THE PORTRAY OF AUTISTIC INDIVIDUALS IN ONLINE NEWS ARTICLE DISCOURSE: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The paper reports on the negative portrayal of autistic individuals in online news articles. It investigates the way such easily accessible global discourse can portray a sensitive group, namely, the autistic individuals. The focus is on the ideological content of online news about autism, using Van Leeuwen's social actor determination approach. The analysis of ten online news articles from the BBC News leads to the identification of a real social problem. Although the online articles analyzed portray autistic individuals in a broad context, their status is imbued with several other (social) roles that have ideological negative connotations. Such negativity is a critical issue for family members and caretakers of autistic individuals who struggle with this negative image when trying to adapt to living and caring for an autistic individual.

Keywords:*critical discourse analysis, social actor, online news article, determination, autistic individual.*

INTRODUCTION

Autism is a lifelong serious neurodevelopmental health condition that afflicts individuals regardless of sex, nationality, social status, religion or ethnicity. It is "a spectrum of neuropsychiatric disorders characterized by deficits in social interaction and communication and by unusual and repetitive behavior" (Autism 2008: 36). The diagnosis autism typically starts before the age of six and, in rare cases, during infancy. There are no clearly identifiable causes or emotional trauma that could lead to it but causes are "believed to involve an inherited or acquired genetic defect" ('Autism' 2008: 36). Before the age of one, the child seems normal but may then develop extreme unresponsive behavior to environmental stimuli. The child sticks to routine in life and activities with apparent 'attachment to unusual objects or obsession with one particular idea' and develops rituals in play and 'obsession with one particular idea' with delay in verbal activities, low IQ and normal physical appearance. Though such people may not show identical symptoms, they share a communicative social movement and sensual problems that affect their behavior through predictable ways ('autism' 2002: 60).

Internet coverage provides people with easy, direct access to numerous services, which play an indispensable role in people's awareness and self-education of multiple life aspects. Online media and electronic newspaper versions have emerged on the internet even before the appearance of the Web (Garrison 2005: 3). Being a source of 'exclusive news stories, investigative reports, and original commentaries', an online news article (henceforth ONA) may provide awareness of 'original news' for 'public affairs issues' which may have 'social consequences' (Salwen 2005: 47). The number of people relying on ONAs as a source of what is perceived to be reliable news has increased dramatically to the extent that the internet is today the main medium for news and for the future of communication in general (Dibean and Garrison 2005: 275).

The importance of online news in people's lives has led the ONA discourse to be a significant data source for science and humanities, such as CDA. The CDA focus has been very much on political and ideological aspects of news articles. However, similar 'political' aspects manifest themselves in health-care discourse and when analyzed, they may reveal profound ideological aspects of

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underlying attitudes that affect patients and care takers in coping with their situation. This justifies a CDA approach to the ONA discourse about autistic individuals as it will help reveal the status of an autistic individual (henceforth AI), whether framed in a narrow or broad context. Such discourse can diminish the abilities of the AIs within the narrow domain of neuropsychiatrically disordered individuals that may lead to certain socio- psychological consequences.

THEO VAN LEEUWEN'S SOCIAL ACTORS APPROACH TO CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The essence of CDA is the cognitive and social concept of ideology as a framework "for organizing the social cognitions shared by members of social groups, organizations or Institutions" forming an "interface" between the "cognitive representations" of discourse and action and "the societal position and interests of social groups" (Van Dijk 1995, 18). Ideologies are "belief systems… socially shared by the members of a collectivity of social actors" (Van Dijk 2006a: 116). Ideology is an accumulative kind of social belief that is acquired gradually and may change by time (Van Dijk 2006a: 116). Contrary to old beliefs of traditional approaches, ideologies can be positive or negative "depending on the perspective, values, or group membership of the one who evaluates them" (Van Dijk 2006b: 729). Discourse is the social practice that is mostly influenced by ideology. Discourse, in its turn, influences our acquisition and alternation of ideologies. Thus, when we speak, we are actually expressing our ideologies which are derived from (or influenced by) "watching television, reading text books at school, advertising, the newspaper, novels or participating in everyday conversations with friends and colleagues, among a multitude of other forms of talk and text" (Van Dijk n. d. : 9).

