'The mythological marauding violent schizophrenic'

Using the word sketch tool to examine collocates of SCHIZOPHRENIC (n.) relating to dangerousness in the UK press

21st February 2019
James Balfour

Introduction

Wildlife-wise, there are not just hammerhead sharks in these parts, he told me, but school sharks and mako sharks – the paranoid schizophrenics of the shark world (*The Independent*, 2 September 2006).

Introduction

- 'It is an incredible and **extremely fast beast**';
- 'Both species are easily identified due to their **strange** (and **mean looking**) **teeth**'
- 'this is the **fastest** shark species in the world'

(Sharksider.com)

Introduction

- The risk that people with schizophrenia will commit violent crimes is similar to that of the general population (Fazel et al, 2009)

- People with schizophrenia are 14 times more likely to be the victims of violent crime rather than the perpetrators (Brekke et al, 2001)

Research question

- In what ways do the press manipulate language to represent people with schizophrenia as violent and dangerous?

- I will cover:
  - Explicit modifiers
  - Misinformed lay diagnoses
  - Explicit violent verbs when SCHIZOPHRENIC is subject
  - Grammatical co-ordination with violent social groups

Background: what is schizophrenia?

- Abnormalities in the domains of delusions, hallucinations etc. (DSM 5, 2013:87)

- Delusions are 'fixed beliefs not amenable to change in light of conflicting evidence' (ibid.)

- Hallucinations are perception-like experiences that occur without an external stimulus (ibid.)

- Roughly 1 in a 100 people are diagnosed with schizophrenia (Frith and Johnstone, 2003:1)

Background: previous scholarship

- The press tend to over-represent people with schizophrenia as violent and dangerous (e.g. The Schizophrenia Commission Report, 2012)

- 80% of articles published in two UK newspapers across three years linked schizophrenia with violent crime (Chopra and Doody, 2007)

- The representation of schizophrenia is more negative than other mental disorders (Thornicroft et al, 2011)

Background: previous scholarship

- 'what concerns campaigners more is […] *how* such incidents are reported' [and that] 'clearly inflammatory language is quite rare' (Thornicroft et al, 2011:5)

- [a biased reporting of schizophrenia] 'may have its foundations in the manner in which mental illness is reported rather than selective over-reporting.' (Kalucy et al, 2011:546)

Background: News values

- A set of implicit criteria used by newspapers to select stories (Galtung and Ruge, 1965)

- 'Violence and conflict' as a news value? (Jewkes, 2015:53).

  - 'The news value which is arguably most common to all media is that of 'violence' because it fulfils the media's desire to present dramatic events in the most graphic possible fashion.' (ibid:63)

Background: social effects

- The press shape public attitudes towards social groups (Baker and Gabrielatos, 2008)

- Readers of tabloids desire greater social distance from people with schizophrenia (Angermeyer, 2008)

- A self fulfilling prophecy?

The data

- A corpus of all U.K. national news articles reporting on schizophrenia published between 2000 and 2015 (sourced from *LexisNexis*).

- An article qualified if it contained *schiz** (*schizophrenia, schizophrenic, schizo*)

- Five tabloids (*The Express, The Mail, The Star, The Sun, The Mirror),* four broadsheets (*The Guardian, The Independent, The Telegraph, The Times*).

- Reference corpus: 50% of UKWaC

Method

- The word sketch tool accessible via Sketch Engine (Kilgariff et al, 2014)
  - Identifies collocates of a word
  - Collocates grouped into grammatical frames
  - Top 25 collocates ranked in terms of their LogDice score (Rychly, 2008), span of 5:5
  - By word I mean the lemma SCHIZOPHRENIC (*schizophrenic, schizophrenics, schizophrenic's, schizophrenics'*)

Word sketch for SCHIZOPHRENIC (n.)

