

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

The Role of Engagement with Characters in Framing and Persuasion through News Narratives

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Doctor of Philosophy

January 2013

This Thesis has been completed as a requirement for a postgraduate research degree of the
University of Winchester

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

ABSTRACT FOR THESIS

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While the field of narrative persuasion has widely stressed the persuasive power of (fictional) stories, the framing research tradition has overlooked the role of narrative properties in framing. Neither field has examined news as narrative and the influence that it might have on audiences through mechanisms of narrative persuasion. Because character is an integral component of the very definition of narrative, it is investigated in this project both as textual cue and reception process that can account for the persuasive power of news frames on audiences.

The first stage of the research involved a qualitative study of character at the textual level. Narrative devices used to portray individuals involved in a newsworthy event and to present their point of view were analysed in two framing analyses. Excerpts from crime news coverage clearly linked narrative devices pertaining to the treatment of character with the available frames about the crime. These devices were used in the news stories to invite readers' engagement with certain characters instead of others and to transmit the frame accordingly.

The effect of character-based frames on reader engagement was then tested in two experimental studies that manipulated the perspective from which the crime events were presented by selecting appropriate excerpts from authentic news media materials. Readers' engagement with characters was measured as the mediating mechanism based on a theoretical model which is developed throughout this thesis. The results of the experimental studies showed that the news frames successfully transferred to audience frames constructed through readers' engagement with the individual from whose perspective the story was narrated. These findings provide evidence for the persuasive power of character engagement in news narratives, which had only been found previously with fictional narratives. The findings confirm that frame setting can occur through mechanisms of narrative persuasion and that news are indeed perceived as narrative.

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Barbara Maleckar

January 2013

Acknowledgements

'An individual working intelligence is never "solo." It cannot be understood without taking into account his or her intelligence books, notes, computer programmes and data bases or most important of all, the network of friends, colleagues, or mentors on whom one leans for help and advice' (Bruner, 1991, p. 3).

With this in mind, I would like to thank first and foremost my supervisor Dr David Giles for giving me the opportunity to further develop my research interests in narrative and media, and for providing a useful methodology for framing analysis. My second supervisor Dr Magdalena Zawisza gave me detailed feedback and encouraged me to develop the model of engagement with characters which has become one of the key contributions of my thesis. Besides discussions with them, lunchtime debates with Drs Olu Taiwo and Susan Carlile were invaluable in developing my ideas. The workshops and symposiums of the StoryNet network provided an important platform to test these ideas and represented the annual highlight of my academic life. All of this would not have been possible without a full scholarship from the Slovene Human Resources and Development Scholarship Fund for the three years of my studies in Winchester.

On a more personal note, I do not know how to thank enough my parents Milena and Franc Maleckar for being my biggest fans and for acquainting me with the world of narratives from early childhood on. They were very present throughout my stay in England, as were my friends from Slovenia who remained in my life and made themselves known – if not else – with a supporting text message when most needed. In addition to that, I was most fortunate to meet in Winchester a group of friends who were like a supporting family to me and who made me feel completely accepted and safe in my new environment. Also, I could have never made it through this PhD voyage without fellow students who shared its joys and sorrows with me: Charlie, Helen, Maily, Kate, Sue, Meritxell, and Cokky, your helpful advice will stay with me during the future steps of my career and life.

1 Researching narrative in framing and persuasion

'You care about the people living between Austen's pages as intensely as if they were real' (Ester Freud reviewing The complete novels of Jane Austin, 2006, cover page).

The power of fictional narratives, particularly classic literature, to prompt readers' engagement with characters is widely acknowledged. We care about characters that are vividly portrayed with all the complexity of real people. A skilled author presents the common humanity between us and the characters, so that we cannot judge, but understand their perspective on unfolding events even if our own perspective differs. A good storyteller makes us willingly put on another persons' shoes; from their viewpoint we can see things about the social world and ourselves that we were previously blind to. These insights can change our position about topics presented, even if initially we held a very different position. This is a powerful form of persuasion which will be the focus of investigation in this thesis.

Just as authors of literary works speak to us through characters to present their view about the world, it is claimed that journalists resort to the use of character as well in order to construct frames about events and topics reported. However, there are no studies within the framing research tradition that have focused on the treatment of character and very few that have explored more generally the role of narrative in framing (e.g., Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Van Gorp, 2010). At the same time, news has been overlooked in the literature on narrative persuasion. When news frames are formed through narrative devices, such as the use of character, it is likely that they exert a persuasive influence on audiences through processes of engagement with the narrative and its characters. Framing effects might thus occur through mechanisms of narrative persuasion, which warrants a conceptual link between the two research traditions.

This PhD aims to fill the gap in framing and narrative persuasion literature by looking at engagement with characters as both a textual cue and reception process, and to examine its role in the persuasive impact of media frames. This chapter will outline research problems that have been overlooked in framing and narrative persuasion, leading to the formulation of questions that guided the research presented in this thesis. A likely reason behind the lack of existing research is the failure to acknowledge the narrative character of news; the following section indicates possible sources of this neglect, which will be further explored in the Chapter 2.3.1.

1.1 News as narrative

News differs in both form and content from prototypical narratives, such as novels and short stories. It displays fewer narrative elements, or narrativity factors (Kinnebrock & Bilandzic, 2006), and is often formed in an inverted pyramid structure which significantly differs from narrative formats typically present in literary narratives (Knobloch, Patzig, Mende, & Hastall, 2004). This might be the reason why the narrative persuasion field has rarely focused on news and why its narrative properties have been overlooked in studies of framing. Despite having a lesser degree of narrativity, it will be argued here that most news fulfils the basic conditions of a text to start functioning as a story and that news narrative characteristics thus deserve attention.

Another reason why news has not been considered as narrative might be the seeming incompatibility between storytelling and the journalistic imperatives of factuality and objectivity. Many authors report a refusal to accept narrative as a valid form of reporting news in mainstream journalism (e.g., Bird & Dardenne, 1997; Roeh, 1989). The narrative threat to factuality is an invalid accusation since narratives might by definition be non-fictional and thus exclusively based on known facts and empirical truths. The threat to objectivity has been likewise dismissed by authors who claim that objectivity in journalism is only a form of storytelling (Hanson, 1997), a paradigm (Roeh, 1989), and a rhetorical claim (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). The very act of framing an event or topic in news acknowledges that there is no single objective version of reality, but that the journalist willingly or unwillingly transmits one of the available interpretations, or frames. A common way to explain reality is to infer a narrative structure upon it, which bounds and interprets events by linking them causally. This thesis will thus attempt to prove that framing might be accomplished through narrative discourse, which equals framing to the act of narrativizing reality itself (White, 1981). The following section will outline how narrativity in framing will be investigated.

1.2 Framing

One of the most notable authorities in the field of framing, Robert M. Entman, and his co-authors, have recently proposed a definition of a news frame which implies its existence beyond a single news text: 'A frame repeatedly invokes the same objects and traits, using identical or synonymous words and symbols in a series of similar communications that are concentrated in

time' (Entman, Matthes, & Pellicano, 2009, p. 177). These words and symbols must connect with the cultural associations of many citizens in order to contribute to the frame. This links with the approach of Baldwin Van Gorp who stresses the importance of looking at the level of cultural frames which influence the content of both media and audience frames in a process of continuous construction of social reality (Van Gorp, 2007, 2010).

According to Van Gorp, narratives such as 'Cinderella, Frankenstein, Snow white, the Beauty and the Beast, Faust' (Van Gorp, 2010, p. 98), represent one type of cultural frames that journalists might use to form news frames. These cultural narratives are appealing for journalists because they provide ready and familiar patterns of framing and reasoning devices to report about a particular event or topic: 'On the basis of their narrative ingredients it is possible to assign roles to the principal actors of an issue (e.g., good-bad, advocate-opponent), specify what the problem is and who is responsible [...]' (Van Gorp, 2010, p. 87). Van Gorp considers it more important to identify narratives and other cultural frames than issue-specific or generic news frames (2010, p. 87). The assumption is that while a single news item might not bear a direct reference to a cultural theme, a cross-analysis of news texts will not fail to reveal a link to a cultural frame that is used to present the topic or event in a process of framing by analogy. Cultural frames, including narratives, will therefore be identified on a macro, inter-textual level, and equate to what Giles, Shaw, and Morgan (2009) call dominant frames.

While I do not contest the value of identifying cultural frames, I argue that looking at issue-specific frames is worthwhile as well. Journalists are undoubtedly inspired by well known narratives and other cultural themes, but they are writers in their own right (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 60), using narrative techniques to present specific events and topics. Therefore, my approach is to investigate news narratives at a textual level in order to establish the role of narrativity in framing.

Pan and Kosicki (1993) analysed news narratives at a textual level too, focusing on what they call the script structure of news articles. According to the authors, the coverage of a newsworthy event follows and complements audience's cognitive script about what, when, where, why and how this type of event happens, and who is involved in it. Authors thus analyse how the news narrative fits the standard way of representing a certain type of events in audience's minds. However, in so doing authors shift the focus from the news narrative to the script that is already present on a shared, cultural level among the audience, similarly as Van Gorp (2010) focuses on cultural narratives that might be used in framing, and not on the news narrative itself. Moreover, it is not exactly clear how the script structure contributes to the central theme, or

frame of the story: Does the script itself carry a meaning regarding to how audiences evaluate this type of event, and thus acts as a framing device when reproduced in a news story?

I aim to demonstrate that the narrative structure functions to deliver a frame even when news does not reference a cultural theme, or conforms to a pre-existing cognitive script. The very act of causally connecting events gives them a meaning (White, 1981), or frame. This causal narrative structure can be found on a micro level in the form of an exemplifying story or anecdote embedded within a more argumentative news discourse and represents the instrumental mode of narrativity (M.-L. Ryan, 1992). Narrative can be found on a macro level as well, where news elements consisting of both argumentative and mimetic, narrative discourse (Roeh, 1989), form the basic narrative structure composed by the abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result or resolution, and coda (A. Bell, 1999; Labov, 1999). Roeh (1989) in fact considers that journalists, among other people, might explain the world through two types of discourse: the argumentative and the mimetic discourse. The former type uses direct utterances, such as claims, beliefs, theories and statements. In the descriptive and the narrative mimetic discourse, meaning or claims are expressed by implication – arguably, the implication of events to affected people, or characters in a story. This might be why Roeh argues that the type of explanation suggested by narratives resembles interpretation or explanation from an insider's point of view, as opposed to the outsider's point of view used in scientific explanation via argumentative discourse (p. 165). Pan and Kosicki (1993) propose a similar distinction between two types of discourse within the thematic structure of news articles, which arguably contributes the most to the main frame. The thematic structure is a system of causal or logico-empirical relations in which causal statements can be either made explicitly, or 'implicitly by simply presenting actions in a context in which one may be seen as an antecedent and another as a consequence' (van Dijk, 1988, in Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 61). It could be seen from this description that the implicit presentation of causal statements equals to the narrative discourse. Instead of the traditionally researched rhetorical means used in framing through argumentative discourse, this thesis thus aims to demonstrate that framing might be achieved through the use of narrative discourse as well.

When framing is accomplished through narrative discourse, the treatment of character acquires particular importance. The bearers of causality in a narrative are its characters who initiate story events or react to events imposed on them. This is why their presence is necessary for a text to resemble a narrative which also has to allow the reconstruction of characters' goals and plans (M.-L. Ryan, 1992). As initiators of action, characters' motivation for it in fact provides the

explanation of why events in a narrative unfold as they do. Therefore, I aim to investigate whether the way journalists write about individuals involved in a newsworthy event (i.e., characters in a news story) helps to construct the frame. The following research question is posed:

RQ1: Is the treatment of character in news a valid framing device?

The transmission of frames formed through the narrative use of character is likely accomplished by evoking readers'¹ engagement with them. Engagement with characters and with the narrative in general has in fact been established as a key mechanism that enables persuasion through narratives. However, due to the lesser degree of narrativity in news, engagement with characters might take a qualitatively different form than in more traditional stories, warranting the inspection of its role in persuasion through news narratives. The following subchapter will present the research focus of this thesis in the field of narrative persuasion.

1.3 Narrative persuasion

The way narratives exert a persuasive effect on readers' attitudes and beliefs has been demonstrated to differ from mechanism of persuasion through rhetorical texts which were traditionally studied because of their overtly persuasive intent. The general dual models of persuasion – the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) and the Heuristic-Systematic model (Chaiken, 1980) – predict two routes through which political speeches, editorials, and other rhetorical texts might convince readers to adopt a certain position about the issue in question. The central or systematic persuasion route requires readers to invest cognitive effort in the critical scrutiny of message arguments, which determine whether the advocated position will be accepted. Failing either the ability or motivation to elaborate the message, it can affect readers through the peripheral or heuristic route: Peripheral message cues, such as source credibility, are inserted as simple heuristics, which are used to determine whether or not to adopt the position advocated by the message.

¹ For reasons of brevity, the term 'reader' will be henceforth used when the discussed phenomena apply to recipients of narratives in general, except where empirical studies that use a specific form of narrative (i.e., written or audiovisual) are discussed.

Neither of the two routes, however, has been able to explain the persuasive effect of narratives. Intuitively, narratives seem to require effortful processing: Readers or film viewers devote all their attention to the book or film to the extent of failing to notice what goes on around them (Green & Brock, 2002; Green, Garst, & Brock, 2004). However, the invested cognitive resources are not used to critically scrutinize information present in a narrative since readers have been found to generate few counterarguments to its persuasive content (Green & Brock, 2000). This seems understandable given that narratives consist of a plot line rather than an argument line and might be fictional. Instead of elaborating arguments concerning issues that might directly affect them (which stimulates their issue involvement), readers' focus on the story plot with an aim to be entertained (Green, Brock, & Kaufman, 2004). Thus, Slater and Rouner (2002) replace issue involvement with absorption in a narrative in their Extended Elaboration Likelihood Model (E-ELM). Absorption might motivate deeper processing of a different kind than cognitive elaboration (p. 187) and thus act as the main mechanism of the persuasive effect of narratives. Instead of two persuasion routes, absorption then becomes the only determinant of narrative persuasion.

In their definition of absorption, Slater and Rouner (2002) focus exclusively on engagement with characters: 'Absorption is vicariously experiencing the characters' emotions and personality' (p. 178). Authors predict a persuasive impact of a narrative 'to the extent of the recipient's sympathetic response to the character's own development and experiences' (p. 177). The focus on characters is not surprising given that their actions and reactions to external events constitute the story plot. However, the first evidence of the role of reader processes in the persuasive impact of narratives has come from research investigating engagement with the narrative as a whole: Busselle and Bilandzic (2009) found a correlation between several dimensions of narrative engagement and the persuasive outcome of a narrative, while in their fourth experiment Green and Brock (2000) confirmed transportation as the mediator of narrative persuasion. Transportation is conceptualized as the phenomenological experience of being transported in the story world (Gerrig, 1993; Green & Brock, 2000) and will be described in more depth in Chapter 5.3, together with the similar construct of narrative engagement (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009). Overall, narrative engagement, transportation, as well as absorption (Slater & Rouner, 2002) and involvement with a narrative (Wirth, 2006) constitute separate but related constructs (see M. Appel & Richter, 2010, pp. 104-5) and the terms will thereafter be used interchangeably to denote readers' engagement with the narrative.

Although both Transportation (Green & Brock, 2000) and Narrative Engagement (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009) scales include items about story characters, the role of readers' engagement with them has only recently received empirical attention. Igartua and his collaborators (2010; 2012) found a correlation between identification with film characters and viewers' endorsement of story consistent attitudes and beliefs. De Graaf, Hoeken, Sanders, and Beentjes (2011) went a step further and manipulated readers' identification with characters by varying the character perspective through which the events in the story were presented. Thereby, they confirmed identification as a mediator of narrative persuasive effects.

Does identification with characters play the same mediating role in the persuasive impact of news narratives? Zillman and Knobloch (2001) demonstrated that affective dispositions to individuals featuring in news have a similar role in directing readers' emotional responses to event outcomes as in fictional stories. Moreover, these affective dispositions influenced the degree of suspense experienced during exposure to news (Knobloch-Westerwick & Keplinger, 2007). However, neither of these studies looked at the persuasive effects of news narratives or measured readers' engagement with the story and its characters, which are the main mechanism of narrative persuasion according to both E-ELM (Slater & Rouner, 2002) and the Transportation-Imagery model (Green & Brock, 2002). It is possible that because news possesses a lesser degree of narrativity than more traditional stories, such as novels and films, engagement with news narratives and individuals featuring in them takes a less intense form, making it questionable whether it still acts as a mediator of narrative persuasion. Since the research question within the framing tradition addresses the treatment of character in news, the investigation within the narrative persuasion field focuses on characters as well. The second research question of this thesis is thus the following:

RQ2: Is engagement with characters in news narratives a mediator of their persuasive influence?

Lastly, this PhD set up to explore variables that might influence readers' engagement with characters. A literature review suggested that readers might engage more with characters who are similar and previously known to them to the extent that they have formed a parasocial relationship with these characters (Giles, 2002; Klimmt, Hartmann, & Schramm, 2006). The aim is to empirically investigate the influence of reader-character similarity and parasocial relationship on engagement with characters, in order to answer the following research question:

RQ3: Are similarity and parasocial relationship determinants of readers' engagement with characters?

1.4 Thesis outline

This thesis consists of qualitative and quantitative sections in which research questions pertaining to the framing and the narrative persuasion traditions have been consecutively addressed. In the first, qualitative section, framing analyses of newspaper articles were carried out in order to discover whether the treatment of characters is a valid framing device (RQ1). These analyses were performed following the procedure outlined by Giles and Shaw (2009); after gaining initial results, the stages of Reader identification and Narrative form were further developed theoretically. This was done by including research from narratology and media studies in order to explain in which way might narrative be present in news (*Narrative form*) and by consulting empirical research about the type of narrative devices for the treatment of character that are found in literary narratives and might by extension be found in news as well (*Reader identification*). These devices have been called reader engagement techniques and were identified in the coverage of three separate crime events. The results of the framing analyses link these techniques to the identified frames, providing an initial affirmative answer to RQ1. The framing analyses are presented in Chapters 3 and 4 after first introducing the framing research tradition in Chapter 2. In addition to this, Chapter 2 provides a theoretical rationale for examining the formation of frames through narrative devices by outlining the narrative properties of news.

The second, quantitative, section of this PhD provides a further, experimentally supported answer to RQ1 as well as targeting RQ2. An experiment was devised (see Study 1; Chapter 6) in which excerpts from articles analysed in Chapter 3 were used to form ecologically valid stimuli. The experimental articles presented the crime either through the perspective of the victim, or the perpetrator, with the use of reader engagement techniques that were obtained in the previous framing analysis. If participants accepted the chosen perspective and interpreted the crime event accordingly, this would confirm the treatment of character as a valid framing device (RQ1). It was also investigated whether this persuasive outcome occurs through processes of readers' engagement with news characters, providing an answer to RQ2.

For the purpose of targeting RQ2, an appropriate measure of readers' engagement with characters was necessary. Two forms of engagement that have received the most research interest in the past are identification and empathy. However, a literature review indicated controversy about the conceptual nature of these phenomena. Therefore, a model is proposed with the aim to integrate the definitions of identification that range from adopting the

perspective to adopting the identity of characters, which is parallel to the distinction between sympathy and empathy. In this model, *sympathy and identification as perspective taking* represent the less intense form of engagement, whereby the reader retains his or her identity and distance from characters. *Empathy and identification as identity adoption*, on the other hand, require a temporal merger between reader and character, which results in an intense experience of imaginatively being the character and feeling the same emotions as him or her.

Because of the reader-character distinction vs. merger dimension, the model enables to examine the role of engagement with characters in the persuasiveness of stories with a different degree of narrativity. It is expected that particularly perspective taking and sympathy as the less intense forms of engagement influence the processing of less literary stories, such as news narratives. Longer stories with more narrative elements, on the other hand, could trigger identity adoption (representing identification proper) and empathy as well. Following the model, items for all four types of engagement were adapted from previous research, which made it possible to address RQ2 about the importance of engagement with characters for the persuasiveness of news narratives.

The model has thus been instrumental in the measurement of readers' engagement with characters in the study reported in Study 1 (see Chapter 6), which simultaneously acted as a test of the model's validity and usefulness for similar framing effects and narrative persuasion studies. Besides its practical value, the model aims to advance theory about how engagement with story characters develops. After clarifying the different forms of engagement, a proposal of how they might be linked is put forward. Empathy, sympathy, perspective taking, and identification are understood as steps in the process of engagement with characters, which is hypothesised to occur through what I call the sympathy and the empathy route. The model is further described in Chapter 5.4.1 and tested in Study 1. The narrative persuasion field, which represents the theoretical background for the experiment, is introduced Chapter 5.3 together with a rationale for conceptualizing narrative persuasion as a mechanism of framing effects (see Chapter 5.2).

Additional analysis from Study 1 (see Chapter 7.2) yielded some preliminary support for the influence of similarity and parasocial relationship on readers' engagement with characters (RQ3). However, both variables were measured implicitly: Reader-character similarity was assessed through demographic questions and questions about a broad similarity in experience, while participants' previous knowledge about the crime case was used as an indicator that they might have formed a parasocial relationship with the victim and the perpetrator. To gain a stronger

support for RQ3, a second study was devised (see Chapter 7.3). Like the first one, it used stimulus articles formed with excerpts from previously analysed articles (see Chapter 4). The articles were again written either from the perspective of the victim, or the perpetrator; in this study, however, both the victim and the perpetrator were world-wide celebrities. It was thus reasonable to expect that they were known to most participants who might have formed a parasocial relationship with them prior to taking part in the study. Parasocial relationship was directly measured through questions adapted from existing scales (Hartmann, Stuke, & Daschman, 2008; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985). Likewise, questions that directly asked for perceived similarity with the victim and the perpetrator were adapted from Auter and Palmgreen (2000). Results from Study 1 and Study 2 are presented in Chapter 7 in order to answer RQ3 about the role of similarity and parasocial relationship in engagement with characters. Chapter 8 summarises the qualitative and quantitative findings of this PhD and provides a general discussion about the role of engagement with characters in framing and persuasion through news narratives.

2 The framing of news

2.1 Introduction

Research on framing has a long tradition. However, Giles and Shaw (2009) argue that despite framing research being widespread, the term 'framing' lacks a consistent definition both conceptually and methodologically and much is left to an assumed tacit understanding of reader and researcher (Entman, 1993). Similarly, Scheufele (1999) points out that 'the term framing has been used repeatedly to label similar but distinctly different approaches' (p. 103). Entman, Matthes, and Pellicano (2009) list two such differing approaches: equivalency and emphasis (or issue) framing. Equivalency framing effects occur when people alter their preferences after exposure to different, but logically equivalent words or phrases. This type of framing effects have been tested in psychological experiments, whereby, for instance, the same medical treatment was framed in terms of how many people will die versus how many will be saved. Conversely, the information subsets presented in emphasis framing are not logically identical to one another. Instead, frames emphasise a subset of different and potentially relevant considerations. Emphasis framing is therefore 'concerned with increasing or decreasing the salience of an issue or consideration when formulating an opinion' (Entman, et al., 2009, p. 182).

It is media and political communication which frame topics and events by giving emphasis to different aspects of an issue; emphasis framing has therefore been traditionally researched in disciplines such as communication, marketing, and political science (Giles & Shaw, 2009). Lately, it has become of research interest to psychology too as it aims to investigate the effects of media on people and their behaviour within disciplines of media psychology (Giles, 2003), or psychology of the media (Giles, 2010; Harris, 2009). Giles and Shaw (2009) list several psychological studies which analysed media texts and have conducted two framing analyses themselves (Giles, et al., 2009; Shaw & Giles, 2009).

This PhD project expands on the previous literature by investigating framing processes and topics relevant to psychology, such as readers' engagement with news characters (framing process) and the framing of domestic and sexual violence (topic). Frames present in media have been examined and therefore this analysis operates within the emphasis framing tradition. Even when confined to this tradition only there are heterogeneous conceptualizations of frames, such as issue-specific versus generic frames (Entman, et al., 2009; Matthes, 2009b). These conceptualizations will be compared in Chapter 4.5 where the focus on issue-specific frames will

be justified. For now, it is an aim of the following subchapter to present a literature review of the framing research tradition and to attempt a coherent definition of frames that is functional in the framing analyses of newspaper articles (Chapters 3 and 4) as well as in the two experiments of framing effects on audiences (Chapters 6 and 7.3). In the section 2.3.1 of this chapter, a definition of narrative is put forward and its role in framing explained.

2.2 The framing tradition

Entman (1993) defines media frames as selective ways of presenting reality in order to promote a particular interpretation or moral evaluation of an event or topic depicted in a news package. In the course of journalistic activity, meanings are 'made to matter via the power invested in particular sets of explanations instead of others' (McDonald, 1999, p.113). These definitions represent the selection part of the framing process. Next, Entman (1993) argues that framing work involves making a piece of information more or less salient by placement or repetition, or association with culturally familiar symbols.

According to Entman (1993), frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgements, and suggest remedies. This is performed through five traits of media texts that compose a frame: importance judgements, agency, identification, categorization, and generalization (Entman, 1991). The framing elements and framing functions outlined by Entman form the basis of the Media framing analysis proposed by Giles and Shaw (2009). This methodology is used and further developed in this thesis in order to analyse newspaper frames. Therefore, I adopt Entman's (1993) definition of frames and of framing through selection and salience throughout this thesis. However, this definition is complicated by the fact that the framing process occurs at different levels (Entman, et al., 2009), as will be explained in greater detail in the remaining of this chapter. This produces different types of frames and the term 'frames' is therefore used to describe both the characteristics of news texts and their cognitive representations in media users' minds (Entman, 1991).

Through his analysis, Entman (1991) evidenced that media frames reside in specific properties of a news text: the choice of words and images to report a particular event or topic, their repetition and reinforcing associations with each other, which all work to make some ideas more salient in the text and others less so. These 'media frames' are then likely to elicit 'audience frames' or 'event-specific schemas' that guide individuals' understanding of the event and their processing of all succeeding information about it (Entman, 1991). In fact, the extent to which media frames

influence audience frames could be seen as the very measure of media effects. Scheufele (1999) calls the transfer from media to audience frames 'frame setting'. According to the author, the impact of this process is seen in the subsequent individual-level effects of framing constituted by change in audiences' attitudes, behaviours and attributions of responsibility – the latter being investigated in this PhD project which focuses on attributions of causality, responsibility and blame for domestic violence episodes.

Entman (1991) argues that journalists create media frames according to their own audience frames which are henceforth called 'journalists' frames'. According to the author, journalists' event-specific schema about the Korean and Iranian plane disasters in the 1980s, analysed in his seminal study, encouraged journalists 'to perceive, process, and report all further information about the event[s] in ways supporting the basic interpretation encoded in the schema' (p. 7). The process of 'frame building' (Scheufele, 1999), or formation of media frames, is thus influenced by journalists' frames which are themselves influenced by existing media frames. This reciprocity is represented in Scheufele's (1999) process model of framing under 'journalists as audiences'. The author in fact claims that journalists themselves are 'susceptible to the very frames that they use to describe events and issues' (p. 117). For instance, initial media frames are often picked up by other media, which according to the author indicates the influence of these frames on respective journalists.

Besides existing media frames, journalists' frames are influenced by audience frames via public opinion indicators, such as poll responses and votes (non-strategic communication), social movements and blogs (strategic framing; Entman, et al., 2009). Scheufele (1999) lists several other determinants of frame building: journalists' ideologies, attitudes and professional norms, which influence their mental frames, or schemas; the type or political orientation of the medium (i.e., organisational routines); and external sources of influence, such as political actors, authorities, interest groups and other elites. Despite placing framing as a theory of media effects within the tradition of social constructivism, Scheufele does not explicitly mention a type of frame which has an important role in the framing process described by Entman and his collaborators (Entman, 1993; Entman, et al., 2009), and is central to the conceptualization of framing by Van Gorp (2007, 2010): the cultural frame. According to Entman (Entman, 1993; Entman, et al., 2009), culture is the stock of schemes that are common to individuals forming a certain society as well as to the system of communications that this society uses (e.g., news, entertainment and conversations). Cultural frames thus constitute both media and audience frames. Among the cultural themes which are known to journalists and members of their society

alike, Van Gorp (2010) lists values, myths, narratives, and archetypes. The shared nature of these cultural frames is precisely the reason why they are frequently used by journalists in the formation of media frames: cultural frames in fact represent ‘universally understood codes that implicitly influence the receiver’s message interpretation, which lends meaning, coherence, and ready explanations to complex issues’ (pp. 87-8).

Cultural frames are particularly important in Van Gorp’s (2007, 2010) constructionist approach to framing. According to the author, journalists frame by suggesting an explanation for what happened in the surrounding world; thereby, they are important actors in the social construction of meaning. To form their explanations, journalists build on those that are already present in society – that is, they use cultural frames as framing devices in the formation of media frames. This media frames might in turn modify existing cultural frames. Entman, Matthes and Pellicano (2009) in fact point out that the cultural stock of frames records the trace of past media framing. This feedback loop is best captured in the concept of ‘media templates’ (Kitzinger, 2000). Media templates such as ‘Watergate’ and ‘Vietnam’ emerge over time through repeated coverage and commentary. Entman, Matthes and Pellicano (2009) suggest that

‘once a frame has appeared enough to be widely stored in the citizenry’s schema systems, it no longer needs to be repeated in concentrated bursts, nor must it be fully elaborated; citizens can summon the stored associations years later in response to a single vivid component (“9/11” or “Berlin Wall”)’ (p. 177).

Media templates thus come to represent a shared understanding about certain news topics between media and their audiences (Kitzinger, 2000). They could be conceptualized as media frames which have been so persistent that they have entered the audience frames of the majority of the population; thereby, they have become their shared, cultural frames. Again, it is important to stress that audiences contribute to the formation of cultural frames through their reaction to initial media frames that are then picked up by journalists.

Entman, Matthes and Pellicano (2009) capture the interdependence of cultural, audience, media and journalist frames in their diachronic model of the framing cycle. According to the authors, it is this diachronicity which distinguishes framing from other communication, since ‘a framing message has particular cultural resonance; it calls to mind currently congruent elements of schemas that were stored in the past’ (p. 177). I concord with the conceptualization of framing which confers a key role to cultural frames and sees framing as a circular process in the construction of social reality. However, I argue for the usefulness of analysing specific media and

audience frames in order to better understand the process of frame setting, which might, in the long run, contribute to frames present in the culture and to our shared understanding of social reality. The following subchapter presents literature external to the framing research tradition which confers a similar role in the construction of social reality to narratives. Thereby, a link between framing and the use of narratives in the act of explaining, or ‘narrativizing’ reality (White, 1981), is suggested.

2.3 Framing as narrativizing reality

Narrative has been often understood as key in the construction of social reality (see for instance Mitchell, 1981). Bruner (1991) claims that man’s knowledge of himself, his social world and his culture is not organised according to logical principles or associative connections, such as his knowledge of the natural or physical world. Instead, ‘we organise our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative’ (p. 4). Looking at the characteristics of the narrative could help explain what sort of organization this form provides.

In the most basic terms, narrative is composed of at least two clauses which are temporally ordered (Labov, 1999). However, White (1981) argues that for a text to exhibit narrative properties ‘events must be not only registered within the chronological framework of their original occurrence but narrated as well, that is to say, revealed as possessing a structure, an order of meaning, which they do *not* possess as mere sequence’ (p. 5, original emphasis). When events are narrated, they acquire causality. As a basic condition of narrativity, Ryan (1992, 2004) in fact contends that a story must contain an interpretive network that allows the reconstruction of causal relations between events. It is this implicit network that turns events, which might otherwise be seen as happening accidentally, into a plot. The interpretive network consists of characters’ goals, plans, and psychological motivations: Based on it, readers build an interpretation about how characters experienced story events which in turn enables them to understand why characters reacted as they did.

Narrative thus enables us to organise the knowledge of the social world by inferring motives for somebody’s action. These explanations are, unlike in the argumentative discourse, indirect (Roeh, 1989; see chapter 1.2). Bruner (1991) in fact claims that intentional states never fully determine the course of events in a narrative because, besides external limitations, characters have some measure of agency and choice. Even when not limited by external obstacles, characters might choose *not* to pursue the action that enables them to fulfil their goals. Because

of the loose link between intentional states and subsequent action, narratives cannot provide causal explanations but only the basis for interpreting why a character acted as he or she did. Narrative is thus 'concerned with "reasons" for things happening, rather than strictly their "causes"' (p. 7). In order to put the somehow chaotic happenings of the social world into a coherent form, narrative *interpretations* seem more suitable than causal *explanations*. Unlike in the physical world, the social event B is not always determined, and thus cannot be directly predicted by the event A. Narrative is thus best suited to clarify events that have happened in the social world where somebody's psychology provides the reason, but not the cause, for his or her action.

It is with the social rather than the physical world that news is arguably concerned: Even when it reports naturally occurring events, it does not aim to provide a scientific analysis but an interpretation of what they mean to people and why they have consequently reacted to them as they did. This is why I will go on to argue that most news functions in the form of a story either on the micro or macro level. In order to substantiate this claim I will first introduce the definition of narrative.

2.3.1 Narrative and its presence in news

Ryan (1992, 2004) outlines three basic conditions of narrativity which form a definition of narrative as a type of meaning: First, a narrative text must create a world and populate it with characters. This world must then undergo changes of state that are caused by physical events: either accidents or deliberate human action. Lastly, the text must allow the reconstruction of the interpretive network discussed previously. It is argued here that most news satisfies these conditions at least on the macro level and could therefore be conceptualized as narrative. Ryan (1992) in fact defines news as a special, deferred mode of narrativity. Each individual report represents only an episode in the developing narrative of events happening in the real world and the final resolution is therefore deferred. News is then 'more like a serial than a short story' (A. Bell, 1999, p. 242) and often cannot present clear-cut results. In spite of this, news reports are full, self-sufficient texts, which aim to achieve narrative completeness by imposing a beginning and end to each singular report (M.-L. Ryan, 1992).

On the micro level, news consists of both narrative and other types of discourse providing argumentation, description, and exposition. Some news texts, particularly action or events oriented (Pan & Kosicki, 1993), might predominantly contain narrative discourse with other

types of discourse complementing it in building the reader's representation of narrative meaning. According to Ryan (2004), no narrative is in fact built with narrative sentences only, which report characters actions. A narrative requires also sentences describing the location and the characters themselves, and some explanatory and evaluative sentences. Direct causal statements might be included in narrator's observations or in character dialogues. In the case of news narratives, this corresponds to journalists' or news actors' observations of the reported events, the latter presented in the form of direct quotes. Bell (1999) in fact claims that news 'has a penchant for direct quotation. The flavour of the eyewitness and colour of direct involvement' (p. 243) is important to it. This is related to the importance of readers' engagement with characters for framing, as will be advocated later.

Other news texts might be predominantly argumentative and expository. What Pan and Kosicki (1993) call issue stories, 'focus on one issue or topic at a time and report several events, actions, or statements related to the issue' (p. 60). Here, short stories might be used as anecdotes to illustrate the journalist's take on the topic or issue. They are a 'self-enclosed micro level unit embedded in a nonnarrative macro structure' (M.-L. Ryan, 1992, p. 12); since they might be instrumental to the general message, or frame of the news narrative, they possess an instrumental mode of narrativity.

Roeh (1989) summarizes the discourse types described above in two broad categories – the argumentative and the mimetic discourse – in order to emphasise their main difference: How directly they express communicator's beliefs. While in the argumentative discourse beliefs are expressed through direct utterances, such as claims and statements, in the mimetic discourse, consisting of the narrative and the descriptive discourse, they are expressed by implication (see Chapter 1.2).

From a structural level, a text is considered to possess narrative properties if it has a clear beginning, middle, and end that evoke a rise and fall in tension following the so called dramatic or 'Freytag triangle' (M.-L. Ryan, 2004). Labov (1999) proposes a more elaborate scheme by describing six components of the narrative structure: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result or resolution, and coda. After a short summary of the story that might be given in the abstract, orientation provides the answer to questions that are typically addressed by journalists as well (A. Bell, 1999): Who, when, what, where? In the orientation, the author thus identifies 'the time, place, persons, and their activity or the situation' (Labov, 1999, p. 229). This activity or situation is then interrupted by a complicating action that eventually results in a resolution. The narrative ends with a coda which signals that the narrative is finished and that

none of the events that might follow are important for the narrative. Evaluation does not have a fixed place in the structural order of narrative components, but ‘penetrates the narrative as waves’. It consists of means used by the narrator to indicate the point of the narrative: Why it was told and what is the narrator getting at.

Evaluation is an essential element of the narrative structure because it ‘distinguishes a directionless sequence of sentences from a story with a point and meaning’ (A. Bell, 1999, p. 240). Besides evaluation, the complicating action is necessary as well if we are to recognize a narrative (Labov, 1999). This is clear already from the previously outlined basic conditions of narrativity which presuppose that the narrative world must undergo changes of state (M.-L. Ryan, 1992, 2004). Simply put, in a certain time and place something must happen in order for the story to take place. According to Bruner (1991), this precipitating event represents a breach of the implicitly present canonical script which prescribes the way people usually behave in a culturally defined situation. White (1981) goes further to argue that the precipitating event does not only represent something unusual, but a conflict – the event that represents the breach of some values for the social system, as judged by the narrator. This breach is then ‘readily recognizable as a familiar human plight’ (Bruner, 1991, p. 12) and warrants the story’s ‘tellability’. As such, the complicating action connects again with evaluation which defines why the story is worth telling. The examples of news texts that Bell (1999) analysed demonstrate that news contain both the evaluation and the complicating action and most of the other elements of narrative discourse, although their order and importance are somehow different. This will be discussed later in the presentation of the inverted-pyramid discourse structure common in news. Now the discourse structural properties of narrative will be explained in more detail in order to define when news is narrative and when narrative discourse could be used to form a frame.

The components of the narrative discourse structure do not need to be in chronological order. In narratological terms, the actual events that do happen consecutively and form the ‘story’ can be presented in a different order in the ‘narrative’². The same story, or ‘event structure’, could then result in different narratives, or ‘discourse structures’. Some discourse structures might evoke particular affective reactions. Knobloch et al. (2004) tested the impact of two such structures: the linear and the reversal type. In the linear type, the discourse structure equalled the event structure since the following elements were presented in chronological order: initiating event, exposition, complication, climax, and outcome. The linear discourse structure was predicted to

² Despite the different meaning that the terms ‘story’ and ‘narrative’ hold in narratology, they are used interchangeably in this thesis, as is the practice in the narrative persuasion research.

evoke the most suspense as ‘the initiating event, presented early in the text, makes significant consequences for the characters very likely to happen in subsequent developments’ (p. 261). The reversal discourse structure was in turn predicted to instigate the most curiosity since the outcome was presented first, making readers wonder throughout the story what caused it. Readers’ curiosity is resolved towards the end of the narrative when the missing information in the form of the initiating event is provided.

The discourse structures that Knobloch et al. (2004) called the linear and the reversal type are typical of fictional narratives. However, authors investigated the affective impact of another structure that is characteristic of news narratives: the inverted-pyramid style. ‘This format places the most important elements at the beginning of an article, at the wide end of the inverted pyramid, and less and less important aspects toward the end, at the narrow end of the pyramid’ (p. 263). In terms of structural components, the initiating event and the outcome are placed at the beginning of the discourse, whereas the remaining elements – the exposition, complication, and climax – follow toward the end.

Knobloch et al. (2004) have found that the inverted pyramid style evokes the least suspense, curiosity and reading enjoyment compared to the linear and the reversal type. This is not surprising given the importance that the outcome plays for a narrative. White (1981) in fact claims that when the narrative conflict is resolved, this resolution gives meaning to all events in the plot that ultimately lead to its closure. The resolution, in fact, reveals at the end a structure that was imminent in the events *all along* (p. 19, original emphasis), according to the narrator. Considering this, perhaps only the first, wider part of the inverted pyramid could be understood as a proper narrative; elements that are added after the initiating event and the outcome are not necessary for the meaning that the reader constructs from the narrative text.

However, according to Bell (1999) the wider part of the inverted pyramid forms part of the abstract which is the first component of the narrative structure outlined by Labov (1999). The abstract provides insight into the orientation and the complicating action in order to forecast what the story is about (Labov, 1999). In news narratives, the abstract is contained in the lead which ‘summarizes the action and establishes the point of the story’ (A. Bell, 1999, p. 239), and in the headline which is the ‘abstract of the abstract’ (ibid). Bell notes that news stories generally place the result before the action which caused it because it is the outcome that is important to the audience. Therefore, news stories ‘consists of instalments of information of perceived decreasing importance’ (p. 243). This enables them to be updated if a new outcome arises, since

the previous action might simply drop down in the story. The inverted-pyramid style thus supports the deferred mode of narrativity (M.-L. Ryan, 1992) present in news.

Still, Bird and Dardenne (1997) claim that 'while the inverted pyramid is an efficient device for the writers, it might be a disaster for the reader' (342). The authors criticise the form in which the lead already dispenses with suspense, 'while explanation, rather than developing through the story, may follow the "result" of the events described' (p. 342). According to Bird and Dardenne, this disengages the readers, encourages partial reading, and causes them to forget much of what they read. Therefore, the authors claim that news in inverted pyramid style functions as a chronicle and not as a proper story.

The chronicle, in Bird and Dardenne's (1997) conceptualization, is represented by 'the daily background of routine stories in terse, inverted pyramid style, recording accidents, unremarkable crimes, day-to-day local or national business' (p. 339). Similarly than chronicles, briefs are defined as 'extremely short stories commonly found in newspaper reports of crimes' (Coleman & Thorson, 2002, p. 408). These short stories possess the embryonic mode of narrativity whereby not all of the basic narrative conditions are satisfied (M.-L. Ryan, 1992). What is missing is the interpretive network; the events listed are not held together by a complex network of causal relations, but by temporal links of chronological succession only. Consequently, events remain disparate entries of the text which fail to coalesce into an intelligible plot and do not build a unifying narrative structure. For this reason, chronicle is held to represent a lower stage of narrative (White, 1981).

The position advocated here is that the inverted-pyramid style is only one type of discourse structure which might or might not represent a proper story. Admittedly, this style invokes less affective responses from readers (Knobloch, et al., 2004) and therefore possesses fewer degrees of narrativity on the structural level (Kinnebrock & Bilandzic, 2006), which equals to a lower narrative quality (Kreuter et al., 2007). However, news texts written in this style might still function as narratives as long as they contain the necessary discourse elements: the complicating action and the evaluation (Labov, 1999); Bell (1999) claims that this is the case with most news, which is mainly written in an inverted pyramid form. Parallel to that, it is claimed that most news satisfy the basic conditions of narrativity (M.-L. Ryan, 1992, 2004): They describe changes of state in the narrative world (i.e., contain a complicating action) and allow the reconstruction of the interpretive network, which is used to give the text a point and a meaning (i.e., an evaluation).

News text which do not satisfy these conditions – the chronicles – are considered ‘frameless’ (Van Gorp, 2010, p. 94). Their text is only about the core facts and the journalist’s only choice is whether to write it or not. There is no point, or meaning, that the journalist would like to transmit. In narratological terms, the point and meaning constitute the evaluation part of the narrative structure, while in the media and communication studies it represents the frame. This brings us back to the initial aim of this chapter – to provide a link between framing and the use of narrative. A literature review has been provided to support the claim that most news functions in the form of a story; arguably, this form can be used to deliver the frame. In fact, textual elements such as the lead and the headline which are deemed very important for framing (e.g., Entman, 1991), represent the nucleus of narrative evaluation:

‘The lead focuses the story in a particular direction. It forms the lens through which the remainder of the story is viewed. This function is even more obvious for the headline, especially when it appears to pick up on a minor point of the story’ (A. Bell, 1999, pp. 240-1).

It is thus argued that evaluation represents the frame of the news text when it is written in the form of a narrative. According to both discourse structural (A. Bell, 1999; Labov, 1999) and content/semantic type of definitions (M.-L. Ryan, 1992, 2004), this is the case with most news texts except with those written in the form of a chronicle. However, in news texts which are longer and more complex than chronicles, and unlike them, do have a frame, this frame might be delivered through means other than elements of the narrative discourse. As was previously discussed, issue stories consist of mainly argumentative and expository discourse whereby framing is achieved through traditionally researched rhetorical means. Narrative within the realm of issue stories only operates on the micro level, as an anecdote to illustrate the point, or substantiate the frame, and as such possesses the instrumental mode of narrativity (M.-L. Ryan, 1992). Differentiating between levels on which narrative operates enables a focus on how precisely might frames be formed through elements of narrative discourse (i.e., narrative devices) versus rhetorical means. As was argued in Chapter 1.2, this has not been done so far, and is thus the aim of framing analyses presented in Chapters 3 and 4.

Framing has never been explored in relation to narratives conceptualized at a textual level. The reason for this omission might be that not only framing, but narrative itself has been extremely hard to define. Ryan (2004) lists several strands from which scholars have attempted to approach this task. Just within this thesis, the following definitions of narrative have been proposed: narrative as a mode of thought (Bruner, 1991), as a series of structural discourse

elements (Labov, 1999), and as a type of meaning (M.-L. Ryan, 1992, 2004). The literature that focuses on news narratives has defined 'narrative' in line with Bruner's (1991) conceptualization – as a mode of thought that functions to construct social reality (Barkin, 1984; Bird & Dardenne, 1997; Hanson, 1997; Roeh, 1989). For instance, Barkin (1984) claims that 'storytellers make sense of the world. They organize phenomena into scenarios, which imply that there are reasons for what has happened' (p. 29). As storytellers, journalists perform an explanatory function and thus 'reinforce a particular view of social reality' (p. 32). Similarly, Roeh (1989) claims that news narratives are a way of giving form to experience. According to Hanson (1997) they are one of the social forms 'which select elements from the raw stuff of experience and shape them into determinate unities' (p. 386). Other 'stories of the real', among which Roeh (1989) counts history, perform a similar function. According to White (1981), the historiographer, as the journalist, does not only convey events 'as they are', but interprets them as good or bad for him and for the social system to which he belongs. It is this interpretation that transforms the text into a narrative.

Based on their definition of narrative, the literature on news narratives uses the terms 'story' and 'narrative' to emphasise that news texts do not only convey reality but actively construct it: 'While news is not fiction, it is a story about reality, not reality itself' (Bird & Dardenne, 1997, p. 347). According to this strand of literature, all news is narrative, because it constructs and not only represents reality. Hanson (1997) argues that also the traditional news style which is deemed objective, only displays a specific form of storytelling. In this form, official or institutional sources from both sides of the story are quoted in order to give an 'unbiased' or neutral account of an event. However, this 'has little in common with the abstract ideal type that defines objectivity as an uninterpreted presentation of the physical and social world' (p. 387). The interpretation is there, but 'a reader should not be able to tell how the writer stands on the issue merely by reading the story' (ibid). In other words, a reader should not be able to recognize the frame. Entman (1993) claims that 'journalists may follow the rules of "objective" reporting and yet convey a dominant framing of the news text that prevents most audience members from making a balanced assessment of a situation' (p. 56).

To sum up, the literature on news narratives contends that all news is narrative, because all news is inherently subjective, that is, it contains a frame. Any framing performed then represents the construction, or 'narrativization' of reality, even if this frame is not primarily delivered through narrative discourse. In fact, this strand of literature does not precisely define what narrative might be in terms of discourse other than a text that constructs social reality.

There is only one attempt made by Hanson (1997) who juxtaposes narrative realism to objectivity as a form of reporting news. Narrative realism is a new form of journalism (in fact, called 'new journalism'; see Wolfe & Johnson, 1973) which presents factual content in a narrative format (this being the reason why it is also called 'narrative journalism'). Simply put, it involves the use of fictional techniques to tell a non-fictional story (Barkin, 1984). Hanson (1997) describes some of these techniques, but does not state whether they contribute to a discourse that is qualitatively different from the one written in the objective form. Rather, both are conceptualized as storytelling techniques used to 'create an image of reality within the mind of the reader' (p. 386).

Parallel to Hanson (1997), also D' Angelo (2010) opposes the 'credo of objectivity', or 'frame of facticity'. Consequently, D' Angelo proposes that 'framing analysis affords boundless opportunities to understand how instances of an evolving narrative form [...] construct meanings of seemingly isolated incidents and events' (p. 358). However, the role of narrative in framing has been scarcely researched so far. As with the literature on news narratives, so does the framing research tradition define any news text with a frame (that is, most of them; see D'Angelo, 2010) as a story. For instance, Van Gorp (2010) mentions 'frames that could turn events into stories' (p. 85). If all news is narrative, this prevents a focus on the role of narrative in framing. When this has been done, narrative has been conceptualized as a culturally constructed mythological narrative (Berkowitz & Nossek, 2001; Bird & Dardenne, 1997). Narrative within framing has then been analysed on the level of cultural frames (Van Gorp, 2010), or as a culturally shared cognitive script (Pan & Kosicki, 1993; see discussion in Chapter 1.2). Again, there has been no focus yet on narrative at the textual level to examine how framing might be performed through elements of narrative discourse, or narrative devices. This lack is evident despite the observation of Bird and Dardenne (1997) that 'in order to explain [that is, to frame], journalists are constantly reverting to the story form' (p. 343). The authors recommend that 'a closer examination of the variety of narrative techniques used by journalists may be in order' (p. 341). This recommendation has been taken up in this PhD project, as will be outlined in the following section.

2.4 Framing through the use of narrative devices

A number of narrative techniques have been explored and recommended for journalists' use by advocates of the new, or literary journalism (Barkin, 1984; Hanson, 1997). These techniques include scene-by-scene construction, whereby the story is told through events rather than

historical narrative; extensive use of dialogue; telling the story through the perspective of a given character; and the inclusion of symbolic details which ‘would indicate the “status life” of individuals’ (Hanson, 1997, p. 390). This project focuses on techniques that pertain to the treatment of character, such as the point of view explained here. It is argued that these techniques are present in most news stories because it is the very inclusion of characters and their mental states that transforms a text into a narrative. Narrative devices called here ‘reader engagement techniques’ might thus be found in all examples of news narratives: Those written in the mainstream objective form as well as those written in the literary style of the new journalism, which is a ‘practice of self-conscious storytelling’ (Barkin, 1984, p. 31). Narrative is in fact not only the domain of a specific form of journalism, but of news in general. For this purpose, all news coverage of a specific event has been analysed in this project.

To substantiate the claim that character is key to narrative, I should like to re-examine the definition proposed by Ryan (1992, 2004): a narrative text must populate the narrative world with characters and allow the reconstruction of why they behave as they do. A narrative is in fact a text about the social world; in this world, human or human-like individuals (i.e., possessing intentional states) are the main actors and reactors to external events and as such the bearers of causality. If a news text proposes an explanation for the reported events or issues through narrative discourse, it must thus develop a sufficient characterization, or description of involved individuals, to allow an understanding of their actions. It also helps if a narrative presents the character’s point of view on events that befell him or on actions that the character initiated himself. This is precisely why the point of view and characterization form the reader engagement techniques analysed here; the main thesis pursued in this chapter is that these techniques help to develop an explanation for the reported events or issues, that is, to deliver the frame.

Characterization and point of view are called ‘reader engagement techniques’ because they likely invite reader engagement with characters at whom they are addressed (a supposition that will be tested in the studies reported in Chapters 6 and 7). Engaged readers then view the reported event or topic from the perspective of these characters, which is why reader engagement techniques are believed to represent useful framing devices. As different frames are usually present about a certain event or topic, these devices are used to engage the reader on the side of some of the involved individuals, or characters in a news story, instead of others. As Ryan, Anastario and DaCunha (2006) claim, ‘far from being neutral hosts of public discourse [...] media outlets participate in ongoing policy contests; by choosing whom to quote and whom to ignore, journalists decide whose accounts count’ (p. 211).