CDA can be conducted through a number of approaches that differ in "theoretical models, research methods and agenda" (Fairclough et al 2011: 357). Van Leeuwen's social actor approach is selected for analysis since it very much suits the objectives of the present paper, especially in finding out what ideologies the ONA discourse holds towards AIs and the kind of attitudes derived. The representation of AIs as social actors is constituted through the setting up of words in one way rather than another to delineate one social status rather than another. Thus, it is through language utilization and manipulation that a social institute (ONA texts) commits itself to particular ideological frameworks for the

delineation of a social actor (the AIs). As any social institute, ONAs impose effective social power over society in general and, as all other media sources, represent an effective source of that power for its wide spread and easy access.

Inspired by Foucault's (1972) concept of discourse' (as a semantic representation of reality with both social and historical functions) and Halliday's (1978) concept of 'register' which refers to the semantic aspect of language and Halliday's (1985) theory of transitivity, Van Leeuwen's social-actor approach (2008: 23-54) is a socio-semantic network which critically represents social actors. It deviates from the other CDA approaches in that, rather than focusing on linguistic operations and categories, he takes a socio-semantic approach to investigate "the ways in which social actors can be represented to establish the sociological and critical relevance of … [the] categories" to then turn "to the question of how they are realized linguistically" (van Leeuwen 2008: 23).

The approach is based on two discursive strategies: inclusion and exclusion. The social actor can be included by the former strategy and excluded by the latter strategy. Exclusion is subdivided into two strategies: suppression, with which the social actor is deleted with no trace behind, and backgrounding, in which the social actor is deleted 'in relation to a given action' but leaving a trace to his/her retrieval in other parts of the same text (Van Leeuwen 2008: 29).

Linguistically, suppression can be realized by 'passive agent deletion', 'nonfinite clauses which function as a grammatical participant' or by 'Nominalizations and process nouns' (Van Leeuwen 2008: 29- 30). As for backgrounding, the social actor can be 'included elsewhere in the same clause or clause complex' by the linguistic tools of 'simple ellipses in nonfinite clauses with -ing and –ed participles, in infinitival clauses with to, and in paratactic clauses' (Van Leeuwen 2008: 30).

METHODOLOGY

Concerning inclusion, Van Leeuwen (2008) has proposed a precise taxonomy of 46 discursive strategies, together with their subdivisions, to elaborate the way in which a social actor is presented in a particular discourse. Van Leeuwen (2008: 52) has put the 46 inclusion strategies, together with those for exclusion, into a comprehensive neat framework representing the 'Social Actor Network'

In the present paper, inclusion, rather than exclusion, has been used for analysis since the selected ONAs tackle issues related to real AIs in society. Of the 46 inclusion discursive strategies, determination (in its

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subcategories of single determination and overdetermination) is selected for identifying how ONA portray IAs. Determination is the category most suitable and practical for achieving the aims put forward in the present paper in addition to the fact that the articles selected already present news about real AIs. In Figure 1, the framework of determination is produced as has been found in Van Leeuwen Social Actor Network:
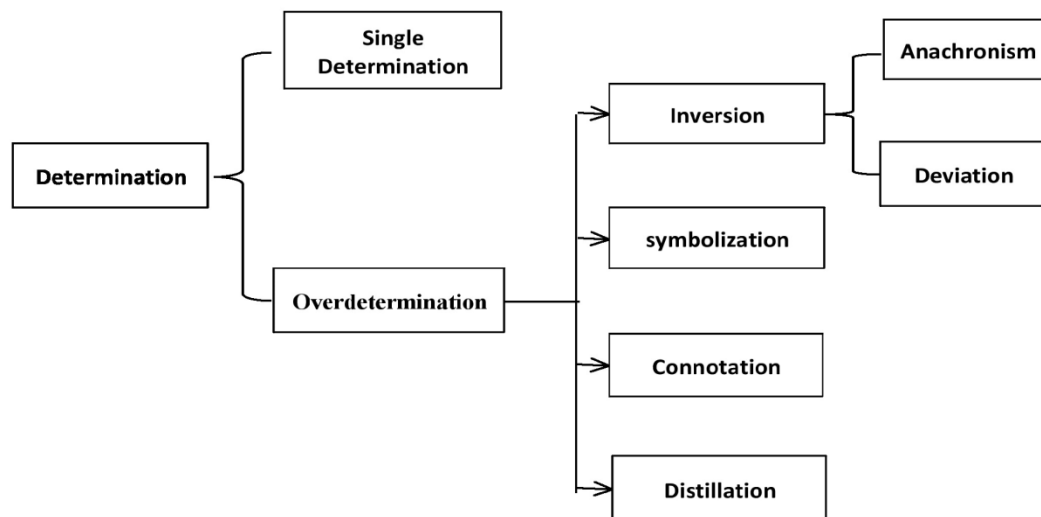

