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Gendered Presentations of Borderline Personality Disorder in the UK Press

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Aim of the Study

Using corpus-driven discourse analysis to:

- Explore how Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) is presented in UK newspapers
- Focus on the discursive creation of stigma against individuals affected by BPD
- Identify gendered presentations



Mental Illness in Newspapers

- Equality Act 2010 makes it illegal to discriminate directly or indirectly against people with mental health issues
- The code of conduct by National Union of Journalists (NUJ, 2015) requires journalists to refrain from creating content that results in discrimination or hatred

Mental Illness in Newspapers

- Newspapers tend to inaccurately link mental illness with violence, or portray people with mental health issues as dangerous (e.g. Sieff 2003)
- Tendency to portray people as incapable, or too disabled to live fulfilling lives (Rhydderch et al. 2016)
- News stories on crimes + mental illness are longer and contain more pejorative language compared to other news stories (Carpiniello et al. 2007)
- Generally, articles about men are more stigmatising than those about women (Whitley et al. 2015)

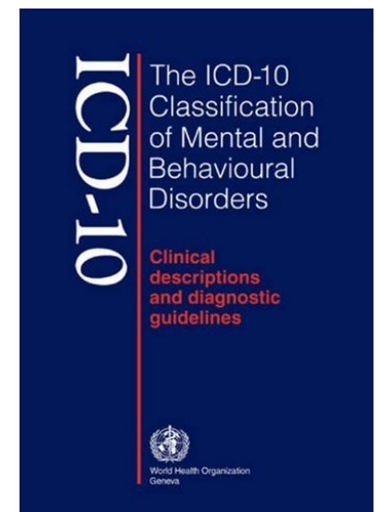
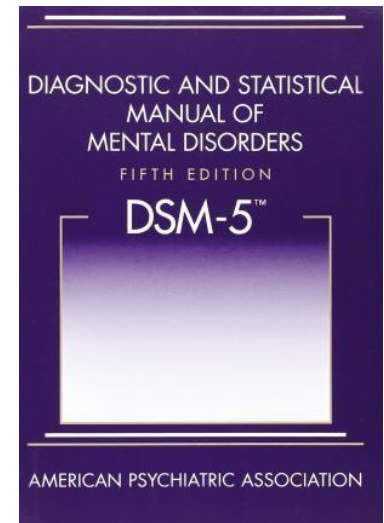
Mental Illness in Newspapers

- Large public survey: 40% of respondents agreed that mental illness was related to violence, and that the media was the source of their beliefs
- Reality: People with mental illness are far more likely to self-harm, or be the victim of a crime rather than the perpetrator (see Cutcliffe & Hannigan 2001)

Borderline Personality Disorder

DSM 5 “BPD” and ICD-10 “Emotional Unstable Personality Disorder”

- Broadly defined behavioural tendencies:
 - emotional instability
 - problems related to thinking or perception
 - impulsive behaviour
 - intense but unstable interpersonal relationships



Borderline Personality Disorder

- Most common diagnosed personality disorder
- Estimated prevalence 0.7%-2% in the general population
- Women 0.6% twice as often diagnosed compared to men (0.3%), overrepresented in the forensic population by 20%
- Most misunderstood, misdiagnosed and stigmatised of all personality disorders



Corpus Linguistics

- “Corpus” comes from the Latin word “body” – plural “corpora”
- A corpus is a collection of texts
 - Not random
 - Purposeful
 - Sampled to be representative of subject investigated
 - Machine-readable for computer analysis
 - Spoken or written data

Corpus Linguistics

- Quick computerised processing of data
- Uses reliable statistics
- Frequency counts of lexical items
- Identifies quantitatively typical and atypical semantic patterns (coarse grain analysis)
- Provides contextual qualitative examples (fine-grain analysis)
- Provides an objective and balanced picture

Corpus Linguistics

- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of semantic patterns identifies:
 - Positive and negative connotations
 - Attitudinal and evaluative meanings
 - Impact on public beliefs and stereotypes towards mental illness