Reader engagement techniques are the focus of the present framing analyses where a link between characterization, point of view and available frames is sought. These analyses were performed on crime news for two reasons. First, crime news most often represents reports about specific crime events instead of a more topical commentary about a certain type of crime and its (societal) causes (for a review see Coleman & Thorson, 2002; Rodgers & Thorson, 2001). As was claimed in the previous section, events reports are more likely to be written in the narrative form than the so called issue stories (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). The second reason why crime news has been chosen among other possible topics that lend themselves to event focused coverage is that its connection to narrative has been often emphasised. For instance, Corner (2009) claims that nowhere has the tendency to use narrative devices been clearer than in the coverage of crime. The author explains that the use of techniques such as empathic personalization creates ‘dramatic playoffs of [...] desire, fear and uncertainty (p. 145)’. Similarly, Roshier (1981) notes that crime news consist of ‘relatively long reports with a literary style that often unfolds the plot like a novelette, with headlines which are suggestive without giving much away (p. 48)’. Before proceeding to the analyses of selected crime events, the methodology used for this purpose will be introduced.

2.5 The Media Framing Analysis

Despite being a long-established analytic approach in the social sciences, the status of framing as a method has been challenged over the years. Giles and Shaw (2009) note that ‘large-scale quantitative content analyses of simple units and complex microanalyses of discourse have been grouped together under the same technique (pp. 377-8)’. Media Framing Analysis (MFA) developed by the authors is an attempt to resolve some of the methodological inconsistencies while retaining as much flexibility as possible to allow its use across different research topics and disciplines.

The analytical goal of framing analysis is to determine which of the words and images present in a text are components of the frame and which are not (Entman, 1991). The accomplishment of this goal might be facilitated through the application of MFA which is a systematic methodological tool to identify the frame of each news text. MFA was developed specifically to analyse media material which gives it precedence over content analysis and other methods of textual analysis that are not sensitive to the mediated context of the data. It consists of six flexible stages which inform the assignment of a frame to each text in the dataset: identifying story; identifying character; establishing reader identification; analysing narrative form;

analysing language categories; and identifying points of generalization. MFA could be applied to the analysis of news in either written or audio-visual form; however, Giles and Shaw (2009) provided specific examples from newspaper articles. Print media was the focus of research in the current project as well and therefore I will refer to news texts as articles in the following presentation of MFA methodology.

MFA is built on Entman's (1991, 1993) work and therefore its stages bear a high similarity to the framing processes identified by the author. Table 2.1 summarizes similarities in the approach to framing between Giles and Shaw (2009) and Entman (1991, 1993) which will be further explained in the description of the individual stages of MFA.

Table 2.1

Comparison of MFA stages to elements of framing identified by Entman

Giles and Shaw (2009)	Entman (1991, 1993)
Identifying story	Problem definition
Identifying character	Identification and Agency
Reader identification	Identification and Agency
Narrative form	
Language categories	Categorization
Generalization	Generalization

Below I briefly outline the stages of MFA, devoting more space to the Reader identification phase within which reader engagement techniques have been analysed. This phase has been further developed in this project precisely by identifying specific textual elements by which reader identification might be prompted: the reader engagement techniques. Instead of reader identification, I henceforth refer to reader engagement, since identification has been conceptualized as just one of the processes of reader engagement, as indicated in the Thesis outline (Chapter 1.4) and as will be explicated in more detail in Chapter 5.4.

Initial data collection and screening. In this initial stage, a database of relevant media material is formed. Code words relevant to the research question might be entered in existing newspaper databases, such as *News Bank* (<http://www.newsbank.com/>), or they might guide the search of online content and televised news bulletins. Next, the collected media material is screened for relevance to the research question.

Identifying story. In this step each article is related to a specific triggering event that can be regarded as the origin of the story. This bears a resemblance to the framing function of ‘problem definition’ in which frames determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits (Entman, 1993). This notion is strengthened in MFA through the idea that it is possible to identify a distinctive ‘news peg’ for each story (Cooper & Yukimura, 2002). This might be a specific incident, press release, statement, or the publication of a piece of research in the coverage of a particular topic. For some articles, such as opinion columns, news pegs may be simply other news, which act as secondary news pegs. News pegs primed by another news pegs feed the process of ‘generalization’ (Entman, 1991) which constitutes a crucial step of MFA. The analysis of generalization in fact enables a direct investigation of long term media influence and will be described in one of the following sections.

Secondary news pegs might be present in a commentary article or larger feature, but are harder to identify in a short news report. For this reason, it is important to break the data set down according to the nature of the analytic units. Newspaper articles could be categorized into a front page item, short news report, extended news report, short and long feature, and editorial and opinion column. Giles, Shaw and Morgan (2009) suggest several possible criteria for the classification of an article, such as its position in the newspaper, the word length and number of quoted individuals.

Another reason for distinguishing articles according to their genre is that they have different stylistic conventions and thus involve different processes by which framing is accomplished (Giles et al., 2009). By breaking down the dataset into meaningful categories of article, potential differences in framing between them could be analysed. Moreover, the coverage of different events and topics could be compared according to the categories represented.

Identifying character. This analytic step consists of identifying key individuals who recur frequently in the articles, compiling a list of ‘dramatis personae’. This forms the basis for the consequent analysis of the narrative form and Reader identification which occupy a central role in MFA.

Reader identification. This is a key step which attempts to demonstrate that the way in which readers are invited to identify, or engage with characters, helps to determine the frame of the story. This assumption is based on Entman’s (1991) work in which he analysed two similar incidents in the 1980s news in which civilian airliners (from Iran and South Korea) were shot down by a military unit (the USA and Soviet Union respectively). Entman found that, in the case

of the Korean aircraft, emphasis was placed on the agency of Soviet military and the victimization of passengers. The agency of the US military, on the other hand, was hidden within a technical discourse of what went wrong in their judgement about the potential threat of the Iranian passenger plane.

The Iran Air victims 'were much less visible, the information less centred on the humanity they shared with audience members, and thus less likely to evoke empathy' (Entman, 1991, p. 15). Spare and plain language with neutral terminology was used to describe their fate, while the coverage of the victims from the Korean plane contained visual embodiments of victims as identifiable human beings, humanizing words and imagined details of what was going on in the flight. Thus, readers were invited to step on the side of the Korean plane victims, while no such invitation was directed towards the victims of the Iranian airliner. This conferred different frames to the two disasters that both exerted a pro-US bias.

In Entman's (1991) work, identification was prompted through the choice of words (humanizing vs. neutral terminology) and peripheral textual items such as headlines, pictures and picture captions. It is argued here that apart from these textual elements, specific narrative devices that are used to cue reader's engagement with characters could be recognised in some articles. These reader engagement techniques form a specific narrative point of view and build a correspondent characterisation of the involved individuals.

The article point of view is formed through the choice of sources that journalists use and instances of internal focalization addressed at them. Van Peer and Maat (1996) define the narrative point of view, or perspective, as the physical or psychological point from which the events are narrated. They refer to differences between two basic oppositions: first versus third person narration and internal versus external narration. News accounts are always written in third person except for opinion and editorial columns. However, the rate of external versus internal narration varies according to the article's length and genre. In shorter articles it is likely that only the external narration, in which character's observable actions and behaviours are described, will be present. However, in larger features instances of internal narration, in which character's thoughts and feelings are described or quoted, might be present as well. This internal perspective is focalized on the character's inner world (and as such called internal focalization), which draws the reader into the character's psychology and thereby creates an illusion of closeness to the character.

A further technique used to invite readers to step on the side of some characters instead of others is characterization. Some individuals are portrayed more positively than others, sometimes to fit the archetypes of victim or hero versus villain. For the purpose of analysing characterizations, attention is paid to characters' descriptions and the use of anecdotes about their lives prior to the crime. These techniques concord with the two pillars of characterisation identified by Berger (1997): descriptions of the character and of his or her behaviour. Readers interpret the current or past actions of characters (narrated in anecdotes) according to their own moral codes and value systems. Thereby, they get a sense of what the characters are like and build their affective dispositions towards them accordingly (Zillmann, 1994, 2006). Descriptions and anecdotes build up what is called here the 'personality profile' of characters in which media interpret what 'manner of a person' (Rapley, McCarthy, & McHoul, 2003, p. 430) the involved individuals were, or are. This provides a motive and thus helps explain their actions.

The Reader identification phase was developed on the basis of Entman's (1991) analysis of identification, as described earlier. The investigation of agency (another framing function described by Entman) is inherent in MFA's analysis of reader identification. The framing of responsibility for a negative event (i.e. agency) in fact determines who are the readers invited to identify with – namely, the other side.

Narrative analysis. As argued in section 2.3.1, many news reports and television documentaries function as factual stories in which much of the framing work is done through storytelling conventions. Bird and Dardenne (1997) even consider story-telling devices as 'a skeleton' on which journalists 'hang the flesh of the news story' (p. 339). Therefore, this stage explores the narrative structure and form of news. Firstly, it could be established whether news articles satisfy the basic conditions of narrativity as established by Ryan (M.-L. Ryan, 1992, 2004) and Labov (1999). Accordingly, articles could be categorized as either narratives or chronicles; the former could then be further analysed. For instance, it could be established whether a certain news article possesses narrativity at the micro or macro level. For narratives on the micro level, it could be examined how they support the main frame of the article. For narratives on the macro level, their discourse structure could be scrutinized further according to the components proposed by Labov (1999). Bell (1999) provides an example of one such analysis. According to the ordering of discourse elements, news articles could then be categorized into those possessing the inversed-pyramid structure, typical for news, versus those having the more literary linear structure (Knobloch, et al., 2004). Parallel to that, news narratives could be categorized into those written in the traditional objective style versus those written in the

narrative realism style typical for the new, or literary journalism (Hanson, 1997). Following these criteria, it could be established whether articles using a more narrative format (the linear discourse structure or even the literary journalistic style) contain different frames than articles with a lesser degree of narrativity (Kinnebrock & Bilandzic, 2006).

In this project, news articles were not analysed according to their narrative properties as specified above. The focus was on reader engagement techniques as textual elements that increase their narrativity (Kinnebrock & Bilandzic, 2006), or narrative quality (Kreuter, et al., 2007), and arguably contribute significantly to the formation of frames, that is, to frame building (Scheufele, 1999). Whereas the Reader identification stage thus focused on narrative at the textual level, Narrative analysis informed this investigation by looking at narrative and its elements at the cultural level: Namely, by identifying narratives as cultural frames (Van Gorp, 2010). These cultural frames are used as devices in the formation of specific news frames. Particularly interesting for the framing analyses performed here are archetypes which provide a pre-set characterization for individuals to which they are applied. Among archetypes, Van Gorp lists the victim and the villain, which were expected to be present in the crime news analysed in this PhD.

Language categories. This stage explores the use of linguistic categories in the framing of news. It includes a detailed examination of the language employed to describe key characters and events in the story. Berger (1997) argues that ‘when authors offer descriptions, through their choice of nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives they are actually speaking to readers, telling them what they should think about certain characters or events’ (p. 44). The present analysis of language categories focused on the portrayal of characters because of its potential to inform the Reader identification phase. This stage is similar to Entman’s (1991) analysis of categorization which surveyed the choice of labels for the plane disasters that either elicited or hindered moral evaluation in audiences. The descriptors used in the coverage of the Korean plane shooting implied that the Soviets acted with deliberate cruelty. On the other side, the descriptors used in the coverage of the Iranian plane shooting emphasised the American innocence by labelling it a mistake.

Generalization. Generalization is a crucial step of MFA because it enables a direct investigation of long term media influence. This final stage requires the analysis of the way articles might be linked either explicitly or implicitly with an ongoing phenomenon. In order to determine the generalization from a specific event to wider debates present in media, the analyst has to separate the news peg, or problem definition (Entman, 1991), from the broader frame. This is

done through investigating whether there is anything intrinsic in the news peg that links the story to a broader frame or whether the link is made through specific intertextual references to other news stories

This step is taken directly from Entman (1991) who found that reports about the Korean plane shooting by the Soviet military were generalized to the nature of the Soviet regime as a whole. Generalization is inherent in the concept of media templates (Kitzinger, 2000) presented earlier. Through generalizations in single articles, media templates gradually emerge over time. In this process, dominant frames work their way from newspaper articles into broader media discourse and thus generalisation may be regarded as the key to how media influence develops.

2.6 Conclusion

MFA stages described above give structure to the analytic process and enable an in-depth exploration of data during which different functions or structures within the text are identified. The analyst has to infer the way in which these functions or structures have worked to frame the story in order to assign a broad frame to each article in the dataset. Conceptually related frames are clustered together in a process typical of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The set of frames that best characterizes the sample is then further reduced to a list of dominant frames. In this project, dominant frames about three different crimes covered in the UK and Irish press were examined by looking at narrative devices used to invite readers' engagement with some characters instead of others. The following two chapters present the results of these analyses.

3 First framing analysis: Engagement with characters as framing device

3.1 Introduction

Crime is the result of an action performed by someone and thus the reason for its occurrence is often sought in this person's psychology. As was argued in the previous chapter, the narrative form provides the means for inferring an explanation about individuals' goals and motives through reader engagement techniques: characterization and point of view. These techniques might play a particularly important role in the formation of frames about crime because at least two different source frames based on them are bound to be present: those advocated by the prosecution and those advocated by the defence. These two sides might present entirely different versions of facts which include dissimilar actions of the accused and the victim, and of their motivation for these actions. Arguably, the prosecution presents the crime from the victim perspective and invites engagement with the victim in order to argue for a strict verdict and punishment of the offender. The defence, on the other hand, might present the same events from the perpetrator's perspective and invite engagement with him or her in order to either reject the accusations, or argue for a mild verdict and punishment.

The source frames of the defence and the prosecution are likely to be picked up by journalists who might subtly position themselves on one of the sides. As with the source frames, the resulting news frames might rely heavily on reader engagement techniques. Moreover, they might lie at the very core of frames applied to some crimes. For instance, the killing of a person might be framed as either murder or manslaughter depending on the presence or absence of the intent to kill: Did the perpetrator have a pre-existing motivation to kill the victim? It is through reader engagement techniques that journalists and sources alike infer their interpretation about the psychological state of the perpetrator that led to the killing. This is why the case of a killing has been chosen to illustrate the use of reader engagement techniques in this chapter. To start with, a brief description of this case is provided, followed by the application of Media Framing Analysis (Giles & Shaw, 2009) to the examination of the coverage.

3.1.1 *The Cawley versus Lillis case*

Celine Cawley was found beaten to death and lying in a pool of blood in the patio of her luxury Dublin home in December 2008. Her husband Eamon Lillis called an ambulance and told

emergency services that he had found an intruder attacking his wife, providing a detailed description of the man who was allegedly wearing a balaclava and gloves. He also claimed that he had received an injury in the ensuing struggle before the intruder escaped through the back garden and that the gardener taking care of their property might be a possible suspect. Five days later, Garda (i.e., the Irish police) arrested Lillis and charged him with murder. The state pathologist later concluded that Cawley died of injuries consistent with being hit three times with a blunt object believed to be a brick, which was found near her body.

The Irish press stressed that Celine Cawley was from privileged origins and led a glamorous life: 'In her younger days Celine lived a jet-set lifestyle as an international model rubbing shoulders with celebrities' (O'Shea, 2008³). It was also frequently mentioned that she featured briefly in a Bond film, resulting in the label 'Bond girl'. Later on in her career she founded an advertising company of which she was a managing director, while Lillis was its TV ads producer and executive. The press frequently emphasised the success of their company and their acquired wealth.

Lillis was released on bail in January 2009 and a year after, in January 2010, the trial began. At the start of the trial Lillis revealed that he had invented the story about the intruder and that he had in fact been the only person present at the scene of the crime. In spite of this revelation, he denied murdering his wife. He claimed that a row between them had erupted over his forgetting to put out food for the birds. According to Lillis's testimony, Cawley received the three head wounds when she first accidentally slipped on the ground in the patio and hit her head on a brick. During the row that then exploded he pushed her against a window frame. As they both fell to the ground, he pushed her head back to stop her biting his finger. At this point, he claimed, the couple conspired to pretend that they got the injuries from a fight with an intruder in order to hide the truth from their 16-year old daughter Georgia. Lillis then left his wife thinking she was fine, since she was sitting upright and wanted him to go away. He went into the bathroom upstairs, cleaned himself and changed his clothes. When he returned downstairs after approximately ten minutes he found her unconscious in a pool of blood and it was at this point that he called the ambulance. Since at this point he was not aware that her injuries were life-threatening, he persisted with the intruder lie to save face with his daughter. He claimed that after getting the news about her death he went into complete shock and did not know how to retract his lie.

³ Newspaper articles analysed or quoted in this study are referenced separately in Appendix 1.

During the trial, several inconsistencies were noted in Lillis's account and a possible murder motive was advanced: Lillis had begun an affair with a young masseuse, Jean Treacy, just eight weeks before the incident. Compelling evidence for the murder charge was presented by the prosecution: there was a half-hour delay before Lillis had called the ambulance; a bag of Lillis's clothes stained with Cawley's blood was discovered in the attic, and further bloodstains and Cawley's tissue were found on Lillis's wristwatch. There were also inconsistencies about the origins of the row that sparked the struggle: Lillis had told Jean Treacy that the argument between him and his wife was triggered by his failure to take out the household rubbish. Despite this evidence, the jury ruled that the prosecution failed to demonstrate intent for murder and instead found him guilty of manslaughter on 30th January 2010. Lillis's sentence was delivered on 6th February.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Media Framing Analysis

For the analysis of the present crime case, the Media Framing Analysis (Giles & Shaw, 2009) as described in Chapter 2.5 was used.

Initial data collection and screening. The coverage of Lillis versus Cawley was analysed in the Irish newspapers offered by the online database *Newsbank* (<http://www.newsbank.com/>): the *Irish Independent/The Sunday Independent* and the *Irish Times*. Moreover, the Irish editions of newspapers from the UK, such as *The Sun*, were available for analysis from *Newsbank* as well. Articles were sampled in the period from the announcement of Cawley's death on 16 December 2008 until 7 March 2010, when the analysis was concluded. Two hundred articles were identified from the database. This database provides only the text of the articles and therefore the analysis of the role of visual imagery in conveying the frame was not possible. However, in some cases the text caption describing the pictures was included in the articles, which made possible a broad inference about the nature of the pictures.

Articles were classified according to their genre: long features, short features, news, short news and opinion columns (see Table 3.1). One additional article was a letter from a reader and one was a long feature which also contained an opinion column. An article that was a communication to the readers about a new crime journalist was excluded. It could be seen from Table 3.1 that there were more news and short news reports of a particular event (e.g. when Lillis was charged with murder), than more discursive, commentary-type articles. However, the coverage contained a considerable amount of short features as well.

Table 3.1

Article classification according to genre

Genre	Number of articles
Long feature (+1500 words)	10
Short feature (+500 words)	52
News (+200 words)	69
Short news	59
Opinion column	9
Total	198

Identifying story. In the coverage of the present crime case the news pegs were generally press releases by the Garda about the progress of the investigation, events during the trial (e.g., Lillis’s lover testifies), and statements by unnamed official sources as well as people who knew the couple.

Identifying character. The key characters in the present crime case were Lillis, Cawley and their daughter Georgia. Various members of Cawley’s family featured repeatedly: her father Jim, brother Christopher, and sister Susanna. Jean Treacy was also a key character, because her relationship with Lillis provided a possible motive for the murder charge advanced by the prosecution. To sum up, the list of ‘dramatis personae’ in the present case consists of:

- the offender Eamon Lillis,
- the victim Celine Cawley,
- their daughter Georgia Lillis,
- Lillis’s lover Jean Treacy,
- Celine’s father Jim Cawley,
- Celine’s brother Christopher Cawley,
- Celine’s sister Susanna Coonan.

Reader identification. This is the key step in the current analysis which attempts to demonstrate that the way in which readers are invited to engage with characters and their viewpoints about the crime helps to determine the frame of the story. Examples of character personality profiles and point of view will be therefore provided in the main analysis section, where they will be linked to the available frames.

Narrative analysis. The identification of archetypes will be provided in the discussion section, as a generalization from specific characterizations used in the portrayal of Cawley and Lillis. Besides archetypes, there was a particular cultural narrative to which the description of relationships between Cawley, Lillis and Treacy was linked: that of a love triangle. Treacy was in fact portrayed as a young and attractive girl who falls in love with Lillis, an older, wealthy and married man.

Language categories. The present analysis of language categories focuses on the portrayal of characters because of its potential to inform the Reader identification phase. For instance, a personality profile of Lillis as an evil murderer was achieved through the use of labels such as 'cheating wife-killer' and 'love rat'.

Generalisation. This final stage of the current analysis involved searching for references to other long-standing crime stories in the press coverage of Lillis versus Cawley. Moreover, it was examined whether the case itself was mentioned in the coverage of subsequent crimes.

3.2.2 Procedure

The dominant frames in the present analysis differed regarding the phase in which the crime was dealt with by the legal system: crime investigation, trial and imprisonment. The crime was framed differently in the three periods regarding to the information that was known to the public; the analysis was therefore performed separately for each phase.

The first phase concerns the coverage between the news about Cawley's death on 16th December 2008, and the start of the trial on 12th January 2010. One hundred and one articles were identified in which the crime was framed as killing based on the conclusion of the state pathologist that Cawley died of injuries consistent with being hit three times with an object. Some articles framed this attack as particularly violent, a consequence of hate, but did not specify whether the killing was premeditated, or whether the hatred escalated in an unplanned outburst of violence. In other articles it was clearly stated that the attack, although violent, was not premeditated.

In the second phase, 33 articles were identified that covered Lillis's trial between 12th and 29th January 2010. Three frames became available: Cawley's death as accident, manslaughter or murder. The defence claimed that Cawley's death was an accidental consequence of a row between her and Lillis, and 11 articles framed the case accordingly. Eleven articles used as a frame the prosecution's claim of murder with intent, while the remaining 11 articles took the middle stance and framed Cawley's death as manslaughter – the result of a killing, albeit without intent.

In the third and final phase, 66 articles were analysed that represent the media coverage of the crime from 30th January, when the jury proclaimed the verdict, until 7th March 2010, when the analysis was concluded. The jury ruled that the prosecution failed to demonstrate Lillis's intent to kill Cawley and found him guilty of manslaughter. Therefore, the frame of accident was no longer possible. However, there were more articles that still framed Cawley's death as murder (40) than those who framed it as manslaughter according to the verdict (26). The frame of murder was proposed by articles implying that Lillis had in fact *intended* to kill Cawley or that the lacked proof of intent is not a justifiable factor to lower the moral severity of taking a person's life. Indeed, all of the articles in the first days after the verdict framed Cawley's death as murder in a probable attempt to emphasise that the act of killing someone is morally blameworthy by itself. Following the judge's decision to reduce the length of Lillis's sentence on 6th February, the majority of articles accepted the frame of manslaughter but shifted the framing work towards the appropriateness of the sentence.

3.3 Analysis

3.3.1 Reader engagement in the framing process

Although frames were scrutinized according to the phases reported above, the present analysis focused on their relation with reader engagement techniques irrespective of the phase in which they were formed. Rather than the quantification of frames, the process of frame building through the use of reader engagement techniques was of interest here. Specifically, the personality profiles of Cawley and Lillis, and their link with the main frames of accident, manslaughter, and murder, were examined. Techniques used to foster engagement with Georgia Lillis and Cawley's family were analysed as well. Quotations and journalists' description of their thoughts and feelings are listed to support the claim that the main frames are enforced either by inviting readers to engage with Cawley, her daughter Georgia and her family, or with Lillis.

Eamon Lillis. To deliver the frame of Cawley's death as an accidental consequence of a row between her and Lillis, an account of events from his perspective is presented and identification with him encouraged:

'MURDER accused Eamon Lillis was goaded by his "superwoman" wife who told him he was a useless husband, a court heard yesterday. [...] Lillis, who earned a '100k salary at his 46-year-old wife's production company to her '500k a year, said she had also needled him about work' (Pownall, 2010a).

The article uses a quotation from Lillis's first-person account of events at the trial to foster engagement with him: 'She said: 'I don't do bins'. [...] She got very sarcastic. She claimed I didn't bother doing things. Said it was typical of me.' The portrayal of Cawley as a dominant wife helps to determine the frame of her death as an accident for which Lillis had limited responsibility: It was she who allegedly provoked him in the row that resulted in her fatal injuries.

Even some articles that framed Cawley's death as manslaughter and attributed the blame for it to Lillis regarded Cawley as partly accountable for the events that led to it. For instance, an article from *The Sun* attributed the reason for Lillis's outburst to his long standing dissatisfaction with their marriage, for which Cawley was regarded responsible: 'Fed up with a sexless marriage to a bullying spouse and desperate to be with Jean, Lillis lost control' (McElgunn, 2010b). Through the description of Lillis's feelings of desperation, readers were invited to engage with him, the killer. Similarly, another article from *the Sun* explicitly states that the reason for attacking the victim came from Lillis's wish to escape his wife's domineering nature: "'Lapdog" Lillis snapped after telling pals he suffered mental torment at the hands of his "Superwoman" spouse with whom he had a teenage daughter' (Moran, 2010). These articles present the events leading to Cawley's death from Lillis's perspective and invite readers to engage with him, possibly in an attempt to justify his conduct. This justification is criticised in other articles, because 'at times it seemed as if Lillis was the wronged party and not the woman he sent to her grave' (Flanagan, 2010).

In contrast from the portrayal of Lillis as a desperate 'lapdog', he is elsewhere presented as 'a cold and calculating killer who battered his wife and left her to die as he tried to cover his tracks' (Pownall, 2010b). An 'informed prison source' is cited stating that

'He's not giving anything away and wouldn't engage in conversation of any sort. There doesn't appear to be a bother on him. [...] Anyone with any sympathy for him should forget it. [...] He may look like a gentleman, but he's a cold, heartless killer' (McElgunn, 2010c).

The portrayal of Lillis as a 'cold killer' frames Cawley's death as murder. It is implied that the attack on Cawley did not happen in rage as inferred by the jury returning a manslaughter verdict, but that he likely had an intent to kill her.

In this frame, Lillis's personality characteristics are considered the cause for the murder: it is implied that it was typical of him to behave aggressively (Pownall, 2010c). The argument for this frame is the revelation of a former friend of Lillis, introduced only as Damien, that he 'held a

KNIFE to a terrified teenager's throat over a silly kids' row' and that he 'smashed up a sports car in a jealous rage'. He was also allegedly thrown out of university for repeatedly trying to set the building on fire. Consequently, the source stated that he 'knew' Cawley was killed by Lillis: 'This is the type of character you were dealing with.' This citation clearly shows the use of anecdotes about Lillis's life prior to the crime in order to build a personality profile of him as a violent murderer. Lillis's personality profile is then employed by a source to argue for a more severe sentence: 'This is a result for him, that he didn't get done for murder, that he got the lightest possible sentence he could get.'

Other articles do not attribute the reason for murder only to Lillis's inclination towards violent behaviour, but argue that there is something inherently 'evil' in his nature that could account for it. Lillis is in fact labelled with words such as *evil wife-killer*, *love-rat*, *cheating brute* and *shameless adulterer*, which refer to his double betrayal of Cawley: when he cheated on her and when he ultimately killed her. The blameworthiness of his betrayal is emphasised through inviting readers to engage with Cawley: it is argued that she did everything for Lillis and gave him a life of luxury (McDaid & Breen, 2010). He, on the other side, had attempted to cheat on her already before his affair with Treacy, as one of the couple's neighbours told: 'He had an eye for the ladies and he tried it on with a few married women but he was told off.' Again, anecdotal materials are used to build the personality profile of Lillis as dishonest, flirtatious and unfaithful. The negative labels are in sharp contrast with his portrayal in the early coverage, in which he was described as a 'mild-mannered art college graduate' (*Sunday Independent*, 2008a). This shows a process of vilification in the development of Lillis's characterisation.

Some articles build up the portrayal of Lillis focusing on his appearance: he 'was a trim, vain man, with an expensive Breitling watch and designer hoodies, who regularly attended a beauty salon and kept in shape with morning exercises' (Power, 2010a). He is portrayed as a man who never fully grew up, which is evident from his way of dressing: 'Even the clothes he wears are far too young for him. He's in his 50s but he wears hoodies. He never left his youth behind' (Kubiak, 2010). The portrayal of him as ineffectual and vain is used to frame the crime as murder with intent: he wanted Cawley out of the way to get advantage of her hard-earned money and enjoy it with a younger lover (Power, 2010a).

Celine Cawley. Some newspaper articles partly blame Cawley for her own death, because she reduced Lillis to a 'part-time house-husband', while heading for success (McElgunn, 2010b). Although it is mentioned in *the Sun* that Lillis was a 'failed journalist' before meeting Cawley, she is not presented positively in the light of giving him a job as an executive of her own firm

(McElgunn, 2010b). Instead, she is portrayed as a ‘superwoman’ who gave him a lower salary ‘with hours suited to being a part-time husband’. Also an article from *the News of the World* mentions that Cawley was paid five times more than Lillis at Toytown Films, the company they ran together (McMenamy, 2010). Even the gardener who was falsely accused for the attack on Cawley regarded her as dominant: ‘I had never dealt with him. Celine was the boss’ (McDaid & Breen, 2010). With the use of this anecdotal material from Cawley’s life prior to the crime, a personality profile of her as a dominant wife is built. This profile is used to frame Lillis’s dissatisfaction with their marriage as the reason for the killing, attributing the blame to Cawley. Another reason cited for Lillis’s dissatisfaction is the claim that Cawley had ‘let go’ her physical condition. She was described as a ‘gorgeous former model’, but in her place was now ‘a size 22 woman, described in court as “clinically obese”’ (McElgunn, 2010b). This apparent lapse in physical state is even used as a mitigating factor in judging Lillis’s behaviour: ‘Lillis was on the look out for a new model Celine’.

The portrayal of Cawley as bossy and bullying is explicitly rejected in the title of an article from *the Sunday Independent* (2010b): ‘Celine not ruthless nor domineering’. Instead of the accident or manslaughter frame formed through the negative portrayal of Cawley, a murder frame is built through presenting an alternative positive portrayal of her: ‘Celine was incredibly hard working and very able. She was just really good at what she did. If a woman is good at something – particularly in business – there seem to be people taking swipes’ (*Sunday Independent*, 2010b). Later, she is portrayed as a ‘warm, kind and generous woman who was both deeply loved and enormously loving in return’. This portrayal is enforced by inviting readers to engage with Cawley’s family, who were ‘upset at “hurtful” trial claims’. Similarly, the title of an article from *the Sunday Mirror* rejects the negative portrayal of Cawley (‘SHE’S NO MONSTER’) and claims that Lillis’s friends used the portrayal of her as dominant ‘to explain his conduct by blaming Celine’s drive and passion for business as the reason he snapped’ (Boyle, 2010). This is judged as unacceptable, because ‘Celine was no longer able to defend herself’. Interestingly, the portrayal of Cawley as dominant was criticised in *the Sun*, even though the same tabloid portrayed her as such in its coverage on the same day (by the same author, Joanne McElgunn): ‘Now they can finally reclaim her reputation as a devoted daughter and sister, rather than the bullying wife Lillis would have us believe’ (McElgunn, 2010a).

Cawley’s daughter and family. In some articles the framing work is done specifically through inviting readers to engage with Cawley’s daughter and family. This is accomplished by describing their feelings of pain:

‘THE death of Celine Cawley is a tragedy for everyone concerned. [...] Lillis refused to tell the truth in the aftermath – and that could have spared the Cawley family additional pain. His actions have torn two families apart and left a young girl without parents.’ (Moran, 2010).

Inviting reader engagement with Cawley’s family makes it possible to argue in favour of murder despite of the manslaughter verdict:

‘When the verdict was read out he [Lillis] looked straight ahead – refusing to allow onlookers, including Celine's 80-year-old father Jim or her sobbing sister Susanna Coonan, a glimpse of what was going on in his mind. [...] While Celine's devastated family wanted a murder verdict, they are relieved that the trial is over’ (McElgunn, 2010a).

3.3.2 The media template of wife-killer

In addition to the analysis of the use of reader engagement techniques for the framing of the Lillis versus Cawley case, it was also explored how the main frames worked their way from newspaper articles into broader media discourse. This was done through the analysis of ways in which the present case was generalised to other long-running crime stories. Findings show that a generalisation was made to ‘fellow wife killers’ who are serving in the same prison as Lillis. The three wife killers to which Lillis is compared, ‘husbands from hell’ (McElgunn & Doyle, 2010), function as media templates – shared understandings of what constitutes a ‘wife killer’ among the newspapers and, by extension, their audiences (Kitzinger, 2000). This generalisation from Lillis’s case helps further to frame his behaviour as premeditated murder. For instance, reference to Brian Kearney who is reported to have murdered his wife Siobhan to keep his multi-million euro fortune intact, insinuates that behind Lillis’s attack on Cawley there may have been a financial interest as well. Moreover, by generalising Lillis’s case to other famous Irish wife-killers who were all convicted of murder and face life sentences, a case was made that Lillis too should have received a more severe sentence (Boyle, 2010).

In addition to being generalised to previous crimes, the case of Lillis versus Cawley itself has become a point of reference to interpret later killings. In the most recent coverage, the case was mentioned in an article about another crime (Power, 2010b). It was not described in detail and it was therefore assumed that the audience was expected to be closely acquainted with the case:

‘As she [the victim of the current crime case] had no previous convictions and poses no apparent threat to society, sending her to jail wouldn't have served any useful purpose

and would have heaped further misery upon an already fractured and bereaved family. Arguably, though, the same was true of Eamonn Lillis, who was also convicted of manslaughter' (Power, 2010b).

It could be seen from this quotation that Lillis versus Cawley has begun to act as a reference point to make sense of subsequent crime events. The case has therefore started to show characteristics of a 'mega' crime (Peelo, 2006) and function correspondingly as a media template. This suggests that Lillis versus Cawley now has a significant influence on the public understanding of crime in Ireland. A further evidence of this is a book about the case (Rieley, 2010) which also shows that Lillis, Cawley and Treacy acquired celebrity status among Irish audiences.

3.4 Discussion

This analysis has illustrated that inviting readers to engage with individuals involved in a crime case might be used to frame the story. In support of this claim, several reader engagement techniques that helped to construct three identifiable frames about Cawley's death (i.e. accident, manslaughter, or murder) have been listed here. The personality profiles built to describe the two key characters – the victim and the perpetrator – and provide reasons for their behaviour were complementary: in articles where Cawley is portrayed as a successful, strong yet caring person, Lillis is described as a vain, ineffectual and aimless 'man who never fully grew up'; where she is described as a 'superwoman' who dominated and bullied her husband Lillis, he was likely to be described as a 'part-time', 'henpecked' 'house-husband' and 'lapdog'. These personality profiles were used to attribute blame and responsibility for Cawley's death and frame the crime accordingly.

The first set of personality profiles *aimless husband/successful wife* were used to frame Cawley's death as murder, providing a motive for the killing. As ineffectual, vain and aimless, Lillis was in fact portrayed as willing to get hold of Cawley's fortune and enjoy it with a younger lover; murder would enable him this without losing a share of this fortune through divorce. Some articles portrayed Lillis in more explicitly negative terms as a cold, calculating, and heartless killer. Overall, readers were invited to engage with Cawley for the double betrayal by Lillis and with her family for their loss. The second set of personality profiles *henpecked husband/bullying wife* was either used to argue for the frame of accident, or surprisingly, for the frame of manslaughter. In the first case, Lillis's first-person narration of events during the testimony was

used to frame Cawley's death as an accident and invite readers to take Lillis's side. Also in the second case, readers were invited to engage with Lillis and understand the reasons why he 'lost control' and 'snapped', which resulted in Cawley's manslaughter.

The use of complementary personality profiles and point of view presentation devices has important implications for how crime is understood. In the first set of reader engagement techniques, explicit labels and anecdotal accounts about Lillis's previous aggressive behaviour were employed to present him as an archetypical villain. The vilification of offenders fosters an understanding that crime can be committed only by 'others' - people who are inherently 'evil' (Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Rodgers & Thorson, 2001). This reflects an everyday bias in causal attribution: when people observe behaviour, they often conclude that the person who performed it was predisposed to do so, ignoring the power of situations (the fundamental attribution error; see Gilbert & Malone, 1995). This bias is typical for the judgement of criminal behaviour even though research has found that extreme circumstances can make ordinary people perform acts of extraordinary violence (Zimbardo, 2008). An article from *the Sunday Independent* illustrates this bias by stating that a nuanced impression of Lillis emerged from Garda interviews with people who knew both him and Cawley, 'an impression which the media, by and large, chose to ignore in a rush to portray him as yet another monster, as undoubtedly any man would be if he had murdered his wife' (Corcoran, 2010).

The second set of reader engagement techniques portrayed Lillis as out of control for his actions (he 'snapped'). This representation offers both a rationale and an excuse for his actions: It implies a 'spontaneous reaction, a spur-of-the-moment, uncontrollable response' (Meyers, 1994, p. 55). Male domestic homicide perpetrators have been frequently found to receive exculpatory coverage (e.g., Wozniak & McCloskey, 2010). Almost half (48%) of the articles in the analysis of Bullock and Cubert (2002) suggested at least one motivation or excuse for the perpetrator that could be interpreted as exonerating him or her, while 17% blamed the victim for his or her death. Also in the Lillis versus Cawley case the blame for his 'outburst' is attributed to Cawley through directly provoking him in the row and causing his long-term marital dissatisfaction. The portrayal of perpetrators as out of control and suggestions of culpability on the victim's side are well-known devices used to deny the agency of the perpetrator (Boyle, 2005). This is problematic, because it transfers the blame from the offender to the victim and somehow paradoxically justifies the crime.

The *henpecked husband/bullying wife* set of personality profiles and corresponding point of view also make a claim that the theory of 'mediated witness' needs to be extended from victims and

co-victims to perpetrators. Peelo (2006) defines mediated witness as a phenomenological experience in which readers identify with the emotions of those who have been hurt by the killing. However, the present results point out that newspapers invite readers to engage on the side of offenders as well. Peelo also claims that ‘all murders – indeed all serious crime – have roles in the [public] drama assigned to victims and to perpetrators [...]’, which are based on the use of ‘shorthand symbols’ [i.e. labels] that make ‘it easier for readers to know when to hiss and boo as the villain appears and when to identify with the good and worthy’ (p.163). However, even though some articles in the present case used the commonly employed negative terms to label Lillis, they did not assign him the role of villain, but victim. An article from *the Sun*, for instance, labelled Lillis as ‘wife killer’ in the title, but nevertheless attributed the blame for the manslaughter to Cawley, because she was a ‘bullying wife’ and ‘superwoman’ (McElgunn, 2010b). Thus, Lillis is portrayed as the real victim in this article, because he was exposed to the provocation and mistreatment of Cawley and is therefore more deserving of mercy and compassion than condemnation and constraint (cf. Meyers, 1994). On the other side, Cawley as the ‘bullying wife’ and ‘superwoman’ is the villain of the story. This demonstrates that the roles of villain and victim in the ‘public drama’ are not fixed, even by trial outcomes, but can be exchanged in order to infer a particular frame to the crime case.

Both sets of reader engagement techniques used to build the main frames are problematic, because they either deny the perpetrator’s agency and justify his or her behaviour, or turn a blind eye to the circumstances and portray him or her as an ‘evil murderer’. In both instances, there is a clear-cut victim and villain present, although these roles are attributed counter-intuitively in the *henpecked husband/bullying wife* set of personality profiles. Arguably, *henpecked husband/bullying wife* are in itself established archetypes used to portray relationships in which women who are more successful than their male partners in Western society. In their portrayal of individuals involved in crime journalists thus seem to use pre-established patterns of characteristics provided by archetypes (i.e., archetypes as cultural frames used in the formation of news frames; see Van Gorp, 2010). This is problematic, because it removes human characteristics from both parties and constructs the narrative as a morality tale rather than a slice out of life, ‘a classic story of good versus evil’ (Bullock & Cubert, 2002, p. 491).

In the presently analysed crime case, the reasons for the simplified and stereotypical reporting are likely twofold: First, it is an example of a highly unusual behaviour in which an ordinary person committed an act of extraordinary violence. Initially this was in fact an everyday story of a couple who got involved in a row that resulted in the unexpected act of the killing of one of the

partners. The explanation is thus bound to be complex, but there is no direct insight into it since only Lillis knows what happened on the day his wife died. Despite this, journalists want to clarify why crime happened and suggest prevention strategies in their quest to affirm and maintain the social order (Barber, 1992). Taking into account both the complex circumstances and personal triggers that led someone to commit a crime requires a deep understanding of human psychology. Instead, media make use of explanations that are already present in the culture and in turn reinforced by media themselves: that of the 'evil' present in the perpetrator or of the victim provoking him. This stereotypical portrayal of crime is problematic as it arguably enters into the discourse of the audiences and influences how people attribute responsibility or place blame (Coleman & Thorson, 2002).

Not only has the coverage of Lillis versus Cawley case arguably influenced audiences' attributions, but the administration of justice as well. In the period after the jury had returned the verdict of manslaughter, reader identification engagement techniques were employed to instead frame Lillis's crime as murder. This was probably done because the manslaughter verdict can result in a broad range of sentences in Ireland and it is through framing Cawley's death as murder that the articles advocated a severe one. In this sense the tabloid media exercised parallel functions of justice in a process that Machado and Santos (2009) name 'trial by media'. A powerful way to exert the trial by media was the generalisation of Lillis's crime to the crimes of other wife killers in Ireland: because they were all convicted of murder and face life sentences it was argued that Lillis should have received a more severe sentence as well (Boyle, 2010).

However, the contrary was achieved: the judge considered the media coverage of Lillis, which was 'an affront to the human dignity', as a mitigating factor for a significant three year reduction of his prison term. Despite the opposite outcome of the trial by media, the judge's regard to the impact of Irish press on both co-victims and the offender in delivering the sentence seems a convincing proof of media influence on the administration of justice. *The Sunday Independent* forms a direct critique of the 'trial by media': 'It is not for a media group [...] to dispense what a team of editorial executives may decide is justice' (Corcoran, 2010). Similarly, Machado and Santos (2009) have argued that the processes of 'trial by media' and 'public drama' in sensationalist reporting 'can potentially undermine the principle of fair trial and the presumption of innocence' (p. 146).

The principle of fair trial and the journalistic principles of objectivity and non-advocacy might be endangered even more by an inconsistent use of either vilification of offenders and 'trial by media' or justification of their crimes. *The Sun* first blamed Cawley for her own death, because

she was a 'bullying spouse' and 'clinically obese' (McElgunn, 2010b), but six days later vilified Lillis and portrayed him as a cold killer (McElgunn, 2010c). It is even more perplexing that the same author on the same day both formed (McElgunn, 2010b) and criticised (McElgunn, 2010a) the portrayal of Cawley as a bullying wife. It is possible to argue that *The Sun's* editors and the journalist McElgunn who covered the case did not possess a particular frame about the crime, but used reader engagement techniques to back up whatever frames that had the potential to be sensational.

By illustrating the way in which reader engagement techniques might be effectively employed to frame crime news, our analysis points at the danger of such misuse. If newspaper articles are successful at inducing engagement with the selected characters, readers might be persuaded to adopt these characters' viewpoint about the crime. Thus, reader engagement techniques might not only help to frame a crime event in a certain way, but execute a persuasive power as well: 'By introducing other perspectives and persuading others to identify with them, new possibilities for understanding are opened that may result in attitude change' (J. Cohen, 2001: 260). An inconsistent and unethical use of reader engagement techniques with the sole purpose of instigating audience interest is particularly problematic, because Lillis versus Cawley's case later started to function as a media template for the interpretation of subsequent crimes. Thus, a one-dimensional representation of crime could be built in which victims either deserve their misfortune, or crime happens because of the inherent evil in the offender.

3.5 Conclusion

The first framing analysis looked at engagement with characters as a textual cue and confirmed its role in the formation of frames within the process of frame building (Scheufele, 1999). Next, it is important to test whether frames formed through reader engagement techniques transfer to audience frames within the process of frame setting (ibid; see Chapter 2.2). This will be accomplished in Chapter 6. Prior to that, the following chapter posits another question of concern: What influences which of the predominant cultural explanations about domestic and sexual violence will be chosen by journalists? In other words, under which circumstances will journalists blame the victims rather than accuse the perpetrators for the crime committed?

The vilification of Cawley reflects an everyday tendency of people to blame victims for their own fates, which is a result of the need to believe in a just world (Lerner & Miller, 1978): a belief that there is a reason why someone became a victim and that the crime cannot just happen to

anyone. Perhaps Cawley attracted special scrutiny because she did not conform to the patriarchal ideas of femininity (Boyle, 2005): arguably, she was not perceived as vulnerable and defenceless and therefore not worthy of sympathy and compassion as someone who is given the status of an 'ideal victim' (Davies, Francis, & Greer, 2006).

Decisions about the victims – their worthiness or otherwise – have traditionally been a central part of how society estimates the degree of badness in serious crime (Peelo, 2006). Domestic violence in particular has become a social problem *about the victims* (Berns, 2004, original emphasis): 'Most media stories focus on the victim. [...] He or she is accused for provoking the abuse and held responsible for ending it' (p. 3). This calls for an understanding of the reasons behind victim blaming, because it diverts attention from the true abuser or the cause of the victimization and becomes a primary barrier to social change (Meyers, 1994). The following chapter addresses this call by comparing the coverage of two similar crimes (domestic and sexual assaults) whose victims were however treated in remarkably different ways: while one of the victims received a highly sympathetic portrayal, the other become the target of accusations for the short reunion with her assaulter. The comparative framing analysis explores determinants that led to these divergences.

4 Second framing analysis: A comparison study of victim blaming

4.1 Introduction

Why is it that some female victims of high profile violent crimes get treated with sympathy by the media while others are treated with indifference, or even blamed for their plight? This chapter compares two such instances of violence against women in the UK and Irish press, where in each case the perpetrator of the violence was a male celebrity, while one of the victims was famous and the other not.

The two crimes in question received a massive coverage in the UK and Irish press, most likely as a result of the celebrity status of perpetrators and of one of the victims. This warranted an exclusive focus on the two crime cases while previous research analysed a larger amount of cases involving 'ordinary' victims and perpetrators (Berns, 2004; Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Wozniak & McCloskey, 2010). These usually received only a one-time mention in crime news or a few follow-up articles, while media interest in the two cases analysed here produced a serialized and in-depth coverage, which included many references to the victims. The aim of this chapter is to investigate why these references markedly differ, to the point that one of the victims is subjected to blaming. The identified factors that influenced the degree to which media held the two victims accountable represent an important contribution to the understanding of why media displace blame from perpetrators to victims of sexual and domestic violence and could form the base for future intervention. The chapter starts with a description of the two cases.

4.1.1 The assault of Chris Brown on Rihanna

In February 2009 the UK and Irish press reported that Robyn Rihanna Fenty, the US singer known worldwide as Rihanna, was beaten up by her boyfriend Chris Brown, also a famous singer. An argument erupted between them over a text message that Brown allegedly received from a former girlfriend while they were driving home after a pre-Grammys party. He did not want to admit to Rihanna's accusations of infidelity and turned violent towards her. Brown allegedly tried to push her from the car, but she was strapped in by her seatbelt. He then struck her several times, banged her head against the passenger window, bit her, and tried to choke her. The attack left Rihanna with a mouth full of blood, split lip, blue eye, bloody nose, bruises on her

face, and bite marks on her arms and fingers. When she tried to contact the police, Brown threatened to kill her. He left the scene of crime, but turned to police the next day. The prosecution charged him with making criminal threats and kept him under investigation for charges of domestic violence. He collaborated with the police and was released on bail.

Brown's lawyers first wanted charges against him dropped, but he pleaded guilty to felony assault at the beginning of the trial in June 2009. The plea bargain included a five year probation period, six months of community labour, 52 weeks of domestic violence counselling and an order of protection requiring Brown to remain at least 50 yards away from Rihanna unless at a public event. He was formally sentenced in August. Neither he nor Rihanna provided evidence at the trial and therefore the information about the assault remained limited to leaks from official and unofficial sources until they released their first interviews.

4.1.2 The assault of Marlon King on Emily Carr

The first news that the police had arrested the well-known English-based footballer Marlon King was released in December 2008. He was charged for indecently assaulting and punching the 20-year-old student Emily Carr in a London nightclub. He was released on bail and formally charged for assault occasioning actual bodily harm and sexual assault by touching in February 2009. He declared himself innocent and opted to face trial by jury, which started in October 2009.

Newspapers reported Carr's testimony in which she claimed that King had approached her by sexually touching her on the bottom. Carr firmly rejected his advances after which King turned his attention to other women from her group of friends. When they too recoiled from his touches, he turned back to Carr. After some more teasing from his side during which Carr's friends tried to intervene, King took one step backward and punched her in the face with a clenched fist. The blow broke her nose, split her lip, and gave her a black eye. She was taken to a back room by a staff member of the club who did not call the police. A friend of King's walked into the room and apologised on behalf of King, but accused her of provocation. The police were then called by one of Carr's friends and she was taken to hospital.

King denied all charges against him and claimed that he was victim of mistaken identity. Nevertheless, the jury found him guilty and he was jailed for 18 months. After the verdict it was disclosed that King had 13 past convictions, including two for violence against women. In spite of this, the *News of the World* reported that King proclaimed his intentions to appeal against the current convictions (Weatherup, 2010⁴).

⁴ Newspaper articles analysed or quoted in this study are referenced separately in Appendix 2.

4.1.3 Research rationale

It follows from the description of the two cases that King and Brown committed assaults that resulted in similar physical and psychological damage to the victims. However, this chapter aims to demonstrate that the two victims received a very different treatment in the UK and Irish press. While readers were invited to engage with Carr, Rihanna was vilified for participating in a reunion with Brown. It is argued that this difference arose from four points of divergence: victims' compliance with media demands for commentary in general and endorsement of cultural myths about domestic and sexual violence in particular; the celebrity status and previous media coverage of both victims and their assaulters leading to their dissimilar personality profiles; and perpetrators' (non)acceptance of guilt.

First, Rihanna and Carr approached the media in a very different fashion. While Carr initiated the contact with media, Rihanna eschewed them for nine months, after which she conceded to their interest. The dissimilar media treatment of the two victims might have resulted also from their divergent embracement of victimhood: while Carr put herself in the role of a typical victim, Rihanna declared a wish to avoid victimisation. This comparison factor enables inferences about what type of victim behaviour media prefer and reinforce through positive coverage.

Second, while Rihanna initially behaved against the imperative that it is the victim's responsibility to end the domestic abuse by reuniting with Brown, Carr immediately complied with the cultural myth that male violence is justifiable in case of female provocation by defending herself against it. The two victims thus showed a different compliance with media demands and cultural myths perpetuated by media; the complying victim received a more favourable portrayal as a reward which ironically reinforced the same myths.

Third, characters' celebrity status might have played a role in the media framing of their blame. Brown and King had both been famous prior to the crime, but Brown received a much more favourable coverage. From the victim's side, Rihanna never won the media approval, whereas the previously unknown Carr did not possess a history of negative media representations. The dissimilar personality profiles resulting from that are one of the reasons why I will go on to argue that Carr was portrayed as a stereotypical victim and King as a perpetrator, whereas in Rihanna and Brown's case readers were invited to consider both perspectives.

Fourth, Brown and King reacted to accusations in a completely different way. While Brown confessed his guilt for the assault at the trial, publicly apologized and emphasised his penance,

King denied any involvement. This might be one of the reasons why Brown succeeded to a greater extent in recovering his image. However, far from accepting full responsibility, he portrayed himself as out of control for what happened and thereby provided an exculpatory motive to the media.

These four factors that influenced victim blaming are examined through a detailed analysis and comparison of the coverage, which follows the Media Framing Analysis procedure (Giles & Shaw, 2009) as described in Chapter 2.5.

4.2 Methodology

4.2.1 Media Framing Analysis

Data collection. King's assault on Carr happened in a London nightclub and was therefore covered by the UK and Irish daily newspapers. Because of the focus of the first case, Brown's attack on Rihanna was analysed in the UK and Irish press as well. In both cases, news articles were sampled from the first report about the assault (10 February 2009 for Brown vs. Rihanna and 11 December 2008 for King vs. Carr) until after the sentence (8 August 2010 and 22 June 2010 respectively). Code words, such as 'Marlon King assault', were entered in *Newsbank* (<http://www.newsbank.com/>) in order to find relevant articles. This search provided 112 articles about Brown vs. Rihanna and 143 articles about King vs. Carr. Next, the collected media material was screened for relevance to the research question. The search for 'Rihanna violence Brown' for instance yielded not only articles describing Brown's attack on Rihanna, but also music reviews about the violent content of her songs bearing no reference to the assault.