Lancaster University

schizophrenic (noun)
Schizophrenia 2000-2015 freq = 3,605 (207.63 per million)

modifiers of "schizophrenic"			nouns and verbs modified by "schizophrenic"			verbs with "schizophrenic" as object			verbs with "schizophrenic" as subject			"schizophrenic" and/or …		
	2,229	0.62		208	0.06		1,156	0.32		1,229	0.34		682	0.19
paranoid +	1,234	12.81	depressive	4	8.95	diagnose	77	10.13	stab	90	10.53	depressive	18	9.68
bit	47	9.22	clunis	4	8.49	free	13	8.24	kill	76	9.70	clunis	16	9.50
dangerous	47	8.79	gunman	4	8.30	jail	12	7.84	attack	18	8.41	kernan	13	9.20
violent	48	8.72	fellowship	4	8.01	release	18	7.72	behead	12	8.22	addict	15	9.11
paranoid	22	8.30	barrett	5	7.94	treat	19	7.50	commit	13	7.94	barrett	13	9.02
chronic	26	8.24	nash	4	6.78	mumble	6	7.37	murder	11	7.82	psychopath	8	8.47
borderline	20	8.11	killer	6	6.57	arm	6	7.21	believe	21	7.59	ray	8	8.45
gmt	33	7.93	man	11	5.27	detain	7	7.20	rape	7	7.40	napper	8	8.41
pm	24	7.66	byline	4	2.81	be +	578	7.10	knife	6	7.25	campbell	8	8.30
undiagnosed	12	7.42				play	27	7.07	claim	15	7.18	bryan	7	8.27
alcoholic	10	7.11				seem	8	7.07	threaten	7	7.09	abram	6	8.03
homeless	11	7.07				delude	5	7.04	suffer	16	7.07	gettler	5	7.89
likely	10	7.04				arrest	8	6.91	spend	10	7.04	psychotic	5	7.87
37-year-old	8	6.84				allow	12	6.86	hear	15	7.02	ferguson	5	7.75
little	21	6.74				feel	11	6.81	admit	10	6.98	nash	6	7.67
incurable	7	6.65				institutionalise	4	6.77	pose	6	6.96	linford	4	7.56
sword-wielding	6	6.45				lock	5	6.67	think	11	6.82	elgizouli	4	7.56
am	8	6.29				sentence	5	6.64	punch	4	6.64	fischer	4	7.48
40-year-old	5	6.13				shoot	9	6.61	inherit	4	6.63	deyanov	4	7.47
crazed	5	6.06				become	21	6.57	slash	4	6.63	killer	5	7.45
psychotic	7	5.97				charge	5	6.52	stalk	4	6.61	khan	4	7.42
edition	10	5.95				convict	5	6.43	die	10	6.41	alcoholic	4	7.39
most	9	5.93				name	6	6.39	lose	6	6.35	joseph	4	7.37
album	5	5.89				hold	7	6.06	live	8	6.33	suspect	4	7.35
pint-sized	4	5.86				help	7	5.97	keep	5	6.27	patient	8	7.25

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Modifiers: modifiers explicitly referring to dangerousness

Locked in a marriage with a **violent** <u>schizophrenic</u>, Lisa kept a gun under her pillow and went on the run with her small daughter (*The Independent*, 18 February 2005)

HOW is it that **dangerous** <u>schizophrenics</u> are let out to roam the country and kill people - but a man is put in a mental hospital against his will just for being fat? (*The Sun*, 25 February 2005).

Modifiers: modifiers indirectly referring to dangerousness

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Modifiers: modifiers indirectly referring to dangerousness

The shooting came four days after a **sword-wielding** <u>schizophrenic</u> was shot dead by officers on Merseyside. (*The Mail*, 17 July 2001)

A MERSEYSIDE Police chief will attend the funeral of a **sword-wielding** <u>schizophrenic</u> shot dead by armed officers. (*The Independent*, 2 August 2001)

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Modifiers: challenging the stereotype

The 2007 act was motivated as much by the desire to assuage popular fears of the mythological marauding '**violent** schizophrenic' as by the hope of getting better clinical outcomes (*The Guardian*, 29 June 2008).

Most schizophrenics are never violent. The manifestation of McNaughton's illness – being driven to kill – is rare, as in the case of, Peter Sutcliffe, the Yorkshire Ripper (*The Mail,* 26 January 2008).