Figure (1): The framework of determination (part of Van Leeuwen 2008: 52)

Determination is one of van Leeuwen's dichotomies of recontextualizing social actors; the other member of the dichotomy in question is 'indetermination' which 'occurs when social actors are represented as unspecified, 'anonymous' individuals or groups' (Van Leeuwen 2008: 39). The typical realization of indetermination is the use of indefinite pronouns (like *somebody*, *someone*, *some, some people*) or the use of 'generalized exophoric reference' that gives 'social actors … a kind of impersonal authority, a sense of unseen, yet powerfully felt coercive force'. Determination occurs when the identity of the social actor is 'specified'. The dichotomous subcategories of determination are: *association and dissociation*, *differentiation and indifferentiation, categorization and nomination,* and *single determination and overdetermination.*

The dichotomy of *single determination and overdetermination* is used for the data analysis because it is the best to address the objectives of the present study.

To put things in a more extensive and comprehensive way, the present paper mainly aims at:

1. Finding out whether ONAs endow AIs a wide or narrow status;
2. Identifying the single determination linguistic tools or overdeterminationsubcategories utilized to widen or narrow the roles of AIs in society;

3. Identifying whether or not ONAs have diminished the abilities of AIs to imprison them within the domain of neuropsychiatrically disordered individuals;
4. Identifying the ideologies of ONA, as a discourse of social power, towards AIs;
5. Identifying the kind of social attitudes derived from the other social roles and ideologies set for AIs.

A. *Overdetermination*

When a social actor is given 'more than one social practice', the case of overdetermination occurs (Van Leeuwen 2008: 33). Thus, an AI who is connected to neuropsychiatric therapy sessions and schooling and participates in both of these practices is actually overdetermined. Van Leeuwen (2008: 48) has 'distinguished four major categories of overdetermination: inversion, symbolization, connotation, and distillation', as shown in Figure 1 above.

Inversion is achieved when a social actor is allocated two contradictory social practices; 'each other's opposites' (Van Leeuwen 2008: 48). Inversion comes in two forms which Van Leeuwen (2008: 50) describes as the most common: anachronism and deviation. The former refers to two contradictory actions performed by

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the same individual; one of the actions is related to the personality of the individual and the other action contradicts the characteristics of that individual. The latter, deviation, is a form of inversion which assigns social actors certain activities which 'are represented by means of reference to social actors who would not normally be eligible to engage in these activities' (Leeuwen 2008: 50- 51).

As for symbolization, it occurs when 'a 'fictional' social actor or a group of social actors stands for actors or groups in nonfictional social practices' (Van Leeuwen 2008: 48). The fictional actor is a 'mythical' or a 'stand past' actor who stands for real social actors in real social practices. For example, in the movie of 'Rain Man' (1988), the autistic character of Raymond (performed by Dustin Hoffman) stands for real AIs in real life until nowadays.

A unique kind of overdetermination is connotation which is represented by 'a nomination or physical identification' to indicate 'a classification or functionalization'. Barthes (1977: 50, quoted in Van Leeuwen 2008: 49) sees connotations as 'discontinuous' and 'scattered traits' which are bound to culture in their knowledge.

The fourth category of overdetermination is distillation which is 'a combination of generalization and abstraction'. For example, though 'schoolteachers,' 'ministers,' and 'job counselors,' are not classified as therapists, but they may perform some of the tasks attributed to therapists. Thus, therapy here is a 'peripheral' trait which can be elevated to the level of generalization and the title 'professional' can be used as a general title referring to 'therapist,' 'schoolteachers,' 'ministers,' and 'job counselors,' (Van Leeuwen 2008: 49).