Newsbank provides access to the text of the articles only and therefore original copies of articles that published the official police photograph of the injured Rihanna were obtained from the British Library. This made it possible to analyse the use of imagery in cueing readers' response to Rihanna. For the same reason, copies of the exclusive interview with Carr for the *News of the World* were obtained, together with articles referring to it and publishing photographs of Carr's injuries afterwards.

Identifying story. In the coverage of the present cases news pegs were generally police press statements about the assaults and charges against King and Brown, trial proceedings, photographs of Rihanna and Carr's injuries, and statements of various sources from the football world as well as celebrities and readers who suffered domestic violence. Interviews with

Rihanna, Brown and Carr were identified as secondary news pegs referenced in subsequent articles.

Identifying character. Key characters in the present coverage are Chris Brown and Rihanna. In addition to Marlon King and his victim Emily Carr, also King's wife Julie is frequently mentioned.

Reader identification phase. The key step in the current analysis that attempted to demonstrate an unequal treatment of Rihanna and Carr in the UK and Irish press was to explore the dissimilar ways in which readers were invited to engage with them. This formed the base for the exploration of factors that influenced the divergence in victim blaming; examples of reader engagement techniques are therefore provided in section 4.3 *Determinants of victim blaming*.

Narrative analysis. The narrative analysis of crime articles in this chapter focused on archetypes, which are often applied to form specific characterizations. The coverage of the cases compared here contained the archetypes of victim and villain, as evidenced in the main analysis.

Language categories. The present analysis focused on language used to form characterizations because of its potential to inform the reader identification phase. Positive language was found in the description of both victims. Labels used to describe Rihanna emphasised her celebrity status (e.g., 'superdiva'), success ('chart queen'), wealth ('multi-million selling artist') and beauty ('gorgeous Umbrella singer'). However, her brief reconciliation with Brown resulted in negative labels as well (e.g., 'silly girl' and 'doormat'). In contrast, Carr obtained only positive labels emphasising her beauty ('pretty victim') and student status (e.g., 'blonde student'). Brown and King received similarly negative labels: For instance, they were both described as 'thugs' and 'cowards'. However, Brown was also described as a 'good kid' (Clements, 2009), 'soft-voiced, puppy-eyed' and 'polite', (Jackson, 2009).

Generalisation. The assault on Rihanna was generalized to the wider problem of domestic violence. Her case highlights that 'relationship violence is not restricted to any particular cultural background, class or age group' (Daly, 2009) and that 'younger women are also at risk' (Carey, 2009). King's sexual and physical assault on Carr was generalized to other crimes of footballers, particularly to those committed against women.

4.2.2 Procedure

Rather than determining the frame of each article, this analysis identified examples of reader engagement techniques that helped to frame the blame for the assault. These excerpts evidenced remarkably different portrayals of the two victims which contributed to a dissimilar

pattern of blame attribution. The following analysis provides examples and explanations for this divergence.

4.3 Determinants of victim blaming

4.3.1 Victim compliance with media demands

Rihanna and Carr had a different relation with media during the coverage of the crimes that were inflicted on them. Carr waived her right to anonymity in an exclusive interview for *News of the World* and revealed photographs of her injuries (Panton & Drake, 2009a, 2009b), while Rihanna maintained media silence for nine months. Also the now famous police photograph of her injuries was leaked on the internet against her will.⁵

Carr's testimony was a powerful means to invite readers' engagement with her and frame King's approach as a sexual assault: 'It was disgusting, a violation. It wasn't just a pinch, it was a squeeze done in a sexual way. I was really offended' (Evans, 2009). Carr supplied photographs to confirm the extent of her injuries and their lasting impact on her facial features:

'Urging all Britain to look at her horrifying injuries in the pictures taken just minutes after he broke her nose and split her lip, she sobbed: "It was like having a brick smashed in your face. King hit me just like a professional boxer. He's a disgrace and should never be allowed on a football pitch again.'" (Panton and Drake, 2009a)

The press openly praised Carr for her disclosure. It was pointed out that she 'bravely waived her right to anonymity to reveal the full chilling story of how the Wigan Athletic star lashed out at her' (Panton & Drake, 2009b).

Rihanna, on the other hand, did not behave according to media expectations. She did not comment on the case until nine months after the assault. The US media explicitly called Rihanna to speak and criticised her for not doing so: 'I think her absence sent a terrible message' (Showbiz Tonight, CNN, 4th April 2009, in Projansky, 2010). In November 2009 Rihanna conceded to the media interest before the release of her new album *Rated R*. She won some sympathies for opening up the debate about domestic violence: 'The pop star has *finally* showed the world that being beaten up is not a crime of passion, it's just a crime' (Daly, 2009; my emphasis). As a contrast to labels used in the earlier coverage of her reconciliation with Brown (i.e. 'pathetic, pulverized mess', 'silly girl' and 'doormat'), she was then described as a 'successful, independent young woman' (Daly, 2009). According to Projansky (2010), this

⁵ The photograph of Rihanna's injuries was published in the UK and the Irish press on 21st February 2009.

presented her as a survivor instead of a victim who is beaten and weak, and unable to leave the relationship as she was portrayed in the early coverage.

Rihanna expressed her resistance to violence not by accusing the assaulter and emphasising her victimhood as Carr did, but by rejecting the victim role and emphasizing her strength through her music work. She declared that she does not 'want that stamp of a domestic violence victim' (Wotton, 2009) and remodelled herself as a 'strong woman' (McCormick, 2010) in the first album after the assault. However, this received a mixed response: Her album was either interpreted as a form of resistance to the role of the victim or as a way of emphasising and exploiting it. Some commentators gave a positive review to the album, although they drew attention to the use of violent imagery and perplexing lyrics: 'Rihanna has said she doesn't want to be defined by the attack, so maybe this is her way of getting it out in the open and putting it behind her' (Nicholson, 2009). Other music reviewers accuse her of exploiting victimhood for studied celebrity: '[T]o accessorise with domestic violence, to make it almost look like "it's kind of cool to be a victim" - that really is too much' (Jenkins, 2009).

Regardless of what Rihanna intended, it seems that her behaviour did not conform to media expectations: victims are supposed to 'help themselves' by getting out of the abusive situation and thus act as empowered survivors. Berns (2004) found that in the so called victim empowerment frame victims are framed as heroic, but only if they solve "their" problems: 'Not only is domestic violence portrayed as a private problem, but most often it is the victim's problem, and she has the responsibility for solving it' (p. 55). At the same time, victims are required to distance themselves from the perpetrator by accusing his actions. This is done efficiently through emphasising their victimhood. Women thus have to present themselves as both survivors and victims, possibly graceful and feminine ones. Boyle (2005) in fact argues that the behaviour of female victims of all kinds of male violence is regularly scrutinised in press reports and only women who conform to patriarchal ideas of femininity are consistently sympathetically treated. It is likely that by remodelling herself as a strong woman Rihanna departed from these ideas. Conversely, Carr fulfilled these expectations by both offering a testimony in which she emphasised her injuries and by publicly accusing King. Consequently, the UK and Irish press portrayed her as a vulnerable, defenceless and innocent victim (Kendrick, 2009), who is worthy of sympathy and compassion. Davies, Francis and Greer (2006) argue that victims who are perceived like this – the so called 'ideal victims' – are given the complete and legitimate status of being victims. Rihanna and Carr's diverging compliance with media demands

for collaboration in general and endorsement of victimization in particular might thus be one of the reasons why media placed a different degree of blame on them.

4.3.2 **Victim compliance with myths about domestic and sexual assault**

One of the primary myths about violence against women is that they have somehow provoked their assaulters (Meyers, 1994). Carr denied that she was dressed provocatively on the night of the assault: 'I was in a grey strapless woollen dress. You couldn't describe it as revealing, it was very conservative' (Panton & Drake, 2009b). She also referred to King's physical predominance: 'I am only a small girl, how on earth could I have provoked King' (Panton & Drake, 2009b). Carr thus defended herself from the implied accusations and thereby took the myth of female provocation into account, reinforcing it. The troubling implication is that if Carr had provoked King, would his violence be justified?

Rihanna was never directly accused of provoking the assault. However, she was scrutinized under the common misconception that it is the victim's responsibility to end the domestic abuse (Berns, 2004). There was a campaign going on in the UK and Irish press calling for Rihanna to end the relationship with Brown. On just the second day of the coverage *The Sun* published an open letter from a reader who experienced domestic abuse, urging Rihanna to leave Brown:

'Forgiving an abuser means condoning behaviour which could lead to your premature death. [...] When a man raises his hand to you for the first time he has crossed a line and if you choose to stay you have chosen to accept that behaviour' (The Sun, 2009).

It could be seen from this quote that the press equated Rihanna's persistence in the relationship with her acceptance and exoneration of domestic abuse. It was even claimed that taking Brown back would be 'as good as saying that it's OK for men to abuse women, it's what they have to accept' (Burnie, 2009). See Table 4.1 for headlines of articles that pressurized Rihanna into leaving Brown in the first two months of the coverage.

Table 4.1

Article headlines urging Rihanna to leave Brown

Date	Source	Headline
11.2.2009	The Sun	Leave him...before he kills you Rihanna - AN OPEN LETTER TO 'BATTERED' POP STAR A WOMEN WHO SUFFERED FIVE YEARS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
21.2.2009	Daily Record	No place in her life for a thug
3.3.2009	Daily Record	Don't put up with abuse
4.3.2009	The Sun	Once, too often
8.3.2009	Sunday Mirror	Rihanna, it's time to shop this loser
10.3.2009	Birmingham Mail	The World: Oprah's pledge

Media advice notwithstanding, rumours spread out that Rihanna and Brown reunited: she decided not to press charges against Brown, refused to collaborate with the police and asked the judge not to put a restraining order on Brown. Her 'speedy reconciliation' earned her wide media condemnation: 'Sadly, poor Rihanna has not only lost the battle, she's lost the respect of all her young fans' (McIntosh, 2009). It was in fact claimed that other young victims of domestic violence might follow her example. Consequently, she was not only blamed for letting the abuse against her to continue, but for facilitating the abuse of other women as well.

Rihanna earned this accusations by behaving against the cultural imperative that it is the victim's responsibility to leave the perpetrator. Conversely, Carr responded to the myth that mitigates violence against women in presence of female provocation: there was not any from her side and therefore she was portrayed sympathetically. One of the reasons why Rihanna and Carr received a different degree of media blame might thus lie in their different compliance with cultural myths about domestic and sexual violence.

4.3.3 **Celebrity status and personality profiles**

The portrayal of the two victims might have been influenced by the different celebrity status of both victims and perpetrators and by their personality profiles built through previous media coverage. Berns (2004) claims that 'people's desire to erode the credibility of a *victim* intensifies when the offender is a beloved celebrity, politician, sports hero, coach, or other popular figure' (p. 152). When there are celebrity or high-status perpetrators involved in non-fatal domestic violence 'our assumed prior familiarity with aspects of the abuser's story allows for a more complex – and potentially sympathetic – portrait of the abuser to emerge [...]' (Boyle,

2005, p. 86). Brown and King were both well-known to the British and Irish audience, but Brown received a much more favourable coverage. He was labelled 'the then crown prince of R&B' (Elan, 2009). Prior to the assault Brown had no previous convictions and a 'squeaky-clean' image (Clements, 2009).

The assault on Rihanna severely damaged Brown's public image, forming a personality profile of a teenage idol turned bad. However, this is undoubtedly better than King's fame as a criminal offender. Arguably, he was more famous for his bad public behaviour than for his football achievements. This informed his personality profile: He was portrayed as a criminal and 'jailbird', because he has received a 'DOZEN other convictions dating back to 1997' (Clench & Syson, 2009). Particularly his convictions for assaults on women were frequently mentioned, because they bore a 'chilling resemblance to his nightclub act of thuggery' (Clench, 2009). King was portrayed as extremely arrogant: '[He] is so bloated with his own self-importance that he thinks that women should be grateful when he indecently assaults them in nightclubs' (The Times, 2009).

On the victims' side, Rihanna is famous world-wide, while Carr has been unknown prior to the assault. Rihanna's celebrity status was emphasised in most articles with labels such as 'pop princess' (The Sun, 2009). In spite of that, Rihanna 'never enjoyed good PR' (Boyd, 2010). Both media from the US and her native Barbados accused her of having boosted her success through sexual favours to her music manager. It was claimed that '[e]ven people within the [music] industry who wouldn't normally indulge in character attacks have referred to her as a "cold bitch"' (Boyd, 2010). Thus, the personality profile of an unscrupulous career woman has been built. On the other side, Carr was a previously unknown British student who was attacked by a presumptuous celebrity. As argued in the previous chapter, she was mainly presented positively, as an ideal victim.

To sum up, while Brown was at the peak of his fame prior to the incident, King already received much negative coverage for his past offences. On the other side, the nature of Rihanna's celebrity status did not work in her favour as compared to the untarnished image of the previously unknown Carr. Differences in characters' celebrity status and previous media coverage leading to dissimilar personality profiles might have contributed to divergences in blame attribution: While Rihanna shared some of the blame with Brown, King and Carr received a much more polarized portrayal.

4.3.4 Perpetrators' acceptance of guilt

Brown pleaded guilty to assault charges and publicly apologized, while King denied any involvement. This might have contributed to differences in their media exoneration and the level of blame that was instead placed on the victims.

In Brown's exclusive interview for *The Times* it was emphasised that he 'apologized repeatedly to Rihanna, privately and publicly, accepting full responsibility' (Jackson, 2009). In July 2009 he posted a video on his website to 'publicly express his regret' over the incident (De Burca, 2009). While the *Daily Mirror* (De Burca, 2009) invited engagement with Brown by quoting his statement in the title ('I'M TRULY SORRY'), other newspapers accused him of making a tasteless PR move before sentencing, a 'grovelling' apology for fans (Brown, 2009). He was compared to other perpetrators of domestic abuse who 'say sorry afterwards and then do it all over again' (Brown, 2009).

Nevertheless, Brown continued to stress a 'determination to address his negative issues' through the community work and counselling sessions that were part of his plea deal (Jackson, 2009). He declared to be remorseful over the impact of his crime on young fans; he was trying to win their trust back by showing them that he was learning from his mistakes. In spite of this, his claim that he can still act as a role model received a mixed response. While *The Sun* cited an expert of domestic abuse allowing him the opportunity to 'become the role model that young people deserve' (Watkins & Burchill, 2009), the *Daily Mail* argued he should instead be jailed as an example to other perpetrators (Brown, 2009).

On the other side, King denied any responsibility for the assault on Carr: 'I didn't deck anyone. I didn't touch anyone in that club... I didn't smash anybody's face in' (Western Mail, 2009). Engagement with him was encouraged through a statement from King's agent Tony Finnegan: 'He'll be devastated, sitting in a cell with someone tonight. No one expected this. I asked Marlon and he said, "I'm not guilty, Tony. I want the British justice system to find me not guilty"' (Smith, 2009). Six articles referred to his denial in their headlines during the trial, but they nonetheless portrayed him as guilty and invited engagement with the victim.

The behaviour of both perpetrators could be seen as an attempt to recover their public image. Penfold-Mounce (2009) describes several devices that are used by celebrity perpetrators to minimise deglamorization after image transgression. Among these devices, Brown and King both used victimhood. While King proclaimed himself a victim of mistaken identity, Brown declared himself to be victim of a 'firestorm of condemnation': 'I've looked at Michael Jackson's career

and how the public totally turned on him, then switched and got back with him again, back and forth. [...] They throw you to the dogs. They don't see you as a person' (Jackson, 2009). Brown's unfulfilled love for Rihanna was another element through which he sought the role of a victim: I never fell out of love with her. [...] That just wouldn't go away' (Belfast Telegraph, 2009). Thereby, he made use of the often misused frame of a tragic love gone awry (C. Ryan, et al., 2006).

Apart from the attempt to present himself as a victim, Brown used public declaration and penance as devices of minimizing deglamorization as well (Penfold-Mounce, 2009). His public apologies could be understood as declarations of regret, while his emphasis on the performance of community work and attendance of counselling sessions as the acceptance of penance. Although this received a mixed response, Brown arguably managed to recover his public image better than King. This is evidenced by his more favourable portrayal, which fits 'no one stereotype of a violent man' (Jackson, 2009). Contrary to this, an unnamed prison source described King as 'a violent man' (The Times, 2009): 'He gets so pent up and aggressive - he just flips' (News of the World, 2010). Because of his denial of any guilt, King became described as remorseless and arrogant (Greenhill, 2009). This negative portrayal might partly explain why King was the only party blamed for the assault on Carr, while Brown shared the blame with Rihanna.

In spite of Brown's public apologies, it is questionable whether he accepted full responsibility for the assault. He claimed that he was 'in shock' about his actions (Belfast Telegraph, 2009) and described the assault as 'a blur'. In a widely cited interview for a US television, he declared: 'When I look at it now it's just like, wow, like I can't believe that actually happened.' This statement portrays Brown as out of control, which is a technique used to deny the perpetrator's agency in the crime (Boyle, 2005). It appears that the press partly accepted Brown's exculpatory motive, which might be another reason why he could redeem his public image. While the *Guardian* criticised his statement for the US television as noncommittal and apology-free (Elan, 2009), some other newspapers in fact judged his whole appearance as an honest admission of a mistake (The Sunday Times, 2009).

4.4 Discussion of the second framing analysis

The first aim of this chapter was to demonstrate that two victims of comparably violent assaults were treated differently in the UK and Irish press. This was accomplished by presenting evidence

that Carr received media support, while Rihanna encountered critique and condemnation. The language used to describe her suggests a treatment that is usually reserved for perpetrators, not victims of crime.

Next, this chapter aimed to discover the reasons behind the markedly different coverage of the two cases. Four factors were proposed to influence the degree to which media held the two victims accountable: victims' collaboration with media and compliance with domestic and sexual violence myths, perpetrators' acceptance of guilt, and the celebrity status of both victims and perpetrators leading to their dissimilar personality profiles.

Among factors that have likely caused the dissimilar portrayal of Rihanna and Carr, one deserves special attention: victims' compliance with myths about sexual and domestic violence. Perhaps journalists genuinely believe that acting in accordance with myths about domestic and sexual violence is helpful and want to benefit victims included in their coverage, as well as other (potential) victims – that is, article readers. For instance, Berns (2004) claims that journalists want to empower victims to help themselves and exit from the abusive situation. Thereby, however, they locate

'the victim's experiences within a frame that ignores not only the role of the abuser, but also that of society. [...] It is sympathetic to the victims, but they continue to be held responsible for solving the problem' (Berns, 2004, p. 55).

Rihanna was blamed for initially failing to do so; her celebrity status paradoxically contributed to the hostility with which she was treated. Rihanna was in fact held responsible not only for her own safety, but for the safety of her fans as well. Celebrity thus intensifies the rigour with which victims are scrutinized and therefore deserves special attention. Moreover, celebrity increases the news value of the case and the consequent extent of the coverage. The two cases presented in this chapter received a much wider coverage than cases of domestic and sexual violence usually do. This claim is supported by the high number of news published in national newspapers: 75 out of 112 for Rihanna vs. Brown and 99 out of 143 for Carr vs. King. While Ryan, Anastario, and Da Cunha (2006) claim that domestic violence is most often reported in local news, as much as 75 and 70 % of the Rihanna vs. Brown and Carr vs. King articles respectively received coverage at the national level. This prominent coverage enhances the likelihood of victim-blaming language to enter into public discourse.

To sum up, celebrity status might work against victims, particularly if their previous coverage was negative or ambivalent. On the other side, celebrity and positive previous coverage might

motivate journalists to justify perpetrators' actions, especially if they proficiently use techniques to recover their public image (Penfold-Mounce, 2009). Celebrity thus represents one of the causes of victim blaming uncovered in this analysis. Other causes are victims' refusal to fulfil media demands for commentary and endorsement of the victim role, and victims' behaviour against cultural expectations based on myths about domestic and sexual violence. One such myth is that victims consciously or unconsciously decide to be battered if they persist in abusive relationships (Peters, 2008). Journalists should be made aware of these factors which might tempt them to shift the blame from perpetrators to the very victims of the crime they are covering. Instead of recognizing how widespread domestic violence is among all strata of the population (28% of women in England and Wales according to the latest crime survey; Smith et al., 2010) and how difficult it is for women to reach safety even after separating from their abuser, blame is placed on them if they fail to do so. This is not only misleading, but potentially harmful to victims because it reduces public support (Peters, 2008) and victims' own confidence (Enander, 2010).

Despite the contribution of this study to unveil and warn about the reasons for victim blaming in media, a limitation must be mentioned. Race might have acted as the fifth factor influencing victim blaming but this was not explored in the present study. According to McDonald (1999), the coverage of domestic violence perpetrated by footballers of colour suggests racist characterisations of cultural deficiency as explanation for their conduct. No examples of racist characterisations that would exonerate King or Brown because of their deficient cultural origin were found in this analysis. Claims of cultural legitimacy of sexual violence were absent as well, thereby contrasting previous research reviewed in Worthington (2011). Still, it might be that the Jamaican heritage of King and the white British origin of Carr contributed to their polarised portrayal. Rihanna and Brown, on the other side, are both non-whites: Brown is Afro-American, while Rihanna is of mixed ethnicity from Barbados. However, there was not enough evidence in the coverage to support this claim and thus the analysis of the interplay between racial myths and myths about violence against women remains for further investigation.

The following subchapter presents a summary of framing analyses reported in this and in the previous chapter. First, a general discussion about the type of frames that were analysed will be provided. Next, the Media Framing Analysis (MFA; Giles & Shaw, 2009) that was used as the method will be evaluated. This methodology will be placed among more systematic approaches to framing analysis in order to argue why there were not suitable for the research focus of this thesis. It will then be summarized how the MFA stages of Reader identification and Narrative

analysis were further developed. Lastly, the studies that were designed to validate the results of the framing analyses will be introduced. Two experiments were implemented to verify whether the identified news frames mapped on to corresponding audience frames. The experimental design of the studies did not only enable a methodologically sound validation of the framing analyses, but made it possible to investigate the processes involved in the adoption of news frames, namely the engagement with the story and its characters. Besides providing an additional answer to RQ1, the experiments thus targeted RQ2 as well.

4.5 Summary of Chapters 3 and 4

In the two framing analyses reported in Chapters 3 and 4, it was explored how frames about crime (i.e., intimate partner homicide, domestic and sexual assault) were developed through the employment of reader engagement techniques – narrative devices used by journalists to invite readers' engagement with some characters from the cast of individuals involved in the crime, instead of others. Chapter 2 presented various definitions of frames depending on the level at which the framing process occurs; according to Entman, Matthes and Pellicano (2009), framing could take place in the text of communications (news frames), in the minds of individual citizens (audience frames), in the culture (cultural frames) and in the minds of elites and professional political communicators (source frames, mentioned in Chapter 3). It is clear that the framing analyses reported so far were performed on news frames in the quest to understand the role of reader engagement techniques in the process of frame building (Scheufele, 1999). These findings will be verified through two studies reported in Chapters 6 and 7.3, where the role of reader engagement techniques in the transfer of news frames to audience frames (i.e., frame setting; Scheufele, 1999) will be examined.

Besides distinguishing frames according to the level of communication at which they occur, frames could be categorized according to the level of abstraction as well; this gains a distinction between issue-specific and generic frames (Entman, et al., 2009; Matthes, 2009b). As their name suggests, issue-specific frames pertain only to specific topics or events, which means that every topic or event can have different issue-specific frames. Examples include framing research conducted on the topics of voluntary childlessness (Giles, et al., 2009), motherhood in older age (Shaw & Giles, 2009) and immigration (Cheng, Igartua, Palacios, Acosta, & Palito, 2010).

On the other hand, generic frames transcend thematic limitations and can be identified across different issues and contexts. Episodic and thematic frames described by Iyengar (1991) are prime examples. When an issue is framed episodically, a special instance or episode of this issue is emphasised. The focus is on particular individuals involved in this episode and thus the

responsibility for the issue is placed on them. In contrast, thematic framing emphasises broader trends or backgrounds of the issue and stimulates attributions of responsibility to society. Iyengar found that the coverage of four distinct issues (crime, terrorism, poverty, and unemployment) was predominantly framed according to one of the two generic frames. These frames echo the distinction between action or event-oriented stories and issue stories proposed by Pan and Kosicki (1993). As indicated earlier, Iyengar (1991) discovered that crime was predominantly covered with an episodic frame – that is, reported as an action/event oriented story – instead of a wider and persistent problem in society.

Another set of generic frames has been proposed by Valkenburg, Semetko, and de Vreese (1999): conflict, human interest, economic consequences, and attributions of responsibility. In a framing effects study, the researchers formed experimental articles about crime and the introduction of euro according to one of the proposed frames and these frames were found to transfer to audience frames. Other scholars found the same five generic frames proposed by Valkenburg, Semetko, and de Vreese in their analysis of news coverage (e.g., Igartua, Cheng, & Muniz, 2005).

In a content analysis of framing studies reported in the world's leading communication journals, Matthes (2009b) found that the majority analysed issue-specific frames (78%) compared to those reporting generic frames (22%). The author criticised analyses focusing on issue-specific frames as having merely a descriptive focus, whereas generic frames were deemed more suited for hypothesis testing. However, Matthes also notes that generic frames differ in how generic they are: the conflict and personalization frame (Valkenburg, et al., 1999) more so since they describe structural features of news items. Contrarily to that, the economic frame (ibid) represents features of topics and issues. According to the author, it thus has to be defined how generic frames have to be in order to be classified as such. On the other hand, it has to be defined when they become too generic and start overlapping with news values, as is the case with the conflict frame.

It is argued here that generic frames describe the *form* of reporting a particular issue or event rather than its *content* – that is, they describe the way in which an interpretation has been given to an issue or event instead of offering insight into this interpretation. The approach of this thesis is to focus on issue-specific frames in order to discover the *content* of the frames that are placed around chosen crimes; however, these frames are linked to *formal* devices used to develop them – reader engagement techniques. Both the form and the content of crime frames were thus investigated, overcoming the limitation of analysing issue-specific frames; according

to Matthes (2009b), this in fact focuses on the description of news content, whereas the analysis of generic frames provides insight into the structure and nature of frames.

Choosing to investigate generic frames instead would be implausible: According to the generic frames proposed by Iyengar (1991), crime would predominantly contain the episodic frame and according to those proposed by Valkenburg, Semetko, and de Vreese (1999), the human interest frame. In the authors' conceptualization, 'the human interest frame brings an individual's story or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem' (Valkenburg, et al., 1999, p. 551). This links to the notion of a micro narrative used within a predominantly argumentative or expository discourse in order to help deliver the general message, or frame of a news narrative (see M.-L. Ryan, 1992, in Chapter 2.3.1). However, crime is an event and as such it tends to get reported episodically (Iyengar, 1991), as an action or event oriented story (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). As argued in Chapter 2.3.1, these types of news texts are predominantly written in the narrative discourse, which is present on the macro textual level. Thus, instead of possessing a human interest frame, or a micro narrative, crime news *is* reported as a human interest story.

Consequently, while Valkenburg, Semetko, and de Vreese (1999) claim that the human interest frame personalizes the news, it is claimed here that personalization is a default characteristic of crime news. Crime is centered on characters, at least on the main ones: The victim(s) and the perpetrator(s). This is the reason why crime news has been chosen to target the first research question posited in this PhD: Whether the treatment of character acts as a valid framing device. Chapter 3 provides an affirmative answer: The frames of murder, manslaughter, and accident were formed through two sets of complimentary personality profiles and textual devices used to indicate the narrative point of view. This has established character as an important framing device in general, not only within the human interest frame.

These frames have been analysed at the article level as opposite to assigning a frame to each proposition in the text. Working with thematic units (i.e., articles) vs. discourse units (i.e., propositions) is the chosen approach of the majority of studies examined by Matthes (2009b). Each thematic unit has been assigned one frame, even though more minor frames could be identified in a single article. It is claimed that these minor frames represent varied and mostly oppositional source frames included in the news text in order to adhere to the norm of objectivity. Matthes and Kohring (2008) in fact argue that there can be different frames included in a single article when frames are 'understood as strategic views on issues put forth by actors' (p. 276). In crime news, these source frames represent the claims of the defence and

prosecution which have to be reported in a balanced way. However, it is my contention that a particular news text overall transmits one main frame.

The main frames on the article level were derived inductively in this PhD by examining the explanations that Cawley's death received in the three separate stages of the coverage. These explanations were compared to legal definitions of murder and manslaughter in Ireland (e.g., murder as killing with intent) and thus a mixture of inductive and deductive approaches to the derivation of frames was present (Matthes, 2009b). After each article has been assigned a main frame, these frames were clustered together following a procedure typical of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thereby, dominant frames present in each of the three coverage stages have been established. Despite this element of quantification, the application of Media Framing Analysis (MFA; Giles, et al., 2009) in this PhD could be best described as a non-quantitative, text-based analysis (Matthes, 2009b). The analyses reported in Chapters 3 and 4 in fact focused on the exploration of the framing process rather than the quantification of frames, even though this was performed for informative purposes. This analyses thus fit the description of inductive qualitative studies where 'frames are described in-depth, with detailed quotes, but without quantification' (Matthes, 2009b, p. 351).

In spite of the fact that the inductive qualitative studies which follow a hermeneutic approach (Matthes & Kohring, 2008) were found to represent the majority of framing studies (Matthes, 2009b), they were criticised as 'one of the major threats to reliability in frame analysis' (Matthes & Kohring, 2008, p. 264). Because these studies do not specify how frames were extracted, this extraction may differ across researchers and coders, lowering the reliability of the analysis. However, Matthes and Kohring (2008) allow that a hermeneutic analysis might be convincingly conducted if the steps taken to generate frames are explained. This is exactly the case with MFA which prescribes six stages necessary for the assignment of a frame to each article in the dataset. Two of these stages – Reader identification and Narrative analysis – have been further developed in this PhD, providing even more precise guidelines about how frames could be established. The stage of Narrative analysis now specifies categories of narrative form according to which articles could be coded, which could help further establish the role of narrativity in framing. Likewise, the stage of Reader identification now provides a description of specific narrative devices called reader engagement techniques which could be identified in the news text and connected to (opposing) frames.

In order to improve the reliability and validity of framing analysis, Matthes and Kohring (2008) proposed a deductive quantitative-clustering approach (Matthes, 2009b). The authors analysed

the coverage of the issue of biotechnology. For biotechnology, previous codebooks were available based on which Matthes and Kohring (2008) operationally defined frame elements; the grouping of these elements performed through cluster analysis then revealed the underlying frames. However, such an analysis could only ever be useful for comparing press coverage of generic topics (e.g., biotechnology, or violent crime) across time periods or publication outlets and would not yet explain how or why these frames are developed. Moreover, a deductive quantitative-clustering approach does not seem feasible for the analysis of action or event-oriented stories where framing devices could not be determined in advance. These stories in fact cover particular cases which might or might not resemble other cases that contribute to the public understanding of an issue. In the character-centred analysis presented here, reader engagement techniques specify which textual properties the analyst should pay attention to (i.e., character descriptions and quotations). However, the content of these textual elements could not be established in advance and defined in a codebook. For instance, while the use of two sets of complimentary personality profiles is expected in the coverage of a crime case (see Chapter 3.1), the content of these characterizations could not be predicted in advance and might differ according to the specific case. The framing analysis of an action or event-oriented story thus requires an initial qualitative/inductive phase to establish the content of framing devices.

This inductive and qualitative approach could however be complemented with a deductive quantitative phase. For instance, Van Gorp (2010) devised a deductive phase to validate the inductively reconstructed cultural frames; in this phase, the analyst records the presence of framing devices that were previously linked to a specific frame. Similarly than in the study of Matthes and Kohring (2008), a cluster or factor analysis is then performed in order to determine whether the framing devices that were supposed to form a frame package indeed constitute a cluster or factor which indicates the latent frame.

A similar approach could be followed in the character-centered analysis presented here: In the inductive phase, the content of reader engagement techniques could be established, whereas in the deductive phase the clustering of these devices could be examined (e.g., in the expected two complimentary sets of personality profiles indicating the underlying frames of manslaughter/accident, or murder). In the deductive phase, more than one coder could be employed and the inter-coder reliability established. Despite this suggestion remains for future investigation, an extensive verification of framing analysis results has been devised in two studies described in Chapters 6 and 7.3. Before proceeding to them, Chapter 5 will introduce the field of narrative persuasion, within which the two studies have been conducted.

5 Narrative persuasion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces a literature review of the narrative persuasion field (see section 5.3), which forms the theoretical base for the two studies conducted in the quantitative part of this PhD. Prior to that, a link between the framing analyses reported in Chapters 3 and 4, and the narrative persuasion experiments described in Chapters 6 and 7.3, will be established (see section 5.2): Narrative persuasion is proposed to act as a mechanism of frame setting, when news frames are formed predominantly through narrative devices. If these devices consist of reader engagement techniques, readers' processes of perspective taking, identification, sympathy and empathy with characters are expected to account for framing effects. These processes in fact represent a crucial mechanism that enables persuasion through narratives (see Chapter 1.3 and section 5.4 here). In this thesis, a considerable amount of theoretical work was therefore devoted to the conceptualization of character engagement processes; these processes were integrated in a model that is intended to further clarify their role in persuasion through various narratives, including those present in news (see section 5.4). Therefore, the model will be used to inform the answer to the second research question about the mediating role of engagement with characters in news narrative persuasiveness (RQ2; Chapter 1.3).

5.2 Narrative persuasion as a mechanism of frame setting

Several authors argue that news frames rarely transfer to identical audience frames and that the process of frame setting is thus seldom absolute (e.g., Entman, 1993). Instead, the media 'provide a setting or a frame, which allows different audiences to interpret the "same" message in quite different ways' (S. Cohen & Young, 1981, p. 427). The framing effects research, however, is based on the assumption that *most* of the audience members will accept the preferred meaning implied by the news frame. Also Cohen and Young (1981) concede that '[o]ften, the sheer power and exclusiveness of these frames [that the media provide, p. 437] will not allow for much element of interpretation, perceived relevance or choice' (p. 438). Similarly, Entman (1991) argues that only readers or viewers with expertise or previously internalised oppositional schemata were likely to have developed an event schema of the plane disasters that facilitated the perception and processing of the contradictions. On most matters of social or political

interest, however, people are not so well-informed and cognitively active, and therefore framing heavily influences their responses to communication (Entman, 1993).

Entman's (1993) explanation of framing effects fits the peripheral or heuristic route of persuasion through rhetorical texts such as political speeches, editorials, and policy proposals (see Chapter 1.3). According to the classic dual models of persuasion - The Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) and the Heuristic-Systematic model (Chaiken, 1980) – people are cognitive misers who endeavour in critical elaboration only if motivated and able to do so. According to Entman (1993), critical elaboration rarely occurs even with matters of social and political interest, and therefore the least effortful route to processing communication is preferred. This supposition has been directly tested by Igartua and his colleagues (Igartua & Cheng, 2009; Igartua, Moral-Toranzo, & Fernandez, 2011) who conceptualized framing effects as a heuristic process: Since media consumers are not particularly motivated to process information, the presence of peripheral cues in a news text conditions the cognitive, attitudinal, and emotional impact that frames have on them. In two experiments, the authors manipulated news frames about immigration (economic contribution vs. crime growth), as well as peripheral cues revealing the origin of the immigrants (Moroccans vs. Latin Americans). The authors reasoned that if the framing effect can be explained by the activation of heuristic processing, the presence of peripheral cues should modify the impact of news frames. Specifically, the positive impact of the economic consequences frame should be decreased when a reference is made to the group of immigrants which is less liked in Spain (i.e., to the Moroccans).

This was indeed found in the first experiment which focused on the effects of frames on the cognitive and attitudinal outcomes only (Igartua & Cheng, 2009). In addition to a thought listing procedure and attitudinal measures, the second experiment introduced measures of positive and negative emotions (Igartua, et al., 2011). In contrast with the first experiment, it was found that the mention of immigrants' origin constituting the peripheral cue moderated the framing effects on emotions only: the crime growth frame induced more negative emotions when the immigrants in question were categorized as Moroccans. The authors provide two possible reasons for the discrepancy with the previous study: First, participants indicated high interest in the topic of immigration which signals high elaboration likelihood. If participants were motivated enough to process the news text through the central or systematic persuasion route, this could explain why peripheral cues did not exert the expected effect – that is, why the positive impact of the economic consequences frame was not decreased when the immigrants were stated to be

of Moroccan origin. Second, while in the first experiment a specific crime incident was narrated to substantiate the crime growth frame (Igartua & Cheng, 2009), frames in the second experiment were developed in abstract terms only by quoting experts and citizens' opinions while providing no specific examples for these opinions (Igartua, et al., 2011). Because the crime incident in the first experiment mentioned the national origin of the perpetrator, the authors reason that the exclusion of such exemplifying narrative from the second experiment lowered the strength of the peripheral cue manipulation. However, an alternative explanation is possible: Because the crime incident in the first experiment has all the characteristics of a micro-narrative used to support the main message, or frame of the news narrative (see Chapter 2.3.1), it might have produced persuasive effects through mechanisms typical for the processing of narratives instead of those involved in the processing of rhetorical communication. In this sense, the inclusion of the crime incident might not only have increased the vividness of the news text, as Igartua and Cheng (2009) claimed, but evoked framing effects through mechanisms of narrative persuasion.

The notion that persuasion could be one of the psychological mechanisms that account for framing effects has been put forward already by Entman, Matthes, and Pellicano (2009). However, similar to Igartua and his collaborators (Igartua & Cheng, 2009; Igartua, et al., 2011), Entman, Matthes, and Pellicano (2009) imply mechanisms of persuasion through rhetorical texts: As limited-capacity information processors, individuals cannot possibly consider everything they know about an issue or event at any given moment, which allows room for persuasion. It is my contention that frame setting could be accomplished through mechanisms of narrative persuasion as well when frames are formed predominantly through narrative devices, as is particularly the case in events or action oriented stories (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). In these stories, narrative devices might influence the size of the framing effects, or their direction. Regarding the former, the more narrative elements a news text contains, the bigger the *size* of its framing effects should be. This prediction is in line with Kinnebrock and Bilandzic's (2006) proposal of a link between the degree of narrativity that a text exhibits and the size of its persuasive effect. On the other hand, when narrative elements are used to invite readers' engagement with some characters instead of others, it is claimed that they determine the *direction* of the framing effects; that is, which of the frames made available through the coverage is transmitted by a particular article. Focusing on engagement with characters, the two experiments reported in this thesis in Chapters 6 and 7.3 investigate the connection between narrative devices and framing effects direction.

Before presenting the results of these experiments, the narrative persuasion research tradition will be introduced. It is claimed that most of the audience members accept the preferred meaning implied by the frame not only because they are cognitive misers who prefer not to critically scrutinize the news text and are consequently passively influenced by it. When news is formed as a narrative, audience members might become engaged, or transported in it; this process requires the focus of their cognitive activity, impedes their access to knowledge and experiences stored in memory which could contradict the presented information, and thereby makes audience members responsive to the general message of the narrative – that is, to its frame. Frame setting might thus be seen as an instance of persuasion through narratives. The following section is devoted to a further explanation of the mechanisms of narrative persuasion and their divergence from mechanisms involved in persuasion through rhetorical texts.

5.3 The narrative persuasion tradition

The power of narratives to influence story related beliefs and attitudes has been supported by independent researchers (e.g., M. Appel & Maleckar, 2012; Igartua & Barrios, 2012; Prentice, Gerrig, & Bailis, 1997; Strange & Leung, 1999; Wheeler, Green, & Brock, 1999); this influence has been demonstrated to persist and even increase over time (M. Appel & Richter, 2007; Jensen, Bernat, Wilson, & Goonewardene, 2011). As explained in Chapter 1.3, the mechanisms that account for the persuasive effect of narratives are different from those responsible for persuasion through rhetorical texts. Instead of critically elaborating arguments or heuristically processing peripheral cues, readers were found to engage with the narrative and its characters which influenced the extent to which they were persuaded by it. This section will describe the engagement process in more detail and elucidate its role in narrative persuasion.

A series of experiments by Prentice, Gerrig, and their collaborators (Gerrig & Prentice, 1991; Prentice, et al., 1997) represents the first attempt to explore the persuasive impact of stories. Gerrig and Prentice (1991) introduced readers to a fictional story that included general world assertions in character dialogues; between the experimental versions of the story these assertions were varied to be consistent or inconsistent with the real-world state of affairs. For instance, the correct assertion ‘Penicillin has been a great benefit to humankind’ was changed to ‘Penicillin has had bad consequences for humankind’ (p. 338) in one of the experimental stories. Authors found that the correct rejection of an assertion inconsistent with the real world was greatly slowed after participants had read this assertion in the experimental story. The

assertions were part of character dialogues that were not crucial for plot development (cf. Dahlstrom, 2010) and thus their impact is even stronger evidence of the persuasive power of narratives. In two later experiments, Prentice, Gerrig, and Bailis (1997) found that the assertions inconsistent with the real world were rejected only if participants were familiar with the story location, which likely motivated them to be more critical. The persuasive impact of story assertions could thus be still explained through the central or systematic route of persuasion through rhetoric texts which occurs when readers are able and motivated to critically scrutinize the text.

While Prentice, Gerrig, and colleagues (Gerrig & Prentice, 1991; Prentice, et al., 1997) tested participants' endorsement of beliefs contained in peripheral story information – character dialogues - another early experiment on the persuasive power of narratives tested the impact of beliefs implied by the central plot outcome. Strange and Leung (1999) used a story about a student planning to drop out of high school. Two experimental versions were written to either implicate situational (poor urban high school) or dispositional causes (emotional and motivational issues) for the student's decision to drop out. Results showed that the causal focus of the story influenced readers' general beliefs about reasons for school dropout and the solutions that they proposed in order to address this problem: Participants reading the story with a situational focus identified more situational causes and solutions than those reading the story with the dispositional focus.

Wheeler, Green and Brock (1999) questioned the results of Prentice, Gerrig, and Bailis (1997), since they reasoned that 'the power of fiction has not appeared to be limited to narratives about remote places or eras' (p. 136). Indeed, in three experiments designed to replicate the original study they failed to reproduce the moderating effect of story location. In order to explore this finding, they measured need for cognition and the extent of critical scrutiny of the story. Need for cognition is defined as 'the tendency for an individual to engage in and enjoy thinking' (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982, p. 116) and as such predicts the likelihood of critical elaboration. In the study of Wheeler, Green and Brock (1999), need for cognition (measured using the short version of the scale; Cacioppo, Petty, & Kao, 1984) indeed influenced the extent of critical scrutiny: After reading the story, participants with high need for cognition circled more false sounding portions of the text than participants with low need for cognition. However, the effect of need for cognition on critical scrutiny did not transfer to belief change: Participants agreed with the test items less when the story assertions were incongruent with them than when they were congruent, irrespective of the story location, their need for cognition, and the critical scrutiny

exhibited. Despite the fact that need for cognition represents an important measure of individual differences in persuasion through rhetorical texts since it determines the likelihood of critical elaboration, it does not seem to have an impact on persuasion through narratives. Wheeler, Green and Brock (1999) conclude that some other processes might drive belief change as a consequence of exposure to narratives.

These processes are explored in the seminal paper of Green and Brock (2000), which established the research focus on narrative persuasion. According to the authors, the process that makes narrative persuasion qualitatively different from persuasion through rhetorical texts, is transportation. Following Gerrig (1993), transportation is defined as readers' experience of being absorbed or transported in the story world. This experience results in 'an integrative melding of attention, imagery, and feelings' (Green & Brock, 2000, p. 701) meaning that a transported individual is 'cognitively and emotionally involved in the story and may experience vivid mental images tied to the story's plot' (Green, Garst, et al., 2004, p. 168). Transportation is thus 'a convergent process where all mental systems and capacities become focused on events occurring in the narrative' (Green & Brock, 2000, p. 701). This focus prevents readers from accessing knowledge and experiences stored in memory that might contradict the information presented in the story and consequently readers' are less critical and more prone to be persuaded by story's content. Even when previous knowledge and memory are activated, they tend to be congruent with the story and thus do not prompt the reader to be critical (Green & Brock, 2000; Strange & Leung, 1999).

Following this conceptualization of transportation and its role in persuasion through news narratives, Green and Brock (2000) devised a scale to measure cognitive, emotional, and visual aspects of transportation. This scale was then used to measure transportation in four experiments which showed that it consistently influenced the extent of story-congruent beliefs endorsed by participants: Those highly transported in the story agreed more with beliefs implied by the plot outcome than those with a lower degree of transportation. Moreover, the fourth experiment directly tested for the predicted causal role of transportation in persuasion through narratives and found a full mediation. In this experiment, transportation was manipulated by instructions that either encouraged participants to focus on the surface aspects of a story (they had to identify difficult words), or to become immersed in it. These instructions managed to alter transportation, which in turn influenced the degree of story-relevant belief endorsement; the influence of instructions on belief endorsement was fully mediated by transportation. Other

studies have confirmed that the degree of transportation influences the extent of narrative-led belief change (e.g., M. Appel & Maleckar, 2012; M. Appel & Richter, 2010; Green, 2004).

Already before the seminal study of Green and Brock (2000), Strange and Leung (1999) measured narrative engagement in a narrative persuasion experiment. Narrative engagement was assessed through items about story-cued reminders, elaborations, attention, and imagery; this was found to facilitate story-congruent beliefs about reasons for high school dropout (responsibility judgements) and about solutions that might solve the problem. Story-cued 'reminders of people and situations that were similar to story-world characters and circumstances' (p. 437) had an independent influence on responsibility judgements. Some of the components of narrative engagement operationalized by Strange and Leung (1999) overlap with Green and Brock's (2000) conceptualization of transportation, as acknowledged by the authors (Green & Brock, 2000, p. 702). However, Green and Brock (2002) were the first to develop a coherent theoretical account about the role of engagement in narrative persuasion in their Transportation-imagery model and to test the discriminant and convergent validity of the instrument devised to measure it – the Transportation Scale (Green & Brock, 2000).

The discriminant validity of the Transportation Scale was established by comparison with the Need for Cognition Scale (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). Not only did Green and Brock (2000) find that the correlation between need for cognition and transportation is small and nonsignificant, but need for cognition failed to influence participants' endorsement of story-relevant beliefs. As in the previous research by Wheeler, Green, and Brock (1999), this is another evidence of the difference between narrative persuasion and persuasion through rhetorical texts where need for cognition acts as a key trait variable determining the likelihood of elaboration. The elaboration involved in the central or systematic route of persuasion through rhetorical texts might be conceived as a divergent process: 'Rather than having a single focus (e.g., the narrative), a person engaged in elaboration might be accessing his or her own opinions, previous knowledge, or other thoughts and experiences in order to evaluate the message at hand' (Green & Brock, 2000, p. 702). Under conditions of high elaboration connections to individual's schemas and experiences are thus established, while a transported individual might be temporarily distanced from his or her current and previous schemas and experiences. This is captured in the metaphor of transportation as travelling in the story world proposed by Gerrig (1993) and adopted by Green and Brock (2000): Similarly as parts of the world of origin become inaccessible to the traveller, so does the transported reader lose access to some of the real-world facts that contradict assertions made in the narrative. Consequently, the transported reader returns from

the journey in the story world somewhat changed by the experience, the same as the journey in the real world changes the traveller.

Green, Brock, and their collaborators (Green & Brock, 2000; Green, Garst, et al., 2004) postulate three mechanisms through which transportation enables narrative-based belief change. First, transportation may reduce negative cognitive responding to issues raised in the story. Both the ability and motivation required for critical elaboration (Chaiken, 1980; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) might be lowered. Because transportation is a convergent process, the mental resources of a transported reader 'are so engaged in experiencing the story that they are not able to disbelieve story conclusions' (Green, Garst, et al., 2004, p. 168). In other words, transported readers might not have enough cognitive resources available to scrutinize story content. Moreover, readers might lack the motivation to engage in critical elaboration because counterarguing story points 'would destroy the pleasure of the experience' (ibid) of transportation. Confirming the negative connection between transportation and critical elaboration, Green and Brock (2000) indeed found that more transported readers identified less false sounding portions of the narrative.

Second, transportation may affect beliefs by making narrative events seem more like personal experience: 'If a reader or viewer feels as if he or she has been part of narrative events, the lessons implied by those events may seem more powerful' (Green, Garst, et al., 2004, p. 169). Because the mediated experience that is created through transportation closely resembles a personal one (Bilandzic, 2006), it might be used to form judgements about everyday issues. This mechanism of narrative-led belief change is tied to vivid imagery that transported readers create about events and characters in the story, through which these acquire qualities similar to real memories (Green, Garst, et al., 2004). Green and Brock (2002) confer a paramount role to imagery in their Transportation-Imagery Model of narrative persuasion. According to its second postulate, narrative persuasion occurs to the extent that the evoked images are activated by transportation: 'A prior belief can be changed by an imagery-driven juxtaposition with new information' (Green & Brock, 2002, p. 323).

Third, transportation creates strong feelings towards story characters and this plays a critical role in narrative-based belief change: 'If a viewer likes or identifies with a particular character, statements made by the character or implications of events experienced by that character may carry special weight' (Green, Garst, et al., 2004, p. 170). This is the premise of the investigation undergone in this doctorate; however, rather than assuming that transportation leads to engagement with characters, the two forms of engagement are seen as contributing to each other. In line with Green, Garst, and Brock (2004), Cohen (2006) claims that identification as one

type of engagement with characters (see section 5.4) could be seen as a result of becoming at least initially transported by the text. If readers remain distant from the text, it is in fact hard to imagine any significant identification developing with characters. However, it is also possible that identifying with characters represents one way to become transported by the text: 'As we come to understand and care about the characters, we come to care about what happens to them and thus become involved in the plot and transported by the text into a fictional world' (p. 186).

According to Dal Cin, Zanna, and Fong (2004), the first and the third mechanism of narrative-led belief change (Green & Brock, 2000; Green, Garst, et al., 2004) might be the reason why narratives are so successful in overcoming resistance to persuasion. Regarding the first mechanism, Dal Cin, Zanna, and Fong (2004) argue that besides the lack of ability and motivation on the readers' side, characteristics of narrative text might diminish critical elaboration as well. Authors suggest that narratives are not perceived as possessing a persuasive attempt. As noted in Chapter 2.3.1, narratives predominantly contain narrative discourse which reports characters' actions, as opposite to the argumentative discourse in which claims and opinions are directly stated (M.-L. Ryan, 2004). This seems to explain why narratives are seen and processed differently from rhetorical communication in which a persuasive attempt is detected. Moreover, the structure of narratives may impede forewarning of a counter-attitudinal message since a story often unfolds with some degree of suspense and 'it is not always clear what situation might next befall a protagonist or how that protagonist will react to it' (Dal Cin, et al., 2004, p. 177). Lastly, the content and form of what Dal Cin, Zanna, and Fong (2004) call 'narrative arguments' may make them harder to discount than arguments in rhetorical texts. The content of narrative arguments is constituted by life experiences of other people (as represented by characters), which makes them more difficult to discard than general claims or hypothetical examples used to support arguments in rhetorical messages. Moreover, narrative arguments are often implied as opposed to stated directly, which is another factor why they are more difficult to refute than arguments in rhetorical texts.

By emphasising the role of imagery, Green and Brock (2002) also assert the advantage of narrative arguments over arguments in rhetorical texts. According to the authors images are less susceptible to countervailing evidence than verbal arguments. They derive their strength and power from the evocation of story events: An image formed after reading a description of an event can, if prompted, evoke not only that event, but events that led to it and that follow from it since events in the plot are causally connected. Thus, 'a story image, more than a rhetorical

argument, can re-invoke the original communication for a recipient' (p. 337). Besides the power to evoke images, Green and Brock (2002) stress other characteristics of narrative texts as important for their persuasiveness. According to the authors, there is a minimum level of literary craftsmanship necessary on the part of writers in order to evoke transportation and produce persuasive effects. Especially the adherence to the narrative format that produces suspenseful effects is emphasised (i.e., the classic linear discourse structure; Knobloch, et al., 2004, see Chapter 2.3.1).