Sampling of Data

- UK broadsheet, tabloid and local newspapers (1996-2016) sourced from LexisNexis
- *borderline personality disorder OR bpd OR emotionally unstable personality OR EUPD OR emotion regulation disorder OR emotional dysregulation disorder OR edd OR emotional instability disorder OR emotion impulse regulation disorder*
- 2,709 articles with total count of 1,916,325 words

Corpus Analysis

Software

- Sketch Engine corpus analysis software (Kilgariff et al. 2004)
- LogDice association measure for collocations

Analysis

- 1) In-depth manual analysis of concordances to identify contextual meaning
- 2) Examination of the full newspaper articles
- 3) Identified collocations were then categorised into discursive themes

Example of Concordances

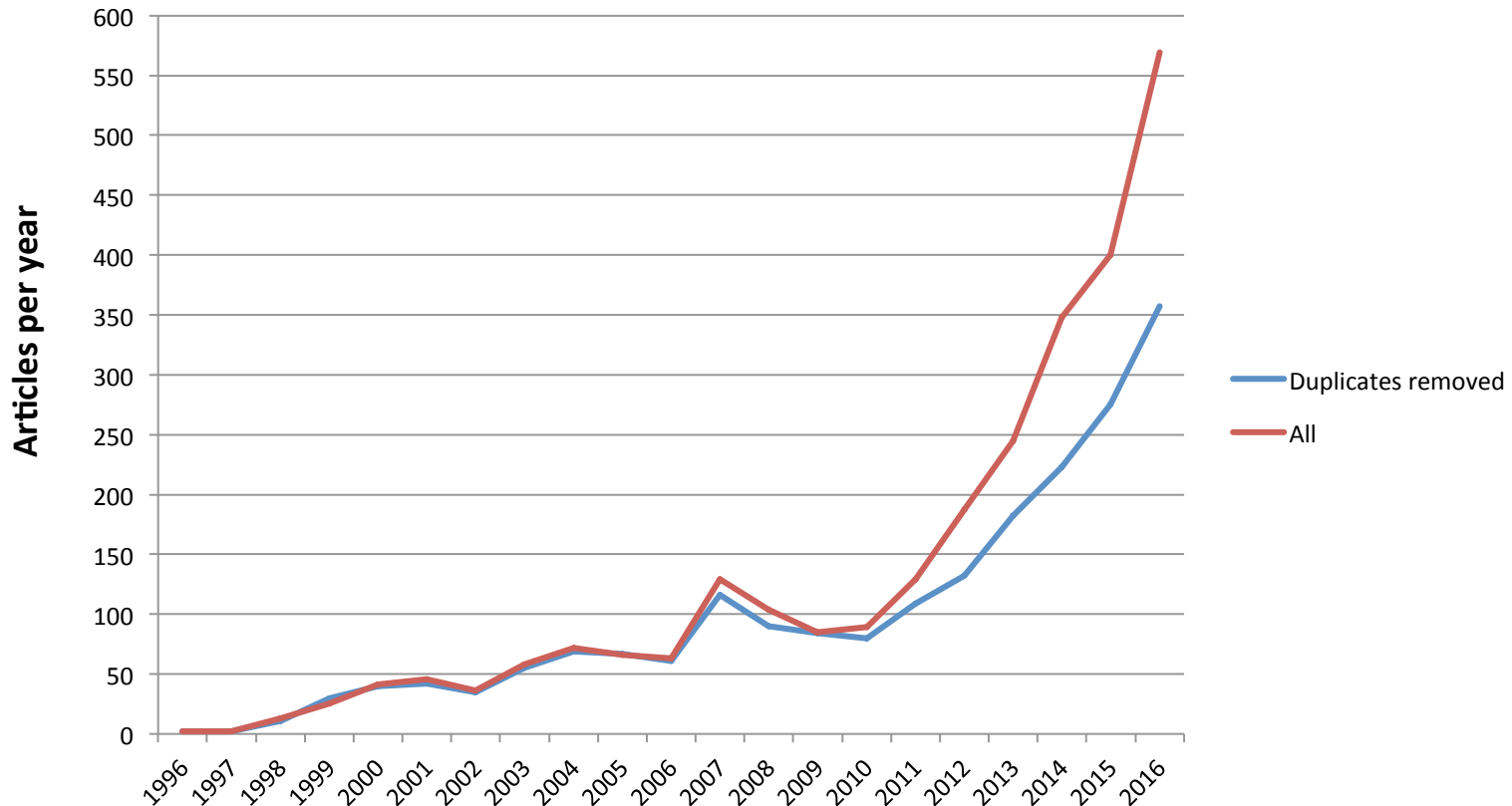
Details	Left context	KWIC	Right context
1 ⓘ doc#0 sat in the kitchen with three knives. </s></s> "I told her I was going to kill her," he said. </s></s> "		She	was laughing. </s></s> "I stabbed her in the neck with a steak knife. </s></s> "I stared at her for tv
2 ⓘ doc#0 hat would not got through her skin. </s></s> "I put it back through the hole in her chest. </s></s> "		She	was still talking to me when I was still stabbing her. </s></s> "I gave her a fag which she smoked v
3 ⓘ doc#0 </s></s> "She was still talking to me when I was still stabbing her. </s></s> "I gave her a fag which		she	smoked while I was stabbing her. </s></s> " The court heard this was unlikely as she was probabl
4 ⓘ doc#0 a fag which she smoked while I was stabbing her. </s></s> " The court heard this was unlikely as		she	was probably already dead. </s></s> After killing her Hilling popped into McDonalds to eat, showe
5 ⓘ doc#0 multiple stab wounds. </s></s> Hilling had been staying with her after coming out of jail because		she	felt sorry for him and did not want him to be homeless. </s></s> The court heard he tortured her, t
6 ⓘ doc#0 h 18, 2016 Friday 5:47 PM GMT Serial killer Joanna Dennehy was on probation for assault when		she	murdered three men by stabbing them through the heart . Triple murderer was on probation for as
7 ⓘ doc#0 ough the heart . Triple murderer was on probation for assault and owning a dangerous dog when		she	carried out killings in 2013 . Official report finds that her case should have been handled by a mor
8 ⓘ doc#0 case should have been handled by a more experienced manager . Victim's widow hits out saying		she	was 'left numb' by the findings Triple murderer Joanna Dennehy was on probation at the time she
