Perceptions of intimate partner violence in rural America: A content analysis of local Midwestern newspapers

Erin O’Gara
PhD Candidate – Journalism and Mass Communication
The University of Iowa
Intimate Partner Violence (IPV): An Overview

- Types of abuse
  - physical, sexual, psychological
- 1.4 - 4 million victims of IPV each year (Yamawaki, Ostenson & Brown, 2009)
- 85-95% of victims are women (DVIP, 2011; NCADV, 2011)
- Mental/physical health and social repercussions
  - STIs, gastrointestinal and gynecological disorders, heart and central nervous system complication, depression, anxiety, PTSD (CDC, 2011)
  - Cost to society >$8.3 billion annually (CDC, 2011)
- Highest instances of abuse are in rural areas (Gramma, 2000)
Rural IPV

• Rural victims of IPV face additional barriers:
  – Geographic isolation
  – Increased stigma
  – Unreliable aid of law enforcement
  – Poverty
  – Reduced access to legal aid, healthcare, shelter and advocacy services (Eastman & Bunch; Grossman, Hinkley, Kawalski & Margrave, 2005; Hightower, Gorton & DeMoss, 2000)
News coverage of IPV

• Minimizes the role of the abuser
  (Berns, 2001; Meyers, 1997; Taylor, 2008; Webster & Dunn, 2005)

• Portrayed as an isolated incident
  (Meyers, 1997)

• Victim-blaming
  (Leonard, 2002; Myers, 1997; Thapar-Bjorkert & Morgan, 2010; Yamawaki et al., 2009)
    – Emphasizing SES; substance use/abuse; provoking behaviors
    – Why don’t they just leave?
Theoretical Perspective

• Social Cognitive Theory:
  – Behavior influenced by a variety of factors – including things learned through the mass media (Bandura, 2002)

• The ways in which issues are portrayed can influence actions

• Barriers/resources

• Local media’s significance
Research Questions

• **RQ1**: What is the nature of news coverage on intimate partner violence in rural Midwestern newspapers?

• **RQ2**: How are barriers to intimate partner violence interventions described?

• **RQ3**: What information is provided on intimate partner violence resources?
Methodology

• Random samples of news articles:
  – Iowa: \( n = 113 \)
  – Nebraska: \( n = 39 \)
  – Missouri: \( n = 101 \)
  – Kansas: \( n = 278 \)
    • Total \( N = 531 \)

• October 2006 – October 2011
• Only newspapers with circulation <10,000 included (McGhee, 2011)
Variables coded:

- The role of intimate partner violence, \( \kappa = 0.79 \)
- Intimate partner violence described as, \( \kappa = 0.82 \)
- The gender, role, race/ethnicity, age and marital status of individuals involved, \( \kappa \) ranged = 1 - 0.92
- The relationship between the primary and secondary focus, \( \kappa = 1 \)
- Intimate partner violence incident, \( \kappa = 0.87 \)
- Article places fault or responsibility, \( \kappa = 0.84 \)
- Barriers mentioned, \( \kappa = 1 \)
- Resources mentioned, \( \kappa = 1 \)
RQ1: Nature of News Coverage

- IPV not explicitly described in most articles 69% \((n = 367)\)
  - IPV as violence from one individual to another 25% \((n = 130)\)

- Women most often ID’ed as victims 81% \((n = 105)\)

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**Types of News Stories**

- Community Calendar: 11% \((n = 70)\)
- Police Report: 12% \((n = 65)\)
- In-Depth Story: 21% \((n = 112)\)
- Legislation: 17% \((n = 131)\)
- Finances: 11% \((n = 57)\)
- Death/Injury: 7% \((n = 39)\)
- Children: 3% \((n = 36)\)
- N/A: 7% \((n = 36)\)
RQ1: Nature of News Coverage

Cross-tabulation of gender and role in IPV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female Victim</th>
<th>Male Victim</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female Perpetrator</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11 (30.6%)</td>
<td>11 (30.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Perpetrator</td>
<td>24 (66.7%)</td>
<td>1 (2.8%)</td>
<td>25 (69.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24 (66.7%)</td>
<td>12 (33.3%)</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² = 31.68 (df = 1; N = 36) = , p < .001
RQ2: Discussion of Barriers

• Barriers described:
  – 1% \((n = 7)\) of articles mentioned barriers

  • decreased shelter services \((n = 6)\)
  • long travel to healthcare facilities \((n = 1)\)
RQ3: Discussion of Resources

• Intervention Resources

  – Resources mentioned in 35% of articles \((n = 188)\)
    • \(n = 187\): Hotline phone number
    • \(n = 1\): Advocacy Center
Discussion

• Relatively little discussion of IPV
  – Police Report

• Female victims, 81%
  – National statistics 85-95%

• Isolated incident, 23%
  – Not in my community!
Discussion

• Resources
  – Community Calendar/Dear Abby

• Barriers, $n = 7$
  – (or lack thereof!)

  – What does it all mean?
    • Social Cognitive Theory


McHee, G. (2011, July 14). Rural newspapers doing better than their city counterparts. Accessed from the Stanford University Rural West Initiative at: [http://www.stanford.edu/group/ruralwest/cgi-bin/drupal/content/rural-newspapers](http://www.stanford.edu/group/ruralwest/cgi-bin/drupal/content/rural-newspapers)


