Presentations of Complex Mental Illness in the UK Press: A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Study

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The Project

- Corpus-assisted discourse analysis to explore how Borderline Personality Disorder is presented in UK newspaper articles

- Stigma and prejudice against individuals affected by mental illness

  o Borderline Personality Disorder

Media and Mental Health

- Illegal to discriminate directly or indirectly against people with mental health issues (Equality Act 2010)

- National Union of Journalists 'Code of Conduct':
  - To ensure information to be honest, accurate and fair
  - To correct harmful inaccuracies
  - To produce no material leading to hatred or discrimination

Media and Mental Health

- Media exaggerates links between mental illness and violence or portrays people with mental health issues as dangerous (Mental Health Foundation, 2015)

  o Perpetuates stigma

  o Impacts help-seeking behaviour

  o Marginalises people with mental health problems

Media and Mental Health

- In a large public survey, nearly 40% of respondents agreed that mental illness was related to violence

- Media was the source of their beliefs

- TRUTH IS: People with mental illness are more likely to be victims of crime rather than perpetrators of violence

BPD in the DSM-5

1. Impairments in self functioning (a or b):

- **a. Identity:** Markedly impoverished, poorly developed, or unstable self-image, often associated with excessive self-criticism; chronic feelings of emptiness; dissociative states under stress.

- **b. Self-direction:** Instability in goals, aspirations, values, or career plans.

AND 2. Impairments in interpersonal functioning (a or b):

- **a. Empathy:** Compromised ability to recognize the feelings and needs of others associated with interpersonal hypersensitivity; perceptions of others selectively biased toward negative attributes or vulnerabilities.

- **b. Intimacy:** Intense, unstable, and conflicted close relationships, marked by mistrust, neediness, and anxious preoccupation with real or imagined abandonment; close relationships often viewed in extremes of idealization and devaluation and alternating between over involvement and withdrawal.

BPD in the ICD-10

F60.3 Emotionally unstable personality disorder

- A personality disorder in which there is a marked tendency to act impulsively without consideration of the consequences, together with affective instability.

- The ability to plan ahead may be minimal, and outbursts of intense anger may often lead to violence or "behavioural explosions"; these are easily precipitated when impulsive acts are criticised or thwarted by others.

- Two variants of this personality disorder — impulsive type and borderline type — and both share this general theme of impulsiveness and lack of self-control

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
- Counts lexical items
- Identifies quantitatively typical and atypical semantic patterns (coarse grain analysis)
- Provides an objective and balanced picture
- Provides contextual qualitative examples (fine-grain analysis)