9 ⓘ doc#0 she was 'left numb' by the findings Triple murderer Joanna Dennehy was on probation at the time		she	killed three men and dumped their bodies in the countryside, it emerged today. </s></s> An officia
10 ⓘ doc#0 nexperienced to deal with its 'complexities'. </s></s> The widow of one of Dennehy's victims said		she	had been left 'numb' by the revelation and questioned whether her husband could still be alive if r
11 ⓘ doc#0 s being supervised by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough probation service at the time. </s></s>		She	had previously been given a 12-month community order after being convicted of assault and own
12 ⓘ doc#0 hey did not contribute directly to her killing spree. </s></s> An assessment of Dennehy found that		she	had the 'potential to cause serious harm' but was unlikely to do so. </s></s> Christina Lee, whose
13 ⓘ doc#0 e of her anger at the report's findings. </s></s> 'We have been left numb by the failings identified,'		she	told the BBC. </s></s> 'It has left us wondering whether my husband would still be alive today hac
14 ⓘ doc#0 . ' Dennehy murdered Lukasz Slaboszewski, 31, Kevin Lee, 48, and John Chapman, 56. </s></s>		She	stabbed her victims, who she knew, through the heart and dumped their bodies in remote ditches
15 ⓘ doc#0 Slaboszewski, 31, Kevin Lee, 48, and John Chapman, 56. </s></s> She stabbed her victims, who		she	knew, through the heart and dumped their bodies in remote ditches around Peterborough. </s></s>
16 ⓘ doc#0 ew, through the heart and dumped their bodies in remote ditches around Peterborough. </s></s>		She	then went on the run with her accomplices, before randomly selecting and stabbing two dog walk
17 ⓘ doc#0 escribed her as 'a cruel, calculating, selfish and manipulative serial killer'. </s></s> He added that		she	told a psychiatrist: 'I killed to see how I would feel, to see if I was as cold as I thought I was, then i
18 ⓘ doc#0 d to a psychiatric unit at Peterborough City Hospital between February 18 and 21, 2012. </s></s>		She	was diagnosed with a personality disorder, psychopathic, anti-social and emotional instability disc
19 ⓘ doc#0 h 18, 2016 Friday 4:31 PM GMT Serial killer Joanna Dennehy was on probation for assault when		she	murdered three men by stabbing them through the heart . Triple murderer was on probation for as
20 ⓘ doc#0 ough the heart . Triple murderer was on probation for assault and owning a dangerous dog when		she	carried out killings in 2013 . Official report finds that her case should have been handled by a mor

