, however they did note that there was a slightly higher rate of victim blaming with regard to various types of, in their words, “victim blame frames,” which include:

- a) The victim may have contributed to the violence by wearing sexy/revealing clothing or engaging in flirtatious behavior;

- b) the victim may have provoked a partner to violence by physically attacking him;
- c) the victim may have contributed to the violence by being unfaithful/dating others;
- d) the victim may have contributed to the violence by becoming impaired by drink, drugs, etc.;
- e) the victim may have contributed to the violence by staying with a violent partner/failing to cooperate with police/continuing to see a violence partner;
- f) the victim may have contributed to the violence in another way, perhaps having been married many times, being argumentative, nagging, flaunting success, etc. (p. 54).

The “victim blame frames” noted by McManus & Dorfman align with the findings in Meyers and other scholars’ studies and are also contextual elements that were found in the present study.

Methods

The McManus & Dorfman (2005) essay contradicts specific elements of Meyers' study and, more generally, the extant research done by critical feminist media scholars. McManus & Dorfman do not find any significant issues of victim blaming or perpetrator blame alleviation. First, I will seek to replicate the Meyer's study to see if results align with her study or the McManus & Dorfman study. Also, I will account for the issues raised regarding local media and the Reading area specifically.

This study will critically examine representations of sexist violence and examine to what extent worldviews (such as patriarchal ideologies, myths and stereotypes) are inherent in the *Reading Eagle's* portrayals of violence against women. The goal of the study is to raise awareness regarding issues of framing and representations in the news. Ultimately, the research could further the cause of representing sexist violence in the news in a way that does not create further victimization.

The research questions that drive this study are:

RQ 1: How is sexist violence represented? What types of stories of sexist violence garner the most local news media attention?

RQ 2: How do these representations influence perceptions of race, gender and social class?

RQ 3: What are current worldviews (ideologies, myths and stereotypes) that underscore such representations?

RQ 4: Is victim blaming prevalent in articles discussing sexist violence?

RQ 5: Is perpetrator blame alleviation prevalent in articles discussing sexist violence?

I executed a qualitative textual analysis in order to answer the research questions stated above. I ran a database search of the *Reading Eagle* archives in order to find every article from 2008 through 2011 that discussed sexist violence. The primary search words used were “rape” and “domestic violence.” All articles were then printed out and organized into categories based on elements such as representations of innocence or blame, victim focus vs. perpetrator focus, and the reification of patriarchal gender roles. Although hundreds of articles were part of the initial data set, 55 articles were highlighted and critically analyzed based upon factors such as multiple articles on the same story, the length of articles and their overall reflection of the varying types and frequency of articles noted in the original database search. I then analyzed how descriptions were chosen to contextualize the violence. The analysis focused on the language used and its effect on the explicit and implicit framing of the victims and attackers in articles about sexist violence.

The representational themes regarding victim responsibility highlighted in the study are: women who are represented as completely innocent; women who are represented as responsible for their own victimization; and college women represented as responsible for their own victimization. The study also notes attention paid to the attackers’ race and/or nationality. Finally, there is an analysis of how a group of *Reading Eagle* articles, discussing one specific case, problematically use education and socio-economic class as contextual descriptors.

Analysis

Women who are represented as completely innocent

Women, who are deemed ‘pure’ or morally righteous, based on their perceived celibacy or sexual conservatism, are far more likely to escape implied blame. For example, young girls, elderly women, or as in one article analyzed, a Sunday school teacher. The first contextual descriptions provided are about the reasons for their innocence (such reasons as age or profession). These journalistic choices create a societal environment where women who are not found to have these qualities of innocence can be immediately judged on their moral worthiness, which becomes the starting point for placing blame, rather than blame starting with the attacker.

The highest frequency of victims represented as innocent occurs when they are extremely young or elderly. Usually in this type of story, the victim’s age is the first point mentioned, particularly if the victim is a young girl. The child’s age is first mentioned in either the title or the first sentence of the article. There is no question in these types of stories where the responsibility lies. One example of this type of story is titled, “Hamburg man arrested in sex assault on girl, 11” (*Reading Eagle*, Nov 13, 2008). In another story of a similar nature, the first line of the article is “a Reading man has been arrested on charges he sexually assaulted a 10-year-old city girl in her home in 2003” (*Reading Eagle*, Jul 9, 2008). These articles are often brief and the details are left out presumably out of respect for the victims and their families. Often the only specific detail of the victim is her age. The fact that reporters are able to leave out other contextual details out of deference for the family makes it clear that they are capable of leaving out contextual

details regarding dress and location. This conclusion further suggests that when contextual details are presented in articles about sexist violence, they frame the victim in a specific light. This phenomenon will be addressed later in the study.

Although most often age-based victim responsibility alleviation happens due to the victim being considered inappropriately young to be willingly engaging in sexual affairs, it sometimes happens when the victim is deemed inappropriately old. Although only one story involving an elderly victim was given major coverage during the timespan of this study, it was also given significantly more coverage than in any of the assaults on children. The title of the first article about this story is “Neighbor arrested in Mount Penn rape, theft: Footprints in the snow help police track the man they say attacked a 73-year-old woman in her house” (Mekeel, Dec 9, 2008). The article continuously notes the victim’s age and the fact that she was sleeping in her home at the time of the attack. As noted earlier regarding victims who are children, the same holds true for the representation of this elderly woman. Her potential responsibility for her attack is immediately discredited by her age, and then it is further discredited by a discussion of her location at the time of the attack. Since she was engaging in appropriate behavior for the time of night and inside her own home and sleeping, she was represented without her credibility being questioned or her potential responsibility suggested.

In the four articles in the data set about the rape of the elderly woman, her age is prominently noted in the title and/or the first line of the story. The woman’s moral righteousness is also presented as clearing her of responsibility, not only because she was in a place considered appropriate and acceptable when her victimization occurred, but also because she is represented as a “Godly” woman. One of the articles discussing the

story notes that the victim “said she told the man who raped her that she and God would forgive him” (Herman, Mar 19, 2010). Another story about the case is titled, “Rapist gets 36 to 72 years: Victim: ‘He turned my sweet house into a crime scene’”(Herman, June 12, 2010) (see Appendix A). Both articles immediately and without question represent the victim as innocent and pure. Judge Stephen B. Lieberman was quoted as saying that the crime was “like 9/11, it’s an unprovoked attack on an innocent person” (Herman, June 12, 2010) (see Appendix A). He was not establishing this metaphor to explain the despicable issue of rape and sexist violence in general, he was singling this particular case out as being “an unprovoked attack on an innocent person,” which suggests that other crimes of a similar nature are not always, and possibly not even usually, unprovoked attacks on innocent victims. This language in and of itself stigmatizes the vast majority of victims who do not fall into the ideologically constructed ‘blameless’ categories where a victim is safe from accusation of responsibility.

It is important to note the significance of the findings that both older people and children are considered ‘innocent,’ as they are also groups of people that have less ‘agency’ in our society. Peccei (2004) finds that people talk *to* children and the elderly in similar ways, so it is not surprising that the current study finds that those tendencies also come out in how we talk *about* the two groups as well. Age is the most important factor in alleviating the victim of responsibility, but moral righteousness plays a large role in the representation of the victim as well. The title of an article in the *Reading Eagle* on July 26, 2008 is, “Death sentence upheld in city murder: Michael Pruitt was convicted in 2005 of raping and strangling Greta A. Gougler, a Reading Sunday school teacher, in 2002” (Herman). This is the only article in the study where the profession of the victim was

noted in the title of the article. It also repeats in the body of the article that she was a longtime Sunday school teacher, and also that she was killed in her home. This immediate discussion of her morality (with regard to occupation) and lack of guilt (with regard to location at the time of the attack) implies that she should not be considered responsible for her victimization. This implication is problematic because it suggests that other victims who are attacked outside of their homes, or who engage in activities considered less “righteous” than teaching Sunday school, would be more to blame for their victimization than Gougler, the Sunday school teacher.

