

James Balfour, **Representing Schizophrenia in the Media: A Corpus-Based Approach to UK Press Coverage**, Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2023, 218 pp., \$160.00 (hardcover).

Reviewed by

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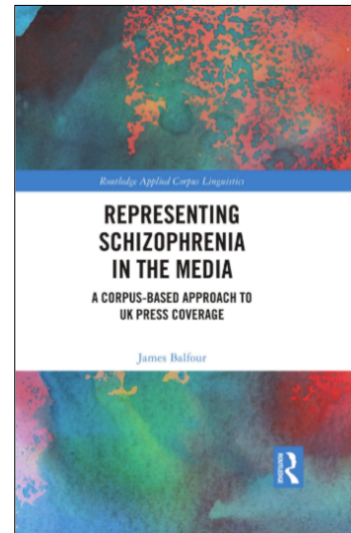
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The media representation of schizophrenia plays a role in influencing public attitudes toward people with schizophrenia and the effective treatment of schizophrenia. The existing literature has addressed the representation of schizophrenia in the UK press but is limited in the selection of newspapers and the number of years. In **Representing Schizophrenia in the Media: A Corpus-Based Approach to UK Press Coverage**, author James Balfour examines how schizophrenia and people with schizophrenia are represented in a 15-million-word corpus of news articles from nine UK national newspapers published between 2000 and 2015, which is the largest to date. He combines corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis to identify and analyze the linguistic patterns in the corpus and uncover the values and ideologies behind the press's particular way of representing schizophrenia.



The book consists of eight chapters. Chapter 1 serves as the book's introduction, chapters 2–7 constitute the analysis, and the last chapter is the book's conclusion. Specifically, chapters 2–4 deal with the representation of schizophrenia in the whole corpus, in different newspapers and over time. Chapters 5–7 are concerned with specific topics related to press discourse on schizophrenia, including metaphorical use, horror, and blame.

Chapter 1 begins with an overview of schizophrenia, the UK press, and the representation of schizophrenia in the UK press. Then Balfour introduces the approach of this study, namely a combination of critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics. This methodological synergy can effectively facilitate the identification of repetitive linguistic patterns and uncover subtle ideologies in the news discourse about schizophrenia. Finally, Balfour presents the limitations of the study and an overview of the book.

Chapter 2 interrogates the entire corpus to explore how people with schizophrenia are represented in the UK press. It is developed by undertaking collocational analyses of the three most frequent labels referring to schizophrenia, including *schizophrenia*, *schizophrenic* (adjective), and *schizophrenic* (noun). Results show that schizophrenia is often reported in the contexts of crime, the reclassification of cannabis and drug legalization, TV and film, and metaphorical uses. The overall picture is negative, which can be explained by the nature of schizophrenia as a mental disease and the newsworthiness of negative stories.

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Chapter 3 deals with how tabloids and broadsheets differ in constructing schizophrenia. A keyword analysis of tabloids and broadsheets shows that crime and drug use are distinct topics in tabloids, whereas arts and culture is the most distinctive topic in broadsheets. Moreover, tabloids and broadsheets share the theme of stereotyping people with schizophrenia with "a sense of undesirable differentness" (p. 83). Tabloids tend to represent people with schizophrenia as violent criminals who should be perpetually incarcerated, and broadsheets are also at risk of stereotyping such people as different by connecting schizophrenia with artistic genius. Results also indicate that tabloids and broadsheets are not homogenous, as previously assumed. That said, aside from the tabloid/broadsheet axis, political leaning may also contribute to significant differences across newspapers.

Chapter 4 is a diachronic analysis of reports about schizophrenia between 2000 and 2015. A frequency analysis of articles within each of the 16 years uncovers peaks and troughs in the data despite an overall increase in the number of articles, suggesting the media's reaction to contemporary events. This study continues by taking four features identified by Clement and Foster (2008) as problematic forms of language used to label schizophrenia and diachronically tracking their frequency. Departing from Clement and Foster's (2008) findings, this study reveals a steady decrease of all four features over 16 years. An investigation of distinct keywords in each year discloses a continued existence of stories about violence over the 16 years, a decrease in obviously problematic language, and an increase in sympathetic stories.

Chapter 5 explores the use of two labels, *schizophrenic* (adjective) and *schizophrenia*, as metaphors. Findings show that their basic conceptual metaphor is that schizophrenia is internal inconsistency. Their metaphorical meanings are mainly negative but could carry positive meanings, such as "electric" in fashion reporting and advertising. The metaphors, highlighting inconsistency, appear to mirror the postmodern culture of our era. That said, as core values dissolve, public attitudes grow more contradictory, and postmodern art embraces the integration of inconsistent elements. Besides, the distribution of metaphorical uses for *schizophrenic* (adjective) is relatively balanced between tabloids and broadsheets, but that for *schizophrenia* accounts for only 17% in tabloids.

Chapter 6 explores the language used in tabloid reports to represent people with schizophrenia who kill and the similarities between the style and content of such reports and that of Hollywood slasher films. To this end, Balfour groups the keywords in a corpus of tabloid reports on schizophrenia in the context of violence according to Clover's (1992) component categories of the slasher genre. Data reveal that such reports appear to highlight the physical details of crimes, instead of more systemic causes of crime. Besides, news reports about people with schizophrenia who kill are similar in style and content to the competent categories of popular slasher films. This particular way of representation could be explained by the news values, including negativity, violence and visual spectacle, proximity and simplification, as well as the journalists' ideology of constructing self-other dichotomies between readers and people with schizophrenia.

Chapter 7 looks at how people with schizophrenia who commit violent crimes are cast as blameworthy by the UK press. Based on Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe's (2014) path model of blame, Balfour categorizes the collocates of the ten most frequent words indicating violence into five groups: event detection, intentionality, reasons, obligation, and capacity. A detailed inspection of the collocates of words in each group reveals that journalists often implicitly rather than explicitly state whether people with

schizophrenia who commit violent crimes are blameworthy or not. In doing so, the journalists can adopt a moral standpoint without explicitly violating the rules of the Independent Press Standards Organisation. Nevertheless, subtly suggestive linguistic strategies play a role in influencing readers' conscious or subconscious moral judgments.

The last chapter summarizes the book's major points and delves into the comprehensive depiction of people with schizophrenia in the UK press during 2000 to 2015. Additionally, it explores the connections between these depictions and the broader social and historical contexts. It concludes that the UK press primarily represents schizophrenia in a negative light. Moreover, the inaccurate or intolerant representations are often more subtle rather than explicitly biased. Though schizophrenia is part of a medicalized discourse, the UK press uses sensationalist language to report people with schizophrenia, negatively impacting public attitudes. This chapter suggests that media discourse about schizophrenia is shaped in the context of free market capitalism where newspapers compete for readership, and news stories with "entertainment and spectatorship" (p. 188) values are prioritized. Finally, Balfour offers five practical guidelines for journalists to help change the narratives about schizophrenia and promote more accurate and tolerant representations.

This book is logically organized and well presented with clear chapter headings and summaries. Focusing on schizophrenia, this book can serve as a guide and model for scholars interested in mental illness and media discourse. It demonstrates the usefulness of incorporating corpus linguistics into health communication studies by detailing how to establish a representative corpus and select data-analytic perspectives. In addition to methodological advancements, it also gives a set of practical insights that aid journalists in presenting more accurate portrayals of schizophrenia and assist mental health professionals in delivering effective treatment and interventions. Thus, we strongly recommend this book to scholars in the fields of discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, and health communication, as well as journalists and mental health practitioners.

### References

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