Modifiers: misinformed lay diagnoses

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Modifiers: misinformed lay diagnoses

Christian Bale describes Moses as 'barbaric' and a '**likely schizophrenic**' (*Independent.co.uk*, 27 November 2014).

The actor Christian Bale has said that Moses was '**likely schizophrenic** and was one of the most barbaric individuals that I ever read about in my life' (*The Observer*, 30 November 2014).

Modifiers: misinformed lay diagnoses

Father-of-two Mr Lanza, a vice-president for taxes at a General Electric subsidiary, said he had not seen his son for two years at the time of the shooting. He explained Adam spent his entire life troubled by mental illness and he thought his son was an **undiagnosed** schizophrenic. "You can't get any more evil" (*MailOnline*, 10 March 2014).

In June 1983, the **undiagnosed** schizophrenic beat his mother to death with a hammer. He was jailed for second-degree murder. (*The Mail*, 23 September 2008).

Verbs: schizophrenic people engaging in violence

verbs with "schizophrenic" as subject		
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Verbs: schizophrenic people engaging in violence

A MACHETE-wielding <u>schizophrenic</u> who **slashed** two guards in a rampage through MI5's HQ was locked up in a mental health unit indefinitely yesterday. (*The Sun*, 22 June 2005)

PC Nina Mackay of east London, was **knifed** by a paranoid schizophrenic in October 1997. (The Observer, 28 December 2003)

<u>Schizophrenic</u> who **beheaded** great-grandmother and killed two cats shouted 'I am the king' as police battled to subdue him (MailOnline, 23 June 2015)

Verbs: schizophrenic people engaging in violence

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Verbs: schizophrenic people engaging in violence

Three major opportunities were missed to assess risks **posed** by a paranoid <u>schizophrenic</u> who repeatedly stabbed a woman in a supermarket, a report has found. (*The Independent*, 30 June 2012)

The proposals would also have done little to prevent the sort of rare but terrifying murders recently **committed** by two paranoid <u>schizophrenics</u> , John Barrett and Peter Bryan. (*Independent on Sunday*, 27 March 2005)

The paranoid <u>schizophrenic</u> **admitted** strangling his wife and was sentenced in January 2001 to indefinite detention under the Mental Health Act. (*The Mirror*, 3 December 2009)

The case of *died*

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The case of *died*

- They found the 52-year-old <u>schizophrenic</u> had **died** from asphyxia after officers restrained him in the prone position, with his hands cuffed behind his back' (*Independent.co.uk*, 23 February 2015).

- [...] death of David ''Rocky'' Bennett, a <u>schizophrenic</u> who **died** after a struggle with staff at an NHS hospital in Norwich' (*The Telegraph*, 11 January 2006).

- [...] death of Sean Rigg, a 40-year old musician and <u>schizophrenic</u> who **died** in police custody in Brixton in 2008, reports its results' (*Sunday Express*, 12 May 2013).

Co-ordinating nouns: schizophrenic people linked with negative groups

"schizophrenic" and/or …		
	682	0.19
depressive	18	9.68
clunis	16	9.50
kernan	13	9.20
addict	15	9.11
barrett	13	9.02
psychopath	8	8.47
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patient	8	7.25

Co-ordinating nouns: schizophrenic people linked with negative groups

Was he a <u>schizophrenic </u>or a potential **psychopath**? Both thoughts raced through his mind (*The Observer*, 16 June 2016).

Had I crossed a mental Rubicon and become a schizophrenic, or a potential **psychopath**? (*The Telegraph*, 27 May 2013).

Jury's question: was he a <u>schizophrenic</u> or a cold-blooded **killer**? (The Independent, 17 March 2006)

Conclusions

- The British press manipulate language in various ways to represent schizophrenic people as violent and dangerous
  - Explicitly described as dangerous
  - Quote misinformed lay diagnoses
  - Over-represent schizophrenic people as enacting violent behaviour
  - Equivalence is drawn between schizophrenics and groups associated with violent behaviour

Discussion

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