The other troubling aspect of the article is the discussion of her murderer’s cocaine habit. His drug abuse is discussed because his lawyers maintained, “Pruitt was mentally unable to form an intent to kill Gougler, a required factor for murder, because he was using cocaine” (Herman, July 26, 2008). Although his sentence was upheld, the suggestion that drug abuse can alleviate a certain level of perpetrator blame is problematic for a number of reasons. Most importantly, it is problematic because drug or alcohol abuse seems to have the potential to alleviate the attacker of a portion of the blame, whereas drug or alcohol abuse stigmatizes the victim and implies victim responsibility when she is found to be under the influence. This notion will be expanded upon later in the study.

Women who are represented as responsible for their own victimization

The language usage in articles changes when the victims do not fall into the age ranges discussed previously, or if their decisions are not considered “acceptable” by proscribed societal gender roles. The chosen representations of the victims not considered

fully innocent include poor behavioral choices such as promiscuity, drug/alcohol abuse, or a history of violence in previous relationships. The shift in the framing of responsibility is usually implied rather than expressly stated, but the shift is still important both ideologically and practically. For example, in a story about a woman who accepted a ride with a virtual stranger and was raped in his garage, the first line of the story reads, “a Laureldale man has been held for court on charges that he raped a 19-year-old city woman in his garage in December after offering her a ride to downtown Reading” (*Reading Eagle*, Feb 9, 2008). Unlike the stories involving the victims who were represented as being blameless, her rape is immediately qualified in the article by noting that she accepted a ride with the man before he raped her. The story describes her call to police the day after the rape, noting that she, “reported that she had been raped the previous day by a man whom she recognized through a friend. She did not know his name” (*Reading Eagle*, Feb 9, 2008). Contextual information that is included in the description of violence seems to, more often than not, work against the victim when framing responsibility. If the woman is represented as blameless, then fewer details about the situation are released to the public. This representation is inherently problematic in that it creates a spiraling cycle where victims of sexist violence are further victimized through the media coverage. Ultimately, they not only get to relive the horrific events, but they also get to sustain acute analysis by the community regarding their possible responsibility for their victimization.

Victims are also more likely to be represented as responsible for their victimization in some way if they allow the attacker into their home, rather than being caught off guard while asleep. For example, in a story where a pregnant woman was

attacked and raped in her own home, the initial prediction was that the language use would not imply her guilt. This is for two reasons: first, she was pregnant, which could have put her into the categories “free from blame” such as age and morality concerns; second, she was in her own home, a traditionally acceptable location for a pregnant women to be. Her problem though, and the reason that the article implies some blame for her circumstances rests on her own shoulders, is that after her attacker called her on the phone and she refused to see him, he showed up at her house, tapped on her window and she opened it to speak to him (*Reading Eagle*, Mar 28, 2008). The implication is that after already refusing to see the attacker, she should have “known better” than to open the door to him.

Another feature of a story that creates a discourse of victim blaming is when the violence can be rationalized as provoked through argument. For example, the title of one article was “Berks man is held in strangling of wife: He killed his estranged spouse after they argued about a bill, and then he abused the corpse, according to authorities” (*Reading Eagle*, Dec 2, 2008). The inclusion of events that took place prior to the violence is a feature that is not included in most of the stories in the study. It appears that most often when contextual information is added to the title or beginning of an article, the added information implicates victim responsibility. In the provided example, the discussion of a previous argument implies that the victim had a part in the escalation toward violence. It also reifies the gender role that women should submit to the decisions of their husbands instead of disagreeing or having their own opinions. Another problematic element of the story’s representation of the victim is in the representation

that she ‘should have known better’. The article discusses a prior record of violence in the relationship, which is another frame that is created to imply victim responsibility.

A major theme in stories that lack empathy for the victim is a prior history of domestic violence. Whether the victim’s past batterer is the same as the present batterer does not matter as much as the simple fact that the victim has been abused in the past. When a victim is described as having experience with sexist violence, she also tends to be represented as holding at least partial responsibility for her victimization. A key example of this phenomenon is an article that begins by stating, “Maria Serrano knew she was in trouble even before her ex-boyfriend doused her with gasoline” (Henshaw, Sep 16, 2009). She is immediately represented as being aware that she was in danger. This is a rather explicit framing of responsibility, where peripheral contextual information works to implicate victim blame.

Another major theme in stories that lack empathy for the victim is when the victim has engaged in activities that question her innocence. For example, drinking in a bar prior to the attack, being anywhere but at home in the middle of the night, and flirting or engaging with strangers. Examples of the type of representation the victim is given in this type of story are the articles in the *Reading Eagle* that discuss a 22-year-old woman who was carjacked and raped after leaving an Alsace Township tavern (*Reading Eagle*, Oct 22, 2008). The first article addressing the crime has the usual component of the victim’s age, and it also has the rather common element of added contextual information that does little more than frame the victim in a negative light. In this case, it is noted that the woman was in the parking lot of a local bar when she was attacked, implying that she had been drinking and thus was not acting “appropriately.” In fact, all articles discussing

the story begin by noting that the victim had spent the evening in a bar, and that she left at 12:45 a.m., further implicating her responsibility for her victimization. One story even notes that the victim was talking to the suspects inside the bar before the attack. This type of contextual information, which does nothing more than suggest the women made the poor choice of talking to strangers, once again implies her responsibility for her own victimization (*Reading Eagle*, Oct 29, 2008).

College women who are represented as responsible for their own victimization

A subset of the group of women who are considered at least partially responsible for their own victimization are college females who are engaging in “questionable” behavior. The type of story most often discussed in the *Reading Eagle* is about date rape involving college students. The discussion of the incident becomes a narrative about irresponsible drinking rather than a narrative about violence. The narrative focus ultimately creates an environment where the media has encouraged a mentality where when rape is mentioned, people automatically think about what the victim could have done differently. The focus on victim responsibility alleviates perpetrator blame by taking the focus of attention away from systemic societal problems that make this type of violence socially acceptable. Ideologically, the crime becomes punishment and a deterrent rather than an act of unacceptable violence, as it would be considered in any other type of crime.

One of the major elements noted in articles involving alleged date rapes on college campuses is the time of night the event occurred. The focus of responsibility is represented as falling on both parties if the event occurred at a “drinking party,”

especially if the attacks occurred in the middle of the night, such as two attacks that happened on the same evening within an hour of each other in the middle of the night (3 a.m. and 4 a.m.) (Mekeel, Feb 27, 2008). The implication that the victim was intoxicated creates a dialogical situation where the victim is punished for poor choices, while at the same time alleviating the attacker of a portion of the responsibility for the crime.

The one unique situation where women are always framed as somewhat guilty, even though they were attacked in their own “home,” is if the victim lives in a college dormitory. The implication seems to be that female college students should not be inviting male college students into their dorm rooms, and, if they do, they are promiscuous and at least in part responsible for anything that happens in the room. An example of this type of reporting occurs in a March 25, 2008 report of rape where the article makes it a point to note that “the female signed in Van-Derbeek and the other male as guests to her dorm, which is required because they reside in other dorms” (Henshaw, Mar 26, 2008). The inclusion of this piece of contextual information makes it clear that the victim allowed the attacker into the room by her own free will, ultimately questioning her innocence in the situation.

In another article regarding the same story, the headline reads, “Woman is a no-show at KU rape hearing: She has dropped out of school and ended her cell phone service” (Brudereck, Apr 16, 2008) (see Appendix B). It is only later in the article when it is mentioned that she told police she dropped out of Kutztown University and ended her cell phone service because of harassment by fellow students. The placement of this information near the end of the article creates a lesser focus on the aspect of bullying and a larger focus on her withdrawal from society. This focus could ultimately create an

image in readers' minds of women who are being mysterious for a variety of reasons: she is 'making up' the allegations, she is in hiding, or she is ashamed. The ambiguity sets her up as irrational and weak as she does not deal with her problems, rather she hides from them. Feminist scholars (see Cixous & Clement, 1986; Harding 1991) have discussed ideological structures that position women in these ways. These ideologies are underscored by a logocentric dichotomy that situates masculinity as rational/clear and femininity as irrational/mysterious.