B. *Single Determination*

As for single determination, Van Leeuwen (2008) does not give detailed discussion in this respect perhaps because the terminology of single determination and overdetermination, together with the detailed explanation of overdetermination, makes clear the notion of single determination as referring to the case in which the social actor is associated with a single definite social practice or given one single specific social role to perform in society.

THE DATA ANALYZED

The data analyzed consists of ten ONAs downloaded from www.bbc.com/news. The articles have been selected depending on their titles (as a semantic

macrostructure aspect that reveals topics related to ALs) and their content (as a semantic microstructure aspect manifested in the propositions of statements and the lexicalization employed in the contextualization process). The ONAs analyzed have been taken from the online BBC News Agency, in particular, since it heavily relies on 'specialist knowledge' in delivering 'a complete news package' of categories such as politics, science, sport, health, business, etc. (Boaden 2004). The ten articles vary in their number of words that range from 101 to 453 words forming up a body of data that consists of 3003 words.

The choice of online articles, in particular, is a reaction to the massive importance of the internet access in our lives. It is now treated as an easily available source of education and awareness for everyone. This data has come to create some balance since the majority of CDA studies have tackled political discourse. The vital effect of political discourse on social life is undeniable, but there are other domains of discourse the investigation of which can come up with results with social benefits. In addition, politicians are not the only influential individuals in societies. There are other individuals who seem to be untended by critical discourse analysts; the AIs represent an example especially with the rising rates of autism nowadays around the world.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The type of analysis conducted is both qualitative and quantitative to create a comprehensive and complementary view to fulfill the objectives of the study. The quantitative analysis is performed by manual statistics to arrive at the frequencies that form the decisive tools for better objective results.

1. 'Winterton school stabbing: Elisha Burkill diagnosed with autism', 2018, (362 words):

A 16 year old teenage autistic girl student has been accused of ferociously stabbing a 61 year old school support worker in his face .There is overdetermination which is identified in two category forms. The first is connotation which has occurred seven times; six times by nomination (by identifying the autistic girl with her full name (Elisha Burkill) once and her family name (Burkill) five times) and once by the physical identification of the autistic girl by age ('Elisha Burkill, 16, knifed Joy ….').
The second is by inversion in its subcategory of deviation since a teenager autistic female has been produced as performing three social roles. The first role is as a student that is apparent from the identification of the setting of actions (school) as elicited from the lexicalization of

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school support worker, knives in school, school stabbing and *bring a knife to school*. The second is as a mentally unhealthy person who could be dangerous when undiagnosed as indicated in the following propositions:

1. "A teenage girl … has autism";
2. "[H]e said that on the other side of that lay the problem of undiagnosed mental health problems in the young….";
3. "This was at the very crux of what led her to act in such an abhorrent way….";
4. "[S]he had had no contact with mental health services but had a long history of a depressive illness";
5. "Burkill has since been diagnosed with autism and severe depression";
6. "He asked for the appeal hearing to be adjourned so a new psychiatric report can be prepared";
7. "[H]ow Burkill was responding to treatment".

The third social role is as a criminal as indicated in the following propositions:

8. "A teenage girl … stabbed a school support worker in a 'ferocious' attack";
9. "Elisha Burkill … knifed Joy Simon … in the face and chest";
10. "Burkill had admitted wounding with intent and possessing a bladed article and was sentenced … to seven years in custody";
11. "[W]hat led her to act in such an abhorrent way";
12. "Burkill was initially charged with attempted murder";
13. "Burkill was told she would serve five years on licence following her release".

The student role is a neutral one, but the criminal role is negative. The autistic girl role has been put in a negative frame work as the impeller to 'ferocious' acts through embedding autism in such lexicalization as 'undiagnosed mental health problems, the very crux of what led her to act in such an abhorrent way and the issue of dangerousness'.

Thus, the autistic girl has been assigned two negative social roles; as a criminal and a dangerous mentally disturbed person. A neutral role has also been identified as an autistic student.

2. 'Autistic boy's mum praises "lovely" school prom classmates', 2018, (453 words):

An autistic boy's mother is expressing her appreciative feelings for a group of his school prom classmates for getting along with her autistic son. Three cases of single determination have appeared in four propositions which limit the status of the boy to that of an autistic individual:

14. "[H]e finds social situations difficult";
15. "[H]e … finds communicating his thoughts and feelings difficult";
16. "[H]e … insisted on going on his own" (expressing AIs' tendency for isolation).