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 (1990-2016)
    - Duplicates were maintained!
    - Linguistics remove duplicates with focus on unique linguistic expressions
    - Psychological perspective: What about the mere-exposure effect and illusionary truth effect?
    - Unique editorial decision to maintain (rather than change/correct) stigmatising linguistic expressions
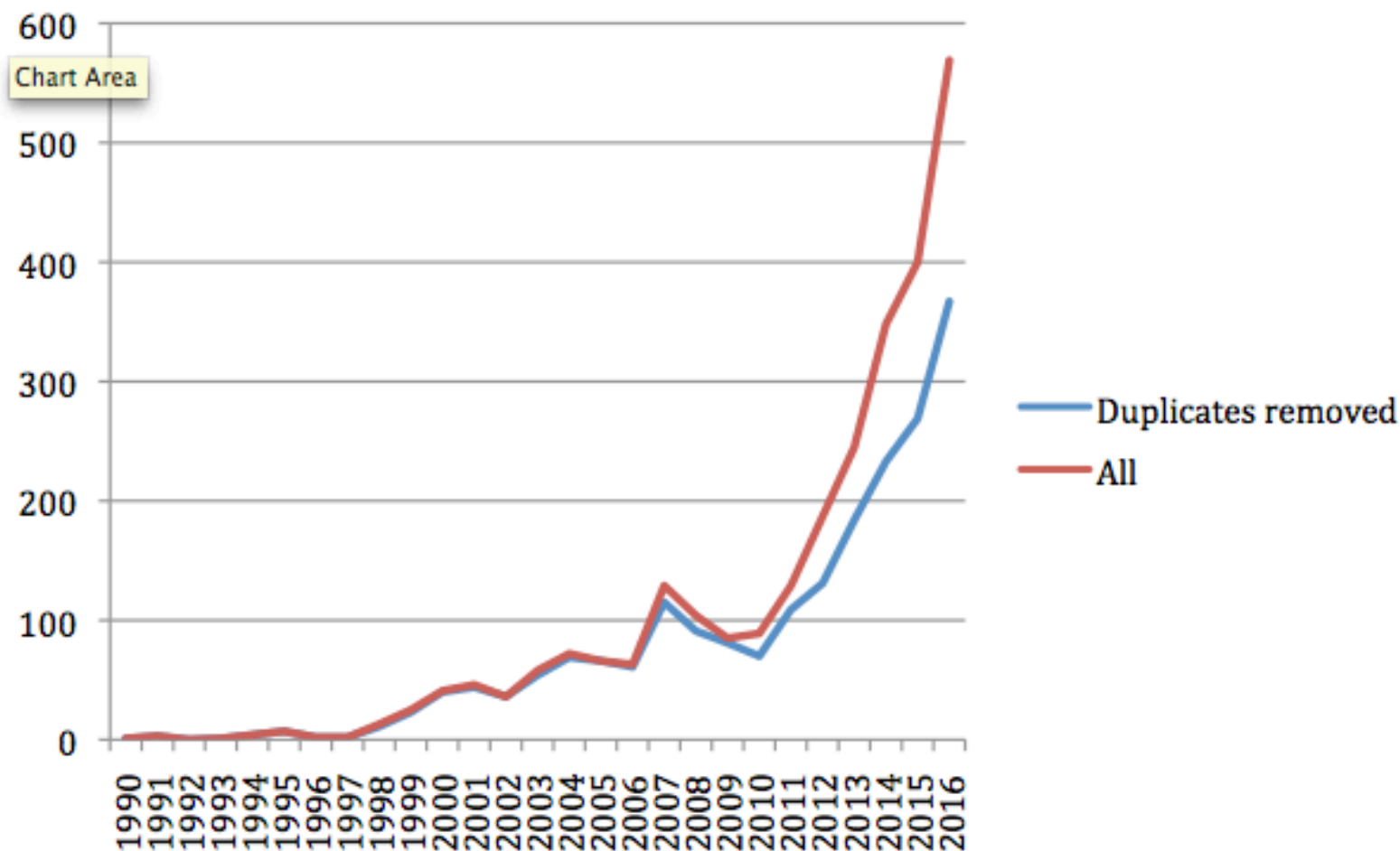
Data Search

- 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

- 2,725 articles with total count of 1,940,020 words

Corpus Analysis

- SketchEngine – online based corpus tool

- LogDice association measure for collocations

- Lemmatised form of words & parts-of-speech
  - be(verb) (am, are, is, was, were, been)

- Verbal collocates to subject pronouns "she" and "he" range of up to 5 words to the right of node
  - "_she_ has certainly not been _diagnosed_"

- Noun collocates to object pronouns "her" and "his" range of up to 3 words to the right of the node

Chronological Development

UK Press Articles on BPD between 1996-2016

'All' 2,725 articles & 'Duplicates' removed 2,074 articles

Early Articles

Focus mainly on women believed to have BPD

- Derek Humphry Helped **His First Wife** To Die… (The Independent, April 1990)
- **Women:** Altered states - While **women** form four per cent of the prison population, they make up 20 per cent of patients in Special Hospitals. Ann Lloyd finds out why (The Guardian, June 1991)
- Death haunts suicide guru (The Sunday Times October 13 1991)
- The **woman** who chose to die in the wilderness; Cal McCrystal's Notebook (The Independent, October 1991)
- Life and death in a killer climate (The Time, May, 1993)

Early Articles

Princess Dianna focus in 1995

- Did Diana's Childhood Set Her Forever On The Brink?; A Top Psychiatrist Examines The Princess's Mind (Daily Mail, November 22, 1995)

- Is Diana The Mistress Of Manipulation? Mental anguish behind fall of Diana the 'saint' (Main on Sunday, August 20, 1995)

Early Articles

- Goran Jelisic is guilty of genocide - Yugoslav War Crimes tribunal in the Hague (Birmingham Post, December 1, 1998)
- Jonathan Crisp murdered his girlfriend (The Journal, May 15, 1998)