Similarly, the first line of the same article notes, "the alleged victim failed to appear before District Judge Gail M. Greth" (Brudereck, Apr 16, 2008) (see Appendix B). It is only much later in the story that the author notes that "Greth said she could not find paperwork indicating campus police had sent the woman a subpoena telling her to show up for the hearing" (Brudereck, Apr 16, 2008) (see Appendix B). The reporting of contextual information surrounding the circumstances of the case is problematic because readers who do not make it through the entire story will get a very different, and far more negative, impression of the victim than readers who finish the story.

Regarding the case where focus is placed on the victim intentionally inviting the attacker into her dorm room, most articles also note that she took her own clothes off before he raped her. One article says the attacker "became angry, intimidated the woman into taking off her clothes and raped her" (Urban, Oct 1, 2008). The inclusion of this information is problematic because other stories of rape in the study, where the attacker presumably removed the victim's clothing, do not mention the removal of clothing at all. The fact that it is only mentioned when the victim removes it herself, speaks to the unnecessary representation of the woman as being responsible for her own victimization.

Many of the articles discussing this story also note that the victim and attacker were both drinking, and that although the attacker drank most of the vodka, the bottle was the victim's (Brudereck, May 28, 2008). The narrative created through the inclusion of details such as her underage possession of a bottle of vodka is that the victim is not an entirely innocent being.

A rather blatant question regarding the credibility of the victim's claim of rape was printed in the same article: "Coggins pointed out to the woman that it took a long time between the alleged rape and her arrival at the police station" (Brudereck, May 28, 2008). That specific piece of information is unhelpful to the retelling of the story and suggests potential disconnect in the victim's story, all the while disregarding the very real and acceptable possibility that the victim sought out members of her support group before going to the authorities. The same article also implies credibility flaws in the victim by discussing her apparent floundering on the stand when asked if she had sex with the victim. Her response clearly implied that she considered the situation of her rape to be that the suspect had sex with her, but she did not have sex with the suspect. The article notes that there was confusion as to how she could have been raped if she never had sex with the suspect. This interpretation clearly disregards the intention of the victim's statement, while unnecessarily attacking the credibility of the victim.

Another ideologically problematic representation presented in an article regarding this case is that the suspect's description of the events on the night of the attack is more important than the victim's. One article, in reference to the possible shredding of the suspect's statement on the night of his arrest, notes, "the evidence shredded by the officer was arguably the most important piece of evidence in the case" (Urban, Oct 1, 2008).

While there is no question that the suspect's statement is incredibly important evidence in a case, the language used suggests that its importance eclipses the importance of the victim's statement, which is inherently problematic.

An article that discusses the previously mentioned rapes of the two students on the same night in February and the woman in March who allowed the rapist into her dorm room, has a title that reads, "KU students get important lesson on staying safe: Amid the excitement of a new school year, security is a major subject because of a series of recent attacks on or near campus" (Vandermeulen, Aug 28, 2008) (see Appendix C). The title speaks to the ideology that education regarding rape and domestic violence should be centered on victim safety and discipline, rather than on the societal problem of violence and attackers. There was "a tent set to promote safety, (and) they handed out pamphlets about partying responsibly" (Vandermeulen, Aug 28, 2008) (see Appendix C). The implication of this prevention focus is that the responsibility falls on the shoulders of potential victims, not potential perpetrators. Later in the same article, the advice is offered never to go anywhere alone. Although this is probably good advice, it suggests the need for a behavioral adjustment on the part of the victim rather than the part of the attacker.

An article discussing another college rape case begins, "Two Reading Area Community College students were arrested Wednesday on charges they raped an 18-year-old Albright College student in her dormitory room after they met her at an underage drinking party near campus" (Kahl, May 1, 2008). The immediate focus on the fact that the victim was at an underage drinking party speaks to her decision to engage in questionable behavior. All of the articles discussing her case frequently mention her

decision to consume drugs and alcohol. One article notes, “the victim said she had smoked marijuana and drunk alcohol before she went to the party, then drank more at the party” (Kahl, May 1, 2008). Another article states, “the victim said she could barely walk and was nearly unconscious when she was assaulted. She admitted that she smoked marijuana and drank before the party, continued to drink at the party and dance with and kissed one of the defendants” (Kelly, May 2, 2008) (see Appendix D). Not only do these articles speak to her engagement with illegal substances, but also to her promiscuity, noting that she was dancing and kissing one of her attackers.

While intending to alleviate the associated schools of responsibility or safety concerns, certain language is used that inadvertently implicates the victim. For example, one article discussing the case has a headline that reads, “After rape is claimed, officials call security at Albright adequate: A college spokeswoman says dorms are as safe as the school can make them. A city police captain says he has no problem with campus safeguards” (Kelly, May 2, 2008) (see Appendix D). Later in the article, all of the safeguards that the victim ignored are listed: “dorms are locked and required card-key access 24 hours a day. There are resident assistants in every dormitory that can help students, campus security patrols the dorms and the campus, we offer escorts, a van service. The residence halls are as safe as we can make them” (Kelly, May 2, 2008) (see Appendix D). The article continues to imply that the responsibility is not on the college community, which effectively turns the attention to the victim, who failed to make use of the various safety protocols described. Albright spokeswoman Barbara Marshall is quoted in the article as saying, “this is a really unfortunate situation, and I wish it never happened, but it doesn’t speak to the safety of our campus” (Kelly, May 2, 2008) (see

Appendix D). If the representation of the problem does not speak to the safety of the campus community, it most certainly speaks to the behavioral choices of the victim. All of the rape prevention education is targeted on teaching young women how to keep themselves safe, while no attention is paid to educating young men about the ideologies that lead to sexist violence, in order to stop rape all together. One of the most problematic lines printed in any article in the study was also found in this article. The article notes, “Drexler (the City police Captain) said he has handled crime cases on college campuses in the past and they ultimately come down to personal decisions made by students” (Kelly, May 2, 2008) (see Appendix D). Responsibility clearly focuses on the “personal decisions” made by the victims of heinous crimes.

A final article was printed about the case once the charges were dropped. The headline of the article was “2 RACC students won’t face sex charges: The 18-year-old woman who alleged the assault in her Albright College dormitory room refused to cooperate in the case authorities say” (Young, Aug 13, 2008). Other incidences in the study where charges were dropped after the victim was implicitly re-victimized in news coverage through implications of responsibility led to harassment of the victim by people familiar with the story and, in some cases, ultimately led to the victim dropping charges or not showing up at the hearing. The possibility that the victim could have been intimidated into dropping charges in the case against the two RACC students leads to the conclusion that the implication of victim responsibility in news coverage of sexist violence can lead to bullying and intimidation. This potential threat further victimizes the survivor and could potentially cause her to not cooperate with authorities in order to alleviate the public scrutiny of her credibility.

Articles focused on perpetrator race and nationality

While this study has already analyzed in depth the representation of the victims in media coverage of sexist violence, another important element is the representation of the suspected attackers. This study found that race was not often mentioned regarding the victim, although it was mentioned frequently regarding the suspected attacker. In most articles regarding sexist violence, the attacker is only spoken of in terms related to the behaviors the suspect may or may not have engaged in with the victim prior to the attack. The other discussion of the suspect involves a physical description (including race) that is provided to the community in order to aid the police in apprehending the suspect. The study found two types of situations where the suspected criminal was described without contextual connection to the victim or an ongoing police search. The situations within this study were when the suspect was Latino, especially if he fled the local area, or if the suspect was not a citizen of the United States, no matter what race. This study found a dichotomy between how Latinos, whether local men or not, are treated in media coverage when suspected of being the attacker in a sexist crime, as compared to Caucasian locals or Caucasian non-natives such as one Australian man. It is also interesting that stories garner media attention before a verdict has been decided with regard to Latino men, but the Caucasian non-native (from Australia) man's story was not printed until after his acquittal. The stated journalistic choices perpetuate a fear of the 'racial Other'.