Thus, the boy is given two neutral social roles: as an AI and as a schoolboy. In addition, there are ten cases of overdetermination; eight of them are of the category of inversion and two are of the connotation category. In the eight inversion cases, the autistic boy has been assigned two contradictory social practices; one of them is very much of an AI and the other contradicts the autistic personality tendencies. Of these eight inversion cases, seven are of the subcategory of deviation for putting the autistic boy in a social person's position of performing the usual ordinary social roles as a normal school boy who loves to communicate with others and make friendships. These are expressed in the propositions:

17. "[H]e made friends and completed his GCSEs";
18. "[H]e wanted to go to prom'";
19. "I was so proud of him doing his GCSEs";
20. "[H]e set off for prom";
21. "It has really boosted his confidence";
22. "[H]e has sociology with two of the girls in the group";
23. "I thought it was pretty funny at the time, it was a nice thing to do"(as expressed by the autistic boy himself).

Accordingly, the positive social role of a friendly social individual is indicated here. The eight cases of inversion are all anachronism ones which have occurred in utterances all issued by the autistic boy himself expressing two contradictory propositions to denote two contradictory social actions performed by him:

24. "I get along with them well but we're not really friends".

As far as the two cases of connotation are concerned, the first is indicated through nomination when the autistic boy was identified by name and the second is through physical identification when he was identified by age:

25. "Dianne Smith, … said *Brodie, 16* … was diagnosed….".

Accordingly, Brodie has two positive social roles: a fairly social boy and a successful student (for doing his GCSEs successfully). In addition, he has been given the neutral social roles as unsocial autistic boy (at the beginning) and that of a student.

3. 'I used to be ashamed to have autism', 2018, (115 words):

The article tackles the case of 26 years old Hayden Rustage who is an AI that has volunteered lately as an assistant for the National Trust. In this ONA, there is no single determination case. Instead, seven overdetermination cases have been traced; three of which are inversion ones. Two of these inversion cases are deviation ones in which the autistic Hayden has been given social roles more associated with normal people who lead a very normal life as expressed in the following two propositions:

26. "Hayden Rustage volunteers for the National Trust";

27. "Hayden said being given the opportunity to volunteer and meet people has improved his confidence".

The first proposition indicates the role that Hayden plays in society as an assistant who works for a popular organization and the social challenges that he needs to go through as an AI at the same time. In the second proposition (27), Hayden is fighting and contradicting his autistic personality tendencies by mixing with people as a volunteer and trying to boost his self- confidence. The other case of inversion is anachronism as indicated in:

28. "Hayden, 26, has autism but since he started volunteering three years ago, he said he had become a very different person".

The anachronism indication is spotted in the fact that autism is supposed to be a lifelong neuropsychiatric disorder; however, Hayden has managed to play a social role which is in contrast to its characteristics and even changed to 'a very different person'. Moreover, there are four cases of connotation; three are represented by nomination in reference to the autistic person by name (*Hayden* and *Hayden Rustage)* and the fourth one is indicated through the physical identification of Hayden's age "Hayden, 26, has autism….".

The article in question has assigned Hayden a positive social role of a volunteer for national trust organization. Autism has also been presented as a neutral trait as a neuropsychiatric disorder that can be successfully overcome when faced with wisdom and personal determination.

4. 'How much do you know about autism?', 2015, (101 words):

The fourth ONA explains how 10-year-old autistic Charlotte was bullied for her autism. The article carries one case of single determination when referring to Charlotte only as an autistic person who has undergone bullying at school:

29. "When … Charlotte was diagnosed with autism, bullies made her life a misery ….".

There are also four cases of overdetermination in the form of connotation. Two are indicated through nomination (*Charlott)*, and the other two have occurred in the form ofphysical identification; once of Charlotte as a weak person who has to be supported by her sister as a protector form bullying in school:

30. "When this happened Charlotte's older sister Caitlin turned protector";

The other one is through reference to her age bythe lexicalization of '10-year-old Charlotte ….'.