The role of narrative quality for its persuasiveness was further developed in the concept of narrativity proposed by Kinnebrock and Bilandzic (2006). Narrativity is defined as 'the presence and interaction of a set of textual elements that distinguish narrative texts from non-narrative texts and that constitute the potential of a text to create a rich mental representation of the story and to generate transportive experiences' (p. 5). Narrativity is not a dichotomous characteristic, but a continuous attribute that can be found in almost any text. This attribute might be strengthened through inclusion of textual elements that characterize a narrative – the so called narrativity factors. These factors 'may result in increased perceived narrativity on the reader's side and, consequently, enhance transportation [...]. By improving transportation, narrativity factors might ultimately influence persuasion' (ibid). Kinnebrock and Bilandzic (2006) list several narrativity factors on the level of story content, structure and discourse. Similarly, Kreuter et. al (2007) list elements of narrative quality that might 'enhance the narrative experience and narrative effects' (p. 229).

Characteristics of narrative texts mentioned by Dal Cin, Zanna, and Fong (2004), and Green and Brock (2002) work to reduce counterarguing through decreasing the amount of negative thoughts. In addition to that, 'narrative may also function by increasing positive thoughts about a behaviour or an attitude object' (Dal Cin, et al., 2004, p. 179). When readers identify with a protagonist who behaves in a particular way or endorses a particular attitude, this creates a positive association with the action or the attitude. This confers an important role to the third mechanism of persuasion through narratives (Green & Brock, 2000; Green, Garst, et al., 2004): engagement with characters. Before describing the processes of engagement with characters, which are crucial for the present investigation, I would like to mention some alternative conceptualizations of transportation. It is based on these conceptualizations that engagement with the narrative was in fact measured in studies reported in Chapters 6 and 7.3.

Busselle and Bilandzic (2008) place the conceptualization of transportation within two acknowledged theories: deictic shift theory (Duchan, Bruder, & Hewitt, 1995) and flow theory

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The comparison of transportation to the state of flow addresses the loss of self-awareness: Transported readers may lose track of time, fail to observe events going on around them and feel that they are completely immersed into the world of the narrative (Green, 2004). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defines flow as the experience of total absorption in an activity which may cause individuals to stop being aware of themselves as separate from the actions they are performing. Invoking the concept of flow is important because it suggests that transportation requires engagement in an activity and near complete focus on that activity. In art or music, flow is centred on the creation of the artistic piece. Busselle and Bilandzic (2008) suggest that while processing a narrative, flow is centred on the construction of meaning. Transportation into a narrative can then be seen as the extent to which a reader becomes absorbed in the activity of constructing mental models about the story. This redefines the previous passive conceptualization of transportation as the experience of being lost in a book (Green & Brock, 2000, 2002; Green, Garst, et al., 2004) into an active one, in which transportation is the consequence of a fluent and smooth construction of story mental models.

However, not only do readers have to lose awareness of themselves and their surroundings, but also phenomenologically enter the story world in order to engage with a narrative. According to Busselle and Bilandzic (2008), this psychological relocation into the story separates narrative experience from absorption in non-narrative activities, such as sport or art. In addition to creating story mental models, readers must locate themselves in them by performing the so called deictic shift: They have to shift of the centre of their experience from the actual world into the story world (Duchan, et al., 1995). Readers have to switch to the time and location of the narrative and the subjective world of the characters from whose viewpoint the story is told in order to understand what their statements mean and to which person or location they refer. When readers locate themselves within story mental models, they perceive the story 'from the inside' and have the feeling of experiencing directly what happens. These phenomena, which were described as characteristic of transportation, are now explained by Busselle and Bilandzic (2008) as phenomenological consequences of the deictic shift in the story world, which is a well-known concept in communication studies.

Busselle and Bilandzic (2008) thus define transportation as the phenomenological consequence of processing the narrative during which the reader constructs story mental models and shifts the centre of his or her experience into them. Based on this mental models approach to narrative processing, Busselle and Bilandzic (2009) developed a scale to measure narrative engagement in viewers of feature films and television. The scale distinguishes among four

unique but interrelated dimensions of narrative engagement: narrative understanding, attentional focus, narrative presence, and emotional engagement. Narrative understanding is defined as the lack of difficulty in comprehending the narrative – that is, in constructing mental models of its meaning. Attentional focus describes viewers' lack of distraction from the audio-visual programme. Narrative presence is defined as 'the sensation that one has left the actual world and entered the story' (p. 341). This sensation of entering another space and time is a consequence of the deictic shift in story mental models. Lastly, emotional engagement 'concerns emotions viewers have with respect to characters, either feeling the characters' emotions (*empathy*), or feeling for them (*sympathy*)' (original emphases; Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009, p. 331). Similar dimensions of narrative engagement were found in the studies of De Graaf et al. (2009; 2011).

Narrative engagement and transportation overlap both conceptually and empirically, as shown by their high intercorrelation (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009). Both concepts and the scales developed to measure them tap into attentional focus, emotional engagement and narrative presence. Narrative engagement includes narrative understanding as well but not imagery since it was developed on viewers of films which provide ready images. In comparison, readers of short stories, which were the basis for the development of transportation, need to construct their own mental images of the story world and events going on in it. Both readers and viewers have to construct mental models of the story which go beyond imagery to represent relations between events, characters, and story settings (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008). This is probably why Green et al. (2008) found no difference in readers' transportation into the same narrative across medium (print and film).

The overlap between narrative engagement and transportation was expected given that Busselle and Bilandzic's (2009) intent was to 'clarify constructs and relations between constructs, rather than to measure an entirely new construct' (p. 342). Because items taken from the Transportation Scale (Green & Brock, 2000) do not load on the same subscale of narrative engagement, Busselle and Bilandzic (2009) conclude that the Transportation Scale likely confounds these constructs. Also, because transportation correlates to a lesser degree with narrative engagement subscales than with the sum of all its items, Busselle and Bilandzic contend that the subscales indicate different experiential sensations. Thus, the authors do not see their scale and subscales as 'redundant with other scales, but instead as measuring a more fundamental set of engagement sensations that may be confounded with other constructs in other scales' (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009, p. 342). This is the reason why narrative engagement

was measured as a multidimensional construct in these thesis based on scales developed by Busselle and Bilandzic (2009) and De Graaf et al. (2009, 2011) (see chapters 6.3 and 7.3.1). However, for another view and a preference for the Transportation Scale see Appel and Richter (2010).

In narrative persuasion research, the persuasion parity of factual and fictional stories is considered to represent an additional proof of the power of narratives to persuade. Several researchers (e.g., M. Appel & Maleckar, 2012; Green & Brock, 2000; Strange & Leung, 1999) have demonstrated that narratives introduced as fictional are no less persuasive than those introduced as factual, despite the fact that the label fiction discounts the information presented in the story. In these experiments, factuality was manipulated through reading instructions which informed participants that they were either going to read a short story published in a literary magazine (i.e., the fiction condition), or an on-line news article (i.e., the non-fiction condition). However, these studies have manipulated the truth status of the story through its paratext (see M. Appel & Maleckar, 2012) only, and did not vary the narrative text itself between conditions. The text that was used was either self-constructed by researchers as in the case of Strange and Leung (1999), or a true story published in a bestselling collection of short stories by Nuland (1994) that was extracted to form the frequently used 'Murder at the Mall' narrative (M. Appel & Maleckar, 2012; Green & Brock, 2000).

There has been only one study to date conducted in the field of narrative persuasion which used a news article as stimuli: Green and Donahue (2011) tested the persuasive impact of a journalistic account that won the Pulitzer prize, which however had to be returned after significant falsehoods were found in the article. Besides containing fabricated elements which disagree with the journalistic imperative of factuality, the news is written in the form of narrative realism (Hanson, 1997) typical for the new, or literary journalism (Wolfe & Johnson, 1973). Events in the article are in fact 'presented realistically; however, the author has a descriptive style that goes beyond a straight journalistic account' (Green & Donahue, 2011, p. 319). Despite demonstrating the persuasiveness of this article, Green and Donahue's results thus cannot be generalized to narratives written in a more traditional news style (see the comparison of both styles in Chapter 2.3.1). Moreover, the authors did not measure engagement with the narrative and its characters, only character evaluations on semantic differential scales. These evaluations did not differ between experimental conditions which introduced the news narrative as indeed factual (i.e., a journalistic account) or fictional (i.e., published in a national fiction magazine).

No study on the persuasive power of factual narratives has thus manipulated general news content and measured its impact through mechanisms of narrative persuasion: engagement with the narrative and its characters. It is important to verify whether these engagement processes take place during the processing of a news narrative since this would demonstrate that news written in a narrative format indeed starts functioning as a story and influences readers via mechanisms typical for the processing of other factual and fictional narratives. This was the aim of two narrative persuasion experiments described in Chapters 6 and 7.3; these experiments focus on engagement with characters since character is central to the definition of narrative (see Chapters 2.3.1). The next section introduces the processes of engagement with characters and presents a model that was developed in this thesis in order to understand them better.

5.4 Engagement with characters

Scholarship in psychology, media, communication, and literary studies has identified several different processes of readers' engagement with characters, consisting mainly of empathy, sympathy, identification, and perspective taking. However, there is some controversy about the conceptual nature of these phenomena. For instance, whereas Cohen (2001) and Tan (1994) conceptualize empathy and perspective taking as part of identification, Zillmann (1994) and Davis (1983) conceptualize perspective taking as the cognitive component of empathy. Especially identification has many different conceptualizations ranging from adopting the perspective of the character and interpreting the events from his or her viewpoint (Tan, 1994) to adopting the identity of the character and temporally experience the events in the story as happening to ourselves (J. Cohen, 2001; Kaufman & Libby, 2012). Identification as perspective taking is widely accepted as a form of readers' engagement with characters, while the more extreme conceptualization of identification has been frequently criticised. Zillmann (1994) claimed that it presupposes an unlikely element of ego-confusion and being displaced by the other, and therefore proposed to discard it completely in favour of empathy. However, it seems unreasonable to reject identification completely since empathy also implies a degree of reader-character merger (Escalas & Stern, 2003). Before examining the relationship between identification and empathy, a clear definition of identification will be attempted.

The core dispute between different conceptualizations of identification surrounds the question of how close readers' engagement with characters could be: Do readers merely imagine what is it like to be a character or might they temporarily feel as if they were a character? Tan (1994)

and Zillmann (1994) criticise the idea of identification as ‘ego confusion’ and claim that as witnesses to characters’ actions, film viewers cannot substitute themselves for these characters. They prefer the notion of empathy with story characters which like empathy with individuals in everyday life does not imply a loss of self-awareness. The critique of identification might have arisen from the fact that, based on an investigation of filmic narratives, Tan (1994) and Zillmann (1994) assumed that identification took place solely as a result of the use of ‘subjective camera’ technique, where the camera angle is intended to represent the protagonist’s point-of-view. This filming technique simulates the visual perception of characters (i.e., literally seeing from characters’ eyes), while the objective camera represents the cinematic narrator and shows the characters in witness fashion. In an experiment by Sapolsky (1979, in Zillmann, 1994), the subjective camera was no more efficient in stimulating viewers’ involvement with characters than the objective camera, which led Tan (1994) and Zillmann (1994) to reject the concept of identification. However, it is argued that identification as perspective taking (henceforth called perspective taking only) does not mean that readers literally see from the character’s eyes and thus substitute themselves for the character. Even when readers identify with a character to the point of adopting his or her identity (what I refer to as ‘identification’), the accompanying loss of self-awareness is only temporal. Similarly, empathy in everyday life also represents only a temporal emotional merger with a fellow human being in which we feel the same emotions as our co-speaker but because of the inconsistency of this experience do not forget about our own presence in the conversation.

To develop the first line of argument and present the notion of identification as perspective taking, the example of Busselle and Bilandzic (2008) will be used: In a park, a police officer discovered an old woman standing over a corpse. This suggests the perspective of the officer. Alternatively, if the example had begun with the woman noticing the approaching police officer, the old woman’s perspective would have been suggested. The adopted perspective influences readers’ interpretation of the incoming information: They learn that the old woman slipped a handgun into her coat pocket as the police officer approached. The gun in the old woman’s pocket suggests that she may be more than an innocent passer-by. However, the old woman tells the officer that she was out for a walk and stumbled upon the body. Readers can infer that this would seem likely to the officer because they know he is unaware of the gun in the woman’s pocket.

In order to understand this short story readers have to construct mental models about its settings, characters and events, and shift the centre of their experience into them (Busselle &

Bilandzic, 2008). Besides forming the basis of transportation, mental models construction and deictic shift thus first and foremost enable readers to interpret the information from the physical perspective of a character and understand to whom or what the character refers. For instance, only readers positioned within the deictic centre of the story could understand the following question of the officer: ‘What is happening here?’ They would in fact reason that the officer refers to the corpse lying behind the old woman. This physical perspective taking does not mean, however, that readers literally see from the character’s eyes. Rather, they are observers within the story deictic centre and, similarly than in everyday social interactions, they reason about characters’ actions and statements.

However, perspective taking could be more complex than readers’ deictic shift in the story world. Van Peer and Maat (1996) defined narrative perspective as ‘the physical or psychological point from which the events are narrated’ (p. 141). Parallel to that it is argued here that perspective taking as readers’ process might also take the physical or psychological form. While the physical perspective taking described above enables the understanding of *what* is happening in the story world, the psychological perspective taking enables the understanding of *why* it is happening – that is, it enables an understanding of why the characters behave as they do. This is achieved through establishing the amount of knowledge in possession by each character and by interpreting story events according to the characters’ goals.

In order to establish the amount of knowledge in possession by each character, readers continuously shift between a reader-centred and a character-centred perspective (Gerrig, 1996) while still being positioned within the deictic centre of the story. From their reader-centred perspective they possess the knowledge of all things that have happened in the story up to a certain point. According to Oatley (1994), ‘reading a novel is like becoming an invisible person within the events of the imaginary world, perhaps with special knowledge that none of the characters have’ (p. 62). From the character-centred perspective, readers consider the character’s limit to this knowledge. For instance, readers have to adopt the perspective of the officer to understand why he believed the old woman’s lie; his credulity was a consequence of his limited knowledge about story events – the gun that the woman had slipped into her pocket. Both the reader-centred and the character-centred perspective are thus necessary to understand why characters perform certain actions and why the story consequently unfolds as it does.

In their example, Busselle and Bilandzic (2008) explain that the story is told from the officer’s perspective because he discovered the old-woman standing over a corpse. However, Gerrig

(1996) argues that readers must switch between different character's perspectives as the story unfolds. For instance, readers have to take the perspective of the woman in order to form an understanding of why she put the gun into her coat. Afterwards, they have to adopt the officer's perspective in order to understand his credulity. This brings us to what is argued to represent the second element of the psychological perspective taking: the understanding of characters' motivation. Readers have to establish what the goals of various characters are and interpret the events in the story accordingly: Is the event that happened good or bad for a particular character according to his or her goal? Through this reasoning readers acquire both an understanding of characters' mental states (i.e., the emotions and thoughts that the event likely provoked) and of characters' future actions. This is necessary for other processes of engagement with characters to take place, particular for identification which is based on the adoption (and thus necessarily understanding) of characters' goals.

The psychological perspective taking is facilitated by the employment of a specific narrative point of view: First-person internal narration (i.e., internal focalization; see Chapter 2.5) provides the greatest insight into the character's inner world – about what the character knows and wants, thinks and feels (van Peer & Maat, 1996). This enables readers to imagine what it is like to be the character and to understand why he or she performed certain actions. Following the textual cues, this understanding is only possible through comparison with readers' own experience. Oatley (1994) in fact argues that identification requires taking on the perspective of another, but necessarily doing so through the filters of one's own understanding and experience.

The perspective taking described in the example of Busselle and Bilandzic (2008) does not, however, imply readers' identification in the sense of adopting the alternative identity of a character (J. Cohen, 2001), as the authors claim. When reading Busselle and Bilandzic's (2008) sample narrative, readers arguably retain their own identity as spectators of the story within its deictic centre, observe the old woman and the officer, infer what they know and anticipate their actions. Also Gerrig (1996) conceptualized shifts in character perspective only to be a consequence of speaker shifts (e.g., in a dialogue), not meaning that the reader becomes overwhelmingly involved in the mental lives of some characters. However, sometimes a more intense form of identification than perspective taking is possible during which readers temporally merge with characters and adopt their identity (J. Cohen, 2001). This might happen with the protagonist or other characters with prominent roles in the story, while identification as

physical and psychological perspective-taking is functional to understand the behaviour of all characters featuring in the text.

Identification as identity adopting happens when readers do not only try to understand characters' goals, but adopt them while temporarily suspending their own goals (J. Cohen, 2001; Oatley, 1994, 1999a). Readers substitute their goals for the protagonist's in what Oatley (1994) calls the planning processor. Usually, we use this processor to plan our own actions. When we achieve our goals, we are happy. On the other side, when we fail or encounter obstacles, we feel sad or angry. Similarly, when story outcomes fulfil the protagonist's goals that readers have taken on – when there are positive outcomes for the protagonist and negative for the antagonist – this elicits positive emotions in readers. When, on the other hand, there are negative outcomes for the protagonist and positive for the antagonist, this provokes negative emotions in readers, the same as if the negative events would have happened to them. Thus, the adoption of the protagonist's goals enables readers not only to understand what events in the story mean to him or her (i.e., perspective taking), but to experience his or her emotional states themselves. The outcome of goal substitution is thus not only identification, but empathy – feeling with another person or character and experiencing the same emotions to a certain extent (J. Cohen, 2001).

I argue here that the notion of goal substitution, which is central for identification and empathy, is inherently linked to readers' affective dispositions towards characters. In his disposition theory, Zillmann (1994) claims that affective dispositions are based on readers' moral appraisals of characters' actions: Positive dispositions are developed towards characters judged as appropriate and good, whereas negative affective dispositions are developed towards characters judged as inappropriate and bad. According to the author, readers treat good characters as friends and experience positive affect, liking and caring towards them, whereas bad characters function as enemies and evoke disliking and resentment. These affective dispositions determine which events' outcomes readers expect and which they fear: 'Apparently, friends are deserving of good fortunes and undeserving of misfortunes, whereas enemies are deserving of misfortunes and undeserving of good fortunes' (p. 45).

Affective dispositions towards characters could thus be seen as determining which character's goals readers adopt and consequently identify and empathize with (Oatley, 1994). In fact, Zillmann (1994) conceptualizes empathy as the result of affective dispositions: The more readers 'will hope for some outcomes and fear others, and the more intensely they will experience empathic distress and pleasure' (p. 48). Besides the intensity of empathy, affective dispositions

determine its direction: while readers empathize with positively evaluated characters, they feel discordant affect, or counterempathy, towards negatively evaluated ones. With the former, they share positive emotions when a positive outcome for them occurs and negative emotions when they are impacted by a negative outcome. In contrast, readers cannot share positive emotions with characters-foes and rather feel distressed when positive outcomes happen to them. Similarly, readers enjoy instead of share the same negative emotions of characters-foes when story outcomes that are negative for them materialize, and thus experience counterempathy.

In order to engage with the narrative, or to become emotionally involved with the drama in Zillmann's (1994) terms, characters 'must be introduced such that respondents react to protagonists as if they were friends and to antagonists as if they were enemies' (p. 48). The better these affective dispositions are developed – that is, the better the characters themselves are developed – the stronger the engagement with the narrative will be:

'the more strongly respondents react to protagonists as friends and to antagonists as enemies, the more strongly they will be emotionally engaged: the more they will hope for some outcomes and fear others, and the more intensely they will experience empathic distress and pleasure' (p.48).

Narratives that develop the most admirable protagonists and the most terrifying antagonists, all within the limit of dramatic credibility, or realism (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008), are therefore likely to evoke the strongest emotions (Zillmann, 2006). In order to develop protagonists and antagonists, Zillmann (1994) claims that the narrative must enable a moral appraisal of their actions: 'These characters must be good or evil, if only temporarily. To accomplish this, they must have done, or they must be witnessed doing, good or evil deeds' (p. 48). Key to Zillmann's (1994, 2006) notion of affective dispositions is thus the moral appraisal of characters' actions, which is necessary to determine the valence and strength of affective dispositions.

However, Raney (2004, 2006) claims that the initial moral appraisal is not required since story schemas 'assist viewers in making determinations of character liking immediately when the character is introduced into the narrative' (Raney, 2006, p. 145). Story schemas are knowledge structures about what represents a narrative; thus, when a story schema is retrieved, readers expect that 'upcoming information will be causally and temporally related, and that some conflict will be explicated and resolved' (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008, p. 258). Within the expectation of a conflict, readers anticipate 'to encounter opposing and often irreconcilable sides [...], with characters representing each side' (Raney, 2004, p. 354). These expectations guide character interpretation and as a result, readers 'are generally able to classify characters

as good or bad [...] almost instantaneously' (ibid). Characters who are classified as good – protagonists, or heroes and heroines – are liked and their behaviour is expected to be morally acceptable. The opposite is true for antagonists or villains. Their actual behaviour narrated within the story is then justified or condemned in line with initial affective dispositions instead of being independently judged according to moral standards. However, Raney (2006) concedes that his modification of Zillmann's (1994) disposition theory is limited to a fairly standard narrative structure encountered in formulaic stories and to readers who approach the narrative with escapist goals, which lower their willingness to morally evaluate each action and motivation of characters (Raney, 2004).

Be it through moral evaluation or guided by story schemas, affective dispositions seem to determine readers' adoption of characters' goals, and through this, the processes of identification and empathy. These processes represent a form of reader-character merger, which could only be temporal. In fact, when readers merge with the protagonist and have the illusion of being him or her, this does not mean that they lose their identity; they simply suspend it momentarily (J. Cohen, 2006). Afterwards, they shift back to their role as audience members and spectators (Oatley, 1999a). Readers are thus continuously switching between spectatorship in which they read what happens to characters and adopt their physical and psychological perspective, and identification in which they experience the story as if the events happened to them (J. Cohen, 2001). Because of the temporality of identification as reader-character merger, there is no danger of 'ego confusion' as Tan (1994) and Zillmann (1994) warned. Also Oatley (1994) argues that the reader brings some of, but not all of, him or herself into the experience and is able to mentally move in and out of identification. The reader's entry into the narrative world created by the artist and his or her existence as a reader is, therefore, like a semi-permeable membrane.

It is an aim of this chapter to argue following the literature review presented above that identification is possible both in the form of adopting characters' perspective and adopting their identity. Identification as psychological perspective taking is necessary to understand characters' actions and hence it likely occurs in response to all stories, even the shorter and less literary ones such as news narratives. Identification as adopting characters' goals and identity, on the other side, requires the reader to be highly engaged with the story and is thus more likely to happen with longer narratives that carefully develop the portrayal of characters. However, the relation between perspective taking, identification proper, and other processes of readers'

engagement with characters requires further clarification. For this purpose, a model of readers' engagement with characters was developed in this thesis.

5.4.1 Model of engagement with characters

The model proposed here accounts for both the close and the distant form of identification (i.e., perspective taking and identification proper) as the cognitive component of readers' engagement with characters, whereby readers form an understanding or even experience what is it like to be the character, and sympathy/empathy as the emotive component. Conceptualising identification as both perspective taking and identity adoption parallels the common distinction between sympathy as feeling emotions *for* another person or character (Escalas & Stern, 2003; Mar & Oatley, 2008), such as concern, pity, or compassion; and empathy as feeling *with* this person or character and experiencing the same emotions to a certain extent (J. Cohen, 2001). What differentiates sympathy and empathy on the one side, and the two forms of identification on the other, is the closeness of readers' engagement with characters. While taking the perspective of a character and sympathizing with him or her, there is a distinction between the reader and the character, the reader observes the character within the story world and retains his or her identity. In order to experience the same emotions as the character, readers have to temporally merge with that character and experience as if they were him or her for a limited amount of time, which is the very definition of identification as identity adoption (Cohen, 2001). This comparison is represented within the reader-character distinction vs. merger dimension of the model (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

*Model of readers' engagement with story characters with sample items from questionnaire**

	Cognitive dimension	Emotive dimension
Reader – Character Distinction	Perspective taking as adopting the psychological viewpoint of the character (e.g., 'While I was reading, I pictured what it was like for the character to experience what was described.')	Sympathy as feeling emotions <i>for</i> the character, such as pity or compassion (e.g., 'I was concerned about what happened to the main character.')
Reader – Character Merger	Identification temporally adopting character's goals and identity (e.g., 'When I had been reading the article for a while, it seemed as if I had become the character in my thoughts.')	Empathy as feeling emotions <i>with</i> the character (e.g., 'I experienced the character's feelings as if the events were happening to me.')

Note. * Questionnaire employed in experiments presented in Chapters 6 and 7.3.

The model of readers' engagement with characters thus clarifies the distinction between perspective taking, identification, empathy and sympathy according to the distance between reader and character, and the emotional vs. cognitive nature of the process. It is proposed that these well-known terms for processes of engagement with characters are retained in the future literature about narrative engagement and persuasion in order to avoid the theoretical and terminological confusion created by previous scholarship. Several authors have in fact disputed which of the phenomena is primary and incorporates the others. For instance, in the same paper Tal-Or and Cohen (2010) defined identification as either composed of affective empathy and cognitive *empathy*, or of emotional and cognitive *perspective taking*. Does identification then equals empathy or perspective taking? And what exactly does emotional perspective taking mean? According to, Busselle and Bilandzic (2009), it consists of identification and empathy, which only complicates things further.

Adding to the terminological confusion, Kaufman and Libby (2012) introduce a completely new term: experience-taking. This is defined as simulating the subjective experience of a character, its thoughts, feelings and goals. Experience-taking represents a form of reader-character merger

since it ‘entails the spontaneous replacement of self with other’ (p. 2). As such, experience-taking ‘depends on the *relinquishing* of the self-concept’ (p. 2; emphasis added), while the traditional concept of perspective-taking *increases* the activation of an individual’s self-concept. To take the perspective of another person or character, readers have to rely on their ‘conceptual knowledge of the self to reason how another person might be responding to or experiencing a particular situation or event’ (p. 2). The concept of experience-taking is thus useful for pointing at differences between forms of reader-character merger and distinction, such as perspective taking. However, an item from the scale used to measure experience-taking (‘I felt like I could put myself in the shoes of the character in the story’, p. 19) evidences that its operationalization might contain perspective taking as well. Moreover, the conceptualization of experience-taking entails both identification proper (i.e., adoption, or simulation, of characters’ goals and identity) and empathy (i.e., the simulation of characters’ feelings). Contrarily to that, I claim that it is useful to keep the conceptualizations of perspective taking, identification, empathy, and sympathy separated – not only to bring terminological clarity, but to start unveiling the relations between them. This might help explain their formation as well since I posit that mechanisms of engagement with characters lead to one another via what I call the sympathy and the empathy route described in a process model outlined below. This is important since the formation of character engagement has not been fully understood yet; Cohen (2009) in fact claims in regard to identification that ‘although the research has made some progress in understanding what factors foster identification, the processes underlying the creation of identification with characters seem complex and difficult to decipher’ (p. 231).

The process model proposed here advances the Kaufman and Libby’s (2012) juxtaposition of perspective taking and experience-taking insofar as it proposes that the former is the basis for the later: The understanding of the character gained through effortful perspective taking forms the basis for either feeling emotions for the character via the sympathy route, or for adopting the character’s goals and overall identity, and feel the same emotions as the character via the empathy route. Perspective taking is thus seen as the basic psychological mechanism through which an understanding of characters’ mental states and behaviour is gained. Likewise, Kaufman and Libby claim that perspective taking is a ‘conscious, effortful process of attempting to understand another’s thoughts, feelings, and experiences’ (p. 15), while identification and empathy – incorporated in their concept of experience-taking – are a ‘relatively natural, spontaneous response’ (p. 15). However, for this natural and spontaneous response to occur, an initial understanding of characters gained through perspective taking is necessary. As

established in the previous section, readers interchangeably take the psychological perspective of various characters in the story in order to understand their behaviour (Gerrig, 1996). However, it is likely that they most often put themselves in the shoes of the protagonist towards whom positive affective dispositions are prompted by story schemas (Raney, 2004, 2006) and behaviour descriptions (Zillmann, 1994, 2006), and to whom most instances of internal focalization are arguably directed as well. The first step in the process model of readers' engagement with characters thus consists of positive affective dispositions leading to psychological perspective taking.

Perspective taking consists of 'deliberate cognitive efforts at putting oneself into another's place – not in the sense of identifying with that other, but as an attempt at understanding as much of this other's experiential state as possible (Zillmann, 1994, p. 40). Putting oneself into another's place is enabled by direct and indirect cues about a character's inner world. Using Goldman's (2006) simulation theory of mind-reading in everyday conversations (i.e., a concept similar to perspective taking), Oatley (2011) claims that indirect cues are provided by descriptions of a situation in the story. When readers learn what happened to a character, they imagine what this event would mean to them had they had the same goals as this character (but not yet having adopted them as during the process of identification). By a process of simulation, they feel within themselves an emotion appropriate to the event and project it onto the character, reasoning that this character must feel the same. A similar process occurs when direct cues about a character's emotions are provided through instances of internal focalization (Gerrig, 1996). Also in this case readers have to imagine how they experienced the described emotion and project this simulated emotion onto the character.

The understanding gained through the simulative process of perspective taking might then lead readers to feel emotions for characters, such as pity, compassion, or concern, in what is called here the sympathy route of engagement with characters. When engagement with characters takes this route (positive affective dispositions—perspective taking—sympathy), readers simulate emotions appropriate to characters' goals in relation to events that befell them, and feel emotions of their own – emotions of sympathy. In contrast, readers might not only simulate characters' emotions but feel the same emotions as if the events in the story happened to them. When engagement with characters takes the so called empathy route, perspective taking thus leads to empathy. This happens via identification since adopting the character's goals is necessary for feeling the same emotions as the character.

5.5 Conclusion

The process model of engagement with characters enables to understand how perspective taking, identification, empathy, and sympathy interrelate to bring readers the unique experience of engagement with characters. As stated before for identification versus spectatorship, the empathy and the sympathy routes interchange continuously. Still, narratives might differ in regard to which of the routes is prompted more often. News narratives investigated in this thesis are shorter and less literary (i.e., they possess fewer elements of narrativity, Kinnebrock & Bilandzic, 2006; or narrative quality, Kreuter, et al., 2007) than narratives traditionally investigated in narrative persuasion research, such as fictional or factual short stories (Green, 2004; Green & Brock, 2000), short films (Igartua, Cheng, & Lopes, 2003), feature films (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009; Igartua, 2010; Igartua & Barrios, 2012), and television series (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009). It is argued that news narratives might still engage readers with their characters – individuals involved in the factual events reported – but do so through the less intense, sympathy route. This prediction is tested in two experiments reported in Chapters 6 and 7.3.

6 Study 1: Engagement with characters as mediator of news narrative persuasiveness

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will report a study carried out to provide a further, experimentally supported answer to RQ1 (Chapter 1.2), as well as to target RQ2 (Chapter 1.3). Framing analyses reported in Chapters 3 and 4 have established point of view and characterization as valid framing devices forming the so called reader engagement techniques. This finding provided an affirmative answer to RQ1 which questioned the role of character in the formation of frames. Moving beyond frame building (Scheufele, 1999; see Chapter 2.2), this chapter focuses on the process of frame setting (ibid): If media frames formed predominantly through reader engagement techniques transfer to corresponding audience frames, this will provide empirical evidence for the efficiency of these techniques in determining the direction of framing effects (see Chapter 5.2). However, not only would this confirm the treatment of character in news as a valid framing device (RQ1), but offer an answer to RQ2 as well. Point of view and characterization are in fact expected to affect framing outcomes thorough evoking readers' engagement with characters, specifically their sympathy and perspective taking which represent less intense processes that likely occur in response to shorter and less literary stories such as news narratives (see Chapter 5.4.1). Sympathy and perspective taking could then mediate the persuasive effects of frames formed through reader engagement techniques (RQ2). Testing for this assumption will also address the research shortage noticed by Van Peer and Maat (1996) who claim that 'although narratology has devoted considerable energy to describing the various textual devices that constitute "point of view", not much is known of its real effects on the reading process and its outcome with any certainty' (p. 145).

Since according to the framing analysis presented in Chapter 3, media frames formed through reader engagement techniques presented the crime either from the perspective of the victim, or the perpetrator, it was expected that these frames influence the extent to which readers attribute the blame for what happened to the victim and the perpetrator. Blame attributions were taken as an indicator of framing effects in this study. According to Scheufele (1999), attributions of responsibility constitute individual-level effects of framing that occur after the process of frame setting, that is, after media frames exhibit an impact on audience frames, as

revealed by participants thoughts about the topic or event reported in the coverage. Changes in audience frames, or ways of thinking about the issue, then influence participants' attributions of responsibility, their attitudes, and behaviours, which all represent individual-level effects of framing. Scheufele criticises studies focusing on individual-level effects of framing for failing to examine whether media frames affected audience frames prior to provoking behavioural, attitudinal, and cognitive outcomes. However, individual-level effects of frames were investigated in this study since this enabled an experimental design. Character blaming was in fact measured as a composite score of items assessing participants' attributions of causality, responsibility, and blame to each character since these indicate different underlying constructs (Knobloch-Westerwick & Taylor, 2008; Shaver & Drown, 1986). In comparison, exploring audience frames would require a qualitative approach whereby participants' responses on open-ended questions about the coverage would be content analysed.

Blame attributions as an outcome of frame setting have been investigated already by Coleman and Thorson (2002). The authors claim that 'attribution theory relates to framing because how a message is framed can have an effect on how people attribute responsibility or place blame' (p. 406). Coleman and Thorson looked at two types of frames: thematic and episodic (Iyengar, 1991), which roughly correspond to issue versus action or events oriented stories respectively (Pan & Kosicki, 1993; see Chapter 2.3.1). Focusing on the framing of crime, Coleman and Thorson (2002) assumed that audiences exposed to an episodic frame will attribute the responsibility for the crime to individual perpetrators and request punitive action, as opposed to attributing the blame to society and requesting prevention strategies when exposed to a thematic frame. However, this prediction was not supported by Coleman and Thorson's findings since episodic and thematic frames evoked individual and societal blame attributions to a similar extent. This might be explained by individual preferences to attribute blame to dispositional (i.e. individual) versus external (i.e. societal) factors which were found to moderate the impact of episodic versus thematic frames on blaming (Matthes, 2009a).

Analyses of actual coverage showed that crime news most often exhibits an episodic frame (Iyengar, 1991; Rodgers & Thorson, 2001). The focus in analysing the impact of framing on attributions of blame for crime events should therefore be placed on dispositional attributions; these attributions might, however, be directed to different characters. Thereby, the question shifts from whether individuals or society are blamed to which of the individuals involved in the crime case become the target of blame. This question was addressed by Knobloch-Westerwick and Taylor (2008) who analysed the so called 'blame game' coverage in which actors in the

public arena 'try to deflect, deflate, or diffuse blame for negative events so that the public does not view them as the cause of harm' (p. 723). In their first study, the authors investigated the blaming process by manipulating the verb voice of action descriptions relevant to an event reported in the stimulus articles. For instance, in an article entitled 'Teen Charged for Hosting Party with Alcohol', the passive and the active voice text versions differed in three passages, such as 'McInnis threw a party...' (active voice) versus 'A party was thrown by McInnis...' (passive voice). The agents, in this case the McInnis, were perceived as more the cause of an event when active voice was used to describe their actions, than when passive voice was used. Verb voice thus influenced causal attributions, which are one of the indicators of character blaming (the other two being attributions of responsibility and attributions of blame; Shaver & Drown, 1986).

In a second study by Knobloch-Westerwick and Taylor (2008), the verb voice of multiple agents – parties involved in a conflict – was manipulated. The results of the first study were replicated with an additional interaction found: The impact of the verb voice manipulation on attributions of causality for Party A was significant among those participants who read the news stories with passive voice for Party B, but not significant among those who read the versions with active voice for Party B. Besides attributions of causality, participants' support of discussed political changes ('support for policy change') and their opinion on who is right in the targeted controversy ('assent with party views') was measured. Both measures were influenced by attributions of causality. These findings indicate that 'journalists may give readers the "full story" but still influence greatly through implied causal accounts what readers make of the events when it comes to their own opinion formation' (p. 740). The causal accounts were implied since they only consisted of formal differences in news presentations – the active or passive voice manipulation. This addressed a gap in the framing literature 'in that causal interpretations specifically were examined while keeping the actual content constant' (p. 740). In other words, Knobloch-Westerwick and Taylor (2008) investigated the impact of equivalency framing (Entman, et al., 2009) on siding with agents in news, as indicated by participants' assent with party views and support for policy change proposed by a certain party. This type of framing produces effects in response to different but logically equivalent words or phrases (see Chapter 2.1) and thus cannot occur outside the experimental setting where media texts differ in content, not only form, producing emphasis framing effects (Entman, et al., 2009; see Chapter 2.1). Although Knobloch-Westerwick and Taylor (2008) used original news articles as stimuli, the ecological validity of their findings is thus questionable.

Instead of directly manipulating causal attributions through verb voice, the study reported in this chapter manipulated reader engagement techniques. While some of these techniques might influence character blaming directly, others might influence the blaming process indirectly through mechanisms of readers' engagement with characters (see Chapter 5.4). Among the former techniques, point of view might directly influence blame attributions through providing reasons and justifications for characters' action. For instance, from Eamon Lillis's point of view within the manslaughter frame his attack on Celine Cawley was somehow justified by her bullying behaviour which allegedly led to the row between them; in the row Lillis lost control and attacked her, causing her deadly injuries. According to Lillis's point of view, his attack was therefore provoked and lacked the control and intent necessary for the murder frame (see Chapter 3.3.1). Perceptions of control and intention were found to influence participants' attributions of causality in the second study by Knobloch-Westerwick and Taylor (2008) as well. Characterization, however, does not seem to directly translate to character blaming; instead, it might exhibit an impact on character blaming through eliciting readers' engagement with some characters instead of others. Readers might in fact develop positive affective dispositions (Raney, 2004, 2006; Zillmann, 1994; 2006; see Chapter 5.4) towards characters who are presented positively through either direct descriptions or anecdotes constituting characterization (see Chapter 2.5). This might lead readers to take the perspective of these characters and engage with them through the sympathy route, as predicted in the case of news narratives.

In the present study, wider factors that might directly or indirectly impact character blaming were thus examined and this required a different approach to the one applied by Knobloch-Westerwick and Taylor (2008). Since the focus was on narrative properties of news instead of formal linguistic characteristics such as the verb voice, emphasis (or issue) framing instead of equivalency framing (Entman, et al., 2009) was investigated. However, some of the considerations brought forward by Knobloch-Westerwick and Taylor (2008) were taken into account. In a critique of emphasis framing, the authors note that

'many studies in the field of framing research simply selected different parts of information related to events and included them in different versions of the presented news [...]. Yet, it is not overtly surprising that news consumers then gain different impressions of the topic' (p. 740).

This limitation of emphasis framing was addressed in the present study by manipulating reader engagement techniques only, while keeping the frame constant across stimulus articles. In these

articles, the same broad frame about Celine Cawley's death as manslaughter was in fact presented, but different perspectives on events leading to it were introduced: The perspective of Celine Cawley, the victim; the perspective of Eamonn Lillis, the perpetrator; or the perspective of both which represented the neutral condition. Another benefit of this approach was to employ ecologically valid stimuli, while allowing for experimental manipulation. This overcomes the shortcomings of most psychological research and many communication research on framing effects which has been conducted without any reference to the media at all (Giles & Shaw, 2009). In these studies, the effects of framing on audiences is typically investigated through a set of researcher-designed vignettes (e.g., Coleman & Thorson, 2002). Because of a careful experimental manipulation of these vignettes, this research has high internal but low ecological validity. Giles and Shaw (2009) in fact argue that 'there is no consideration of when and how (and from where) individuals might encounter such "messages" outside the laboratory (p. 378).' This is the case also with the studies conducted by Knobloch-Westerwick and Taylor (2008): While the authors used original newspaper articles, they did not base their manipulation on a previous framing analysis. Indeed, equivalency framing does not occur in real-life settings, such as media communication, but could only be performed through experimental manipulation (Entman, et al., 2009). In contrast, the present study utilised authentic media material that was carefully manipulated under controlled experimental conditions.

The experimental design made it possible to target RQ2 (Chapter 1.3) by manipulating characters' perspective and measuring character blaming as well as character engagement as the mediator of framing effects (i.e., the individual-level effects of audience frames; Scheufele, 1999). It was in fact questioned whether readers' engagement with characters still acts as a mediator of the persuasive power of news stories which are shorter and less literary than narratives traditionally investigated in narrative persuasion research (RQ2). The model of engagement with characters (see Chapter 5.4.1) allowed to target this question since it classifies various psychological processes according to their intensity, as indicated by the distance between reader and character. In the case of news narratives, it was predicted that particularly the less intense processes involved in the sympathy route – perspective taking and sympathy – will play a role. In the following section these predictions are developed further.

6.2 Hypotheses

First, in response to RQ1 the main effect of media frames on character blaming was expected. It was hypothesised that:

H1a: Reading the perspective of the perpetrator will increase attributions of blame to the victim and decrease attributions of blame to the perpetrator, as compared to reading the neutral perspective.

H1b: Reading the perspective of the victim will increase attributions of blame to the perpetrator and decrease attributions of blame to the victim, as compared to reading the neutral perspective.

Second, it was verified whether reader engagement techniques that were used to present the crime from a particular characters' perspective indeed acted as reader engagement techniques. All processes of readers' engagement with characters defined in the model (see Chapter 5.4.1) were measured although it was expected that particularly sympathy and perspective taking will be influenced by perspective manipulation. Identification and empathy, on the other hand, are more intense and thus likely elicited by longer and more literary narratives than usually present in news. The following hypotheses were tested:

H2a: Reading the perspective of the perpetrator will increase sympathy and perspective taking with him and decrease sympathy and perspective taking with the victim, as compared to reading the neutral perspective.

H2b: Reading the perspective of the victim will increase sympathy and perspective taking with her and decrease sympathy and perspective taking with the perpetrator, as compared to reading the neutral perspective.

Third, the assumption that reader engagement techniques invite readers' engagement with the perspectivizing character and thereby influence readers' attributions of blame for the crime was put to a direct test through a mediation analysis: It was investigated whether perspective taking and sympathy act as mediating mechanisms of the perspective effect on character blaming (RQ2). The following hypotheses were tested:

H3a: Perspective taking and sympathy will mediate the effect of perspective manipulation on perpetrator blaming.

H3b: Perspective taking and sympathy will mediate the effect of perspective manipulation on victim blaming.

6.3 Method

Experimental design

The study followed a 3 X 2 mixed factorial design with article perspective (victim, perpetrator, neutral) as between-subjects factor and target of participants' blame (victim, perpetrator) as within-subjects factor. Participants' attributions of blame were measured as the dependent variable. Processes of readers' engagement with the victim and the perpetrator (sympathy, perspective taking, identification, and empathy) were entered as mediating variables.

Participants

The sample consisted of 282 adult volunteers (63.8% women) between ages of 18 and 59 ($M = 26.16$; $SD = 9.31$). Fifty-five participants were psychology students who received credits for their participation. Others were sampled through personal recommendation and through links posted to internet sites that advertise online studies, such as <http://psych.hanover.edu/research/exponnet.html> and <http://www.onlinepsychresearch.co.uk>. A prize draw for a £70 Amazon voucher was offered for participation. There was a 70.11% response rate and a 41.87% completion rate.

Because international sites were employed for the advertisement of the study, participants were not only from the UK, but from Australia (1) and the US (17) as well. One participant from Austria and one from Switzerland were excluded from the analysis because they were not native English speakers, while we retained one participant currently living in Italy and one in France, because they were of a British nationality. We intentionally sought participants from Ireland (26) and Northern Ireland (8) in order to compare them to the British sample because crime case reported in stimulus articles happened in Dublin (see Chapter 3.1.1). The Irish subsample was not sufficiently large to run this comparison, but it was included in the main sample because its results did not significantly differ from results of other participants. White Irish participants (29) in fact attributed the same amount of blame to the victim and to the perpetrator than White British participants and participants from other ethnic backgrounds constituting the comparison group ($t(280) = 0.90$, $p > 0.5$, $d = 0.18$ for perpetrator blaming; $F(280) = -1.09$, $p > 0.05$, $d = 0.22$ for victim blaming).

Participants were mostly students (74.8%) with 43.6% of them already having a higher education degree and 27% of them a post-graduate degree. Most of the participants were white British (66.7%), some were white Irish (10.3%) and some from other white backgrounds (15.6%), whereas there were less than five representatives of other ethnicities.

Participants who spent less than ten minutes on completing the study (the average response time was 31 minutes) and who failed more than two attention checks out of seven were not included in further analyses. All participants answered correctly to the memory check question asking who was convicted of manslaughter and therefore there was no need to exclude additional people.

Procedure

The study was administered online through the programme Unipark (www.unipark.com). Participants were told that the study investigated their perception of crime news. The programme randomly assigned them to one of the three experimental conditions. Ninety-two participants read the stimulus article from the perspective of the victim, 93 from the perspective of the perpetrator, and 97 from the perspective of both (neutral condition). After reading the article they answered a series of questions about their attributions of blame for the crime, engagement with the story and its characters, and perceived realism of the article. At the end they provided demographic information.

Stimuli

Three stimulus texts in the form of newspaper articles were constructed using excerpts from previously analysed coverage. In these articles, the same broad frame about Celine Cawley's death as manslaughter was presented, but different perspectives on events leading to it were introduced based on reader engagement techniques identified in the first framing analysis (see Chapter 3). The three stimulus articles were thus either written from the victim's perspective (1035 words; see Appendix 3), the perpetrator's perspective (1037 words; see Appendix 4), or the perspective of both which represented the neutral condition (1020 words; see Appendix 5). The impact of stimulus articles on readers' attributions of blame then resulted exclusively from different reader engagement techniques used to present a particular perspective on what lead

to Cawley's manslaughter, and not from completely different frames about the crime: Accident, manslaughter, or murder, as found in the framing analysis (see Chapter 3).

The first part of the article (623 words) was the same in all three conditions: The article first introduced the jury's verdict that Eamonn Lillis committed manslaughter. Then, his version of the facts told at the trial was presented in order to engage readers in the narrative account about events leading to the crime. Afterwards, it was clearly stated that the jury rejected Lillis's testimony according to which Cawley died of accidental injuries; however, it was emphasised that the prosecution did not prove an intent for murder either. What follows this common part is an account from one of the three perspectives. In all of them, Lillis's secret desire to start a new life with his lover was stated as the catalyst of the row between them and as the main reason for Lillis's aggressive outburst which resulted in Cawley's death. However, different reasons that led to Lillis's marital dissatisfaction were suggested: Lillis's vain and ineffectual nature (the victim's perspective), Cawley's domineering behaviour (the perpetrator's perspective), or common reasons of marital dissatisfaction (the neutral perspective). The motivation provided in the victim and perpetrator manipulation condition was based on reader engagement techniques identified in the previous framing analysis (see Chapter 3), while no such techniques were present in the neutral condition. Apart from different reader engagement techniques used to convey the perspective of one of the characters, headlines and picture captions were manipulated as well (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1

Manipulation of paratextual elements

Perspective	Victim	Perpetrator	Neutral
Headline	Cheating husband found guilty of killing wife in row	Husband found guilty of killing 'Superwoman' wife in row	Husband found guilty of killing wife in row
Victim picture	Cawley ... portrayal of a bossy wife made her victim again	Cawley ... Bond girl become a size 22 businesswoman	Cawley ... died from blows to the head
Perpetrator picture	Shameless adulterer ... in his 50s Lillis still wears hoodies	'Lap dog' Lillis ... goaded by his 'superwoman' wife	Eamonn Lillis ... convicted of manslaughter

Measures

Blame attributions. Character blaming was measured as a composite score of items assessing participants' attributions of causality, responsibility, and blame to each character by adapting the following items from Harding, Zinzow, Burns, and Jackson (2010):

- The incident was caused by Eamonn Lillis/Celine Cawley (*causality*).
- Eamonn Lillis/Celine Cawley is responsible for what happened (*responsibility*).
- Eamonn Lillis/Celine Cawley is to blame for what happened (*blame*).

Participants responded on a Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The internal consistency (Cronbach's α) of blame attributions to Cawley (victim blaming) was 0.84. The consistency of blame attributions to Lillis (perpetrator blaming) was lower, but still satisfactory (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$).

Engagement with the Narrative and its Characters. First, items about identification, perspective taking, sympathy, and empathy were included in the questionnaire in order to measure readers' engagement with characters as conceptualized in the proposed model (see Chapter 5.4.1). For this purpose, items were adapted from existing research, mainly from De Graaf et al. (2009), and Igartua Perosanz and Rovira (1998), whose items were translated from Spanish (for an English version of the scale published afterwards, see Igartua, 2010). The decision to combine items from different existing scales was taken in order to measure each of the processes of engagement with characters with more than one item and thus verify whether they load on

different factors in accordance with the proposed model (see Chapter 5.4.1). The same items were formed separately for the victim and the perpetrator, and measured on a Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7), with higher scores indicating higher engagement with characters. In order to verify whether perspective manipulation unintentionally influenced dimensions of engagement with the narrative in general, items about the sensation of being in the narrative world, mental imagery about the story world and its events, general emotions elicited by the story, and attentional focus on the story were included in the questionnaire as well. This is in line with the approach of De Graaf et al. (2009, 2011) and is based on the rationale that engagement with the narrative and its characters likely happens simultaneously (J. Cohen, 2006; see Chapter 5.3). Items about engagement with the narrative were adapted from Busselle and Bilandzic (2009) and De Graaf et al. (2009; see Chapter 5.3) and were likewise measured on a Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7), with higher scores indicating higher engagement with the narrative.

An exploratory principal factor analysis was run on all items. The eigenvalue rule indicated that a nine-factor solution best described the data, but according to the scree plot a six-factor solution was more appropriate. A Varimax rotation was therefore performed specifying a six factor solution (see Appendix 6 and a summary of the factor analysis displayed in Table 6.2). Factor 1, 'Victim Engagement', contained all items about identification and empathy with the victim which represent the reader-character merger dimension of the model (see Chapter 5.4.1). Moreover, this factor contained four items about adopting victim's perspective which represent the reader-character distinction dimension of the model; factor 1 thus represents an indicator of a general engagement with the victim. Factor 2, 'Perpetrator Merger', contained all items about readers' close engagement with the perpetrator (i.e., empathy and identification) which form the reader-character merger dimension of the model (see Chapter 5.4.1). Factor 3, 'Emotional Engagement', contained all items about general emotion elicited by the news story and sympathy with the victim. Factor 4, 'Perpetrator Distinction', contained all items about readers' distant form of engagement with the perpetrator (i.e., sympathy and perspective taking) which form the reader-character distinction dimension of the model (see Chapter 5.4.1). Factor 5, 'Being in the Narrative World', contained all items about mental imagery and the sensation of being transported into a narrative world. Also in the studies conducted by De Graaf et al. (2009, 2011), these items loaded on the same factor, leading the authors to conclude that 'imagery of the story and the feeling of going into a narrative are closely related' (2009, p. 395). Factor 6

contained all items about 'Attentional Focus' on the narrative. The remaining items were not included in any factor because they cross-loaded on more than one factor.⁶

Table 6.2

Factor analysis summary of Engagement with the Narrative and its Characters

No.	Factor	Eigenvalue*	% of variance explained*	Cronbach α
1	Victim Engagement	14.10	28.20	0.91
2	Perpetrator Merger	5.23	10.47	0.93
3	Emotional Engagement	4.22	8.44	0.90
4	Perpetrator Distinction	2.81	5.62	0.87
5	Being in the Narrative World	2.13	4.26	0.86
6	Attentional focus	1.70	3.40	0.85

Note. * before rotation

Perceived Realism. As a control variable, the perceived realism of newspaper articles was measured. Scales of external and narrative realism were constructed following the conceptualization of Busselle and Bilandzic (2008). A Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) was employed in both cases, with a higher score indicating higher perceived realism. Additionally, a composite score from both scales was calculated.