One series of articles discusses the extradition of a suspected rapist from Mexico, where the focus of the stories is on the suspect being the "first person Berks County authorities have extradited from another country" (Herman, Jan 23, 2010). The focus of

these articles is primarily on the suspect being Mexican and that he returned there and was on the run from police when he was arrested and extradited back to Berks County.

In a case discussed earlier regarding a woman abducted and raped in the parking lot of a local bar, the story once again became news worthy when one of the suspects was arrested in Puerto Rico by a Federal Bureau of Investigation task force (Henshaw, Jun 17, 2010). In the articles discussing the crime after the suspect's arrest, the first piece of information always noted was that he was returned from Puerto Rico to face charges. Another article discusses the belief that the other suspect in the case was also hiding in Puerto Rico (Henshaw, Jun 18, 2010). In these articles that focus on the race of the suspects in question, the language and contextual information chosen to describe the victims are far less centered on the victims' implied responsibility for victimization. While the articles discussed earlier in the study focused on the fact that she was flirting with the suspects in the bar prior to leaving the bar in the middle of the night, once race became an issue, these pieces of information are hardly noted, with only one story mentioning that she left the bar at 12:40 a.m., and no stories mentioning her flirtatious behavior towards one of the suspects.

It is interesting that the only article that could be found discussing an Australian cycling coach who was accused of raping a 15-year-old girl while staying in Berks county was printed after the charges were dropped. Although ultimately the Australian man was found not guilty, and the men who were returned from Mexico and Puerto Rico were found guilty, the fact that there was far more media coverage before the verdicts against the Latino men than there was with regard to the Caucasian man from Australia, is important to note. The varying representations speak to the implication that the "Other"

that is demonized through these stories is related to race far more so than to nationality, since the racial descriptor of Latino created more suspicion and alarm than the lack of U.S. citizenship such as in the case of the Australian man. The ultimate effect is the perpetuation of fear of the “racial Other.” This reification of racial difference and a representation of potential danger across racial lines is incredibly problematic no matter where the study takes place. The phenomenon is particularly poignant in a study of the Reading, Pennsylvania area due to the direct relationship between violent crime and poverty in a city that has 58.2 percent of residents identifying as Latino/a, compared to a county wide Latino/a representation of merely 16.4 percent. The demonization of Latino men in the representation of sexist violence is particularly troublesome to the community environment and, potentially, creates an environment where suburban residents are too afraid to frequent the city of Reading, ultimately maintaining the cycle of poverty and distress within the city limits.

Articles covering the murder-suicide of Chukwudubem and Cheryl V. Okafor

While major focuses of this study have been on the framing of victims as potentially responsible for their victimization and on the representation of race in the discussion of accused attackers, another focus is on the representation of socio-economic status with regard to sexist violence. A series of articles focusing on a story about a husband, Chukwudubem Okafor, who shot and killed his estranged wife, Cheryl V. Okafor, before turning the gun on himself and committing suicide, is a primary focus of this study (Hambricht, Aug 16, 2010). The *Reading Eagle* attempted to use this case to show that domestic violence isn't a socio-economic issue because the couple was

affluent. The media coverage garnered by the story actually suggests the opposite. The case had more stories in the *Reading Eagle* than any other single instance of violence. The media attention paid to this particular story shows that it was relatively unique as compared to other types of sexist violence. It also implies that when it happens to affluent people, it is worthy of more coverage, and ultimately is a unique situation.

The first article printed in the *Reading Eagle* about Okafor's murder begins with the phrase, "A domestic dispute left two people dead" (Hambright, Aug 16, 2010). This immediately equalizes the victim and her attacker, implying that responsibility for the crime is shared. Similar to Meyers' (1997) findings, both people are represented as being equal in the situation, rather than semantically separating the victim from her murderer. The article then continues to mention frequently that the gunfire happened after an argument escalated. The focus on the argument being the cause of the violence continues to suggest that Okafor was just as much to blame for her fate as her husband who killed her was responsible for the crime. Later in the same article, Hambright notes that, "police said they were interviewing the relatives to learn more about the argument that prompted Chukwudubem Okafor to open fire in the front living room of the house" (Hambright, Aug 16, 2010). The maintained focus of the argument implies that depending on what the argument was about, Okafor could have been responsible for bringing the violence upon herself.

It is also important to note that in the same article, Okafor's dress at the time of her murder was discussed. In other stories in this study where dress is discussed, attention is paid to the provocative nature of the dress. In this case, however, Okafor's attire is noted because it made her "look out of place in the neighborhood, like a movie star"

(Hambright, Aug 16, 2010). Although the description of her clothes represents a different type of judgment on her behavior, it still represents a suggestion that she transgressed rules regarding acceptable behavior and attire. Dressing “appropriately” is once again a requirement for not being blamed for one’s victimization.

The next article about Okafor’s death is even more problematic. The representation of victim blame begins with the title: “Domestic violence stalked victim once before: What more can we be doing, advocate asks” (Urban, Aug 17, 2010) (see Appendix E). The problem with this type of framing is that it implies that the victim should have known better. The first line of the article reads, “long before she was shot dead by her husband in a murder-suicide in Reading, Cheryl V. Okafor was a victim of domestic violence” (Urban, Aug 17, 2010) (see Appendix E). The article continues to discuss Okafor’s first husband, Alfred Philmore, who battered Okafor for years. After they were eventually separated, Philmore shot and killed Okafor’s boyfriend. The article continues to present Okafor’s history of violent relationships by explaining that before the fatal shooting, Philmore “was convicted and jailed four times for harassing, stalking and beating Okafor” (Urban, Aug 17, 2010) (see Appendix E). By describing Okafor’s previous history with violent men, the reader is invited to focus upon what potential victims can do to keep themselves safe, rather than focusing on the violence of the men who committed the crimes against her. Essentially, Philmore’s violence is used to imply Okafor’s blame in her current violent relationship because she had already experienced a similar situation in her past with Philmore.

The August 17 article also makes it a point to note that Okafor had earned her B.A. and M.A. degrees from Kutztown University in art education. According to the

article, “in addition to being a watercolor painter and working on other art projects related to domestic violence, she was a mentor to domestic violence victims” (Urban, Aug 17, 2010) (see Appendix E). This contextual discussion of Okafor continues to imply her blame because it represents her as an educated woman with professional experience in the realm of domestic violence and that, ultimately, she should have known better than to put herself in that situation again.

The third article discussing the Okafor murder-suicide focuses on past violence between Chukwudubem and Cheryl Okafor, which was documented by the court. The article explains that even before the Okafors were married, “Cheryl Okafor obtained a temporary protection-from-abuse order against Chukwudubem Okafor, alleging that he shoved her during an argument, threatened to kill her and slapped her” (Young, Aug 18, 2010). The article then discusses his counter order, which alleged that she had threatened to cut him. Both dropped their protection-from-abuse orders, and they were married a short time later. The article ends by discussing another occurrence of violence in the relationship: “In March 2007, Cheryl Okafor again received a temporary order, alleging that her husband called her names, made false allegations about her to the county children and youth services agency, kicked her in the stomach and held her down on the floor. She dropped the complaint a short time later” (Young, Aug 18, 2010). The article ends on that note, leaving the reader with a lasting impression of Okafor’s poor choices in returning to violent situations.