Sampling of Data

- Duplicates were maintained!
- Linguistic research tends to remove duplicates with aim to focus on language patterns
- Psychological perspective:
 - What about the mere-exposure effect and illusory truth effect?
- Focus on unique editorial decision to maintain (rather than change/correct) stigmatising linguistic expressions

Chronological Development

UK broadsheets, tabloids and local newspapers published between 1996-2016



2,709 articles with total count of 1,916,325 words

Gender Differences

<u>word</u>	<u>frequency</u>
the	70,790
to	54,704
and	50,681
a	48,349
of	40,994
in	31,955
was	29,856
her	25,477
I	21,282
she	19,528
that	19,193
with	16,655
for	16,607
had	15,059
is	14,971
on	13,848
he	12,237
said	11,873
at	11,502
it	11,394
The	11,141
his	10,034
as	9,919
from	9,784

Feminine pronouns = 54,658

Male pronouns = 33,470

Log-likelihood ratio = 5144.32

$p < .000001$

% diff 63.30%

Presentations of Women

Deaths and Addiction

Pronounced focus on suicide

- *"take/took/taken her own life" (284)*
- *"jumped to her death" (54)*
- *"The family of a young women who killed herself after she was turned away from a mental health unit"*

Death due to failed mental health services

- *"5 women die at mental health hospital"*
- *"Mum died after leaving hospital"*

Drug abuse

- *"After their 12-year relationship came to an end, her life descended further into alcohol abuse, drug addiction and mental illness."*
- *"The family of a woman who died from overdose"*

Vulnerable Victims

Women are presented as vulnerable

- *"she was a very precious and vulnerable young woman"*

Victims of men's aggression and violence

- *"A man who attacked a 'vulnerable' young woman with mental health problems has been jailed for 18 months."*
- *"found guilty of kidnapping and raping women"*
- *"guilty to attacking a pregnant woman"*
- *"he killed two women"*

Victims of Trauma and Abuse

Traumatic experiences when growing up

- *"This was amplified when her father Tom died of cancer when she was 18."*
- *"She had a serious psychiatric condition directly as a result of child sex abuse at age eight."*

Abuse by mental health practitioner or social worker

- *"A psychiatric nurse from Huddersfield has denied fondling a woman patient in her hospital room and asking to have sex with her after her discharge home."*

Women are Passive

Women are presented as passive subjects in relation to mental health services

- Verb “admit” (e.g., admit, admits, admitting, admitted)
- 219.12% difference associated to passive sentence construction in “*she*” vs. “*he*”
 - “*She was admitted to an inpatient facility*”
 - “*He admitted a mistake*”

Women as Killers

Matricide (e.g., *stab, kill, attack*)

- *"after stabbing her mother nine times"*

Fewer instances of patricides

- *"She told me that she had served 13 years in prison for killing her father."*
- *"Murdering her father after years of abuse"*

Killer Nicola Edgington: Officers 'failed to carry out checks'

© 4 March 2013



Police officers failed to carry out checks on a psychiatric patient who murdered a woman, which would have revealed that she had killed before, a report has found.