The external realism of fictional stories is judged as their match with the actual world of readers (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008). Since newspaper articles report events that have really happened and thus represent factual stories, their external realism was assessed here as the extent to which participants trust their objectivity. The following items were formulated:

- The article is trustworthy.
- The article is unreliable (*reverse scored*).
- The article likely provides true information.
- I can trust information provided in the article.
- The information presented in the story is probably invented (*reverse scored*).

The internal consistency (Cronbach's α) of External Realism was 0.86. Additionally, the following items were constructed to measure the perceived coherency of the story (i.e., its narrative realism; Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008):

⁶ An item was regarded to cross-load when its factor loadings differed on less than one point.

- The article was coherent within itself.
- The article contained elements that contradicted themselves (*reverse scored*).
- At some points in the article it was not clear why something happened (*reverse scored*).

The internal consistency (Cronbach's α) of Narrative Realism was 0.70. Together with External Realism it formed the composite of Perceived Realism (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.85$).

6.4 Results

Main effects of perspective manipulation

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of all variables included in this study are given in Appendix 7. First, the main effect of perspective manipulation on character blaming was verified in order to test for H1a and H1b, which predicted that reading the perspective of one of the characters will decrease attributions of blame to this character and increase attributions of blame to the other character, as compared with the neutral perspective. To test these hypotheses, a 3 X 2 mixed ANOVA was conducted with article perspective as between-subjects factor and the character who was the target of participants' blame as within-subjects factor. There was a significant main effect of character on the amount of blame, $F(1,279) = 3.05$, $p < 0.001$, $\mu^2 = 0.52$. Pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni corrections revealed that participants blamed the perpetrator significantly more ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.73$) than they blamed the victim ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 0.81$). There was no significant effect of perspective on the amount of blame in general, $F(2,279) = 0.14$, $p > 0.05$, $\mu^2 = 0.001$. However, there was a significant interaction between article's perspective and the target of participants' blame, $F(2,279) = 6.81$, $p < 0.001$, $\mu^2 = 0.05$. Follow-up one-way ANOVA analyses were run separately for attributions of blame to the victim and for attributions of blame to the perpetrator in order to analyse the nature of this interaction. Significant main effects of article's perspective on perpetrator blaming ($F(2,279) = 5.01$, $p < 0.01$, $\mu^2 = 0.04$) and on victim blaming ($F(2,279) = 4.96$, $p < 0.01$, $\mu^2 = 0.04$) were revealed. REGWF post-hoc test showed that the mean perpetrator and victim blaming of participants reading the perpetrator perspective differed from the means of both the victim and the neutral perspective readers, as indicated in Table 6.3. Participants who read the perpetrator perspective attributed more blame to the victim and less blame to the perpetrator than participants who read the neutral perspective, confirming H1a. However, against predictions made in H1b readers of the victim perspective did not exhibit different character blaming from readers of the neutral perspective.

Table 6.3

Means and standard deviations (between brackets) for blame attributions and character engagement per article perspective

	Victim's perspective	Perpetrator's perspective	Neutral perspective
Perpetrator Blaming	3.88 (0.67) ^b	3.56 (0.75) ^a	3.80 (0.72) ^b
Victim Blaming	2.23 (0.73) ^b	2.60 (0.85) ^a	2.36 (0.82) ^b
Perpetrator Distinction	3.27 (1.19) ^b	3.90 (1.21) ^a	3.44 (1.23) ^b
Perpetrator Merger	2.28 (1.18)	2.46 (1.42)	2.26 (1.10)
Victim Engagement	3.09 (1.23)	2.68 (1.19)	2.85 (1.01)
Emotional Engagement	3.95(1.16) ^b	3.39 (1.26) ^a	3.83(1.14) ^b

Note. Different superscripts indicate differences significant at $p < .05$ or less.

Next, the main effect of perspective manipulation on engagement with characters was inspected in order to test for H2a and H2b. These hypothesis predicted that reading the perspective of one of the characters will increase the distant forms of engagement with him or her (perspective taking and sympathy) and decreased engagement with the other character, as compared to reading the neutral perspective. A series of one-way ANOVAs with REGWF post-hoc tests of mean differences were performed on all factors of character engagement to verify these assumptions. First, Perpetrator Distinction was significantly affected by perspective manipulation, $F(2,279) = 6.16, p < 0.01, \mu^2 = 0.04$. REGWF post-hoc test indicated that the mean Perpetrator Distinction of participants reading the perpetrator perspective differed from the means of both the victim and the neutral perspective readers. An inspection of the Table 6.3 shows that participants who read the article from the perspective of the perpetrator sympathized more with him and took his perspective to a greater extent than those who read the neutral perspective, offering partial support to H2a. Contrary to H2b, however, reading the perspective of the victim did not decrease sympathy and perspective taking with the perpetrator in comparison to reading the neutral perspective.

Second and as expected, perspective manipulation did not have a significant effect on the close form of participants' engagement with the perpetrator (Perpetrator Merger; $F(2, 279) = 0.74, p > 0.05, \mu^2 < 0.01$), which was below scale midpoint in all three manipulation conditions (see Table 6.3). Third, the perspective effect on Victim Engagement was only trend significant ($F(2,279) = 2.86, p = 0.06, \mu^2 = 0.02$) and the REGWF test revealed that the group means did not differ from each other (see Table 6.3). This was expected, because Victim Engagement included both the

close forms of engagement with the victim (empathy and identification), as well as perspective taking with her. However, only the close form of victim engagement – sympathy with her – was included in the factor describing Emotional Engagement with the narrative and its victim; fourth and as expected, this factor was significantly affected by perspective manipulation, $F(2, 279) = 5.85, p < 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.04$. REGWF post-hoc test indicated that the mean Emotional Engagement of participants reading the perpetrator perspective differed from the means of both the victim and the neutral perspective readers. An inspection of Table 6.3 reveals that participants who read the article from the perpetrator's perspective felt less general emotions and sympathised less with the victim than participants who read the neutral perspective, offering additional support to H2a. However, reading the victim's perspective did not increase sympathy with her in comparison to reading the neutral perspective and thus H2b had to be rejected.

In line with expectations, there were no effects of perspective manipulation on other dimensions of engagement with the news narrative in general, or on its perceived realism (all $F_s < 2.12, p_s > .05$). The scores for perceived external ($M = 3.67, SD = 1.20$), narrative ($M = 3.75, SD = 1.18$) and composite realism ($M = 3.70, SD = 1.04$) were all above the scale midpoint.

Mediation analysis

Bootstrapping was used to establish whether perspective taking and sympathy mediated the perspective effect on character blaming, as predicted by H3a and H3b. The bootstrapping procedure estimates a confidence interval for whether the indirect effect of the independent variable via the mediator is significant: If this interval does not include zero, the indirect effect could be regarded as significant (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). The independent variable in our case represented the three manipulation conditions and therefore the bootstrapping procedure for a multicategorical independent variable was performed (Hayes & Preacher, 2011). Dummy coding was used to calculate the effects of the victim and perpetrator perspective on character blaming as compared to the effects of the neutral perspective, which acted as a reference group (J. Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). The effects of the perpetrator vs. neutral perspective are reported as *relative* to the effects of the victim vs. neutral perspective, and vice versa (Hayes & Preacher, 2011).

Perspective taking and sympathy with the perpetrator were represented by the factor Perpetrator Distinction, while sympathy with the victim was contained in the factor Emotional Engagement. These two factors were simultaneously entered as mediators in order to test for H3, following the recommendation of Preacher and Hayes (2008) that in the case of multiple

hypothesised mediators, multiple mediation analysis is the appropriate analytic strategy. This analysis calculates the *specific* indirect effect of the independent variable via a particular mediator. Hayes and Preacher (2011) demonstrate that it is plausible to combine multiple mediators also when the independent variable is multicategorical and is represented by a set of coded variables in the analysis. In this case, the indirect effect of a particular coded variable through a chosen mediator is called the *relative specific* indirect effect (p.30).

Two multiple mediator models were formed with Perpetrator Identification and Emotional Engagement as mediators, two dummy coded variables representing the victim and the perpetrator perspective vs. the neutral one, and either the victim or the perpetrator blaming as dependent variable. Five thousand bootstrap samples were used to estimate 95% confidence intervals for whether the indirect effects are significant in both models.

The first mediator model tested the hypothesis that the perspective effect on perpetrator blaming is mediated by perspective taking and sympathy with both characters (H3a). In line with this prediction, the perpetrator perspective exerted a significant relative indirect effect on perpetrator blaming through both mediators: Perpetrator Distinction ($B = -.07, SE = .03, CI = [-.1393, -.0100]$) and Emotional Engagement ($B = -.06, SE = .03, CI = [-.1386, -.0108]$). The nature of these effects can be seen in Figure 6.1; full arrows indicate significant effects. Statistics are displayed for the significant relative effects of perpetrator perspective on both mediators only; they show that reading the perspective of the perpetrator increased sympathy and perspective taking with him (Perpetrator Distinction) and decreased emotional engagement with the crime narrative and its victim (Emotional Engagement). The overall effect of Perpetrator Distinction in turn reduced perpetrator blaming ($B = -.15, SE = .04, p < 0.001$), while Emotional Engagement increased it ($B = .14, SE = .04, p < 0.001$). H3a is thus partially confirmed. However, the victim perspective exerted neither a significant relative direct nor indirect effect on perpetrator blaming in comparison to the perpetrator perspective. In line with the main manipulation effects on character blaming (rejected H1b), victim perspective did not have a significant direct effect on perpetrator blaming when compared with the effect of the neutral perspective (dummy coded; $B = .03, SE = .10, p > 0.05$). Also in line with the main manipulation effects on character engagement (rejected H2b), victim perspective did not significantly influence perpetrator blaming through either of the mediators: Perpetrator Identification ($B = .02, SE = .03, CI = [-.0271, .0845]$) or Emotional Engagement ($B = .02, SE = .03, CI = [-.0321, .0712]$). Taken altogether, the results of the first mediation model offer only partial support for H3a:

perspective taking and sympathy mediated the effect of the perpetrator perspective, but not of the victim perspective, on perpetrator blaming.

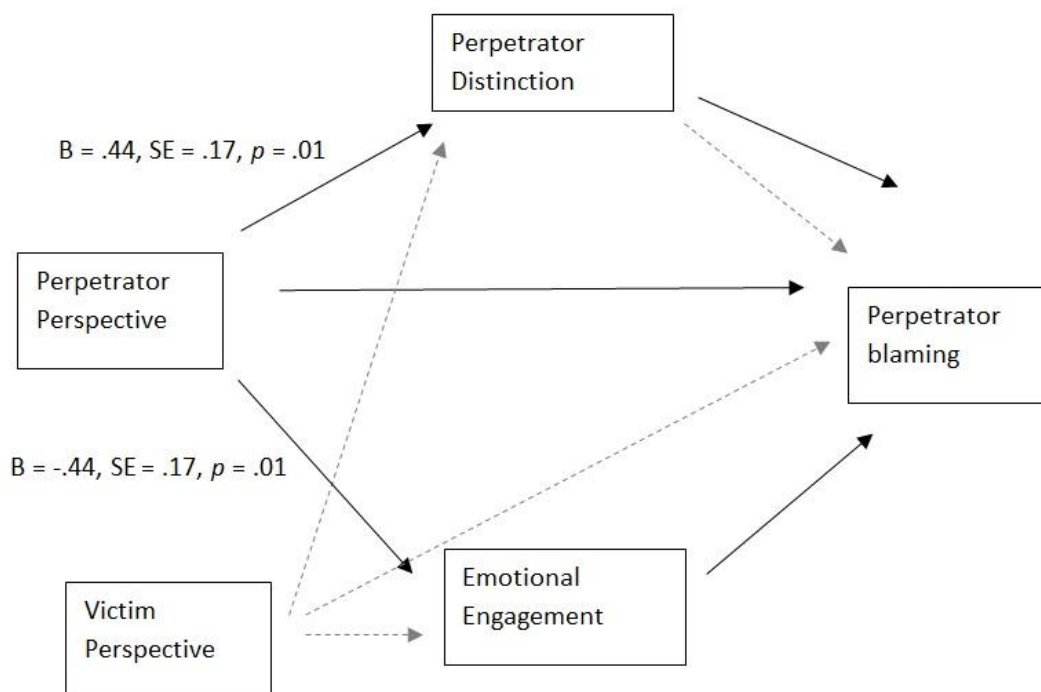


Figure 6.1. Multiple mediation of perspective effects on perpetrator blaming.

The second mediation model tested the hypothesis that perspective taking and sympathy with both characters mediate perspective effects on participants' blaming of the victim (H3b). The model is the same as displayed in Figure 6.1, but instead of perpetrator blaming, victim blaming acts as the dependent variable. Parallel results were found as in the first model. Perpetrator perspective exerted a significant relative indirect effect on victim blaming through both mediators: Perpetrator Distinction ($B = .11, SE = .05, CI = [.0186, .2114]$) and Emotional Engagement ($B = .10, SE = .05, CI = [.0195, .1997]$). The nature of these effects could again be interpreted from Figure 6.1 which displays the same statistics for the relative effects of perpetrator perspective on both mediators as were found in the first model. In line with expectations, the two mediators exerted a different overall effect on victim blaming than they did on attributions of blame towards the perpetrator: Perpetrator Identification significantly increased victim blaming ($B = .24, SE = .04, p < 0.001$), while Emotional Engagement decreased it ($B = -.23, SE = .04, p < 0.001$). However, in line with the null manipulation effects of the victim's perspective on character blaming and engagement (rejected H1a and H1b), there were no direct nor indirect effects found. First, victim perspective did not exhibit a significant relative direct

effect on victim blaming (dummy coded; $B = -.06$, $SE = .11$, $p > 0.05$). Second, victim perspective did not have a significant indirect effect through either of the mediators: Perpetrator Identification ($B = -.04$, $SE = .04$, $CI = [-.1317, .0410]$) and Emotional Engagement ($B = -.03$, $SE = .04$, $CI = [-.1095, .0496]$). Taken altogether, H3b has also received only partial support: perspective taking and sympathy mediated the effect of the perpetrator perspective, but not of the victim perspective, on victim blaming.

Gender effects

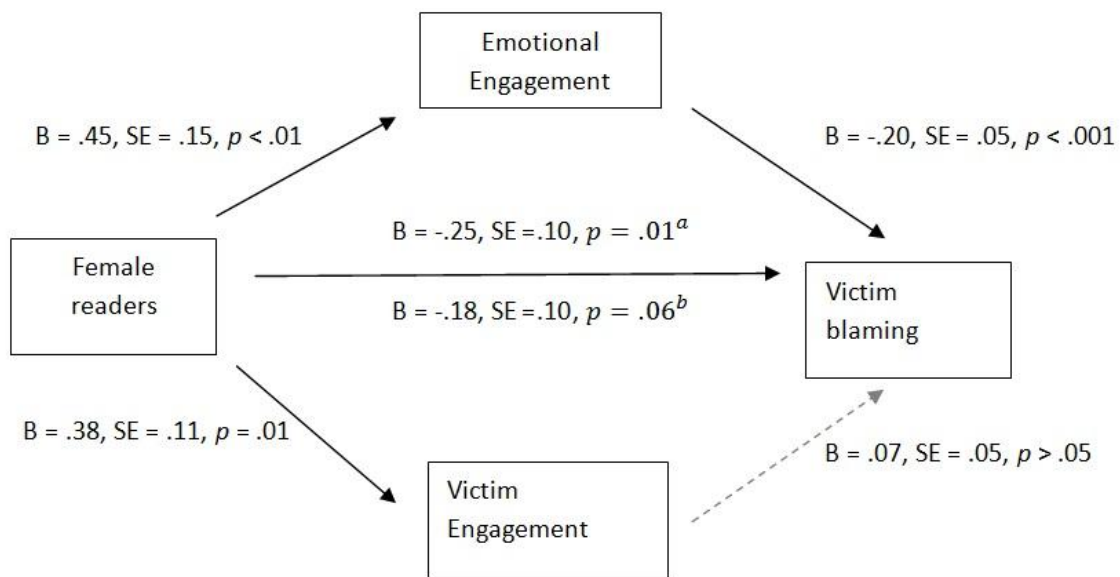
In order to obtain ecologically valid stimuli, the gender of the victim and the perpetrator was kept the same as in the analysed coverage (see Chapter 3): In all experimental conditions, the victim was female and the perpetrator male. It was therefore verified if there are any gender effects on character engagement and blaming, and if the effects of perspective manipulation remain significant when gender is accounted for.

A two-way ANOVA with gender and manipulation conditions as independent variables revealed a significant main effect of gender on attributions of blame to the (female) victim, $F(1, 276) = 4.62$, $p < 0.05$, $\mu^2 = 0.02$. Female readers attributed less blame to her ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 0.06$) than male readers ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 0.08$). Gender did not interact with the perspective manipulation in its effects on victim blaming, $F(2,276) = 1.15$, $p > 0.05$, $\mu^2 = 0.01$. In order to verify whether character perspective (dummy-coded) remained an important predictor of victim blaming when the influence of gender is accounted for, a regression analysis was carried out. After partialling out gender in the first regression step, the effect of perpetrator perspective on victim blaming remained marginally significant ($B = .22$, $SE = .12$, $p = .06$), while in line with the previous results the victim perspective did not have a significant effect on victim blaming ($B = -.12$, $SE = .12$, $p > .05$). In regard to attributions of blame to the perpetrator, gender alone did not have a significant influence, $F(1, 276) = 0.00$, $p > .05$, $< .001$, nor did it interact with character perspective, $F(2,276) = 2.24$, $p > 0.05$, $\mu^2 = 0.02$.

Looking at character engagement, gender did not affect readers' engagement with the perpetrator as measured through factors Perpetrator Distinction ($F(1, 276) = 1.67$, $p > .05$, < 0.01) and Perpetrator Merger ($F(1, 276) = 0.02$, $p > .05$, < 0.001). However, gender had an important effect on factors of readers' engagement with the victim: Victim Engagement ($F(1, 276) = 6.25$, $p < 0.01$, $= 0.02$) and Emotional Engagement ($F(1, 276) = 7.25$, $p < .01$, $= 0.03$). Female participants identified more with the (female) victim ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.17$) than male participants ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.09$). Females also engaged more emotionally with the crime news

story and its (female) victim ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.14$) than male readers ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.28$). There were no interactive effects of gender and perspective manipulation on factors of engagement with characters, all F s < 1.15 , p s $> .05$.

A multiple mediation analysis was carried out to verify whether gender (dummy coded with male as reference category) influenced victim blaming through Victim Engagement and Emotional Engagement. Bootstrapping revealed a significant specific indirect effect of gender on victim blaming through Emotional Engagement ($B = -.09$, $SE = .04$, $CI = [-.1756, -.0248]$), while Victim Engagement did not act as a significant mediator ($B = .03$, $SE = .03$, $CI = [-.0109, .0851]$) since it did not exert a significant effect on victim blaming, as displayed on Figure 6.2. It could be concluded that female participants attributed less blame to the (female) victim partly because they sympathized more with her and experienced more emotions elicited by the story (Emotional Engagement) than male participants.



a : Total effect of gender on victim blaming

b : Direct effect of gender on victim blaming

Figure 6.2. Multiple mediation of gender effect on victim blaming.

6.5 Discussion

The first aim of this study was to investigate the persuasive effects of media frames formed through reader engagement techniques in order to verify the results of the first framing analysis. In this analysis, the link between reader engagement techniques and media frames provided an initial affirmative answer to RQ1 (Chapter 1.2) and established the treatment of character in news as a valid framing device (see Chapter 3). However, the present study presented mixed findings in response to this question. Reader engagement techniques were employed to form character perspective manipulation and character blaming was measured as an indicator of framing effects. Overall, the perpetrator was blamed more than the victim, but reading the perpetrator perspective significantly altered attributions of blame to both characters in comparison with reading the neutral perspective, thus confirming H1a. In contrast, character blaming of victim perspective readers did not differ from the blaming of neutral perspective readers, leading to a rejection of H1b. When looking at the perspective effects on character engagement, which was measured as a mediator of framing effects, similar results were found: Reading the perpetrator perspective significantly altered the distant forms of engagement with both characters (i.e., perspective taking and sympathy with the victim and the perpetrator captured in the factors Perpetrator Distinction and Emotional Engagement) as compared to reading the neutral perspective, in the direction predicted in H2a. Contrarily to predictions in H2b, however, readers of the victim perspective engaged with both characters to a similar extent than readers of the neutral perspective.

It thus appears that the perpetrator perspective was more successful in inducing framing effects and altering character engagement than the victim perspective. This could be explained through the employment of story schemas which according to Raney (2004, 2006) direct readers' initial affective dispositions' towards story characters (see Chapter 5.4). Based on the story schema of a courtroom drama, which might be activated when reading crime news as well, readers 'expect to encounter a character or characters representing forces of good (or order, peace, justice, civility) battling a character or characters representing forces of evil (or disorder, unrest, injustice, lawlessness)' (Raney, 2004, p. 354). In the case of crime news, forces of good are represented by victims, among others, while forces of evil are represented by perpetrators. As soon as a character is introduced as the victim, readers might thus exhibit positive affective dispositions towards him or her, and the opposite is true for the perpetrator. This might occur already before readers form moral evaluations of characters' actions which are described in anecdotes and point of view presentations that constitute reader engagement techniques (see

Chapter 2.5). The impact of story schemas might thus account for greater perpetrator blaming across manipulation conditions.

Looking at specific manipulation conditions, the effects of the neutral perspective might lend themselves particularly well to an explanation based on Raney's (2004, 2006) extension of the classic disposition theory (Zillmann, 1994; 2006; see Chapter 5.4). No particular reader engagement techniques were employed in the neutral manipulation condition and thus the formation of affective dispositions was likely predominantly based on story schemas (Raney, 2004, 2006) as opposite to moral evaluations of characters' actions (Zillmann, 1994, 2006). It is quite significant then that the perpetrator perspective provoked a shift in character blaming and engagement in comparison with the neutral perspective. In all manipulation conditions, the victim was explicitly assigned the role of the victim and thus represented the good character according to story schemas, and vice versa for the perpetrator. Despite this, reader engagement techniques included in the perpetrator perspective managed to slightly alter readers' engagement with characters and their attributions of blame that would usually occur in response to a crime narrative (as represented by the neutral condition). It could be concluded that the perpetrator perspective succeeded in manipulating affective dispositions against those elicited by story schemas; these affective dispositions in turn altered readers' engagement with characters and attributions of blame according to the basic role that these dispositions play in the process of engagement with characters (see Chapter 5.4.1).

In comparison, the victim perspective did not differ in its effects on character blaming and engagement from the neutral perspective; the reason for this might be that blaming and engagement were invited in the same direction as expected according to story schemas about crime narratives. Reader engagement techniques might be therefore particularly influential in directing affective dispositions in narratives that go against commonly held story schemas, as was the case with the crime article written from the perpetrator perspective. In the case of formulaic stories, such as narratives presenting the crime from the victim's perspective, story schemas might play a bigger role than moral evaluations evoked through reader engagement techniques (Raney, 2004).

The greater success of perpetrator perspective manipulation is reflected in the factor analysis of the engagement questionnaire. This analysis was undertaken to test for the theoretically predicted dimensions of engagement with characters included in the initial model (see Chapter 5.4.1). Results show that perspective taking and sympathy with the perpetrator loaded separately from empathy and identification with him, forming the factors Perpetrator Distinction

and Perpetrator Merger respectively. This validates the dimension of reader-character distinction vs. merger that is included in the proposed new model. However, in the case of engagement with the victim, perspective taking, identification, and empathy loaded on a single factor (Victim Engagement), whereas sympathy with her loaded together with general emotions elicited by the story (Emotional Engagement). Based on the influence of story schemas, it is possible to argue that sympathizing with the victim of a crime felt as natural for the readers as feeling general emotions towards the story, such as the sensation of being touched by the story.

The factors Emotional Engagement and Perpetrator Distinction, which contain distant processes of engagement with the victim and the perpetrator respectively, were used to target RQ2 (Chapter 1.3) about the mediating role of readers' engagement with characters in the persuasion through news narratives. It was predicted that particularly perspective taking and sympathy will act as mediators of persuasive effects since news narratives might be more successful in eliciting distant and less intense processes of engagement with characters. This was confirmed by main effect findings, whereby the perspective manipulation had a significant effect on Perpetrator Distinction and Emotional Engagement only. Based on these results, both factors were entered simultaneously in a multiple mediation analysis which showed that they mediated the perpetrator perspective effects on perpetrator and victim blaming, thus offering partial support to H3a and H3b. However, in line with the null effects of the victim perspective discussed above, there were no direct nor indirect effects of the victim perspective manipulation on victim or perpetrator blaming. Overall, the results of the mediation analyses provided an initial affirmative answer to RQ2 and established perspective taking and sympathy as crucial reader reception processes that might augment or diminish the persuasive effects of media frames formed through readers' engagement techniques. These techniques thus acted as powerful framing tools at least within the perpetrator perspective manipulation which altered character engagement and blaming against those predicted by story schemas about crime narrative. This provided an additional affirmative answer to RQ1.

Additionally, gender exhibited a significant main effect on victim blaming and engagement: Female participants engaged more with the victim, as measured by Emotional Engagement and Victim Engagement, and blamed her less than male participants; Emotional Engagement was found to mediate gender effects on victim blaming. Gender did not confound perspective effects on character blaming but pointed to a factor that might have impacted character engagement, and thereby, attributions of blame: reader-character similarity. Female readers, who are of the same gender than the female victim, in fact engaged more with her than male readers and this

led female readers to blame her less for what happened. As indicators of similarity, other demographic characteristics and participants' previous victimization and crime convictions were measured as well and will be reported in the next chapter. Chapter 7 is in fact devoted to the investigation of the role of similarity and parasocial relationship (Giles, 2002; Klimmt, et al., 2006) in engagement with characters and will present an additional study carried out to answer RQ3 (Chapter 1.3).

7 Determinants of readers' engagement with characters

7.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to interrogate the role of parasocial relationship (Giles, 2002; Klimmt, et al., 2006) and similarity in engagement with famous media figures included in news narratives (RQ3; see Chapter 1.3), and in the persuasive impact of these narratives. Connell (1992) in fact observes that a great majority of news stories 'concern themselves with "personalities" – those who have established themselves in one or the other sector of the public world' (p. 68). 'Conventional news values direct journalists towards 'personalities', particularly those who are perceived to wield power' (Manning, 1999, p. 323), and as a consequence, 'the powerful frequently loom large in the thoughts of news audiences as they process information and construct their interpretative frameworks' (Manning, 2001, p. 216). It is therefore important to investigate the influence of characters in news narratives when these characters are famous media figures. In this case, it is likely that readers have developed a parasocial relationship (PSR) with them based on reoccurring parasocial interaction (PSI; Giles, 2002; Klimmt, et al., 2006). PSIs and PSRs are then likely to influence readers' engagement with characters through predetermining their affective dispositions, as will be discussed below. PSRs and PSIs also appear to be related to reader-character similarity which is deemed influential for engagement with characters by a separate body of literature. In order to test for the role of PSR and similarity in directing readers' engagement with characters, and through this, influencing news narrative persuasion, some additional analysis from the first study will be reported, as well as a second study that was carried out specifically to address RQ3. Prior to that, the concepts of PSR, PSI, and similarity will be introduced.

7.1.1 *Parasocial interaction and parasocial relationship*

The terms 'parasocial interaction' and 'parasocial relationship' with a media figure are both composed by words 'para' and 'social' because they resemble everyday social interactions and relationships but differ from them in that they are asymmetrical: While the audience member responds to a media figure as if he or she were a personal acquaintance (Giles, 2002), the media figure does not respond back, at least not to that audience member in particular. Giles (2002) proposes a continuum between social and parasocial interaction (PSI), whereby the later end is

characterized by distance, formal social and communicative constraints, and a decreasing likelihood of developing informal relations. Even the most social, first-order PSI, whereby the media figure addresses the user directly, is one-sided. For instance, a talk show host might face the camera, greet the viewers and anticipate their reactions, but 'these anticipations can never be perfect and are understood by viewers to be impersonal' (J. Cohen, 2009, p. 228). Even though audience members exhibit cognitive (e.g., psychological inferences about a figure's behaviour; Giles, 2002) and behavioural (e.g., greeting the newscaster out loud; *ibid*) responses to a certain media figure, their interaction is imagined and audience members are aware of that, particularly if reminded (J. Cohen, 2009).

Cohen (2009) argues that a talk show host might also make repeated references to past programmes, thereby creating a sense of history and opening up the possibility of 'inside jokes'. This makes repeated viewers 'feel that they have unique knowledge about the performer and a shared history of him or her' (p. 227). In other words, repeated PSI stimulated by the described production techniques, might result in a sense of parasocial relationship with the media figure (PSR). Hartmann, Stuke, and Daschmann (2008) define PSR as 'an enduring mental relational schema fuelled by parasocial interactions that are conducted during media exposure' (p. 25). The authors propose a link between PSRs, PSIs, and affective dispositions that might be useful in understanding the impact of PSIs and PSRs on character engagement. According to Hartmann et al., affective dispositions in fact 'build on the detailed perception processes inherent in parasocial interactions' (p. 26). Similarly put, it is through PSI with media figures that affective dispositions develop towards those figures. A recurring pattern of PSI with a specific media figure might thus lead to a predominant positive or negative affective disposition with that figure and to a positive or negative PSR with him or her. Negative PSRs are characterized by feelings of antipathy, hate, or disgust, and were measured by Hartmann et al. through items indicating 'a mixture of disdain, *Schadenfreude* or spitefulness, and wanting to avoid meeting the disliked character in future media exposure' (p. 29; original emphasis). Based on the conceptualization of PSR as a cognitive schema, the authors in fact claim that PSRs 'cannot be exclusively defined in terms of friendship and must also allow for potentially hostile relationships' (p. 26).

Hartmann et al. (2008) claim that 'a PSR schema also incorporates an affective evaluation of the media character (e.g., I like him or her), and this could be regarded as an enduring affective disposition' (p. 26). The link between affective dispositions and PSRs is also stressed by Zillmann

and Knobloch (2001) who claim that 'affective dispositions toward the targeted individuals are an integral part of these relationships' (p. 197). Because affective dispositions towards media figures with whom audience members have a PSR are already formed prior to exposure to a particular media text, there is no need to develop these dispositions through descriptions of characters' actions as in other unmediated narratives (Zillmann, 1994; 2006; see Chapter 5.4). In other words, when famous media figures are included as characters in news narratives, this characters could be considered as pre-developed and participants' 'involvement by mere reference [to them] need only be supplemented by the report of events that pertain to them' (Zillman & Knobloch, 2001, p. 197). Despite the link between PSRs and affective dispositions, Hartmann et al. (2008) stress the need to distinguish both constructs: While affective dispositions are situational sentiments towards characters, PSRs are 'a cross-situational, stable, and schematic cognitive pattern of images and interaction scripts that includes affective aspects' (p. 26). The distinction between affective dispositions and PSRs thus parallels the difference between states and traits present in psychology.

Assuming that there is a link between PSRs and affective dispositions and that the later has an important role in determining the target of readers' engagement (see Chapter 5.4.1), it becomes clear why this chapter focuses on PSR as a possible determinant of character engagement. Readers might in fact be predisposed to take the perspective of characters with whom they have a positive PSR since their affective dispositions are predetermined to be positive as well; the contrary might be true for negative PSRs. Perspective taking might then lead to other engagement processes via the sympathy or empathy route (see Chapter 5.4.1). The opposite is likely true for characters with whom readers have a negative PSR: Because this determines a negative affective disposition towards these characters, readers might be discouraged to take their perspective and engage with them. This chapter will therefore examine whether positive and negative PSRs with characters have the power to strengthen or impair the pattern of affective dispositions promoted by story schemas (Raney, 2004, 2006) and descriptions of characters' actions (Zillmann, 1994, 2006).

Another variable that might influence readers' engagement with characters is reader-character similarity (Klimmt, et al., 2006). Auter and Palmgreen (2000) included items that assessed similarity between viewers of a TV series and their favourite character from this series in their measure of PSI. It is likely that PSIs/PSRs and similarity are connected in a reciprocal way: The knowledge about the character that results from the imagined relationship with him or her might increase the sense of perceived similarity with that character. Likewise, it is possible that

the initial perceived similarity facilitates PSI and promotes the development of a PSR. Regardless of the link between similarity and PSI/PSR, the influence of similarity on processes of engagement with characters, in particular on identification, has been proposed by an independent body of literature, as will be discussed in the following section.

7.1.2 *Similarity*

Similarity is deemed so important for identification with characters that the terms are often used interchangeably (e.g., Auter & Palmgreen, 2000; S. T. Bell, Kuriloff, & Lottes, 1994).

However, Cohen (2001) argues that identification is fundamentally different from similarity since it represents a form of reader-character merger (see Chapter 5.4.1), while similarity requires the reader to compare the character with him or herself, for which a distance between them is necessary. Similarly, PSIs/PSRs require a distance between reader and character in order for the interaction and relationship to occur (J. Cohen, 2001, 2009). Based on the conceptual distinction between similarity and identification and parallel to the role of PSR in readers' engagement with characters proposed above, also similarity might have a facilitating impact on engagement: 'It seems plausible that viewers would find it easier to relate to characters who are similar to them, and who face similar problems to those they face in their everyday life' (J. Cohen, 2006, p. 186).

However, Cohen (2006) reports an inconclusive review of research which shows that some forms of similarity promote identification while others do not. Psychological similarity, such as attitudinal homophily (i.e., similarity in attitudes) and consonance between viewer's motives and character's actions, seems to be a good predictor of identification, while demographic similarity, such as age, gender, and social class, seems to be less important. There are at least two reasons why demographic similarity has less of an impact on identification than psychological similarity: First, Cohen (2006) lists research evidence that people often identify with characters that represent what they wish to be (i.e., wishful identification; Konijn, Bijvank, & Bushman, 2007) or to whom they are attracted, rather than characters similar to them.

Second, if demographic similarity would be crucial for readers' engagement with characters, they could get involved only with stories that narrate experiences similar to the ones they had in their life. On the contrary, a story is known to have the ability to transport readers to very different worlds both in space and time (Green & Brock, 2000), where they encounter characters that are very different from how they perceive themselves. Even with these characters, readers have to recognize a type of similarity that Mar and Oatley (2008) call common humanity. The authors in fact argue that 'without the reader assuming the same (or similar) emotions, desires and beliefs as the protagonist in the story, the phenomena of engagement with the story,

enjoyment, and ultimately understanding would remain elusive' (p. 181). It is through comparing characters' emotions, desires and beliefs to their own that readers can understand them and take the perspective of these characters, as described in Chapter 5.4.1. It is not required that a correspondence exists between readers' and characters' mental states. Rather, it is based on readers' understanding of their own mental states that a simulation of how they would experience the events that happened to characters is run (Oatley, 1994, 1999a).

While similarity is not a necessary condition of engagement with characters, it might certainly aid in readers' understanding of characters' mental states and thus facilitate engagement with them – the psychological similarity more so than the demographic one. As a preliminary exploration of both forms of similarity as well as PSR, some additional analysis from the study reported in Chapter 6 are presented in the next section. Based on them, a second study was carried out to experimentally investigate the impact of similarity and PSR on engagement with characters (RQ3; see Chapter 1.3) and on the persuasive power of news narratives (see section 7.3).

7.2 Additional analysis from Study 1

In order to verify which aspects of similarity might influence engagement with characters, variables that indicated both demographic and psychological similarity (J. Cohen, 2006) were taken into account. The impact of demographic similarity was assessed through the following characteristics of the sample used in Chapter 6: gender, age, background, employment, and relationship status. On the other hand, the impact of psychological similarity was inspected through questions about participants' previous victimization and crime convictions which indicate a broad similarity in experience with the victim and the perpetrator. The study posed the following research question:

RQ4: Which elements of readers' similarity with the victim and the perpetrator have a significant effect on character engagement?

As an initial investigation into the role of PSR in character engagement, participants were asked if they knew about the crime case before taking part in the study reported in Chapter 6. Their previous knowledge could indicate that they have followed the extensive coverage of the crime long enough to have formed a parasocial relationship with the victim and the perpetrator.

Therefore, the following hypothesis was formed:

H1: Participants with previous knowledge about the crime case will engage more with the victim and the perpetrator than those without previous knowledge.

7.2.1 *Method*

Please refer to Chapter 6.3.

7.2.2 *Results*

Similarity

In order to answer RQ4, all the reported t-tests are two-tailed.

Gender. As reported in Chapter 6.4, similarity in gender influenced victim blaming and engagement in the predicted direction: Female participants engaged more with the female victim and blamed her less than male participants.

Age. Age influenced the factor of Perpetrator Merger⁷, albeit in the opposite direction than predicted: The older participants were, the less they empathised and identified with him ($B = -.02$, $SE = .01$, $p < .05$). Thus, the more similar the participants were to the perpetrator, the less they engaged with him given that he was in his fifties when he committed the crime. No other age effects on dimensions of engagement with characters and attributions of blame were significant.

Background. Twenty-nine participants identified themselves as sharing the White Irish background with the victim and the perpetrator, as compared to 253 participants of other backgrounds. These two groups (White Irish vs. Other) were compared in t-tests which showed that background similarity had an important effect on participants' Emotional Engagement, $t(280) = 2.50$, $p = .01$, $d = .51$, and Victim Engagement, $t(280) = 2.12$, $p < .05$, $d = .39$. White Irish participants experienced significantly more Emotional Engagement with the story and its victim ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.12$) than participants from other backgrounds ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.21$). Similarly, White Irish participants engaged more with the victim ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.05$) than participants from other backgrounds ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.16$). Participants' background did not have a significant influence on other dimensions of engagement with characters and attributions of blame.

⁷ For the content of character engagement factors refer to Chapter 6.

Victimization. Half of the sample (134) has previously experienced victimization (12 participants preferred not to answer), of this 98 participants declared to have been victims of a non-violent crime, 15 experienced domestic violence, 45 have been victims of other violent crimes and 5 did not want to declare the type of crime they have been a victim of. Previous victimization had a significant effect on Perpetrator Merger, $t(268) = -2.08$, $p < .05$, $d = .25$, and Victim Engagement, $t(268) = -1.97$, $p = .05$, $d = .23$. Participants who had been victims of crime experienced less merger with the perpetrator ($M = 2.18$, $SD = 1.20$) than participants who had not been victimized ($M = 2.49$, $SD = 1.25$), confirming a link between similarity and engagement. Likewise, participants who shared the experience of victimization with the victim engaged more with her ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.10$) than those who had not previously experienced crime ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.14$). Besides its influence on these dimensions of character engagement, previous victimization had a trend-significant impact on Perpetrator Blaming, $t(268) = -1.92$, $p = .06$, $d = .23$. Previously victimized participants surprisingly blamed the perpetrator less ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.74$) than participants who have never experienced crime ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.73$).

Previous crime convictions (12 participants, all convicted of a non-violent crime), employment (211 students) and relationship status (130 single) had no effects on blame attributions or dimensions of engagement with the story and its characters (all $|t|s < 1.24$, $ps > .05$).

To sum up as an answer to RQ4, the elements of reader-character similarity that had an important effect on readers' engagement with the victim were gender, background, and previous victimization. Engagement with the perpetrator was likewise influenced by previous victimization, as well as by age, although this did not occur in the predicted direction: The more similar participants were to the perpetrator in terms of age (i.e. the older they were), the less they merged with him. The victimization effects on perpetrator blaming were also counterintuitive: Those who were previously victimized, blamed the perpetrator less for what happened.

Previous knowledge

Only 26 participants had previous knowledge about the crime case. This knowledge influenced their Victim Engagement, $t(268) = 2.08$, $p < .05$, $d = .42$ (one-tailed), and Emotional Engagement with the victim and the story, $t(268) = 2.29$, $p = .05$, $d = .48$ (one-tailed). Participants with previous knowledge engaged more with the victim ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.04$) than participants without this knowledge ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.16$). Similarly, participants with previous knowledge engaged more emotionally with the story and its victim ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.10$) than participants

without this knowledge ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.21$). Thus, previous knowledge about the crime case influenced readers' engagement with the victim, while their engagement with the perpetrator was left unaffected, offering partial support to the fourth hypothesis (H4). This effect could not be merely attributed to background similarity, since not all participants with White Irish background knew about the crime case (10 out of 29 did not).

Additionally, the success of the experimental manipulation was once again confirmed since participants with previous knowledge about the crime case perceived the stimulus articles to be more realistic than participants who were previously not acquainted with it (see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1

T-tests (two-tailed) of previous knowledge effects on perceived realism

	Previously known		Previously unknown		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
External Realism	4.38	1.10	3.60	1.19	3.24	.001	.68
Narrative Realism	4.21	1.22	3.70	1.16	2.09	.04	.43
Composite Realism	4.32	1.04	3.64	1.03	3.22	.001	.66

7.2.3 Discussion

The results of the preliminary exploration about the impact of similarity on character engagement appear inconclusive: Some indicators of demographic similarity (gender, background, and age, but not employment and relationship status) had an impact on some factors of character engagement, while victimization but not previous crime convictions, which acted as indicators of psychological similarity, influenced merger with the perpetrator and engagement with the victim. It thus seems that both demographic and psychological similarity might stimulate engagement with characters, albeit different indicators of the two types of similarity work on different factors of character engagement. Some similarity effects, however, run against predictions: Similarity in age with the perpetrator decreased participants' merger with him, while victimization, which represents psychological similarity with the victim, decreased perpetrator blaming. The first finding could have resulted from participants' wish to dissociate themselves from the perpetrator. The second finding, however, could not be explained by reference to previous studies which measured only participants' attributions of blame to the victim, but not to the perpetrator (e.g., S. T. Bell, et al., 1994; Dexter, Penrod, Linz, & Saunders, 1997). Moreover, in most of the attributional studies similarity was measured as a subjective perception – that is, as readers' perceived similarity with the victim and the

perpetrator (for a review, see Grubb & Harrower, 2008). In the next study (see section 7.3), similarity will therefore also be assessed as a subjective perception. Besides enabling comparison with previous studies, this might transcend the unresolved question of whether demographic or psychological similarity represents a better indicator of the role of similarity in readers' engagement with characters.

Findings about the influence of participants' previous knowledge about the crime case on character engagement were more uniform, showing that only participants' engagement with the victim was affected. This indicates that PSRs might exhibit a particular influence on processes of engagement with the victim. Together, these results warranted a further experimental investigation of the role of PSR and similarity in readers' engagement with characters.

7.3 Study 2: Similarity and parasocial relationship in narrative persuasion

The experimental study into the influence of similarity and PSRs on readers' engagement with characters was enabled by employing a news narrative that includes famous media figures. To compare findings with the results of the first study (see Chapter 6), crime news was again chosen: the assault of Chris Brown on Rihanna (see Chapter 4.1.1). Both media figures might evoke the most social, first-order PSI (Giles, 2002), since they represent themselves in the media in the role of singers and potentially address audience members directly in their performances and other public appearances.

As in the study reported in Chapter 6, stimulus articles were constructed from excerpts of the previously analysed coverage (see Chapter 4). These excerpts represent reader engagement techniques and therefore an additional experimental verification of whether the treatment of character in news acts as a valid framing device was possible (RQ1; see Chapter 1.2). Based on stimulus articles, two experimental conditions were formed: The one that presented the crime from the perspective of Rihanna, the victim, and the other that presented the same crime from the perspective of Chris Brown, the perpetrator. A similar experimental design (minus the neutral condition) as in the first study was therefore possible; this enabled a further test of the mediating role of readers' engagement with characters in the persuasion through news narratives (RQ2; see Chapter 1.3).

In order to replicate the findings from the study reported in Chapter 6, a parallel set of hypotheses was formulated (H1 – H3). Instead of attributions of blame to the victim and the perpetrator, a more general indicator of framing effects was used. Since Brown's assault on

Rihanna could be understood as a singular episode of domestic violence, readers' acceptance of domestic violence myths was measured (Peters, 2008). As in the previous study, this indicated individual-level effects of framing (Scheufele, 1999; see Chapters 2.2 and 6.1). The following prediction was made:

H1: Reading the perspective of the perpetrator will increase acceptance of domestic violence myths as compared to reading the perspective of the victim.

Since the perspective manipulation was formed through the use of reader engagement techniques, it was again expected that it would influence processes of readers' engagement with the victim and the perpetrator, particularly the less intense, distant ones: perspective taking and sympathy (see Chapter 5.4.1). The study proposed the following:

H2a: Reading the perspective of the perpetrator will increase sympathy and perspective taking with him as compared to reading the perspective of the victim.

H2b: Reading the perspective of the victim will increase sympathy and perspective taking with her as compared to reading the perspective of the perpetrator.

Moreover, sympathy and perspective taking were expected to act as mediators of the perspective manipulation effects on domestic violence myth acceptance. The following hypothesis was formed:

H3: Perspective taking and sympathy will mediate the effect of perspective manipulation on domestic violence myth acceptance.

The second set of hypotheses (H4-H6) was formed to investigate the influence of similarity and PSRs on engagement with characters (RQ3, see Chapter 1.3). It is predicted that similarity will have a facilitating effect on participants' engagement with the victim and the perpetrator since it might aid in readers' understanding of these characters' psychology. Unlike in the first study where reader-character similarity was inferred from participants' demographics, previous victimization and criminal offence, questions that directly asked for participants' perceived similarity with the victim and the perpetrator were used to test the following hypotheses:

H4a: The more readers perceive themselves as similar to the victim, the more they engage with her and the less with the perpetrator.

H4b: The more readers perceive themselves as similar to the perpetrator, the more they engage with him and the less with the victim.

As similarity, PSR is also expected to influence the strength of readers' engagement with characters. Because a positive PSR with a famous media figure includes a positive affective disposition towards him or her, this should increase readers' engagement with the media figure. On the other hand, negative PSR should decrease engagement with characters since it includes a negative affective disposition towards them. Unlike in the study reported in Chapter 6 where participants' previous knowledge of the crime case was taken as an indicator of a possible (positive) PSR with the main characters, here positive and negative PSRs were measured directly. The following hypotheses were posited:

H5a: Readers who have a positive PSR with the victim or negative PSR with the perpetrator, engage more with the victim and less with the perpetrator.

H5b: Readers who have a negative PSR with the victim or positive PSR with the perpetrator, engage more with the perpetrator and less with the victim.

Besides the impact of PSR, affective dispositions are also influenced by the role that characters' have in the narrative according to story schemas (i.e., victim vs. perpetrator in a crime narrative; Raney, 2004, 2006) and by descriptions of characters' actions (Zillmann, 1994, 2006) manipulated here through reader engagement techniques. Since affective dispositions represent the first step in engagement with characters according to the process model proposed in Chapter 5.4.1, this represents another reason why it was predicted that character perspective manipulated through reader engagement techniques has a main effect on readers' engagement with characters (H2a,b). However, given that PSR might have a role in directing affective dispositions as well, it was questioned whether this will moderate the main perspective effect on character engagement. The following research question was formulated:

RQ5: Will positive and negative PSRs with the victim and the perpetrator moderate perspective effects on engagement with both characters?

Lastly, the role of PSR as well as similarity in persuasion through news narratives was questioned. If news narrative persuasion occurs through processes of engagement with characters and if PSR and similarity have an impact on them, will PSR and similarity act as moderators of the mediation posited in H3? The following hypothesis was made:

H6: PSR and similarity will moderate the indirect effect of perspective manipulation on domestic myth acceptance that occurs through sympathy and perspective taking.

7.3.1 *Method*

Experimental design

The study followed a between-subjects design with three conditions. One group read the stimulus article written from the victim's perspective ($n=83$), while the other read the perpetrator's perspective ($n=84$). A third group ($n=68$) acted as control and answered the domestic myth acceptance questions before reading the article in order to establish a baseline of myth endorsement. Processes of engagement with the victim and the perpetrator were measured as possible mediators of the main effect of perspective manipulation on domestic myth acceptance. PSR and perceived similarity were measured as moderators of perspective effects on character engagement and of the indirect effect of perspective manipulation on domestic myth endorsement.

Participants

The sample consisted of 235 adult volunteers (73.6% women) between ages of 18 and 65 ($M = 28.91$; $SD = 11.96$). Participants were sampled through personal recommendation and through links posted to the same internet sites that advertise online studies as in the first study (see Chapter 6). A prize draw for a £70 Amazon voucher in return for participation was offered. There was a 31.41% response rate, and a 21.23% completion rate.

Since the employed internet sites advertised international research, participants were from outside the UK as well. Three participants from Canada, one from Ireland, and 20 from the US were retained in the sample because it was assumed that they were native English speakers. Three participants from Germany, one from Romania, and one from Sweden were excluded because they did not fulfil the same criteria. Two participants older than 70 were removed from the sample as well as their age might have caused some interferences with the task. Additionally, participants who spent less than 10 minutes on the study (mean response time was 20 minutes), who failed the memory check question and who failed more than one attention check out of four ($N = 10$) were not included in further analyses. The final sample reported consists of selected participants ($N = 235$).

Participants were mostly students (71.5%), although almost half of them (42.6%) were employed besides their studies as well. Approximately a third already had a higher education degree (34.0%) and a third a post-graduate degree (34.9%), while a considerable portion had a secondary (high school) education (28.5%). Most of the participants were white British (79.1%),

some were from other white backgrounds (10.2%), whereas there were less than five representatives of other ethnicities.

Procedure

As in the previous study (see Chapter 6), the present experiment was administered online via Unipark (www.unipark.com). Participants were told that the study investigated their perception of domestic violence news. They were first asked if they knew Rihanna and Chris Brown and if the answer was affirmative they answered questions about their PSR and perceived similarity with the two media figures. If not, they skipped these questions and proceeded to the next stage in which Unipark randomly assigned them to one of the three experimental conditions. Participants in the control condition first provided their answers to the domestic violence myth acceptance scale (2008; DVMAS) and then read the stimulus article. Participants in the other two experimental conditions proceeded in the opposite order, first reading the articles and then answering DVMAS. All participants answered questions about engagement with the narrative and its characters after reading the stimulus article. At the end, their perception of article's realism was assessed, demographic information collected and some additional questions posed, such as the question that served as a memory check.

Stimuli

Two stimulus texts in the form of newspaper articles were constructed from excerpts of articles taken from the corpus analysed in the second framing analysis (see Chapter 4). As in the previous study (see Chapter 6), stimulus articles consisted of two parts: The first, in which the same account about the assault of Chris Brown on Rihanna was narrated, and the second, which differed between the two manipulation conditions to invite either participants' engagement with the victim, or the perpetrator. In comparison with the previous study, there was no neutral condition included since the analysis of the coverage did not reveal a neutral perspective on the assault or on the characters' behaviour afterwards (see Chapter 4).

In the first part of the stimulus articles (334 words), Brown's assault on Rihanna was described following an affidavit that was allegedly leaked by the police. Rihanna's injuries were listed and it was clearly stated that Brown pleaded guilty to felony assault and making criminal threats. The second part of the articles was formed with excerpts from Brown and Rihanna's interviews after the trial. Rather than presenting their perspective on what happened during the assault, which they have never revealed (see Chapter 4.1.1), reader engagement techniques were used to

invite readers' engagement with either Rihanna as the victim, or Brown as the perpetrator. The two manipulation conditions that resulted were nevertheless named the 'victim perspective' and the 'perpetrator perspective' respectively for ease of comparison with the study reported in Chapter 6.

The victim perspective (see Appendix 8) presented the difficulties that Rihanna faced because of the enormous media interest in her, and her disappointment at the leaked police photograph. It was also mentioned that she rejected the accusation that she should have protected herself; this was linked to the claims of a domestic violence expert that there is a cultural tendency to blame victims. The perpetrator perspective invited readers' engagement with Brown (see Appendix 9) by presenting him as apologetic and as taking responsibility for his actions. At the same time, Brown's claims that he had a blurred memory about the incident were mentioned and this implicitly denied his agency in the assault. Brown also implied that Rihanna might have been violent towards him and thereby provoked his assault. Apart from different reader engagement techniques in the main text, paratextual elements were manipulated as well (see Table 7.2).