A few days later, another article was printed in the *Reading Eagle* titled, “No easy way out: A recent tragedy involving an educated, successful couple is a reminder that domestic violence can hit home anywhere” (Urban, Aug 22, 2010) (see Appendix F).

Even as the title of the article tries to suggest that sexist violence is not an issue that plagues varying levels of socio-economic status more than others, the repeated emphasis on this story as compared to other stories of abuse, rape and murder implies that its uniqueness is why it is media worthy. In the first line of the story, the phrase “the murder-suicide seemed to defy all logic” (Urban, Aug 22, 2010) (see Appendix F), perpetuates the idea that this should not have happened to an affluent woman.

The article also notes, “Cheryl Okafor knew just how dangerous it was to be involved with a violent man” (Urban, Aug 22, 2010) (see Appendix F). This statement, although probably meant to imply that this type of violence can happen to anyone, instead implies that Okafor should have known better, perpetuating victim blaming. The second half of the article is dedicated to explaining how women can protect themselves from violent situations and relationships. Instead of analyzing why Chukwudubem Okafor would commit such a heinous crime, the article frames Cheryl Okafor as an example to other women. Again, attention is focused on the responsibility of the victim to stay out of dangerous situations rather than the attention being focused on ending the violent acts.

The article continues to attempt to suggest that class is not a factor because, according to Daniel P. Billings, director of security at St. Joseph Medical Center and a former Wyomissing police officer and domestic violence expert, “the Okafor tragedy shows it is a mistake to assume that because a couple is educated and appears to be successful, that the wife and husband will work things out... I know from investigating these crimes that socioeconomic status has zero connection to domestic violence” (Urban, Aug 22, 2010) (see Appendix F). Although the intent of the article is to show the public

that domestic violence can happen anywhere, the focus of this article implies that this story is more important since the couple is affluent. The article even notes that, “a number of the 36 domestic violence killings in Berks over the past decade were committed by men who had led successful lives” (Urban, Aug 22, 2010) (see Appendix F), but then continues to list three instances where that was actually the case. This representation seems to highlight that these cases are the exception to the rule, yet they still garner a disproportionately high amount of media coverage.

The article also notes that “the only demographic that increases the risk for domestic violence is age since 16- to 24-year-old females are more likely to be in abusive relationships” (Urban, Aug 22, 2010) (see Appendix F). As previously discussed, these college-aged women are also the women who are most frequently considered responsible for at least a portion of their victimization. So if it is already known that this age group of women is more likely to be in abusive relationships, why does society tend to blame them for the abuse they sustain? Shouldn't society be using this statistic in order to prevent the violence, rather than to attribute responsibility to the victim?

Conclusions

While perhaps not intentionally biased against women, the journalists at the *Reading Eagle* have not critically assessed the language they use to talk about sexist violence, and, therefore, they inadvertently perpetuate the harmful stereotypes and sexist ideologies revealed in this study. These re-victimizing representations are a systemic problem rather than a problem only with the *Reading Eagle*, as journalists are simply caught up in the same hegemonies and discourse that perpetuates them, as everyone else is.

To their credit, the *Reading Eagle* has printed many articles discussing support groups and anti-violence programs. The problem is that the language of victim support does not always cross over into the coverage of specific events. In many cases, the authors of both types of stories are the same people. Somehow, when it comes to reporting the events, representation of the victim becomes more negative than how victims are presented in the empowerment articles discussing outreach groups (Wilcox, Dec 18, 2011; Young, Mar 30, 2010; Cuyler, Mar 15, 2010; Young, Oct 16, 2009). Perhaps we need to figure out a new way to navigate journalistic “objectivity,” which does not further victimize survivors of sexist violence.

As noted previously, there are far fewer local media outlets in a location such as Reading, Pennsylvania as there are in a location such as Atlanta, Georgia, or San Diego, California, where the Meyers (1997) and McManus & Dorfman (2005) studies took place, respectively. These representations become even more important when discussing an area like Reading, Pennsylvania that has few media outlets, and where the only local newspaper is the *Reading Eagle*. What is printed in the paper has the potential of holding

more power over the way we think about sexual assault because there are fewer outlets to give us different perspectives (Entman, 1990). This speaks to a paper such as the *Reading Eagle* holding an even greater responsibility to the community to represent victims of sexist violence fairly and accurately, without the inclusion of contextual details that ultimately implicate the victim as responsible for the attack.

The fact that McManus & Dorfman (2005) did not find victim blaming and perpetrator blame in the articles involved in the study actually furthers the claims of the feminist critical scholars by inadvertently supporting the claim that ideologies based on accepted gendered behavior do inform the representation of sexist violence in the news media. Their study speaks to the notion that when women are victims of intimate partner violence-- rather than breaking gender expectations, such as appropriate dress and nighttime location-- they are far less likely to be blamed for the perpetrator's violence against them. This duality aligns with criticism cited in the studies completed by feminist critical scholars such as Meyers (1997).

This study shows, however, that even in intimate partner violence incidents, the victim still has a good chance of being blamed. What is more important in predicting whether a victim will be blamed is whether she fits into other categories based on age, type of intimate relationship, past history of abuse, and activities of the victim at the time of the violence. The fact that young children and elderly women were not blamed, or at least implied blame was held to a lesser degree, is problematic when compared to how college-aged women, who were seen as promiscuous, were often suggested to be at fault. Also, women who are noted as having survived a previous abusive relationship seem to be judged more harshly than other victims of violence. Race and class are also

problematically represented in the articles within the dataset, further perpetuating a stereotype of Reading as the poverty and crime stricken city of Berks County, continuing a cycle of economic devastation that has crippled Reading in recent years.

Ultimately, the difference between the outcomes of the journalists versus the critical scholars is in interpretation. While the journalists were looking for direct statements of blame, possibly in order to align with their training towards objectivity, the critical scholars were instead looking at language choice and specific semantic structures that create implied blame. While both studies, Meyers (1997) and McManus & Dorfman (2005), do accurately depict the data collected, the studies use different methods, which ultimately result in different outcomes, creating several layers of analysis with regards to victim blaming. I argue that while direct victim blaming, as McManus & Dorfman argue, is relatively low frequency, implied blame in the framing of stories ultimately creates an environment where victims are held responsible, or at least accountable for the consequences of their 'poor choices'. The implied blame could actually carry more weight than direct victim blaming, in that it affirms and perpetuates problematic stereotypes already held in society regarding gender roles and sexist violence.

A major conclusion of the study aligns with suggestions made by critical scholars such as Meyers, which argues that no contextual description of the victim or setting of violence is needed, regardless of age, time of night, clothing, activities, etc. We should recognize that in these particular crimes, even the typical "who, what, where, when, why, and how" of reporting may unintentionally bias the public and reify sexist assumptions about rape and domestic violence, and a woman's level of responsibility for it.

While engaged in a heavy critique of the news media's representation of sexist violence, Meyers (1997) makes it a point to note that:

The overwhelming majority of reporters and editors draw on the mythology of anti-woman violence not because they are engaged in a grand conspiracy or consciously seek to maintain male supremacist ideology (although there is no question that some journalists do use their positions to further their own political and personal agendas) but because they, like everyone else, exists within patriarchy, within a culture that views women as subordinate to men. To view the world otherwise is to question the assumptions and ideas on which society rests (p.124).

Meyers notes that recognizing the inherent stereotypes and patriarchal myths portrayed in the news is the first step toward changing the media's representation of sexist violence. She describes the next step as journalists refusing to accept and promote the patriarchal mythology.

Meyers suggests a few ways that journalists can educate themselves in order to properly represent victims of anti-woman violence in the media. For example, she suggests that journalists can read about anti-woman violence. She also suggests that they interview advocates of anti-woman violence victims and take training courses designed for work at rape crisis centers and women's shelters. Another important suggestion is for news organizations to establish internal training programs that draw on the expertise of advocates, victims, and researchers. Policies can also be established within news organizations that proscribe how coverage of sexist violence should be reported (Meyers, 1997).