Nicola Edgington, 32, of Greenwich, virtually decapitated Sally Hodkin, 58, six years after killing her own mother.

The police watchdog said officers had failed to carry out a check on the day of the murder in 2011.



Psychotic daughter killed mother in frenzied knife attack



Image 1 of 2

Victim: Marion Edgington

By David Sapsted

12:01AM BST 24 Oct 2006

A loving mother who lived in fear of her psychotic daughter was fatally stabbed by the "wayward" young woman in a frenzied attack at her country home, a court heard yesterday.

UK News
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Bad Mothers

Mothers as murders (e.g., *accuse, allege, murder, jail*)

- "A mother was *jailed for life for murdering her baby*"
- "William falsely *accused her mother of being the killer*"
- "Did a loving mother *kill her own son with salt?*"

Mothers are unavailable and blamed for their children's situation (e.g., *abandon, ill*)

- "*her mother has abandoned her*"

Presentations of Men

Aggression and Violence

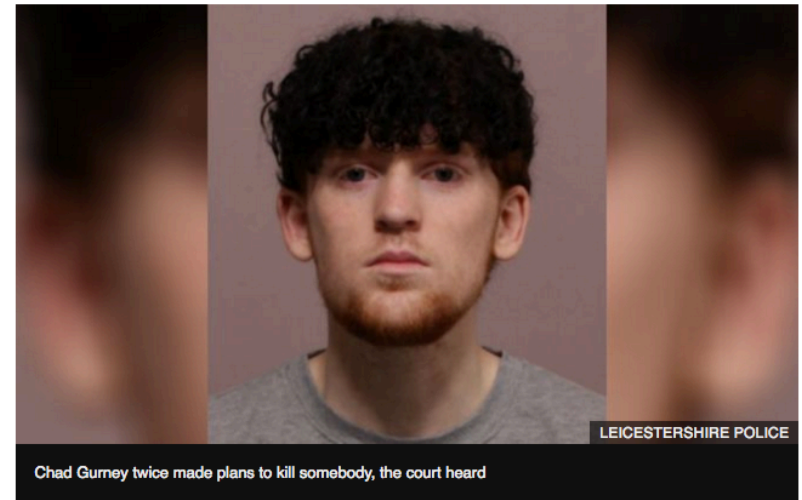
Presentation of men as violent, dangerous, callous, sadistic and abusive

- "A husband who stabbed his wife 58 times in their own home"
- "A man accused of murdering a 16-years old school boy"

Grindr 'murder plotter' jailed over scissor attack

© 2 hours ago

f     Share



A teenager stabbed his Grindr date in the neck with a pair of scissors after writing a "murder plan", a court heard.

Chad Gurney and his victim had consensual sex in a Leicester park in July before the 19-year-old attacked him.

His trial heard police had found a notebook and diary of "murderous thoughts" at his home.

Prison and Insanity Plea

Prison sentence

- *"He was jailed for life and ordered to serve at least 30 years behind bars"*
- *"He was then arrested at the flat in Culbert Street, Portsoy, and taken to Hampshire for questioning."*
- *"Man who killed ex-partner detained at Carstairs"*

Insanity plea

- *"Mr Molloy did not meet the criteria for insanity"*
- *"Hilling admits manslaughter by diminished responsibility"*

To Sum Up

- Highly gendered discourse biased against women
- Due to low male references, lack of stable discursive patterns in men
- Corpus linguistics represents a suitable methodology

Conclusion

- News media are complicit in perpetuating stigma against individuals with BPD
- Misinformation about BPD
 - Attention seeking individuals
 - Dangerous and unpredictable
 - 'Personality is wrong'
- Living with the label of BPD is difficult
- Marginalises people with BPD in society
- Impacts on help seeking attitudes

Creating Impact

- Change in journalistic training
 - Accountability, integrity and responsibility
 - Better knowledge about mental illness
- Constructive and solution-orientated focus in the news
 - Development of guidelines
 - Positive representations of lived experiences
 - Encourage open conversations
 - Sharing of coping strategies



Thank you!

Any Questions?