Table 7.2

Manipulation of paratextual elements

Perspective	Victim	Perpetrator
Headline	This happened to me	I'm truly sorry
Lead	RIHANNA spoke for the first time yesterday about how her dream romance with singer Chris Brown ended in a nightmare of violence.	THE R&B singer Chris Brown, 20, admitted he 'made a mistake' when he beat up his girlfriend, the Barbados-born pop star Rihanna.
Victim picture	Shocking official police photograph of Rihanna	Brown sorry for what happened to Rihanna
Subtitle	'It's been rough'	'Never been in trouble'

The two stimulus articles were similar in length (800 words for the Rihanna version and 805 for Brown) and were examined in order to ensure that they were grammatically and stylistically correct. Eleven students read one of the two stimulus versions and marked anything that seemed unnatural or unsuitable to them. Additionally, they filled in a short questionnaire about

articles' realism (see the Measures section below); this served as a discussion lead whereby further suggestions for the improvement of the articles were collected. These suggestions were taken into account and the resulting stimuli were formatted to resemble newspaper articles with a date, journalist's name, and subtitle ('Full story behind Chris Brown/Rihanna bust up'), in addition to the paratextual elements listed in Table 7.2. The newspaper outlet/source of the article was not revealed since its perceived trustworthiness could have influenced the results (see, for instance, Druckman, 2001).

Measures

All analyses in this and in the results section are performed without the control group data since this group answered DVMA questions before reading the stimulus article (see Procedure) and this might have made this group aware of its persuasive intent. The reduced number of participants is thus 167 where not stated otherwise (see Appendix 10).

Domestic violence myth acceptance. The scale devised by Peters (2008; DVMA) was employed. One item that was originally in the form of a question ('If a woman goes back to the abuser, how much is that due to something in her character?') was reframed to match other items presented as statements (now: 'If a woman goes back to the abuser, this is due to something in her character.'). Participants answered 18 items on a seven-point rating scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7), with higher scores indicating a higher acceptance of domestic violence myths. An exploratory principal component factor analysis was run: While the eigenvalue rule indicated only four factors (see Table 7.3), the scree plot indicated that five factors should be retained which together explained 64.87% of variance in the data. Next, a Varimax rotation was performed specifying a five factor solution (see Appendix 11 and a summary of the factor analysis displayed in Table 7.3). Factor 1, 'Blame for Staying', contained four items about blaming the victim for staying with the perpetrator. Factor 2, 'Blame for Provoking', included items about holding women responsible for initiating the abuse. Factor 3, 'Blame for Flirting', consisted of two items that accuse women of provoking the abuse by flirting and making men jealous. Factor 4, 'Perpetrator Exoneration', consisted of three items that exonerate the perpetrator from the responsibility for the abuse. Factor 5, 'Minimization', consisted of two items that minimize the seriousness and extent of the abuse. The remaining items were not included in any of the factors because they loaded equally high on two factors⁸. Due to the low reliability of factors 4 and 5 (see Table 7.3), only the dimensions of domestic violence myth

⁸ As in Chapter 6, an item was regarded to cross-load on more than one factor when its factor loadings on these factors differed on less than one point.

acceptance that captured victim blaming were included in further analysis. Therefore, these factors are thereafter referred to as indicators of victim blaming.

Table 7.3

Factor analysis summary of DVMAAS

No.	Factor	Eigenvalue*	% of variance explained*	Cronbach α
1	Blame for Staying	6.50	36.32	0.82
2	Blame for Provoking	1.75	9.80	0.75
3	Blame for Flirting	1.22	6.92	0.79
4	Perpetrator Exoneration	1.14	6.26	0.66
5	Minimization	0.96	5.58	0.39

Note. * before rotation

The factors Blame for Staying, Blame for Flirting, Perpetrator Exoneration, and Minimization correspond to theoretically predicted factors (Peters, 2008); Blame for Staying and Blame for Flirting were renamed after the original factors Character Blame and Behaviour Blame, respectively, for better clarity of interpretation. However, the factor Blame for Provoking included two items from the original theoretical factor Behaviour Blame, one Minimization and one Character Blame item. All Blame for Provoking items point at the belief that women share the responsibility for domestic violence and thus seem to form a coherent factor (see Appendix 11). Also Peters (2008) detected a certain variability in the factor structure of DVMAAS when he run the factor analysis on two different samples and on male and female participants separately.

Engagement with the narrative and its characters. The same questionnaire as in the first study was employed (see Chapter 6.3), but three items with the lowest factor loadings were dropped from the theoretical dimension General Emotion and three from Attention focus, which made the study more manageable for participants. Except for the factors Lack of Attention and Lack of Perspectivizing described below, higher scores on the Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) indicate higher participants' engagement. An exploratory principal factor analysis was run on all items. The eigenvalue rule indicated eight factors which together explained 66.93% of variance in the data. Next, a Varimax rotation was performed specifying an eight factor solution (see Appendix 12 and the summary in Table 7.4). Factor 1, 'Narrative and Victim Merger', contained all items about merger with the victim (empathy and identification) and the sensation of being in the narrative world which represents a type of merger with the

narrative as well. Factor 2, 'Perpetrator Engagement', contained all items about identification and empathy with the perpetrator which represent the reader-character merger dimension of the model (see Chapter 5.4.1). Moreover, this factor contained three items about adopting perpetrator's perspective which represent the reader-character distinction dimension of the model; factor 2 thus represents an indicator of a general engagement with the perpetrator. Factor 3, 'Lack of Attention', contained all four items about the attentional focus on the story (three were reverse scored). Factor 4, 'General Emotions', contained all four items about emotional engagement with the narrative in general. Factor 5, 'Victim Sympathy', contained all items about sympathy with the victim and one item about adopting her perspective (i.e., four items altogether). Factor 6, 'Imagery', contained all three items about the production of mental imagery related to the story world. Factor 7, 'Lack of Perspectivizing', contained two reverse scored items about taking the perspective of the victim and one reverse scored item about taking the perspective of the perpetrator. Factor 8, 'Perpetrator Sympathy', contained two items about sympathy with the perpetrator. The remaining items were not included in any factor because they loaded equally high on two factors, while the last two factors were excluded from further analysis because of insufficient reliability (see Table 7.4).

Table 7.4

Factor analysis summary of Engagement with the Narrative and its Characters

No.	Factor	Eigenvalue*	% of variance explained*	Cronbach α
1	Narrative and Victim Merger	11.06	24.67	0.93
2	Perpetrator Engagement	7.18	17.19	0.89
3	Lack of Attention	3.14	7.34	0.90
4	General emotions	1.84	4.57	0.85
5	Victim Sympathy	1.67	4.03	0.79
6	Imagery	1.60	3.70	0.74
7	Lack of Perspectivizing	1.23	3.06	0.56
8	Perpetrator Sympathy	1.04	2.38	0.60

Note. * before rotation

PSR and perceived similarity. In order to measure PSRs, nine questions about readers' positive relationship with the well-known victim and perpetrator and five about their negative relationship were adapted from existing scales (Hartmann, et al., 2008; Rubin, et al., 1985).

Additionally, four items about readers' perceived similarity with characters were adapted from

Auter and Palmgreen's (2000) Identification⁹ with a Favourite Character subscale of the Audience-Persona Interaction Scale. The same items were formulated for both the victim and the perpetrator and were answered by participants on a five-point rating scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), with higher numbers indicating a higher perceived similarity, positive or negative PSR with the character. An exploratory principal factor analysis was run separately for items pertaining to the victim and those pertaining to the perpetrator.

One hundred and twenty-four participants (out of 167) stated that they know Chris Brown and were therefore directed to the questionnaire assessing PSR and perceived similarity with him. An exploratory principal component factor analysis was run: While the eigenvalue rule indicated only four factors, the scree plot indicated that five factors would be more appropriate; these five factors together explained 64.92% of variance in the data. Next, a Varimax rotation was performed specifying a five factors solution (see Appendix 13 and the summary in Table 7.5). Factor 1, 'Negative Perpetrator PSR', consisted of three items adapted from Hartmann, Stuke, and Daschman (2008) which were formulated to measure negative PSRs with a media figure, and one item formulated to measure positive PSR with that figure, reverse scored (items for this aspect of PSR were adapted from both Hartmann et al., and Rubin, et al., 1985). Factor 2, 'Perpetrator Similarity', consisted of all four items formulated to measure perceived similarity with characters. Factor 3, 'Positive Perpetrator PSR', consisted of four items formulated to measure positive PSRs with characters. Factor 4, 'Perpetrator Interest', included three items that measured interest to follow Chris Brown in media and willingness to meet him in person; these items were derived from both the positive and the negative theoretical dimensions of PSR. Factor 5 consisted of only one item ('When Chris Brown reveals an opinion on a topic, it helps me make up my mind about that topic.') on which participants gave a very low agreement ($M = 1.51$, $SD = 0.78$); this item was therefore dropped from further analysis. The remaining items were not included in any factor because they cross-loaded on more than one factor.

⁹ Auter and Palmgreen (2000) referred to similarity as identification (see section 7.1.2).

Table 7.5

Factor analysis summary of Perceived Similarity and PSR with the Perpetrator

No.	Factor	Eigenvalue*	% of variance explained*	Cronbach α
1	Negative Perpetrator PSR	6.03	31.26	0.74
2	Perpetrator Similarity	2.03	11.70	0.79
3	Positive Perpetrator PSR	1.68	9.30	0.72
4	Perpetrator Interest	1.06	7.12	0.70

Note. * before rotation

A separate factor analysis was run for items assessing PSR and perceived similarity with Rihanna. Only nine people did not know who Rihanna is, all others filled in the questionnaire ($n = 158$). The eigenvalue rule in an exploratory principal factor analysis indicated three factors which together explained 56.87% of variance in the data. A Varimax rotation was run consequently which specified a five factor solution (see Appendix 14 and the summary in Table 7.6). Factor 1, 'Positive Victim PSR', included six items formulated to measure positive PSRs with characters and one formulated to measure negative PSRs, reverse scored. One item that cross-loaded on factor 3 was excluded from additional analysis. Factor 2, 'Negative Victim PSR', included four items formulated to measure negative PSRs with characters and two formulated to measure positive PSRs with them, reverse scored. Factor 3, 'Victim Similarity', included all four items about perceived similarity with a character.

Table 7.6

Factor analysis summary of Perceived Similarity and PSR with the Victim

No.	Factor	Eigenvalue*	% of variance explained*	Cronbach α
1	Positive Victim PSR	6.47	37.84	0.86
2	Negative Victim PSR	2.25	11.11	0.80
3	Victim Similarity	1.44	7.92	0.78

Note. * before rotation

Perceived realism. The same scales of external (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.88$) and narrative realism (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.50$) were employed as in the first study (see Chapter 6). Due to low reliability, the narrative realism scale was dropped from further analysis. Together with external realism, narrative realism however formed a reliable composite score (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.82$).

Memory check. In order to verify whether participants retained an accurate knowledge about information presented in the stimulus articles, they were asked the following question: 'How did Chris Brown react to charges of assault and criminal threats against Rihanna?' Participants could choose between the following two answers: 'He pleaded guilty.' (correct) or 'He denied the charges.' (incorrect).

Manipulation check. Participants were asked to indicate whether the article invited them to engage with Rihanna or Chris Brown or not.

7.3.2 Results

Preliminary results

Memory check. Overall, eleven participants (or six when looking at the two experimental groups only) provided an incorrect answer to the memory check and were therefore excluded from further analysis.

Manipulation check. All participants who read the article written from the perspective of the victim correctly indicated that the article invited them to engage with Rihanna (see second row of Table 7.7). However, more than half of participants who read the perpetrator version of the article misidentified Rihanna as the intended target of their engagement, indicating that the manipulation of the article perspective did not succeed. Yet more people who read the victim perspective thought the article invited them to engage with her in comparison to people who read the perpetrator perspective (see first column of Table 7.7). Similarly, only people who read the perpetrator perspective thought the article invited them to engage with him, indicating some partial success in manipulating the perspective of stimulus articles.

Table 7.7

Manipulation check per manipulation condition

	Manipulation check	
	Victim	Perpetrator
Perpetrator Perspective	46	38
Victim Perspective	83	0

Notes. Values indicate the number of participants.

Narrative realism. Participants judged the victim and perpetrator perspective on the domestic violence episode to possess the same extent of external ($M_{\text{victim}} = 4.40$, $SD_{\text{victim}} = 1.00$; $M_{\text{perpetrator}} = 4.21$, $SD_{\text{perpetrator}} = 1.13$) and composite realism ($M_{\text{victim}} = 4.38$, $SD_{\text{victim}} = .80$; $M_{\text{perpetrator}} = 4.19$, $SD_{\text{perpetrator}} = .94$; all $t_s > -1$, all $p_s > .18$, two-tailed).

Main effects of perspective manipulation

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of all variables included in this study are given in Appendix 10. First, the main effect of perspective manipulation on domestic violence myth acceptance was tested. It was hypothesised that reading the perspective of the perpetrator will increase acceptance of domestic violence myths as compared to reading the perspective of the victim (H1). However, no effects were found on any of the dimensions of domestic violence myth acceptance that indicate victim blaming, all $t_s < 1.22$, all $p_s > .11$, one-tailed. The first hypothesis therefore did not find support in the data.

Next, the main effect of perspective manipulation on dimensions of engagement with characters was tested in order to investigate whether reading the perspective of a character in a news story increases sympathy and perspective taking with this character (H2a and H2b). t tests (one-tailed) revealed a significant effect of perspective manipulation on Perpetrator Engagement ($t(165) = 4.10$, $p < .000$, $d = .64$) and Victim Sympathy ($t(165) = -2.08$, $p < .05$, $d = .32$), whereas other dimensions of engagement with characters and the narrative in general were left unaffected (all $|t|s < 1.42$, $p_s > .16$, two-tailed). The inspection of Table 7.8 reveals that participants who read the perpetrator perspective engaged more with him than participants who read the victim's perspective on crime events. The factor Perpetrator Engagement contains items about all forms of engagement with the perpetrator except sympathizing with him; this offers partial support for H2a which predicted that perspective manipulation will have an effect on both forms of distant engagement with the perpetrator (perspective taking and sympathizing), but not on dimensions of reader-character merger (empathy and identification). In contrast, H2b was fully supported since readers of the victim perspective sympathized more with her and took her perspective to a greater extent than readers of the perpetrator perspective as indicated by the perspective effect on the Victim Sympathy factor.

Table 7.8

Means and standard deviations (between brackets) for Narrative Engagement by condition

	Victim Perspective	Perpetrator Perspective
Narrative and Victim Merger	2.68 (1.33)	2.57 (1.39)
Perpetrator Engagement	1.67 (0.70) ^a	2.28 (1.14) ^b
Lack of Attention	3.33 (1.46)	3.01 (1.48)
General Emotion	4.48 (1.39)	4.27 (1.31)
Victim Sympathy	5.72 (0.92) ^a	5.38 (1.20) ^b
Imagery	4.45(1.39)	4.56 (1.34)

Note. Different superscripts indicate differences significant at $p < .05$ or less.

Excluding participants who failed the manipulation check or did not previously know the perpetrator produced the same pattern of perspective effects on victim blaming and engagement with both characters.

Analysis of predictors, mediators and moderators

Although there was no main effect of perspective manipulation on victim blaming, it was verified whether there exists an indirect effect through character engagement in order to offer at least a partial test of H3. Hayes (2009) in fact presents evidence that it is possible for a variable to causally connect the dependent (DV) and the independent variable (IV) even if the DV and IV are not associated. In this case, however, it is not possible to speak about mediation, but only of the indirect effect of DV on IV through an intervening variable (Preacher & Hayes, 2004, p. 719). As a precondition for the indirect effect of perspective manipulation, it was first tested whether the two dimensions of character engagement affected by perspective manipulation (Perpetrator Engagement and Victim Sympathy) influenced victim blaming. Table 7.9 displays a summary of regression analyses with dimensions of Narrative Engagement as predictors and one dimension of victim blaming (DVMAS) as dependent variable per regression model. Of the six dimensions of engagement with the narrative and its characters, only Perpetrator Engagement significantly influenced Blame for Staying and Blame for Provoking. Blame for Flirting, however, had another predictor – Victim Sympathy.

Table 7.9

Unstandardized coefficients and standard errors (between brackets) for Narrative Engagement factors regressed on factors of Victim Blame (DVMAS)

	Blame for Staying	Blame for Provoking	Blame for Flirting
Intercept (B_0)	3.04 (0.89)***	2.67 (0.68)***	2.49 (0.60)***
Narrative and Victim Merger	-0.14 (0.11)	0.07 (0.08)	0.08 (0.07)
Perpetrator Engagement	0.30 (0.12)*	0.28 (0.09)**	0.19 (0.08)*
Lack of Attention	0.04 (0.08)	0.02 (0.06)	0.02 (0.05)
General Emotion	-0.11 (0.11)	0.01 (0.08)	0.04 (0.07)
Victim Sympathy	-0.14 (0.14)	-0.19 (0.10)	-0.32 (0.09)***
Imagery	0.11 (0.09)	-0.04 (0.07)	0.02 (0.06)
R^2	0.12	0.14	0.20
F (6,160)	3.63**	4.40***	6.52***

Note. ***p < .0001, **p < .001, *p < .05 (two-tailed).

Next, the influence of perceived similarity and PSR on dimensions of engagement with characters was examined in order to include significant associations as potential moderators in the computation of indirect effects, as well as to test for H4a,b and H5a,b. PSR and similarity factors were entered simultaneously into regression analyses with one dimension of character engagement per analysis. Only Victim Similarity was a significant predictor of Perpetrator Engagement (see Table 7.10); this went against predictions in H4a since participants who perceived themselves as more similar to the victim actually engaged more with the perpetrator. In line with H5b, however, Victim Sympathy was significantly decreased by Perpetrator Interest. Although the manipulation of Narrative and Victim Merger did not succeed, the effect of similarity and PSR was verified on this dimension as well. In line with H5a, participants' merger with the narrative and its victim was significantly decreased by Negative Victim PSR, while in line with H4a it was significantly increased by Victim Similarity.

Table 7.10

Unstandardized coefficients and standard errors (between brackets) for PSR and similarity factors regressed on character engagement factors

	Narrative and Victim Merger	Perpetrator Engagement	Victim Sympathy
Intercept (B_0)	1.49 (1.20)	1.24 (0.90)	6.56 (0.94)***
Perpetrator Similarity	0.22 (0.27)	0.02 (0.20)	-0.04 (0.21)
Positive Perpetrator PSR	0.23 (0.27)	0.18 (0.20)	-0.04 (0.21)
Negative Perpetrator PSR	0.21 (0.18)	-0.24 (0.14)	0.04 (0.14)
Perpetrator Interest	-0.06 (0.21)	0.21 (0.16)	-0.41 (0.16)**
Negative Victim PSR	-0.52 (0.23)*	0.11 (0.17)	-0.34 (0.18)
Positive Victim PSR	0.19 (0.26)	-0.15 (0.20)	0.38 (0.21)
Victim Similarity	0.46 (0.22)*	0.49 (0.17)**	-0.08 (0.18)
R^2	0.24	0.23	0.17
F (7,117)	5.22***	5.06***	3.32**

Note. ***p < .0001, **p < .001, *p < .05 (two-tailed).

In order to provide an answer to RQ5, it was tested whether the PSR factors that significantly influenced dimensions of engagement with characters (see Table 7.10), moderate the effects of perspective manipulation on these dimensions. In addition, the moderating effect of similarity was investigated as well. Perspective manipulation was dummy coded with the victim perspective as reference group and entered in a series of regression analyses together with Negative Victim PSR and Victim Similarity (dependent variable: Narrative and Victim Merger; see Model 1 in Table 7.11); Victim Similarity only (DV: Perpetrator Engagement; Model 2); or Perpetrator Interest (DV: Victim Sympathy; Model 3). PSR and similarity factors were z-standardized before computing interaction terms with perspective manipulation in order to avoid nonessential multicollinearity (J. Cohen, et al., 2003). In the second step, these interaction terms were added to the regression equation. However, none of the interactive effects significantly predicted character engagement (see Table 7.11) which provides a negative answer to RQ5: Positive and negative PSR with the victim and the perpetrator did not moderate perspective effects on engagement with either of the characters, nor did similarity with the victim act as a moderator.

Table 7.11

Summary of hierarchical regression analyses (main effects and interaction terms) with Narrative and Victim Merger (Model 1), Perpetrator Engagement (Model 2) and Victim Sympathy (Model 3) as DVs

	B	SE _B	β	<i>p</i>
<i>Model 1</i>				
Intercept (<i>B</i> ₀)	2.77	0.14		
Perpetrator Perspective ^a	-0.21	0.20	-0.08	0.28
Negative Victim PSR ^b	-0.36	0.14	-0.27	0.01
Victim Similarity ^b	0.24	0.15	0.17	0.12
Perspective X Negative Victim PSR	-0.08	0.22	-0.04	0.74
Perspective X Victim Similarity	0.09	0.22	0.05	0.68
<i>Model 2</i>				
Intercept (<i>B</i> ₀)	1.70	0.10		
Perpetrator Perspective ^a	0.57	0.14	0.29	0.00
Victim Similarity ^b	0.19	0.10	0.19	0.07
Perspective X Victim Similarity	0.21	0.14	0.15	0.14
<i>Model 3</i>				
Intercept (<i>B</i> ₀)	5.74	0.13		
Perpetrator Perspective ^a	-0.30	0.18	-0.15	0.10
Perpetrator Interest	-0.16	0.14	-0.15	0.26
Perspective X Perpetrator Interest	0.03	0.18	0.02	0.87

Note. Model fit, Model 1: $R^2 = .20$, $F(5, 152) = 7.12$, $p < .000$; Model 2: $R^2 = .18$, $F(3, 154) = 11.54$, $p < .000$; Model 3: $R^2 = .04$, $F(3, 121) = 1.76$, $p = .16$.

^a Dummy coded (perpetrator perspective = 1; victim perspective = 0).

^b z-standardized.

In addition to verifying PSR and similarity effects on character engagement factors, their effects on dimensions of victim blaming were investigated as well. Significant predictors could then be included as potential moderators in the moderated mediation model proposed in H6. The fit of the regression model with Blame for Staying as DV was not satisfactory (see Table 7.12).

Although exhibiting a satisfactory model fit, neither of the PSR or similarity factors influenced Blame for Flirting either. However, both Victim Similarity and Perpetrator Similarity significantly predicted Blame for Provoking.

Table 7.12

Unstandardized coefficients and standard errors (between brackets) for PSR and similarity factors regressed on factors of victim blame (DVMA)

	Blame for Staying	Blame for Provoking	Blame for Flirting
Intercept (B_0)	2.82 (1.35)	-0.14 (0.94)	0.09 (0.81)
Perpetrator Similarity	-0.14 (0.31)	0.43 (0.22)*	0.29 (0.17)
Positive Perpetrator PSR	0.11 (0.31)	0.07 (0.21)	-0.08 (0.18)
Negative Perpetrator PSR	-0.22 (0.21)	-0.11 (0.14)	-0.20 (0.12)
Perpetrator Interest	0.22 (0.24)	0.02 (0.16)	0.23 (0.14)
Negative Victim PSR	0.06 (0.26)	0.34 (0.18)	0.23 (0.16)
Positive Victim PSR	-0.06 (0.30)	0.18 (0.21)	0.20 (0.18)
Victim Similarity	0.04 (0.25)	0.37 (0.18)*	0.20 (0.15)
R^2	0.04	0.20	0.23
F (7,117)	0.71	4.23***	4.93***

Note. ***p < .0001, **p < .001, *p < .05 (two-tailed).

Having established the effects of character engagement factors on dimensions of victim blaming and possible moderators of these effects, four moderated mediation models were computed following the logic of moderated mediation (Muller, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2005). It was in fact predicted that perspective manipulation will have an indirect effect on victim blaming through factors of character engagement (H3) and that this indirect effect will be moderated by factors of PSR and similarity with both characters (H6). In order to test these predictions, the bootstrapping technique developed by Hayes (2012) in the form of a SPSS macro called PROCESS was used since it allowed for the simultaneous inclusion of two indirect effect moderators. This was necessary when testing for the indirect effect of the perspective manipulation on Blame for Provoking, which was predicted by both Victim and Perpetrator Similarity (see Table 7.12). In this case, model 16 of PROCESS was used. To test for the other three indirect effects, which include one potential moderator only (Victim Similarity or Perpetrator Interest), model 14 was used. In all models, the continuous predictors were mean centered prior to analysis.

In the first model, perspective manipulation (Perpetrator Perspective vs. Victim Perspective coded as the reference group) was entered as the independent variable (IV), Blame for Staying as the dependent variable (DV), Perpetrator Engagement as the mediator of the perspective effect on blaming, and Victim Similarity as the moderator of the indirect effect (see Figure 7.1, all

$N = 158$). As already the independent samples t-test revealed, Perpetrator Perspective exerted a significant effect on Perpetrator Engagement, $B = .57^{10}$, $SE_B = .15$, $p < .001$. Perpetrator Engagement, in turn, did not have a direct influence on Blame for Staying, $B = .15$, $SE_B = .12$, $p = .21$. Perpetrator Perspective did not have a direct effect on Blame for Staying either, $B = .10$, $SE_B = .22$, $p = .66$, as revealed by a previous null manipulation effect. However, there was a significant interactive effect between Perpetrator Engagement and Victim Similarity on Blame for Staying, $B = .36$, $SE_B = .15$, $p < .05$. It was thus verified whether the indirect effect of Perpetrator Perspective on Blame for Staying through Perpetrator Engagement was conditional upon values of Victim Similarity. Bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (CI) calculated using 5000 bootstrap resamples indicated that Perpetrator Perspective exerted an indirect effect on Blame for Staying only at high and very high values of Victim Similarity (75th and 95th percentiles of Victim Similarity respectively). For participants who perceived themselves as highly similar to the victim (value 2.25 on the 5-point scale¹¹), the CI for the indirect effect in fact did not include zero ($B = .15$, $SE_B = .08$, CI = [.0318, .3368]). The same was true for participants who perceived themselves as very highly similar to the victim (2.75 on the 5-point scale; $B = .25$, $SE_B = .10$, CI = [.0818, .5058]).

¹⁰ PROCESS produces only unstandardized path coefficients.

¹¹ The distribution of Victim Similarity is positively skewed (.43), but it does not differ from a normal distribution as indicated by Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z (1.16, $p = .14$).

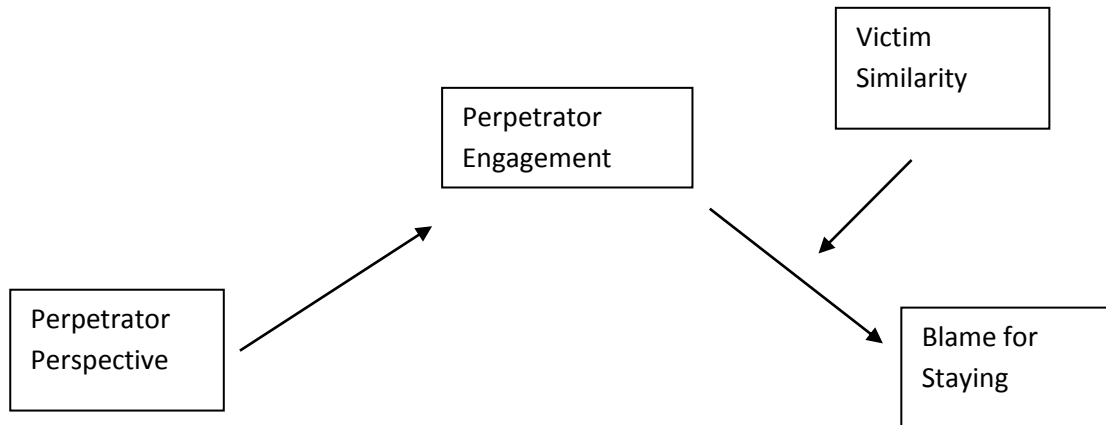


Figure 7.1. Model 1: Moderated indirect effect of Perpetrator Perspective on Blame for Staying; arrows indicate significant effects.

The second model displayed the same variables as the first, with the only difference that the DV in this case was another dimension of victim blaming: Blame for Flirting (see Figure 7.2, all $N = 158$). Perpetrator Perspective therefore had the same significant effect on Perpetrator Engagement as in the first model. There was a marginally significant direct effect of Perpetrator Perspective on Blame for Flirting, $B = -.27$, $SE_B = .15$, $p = .07$. Perpetrator Engagement, however, was a much more significant predictor of Blame for Flirting, $B = .28$, $SE_B = .08$, $p = .001$. The effect of Perpetrator Engagement on Blame for Flirting was characterized by a significant interaction with Victim Similarity, $B = .30$, $SE_B = .10$, $p < .01$. It was thus verified whether Victim Similarity moderated the indirect effect of Perpetrator Perspective on Blame for Flirting. Bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (CI) calculated using 5000 bootstrap resamples indicated that Perpetrator Perspective exerted a significant indirect effect on Blame for Flirting at average, high and very high values of Victim Similarity (its 50th, 75th and 95th percentile respectively). For participants who perceived themselves as averagely similar to the victim (value 2.00 on the 5-point scale), the CI for the indirect effect in fact did not include zero ($B = .17$, $SE_B = .07$, CI = [.0596, .3503]). Also for participants who perceived themselves as highly similar to the victim (2.25 on the 5-point scale; $B = .21$, $SE_B = .09$, CI = [.0794, .4288]) and very highly similar to the victim (2.47 on the 5-point scale; $B = .30$, $SE_B = .13$, CI = [.0989, .5996]), the indirect effect was significant.

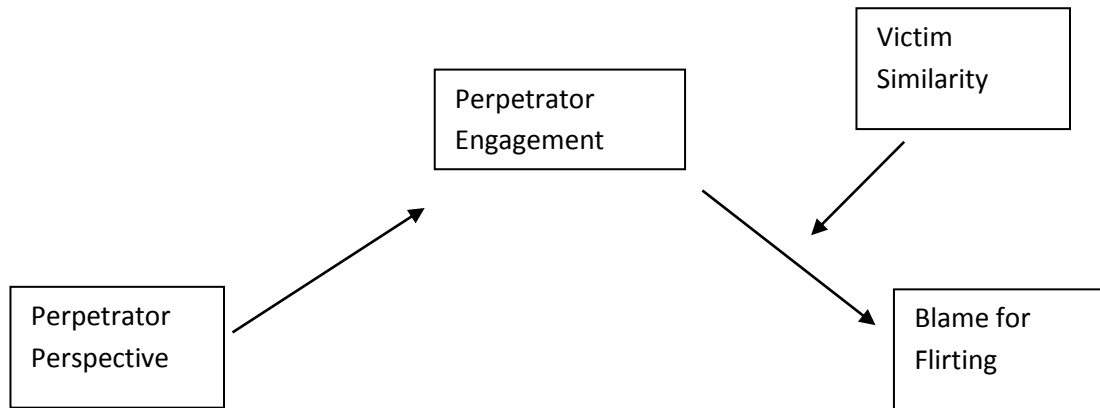


Figure 7.2. Model 2: Moderated indirect effect of Perpetrator Perspective on Blame for Flirting; arrows indicate significant effects.

The third model had perspective manipulation (Victim Perspective vs. Perpetrator Perspective coded as the reference group) as IV, Blame for Flirting as DV, Victim Sympathy as the mediator of the perspective effect on blaming, and Perpetrator Interest as the moderator of the indirect effect (see Figure 7.3, all $N = 125$). In this model, perspective manipulation did not exert a significant effect on Victim Sympathy, $B = .31$, $SE_B = .18$, $p = .09$, and therefore it could not have had an indirect effect on Blame for Flirting either. The null effect was probably due to the smaller number of cases included in the analysis in comparison to the t -tests and the previous two moderated mediation models¹². As already revealed by the independent samples t -tests, there was no direct effect of Victim Perspective on Blame for Flirting, $B = .07$, $SE_B = .15$, $p = .63$. Blame for Flirting was however significantly influenced by Victim Sympathy ($B = -.24$, $SE_B = .07$, $p = .001$) and Perpetrator Interest ($B = .35$, $SE_B = .10$, $p < .001$). Moreover, the interaction of these two predictors was marginally significant, $B = -.17$, $SE_B = .09$, $p = .06$. Inspection of Figure 7.4 reveals that particularly for participants who did not experience much Victim Sympathy (one SD below variable mean), Perpetrator Interest influenced the amount of Blame for Flirting: those highly interested in the perpetrator (one SD above mean) blamed the victim more than those without much interest in him (one SD below mean).

¹² PROCESS deletes cases listwise and so the variable with the least N , Perpetrator Interest, determined the N for the whole model.

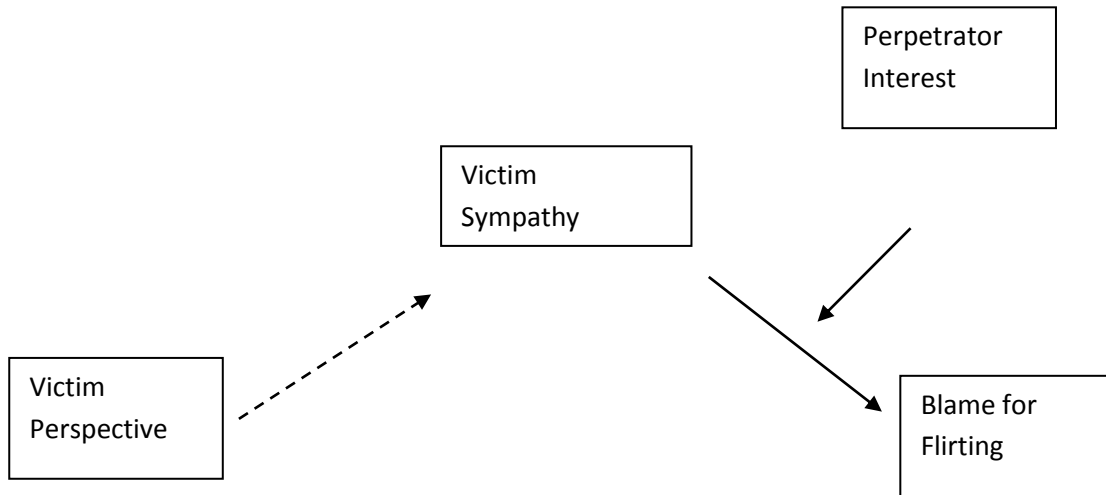


Figure 7.3. Model 3: Moderated indirect effect of Victim Sympathy on Blame for Flirting; full arrows indicate significant effects.

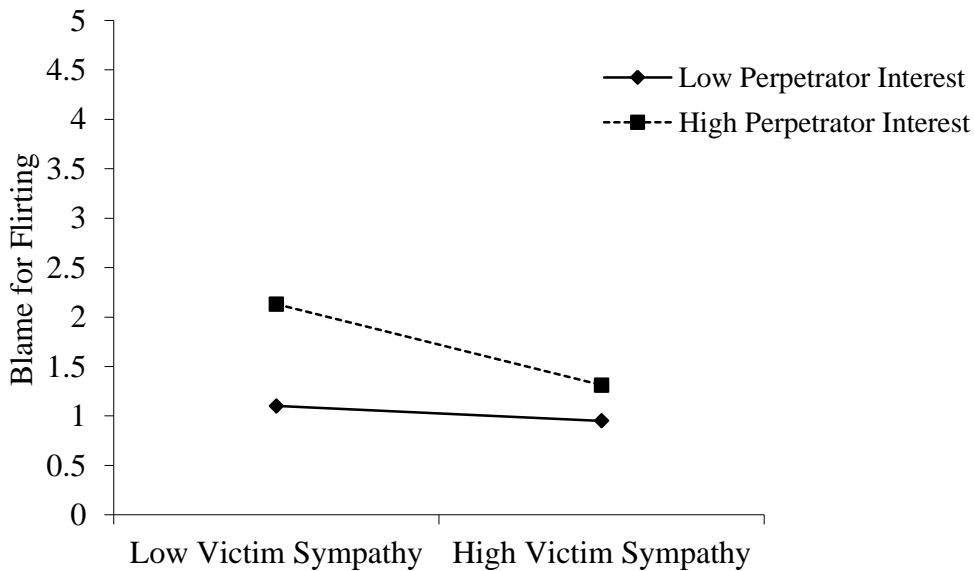


Figure 7.4. Victim Sympathy and Perpetrator Interest Effect on Blame for Flirting.

In the fourth model, perspective manipulation (Perpetrator Perspective vs. Victim Perspective coded as the reference group) acted again as the IV, Blame for Provoking as the DV, and Perpetrator Engagement as the mediator of the perspective effect on blaming. This model included two possible moderators of the indirect effect of perspective manipulation on victim blaming: Perpetrator and Victim Similarity. However, Victim Similarity did neither exert a significant main effect on Blame for Provoking ($B = .24, SE_B = .14, p = .09$), nor interacted with

Perpetrator Engagement ($B = -.02$, $SE_B = .12$, $p = .90$). This differs from the previous results of the simple regression analysis in which Victim Similarity was found to be a significant predictor of Blame for Provoking; the reason for this possibly lies in the smaller number of participants included in the current moderated mediation model ($n = 125$; see footnote 12). However, because Victim Similarity was established as a significant predictor of Perpetrator Engagement in the previous simple regression analysis (see Table 7.10), it was included as a covariate in the model of moderated mediation which now had only one moderator – Perpetrator Similarity (see Figure 7.5, all $N = 125$).

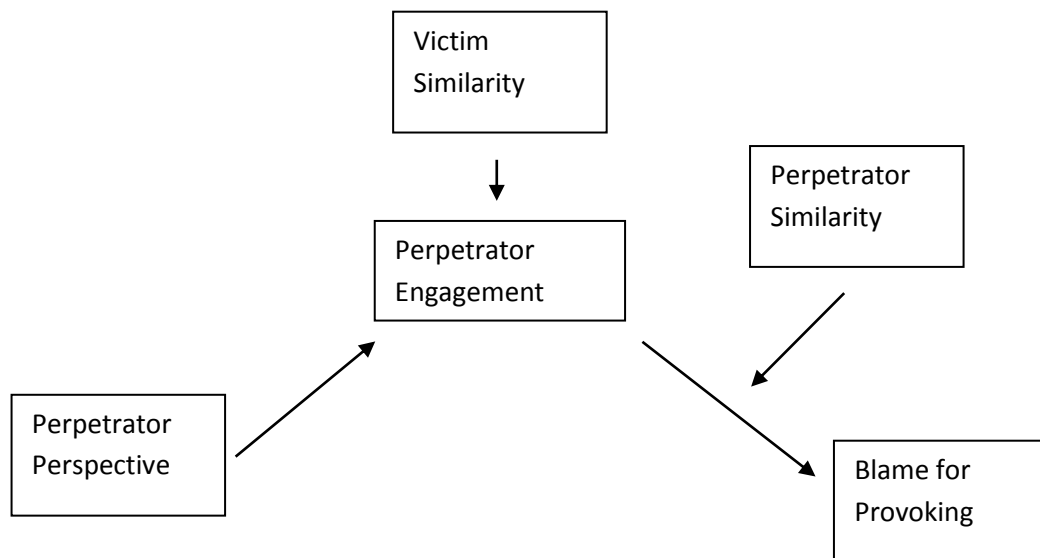


Figure 7.5. Model 4: Moderated indirect effect of Perpetrator Perspective on Blame for Provoking; arrows indicate significant effects.

Results from the PROCESS macro show that Perpetrator Perspective exerted a significant effect on Perpetrator Engagement ($B = .62$, $SE_B = .18$, $p < .001$). Confirming results of the simple regression, Perpetrator Engagement was also significantly influenced by Victim Similarity, $B = .52$, $SE_B = .12$, $p < .001$, and in turn predicted Blame for Provoking, $B = .23$, $SE_B = .10$, $p < .05$. Blame for Provoking was not significantly influenced by perspective manipulation ($B = -.23$, $SE_B = .18$, $p = .20$) nor Victim Similarity, as already found in the preliminary analysis with two moderators. However, Perpetrator Similarity was a significant predictor of Blame for Provoking both alone ($B = .40$, $SE_B = .17$, $p < .05$) and in interaction with Perpetrator Engagement ($B = .26$, $SE_B = .14$, $p = .06$). It was thus tested whether the indirect effect of Perpetrator Perspective on Blame for Provoking through Perpetrator Engagement was conditional upon values of Perpetrator Similarity. Bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (CI) calculated using 5000

bootstrap resamples indicated that Perpetrator Perspective exerted a significant indirect effect on Blame for Provoking only at average, high and very high values of Perpetrator Similarity (its 50th, 75th and 95th percentile respectively). For participants who perceived themselves as moderately similar to the perpetrator (1.25 on the 5-point scale¹³), the CI for the indirect effect in fact did not include zero ($B = .11$, $SE_B = .07$, $CI = [.0044, .2879]$). The same was true for participants who perceived themselves as highly similar to the perpetrator (1.75 on the 5-point scale; $B = .18$, $SE_B = .09$, $CI = [.0590, .4120]$) and very highly similar to him (2.25 on the 5-point scale; $B = .26$, $SE_B = .13$, $CI = [.0779, .6021]$).

To sum up the results of the four indirect effects models, only perspective taking and sympathy with the perpetrator (captured in the factor Perpetrator Engagement), but not perspective taking and sympathy with the victim (measured via the Victim Sympathy factor) causally connected the effect of perspective manipulation on domestic violence myth acceptance – that is, on victim blaming dimensions. This offers only partial support to H3, also in the sense that only an indirect effect and not a proper mediation was found. This indirect effect was moderated by Victim Similarity: Only for participants who perceived themselves as averagely or highly similar to the victim (models 1 and 2), perpetrator perspective significantly influenced victim blaming through increasing Perpetrator Engagement. Perpetrator Similarity had the same moderating role in model 4 but due to its distribution that significantly differs from the normal (see Footnote 13) this finding could not be regarded as reliable. Contrary to perceived similarity with the victim, dimensions of parasocial relationship with either of the characters did not play an important role since only a simple interactive effect of Perpetrator Interest and Victim Sympathy was found in the third model. This offers partial support to H6 in that perceived similarity with the victim, but not similarity with the perpetrator or PSR with either of the characters, moderates the indirect effect of perspective manipulation.

7.3.3 *Discussion*

This study aimed to acquire experimental evidence about the role of PSR and similarity in engagement with characters (RQ3), as well as to verify the answers to RQ1 and RQ2 provided by the previous study. Study 1 (see Chapter 6) in fact confirmed the treatment of character in news as a valid framing device (RQ1; see Chapter 1.2), at least when this treatment goes against

¹³ It has to be noted that the distribution of Perpetrator Similarity was heavily skewed (1.04) towards low values (see Appendix 10), and significantly differed from a normal distribution as indicated by Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z (2.56, $p < .001$). Therefore, the moderation of the indirect effect by Perpetrator Similarity has to be taken with reservation.

commonly held story schemas (Raney, 2004; 2006; see Chapter 5.4) to present the perpetrator perspective on events that led to the crime. In this study, it was not possible to test for a differential impact of the victim and the perpetrator perspective since the coverage used to form stimulus articles did not allow for a construction of a neutral condition which would act as a comparison with the two character perspectives. When the effect of the victim and the perpetrator perspective on victim blaming were tested against each other, this did not result in significant differences. H1 thus had to be rejected and the reason for this could be attributed to an unsuccessful manipulation of character perspective. The manipulation check in fact indicated that the perpetrator perspective failed to invite readers' engagement with the perpetrator, since more than half of its readers misidentified the victim as the target of their engagement.

In order to examine the cause of this failure, it is useful to compare stimulus articles employed in this study to the stimuli used in the previous one. Study 1 introduced the perspective of the perpetrator on events that led to the victim's death and this evoked significant framing effects. However, in the study reported here it was not possible to present the perspective of the perpetrator since neither he nor the victim have ever commented on what happened during the assault (see Chapter 4.1.1). Other reader engagement techniques were employed that were apparently less effective in evoking framing effects¹⁴. The perpetrator in fact never explicitly defended himself or accused the victim, but only implied her contribution in the fight and implicitly denied his own agency (see section 7.3.1). In the procedure undergone to enhance the stimuli, participants noted the absence of the perpetrator perspective on what happened during the assault, but in order to obtain ecologically valid stimuli, this perspective was not fabricated. As a result, however, this study cannot confirm the positive answer to RQ1 offered by Study 1, as well as by the two framing analyses (see Chapters 3 and 4).

In contrast, perspective manipulation had the expected effect on distant processes of readers' engagement with the victim and the perpetrator: perspective taking and sympathy, as measured by the factors Perpetrator Engagement and Victim Sympathy. However, these results were more valid for engagement with the victim than the perpetrator since its factor structure was more consistent with the proposed model of engagement with characters (see Chapter 5.4.1). Items measuring engagement with the victim in fact loaded on two separate factors that represent the close and the distant forms of character engagement according to the model: Narrative and Victim Merger (empathy and identification) and Victim Sympathy (sympathy and perspective taking). Perpetrator Engagement, on the other hand, contained most items about engagement

¹⁴ Nevertheless, the two manipulation conditions that resulted were called perpetrator and victim perspective for ease of comparison with Study 1.

with the perpetrator, regardless of the distance between him and the reader (i.e., identification, empathy, as well as perspective taking). Two items about sympathy with the perpetrator loaded on a separate factor which did not have sufficient reliability in order to be included in further analyses. In sum, these results offer full support to H2b about perspective effects on distant processes of engagement with the victim, but only partial support to H2a about perspective effects on engagement with the perpetrator. This might have again resulted from the failure to manipulate the perpetrator perspective. A higher success to manipulate the victim perspective is indicated also by the fact that Victim Sympathy scores were significantly higher than the scale midpoint of 3.5 ($M = 5.55$; $SD = 1.08$; $t(166) = 24.49$, $p < .000$, one-tailed). All participants regardless of the manipulation condition thus highly sympathized with the victim.

Despite exhibiting a worse factor structure, Perpetrator Engagement, but not Victim Sympathy enabled the indirect effect of perspective manipulation on victim blaming. Victim Sympathy could not be included as a mediator because it was not predicted by perspective manipulation within the moderated mediation model. In comparison to that, independent t -tests did show a significant effect of perspective manipulation on Victim Sympathy and thus the insignificant mediation results could be attributed to a lower number of participants included in the moderated mediation model. In this model, some participants were subjected to a listwise deletion due to the inclusion of PSR and similarity with the perpetrator which had a lower number of cases (see Appendix 10). In any case, H3 was only partially supported also because results evidenced an indirect effect and not a proper mediation. Due to the null main effect of perspective manipulation on victim blaming, there was in fact no total effect present which is necessary for a mediation to occur (Hayes, 2009; Preacher & Hayes, 2004). The affirmative answer to RQ2 (see Chapter 1.3) provided by Study 1 was therefore only partially confirmed: Engagement with the perpetrator, but not engagement with the victim enabled the indirect effect, but not a proper mediation, of perspective manipulation on victim blaming.

Having partially confirmed the role of reader engagement with characters in persuasion through narratives (RQ2), variables that might influence character engagement were explored. In a series of regression analyses, it was examined whether factors of PSR and perceived similarity with the victim and the perpetrator act as predictors of engagement with both characters, which could provide an answer to RQ3 (see Chapter 1.3). With regard to PSR, interest in the perpetrator reduced sympathy with the victim, thus confirming H5b, while negative PSR with the victim reduced empathy and identification with her (as captured in the factor Narrative and Victim Merger), thereby confirming H5a. On the contrary, empathy and identification with the victim

were increased when participants perceived themselves as similar to her, which offered support to H4a. Victim similarity significantly influenced perpetrator engagement as well, but this went against H4a since participants who perceived themselves as more similar to the victim actually engaged more with the perpetrator. Also, there was no effect of perpetrator similarity on any of the factors of engagement with the victim and the perpetrator and therefore H4b could not be confirmed. Perhaps this could be attributed to the fact that Perpetrator Similarity was positively skewed (see footnote 13) with a significantly lower average than the scale midpoint of 2.5 ($M = 1.48$, $SD = 0.56$, $t(124) = -20.32$, $p < .000$, one-tailed). To sum up, only some of the factors of similarity and PSR influenced some of the factors of engagement with the victim and the perpetrator in the expected direction, which does not represent strong evidence in support of the role of similarity and PSR in engagement with characters. As a consequence, only a cautiously affirmative answer to RQ3 could be provided.

However, given that the influence of some PSR and similarity factors on engagement with characters was proved, it was questioned whether these factors moderate perspective effects on character engagement. No such moderating effects were found which provides a negative answer to RQ5 formulated in this chapter. It seems that character perspective on the one side, and PSR and similarity with characters on the other, exhibit an independent effect on engagement with characters, which in the case of PSR and perspective manipulation likely happens through directing readers' affective dispositions towards these characters. According to the model proposed in Chapter 5.4.1, affective dispositions in fact represent the first step in the process of engagement with characters; these dispositions might in turn be influenced by both descriptions of characters' actions (Zillmann, 1994, 2006), manipulated here to constitute the victim and the perpetrator perspective, and by readers' PSRs with characters (Hartmann, et al., 2008; Zillman & Knobloch, 2001).

Lastly, the role of PSR and similarity in the overall process of persuasion through news narratives was questioned: If perspective manipulation has an indirect effect on victim blaming through character engagement (H3), this indirect effect might be moderated through factors of PSR and similarity that influence character engagement and victim blaming (H6). These factors were therefore entered as moderators in mediation models computed to test H3. It was found that perspective manipulation had an indirect effect on victim blaming through perpetrator engagement only for participants who perceived themselves as averagely or highly similar to the victim. Similarity thus had a key role in enabling persuasion through news narratives: Participants had to perceive themselves as similar to the victim in order for the perpetrator

perspective to increase their engagement with the perpetrator, and thereby, their victim blaming. Similarity with the perpetrator and PSR with both characters did not have a similar role in enabling persuasion through news narratives, and therefore H6 was only partially confirmed.

In conclusion, this study did not offer a full confirmation of the role of character as a textual cue (RQ1) and as a reader process (RQ2) in persuasion through news narratives, which had been demonstrated in Study 1 and in the two framing analyses (RQ1; see Chapters 3 and 4). A possible reason for this might lie in the failed attempt to manipulate the perspective of the perpetrator due to the nature of the coverage used to form stimulus articles. This resulted in null direct, but significant indirect perspective effects on victim blaming which occurred through engagement with the perpetrator only; this might have been caused by a lower number of participants that were included in the computation of the indirect effect with victim sympathy as mediator.

The main aim of this study was to acquire experimental evidence about the role of PSR and similarity in engagement with characters. The question of whether PSR and similarity determine character engagement (RQ3) could not receive an unequivocal answer since only some of the factors of PSR and similarity influenced some of the factors of character engagement. However, additional analyses provided useful insights into the role of PSR and similarity in the overall process of persuasion through news narratives. First, PSR and similarity had an independent effect on character engagement since their interaction with perspective manipulation was not significant. Second, persuasion through narratives was enabled by perceived similarity with the victim. However, the effect of victim similarity is controversial, since it increased engagement with the perpetrator. The role of similarity in persuasion through news narratives will be therefore discussed further in the following section which compares the results of this study with the results of the preliminary investigation reported in section 7.2.

7.4 General discussion

Although both Study 1 (see section 7.2) and Study 2 (see section 7.3) showed that PSR and similarity might influence engagement with characters, similarity was more influential in the overall process of persuasion through news narratives as investigated in Study 2. However, the effect of similarity went in the opposite direction as predicted: It increased instead of decreased engagement with the perpetrator. This is related to the additional results from Study which showed that readers' previous victimization, indicating a broad similarity in experience with the victim, likewise decreased perpetrator blaming. Previous studies conducted on the topic of rape have only assessed attributions of blame to the victim and found that these were decreased if

readers perceived themselves as similar to her (e.g., S. T. Bell, et al., 1994; Dexter, et al., 1997). According to the defensive attribution theory 'blame would not be in the observers' best interest if the victim was similar to themselves in some way' (Grubb & Harrower, 2008, p. 402). It is not clear, however, why victim similarity decreased instead of increased attributions of blame to the perpetrator in both studies reported in this chapter.