Without these changes, women who are the victims of male violence will continue to be re-victimized by the news media and the news will continue to play its role in the perpetuation of both the mythology of anti-woman violence and the violence that stems from it (Meyers, 1997). This portrayal of violent crimes against women by news media outlets is not only problematic, but something that could relatively easily be improved. In order for this change to take place, however, systemic hegemonies must be addressed. The media's choices regarding what types of stories to run and how the stories are handled shows that different emphasis and importance is placed on incidents based upon the gender, class and race of the victim. Until patriarchal bias and gendered behavior rules are broken down and replaced by a more compassionate, and rational, depiction of anti-woman violence in the media, the news will time and again engage in re-victimization of victims of sexist violence.

Appendix A

Rapist gets 36 to 72 years: Victim: 'He turned my sweet house into a crime scene'

Reading Eagle (PA) - Saturday, June 12, 2010

Author: *Holly Herman, Reading Eagle, Pa.*

Jun. 12--A 75-year-old woman told Samuel G. Thompson on Friday that he brought fear to Mount Penn residents when he raped her in December 2008.

"He turned my sweet house to a crime scene," she said before Thompson was sentenced in Berks County Prison to 36 to 72 years in state prison.

"Our names will be linked together for eternity," said the woman, whose name is being withheld by the Reading Eagle. "His name has remained 'creep' for eternity. He knows -- and I know -- he is guilty.

"I do not believe he never saw me before. I know now he knows who I am and probably will never forget."

Judge Stephen B. Lieberman imposed the maximum sentence requested by First Assistant District Attorney M. Theresa Johnson.

Lieberman said the sentence should protect the community from Thompson.

"We have an elderly victim who lived alone," Lieberman said. "The defendant was a neighbor. We believe he knew who the victim was and what she looked like. The only thing he didn't know was her mental demeanor and the strength of her spirit."

Lieberman said Thompson is one the most violent, unremorseful defendants he has ever seen.

"This is like 9/11," Lieberman said. "It's an unprovoked attack on an innocent person."

About 50 friends and relatives of the woman attended the hearing. Friends said they recently celebrated her 75th birthday.

The woman said she no longer forgives Thompson and retracted her comments during the trial that she and God will forgive him.

During the trial, Thompson maintained his innocence, saying he was home during the rape in the early morning hours of Dec. 7, 2008.

The 5-foot-tall woman spent five days in Reading Hospital, recovering from facial and arm bruises.

Thompson, formerly of the 2600 block of Cumberland Avenue, declined to comment during his sentencing.

He was convicted March 17 of rape, aggravated indecent sexual assault and related charges. He was acquitted of one count of aggravated assault.

Johnson said Thompson has not accepted responsibility.

"He is a liar," Johnson said. "His DNA was found all over the place. He got up on the stand and said it was not him."

Thompson's attorney, Robert J. Kirwan of Exeter Township, asked for a sentence of the mandatory minimum of eight to 15 years. Kirwan said no weapon was involved nor any attempt to seriously injure the woman.

Kirwan said he will appeal the verdict and sentence to the state Superior Court.

Appendix B

Woman is a no-show at KU rape hearing: She has dropped out of school and ended her cell phone service, officials say . A judge says another proceeding will be held within two weeks and warns that charges could be dismissed.

Reading Eagle (PA) - Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Author: Jason Brudereck, Reading Eagle, Pa.

Apr. 16--A preliminary hearing for a student-athlete accused of raping a fellow Kutztown University student was postponed Tuesday after the alleged victim failed to appear before District Judge Gail M. Greth.

James A. VanDerbeek, 19, Telford, Bucks County, remained free awaiting further court action.

VanDerbeek, who was a member of KU's wrestling and track and field teams, was charged by university police March 25 with rape and aggravated sexual assault.

His lawyer, Maureen Coggins of Allentown, said VanDerbeek denies the charges.

She said she objected to the continuance because VanDerbeek had been looking forward to the hearing.

"We're here, all the other parties are here," she said. "This gentleman's been living with this since March 25."

Greth said she had to postpone the proceeding until university police could determine if the alleged victim would testify.

University police said they last spoke with the woman two weeks ago.

Greth said she could not find paperwork indicating campus police had sent the woman a subpoena telling her to show up for the hearing.

She told police to attempt to contact the alleged victim immediately.

Police left the courtroom and returned to report the woman's cell phone service had been ended and they had left a message on her parents' home phone.

Police said the woman had told them she would be disconnecting her cell phone because of harassing calls she had received from other students accusing her of making up the allegation.

Police also said the woman has dropped out of KU.

When Greth asked Assistant District Attorney Kelly Kline her opinion, Kline said it was Greth's decision what to do with the case.

Greth said the alleged victim would need to appear to testify or the charges would be dismissed.

Coggins asked for the continuance to be brief. Greth said a new hearing would be scheduled within two weeks.

VanDerbeek has not been attending class, Coggins said after the hearing.

He and family members declined to comment.

Matthew L. Santos, KU spokesman, said VanDerbeek is not enrolled and that a university disciplinary hearing into the matter is pending, but the results would not be made public.

After the charges were filed in March, the university had said it barred VanDerbeek from campus pending the disciplinary hearing.

According to police:

The victim went to the campus police headquarters March 24 at 11:45 p.m. to report that she had been raped.

She said VanDerbeek came to her dormitory room about 7:30 p.m. with another male student to study for an exam.

The female signed in Van-Derbeek and the other male as guests, which is required because the males live in other dorms.

She asked them to leave about 9 p.m. The other male left, but VanDerbeek stayed, saying he wanted to hang out.

He sat on the bed while the female was at her computer finishing school work. The two talked and VanDerbeek began kissing her and told her he wanted to have sex with her.

She told VanDerbeek no, but he insisted. She said she removed her clothes because she felt threatened. The victim said VanDerbeek then raped her.

Campus police arrested Van-Derbeek on campus March 25 about 1:45 a.m., about 15 minutes after they finished interviewing the female.

KU police are continuing to investigate the rapes of two other female students on the same weekend in February.

University officials said the VanDerbeek case is unrelated to the February sex assaults, for which no arrests have been made.

Appendix C

KU students get important lesson on staying safe: Amid the excitement of a new school year, security is a major subject because of a series of recent attacks on or near campus .

Reading Eagle (PA) - Thursday, August 28, 2008

Author: *Rebecca Vandermeulen, Reading Eagle, Pa.*

Aug. 28--In the middle of the excitement of starting the first week of the fall semester, student government leaders at Kutztown University had a simple, somber message for their schoolmates Wednesday night:

Stay safe.

At a tent set to promote safety, they handed out pamphlets about partying responsibly.

Campus police encouraged students to sign up for KU's electronic emergency-alert system.

And the college Women's Center gave away coupons for free whistles.

About 30 students stopped by the tent where junior Manuel M. Guzman of Reading was calling out to passing students, inviting them inside.

Guzman said students need to know who can help them in bad situations and how to take care of themselves in situations such as off-campus parties.

"At the end of the day, we're all just one big family," Guzman said. "We've all got to take care of each other."

Campus safety has become a big issue at KU in the last year.

On Monday, Timothy R. Gerhart, 24, of Allentown was sentenced to 20 to 40 years in prison for the Sept. 7 killing of Kyle G.D. Quinn, a 19-year-old KU sophomore.

Two other Allentown men are awaiting trial in the death of Quinn, who was fatally beaten as he was walking along Kutztown's Main Street toward campus at about 2:30 a.m.

And three rapes were reported on campus last school year one in March and two within hour of each other in February

"Obviously, last year brought about a real heightened sense of awareness," said Robert T Watrous, KU's dean of student services and campus life.

KU police Chief William F Mioskie said about 2,340 students signed up for the emergency-alert system so far, up from about 1,400 in February.