Word Frequency List

word	frequency
the	71,752
to	55,378
and	51,277
a	48,961
of	41,613
in	32,341
was	30,147
her	25,849
I	21,603
she	19,740
that	19,481
with	16,844
for	16,815
had	15,200
is	15,178
on	14,010
he	12,381
said	11,964
at	11,607
it	11,551
The	11,255
his	10,167
as	10,033
from	9,902
have	9,671

Feminine pronouns = 55,371
Male pronouns = 33,882
Difference of 63.42%
Log-likelihood Ratio = 5224.98
$p < .000001$

Categories of Verbal Collocates

- Experience of mental illness
  - *Suffer* and *diagnose*
  - "She says *she suffers* from borderline personality disorder and was treated like a hardened criminal"
  - *"He* was *suffering* an as yet undiagnosed mental health condition"
- Treatment and support
  - *Help* "*she* felt nobody could *help* her

Categories of Verbal Collocates

- Reconstruct events and provide insight into psychological states of mind:
  - Reported speech — *say, tell, add*
  - Sense making — *explain* (only to she)
  - Emotions — *feel, struggle, love*
  - Behaviour — *do, go, take, want, leave, try*

Categories of Verbal Collocates

- Arrest and sectioning
  - *admit* — 219.12% difference associated to passive in 'she' vs. 'he'
  - *"she* was *admitted* to an inpatient facility"
  - *"he admitted* dangerous driving"
- *arrest* and *jail* — only to *he*
- Death and attacks — *die, kill, stab, attack*
  - 'she' can be both perpetrator and victim

Categories of Noun Collocates

- Existential — *life, death*
- Familial relationships — *mother, father, brother*
- Partner — *husband, wife, girlfriend, partner*
- Social relationships — *friend*
- Home environment — *home, house, car*
- Work environment — *work, client, career*
- Mental health — *condition, health, care*
- Criminal context — *victim, cell, release*
- Body — *head, hand, arm, body*

Existential Theme in 'her'

'Life' (967), 'death' (870) and 'story' (114)

- Focus on suicide — 'take', 'end', 'jump'
- Life changing moments and attempts to rebuild and save her life
  - "to *turn her life* around"
- "her story" is mystified
  - "what makes *her story* even more tragic"
  - "has shared *her story* in a bid to help others"
  - "some people doubted *her story* immediately"

Existential Theme in 'his'

'Life' (365), 'death' (232) and 'name' (76)

- Marked absence of suicide

- Emphasis on saving 'his life' and preventing 'his death'
  - "Paramedics tried to *save his life* for 35 minutes"

- Death references served to reconstruct events
  - "I know I contributed to *his death* because I *relive* it every day"

Familial and Parental Theme in "her"

Mother (702), father (345)

- **Matricide** (e.g., *stab*, *kill*, *attack*)
  - "after stabbing her mother nine times"
- Fathers get killed in fewer instances
- Mothers accused of killing someone (e.g., *accuse, allege, murder, jail*)
- Mothers are blamed (e.g., *abandon, section, ill*)

Familial and Parental Theme in "his"

Mother (292), father (150)

- In fewer instances men assaulted and killed their mothers (e.g., assault, attack, strangle, murder, shoot)

- To a much lesser extent mothers were blame
  - *"his mother was jailed* for *neglecting him"*
  - *"his mother was an alcoholic"*
  - *"his mother was largely to blame"*

Familial and Parental Theme

Her or his "son" and "daughter"

- Parents harmed their children (e.g., *kill, die, attack, injure, assault, suffocate, choke, stab, murder, threaten, smash*)
    - "Mother who killed her son"
- Children are presented as victims of men's aggression (e.g., *kill*)
    - "he would kill her children"

Familial and Parental Theme

- Parents are presented as expressing sorrow
  - ○ "devastated by the loss of her son"
  - ○ "her daughter could have been saved"
- Parent's perspective reconstructing the past events (e.g., *describe, reveal, say, tell*)
  - ○ "But her father Matthew, said his daughter had been 'happy' during the Christmas period"

To Sum Up

- Verbal collocates reconstruct and narrate the reported events

- Provide insight into psychological state of mind of individuals

- Reported speech is a source of evidentiality, authenticity, truthfulness and reliability

- Vividness and immediacy

Further Steps of the Project

- Detailed manual analysis of semantic collocates in context

- Counting collocations for exact frequencies of presentations

- Diachronic analysis on how presentations have changed over time

Thank you

Any questions?