None of the attributional studies reviewed by Grubb and Harrower (2008) measured perpetrator blaming and thus the results reported in this chapter could not be directly compared to them. However, a classic paper by Cohen (2001) that contributed to the development of the current conceptualization of identification might be helpful in explaining similarity effects on engagement with the perpetrator. Bettelheim (1943) coined the term 'identification with aggressors' to describe coping mechanisms of concentration camp inmates. The author claimed that 'in order to survive in an otherwise unbearable situation, prisoners internalize their captors' views of reality, attitudes, or beliefs' (J. Cohen, 2001, p. 247). Perhaps in a similar fashion, readers who perceived themselves as similar to the victim, and therefore in danger of a possible future victimization, engaged more with the perpetrator. This would be also in line with the defensive attribution theory described by Grubb and Harrower (2008): Readers might try to understand the motives of the perpetrator through engagement with him since this could instruct them how to avoid or prevent situations that might result in similar violence. Again, this might be particularly important for readers who perceive themselves as similar to the victim and therefore as having a higher likelihood of becoming victims of a similar crime.

Following the explanation provided by studies of blame attributions for rape and the conceptualization of identification with aggressors, it might become questionable whether the results presented in this chapter could be generalized outside crime news, or even outside domestic violence news only. Further research will have to investigate whether the impact of other crime and non-crime related news featuring famous media figures is likewise influenced by perceived similarity with these figures. Also, it remains for future investigation why previous knowledge about the crime case (see section 7.2) and PSR with the victim and the perpetrator (see section 7.3) influenced engagement with the perpetrator only. The results presented so far indicate that a further inspection of the impact of PSR and similarity on engagement with characters and their subsequent role in persuasion through narratives might be an interesting line for future research.

8 General discussion and conclusions

This dissertation aimed to advance knowledge within two research paradigms – the framing and the narrative persuasion tradition – by outlining the criteria for conceptualizing news as narrative and by examining whether individuals that are included in news reports become treated as characters in these narratives. This might lead to framing effects through processes of persuasion through narratives: engagement with the narrative and its characters. Research questions were thus posed about engagement with characters as both a textual cue (RQ1) and reception process (RQ2), as well as variables that might influence the later (RQ3). This chapter will provide an overview of findings that answered these questions and discuss their implications for both paradigms. Limitations and strengths of these findings will be analysed and ideas for further research that could be developed on their base will be proposed.

8.1 Overview of findings

It was argued in Chapter 1.2 that previous framing research has not fully investigated the narrative properties of news texts. Rather, narrative has been analysed at the level of cultural frames (Van Gorp, 2010) or as a culturally shared cognitive script (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). To address this omission a coherent conceptualization of news narrative was proposed in Chapter 2.3.1. According to this conceptualization, narrative within news operates at different levels. In issue stories (Pan & Kosicki, 1993), where the argumentative discourse is prevalent, narrative might be present at a ‘micro’ level to exemplify an argument or claim (i.e., instrumental mode of narrativity; M.-L. Ryan, 1992). Since narrative is a device to construct a particular interpretation about the cause of an event, it is argued here that event or action oriented stories (Pan & Kosicki, 1993) mainly contain narrative discourse. In these stories, narrative devices might be used to form a frame, while in issue oriented stories rhetorical devices characteristic for argumentative discourse are typically used, as traditionally researched within framing studies.

If a news text proposes an explanation, or frame, for the reported events through narrative discourse, it must devote special attention to the development of characters who are regarded as initiators of action in a narrative. In order for the action which constitutes the story plot to be intelligible, readers have to be able to reconstruct characters’ motivations for it. It is thus possible that journalists treat individuals involved in a newsworthy event as characters in a narrative in order to provide a motivation for their action, and to subsequently frame the

reported event. The treatment of character in news therefore represented the central focus of this thesis within the framing research tradition. The following research question was posed:

RQ1: Is the treatment of character in news a valid framing device?

In order to answer this question, two techniques of character development were adapted from research in narratology that focuses on literary narratives: characterization and point of view (see Chapter 2.4). Through the use of these techniques journalists might construct the motivation for the action of individuals included in a news report by describing their characteristics and their viewpoint on reported events. Characterization achieved through direct descriptions of an individual's characteristics and through anecdotes about his or her past actions builds up what I call the character's personality profile.

The framing analysis reported in Chapter 3 identified several instances of point of view and characterization in the coverage of crime news which represents event oriented stories that are particularly prone to the use of narrative devices (see Chapter 2.4). Point of view and characterization excerpts were linked to the dominant frames about the crime under investigation: accident, murder, or manslaughter. It was found that complementary personality profiles of the victim and the perpetrator were formed in news in order to argue for the frame of murder, on the one hand, or for the frames of accident and manslaughter on the other. In addition, articles presented either the viewpoint of the victim and her family, or of the perpetrator to promote the frames of murder and manslaughter/accident respectively. The link between characterization, point of view and the available frames thus provided the first indication that the treatment of character might indeed act as a valid framing device (RQ1).

Characterization and point of view were found also in the coverage of two other crime cases involving well-known media figures (see Chapter 4). However, rather than linking these narrative devices to the available frames, it was explored why the victim of one case, but not the victim of the other, was blamed. Four factors that might have caused this divergence were identified which could inform future interventions to help reduce victim blaming and the resulting stereotypical understanding of crime. This might be particularly important in the coverage of domestic violence and sexual assault where the blame is frequently displaced from perpetrators to victims, which reduces public support (Peters, 2008) and undermines victims' own confidence (Enander, 2010).

The different degree of victim versus perpetrator blaming in the two crime cases analysed in Chapter 4 was established through examples of characterization and point of view addressed at

both characters. These devices are called reader engagement techniques in this thesis in order to emphasise that they might invite readers to engage with the targeted characters – those who are described positively and those whose point of view is presented. Reader engagement techniques might thus invite engagement with some characters instead of others, which helps to transmit the frame to audiences. Study 1 reported in Chapter 6 was conducted to test this prediction. Reader engagement techniques that were found in the previous coverage (see Chapter 3) were manipulated to form three stimulus articles that presented the crime either from the perspective of the victim, the perpetrator, or both (neutral condition). Victim and perpetrator blaming were measured as indicators of individual-level effects of framing (Scheufele, 1999). The results showed that reading the perpetrator perspective significantly altered participants' attributions of blame in comparison to reading the neutral perspective. This confirms the treatment of character as a valid framing device (RQ1) not only in the formation of media frames (i.e., frame building; Scheufele, 1999), as examined in the previous framing analyses (see Chapters 3 and 4), but in the transmission of these frames to audiences (i.e., frame setting; *ibid*) as well.

However, reading the victim perspective did not result in significantly different attributions of blame in comparison with those obtained when reading the neutral perspective (see Chapter 6.4). This might be explained by the fact that character engagement was invited in the same direction as expected according to story schemas about crime narratives (Raney, 2004; see Chapter 5.4; 2006) – that is, towards the victim. Reader engagement techniques thus seem to be particularly effective in directing engagement in narratives that go against commonly held story schemas, as was the case with the article written from the perspective of the perpetrator.

To sum up, the first framing analysis (see Chapter 3) and Study 1 (see Chapter 6) both established character as a valid framing device, thus providing an affirmative answer to RQ1. However, Study 2 which was mainly conducted to provide an answer to RQ3 (see Chapter 7.3) could not confirm the role of character in framing since results showed a null effect of perspective manipulation. This was likely due to the nature of the coverage used to form the stimulus articles (see Chapter 4.1.1).

Next, this thesis investigated engagement with characters as a reader reception process. This was demonstrated in the past to represent the mechanism that enables persuasion through narratives (De Graaf, et al., 2011), together with engagement with the narrative as a whole (Green & Brock, 2000; see Chapter 1.3). However, none of the previous studies in the field of narrative persuasion have examined the persuasive impact of narratives present in news. Might

factual narratives written in the traditional news style (as opposed to the new, or literary news style, see Chapter 2.3.1) influence audiences through mechanisms of narrative persuasion? In other words, might news texts be experienced as narratives? These questions have not been answered by previous research which did not use news content to construct stimulus narratives, but only introduced these as news in the factual manipulation condition (e.g., M. Appel & Maleckar, 2012; Green & Brock, 2000; Strange & Leung, 1999; see Chapter 5.3). An initial insight into the persuasive power of news narratives has been offered by Green and Donahue (2011) who used a narrative written in the style of 'literary' journalism (Wolfe & Johnson, 1973). This type of narrative arguably possesses a higher degree of narrativity (Kinnebrock & Bilandzic, 2006), or narrative quality (Kreuter, et al., 2007), than narratives usually present in news. It therefore remained unclear whether narratives typically present in news stimulate processes that account for narrative persuasion: engagement with the narrative and its characters.

Focusing on character engagement, the following research question was posed:

RQ2: Is engagement with characters in news narratives a mediator of their persuasive influence?

In order to answer this question, a model was developed (see Chapter 5.4.1) to differentiate between less intense processes of engagement with characters, which might be triggered by news narratives despite their lesser degree of narrativity, and more intense processes that likely occur in response to more literary narratives. What determines the intensity of character engagement processes is the distance between readers and characters: When readers take the perspective of a character and feel emotions of sympathy for him or her, they engage with that character from their own position as spectators of events that befell him or her. Readers thus remain phenomenologically separated from the character and retain their own identity. Conversely, when readers identify and empathize with a character, they take on his or her identity, which leads them to temporarily experience being that character and feeling the characters' own emotions. Through empathy and identification readers thus experience a temporal merger with a character which is a very intense imaginative process.

It was predicted that particularly the less intense processes of perspective taking and sympathy will mediate the persuasive power narratives present in news, engaging their readers via the so called sympathy route (see Chapter 5.4.1). In contrast, the empathy route consisting of identification and empathy likely mediates the impact of more prototypical narratives, such as novels and films. Indeed, in Study 1 conducted to answer RQ2 (see Chapter 6), perspective manipulation influenced only the less intense processes of engagement with the victim and the perpetrator (i.e., sympathy with her, and sympathy and perspective taking with the perpetrator).

These processes were thus entered simultaneously in a multiple mediation model in which both were found to mediate the effects of perspective manipulation on perpetrator blaming. This offered an affirmative answer to RQ2 since it demonstrated that engagement with characters could still act as a mediator of persuasion through narratives when narratives with a lesser degree of narrativity are examined. In this case, only the distant processes of character engagement – perspective taking and sympathy – enable narrative persuasion, confirming that it is via the sympathy route that news narratives exert a persuasive impact on audiences.

Study 2 (see Chapter 7.3) followed a similar design in order to validate the findings of Study 1. Results show that the perspective manipulation influenced the distant factor of engagement with the victim and the general factor of engagement with the perpetrator which included distant as well as close processes of engagement with him (i.e., perspective taking, empathy, and sympathy). These two factors were thus entered in a moderated mediation model which showed that only an indirect effect but not a proper mediation was present due to the null effect of perspective manipulation on victim blaming.¹⁵ Character perspective thus exerted an indirect effect on victim blaming, but only through engagement with the perpetrator, not with the victim. This might have been due to the lower number of participants included in the computation of the model with distant victim engagement as mediator (see Chapter 7.3.2).

To sum up, Study 1 showed that sympathy and perspective taking with both characters mediated the persuasive impact of news narratives, offering an affirmative answer to RQ2. However, Study 2 offered only a partial confirmation of this answer, since engagement with the perpetrator but not with the victim enabled an indirect persuasive effect of the news narrative. Further research will thus have to fully answer whether engagement with characters in news narratives mediate their persuasive impact (RQ2). Some suggestions for the possible direction of this research will be offered in section 8.5.

A further aim of Chapter 7 was to investigate processes that might impact engagement with characters: similarity and parasocial relationship. First, similarity with characters might aid readers to understand their mental processes and actions and thus facilitate perspective taking and the other processes that follow from it via the sympathy and the empathy route (see Chapter 5.4.1). Readers and characters might only be similar in their demographic characteristics or in psychological factors as well, and the later seems to be more consequential for identification (J. Cohen, 2006) and other processes of engagement with characters. However,

¹⁵ This likely occurred because of the failure to manipulate the perpetrator perspective due to the nature of the coverage that was used to form ecologically valid stimuli (see Chapter 7.3.3).

research into the role of similarity for character engagement remains inconclusive and thus warranted a further inspection in this thesis.

Second, characters in news narratives might represent famous media figures with whom audiences have already formed a parasocial relationship (PSR; Giles, 2002; Klimmt, et al., 2006) through a recurrent pattern of parasocial interaction (PSI; *ibid*). A frequent encounter and PSI with a media figure might lead to a predominantly positive or negative affective disposition towards that figure which forms part of the PSR with that figure. PSRs might thus influence affective dispositions already before the reader approaches the news narrative. Affective dispositions in turn determine the target of readers' engagement (see Chapter 5.4.1) and therefore PSR was investigated as the second process that might impact character engagement. The following research question was posed:

RQ3: Are similarity and parasocial relationship determinants of readers' engagement with characters?

Additional analyses from Study 1 (see Chapter 7.2) showed that participants' previous knowledge about the crime case, which indicates a possible PSR with the victim and the perpetrator, influenced only participants' engagement with the victim, but not the perpetrator. In regard to similarity, results were less conclusive: some indicators of both demographic and broad similarity in experience influenced some factors of engagement with both characters. In order to obtain more reliable results, both variables were measured directly in a further experimental investigation (see Study 2 reported in Chapter 7.3). This was enabled by basing the manipulation of stimulus articles on the coverage of a crime case that involved a famous victim and perpetrator (see Chapter 4.1.1). Readers have thus likely developed a PSR with one or both of them prior taking part in the study and this might have influenced their character engagement when reading the stimulus narrative.

In order to confirm this assumption, positive and negative PSR with each character was measured through items adapted from previous research (Hartmann, et al., 2008; Rubin, et al., 1985; see Chapter 7.3.1). Likewise, similarity was directly measured through items assessing readers' perceived similarity with the victim and the perpetrator (Auter & Palmgreen, 2000). Because similarity and PSR appear to be connected in a reciprocal way (see Chapter 7.1.1), they were both measured prior to participants' exposure to the target narrative and subjected to a factor analysis conducted separately for the victim and the perpetrator items. Factors about similarity, and positive and negative PSR with each character were obtained (see Chapter 7.3.1).

These factors were entered in a series of regression analyses in order to examine whether they predict engagement with the victim and the perpetrator (see Chapter 7.3.2). Results did not provide strong evidence for the predictive power of PSR and similarity since only some of the PSR and similarity factors influenced some of the character engagement factors in the predicted direction. PSR and similarity could thus not be unequivocally confirmed as determinants of readers' engagement with characters (RQ3). However, given that some significant results were obtained, the nature of the influence of PSR and similarity was investigated further. In a series of regression analyses it was examined whether PSR and similarity interact with perspective manipulation to produce significant effects on character engagement. No significant interactions were found and thus the effect of PSR and similarity on engagement with characters appears to be independent from the effect of perspective manipulation. It could be concluded that affective dispositions which initiate engagement with characters (see the proposed new model in Chapter 5.4.1) are independently influenced by PSR and descriptions of characters' actions that constitute the perspective manipulation in the form of reader engagement techniques.

Moreover, further analyses were conducted in order to investigate the role of PSR and similarity in the overall process of persuasion through narratives. If processes of engagement with characters enable narrative persuasion by acting as mediators of the direct (see Study 1; Chapter 6) and indirect effect (see Study 2; Chapter 7.3) of perspective manipulation on victim blaming, and if these processes are at least partially influenced by PSR and similarity, then PSR and similarity might act as moderators of the obtained mediation. This was confirmed in the case of perceived similarity with the victim which moderated the indirect effect of perspective manipulation on victim blaming (see Chapter 7.3.2): Only participants who perceived themselves as averagely or highly similar to the victim were influenced by the perpetrator perspective to engage more with the perpetrator and, consequently, to blame the victim more. Victim similarity was thus key in enabling persuasion through news narratives. However, the nature of its role in the process of narrative persuasion deserves further investigation since it was shown in the previous regression analysis that victim similarity increased rather than decreased engagement with the perpetrator.

To sum up, results in Chapter 7 show that PSR and similarity might influence some of the processes of engagement with characters (RQ3) and that this influence runs independent from the impact of the current news narrative that participants read. The manipulated narrative had an indirect persuasive effect through processes of engagement with the perpetrator, but only

for participants who perceived themselves as averagely or highly similar with the victim. Victim similarity thus had an important but controversial role in news narrative persuasion.

8.2 Implications for the framing research tradition

Framing analyses reported in this thesis (see Chapters 3 and 4) demonstrated that frames might be formed through narrative devices pertaining to the treatment of character. These devices, which are called in this thesis reader engagement techniques, indeed managed to elicit readers' engagement with characters in the two studies reported in Chapters 6 and 7.3, at least the distant and less intense forms: sympathy and perspective taking. This indicates that news articles displaying narrative discourse may indeed start functioning as narratives since they evoke similar, but less intense reader reception processes than more literary narratives. This confirms Roeh's (1989) claims that 'the way in which news stories are "used" or "processed" are categorized very much in the same ways that all other kinds of stories are used, decoded, or experienced' (p. 166). News stories might then exhibit an effect on audiences through mechanisms typical for more literary narratives: engagement with the narrative and its characters. Indeed, the experimental studies conducted in this project showed that framing effects were enabled by sympathy and perspective taking which confirms that frame setting could be accomplished through mechanisms of narrative persuasion (Scheufele, 1999; see Chapter 5.2).

This thesis is thus the first attempt to show that narrative in general, and the treatment of character in particular, might represent effective means of framing. The lack of research so far probably resulted from the fact that the framing research tradition as well as the literature on news narratives have claimed that all news is narrative because it constructs rather than represents social reality. The conceptualization of narrative as a means of social reality construction (Bruner, 1991; see Chapter 2.3.1) did not encourage researchers to examine it at the level of discourse. It thus remained unclear how precisely might narrative be realized in news. In other words, does news use elements of the narrative form in order to construct social reality?

8.2.1 Implications for news creation

The framing research tradition and the literature on news narratives emphasise the subjective nature of news in order to counter the imperative of objective reporting present in journalistic practice (Hanson, 1997). This imperative will be reviewed once more here, in addition to Chapters 1.1 and 2.3.1, in order to describe its negative consequences. It will be argued that its

disadvantages could be overcome if the subjective nature of news were acknowledged and accepted within practice. Narrative could then be seen as an efficient way to convey subjective meaning.

According to Hanson (1997), objective reporting requires journalists to provide an unbiased or neutral account of an event. However, that does not mean that journalists fulfil the abstract, ideal type of objectivity as an uninterpreted presentation of the physical and social world. What journalists provide as facts is actually 'what [news] sources say during, and about, events that grow into public issues' (D'Angelo, 2010, p. 358). Hanson (1997) thus claims that objectivity only represents a form of storytelling which gives exceptional power over the story to news sources. D'Angelo (2010) similarly denotes objectivity as only a 'frame of facticity'. The author argues that journalists are unreflectively adhering to it, 'demonstrating, as a result, little autonomy when adding layers of meaning to—that is, framing—sources' preferred meanings of events' (p. 359). This is even more problematic since these sources are predominantly official or institutional even when journalists provide two sides of the story in order to achieve balance and impartiality (D'Angelo, 2010; Hanson, 1997). This leads to accusations that media address the audience in a single voice (Bird & Dardenne, 1997; Van Gorp, 2007) that is likely to maintain the status quo in society (D'Angelo, 2010; Hanson, 1997).

Contrary to D'Angelo (2010), Pan and Kosicki (1993) claim that journalists might indeed impose their own frame on the reported events by using the very means that were developed to prevent this and to assure objectivity. According to the authors, framing might be achieved by:

'claiming empirical validity or facticity by quoting experts or citing empirical data, linking certain points of view to authority by quoting official sources, and marginalizing certain points of view by relating a quote or point of view to a social deviant' (p. 60).

The frame that journalists transmit in this way is thus not transparent and this is again a result of the norm of objectivity which requires that audience members should not be able to recognize what is journalists' own position on the matter they write about (Hanson, 1997). Regardless of whether journalists uncritically transmit the frame advocated by sources or if they impose their own frame, one thing is evident: Most of news texts except chronicles (Bird & Dardenne, 1997; see Chapter 2.3.1) do contain a frame and acknowledging this subjectivity could only enhance the quality of news reporting.

Arguably, audience members do not even want to be merely informed that something happened but require help in understanding why this happened and how it could be prevented or

improved. According to Bird and Dardenne's (1997), falling back on the technique of chronicling, if at all possible when reporting about more complex issues, is thus not desirable. Rather, journalists should be made aware that they are in any case providing an interpretation – their own, or the one of news sources. By understanding the framing techniques used by institutional sources to promote their subjective opinion, journalists could do more than juxtapose this with some scattered oppositional facts in order to satisfy the imperative of objectivity. They could give equal prominence and framing power to less accessible and less heard opinions – that is, to those of unofficial sources. Entman (1993) argues that only this would properly challenge a dominant frame and 'construct news that makes equally salient—equally accessible to the average, inattentive, and marginally informed audience—two or more interpretations of problems' (p. 57).

Narrative is an excellent means to target the average, inattentive and marginally informed audience, as well as to give voice to neglected parties. Engagement with the narrative and its characters is in fact highly entertaining (Green, Brock, et al., 2004) and thus likely to attract and maintain audiences' interest. Via engaging and entertaining, narratives also convey a particular character's perspective on the narrated events. The understanding of this perspective is not only rational, but emotional and embodied, which Roeh (1989) calls an 'understanding from within' (p. 166). In order to take the perspective of a certain character, readers in fact have to simulate within themselves emotions and psychological states appropriate for the events that the character is experiencing (see the sympathy route of engagement with characters, Chapter 5.4.1). Thereby, readers obtain a deep understanding of the meaning that these events hold for the character. If the perspective of a character who represents a neglected party in an event or issue is presented, narratives could thus be used to transmit powerful alternative frames which challenge the dominant frame of institutional sources, as advocated by Entman (1993).

The framing analyses reported in Chapters 3 and 4 have shown that journalists already use narrative devices pertaining to the treatment of characters. However, these devices frequently form archetypal portrayals of involved individuals and thereby construct 'flat' rather than 'round' characters (M.-L. Ryan, 2004). Flat characters are typical of formulaic stories which may amount to instances of sensationalism in the case of news narratives. Perhaps it is precisely the denial of subjectivity in journalistic practice that leads to the use of narrative in its more formulaic form. The use of character in fact allows journalists to remain invisible narrators and transmit their frame through describing favourably those individuals with whom they agree and through voicing their point of view on the events reported. Perhaps it is because of the

adherence to the norm of objectivity that journalists do not fully develop characters' psychology and instead resort to pre-developed characterizations provided by archetypes that are already present in a culture. The meaning that these formulaic stories transmit is thus rather stereotypical.

Arguably, this is not the meaning that proponents of literary journalism (e.g., Wolfe & Johnson, 1973) had in mind when they argued that this form of journalism 'has as its purpose calling forth meaning rather than presenting an "objective" or "entertaining" account of an event' (Hanson, 1997, p. 390). It is argued here that journalists should start to acknowledge that what they are doing is in fact constructing and transmitting meaning, but aim to transmit complex rather than stereotypical meaning through the use of the narrative form even when they are not aiming for a full reportage in the literary journalistic style. The following chapter will define better the notion of meaning within narrative and discuss the implications of the findings for the narrative persuasion field.

8.3 Implications for the narrative persuasion field

Two possible implications of the finding that news texts might exert an impact on audiences through mechanisms of narrative persuasion need to be considered: What does this tell us about narrative persuasion and what does this mean for the impact of news? The answer to the first question requires a reconsideration of the very process of narrative persuasion. Persuasion through narratives has been conceptualized as fundamentally different from persuasion through rhetorical texts since absorption in the narrative instead of issue involvement is assumed to be directing it (see Chapter 1.3). According to general dual models of persuasion through rhetorical texts (Chaiken, 1980; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), readers' involvement in the issue targeted by the rhetorical text determines the likelihood that they will critically elaborate the arguments and evidence presented to support a certain position. In their Extended Elaboration Likelihood Model, Slater and Rouner (2002) assert that the likelihood of elaboration of narrative information is invariably low, yet readers invest high cognitive effort in what the authors call absorption in the narrative. According to Slater and Rouner, absorption thus represents the only mechanism that enables the persuasive impact of narratives. This logic however seems to hold only for fictional narratives. Factual narratives, including those present in news, might stimulate readers' issue involvement as well if they include content that is relevant to them.

This project did not directly measure issue involvement, but it could be assumed that the crime coverage used to form stimulus articles was of relevance to at least some of the participants. For

instance, participants from Ireland where the crime used in the first study happened (see Chapter 6.3), or those who had a parasocial relationship with the victim and the perpetrator in the second study (see Chapter 7.3), might very well be personally interested in the reasons for the crime and its implications. Thus, they might be disposed to pay critical attention to the narrative and to elaborate information present in it. Yet, findings from the first study show that the news narrative had the same effect on Irish participants than on the rest of the sample: Their attributions of blame were altered in line with the character perspective from which the crime was presented. It is thus possible that despite their issue involvement critical elaboration did not occur, which led to persuasive effects.

This would attribute exceptional power to narratives: Even if readers are motivated to be critical because of their issue involvement, narratives might undermine their ability to pay critical attention to the content presented in the story. According to Green, Brock, and their collaborators (Green & Brock, 2000; Green, Garst, et al., 2004), readers do not have enough cognitive resources left for critical scrutiny when they become transported in a narrative world and are not motivated to exit this transported state because it is highly enjoyable (Green, Brock, et al., 2004). However, in the case of factual narratives in general and news narratives in particular, it is questionable why would readers put their criticality aside in order to become transported in the narrative if at least some of them – those who are involved in the issue presented – might want to remain critical. Could enjoyment offered by transportation represent the only motivation?

From Labov's (1999) conceptualization of evaluation as the essential structural part of narratives, it follows that narratives are always told to transmit a certain meaning – the point that the narrator wants to get across (see Chapter 2.3). It is this point or meaning which according to Labov transforms a directionless sequence of sentences into a story. The narrative meaning arguably consists of an interpretation about what story events mean to characters in regard to their goals and why they consequently behave as they do. According to Ryan (1992, 2004), clues about character motivation in fact enable readers to infer the causal link between events that is needed to understand them as a story. In order to access this meaning, it is not enough for readers to scrutinize story events from their own perspective. As argued in Chapter 5.4, they have to at the very least take the psychological perspective of characters in order to understand their goals and evaluate story events accordingly. However, the meaning of story events might be even more clear to readers if the more intense processes of engagement with characters take place. When identifying with characters, this understanding is in fact not only

based on the simulation of character goals, as during perspective taking, but on adopting these goals and re-living story events in accordance with them (see the process model of engagement with characters described in Chapter 5.4.1).

Particularly important for readers is to understand what provoked and what resolved the conflict, or complicating action, which represents one of the three basic conditions of narrativity (M.-L. Ryan, 1992, 2004) and a necessary component of the narrative structure (Labov, 1999). White (1981) in fact describes that the plot of the story originates from a conflict – the event that represents the breach of some values for the social system, as judged by the narrator. When the conflict is resolved, this resolution gives meaning to all events in the plot that ultimately lead to its closure. The resolution, in fact, reveals at the end a structure that was imminent in the events *all along* (White, 1981, p. 19, original emphasis), according to the narrator. In order to access this final meaning, readers have to re-live story events step by step along with characters. This enables an understanding of what the resolution tells about the origins and the meaning of the conflict. It is thus claimed that readers might be primarily motivated to engage with the story and its characters in order to access the narrative meaning, while enjoyment could be seen as a side effect of this endeavour.

This leads to a reconsideration of narrative persuasion in the light of what I call the meaning transmission function of narratives. Instead of seeing readers as passively influenced by the story because of its entertainment potential, it is likely that they are actively searching for its meaning since this helps them to understand human behaviour and social relations (Mar & Oatley, 2008), and thereby provides the means through which they construct their social reality (Bruner, 1991; Mitchell, 1981). Persuasion through the central plot outcome (e.g., M. Appel & Maleckar, 2012; Green & Brock, 2000; Strange & Leung, 1999) could then be reconceptualised as the accomplishment of the meaning transmission function of narratives which is achieved through processes of engagement with the narrative and its characters.

However, the lack of criticality that results from engagement is seen as problematic in the narrative persuasion field. Again, this is reconsidered in the function of accessing the meaning of the narrative: Readers invest all their cognitive resources in order to enter the story world and discover the meaning towards which the narrator leads them event by event. Since the meaning is only revealed through the final outcome of the story, there is no reason why readers would have to disengage prior its conclusions and scrutinize events that build up to it. Rather, they remain engaged in order to access this meaning unless they notice elements of narrative or external unrealism (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008) which indicate that the meaning might be faulty.

Narrative unrealism in fact points to a lack of coherence between story events and character motivation, while external unrealism, among other, similarly signifies implausible character motivation.

Despite news possesses less narrative means than more literary narratives, news succeeded in engaging readers with individuals involved in the events reported (see Chapters 6 and 7.3); thereby, news' narrative meaning was transmitted, which is referred to as the frame in the framing research tradition. Thus, also readers, who might have been involved in the issue reported, were likely willing to become engaged with the narrative and its characters in order to access its meaning. If the narrative convincingly led to it without elements of narrative or external unrealism, they had no reason to disengage and critically scrutinize the narrative. This provides another argument for the position advocated in the previous section (see Chapter 8.2): Instead of noting audiences' vulnerability to frames formed through either narrative or rhetorical devices traditionally investigated in the framing field, the focus should shift to how these devices could be used to provide audiences with the comprehensive meaning they seek.

Looking again at narrative persuasion, the studies reported in Chapters 6 and 7.3 were the first within this research tradition to manipulate authentic news content. Their findings could thus provide a possible solution to the controversy about the persuasion parity of stories introduced as fictional or factual which has occupied researchers within the narrative persuasion field so far (see Chapter 5.3). Moreover, the findings discussed below offer an additional confirmation of the meaning transmission function.

The fact/fiction debate within narrative persuasion research resulted from studies which manipulated the truth status of narratives through reading instructions only (see Chapter 5.3). These instructions were shown to participants prior to reading the narrative and therefore did not form part of its text, but represented what is called a paratext (i.e., M. Appel & Maleckar, 2012). The information included in the paratext manipulated the truth status of the narrative by either introducing it as a short story or as an online news article (M. Appel & Maleckar, 2012; Green & Brock, 2000; Strange & Leung, 1999). However, the paratext in these studies manipulated only what Oatley (1999b) calls the correspondence type of truth, which depends on how much events and facts presented in the story match real-life events and facts. Truth as coherence and personal insight (Oatley, 1999b), on the other hand, might be achieved through the meaning transmission function of narratives. Since studies exploring the persuasive parity of factual and fictional stories manipulated only the paratext, but not the text of the narrative (M. Appel & Maleckar, 2012; Green & Brock, 2000; Strange & Leung, 1999), the two experimental

conditions arguably possessed a different degree of correspondence truth, but same degree of coherence truth. Their persuasion parity could thus be explained in the light of the meaning transmission function: Because the narrative was the same across manipulation conditions, it possessed the same amount of coherence truth and thus transmitted the same meaning, resulting in similar persuasive outcomes.

However, when Appel and Maleckar (2012) used a paratext that exposed the narrative as fake, this narrative elicited less transportation and was consequently less persuasive than the narrative introduced as fictional. This study was thus the first to demonstrate that the truth status of a narrative might have a bearing on its persuasive impact. The meaning transmission function could again provide an explanation for these novel results: It is argued that the narrative meaning represents knowledge about events in the social world rather than the physical world (Chapter 2.3; see also Mar & Oatley, 2008). Narratives are thus made to transmit knowledge about human behaviour and in order to understand its implications, and thereby access the narrative meaning, it does not seem important whether the behaviour really happened or whether it was described as a hypothetical example. In other words, stories that are fictional might be equally suited to transmit narrative meaning, or the coherence type of truth, than factual stories.

While the coherence truth of the narrative introduced as fictional was thus likely taken for granted by participants in the study of Appel and Maleckar (2012), they might have had reasons to question the level of coherence truth in the story labelled as fake: Why would its author declare that the events have really happened if this is not required for the meaning that narratives usually transmit? Participants might thus have assumed that the narrator possessed a specific persuasive intent, which made them suspicious. Perhaps this is what might have made them critical, lowered their transportation, and thereby reduced the persuasive effects of the fake narrative.

The fake and the fictional experimental condition in the Appel and Maleckar (2012) study thus likely contained a different degree of coherence truth, while their correspondence truth remained the same: Neither fake nor fictional stories recount events that really happened. Because only the difference in coherence truth could have accounted for the variability in persuasion among the two manipulation conditions, this is another indicator that what is measured as persuasion through the main plot outcome actually represents a successful transmission of narrative meaning.

8.4 Limitations and strengths

The main strength of this thesis is that it contributes to the understanding of the role of character in news narratives within two paradigms: framing and persuasion. A qualitative approach was employed to primarily clarify the role of character in framing, while a quantitative experimental design enabled to investigate its role in persuasion through news narratives. Both methodological approaches complemented each other in providing a more valid answer to research questions posited within both paradigms and to overcome some of the limitations, as will be discussed below. Special attention will be devoted to outline the strengths and limitations of the model of engagement with characters which represents the core theoretical contribution of this thesis. Lastly, some issues of generalizability of the findings obtained in this project will be considered.

The role of character in framing was demonstrated through Media Framing Analysis (MFA; Giles & Shaw, 2009) of news content whereby narrative devices pertaining to the treatment of character were linked to the identified frames (see Chapter 3); these excerpts were then used to construct stimulus articles for the experimental investigation into narrative persuasion (see Chapters 6 and 7.3). The link between the results obtained in the qualitative part of this thesis which primarily investigated the role of character in framing, and the quantitative part which was devised to examine its role in narrative persuasion, proved beneficial for advancing the knowledge within both paradigms. First, looking at the benefits for the understanding of framing, Study 1 (see Chapter 6) in fact demonstrated that stimulus articles formed through reader engagement techniques indeed influenced readers' engagement with characters, which justified their inclusion in MFA procedure. Moreover, the engagement processes evoked in readers mediated the influence of stimulus articles, which validated the results of the framing analysis and demonstrated that character has a prominent role not only in frame building, but in frame setting as well (Scheufele, 1999; see Chapter 2.2).

Employing an experimental design might add to the significance of these results since Matthes (2009b) points out that 'by examining the origins and effects of frames, scholars could move beyond a mere description of media content, thus ultimately advancing the understanding of frames' (p. 352). Matthes notes that only 12% of all framing studies that he analysed discussed possible effects of frames, but only 7% presented survey data and less than 1% reported experimental data. Study 1 thus represents one of the rare investigations of framing effects that follows an experimental design and thereby provides highly reliable data.

While Study 2 reported in Chapter 7 confirmed the impact of reader engagement techniques on participants' engagement with characters, it did not replicate the previously obtained framing effects. Results indicated a failure to manipulate the perspective of the perpetrator; this could be attributed to the very nature of the coverage used to form stimulus articles in which neither the victim nor the perpetrator presented their perspective on events that happened during the assault (see Chapter 4.1.1). Other reader engagement techniques were employed which were less successful in creating effective stimulus articles (see Chapter 7.3.1). Most of the participants in fact believed that the perpetrator version of the article made them engage with the victim instead of the perpetrator (see Chapter 7.3.3), which is in accordance with commonly held story schemas about crime narratives.

Nevertheless, the perspective of the perpetrator was not fabricated in order to retain ecologically valid stimuli. These are in fact a rare strength since 'most of the psychological research on message framing has been conducted without any reference to the media at all' (Giles & Shaw, 378). Unlike studies which operationalize framing through researcher-designed vignettes, Study 1 and 2 used original news excerpts that were yet carefully manipulated. Therefore, the obtained findings could be assumed to exhibit both a high internal and ecological validity.

The investigation of the role of character in frame setting provided new insights about the very nature of frame setting. While the literature on framing effects has so far focused on processes of persuasion through rhetoric texts (see Chapter 5.2), this project demonstrated that frame setting might be accomplished through mechanisms of narrative persuasion as well. News frames in fact either directly (see Chapter 6) or indirectly (see Chapter 7) influenced character blaming through processes of engagement with characters which are key to narrative persuasion (see Chapters 1.3 and 5.4).

The complementary use of qualitative and quantitative methodology was beneficial for insights in the field of narrative persuasion as well. For the first time, it was demonstrated that real news content might influence audiences through mechanisms of narrative persuasion, while previous studies only introduced literary or fabricated stories as news in order to manipulate their factuality (see Chapter 5.3). The employment of authentic media material also enabled to test the model of engagement with characters proposed in Chapter 5.4.1. This model classifies character engagement processes according to their intensity; the more intense processes are assumed to be evoked by more literary narratives. If particularly the less intense processes of

character engagement mediate the persuasive impact of news, which represents less literary narratives, this would support the model proposed in this thesis.

Studies 1 and 2 indeed provided a general confirmation of the model since perspective taking and sympathy as the less intense processes, but not identification and empathy, mediated the impact of news narratives on attributions of blame. This indicates that perspective taking, sympathy, empathy and identification are indeed qualitatively different processes that are elicited to a different extent by narratives which differ in their narrative properties (Kinnebrock & Bilandzic, 2006; Kreuter, et al., 2007) and that mediate their persuasiveness accordingly. In addition to its theoretical benefits, the model of engagement with characters could thus further inform empirical research into engagement with characters present in different types of narratives. Some potential venues for this research will be further elaborated in section 8.5.

As a limitation of these findings, it has to be noted that the factor structure of the questionnaire employed to measure character engagement differed between the two studies. In Study 1 (see Chapter 6.4), engagement with the perpetrator resulted in factors that conformed better to the proposed new model (see Chapter 5.4.1) than engagement with the victim. This was likely due to the influence of story schemas which made the manipulation of the victim perspective unsuccessful. Contrary to that, Study 2 (see Chapter 7.3.2) obtained a better factor structure for engagement with the victim than for engagement with the perpetrator. This could have resulted from the failure to manipulate the perpetrator perspective, as explained previously. Future studies will thus have to confirm the plausibility of distinguishing the various processes of engagement with characters as proposed in this thesis. In the case of news narratives, media material that will enable a successful manipulation of character engagement will have to be sought. The role of story schemas which disabled the manipulation of victim perspective deserves attention in its own right, as will be argued under Suggestions for future research in section 8.5.

In addition to the limitations of the findings pertaining to the model of engagement with characters, the overall findings of the project might be limited in regard to their generalizability. Characteristics of participants, the situation, the narratives, and the medium will be examined in order to establish that. Regarding participant characteristics it has to be noted that although the on-line nature of Studies 1 and 2 enabled to sample from a wide age range of the population, their samples predominantly consisted of young adults who were studying at university and already had a higher education degree. These characteristics were explored as factors of reader-character similarity which mainly did not exert a significant impact on the degree of engagement

with characters (see Chapter 7.2). However, since the sample was uneven in the examined characteristics, future studies will need to confirm whether the findings of this project could be generalized to an older and less educated population.

Another characteristic of the sample was that most of the participants were female. Results from Study 1 (see Chapter 6) show that gender had a significant effect on victim blaming: Female participants blamed the victim less, which was mediated by sympathy with her. However, this did not confound the main perspective effects and gender could be therefore viewed as an additional determinant of narrative persuasion rather than as an issue of generalizability. Of all indicators of reader-character similarity, gender had the most prominent role in persuasion through news narratives, but it remains to be investigated whether this resulted from the characteristics of the employed narratives. In fact, not only were stimulus articles in both studies based on crime coverage, but on the coverage of domestic violence assaults where victims are usually assumed to be female and the perpetrators male. Future studies will thus have to replicate the role of gender in the persuasiveness of stories where the roles of protagonist and antagonist are not as strongly determined by gender.

Characteristics of narratives have to be considered with regard to the generalizability of framing analyses results as well. The role of character in framing was analysed within crime news coverage which provided the basis for the construction of stimulus narratives discussed above. Crime news was chosen precisely because its narrative properties have been stressed by previous scholars (see Chapter 2.4). Since character is key to narrative, it is thus not surprising that crime news is particularly character driven. Moreover, the very nature of crime is such that there are always two sides in opposition: the victim(s) and the perpetrator(s). This might be why such a clear pattern of framing devices pertaining to the treatment of character was identified in the first framing analysis (see Chapter 3): Complementary personality profiles of the victim and the perpetrator were clearly linked to the available frames in the coverage. Although crime news might represent a specific case in which framing is achieved predominantly through reader engagement techniques, the coverage of other events or issues might still employ these techniques to form the frame. As argued in chapter 2.3.1, most news contains narrative at some level, either in the form of micro narratives embedded within argumentative discourse, as in the case of issue oriented stories (Pan & Kosicki, 1993), or as a macro narrative in the case of event or action oriented articles (*ibid*).

Crime narratives were investigated only within the realm of print news in this project, which could potentially affect the generalisation of results due to the characteristics of this medium.

However, there were several reasons for the decision to limit the scope of investigation to print news only: First, the procedure that has been the methodological framework for the framing analyses has been likewise conducted on newspaper articles only by its authors (Giles & Shaw, 2009; Giles, et al., 2009; Shaw & Giles, 2009). Second, written news was easily accessible through existing databases such as News Bank (<http://www.newsbank.com/>) and could be manipulated for experimental purposes without technical knowledge necessary for editing audiovisual footage. Third, and most important, written and audiovisual narratives possess the same potential to elicit readers' engagement with the story (Green, et al., 2008), although this might be achieved through different means and take a different form. This probably accounts for the fact that both written (De Graaf, et al., 2011; Green & Brock, 2000) and audiovisual narratives (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009; Igartua, 2010; Igartua & Barrios, 2012) have been demonstrated to exert a persuasive impact through mechanisms typical for narrative persuasion: engagement with the narrative and its characters (see Chapter 1.3). It is therefore expected that readers' engagement with characters has a similar role in the transmission of frames formed in televised news packages, even though devices used to cue readers' engagement might differ. Aust and Zillmann (1996) indeed demonstrated that the inclusion of emotional victim testimonial in television news strengthened viewers' attitudes about the severity of the problems reported and the perceived likelihood that they might become affected. Consequently, it is claimed that the results of this thesis could be generalized to audiovisual news narratives as well.

Lastly, characteristics of the situation in which the studies were conducted need to be considered. The studies were administered online for practical reasons and in order to widen the recruitment of participants. This does not limit their validity since previous research by Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava, and John (2004) has pointed out that data obtained online are no worse in quality than offline data. Additionally, one main obstacle of online studies has been solved by blocking repeat responders which was enabled by the software used. However, one characteristic of the studies conducted in this project might become questionable within an online setting: Stimulus articles were formatted to resemble print news and yet they were shown to participants via internet where news has different presentation standards. However, in addition to reasons stated above for examining print rather than audiovisual news, print again obtained precedence over online news. The latter in fact possess novel characteristics of format and content which might contribute to framing in ways that have not been fully explored yet and which were not of interest to the current investigation. This might potentially limit the generalizability of findings to situations of everyday news consumption. On the other side,

participants could have completed the online study at their own discretion and in a comfortable setting. Unlike paper-and-pencil experiments conducted in laboratory settings, this resembles the way participants usually approach news in their everyday life and thus speaks in favour of the ecological validity and generalizability of the results obtained.

8.5 Suggestions for future research

Some suggestions for future research have already been formulated within specific chapters, such as exploring the role of race in victim blaming (see Chapter 4.4), and more broadly, including a deductive quantitative phase to the investigation of reader engagement techniques as framing devices (see Chapter 4.5). In regard to studies of character engagement as reception process, a need to replicate the obtained results with other types of stories – crime and non-crime related, mediated and traditional narratives – has been pointed out in Chapters 7.4 and 8.4. In addition to these suggestions, some more complex ideas will be presented here. Novel ways of manipulating text and paratext will be considered in order to advance knowledge in the framing and narrative persuasion fields. Moreover, research venues that are enabled by the new model of character engagement and that could provide a further confirmation of its validity will be suggested.

First, the effect of fictionality on character engagement could be investigated through manipulating both text and paratext. Similarly than in previous studies (e.g., M. Appel & Maleckar, 2012; Green & Brock, 2000; Strange & Leung, 1999; see Chapters 5.3 and 8.3), fictionality could be manipulated through paratext only. However, rather than testing whether this impacts engagement with the narrative in general, engagement with characters could be taken under scrutiny. For that purpose, perspective manipulation could be employed, as was done in Studies 1 and 2 reported in Chapters 6 and 7.3 respectively. It could be then assessed whether fictionality influenced the pattern of persuasive effects obtained through processes of character engagement. Although fictionality did not influence persuasion when engagement with the narrative was considered as the mediating mechanism, fictionality could have a bigger impact in directing character engagement and the resulting persuasive effects. The manipulation of story fictionality in fact manipulates the fictionality of characters as well. Through assessing various processes of engagement with characters according to the proposed model, it could be thus verified whether readers respond differently to fictional and factual characters.

However, the role of fictionality in narrative persuasion could be specifically targeted and re-examined in the light of the meaning transmission function. As discussed in Chapter 8.3,

previous studies manipulated only the paratext of the narrative, and thereby only its correspondence, not coherence form of truth (Oatley, 1999b). Unlike correspondence truth, coherence truth could not be simply determined by genre description in the paratext, but has to be developed through elements of narrative form and content that enable the transmission of meaning. If elements that are characteristic for a certain genre were manipulated in addition to the paratext, this might well result in a different persuasive impact of these stories. This assumption could be tested by constructing narratives of different style and narrativity while keeping the content of the story constant. In other words, experimental narratives would be based on the same events, but present them in the form and style that is characteristic for a certain genre. Admittedly, this would not produce equivalent stimuli; however, the suggested research could provide valuable insight into the much debated issue of fact/fiction parity within the narrative persuasion field. For instance, studies following the proposed design could verify whether news narratives indeed possess equal persuasive power than fictional narratives, as demonstrated in the studies so far.

In Study 1 and 2, a decision was purposefully made not to reveal the source of the stimulus articles. Druckman (2001) in fact found that the perceived trustworthiness of a news outlet influenced its framing effects: Frames had a stronger effect when they were conveyed through a credible source (e.g., New York Times). Source credibility might thus have acted as a peripheral cue that directs framing effects through the less effortful route of persuasion through rhetoric texts (see Chapter 1.3). This route has been demonstrated to account for framing effects in the research by Igartua and his collaborators (Igartua & Cheng, 2009; see Chapter 5.2; Igartua, et al., 2011). However, it has been claimed in this thesis that framing effects might occur through mechanisms of narrative persuasion as well when frames are predominantly formed through narrative discourse. Results from Study 1 and 2 mainly confirmed this assumption. However, a stronger proof could be provided if source credibility would be manipulated as well in addition to narrative elements. If news narratives that present a particular character perspective had the same framing effects across levels of source credibility, this would finally establish narrative persuasion as a mechanism of frame setting.

Moreover, the model of character engagement, which is argued to significantly advance knowledge about processes of readers' engagement with characters (see Chapter 5.4.1), could be tested across different types of narratives and characters. The basic assumption of this model is that processes of character engagement differ in their intensity according to the distance between reader and character; the more intense processes of identification and empathy

require a more elaborate character development to be activated and might be thus elicited by more literary stories with a higher degree of narrativity (Kinnebrock & Bilandzic, 2006) or narrative quality (Kreuter, et al., 2007). According to the conceptualization of news narratives (see Chapter 2.3.1), it was assumed that news contains narratives with a lesser degree of narrativity and that their persuasive impact will be therefore mediated by perspective taking and sympathy as the less intense processes of character engagement. This was indeed fully confirmed in Study 1 and partially confirmed in Study 2. However, a direct test of the assumed link between narrativity and intensity of character engagement would be to directly manipulate narrativity through varying the degree of narrativity factors that form more prototypical narratives (Kinnebrock & Bilandzic, 2006). The same approach as the one suggested for investigating the role of fictionality in narrative persuasion through the manipulation of narrative text could be taken: Stimulus articles would be formed based on the same narrative content, but differ in elements of form and style which represent narrativity factors. Again, this would not result in equivalent stimuli, but would enable a sound verification of the proposed model.

As argued above, the model could then be used in investigating engagement with fictional and factual characters: Does it matter whether individuals in a story really existed or were invented by the author? Could their fictionality evoke qualitatively different processes of engagement with characters? Moreover, engagement with characters that possess a different role in the narrative should be explored further. Readers are typically invited to engage with the character who is devised as the protagonist and from whose perspective events in the story are predominantly narrated. The role of protagonist and antagonist might be more or less pre-established by readers' story schemas (Raney, 2004, 2006; see Chapter 5.4). In the case of crime narratives, the victim is typically predetermined to represent the protagonist and the perpetrator the antagonist. This might explain why Study 1 participants engaged more with the victim than with the perpetrator across manipulation conditions. However, further research will need to verify this conclusion by exploring the impact of character role in more or less formulaic narratives where character roles are predetermined to a different degree by story schemas.

8.6 Concluding remarks

The key role of character in narrative is intuitive: Stories are about events that occur to people and about the meaning that these events hold for them. Stories are also about action that people initiate themselves in order to fulfil certain goals and about obstacles and vicissitudes

that they encounter on the way. News is about all of these things as well: News reports events that might impact a larger population, or at least their target audience. News explains what these events mean to the individuals involved and what they might mean, by implication, to the audience as well. News considers why other people initiated these events and what their goals might have been. Thus, it seems that character plays a prominent role in news as well. This is likely due to the function of news which is to explain why things happen in the social world and to construct social reality accordingly. The use of stories, which have a similar role in the construction of social reality, thus seems ideally suited for the formation and transmission of explanations, or frames, about actual happenings in the social world.

This project confirmed that journalists might act as storytellers by using narrative devices, particularly those that enable them to describe people involved in the reported events and to present their point of view on these events. Thereby, journalists treat the involved individuals as characters in their stories which enables them to interpret, or frame, what events mean to them and why they consequently behaved as they did.

News formed in this way might indeed be perceived as a story since it elicits similar responses from participants than stories typically regarded as narratives: When participants in the studies conducted in this dissertation were reading a news article, they put themselves in characters' shoes and interpreted the events in the article from their perspective. This is necessary in order to understand what events mean to characters and indeed it determined the extent to which participants adopted the interpretation, or frame, that the journalist aimed to transmit. The success of journalists in constructing social reality through narrative discourse thus depends on their skill in using devices pertaining to the treatment of character: The better they present the characteristics and motivation of people involved in newsworthy events, the better audience members realize what these events mean to the involved individuals and why they consequently act as they do, acquiring an understanding of social reality.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Newspaper articles from the first framing analysis

Boyle, D. (2010, February 7). SHE'S NO MONSTER. *Sunday Mirror*¹⁶.

Corcoran, J. (2010, February 7). Why we should be grateful that the media cannot act as judge and jury. *The Sunday Independent*.

Flanagan, P. (2010, February 6). Killing is cheaper than a divorce. *Daily Mirror*.

Kubiak, K. (2010, February 2). Lillis goes shopping... at the store he visited on the morning he killed Celine. *Daily Mail*.

McDaid, K., & Breen, S. (2010, January 31). THE QUIET MAN - Defiant Lillis refuses to speak to gardai as he signs on at station EXCLUSIVE. *News of the World*.

McElgunn, J. (2010a, January 30). SIX DAYS LEFT AS A FREE MAN - Brute convicted of manslaughter Killer doesn't flinch at verdict. *The Sun*.

McElgunn, J. (2010b, January 30). The French love shack where wife killer will never take his mistress - HE HOPED FOR NEW LIFE AT ROMANTIC GETAWAY. *The Sun*.

McElgunn, J. (2010c, February 5). INMATE 55511 ON SUICIDE WATCH - LILLIS SENTENCING. *The Sun*.

McElgunn, J. & Doyle, M. (2010, February 6). Killer will return to his life of luxury by - APRIL 10 2015. *The Sun*.