Like many colleges nation wide, Kutztown adopted the system last fall in response to tragedy at Virginia Tech where a student fatally shot 32 students and faculty before killing him self.

Freshman Rachael McConnell of Macungie said Wednesday's event wasn't the first time she had heard the need for safety on campus stressed. Her father had told her the same thing before she started classes at KU.

"My dad said, 'Never go anywhere alone,' " she said.

Her friend Kayla Gombotsh also a freshman from Macungie said she had heard about the on-campus rapes but not Quinn's death.

Grace M. Hill, the Women' Center's associate director, said the whistles the center gave coupons for were chosen because they were loud and metal so they wouldn't get crushed in a purse. Lauren E. Lack, a freshman from West Chester, thought they were a good idea. "If girls feel unsafe, it would be good to have," Lack said.

Appendix D

After rape is claimed, officials call security at Albright adequate : A college spokeswoman says dorms are as safe as the school can make them. A city police captain says he has no problem with campus safeguards.

Reading Eagle (PA) - Friday, May 2, 2008

Author: *Dan Kelly, Reading Eagle, Pa.*

May 2--Albright College and Reading police said Thursday that they believe security measures on the campus are adequate to protect students.

"We certainly want our students to be vigilant," said Albright spokeswoman Barbara Marshall. "We do try to teach them and reinforce to them the importance of good security."

"Our dorms are locked and require card-key access 24 hours a day. There are resident assistants in every dormitory that can help students, campus security patrols the dorms and the campus, we offer escorts, a van service. The residence halls are as safe as we can make them."

Marshall made the comments a day after two Reading Area Community College students were charged with raping an 18-year-old Albright student in her dormitory room after they met her at a drinking party near the Albright campus.

City police Capt. Francis L. Drexler said police have a good working relationship with Albright campus security and college officials.

"I'm certain that Albright does a good job with their security," Drexler said. "I'm satisfied that Albright explains everything to students properly. I don't have a problem with their security."

Drexler said he has handled crime cases on college campuses in the past and they ultimately come down to personal decisions made by students.

Matthew S. Hartwell, 20, of the 400 block of Parkview Road, St. Lawrence, and Scott M. Ellis, 19, of the 4800 block of Oley Turnpike Road, Exeter Township, are charged with raping the woman March 9 in her room in Mohn Hall after a party in an off-campus dwelling known as "Rugby House" on Exeter Street.

Police said the woman was intoxicated and the men took her to her dorm room after she repeatedly turned down sexual advances from them at the party.

The victim said she could barely walk and was nearly unconscious when she was assaulted.

She admitted that she smoked marijuana and drank before the party, continued to drink at the party and danced with and kissed one of the defendants.

"This is a really unfortunate situation, and I wish it never happened, but it doesn't speak to the safety of our campus," Marshall said.

RACC spokeswoman Melissa A. Kushner said the college has not disciplined Hartwell and Ellis. She said the students are entitled to due process.

"This was an off-campus activity. We have no authority over off-campus events," Kushner said. "They maintain their ability to take classes here."

Appendix E

Domestic violence stalked victim once before: What more can we be doing, advocate asks

Reading Eagle (PA) - Tuesday, August 17, 2010

Author: *Mike Urban, Reading Eagle, Pa.*

Aug. 17--Long before she was shot dead by her husband in a murder-suicide in Reading, Cheryl V. Okafor was a victim of domestic violence.

Okafor's first husband, Alfred S. Philmore, battered her for years, according to court records. And after they separated, he fatally shot her boyfriend in Reading.

Philmore of Reading was convicted of third-degree murder for shooting Osmond D. Walker on Sept. 29, 1998.

Philmore, who was 37 at the time, shot Walker, 39, from behind in his right temple and neck as Walker left Okafor's apartment in the 500 block of South 17 1/2 Street.

Philmore was sentenced to 20-40 years in state prison for the murder.

Earlier, he was convicted and jailed four times for harassing, stalking and beating Okafor, according to court records. He once beat her with a baseball bat, and violated several protection from abuse orders she had obtained, records show.

After the guilty verdict in the murder trial was read, Okafor told a reporter she was relieved.

"I thought if he was found not guilty, I would have to live in a safe house or something," she said. "I feel like I can breathe again."

On Sunday, Okafor was shot by her husband, Chukwudubem A. Okafor, inside a relative's house in the 300 block of Pear Street, authorities said. He then killed himself with the same gun, investigators said.

Okafor was born Cheryl Moncrieffe in Jamaica and came to the United States when she was 9.

She grew up in Reading and graduated from Reading High School in 1991. She later attended Reading Area Community College and Kutztown University, where she earned bachelor's and master's degrees in art education.

In addition to being a watercolor painter and working on other art projects related to domestic violence, she was a mentor to domestic violence victims.

Among those she helped was Yvonne Miller of West Reading, who on Monday remembered her as a caring, selfless and supportive friend.

"She was a very positive person in the community," said Miller, who was stunned by Okafor's death. "She motivated me and others to believe in ourselves and to keep going. She will be greatly missed."

Lisa Kneer met Okafor four years ago when she launched Berks Unity Solutions, a community coalition that works to build a strong, safe community.

"Cheryl was freely giving of information to help someone else," Kneer said. "She did stuff because it was the right thing to do without getting paid for it. She was just a good person; there's not a whole lot of them around here."

Okafor would tell her story of abuse to encourage other victims to seek the help available locally, said Christine Gilfillan, prevention education director of Berks County Women in Crisis.

While it's extraordinary that Okafor was connected to two incidents of deadly domestic violence, that reflects on the magnitude of the problem, not on her, Gilfillan said.

Okafor was the 36th domestic violence victim killed in Berks in the last decade, she said.

"Instead of asking what Cheryl could have done differently to prevent this, we should be asking, 'What more could all of us be doing?' " Gilfi llan said.

(Reporter Greta Cuyler contributed to this story.)

Appendix F

No easy way out: A recent tragedy involving an educated, successful couple is a reminder that domestic violence can hit home anywhere.

Reading Eagle (PA) - Sunday, August 22, 2010

Author: *Mike Urban, Reading Eagle, Pa.*

Aug. 22--WHEN Dr. Chukwudubem Okafor fired one bullet into his wife Cheryl's head and two more into her chest -- then put the handgun in his mouth and again pulled the trigger -- the murder-suicide seemed to defy all logic. This was a successful Berks County couple, after all. So how could it end like this? How could Chukwudubem, so educated and respected as a teacher and poet, do such a thing? And how could Cheryl, having survived a brutal first marriage, be involved with another violent man? But while many were stunned by the Exeter Township couple's deaths last Sunday, those who work with domestic abuse victims in Berks say the tragedy is typical in several ways. It shows that violence can occur in any type of household. "We see abuse involving every kind of person," said Christine Gilfillan, prevention education director for Berks County Women in Crisis. "This can happen to anybody."

It also demonstrates just how difficult it can be for women to avoid, and eventually escape, abusive relationships.

"There are no easy answers," Gilfillan said.

Tragic relationships

Cheryl Okafor knew just how dangerous it was to be involved with a violent man. That tough lesson came during her first marriage, when her husband, Alfred S. Philmore, battered her repeatedly, hit her with a baseball bat and threatened to kill her. After Cheryl left Philmore, he fatally shot her boyfriend, Osmond D. Walker, in Reading in 1998, forcing her to flee to Canada. Surviving that relationship seemed to embolden her, though. Cheryl, 37, spoke out publicly against domestic violence, steering victims away from abuse and into better lives. She even used her talents as a painter to drive home the message. Her new life seemed to be a success story, but at some point she left Chukwudubem, 64, an associate professor of English at Kutztown University, whom she had accused of abusing her for years.

It all came to a terrible end last Sunday when Chukwudubem lured her to a relative's house where he killed her and himself, leaving behind their three sons and a daughter, police said.

Complications abound

While some women seem more vulnerable to abusers, it's not that they seek out such men, Gilfillan said.

So to say women should avoid abusive relationships, or leave once things turn violent, oversimplifies the issue, she said.

Things are often rosy when a couple begins dating, as both partners try to show off their best sides, making it difficult to know who might become an abuser.

Once the violence begins, the woman may be too heavily invested in the relationship to leave or optimistic that they can turn things around.

"We want to believe that we can put the relationship back together, and we want to believe their promises that 'this won't happen again,'" Gilfillan said. "Sometimes things get better. Sometimes they don't."

Abusers can isolate victims, reducing their power to leave, said Grace Hill, associate director of the Women's Center at Kutztown University, which counsels students regarding dating violence.

The women may not know where else to go, may not be able to afford to leave or may have children with the abuser, she said.

The women also might be scared to break things off, and sometimes with good reason, Gilfillan said.

Danger in leaving

Most of the women killed by their partners in Berks in the past decade had recently left them or were preparing to do so, she said.

"Leaving can be the most dangerous time," she said, as Cheryl Okafor's murder shows.

In some cases, though, leaving a violent relationship is still the best option, said Peg Dierkers, executive director of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

"Many women are better off after leaving abusive men," she said.

The key is for the victims to first speak with an advocate, such as a Women in Crisis counselor, to plan a safe departure, she said.

"Leaving may or may not be the best option, but if it is, it has to be done carefully," she said.

Friends and family of domestic violence victims should not push victims to take a step they aren't ready for, but they also shouldn't be silent, said Dr. Edward B. Michalik Jr., administrator of Berks County Mental Health/ Mental Retardation.

"Sometimes families tend to think this is something for the couple to deal with, but we have to let the victims know we support them, and encourage them to seek help," he said.

Class not factor

The Okafor tragedy shows it is a mistake to assume that because a couple is educated and appears to be successful, that the wife and husband will work things out.

It's difficult to predict which relationship might turn deadly, said Daniel P. Billings, director of security at St. Joseph Medical Center, a former Wyomissing police officer and domestic violence expert.

"I know from investigating these crimes that socioeconomic status has zero connection to domestic violence," he said.

The Women in Crisis hot line gets calls from women of all races, religions, ethnic backgrounds and income levels, Gilfi Ilan agreed.

A number of the 36 domestic violence killings in Berks over the past decade were committed by men who had led successful lives, she said.

They include:

Miguel A. Torres, who owned a mortgage company, is accused of fatally shooting his wife, Barbie, during a busy afternoon in a parking lot near the Berks County Courthouse in 2005. He remains at large.

Veterinarian Kent D. Leiby killed his wife, another man and himself in Lenhartsville in 2002.

John G. Marasco, who owned a city dry cleaning business, smothered his children -- Vince 9, and Julia, 8 -- before killing himself in 2000.

The only demographic that increases the risk for domestic violence is age, since 16- to 24-year-old females are more likely to be in abusive relationships, Gilfi Ilan said.

Gun availability ups risk

The presence of a gun increases the risk as well, Dierkers said.

She noted that 63 percent of the 124 domestic violence fatalities in Pennsylvania in 2009 were shootings. And women in violent relationships are five times more likely to be killed if the abuser has access to a gun, she said.

"An abusive partner and a gun are a lethal combination," she said.

Above everything, it's important for victims to know help is available, and for the community to be available to those who seek it, Hill said.

"There are other situations out there (like the Okafors') that are simmering," she said. "This is something that you think can't happen, yet it happens all the time."

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Vandermeulen, R. (2008, April 4). Sex crimes color annual KU event: The horror of recent attacks sets the tone for the college's 18th Take Back the Night gathering. *Reading Eagle (PA)*. Retrieved October 26, 2011, from Newsbank database.

Vandermeulen, R. (2008, August 28). KU students get important lesson on staying safe: Amid the excitement of a new school year, security is a major subject because of a series of recent attacks on or near campus. *Reading Eagle (PA)*. Retrieved October 26, 2011, from Newsbank database.

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Curriculum Vitae
Meghann McGuire
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Education

Pennsylvania State University, Berks Graduation May 2012
Schreyer Honors College
B.A. Communication Arts & Sciences
Honors in Communication Arts & Sciences
Minor: Global Studies
Additional 18 hours of coursework in Political Science

Presentations

- McGuire, M., Ramsey, M., Nicholas, C., Bogdan, A., Gardener, A., Erdman, P. An Ethos of Advocacy: Communication Arts & Sciences at Penn State Berks. *New Voices, New Perspectives Student Research Conference*, University of North Texas, Denton, TX, 2012.
- McGuire, M. Empowering the Children: The staging of agency in the documentary *Born into Brothels: Calcutta's Red Light Kids*. *National Communication Association Convention*, New Orleans, LA, 2011.
- McGuire, M. Black Nationalism and White America: A rhetorical analysis of *The Ballot or the Bullet*. *Central States Communication Association Convention*, Milwaukee, WI, 2011.
- McGuire, M. Party Identification and Economic Self-Interest: The Dichotomy of Republican Motivation. *Central States Communication Association Convention*, Milwaukee, WI, 2011.
- McGuire, M. Symbolically Constituting Flight Attendant Identity: A research proposal. *Central States Communication Association Convention*, Cincinnati, OH, 2010.

Publications

McGuire, M. (2011). Esther Bratt's Story of Survival. *A History of the Jewish Community in Reading and Berks County*. 105-111.

McGuire, M. (2011). A Survivor's Story of Escape on the Kindertransport: Sidney Bratt. *A History of the Jewish Community in Reading and Berks County*. 136- 140.

Teaching Experience

Teaching Assistant for CAS 100C at Penn State Berks 2011
Effective Speech: Principles of communication, implemented through analysis and evaluation of messages, with some attention to formal speaking and group discussion.

Participation at Scholarly Events

Ramsey, E.M., Condit, C.M., Klien, S.A., Treat, S., McGuire, M. Preconference: Connecting Yesterday's Voices to Tomorrow's: Public Address Pedagogy to Inspire Students. *National Communication Association Convention*, New Orleans, LA, 2011.
(Participated as a student offering my perspective on the active engagement aspect of Dr. Ramsey's presentation)

What You Do Matters: A Leadership Summit on Propaganda, Hate Speech, 2011
and Civic Engagement at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.
(Selected Participant)

Service

Lambda Pi Eta – Upsilon Gamma chapter President 2011- 2012
Opportunity House, Reading PA- Book Drive & Meal Service Organizer 2011
Penn State Berks Academic Awards Ceremony Usher 2011

Children and Youth Empowerment Center, Nyeri, Kenya Volunteer; Teacher; Fundraiser	2010
Second Street Learning Center, Reading PA Daycare/ Teaching Volunteer	2009

Honors and Awards

Schreyer Honors Scholar	2010- present
Lambda Pi Eta National Communication Honor Society	2010- present
Lambda Pi Eta, Upsilon Gamma Chapter, President	2011- 2012
Martin Luther King, Jr. Leadership Award, Penn State Berks	2012
Goldstein Honors Scholarship	2011, 2012
Schreyer Ambassador Travel Grant	2011
Penn State Berks Honors Program	2010- present
Joseph L. and Shirley K. Boscov Honors Endowment Award	2010- 2012
Boscov Academic Excellence Award	2010, 2011
Pennsylvania Commonwealth Education Abroad Scholarship	2010, 2011
Penn State Berks Dean's List	2009- 2011

Employment

Austin's Restaurant Server/ Bartender	2009 – Present
United Airlines Flight Attendant	2006 – 2009
Logan's Roadhouse Server/ Lead Service Trainer/ Manager	2004 – 2006
Michigan State University Residence Hall Receptionist	2002 – 2004
Laser Quest Birthday Party Coordinator	2001 – 2002
Giant Food Stores Cashier/ Cashier Supervisor	2000 – 2002