McMenamy, E. (2010, January 24). JEAN'S SECRET COURT DATE - Gardai take Lillis ' young lover on tour of justice building the day before she gives vital evidence EXCLUSIVE PICTURES. *News of the World*.

¹⁶ All newspaper articles were retrieved from the Newsbank online database (<http://www.newsbank.com/>) and hence their page numbers are not indicated.

- Moran, B. (2010, January 30). CHEATING BRUTE LILLIS REVELLED IN SPOTLIGHT - OBSESSED with media coverage Enjoyed having PICTURE taken Joked he would get FAN MAIL. *The Sun*.
- O'Shea (2008, December 22). CELINE'S HUBBY IN COURT TODAY - DEATH OF MEDIA MOGUL Millionaire ad exec faces wife murder charge. *The Sun*.
- Power, B. (2010a, January 31). A verdict that confounds anyone with eyes and ears. *The Sunday Times*.
- Power, B. (2010b, February 21). Knifing let-off is a stab in the back for justice. *The Sunday Times*.
- Pownall, S. (2010a, January 23). I said to Celine: Why don't you shove this brick where the sun don't shine? *The Sun*.
- Pownall, S. (2010b, February 5). The memory of my fun sister is replaced with the horror of blood and a head-shaven dead body with her 18 injuries - LILLIS SENTENCING TRAGIC CELINE'S FAMILY HAUNTED BY IMAGE OF HER LYING ALONE TO DIE. *The Sun*.
- Pownall, S. (2010c, February 6). Ex-pal: Beast held blade to teen's neck during row. *The Sun*.
- The Sunday Independent* (2008a, December 21). Frenzied patio murder of high-flyer done in 'spontaneous combustion'.
- The Sunday Independent* (2010b, February 7). Celine not ruthless nor domineering.

Appendix 2: Newspaper articles from the second framing analysis

Belfast Telegraph (2009, September 1). I do remember beating up Rihanna, says R&B star...¹⁷

Boyd, B. (2010, May 15). Umbrella girl strikes back. *The Irish Times*.

Brown, A. (2009, July 24). Kidnapped nurse is a real inspiration. *Daily Record*.

Burnie, J. (2009, February 21). No place in her life for a thug. *Daily Record*.

Carey, T. (2009, November 26). Why we need to teach our children about domestic violence. *Daily Mirror*.

Clements, J. (2009, June 24). Brown barred for beating Rihanna. *Daily Mail*.

Clench, J. (2009, October 30). STRIKER WITH FORM - WIGAN ACE KING JAILED FOR ATTACK ON CLUB GIRL Prem star had 'previous' for violence against women. *The Sun*.

Clench, J. & Syson, N. (2009, October 31). FULHAM REFUSED TO SIGN CRIMINAL KING - Premier club spurned brute over past convictions. *The Sun*.

Daly, S. (2009, November 17). How Rihanna lifted the lid on 'dating violence'. *The Irish Independent*.

De Burca (2009, July 22). 'I'M TRULY SORRY'. *Daily Mirror*.

Elan, P. (2009, November 7). The Guide: music: With a new album to promote, will Chris Brown's vicious assault bring the backlash it so richly deserves? Don't bank on it, says Priya Elan. *Guardian*.

Evans, R. (2009, November 2). THIS is why I want football beast King to get a life ban. *Daily Mirror*.

Greenhill, S. (2009, October 30). Sex assault soccer star with history of violence is jailed for 18 months. *Daily Mail*.

Jackson, A. (2009, December 5). On the evening of Saturday, February 7, this photograph of RIHANNA AND CHRIS BROWN, the epitome of pop glamour, was taken at a pre-

¹⁷ All newspaper articles were retrieved from the Newsbank online database (<http://www.newsbank.com/>) and hence their page numbers are not indicated.

Grammys party in Beverly Hills. Just hours later, Rihanna was found walking an LA highway, battered and bruised, and Brown faced personal and career meltdown. In his first major interview since that night, the fallen R&B star talks to Alan Jackson. *The Times*.

Jenkins, A. (2009, December 5). Bankers must have a death wish. *The Independent*.

Kendrick, M. (2009, November 1). Villa show football has got a good side. *Sunday Mercury*.

Knight, I. (2009, March 15). Save us from the gimmicks. *The Sunday Times*.

McCormick, N. (2010, May 10). Sex, violence and fireworks - but where was the groove? *Daily Telegraph*.

Mclutosh, F. (2009, March 8). Rihanna, it's time to shop this loser. *Sunday Mirror*.

News of the World (2010, May 16). ART MAD MARLON.

Nicholson, R. (2009, December 6). Confession time. *The Sunday Times*.

Panton, L. & Drake, M. (2009a, November 1). Battered: First picture of Marlon King's punch girl minutes after attack. *News of the World*.

Panton, L. & Drake, M. (2009b, November 1). King thought he was Mr Big, but he is just a thug with a gold card - MARLON KING Exclusive: Emily tells of star's sneers, gropes and brutal punch. *News of the World*.

Smith, R. (2009, October 30). King sent to prison and sacked by Wigan Striker jailed for 18 months after sexual assault in nightclub. *Daily Telegraph*.

The Sun (2009a, February 11). Leave him...before he kills you Rihanna - AN OPEN LETTER TO 'BATTERED' POP STAR A WOMEN WHO SUFFERED FIVE YEARS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

The Times (2009b, November 4). Permanent red card - Letters to the Editor.

The Sunday Times (2009, September 6). R&B star speaks from the heart - Interviews of the week.

Watkins, N. & Burchill, J. (2009, July 22). Can a woman trust any man like Chris Brown? *The Sun*.

Weatherup, J. (2010, May 30). FOOTIE MARLON 'S ASSAULT APPEAL. *News of the World*.

Western Mail (2009, October 29). Footballer denies 'decking' woman.

Wotton, D. (2009, November 22). RIHANNA 'S being a naughty little [...]. *News of the World*.

Appendix 3: Stimulus article from the victim perspective (Study 1)

Cheating husband found guilty of killing wife in row¹⁸

Saturday, January 30, 2010

After nine hours and 28 minutes over three days of deliberation, the majority of an anxious and exhausted looking jury declared that Eamonn Lillis did not plan to end Celine Cawley's life on the morning of December 15, 2008 and acquitted him of murder accusations.

But refusing to believe that it was a 'pure accident', as he had claimed, they clearly did not accept his theory that his wife of 17 years had slipped and fallen three times on the decking of their seaside home. Instead, they found him guilty of manslaughter.



**Cawley ... portrayal
of a bossy wife made
her victim again**

**Shameless adulterer
... in his 50s Lillis still
wears hoodies**

The 46-year-old successful businesswoman once Bond girl and top model died in hospital at that Monday morning of blunt force trauma to the head. During the trial the deputy state pathologist said that moderate force would have caused the three wounds to Ms Cawley's head that resulted in blood loss and asphyxia; her obesity and enlarged heart

¹⁸ Originally, all stimulus articles used in the studies reported in Chapters 6 and 7.3 were formatted in two columns in order to resemble a newspaper layout.

were contributory factors. He said she might not have died if medical help had been summoned more quickly.

Lillis, who was having an affair with his masseuse Jean Treacy, had told gardai that when he came home from walking his dogs that morning an intruder was attacking his wife on the patio, that he tried to intervene but this assailant knocked him out and escaped.

However, in the witness box Lillis confessed that there was no intruder and that he was the only other person present at their home during that morning. His wife was wearing rubber gloves and cleaning out the fridge when he arrived home. She asked him had he given the mealworms to the robins. He told her he'd forgotten. And that's the point at which it all began.

A row broke out in which Cawley called him a 'terrible husband, just useless', and he accused her of being interested only in her 'Superwoman' image. He said she must have slipped when she followed him outside. She was picking up a brick and rubbing her head, so he presumed she must have fell on it and hurt her head.

Angry and with the brick in her hands, Cawley thrust it at him, while Lillis tried to defend himself and jabbed her in the shoulders. A fight ensued during which both slipped and fell. Lillis said Ms Cawley bit his little finger hard at one point, twisting from side to side. He said he pushed her forehead with the heel of his other hand to force her to release his finger. It was around this time that she scraped him, he said.

Lillis told the court that when the row stopped, he noticed a cut to his wife's head and rested it on his lap. He asked if she was okay and what they were going to tell their daughter. And here's where the lie about the burglar began, according to the defence. Lillis stuck to this lie even after his wife slipped out of consciousness and he called the emergency service, because he presumed she will be fine: 'I presumed Celine would say the same things as well so I kept with the story,' he said. When he found out his wife had died, he went into complete shock and didn't know what to do. He continued to lie about the phantom burglar, because he became 'paralyzed' and 'didn't see any way out'.

The jury did not believe Lillis's story of a mild physical spat that ended with an agreement to lie to their daughter, though. They ruled this was no accident, but that Lillis wrongfully killed Cawley with blows to the head from a brick. However, they did not believe that he had an intent to kill her as the prosecution claimed either.

Lillis and Cawley were a patently unhappy and mismatched couple. She was a tough hard-working woman who paid the piper and called the tune in their home - a former beauty who wasn't bothered by her size after she traded the modelling world for a successful business career. He, on the other hand, was ineffectual and aimless, a bit of a dead weight who enjoyed styling himself as a producer but produced little of real value to the family business; an adulterer who traded on the glamour and affluence of his lifestyle.

We could imagine thus, how flattering it was for the cheating brute to start the affair with Jean Tracey: there were other women, but none as young as she. However, time was running out for Lillis as Jean refused to call off the wedding with her fiancé. Therefore, 'Lillis might have responded differently to how he might have in a row with his wife otherwise,' acknowledged Lillis's barrister. When yet another row sparked between them, he hit Cawley with the brick, which resulted in her lethal injuries.

The love-rat subtly presented himself at the trial as the worm that turned – a mild-mannered man with an overbearing wife who was pushed too far. Cawley, the woman he pledged in church to love, honour and respect, had her good name undermined in that courtroom with her character interpreted as bossy and domineering. 'If a woman is good at something – particularly in business – there seem to be people taking swipes,' Cawley's cousin replied to the insinuations.

Celine was just 'incredibly hard working and very able', and at the same time a 'warm, kind and generous woman who was both deeply loved and enormously loving in return. She was the type of person that would rally the family at a time of adversity and ensure that everyone was catered for.' In fact, Cawley took good care of the children of her sister after she died of cancer. One of Cawley and Lillis's neighbours confirmed that 'between Eamonn Lillis and Celine Cawley, you would pick Celine any day. She was a lady. She was better known and better liked than her husband for a reason.'

Luckily, the jury agreed that Cawley's death was no accident caused by her provocation. Lillis will be sentenced for manslaughter on Thursday.

Appendix 4: Stimulus article from the perpetrator perspective (Study 1)

Husband found guilty of killing ‘Superwoman’ wife in row¹⁹

Saturday, January 30, 2010

After nine hours and 28 minutes over three days of deliberation, the majority of an anxious and exhausted looking jury declared that Eamonn Lillis did not plan to end Celine Cawley’s life on the morning of December 15, 2008 and acquitted him of murder accusations.

But refusing to believe that it was a 'pure accident', as he had claimed, they clearly did not accept his theory that his wife of 17 years had slipped and fallen three times on the decking of their seaside home. Instead, they found him guilty of manslaughter.

**Cawley ... Bond girl
become a size 22
businesswoman²⁰**

**‘Lap dog’ Lillis ...
goaded by his
‘superwoman’ wife**

The 46-year-old successful businesswoman once Bond girl and top model died in hospital at that Monday morning of blunt force trauma to the head. During the trial the deputy state pathologist said that moderate force would have caused the three wounds to Ms Cawley 's head that resulted in blood loss and asphyxia; her obesity and enlarged heart were contributory factors. He said she might not have died if medical help had been summoned more quickly.

¹⁹ Originally, all stimulus articles used in the studies reported in Chapters 6 and 7.3 were formatted in two columns in order to resemble a newspaper layout.

²⁰ See pictures in Appendix 3.

Lillis, who was having an affair with his masseuse Jean Treacy, had told gardai that when he came home from walking his dogs that morning an intruder was attacking his wife on the patio, that he tried to intervene but this assailant knocked him out and escaped.

However, in the witness box Lillis said his wife was wearing rubber gloves and cleaning out the fridge when he arrived home. She asked him had he given the mealworms to the robins. He told her he'd forgotten. And that's the point at which it all began.

A row broke out in which Cawley called him a 'terrible husband, just useless', and he accused her of being interested only in her 'Superwoman' image. He said she must have slipped when she followed him outside. She was picking up a brick and rubbing her head, so he presumed she must have banged it.

Angry and with the brick in her hands, Cawley thrust it at him, while Lillis tried to defend himself and jabbed her in the shoulders. A fight ensued during which both slipped and fell. Lillis said Ms Cawley bit his little finger hard at one point, twisting from side to side. He said he pushed her forehead with the heel of his other hand to force her to release his finger. It was around this time that she scraped him, he said.

Lillis told the court that when the row stopped, he noticed a cut to his wife's head and rested it on his lap. He asked if she was okay and what they were going to tell their daughter. And here's where the lie about the burglar began, according to the defence. Lillis stuck to this lie even after his wife slipped out of consciousness and he called the emergency service, because he presumed she will be fine: 'I presumed Celine would say the same things as well so I kept with the story,' he said. When he found out his wife had died, he went into complete shock and didn't know what to do. He continued to lie about the phantom burglar, because he became 'paralyzed' and 'didn't see any way out'.

The jury did not believe Lillis's story of a mild physical spat that ended with an agreement to lie to their daughter, though. They ruled this was no accident, but that Lillis wrongfully killed Cawley with blows to the head from a brick.

However, they did not believe that he had an intent to kill her as the prosecution claimed either.

Lillis was described by several witnesses as having a quiet and artistic temperament: a docile man who snapped. Cawley, on the other side, had become in Lillis 's own words a

‘Superwoman’, steering her company Toytown Films to greatness and earning '500,000 a year. Lillis felt totally undervalued - his self-confidence further dented when Celine gave him a job with a '100,000 salary with hours suited to being a part-time house-husband. She would not shrink at pooh-poohing her husband's opinions in front of associates at a business meeting if she felt the need – or from raising her voice to him in public.

He may have had a TV producer title, but some claim he was little more than her ‘lap dog’ constantly at her beck and call. It was Lillis who cleaned up the dog poo left by their three pets, Lillis who put out the bins, Lillis who emptied the dishwasher and filled the bird feeders.

He was reduced to completing menial household tasks while she became a multi-millionaire businesswoman, feted round the world for her big-budget telly commercials and branching into movie-making. But as her professional prestige soared Celine's private life was unhappy and even lonely. She and Lillis had stopped sleeping together soon after their daughter - who will be 18 this year - was born.

The figure and face that had once enthralled her husband were now bloated and baggy from comfort eating and too little exercise. Gone was the beautiful girl he'd fallen in love with.

In her place was a size 22 woman, described in court as ‘clinically obese’. Secretly their marriage was over and Lillis was on the look out for a new model Celine.

Lillis’s lover Jean Treacy was then a possible catalyst to this entire tragedy: ‘Lillis might have responded differently to how he might have in a row with his wife otherwise,’ acknowledged Lillis’s barrister. Fed up with a sexless marriage to a bullying spouse and desperate to be with Jean, Lillis lost control.

On the fateful day a year ago a stereotypical, normal sounding row turned out to have very tragic consequences. It was not even their first: ‘Unfortunately they had a reputation for arguing in public,’ recalled one advertising associate. However, ‘when people said they argued I think they meant she argued with him. He didn’t really stand up to her.’ Perhaps this time he chose a wrong way to oppose his bullying wife. Lillis will be sentenced for manslaughter on Thursday.

Appendix 5: Stimulus article from the neutral perspective (Study 1)

Husband found guilty of killing wife in row²¹

Saturday, January 30, 2010

After nine hours and 28 minutes over three days of deliberation, the majority of an anxious and exhausted looking jury declared that Eamonn Lillis did not plan to end Celine Cawley's life on the morning of December 15, 2008 and acquitted him of murder accusations.

But refusing to believe that it was a 'pure accident', as he had claimed, they clearly did not accept his theory that his wife of 17 years had slipped and fallen three times on the decking of their seaside home. Instead, they found him guilty of manslaughter.

**Cawley ... died
from blows to the
head²²**

**Eamonn Lillis ...
convicted of
manslaughter**

The 46-year-old successful businesswoman once Bond girl and top model died in hospital at that Monday morning of blunt force trauma to the head. During the trial the deputy state pathologist said that moderate force would have caused the three wounds to Ms Cawley's head that resulted in blood loss and asphyxia; her obesity and enlarged heart were contributory factors. He said she might not have died if medical help had been summoned more quickly.

Lillis, who was having an affair with his masseuse Jean Treacy, had told gardai that when he came home from walking his dogs that morning an intruder was attacking his wife on

²¹ Originally, all stimulus articles used in the studies reported in Chapters 6 and 7.3 were formatted in two columns in order to resemble a newspaper layout.

²² See pictures in Appendix 3.

the patio, that he tried to intervene but this assailant knocked him out and escaped.

However, in the witness box Lillis confessed that there was no intruder and that he was the only other person present at their home during that morning. His wife was wearing rubber gloves and cleaning out the fridge when he arrived home. She asked him had he given the mealworms to the robins. He told her he'd forgotten. And that's the point at which it all began.

A row broke out in which Cawley called him a 'terrible husband, just useless', and he accused her of being interested only in her 'Superwoman' image. He said she must have slipped when she followed him outside. She was picking up a brick and rubbing her head, so he presumed she must have fell on it and hurt her head.

Angry and with the brick in her hands, Cawley thrust it at him, while Lillis tried to defend himself and jabbed her in the shoulders. A fight ensued during which both slipped and fell. Lillis said Ms Cawley bit his little finger hard at one point, twisting from side to side. He said he pushed her forehead with the heel of his other hand to force her to release his finger. It was around this time that she scraped him, he said.

Lillis told the court that when the row stopped, he noticed a cut to his wife's head and rested it on his lap. He asked if she was okay and what they were going to tell their daughter. And here's where the lie about the burglar began, according to the defence. Lillis stuck to this lie even after his wife slipped out of consciousness and he called the emergency service, because he presumed she will be fine: 'I presumed Celine would say the same things as well so I kept with the story,' he said. When he found out his wife had died, he went into complete shock and didn't know what to do. He continued to lie about the phantom burglar, because he became 'paralyzed' and 'didn't see any way out'.

The jury did not believe Lillis's story of a mild physical spat that ended with an agreement to lie to their daughter, though. They ruled this was no accident, but that Lillis wrongfully killed Cawley with blows to the head from a brick. However, they did not believe that he had an intent to kill her as the prosecution claimed either.

There wasn't a couple in the country who didn't, on some level, put themselves in the roles of Eamonn Lillis and Celine Cawley. There was a widespread understanding of what had happened to the couple, of what could happen between many couples: a stereotypical, normal sounding row, which turned to have very tragic consequences.

Brendan Grehan put it well in his summing-up, when he said for the benefit of the jury, most of whom are presumably married, that even the strongest, most fulfilled marriage could be rocked. Many men simply never get the opportunity, others are adept at handling infidelity. Eamonn Lillis, by virtue of his privileged lifestyle, was handed the perfect opportunity on a plate. 'A beautiful young woman,' Grehan said, 'has the capacity to roll back the years in your life. Conceivably,' Grehan added, coming to the kernel of the thing, speaking of the Lillis affair, 'he might have responded differently to how he might have in a row with his wife otherwise.'

The Lillis and Cawley marriage was not fulfilled, sexually, in the way that Hollywood might tell us it should be; but it was strong enough to stand for 18 years. Anybody who is married a while will understand the merit of that.

Years of sublimating Lillis's sexual appetite, however, possibly of his dreaming of other harmless erotic pursuits, had numbed his ability to handle the inevitable powerful emotions when they presented themselves during his affair with Jean Tracey.

Celine Cawley, in her own right, appears to have replaced sexual pleasure with the rush of business success. Ultimately, a growing lack of allure over the years, added to an increasing tension in their business relationship – Cawley wondered why Lillis wasn't out drumming up work in a recession – would be sure to sound the death knell on their sexual life.

Resentment, then, and frustration and personal disappointment had been building up over the years; all of it fermented during those years of nights in separate bedrooms on different floors of a trophy house, which was itself a monument to success but, equally, to unfulfillment. When yet another row sparked between Lillis and Cawley, he hit her with the brick, which resulted in her lethal injuries. Lillis will be sentenced for manslaughter on Thursday.

**Appendix 6: Factor analysis of Engagement with the Narrative and its Characters
(Study 1)**

Table Appendix 6
Principal Component Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation of Engagement with the Narrative and its Characters scale (n = 265*)

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6
Factor 1 (F1): Victim Engagement						
EV ^a : I experienced Celine Cawley's feelings as if the events were happening to me.	.80	.37				
EV: I felt as if Celine Cawley's feelings were my own.	.73	.35				
AIV: During reading it seemed as if I experienced the events that happened to Celine Cawley along with her.	.70					
AIV: I had the impression I went through what Celine Cawley went through.	.67	.32				
AIV: When I had been reading the article for a while, it seemed as if I had become Celine Cawley in my thoughts.	.67	.41				
APV: I imagined what it would be like to be in the position of Celine Cawley.	.63					
EV: I experienced the emotional reactions of Celine Cawley as if they were my own.	.62	.34	.34			
APV: I imagined the feelings, thoughts and reactions of Celine Cawley.	.61		.30			
APV: I could not put myself in Celine Cawley's shoes. (-)	.57		.43			
APV: I saw things from Celine Cawley's point of view.	.56		.33			
AIV: I felt as if I was Celine Cawley. ^b	.54	.51				
APV: While I was reading, I pictured what it was like for Celine Cawley to experience what was described ^b .	.46		.31		.44	
Factor 2 (F2): Perpetrator Merger						
AIP: I felt as if I was Eamonn Lillis.		.77				
AIP: When I had been reading the article for a while, it seemed as if I had become Eamonn Lillis in my thoughts.		.77				
AIP: I had the impression I went through what Eamonn Lillis went through.		.74				
EP: I felt as if Eamonn Lillis's feelings were my own.		.72		.39		
EP: I experienced Eamonn Lillis's feelings as if the events were happening to me.		.67		.32		
EP: I experienced the emotional reactions of Eamonn Lillis as if they were my own.		.67		.31		
AIP: During reading it seemed as if I experienced the events that happened to Eamonn Lillis along with him.		.60			.33	

Table Appendix 6 (continued)
Principal Component Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation of Engagement with the Narrative and its Characters scale (n = 265)*

Factor 3 (F3): Emotional Engagement	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6
GE: The article made me feel emotional.			.77			
GE: The article stirred emotions in me.			.75			
GE: I was touched by the article.			.74			
GE: I did not find the article moving. (-)			.73			
GE: The article has not affected me. (-)			.67			
GE: Because of the article feelings arose in me.			.67			
SV: I was concerned about what happened to Celine Cawley.	.37		.58			
SV: I felt sorry for Celine Cawley.	.32	-.35	.54			
GE: The article left me shaken.			.53			
SV: I did not feel bad for Celine Cawley. (-)		-.39	.51			
Factor 4 (F4): Perpetrator Distinction						
APP: I could not put myself in Eamonn Lillis's shoes. (-)				.74		
APP: I could not put myself in the position of Eamonn Lillis. (-)				.68		
SP: I felt sorry for Eamonn Lillis.		.31		.66		
SP: I did not feel bad for Eamonn Lillis. (-)				.65		
APP: I imagined what it would be like to be in the position of Eamonn Lillis.		.32		.65	.32	
APP: I saw things from Eamonn Lillis's point of view.		.31		.63	.32	
APP: While I was reading, I pictured what it was like for Eamonn Lillis to experience what was described.				.59	.38	
SP: I was concerned about what happened to Eamonn Lillis.				.56		
APP: I imagined the feelings, thoughts and reactions of Eamonn Lillis.				.56	.35	
APV: I could not put myself in the position of Celine Cawley ^b .	.38			.39		
Factor 5 (F5): Being in the Narrative World						
MI: While I was reading the article, I visualized the events that took place in it.					.76	
MI: During reading I had a vivid image of the events in the article.					.72	
BNW: During reading I had the feeling as if I was present in the spaces described in the article.			.34		.65	
MI: During reading I saw before me what was described in the article like in a movie.					.62	
BNW: When I was reading the article, it seemed in my imagination as if I was there.	.32				.60	

Table Appendix 6 (continued)
Principal Component Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation of Engagement with the Narrative and its Characters scale (n = 265)*

Factor 6 (F6): Attentional focus	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6
AF: I found my mind wandering while reading the article. (-)						.85
AF: I had a hard time keeping my mind on the content of the article. (-)						.82
AF: While reading the article I found myself thinking about other things. (-)						.80
AF: During reading my attention was fully captured by the article.						.77
AF: During reading I did not really notice things that happened around me.						.59
AF: While I was reading the story, I forgot my daily affairs.						.50

Note: *Three participants with missing values on one of the variables were excluded listwise. Factor loadings < .30 are not reported. Items marked with (-) were reverse scored. ^aKey to item's original theoretical constructs: EV/EP = empathy with the victim/perpetrator; AIV/AIP = identification as adopting the identity of the victim/perpetrator; APV/APP = identification as adopting the perspective of the victim/perpetrator; GE = general emotion; SV/SP = sympathy for victim/perpetrator; MI = mental imagery; BNW = being in the narrative world; AF = attention focus. ^bItem was excluded from further analysis.

Appendix 7: Descriptives and intercorrelations of all variables (Study 1)

Table Appendix 7
Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of all variables in Study 1 (n = 282)

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Perpetrator Perspective ^a	0.33	0.47						
2 Victim Perspective ^a	0.33	0.47	-.49***					
3 Perpetrator Blaming	3.75	0.73	-.18**	.12*				
4 Victim Blaming	2.40	0.81	.17**	-.14*	-.48***			
5 Perpetrator Distinction	3.53	1.23	.20***	-.14*	-.22***	.29***		
6 Perpetrator Merger	2.33	1.23	.07	-.03	-.07	.13*	.58***	
7 Victim Engagement	2.89	1.12	-.12*	.13*	.13*	-.09***	.30***	.54***
8 Emotional Engagement	3.73	1.21	-.20***	.13*	.19***	-.26	.26***	.35***
9 Being in the Narrative World	4.18	1.41	-.01	.02	.09	-.00	.45***	.50***
10 Attention	4.21	1.36	-.03	.05	.14*	-.07	.16**	.21***
11 Narrative Realism	3.75	1.18	.05	.04	.09	.00	.08	.01
12 External Realism	3.67	1.20	.00	-.11	.15**	.01	.12*	.10
13 Composite realism	3.70	1.04	.02	-.09	.15*	.01	.12*	.07

Note. ^aDummy coded with neutral perspective as reference group. ***p < .0001, **p < .001, *p < .05 (two-tailed).

Table Appendix 7 (continued)

	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Perpetrator Perspective ^a						
2 Victim Perspective ^a						
3 Perpetrator Blaming						
4 Victim Blaming						
5 Perpetrator Distinction						
6 Perpetrator Merger						
7 Victim Engagement						
8 Emotional Engagement	.62***					
9 Being in the Narrative World	.50***	.45***				
10 Attention	.20***	.35***	.43***			
11 Narrative Realism	.02	.10	.17**	.24***		
12 External Realism	.19***	.30***	.24***	.30***	.50***	
13 Composite realism	.15**	.26***	.24***	.31***	.78***	.93***

Note. ^aDummy coded with neutral perspective as reference group. ***p < .0001, **p < .001, *p < .05 (two-tailed).

Appendix 8: Stimulus article from the victim perspective (Study 2)

‘This happened to me’

Full story behind Chris Brown/Rihanna bust-up²³

By Emma Jones²⁴

RIHANNA spoke for the first time yesterday about how her dream romance with singer Chris Brown ended in a nightmare of violence.

Rihanna evoked envious sighs of millions of teenage girls when she began a relationship with the equally famous R&B star Chris Brown. They were the Golden Couple of chart music, both blessed with multi-million dollar fortunes, pin-up good looks and boundless talent.



The Golden Couple: Rihanna and Brown

At the 2009 Grammy Awards show, both were multi-nominated, expected to steal the show and there were even rumours about the two doing a duet together. At a pre-Grammy party the night before, they were the envy of many. Both not yet 21, they had it all and a bright future ahead of them. But the showbiz mirror cracked violently as they drove home early to prepare themselves for the following night. Brown received a text on his mobile phone. Since he was driving, Rihanna said she would read it out for him. According to the testimony of a Los Angeles policeman, the text was from an ex-girlfriend of Brown's. An argument ensued. The policeman disclosed how “Brown shoved Rihanna 's head against the passenger window, punched her in the left eye, continued to punch her while driving, which caused Rihanna 's mouth to fill with blood. He shouted at her, ‘I'm going to beat the shit out of you when we get home. I'm really going to kill you!’ Brown then stopped the car and began choking Rihanna until the point where she began to

²³ Originally, all stimulus articles used in the studies reported in Chapters 6 and 7.3 were formatted in two columns in order to resemble a newspaper layout.

²⁴ Additionally, the following date was provided in the upper right corner of the stimulus article: Friday, 4th December, 2009.

lose consciousness.” Police photographs of Rihanna immediately after the attack were leaked to the media. Numerous publications found them so distressing that they refused to publish them.



Shocking police photograph of Rihanna

Three weeks later, Chris Brown was charged with felony assault and making criminal threats. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to five years' probation, six months of community service and one year of domestic violence counselling. Brown also received a five-year restraining order which requires him to remain 50 yards away from Rihanna. Acknowledging the fact that both are likely to attend music award ceremonies at the same time, the order is reduced to 10 yards at public events.

‘It’s been rough’

Rihanna reveals for the first time her view about the assault she suffered. After the attack she made a conscious decision not to talk about what she now refers to as her ‘interruption’. This self-imposed silence about the attack almost drove her insane.

“I didn't speak to anyone about it for eight months but rather than people forgetting about it, all everyone kept going on about was that night. It really got to me that this was all people wanted to talk about. There wasn't a single day when I wasn't followed by people wanting a piece of me.”

“It was like, ‘What, there are helicopters circling my house? There are 100 people in my cul-de-sac? What do you mean, I can't go back home?’ Then there was all the talk and gossip on the internet and it wasn't anything I could control or avoid. I just tried to live my life but it was hard. I was in the spotlight for all the wrong reasons. Whereas once it was about my music, now all the attention was focused on what happened to me.”

Following the incident, pictures showing the female singer's beaten and swollen face were leaked on the web. Referring to the police photo, Rihanna said: “I felt taken advantage of. I felt people were making it into a fun topic on the internet, and it was my life.”

Rihanna also noted that questions about why she didn't protect herself imply that the emphasis to stop dating violence is placed on the victim, rather than the perpetrator. “This wasn't me who did this – this is what was done to me,” she said.

In the United States this is an especially valid point. Research by the National Women's Law Centre discovered this year that eight states in America do not have laws that specifically bar insurance companies from using domestic violence as a reason to refuse insurance to an abused person. It can be defined as a pre-existing condition, as if it were diabetes or a dodgy heart. In some cases women who have been battered fear reporting it, in case they lose their health insurance. The legislation encourages women to 'put up and shut up'.

"There is a cultural tendency to blame victims," says Margaret Martin, director of Women's Aid Ireland. "But even when women have left a bad relationship, they are frequently still experiencing harassment and physical abuse. There are women who left 10 years ago and they are still being stalked and threatened."

Appendix 9: Stimulus article from the perpetrator perspective (Study 2)

‘I’m truly sorry’

Full story behind Chris Brown/Rihanna bust-up²⁵

By Emma Jones²⁶

THE R&B singer Chris Brown, 20, admitted he ‘made a mistake’ when he beat up his girlfriend, the Barbados-born pop star Rihanna.

Rihanna evoked envious sighs of millions of teenage girls when she began a relationship with the equally famous R&B star Chris Brown. They were the Golden Couple of chart music, both blessed with multi-million dollar fortunes, pin-up good looks and boundless talent.



The Golden Couple: Rihanna and Brown

At the 2009 Grammy Awards show, both were multi-nominated, expected to steal the show and there were even rumours about the two doing a duet together. At a pre-Grammy party the night before, they were the envy of many. Both not yet 21, they had it all and a bright future ahead of them. But the showbiz mirror cracked violently as they drove home early to prepare themselves for the following night. Brown received a text on his mobile phone. Since he was driving, Rihanna said she would read it out for him. According to the testimony of a Los Angeles policeman, the text was from an ex-girlfriend of Brown's. An argument ensued. The policeman disclosed how “Brown shoved Rihanna 's head against the passenger window, punched her in the left eye, continued to punch her while driving, which caused Rihanna 's mouth to fill with blood. He shouted at her, ‘I’m going to beat the shit out of you when we get home. I’m really going to kill

²⁵ Originally, all stimulus articles used in the studies reported in Chapters 6 and 7.3 were formatted in two columns in order to resemble a newspaper layout.

²⁶ Additionally, the following date was provided in the upper right corner of the stimulus article: Friday, 4th December, 2009.

you!’ Brown then stopped the car and began choking Rihanna until the point where she began to lose consciousness.” Police photographs of Rihanna immediately after the attack were leaked to the media. Numerous publications found them so distressing that they refused to publish them.



Brown sorry for what happened to Rihanna

Three weeks later, Chris Brown was charged with felony assault and making criminal threats. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to five years’ probation, six months of community service and one year of domestic violence counselling. Brown also received a five-year restraining order which requires him to remain 50 yards away from Rihanna. Acknowledging the fact that both are likely to attend music award ceremonies at the same time, the order is reduced to 10 yards at public events.

‘Never been in trouble’

Outside court, Brown’s lawyer, Mr Geragos, described his client as a ‘good kid’. Geragos added: “Chris has always wanted to take responsibility. This is a kid who has never been in trouble. He wanted to put out the message that domestic violence is not acceptable.”

Brown told Larry King in an interview for CNN, due to be shown tomorrow night, that he was still in shock about his actions: “When I look at it now, it’s just like, wow, like, I can’t believe that that actually happened.”

After the incident, Brown went to his mother and told her everything but he claims the night was, and still is, a blur. He also called his manager, Tina Davis, who heard him crying. He told her: “Tina, I’ve messed up. I don’t know what happened.”

Brown, who previously had a squeaky-clean image, has apologised for assaulting his ex-girlfriend Rihanna, admitting his behaviour was ‘unacceptable’. The 20-year-old posted a two-minute video on his website: “My attorney has advised me not to speak out even though ever since the incident I wanted to publicly express my deepest regret and accept full responsibility.”

Apart from apologizing, Brown has never talked about that fateful night which changed his life. In a recent interview, however, he came astonishingly close to reveal his version of the truth: “Domestic violence is totally wrong whatever the circumstances, no exceptions. But a lot of people think it's a one-sided issue, that is, only men on women. Let's give an example: I'm not saying verbatim it's what happened, but if a woman hits her man it's looked on as if it's him who's not being macho. But if a man, let's say, were to defend himself or to use force back, then he's wrong - and in every sense he is wrong, of course, because there are choices that you make. It's always a mutual situation though. I feel if force is being used by both of them, then both are wrong.”

Brown seems determined to pay his dues as quickly as possible. Although he has five years in which to do his community service, he's already completed 100 of the required 180 hours at locations close to his home near Richmond, Virginia. He says he wants to demonstrate his determination to address his negative issues and believes that he can benefit from it. He certainly believes the counselling he is undergoing to be of real value. “I'm getting everything I need from it in terms of making myself a better person.”

Appendix 10: Descriptives and intercorrelations of all variables (Study 2)

Table Appendix 10
Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of all variables in Study 2

	N	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Perspective (victim vs. perpetrator) ^a	167	0.50	0.50							
2 Blame for Staying	167	2.59	1.38	.09						
3 Blame for Provoking	167	2.33	1.06	-.00	.46***					
4 Blame for Flirting	167	1.64	0.96	-.03	.55***	.66***				
5 Perpetrator Exoneration ^b	167	3.36	1.33	.07	.28***	.47***	.39***			
6 Minimization ^b	167	2.80	1.12	-.03	.24**	.33***	.28***	.28***		
7 Victim Narrative Merger	167	2.62	1.36	-.04	-.10	.10	.10	.11	-.10	
8 Perpetrator Engagement	167	1.98	0.99	.30***	.21**	.33***	.33***	.21**	.16*	.38***
9 Lack of Attention	167	3.17	1.47	-.11	.13	.13	.16*	-.00	.08	-.07
10 General Emotion	167	4.38	1.35	-.08	-.23**	-.08	-.11	-.01	-.24***	.49***
11 Victim Sympathy	167	5.55	1.08	-.16*	-.26**	-.23**	-.33***	.01	-.24***	.38***
12 Imagery	167	4.51	1.37	.04	.01	-.00	.04	.10	.06	.52***
13 Lack of Perspectivizing ^b	167	4.15	1.35	-.03	.16*	.10	.06	.15*	.20**	-.35***
14 Perpetrator Sympathy ^b	167	2.52	1.49	.18*	.16*	.30***	.28***	.13	.11	.04
15 Narrative Realism	167	4.25	0.94	-.10	.02	-.11	-.16	-.12	-.11	.03
16 External Realism	167	4.30	1.06	-.08	-.07	-.11	-.12*	-.01	-.03	.09
17 Composite realism	167	4.28	0.88	-.11	-.04	-.12	-.16*	-.06	-.06	.08
18 Positive Victim PSR	158	2.11	0.75	-.01	.08	.12	.16*	.13	-.12	.39***
19 Negative Victim PSR	158	2.62	0.67	-.06	-.04	-.01	-.06	-.19*	.11	-.38***
20 Victim Similarity	158	1.93	0.66	-.00	.05	.26***	.19*	.06	.03	.37***
21 Negative Perpetrator PSR	125	3.48	0.78	-.10	-.17*	-.21*	-.31***	-.36***	-.21*	-.08
22 Perpetrator Similarity	125	1.48	0.56	-.00	.06	.36***	.32***	.23**	.09	.16
23 Positive Perpetrator PSR	125	1.58	0.56	.06	.13	.26**	.26**	.25**	-.01	.16
24 Perpetrator Interest	125	1.94	0.77	.04	.16	.21*	.37***	.36***	.03	.18*

Note. ^aDummy coding (victim = 0 vs. perpetrator = 1). ^bVariables were excluded from further analysis due to low reliability. ***p < .0001, **p < .001, *p < .05 (two-tailed).

Table Appendix 10 (continued)
Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of all variables in Study 2

	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1 Perspective (victim vs. perpetrator) ^a									
2 Blame for Staying									
3 Blame for Provoking									
4 Blame for Flirting									
5 Perpetrator Exoneration ^b									
6 Minimization ^b									
7 Victim Narrative Merger									
8 Perpetrator Engagement									
9 Lack of Attention	.06								
10 General Emotion	.01	-.37***							
11 Victim Sympathy	-.21**	-.42***	.63***						
12 Imagery	.23**	-.23**	.29***	.30***					
13 Lack of Perspectivizing ^b	-.17*	.12	-.26***	-.21**	-.17*				
14 Perpetrator Sympathy ^b	.41***	.12	-.07	-.28***	.02	-.02			
15 Narrative Realism	-.03	-.28***	.09	.19**	.20**	-.14	-.12		
16 External Realism	-.17*	-.28***	.16*	.27***	.20**	.02	-.23**	.44***	
17 Composite realism	-.14	-.32***	.16*	.28***	.23**	-.04	-.22**	.73***	.93***
18 Positive Victim PSR	.17*	.00	.22**	.18*	.22**	-.14	.18*	.02	.09
19 Negative Victim PSR	-.08	.12	-.22**	-.21**	-.17*	.15	.07	-.06	-.22**
20 Victim Similarity	.30***	.00	.18*	.06	-.01	-.19*	.09	.11	.13
21 Negative Perpetrator PSR	-.35***	.02	.01	.11	-.07	.04	-.30***	.03	.09
22 Perpetrator Similarity	.30***	.15	-.00	-.17*	-.05	.00	.21*	-.09	-.07
23 Positive Perpetrator PSR	.31***	.22*	-.10	-.13	-.00	.04	.38***	-.20*	-.03
24 Perpetrator Interest	.30***	.05	.09	-.14	.10	-.09	.33***	-.15	-.05

Note. ^aDummy coding (victim = 0 vs. perpetrator = 1). ^bVariables were excluded from further analysis due to low reliability. ***p < .0001, **p < .001, *p < .05 (two-tailed).

Table Appendix 10 (continued)
Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of all variables in Study 2

	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
1 Perspective (victim vs. perpetrator) ^a							
2 Blame for Staying							
3 Blame for Provoking							
4 Blame for Flirting							
5 Perpetrator Exoneration ^b							
6 Minimization ^b							
7 Victim Narrative Merger							
8 Perpetrator Engagement							
9 Lack of Attention							
10 General Emotion							
11 Victim Sympathy							
12 Imagery							
13 Lack of Perspectivizing ^b							
14 Perpetrator Sympathy ^b							
15 Narrative Realism							
16 External Realism							
17 Composite realism							
18 Positive Victim PSR	.08						
19 Negative Victim PSR	-.19*	-.64***					
20 Victim Similarity	.14	.48***	-.43***				
21 Negative Perpetrator PSR	.08	-.16	.26**	-.24**			
22 Perpetrator Similarity	-.09	-.01	-.01	.34***	-.37***		
23 Positive Perpetrator PSR	-.10	.21*	-.09	.20*	-.50***	.54***	
24 Perpetrator Interest	-.09	.52***	-.34	.26**	-.48***	.36***	.48***

Note: ^aDummy coding (victim = 0 vs. perpetrator = 1). ^bVariables were excluded from further analysis due to low reliability. ***p < .0001, **p < .001, *p < .05 (two-tailed).

Appendix 11: Factor analysis of the Domestic Violence Myth Acceptance Scale (Study 2)

Table Appendix 11
Principal component factor analysis with Varimax rotation of the Domestic Violence Myth Acceptance Scale (n = 167)

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
Factor 1 (F1): Blame for Staying					
CB ^a : I don't have much sympathy for a battered woman who keeps going back to the abuser.	.80				
CB: If a woman continues living with a man who beat her, then it's her own fault if she is beaten again.	.80				
CB: If a woman doesn't like it, she can leave.	.69				
CB: I hate to say it, but if a woman stays with the man who abused her, she basically deserves what she gets.	.69		.40		
CB: If a woman goes back to the abuser, this is due to something in her character. ^b	.59	.46			
Factor 2 (F2): Blame for Provoking					
M: Most domestic violence involves mutual violence between the partners.		.71			
BB: Women instigate most family violence.		.66	.33		
CB: Many women have an unconscious wish to be dominated by their partners.	.33	.63			
BB: A lot of domestic violence occurs because women keep on arguing about things with their partners.	.63	.63	.33		
BB: Women can avoid physical abuse if they give in occasionally. ^b	.56	.56	.55		
CB: Some women unconsciously want their partners to control them. ^b	.46	.49			
Factor 3 (F3): Blame for Flirting					
BB: Making a man jealous is asking for it.			.82		
BB: Women who flirt are asking for it.	.31	.31	.70		
Factor 4 (F4): Perpetrator Exoneration					
PE: When a man is violent it is because he lost control of his temper.				.75	
PE: Abusive men lose control so much that they don't know what they're doing.		.36		.71	
PE: Domestic violence results from a momentary loss of temper.			.30	.66	
Factor 5 (F5): Minimization					
M: Domestic violence does not affect many people.					.84
M: Domestic violence rarely happens in my neighbourhood.				.43	.61

Note: Factor loadings < .30 are not reported. Items marked with (-) were reverse scored.^a Key to item's original theoretical constructs: CB = character blame; BB = behaviour blame; M = minimization; PE = perpetrator exoneration.^b Item was excluded from further analysis.

Appendix 12: Factor analysis of Engagement with the Narrative and its Characters (Study 2)

Table Appendix 12
Principal component factor analysis with Varimax rotation of Engagement with the Narrative and its Characters scale (n = 167)

Factor 1 (F1): Narrative and Victim Merger	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8
IV ^a : During reading, it seemed as if I experienced the events that happened to Rihanna along with her.	.81							
IV: During reading, I felt as if I was Rihanna.	.80							
IV: When I had been reading the article for a while, it seemed as if I had become Rihanna in my thoughts.	.77							
EV: I experienced Rihanna's feelings as if the events were happening to me.	.76							
EV: I felt as if Rihanna's feelings were my own.	.76							
IV: I had the impression I went through what Rihanna went through.	.72							
EV: I experienced Rihanna's emotional reactions as if they were my own.	.68							
BNW: When I was reading the article, it seemed in my imagination as if I was there.	.67					.32		
BNW: During reading, I had the feeling as if I was present in the spaces described in the article.	.63					.44		
Factor 2 (F2): Perpetrator Engagement								
IP: I had the impression I went through what Brown went through.		.82						
IP: During reading, it seemed as if I experienced the events that happened to Brown along with him.		.80						
EP: I felt as if Brown's feelings were my own.		.79						
EP: I experienced Brown's emotional reactions as if they were my own.		.78						
IP: When I had been reading the article for a while, it seemed as if I had become Brown in my thoughts.		.75						
PP: During reading, I saw things from Brown's point of view.		.73						
EP: I experienced Brown's feelings as if the events were happening to me.	.32	.67						
IP: During reading, I felt as if I was Brown.	.32	.66						
PP: During reading, I imagined Brown's feelings, thoughts and reactions.	.59	.59						
PP: During reading, I imagined what it would be like to be in the position of Brown.	.54	.54				.36		.33
SP: I was concerned about what happened to Brown. ^b	.48	.48						.38

Table Appendix 12 (continued)
Principal component factor analysis with Varimax rotation of Engagement with the Narrative and its Characters scale (n = 167)

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8
Factor 3 (F3): Lack of Attention								
AF: I had a hard time keeping my mind on the content of the article.		.88						
AF: While reading the article I found myself thinking about other things.		.86						
AF: I found my mind wandering while reading the article.		.86						
AF: During reading, my attention was fully captured by the article.(-)		-.74						
Factor 4 (F4): General Emotion								
GE: The article stirred emotions in me.				.78				
GE: The article made me feel emotional.	.34			.76				
GE: I was touched by the article.				.65	.35			
GE: I did not find the article moving. (-)			.48	-.50				
Factor 5 (F5): Victim Smpathy								
SV: I felt sorry for Rihanna.			-.32		.65			
SV: I did not feel bad for Rihanna. (-)			.33		-.60			
SV: I was concerned about what happened to Rihanna.					.58			
PV: During reading, I saw things from Rihanna's point of view.					.54			
PV: During reading, I imagined Rihanna's feelings, thoughts and reactions. ^b	.42			.33	.47			
PV: During reading, I imagined what it would be like to be in the position of Rihanna. ^b	.36			.37	.40	.36		
Factor 6 (F6): Imagery								
MI: During reading, I saw before me what was described in the article like in a movie.						.72		
MI: While I was reading the article, I visualized the events that took place in it.			-.31			.70		
MI: During reading, I had a vivid image of the events in the article.						.66		
Factor 7 (F7): Lack of Perspectivizing								
PV: I could not put myself in Rihanna's position.								.76
PV: I could not put myself in Rihanna's shoes.								.69
PP: I could not put myself in Brown's position.								.54

Table Appendix 12 (continued)
Principal component factor analysis with Varimax rotation of Engagement with the Narrative and its Characters scale (n = 167)

Factor 8 (F8): Perpetrator Sympathy			
SP: I did not feel bad for Brown. (-)			-.83
SP: I felt sorry for Brown.	.50		.60
PP: I could not put myself in Brown's shoes.		.32	.39
			-.40

Note: Factor loadings < .30 are not reported. Items marked with (-) were reverse scored. Key to item's original theoretical constructs: EV/EP = empathy with the victim/perpetrator; IV/IP = identification with victim/perpetrator; PV/PP = identification as adopting the perspective of the victim/perpetrator; GE = general emotion; SV/SP = sympathy for victim/perpetrator; MI = mental imagery; BNW = being in the narrative world; AF = attentional focus. Item was excluded from further analysis.

Appendix 13: Factor analysis of Parasocial Relationship and Perceived Similarity with the Perpetrator (Study 2)

Table Appendix 13
Principal component factor analysis with Varimax rotation of Parasocial Relationship (PSR) and Perceived Similarity with the Perpetrator (n = 125)

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
Factor 1 (F1): Negative Perpetrator PSR					
-PSR ^a : It is annoying to see Chris Brown on TV.	.84				
-PSR: I do not want to be reminded about Chris Brown.	.82				
-PSR: I do not generally approve of Chris Brown's behaviour.	.55	-.39			
+PSR: I admire Chris Brown for his achievements. (-)	-.55		.31	.41	
-PSR: I am happy whenever I learn that something bad happened to Chris Brown. ^b	.50				.49
Factor 2 (F2): Perpetrator Similarity					
S: I have the same qualities as Chris Brown.		.79			
S: I have the same problems as Chris Brown.		.75			
S: Chris Brown reminds me of myself.		.75			
S: I seem to have the same beliefs or attitudes as Chris Brown.		.62	.31	.30	
Factor 3 (F3): Positive Perpetrator PSR					
+PSR: I think Chris Brown is like an old friend.			.85		
+PSR: I see Chris Brown as a natural, down-to-earth person.	-.44		.66		
+PSR: I miss Chris Brown when I don't come across him in media for a long time.			.64	.50	
+PSR: Chris Brown makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with a friend.		.34	.50		
Factor 4 (F4): Perpetrator Interest					
+PSR: If there were a story about Chris Brown in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it.				.83	
+PSR: I think about Chris Brown even when I am not following him in media.		.39		.62	
+PSR: I would like to meet Chris Brown in person.	-.48		.32	.59	
-PSR: I am not interested in media coverage about Chris Brown. ^b				-.55	-.42
+PSR: When Chris Brown reveals an opinion on a topic, it helps me make up my mind about that topic. ^b					.75

Note: Factor loadings < .30 are not reported. Items marked with (-) were reverse scored.^aKey to item's original theoretical constructs: +PSR = positive parasocial relationship; -PSR = negative parasocial relationship; S = perceived similarity.^bItem was excluded from further analysis.

Appendix 14: Factor analysis of Parasocial Relationship and Perceived Similarity with the Victim (Study 2)

Table Appendix 14
Principal component factor analysis with Varimax rotation of Parasocial Relationship (PSR) and Perceived Similarity with the Victim (n = 158)

	F1	F2	F3
Factor 1 (F1): Positive Victim PSR			
+PSR ^a : I miss Rihanna when I don't come across her in media for a long time.	.77		
+PSR: I think about Rihanna even when I am not following her in media.	.70		
+PSR: If there were a story about Rihanna in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it.	.66	-.45	
+PSR: When Rihanna reveals an opinion on a topic, it helps me make up my mind about that topic.	.66		
+PSR: I think Rihanna is like an old friend.	.64		.40
+PSR: I would like to meet Rihanna in person.	.60	-.54	
-PSR: I am not interested in media coverage about Rihanna. (-)	-.57	.57	
+PSR: Rihanna makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with a friend. ^b	.48		.42
Factor 2 (F2): Negative Victim PSR			
-PSR: It is annoying to see Rihanna on TV.		.79	
-PSR: I do not want to be reminded about Rihanna.		.73	
-PSR: I am happy whenever I learn that something bad happened to Rihanna.		.70	
+PSR: I admire Rihanna for her achievements. (-)	.40	-.62	
-PSR: I do not generally approve of Rihanna's behaviour.		.56	-.32
+PSR: I see Rihanna as a natural, down-to-earth person. (-)		-.43	.40
Factor 3 (F3): Victim Similarity			
S: I have the same qualities as Rihanna.			.79
S: I have the same problems as Rihanna.			.72
S: I seem to have the same beliefs or attitudes as Rihanna.		-.33	.69
S: Rihanna reminds me of myself.	.38		.60

Note. Factor loadings < .30 are not reported. Items marked with (-) were reverse scored.^aKey to item's original theoretical constructs: +PSR = positive parasocial relationship; -PSR = negative parasocial relationship; S = perceived similarity.^bItem was excluded from further analysis.

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