Two social roles have been detected in this article; those of an unconfident autistic girl and a weak autistic girl whose weakness and lack of self-confidence was so obvious to the extent that she became an easy victim for her school mates to bully her. Thus, autism here is associated with negative aspects.

5. 'Mum of autistic boy slams school for "abusive" voicemail', 2018, (377):

It states how a mother of an autistic schoolboy has criticized the school of her son for an abusive voicemail that the mother has received from school. There is one case of single determination indicated in the proposition:

31. "A spokesman for the school, which caters for primary-aged pupils with significant learning disabilities, said…."

The specific assignment of the school, as catering for "pupils with significant learning disabilities", limits the social identification of the social actor in question to the scope of an AI who is supposed to show learning disabilities, at least in specific school subjects. Overdetermination has occurred in the form of connotation that has been utilized eight times in the article. These eight times are distributed to the two forms of nomination indicated twice in the proper name *Harley* and on the form of six different instances of physical identification for Harley through the lexicalization of '10'(indicating age), "off sick", "off all week", "Harley back week", "bring him back week" and "my son wasn't really welcome". Overdetermination has also occurred twice through distillation when more general and abstract reference has been made for Harley as a "pupil' and 'my son" (as stated by his mother) giving a more general identification for that 10- year- old autistic boy who is supposed to be a pupil in a school and, even more generally, a son of somebody.

The article putsHarley in two neutral positions by assigning him two neutral social roles; the first is as a pupil and the second is as a son of somebody. It also assigns Harley a critically negative social role of a heavy

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burden on the school stuff to the extent that they want him to be in a sick leave until the end of the academic year!

6. 'Cameron Cruddace jailed for Richard Percival claw hammer murder', 2018, (405 words):

The sixth article states a murder case committed by an autistic teenager against a 71- year- old man who had employed the autistic teenager to do *odd jobs* in the old man's house. One single determination case has been detected in the proposition:

32. "Cruddace has ADHD, conduct disorder and slight autism …."

Overdetermination through connotation is prevalent in the article for occurring most frequently in comparison with the other subcategories of overdetermination. There have been nine occurrences ofconnotation, four of which have come in the form of physical identification in reference to age; *17* (once) and *teenager* (3 times). The remaining five cases of connotation are in the form of nomination in reference to the autistic individual's name *Cruddace.* Overdetermination has also occurred once through inversion by anachronism when autistic Cruddace "denied the charge but admitted manslaughter and theft". The paradoxical two propositions of denying the charge and admitting murder and theft indicate the disturbed personality of Cruddance as an AI. In addition to these two paradoxical proposition, the article carries another propositions that reveals other negative sides inCruddance's personality:

33. "Judge Alan Conrad…. [a]ddressingCruddace … said he had smashed Mr Percival's skull … before stealing more than £600 'most of which you then spent on drugs";

34. "[H]e had told numerous lies and the jury rejected his account"

35. "Cruddance had invented the sex allegations… to justify what he had done";

36. "[Y]ou launched this murderous attack on Mr Percival in order to steal from him".

Accordingly, Cruddance has been given the neutral role of an AI in addition to the negative social roles of a murderer, thief, drug addict and liar.

7. 'Henley road death: Family pays tribute to "'unique" son', 2018, (216 words):

It states the death scene of the autistic 30- year-old Daniel James by a car accident. One case of single determination has appeared in the proposition:

37. "[H]ad autism spectrum disorder (ASD)"

It refers to James merely as an AI. As for overdetermination, there have been 17 cases distributed on two cases for inversion, 12 for connotation and three for distillation. One of the inversion cases is in the form of anachronism describing two contradictory actions performed by the late James according to the pair of contradictory propositions of:

38. "Although Daniel faced many challenges due to his ASD, he led a full and colourful life".

Thus, he had faced difficulties of communication due to autism and, at the same time, lived a gladsome life. The other case of inversion is in the form of deviation expressing two contradictory social roles for the late James as an autistic man as expressed in the two propositions that contradict the autistic personality:

39. "[H]e had many friends and touched the hearts of many more".

Thus, it seems that James had counteracted the challenges of autism and conducted against its canon through having multiple friendships and being popular individual rather than being a socially estranged person. Concerning the 12 cases of connotation, four of them are in the form of nomination through the proper noun of *James* (three times) and his full name *Daniel James* (once). The other eight connotations are in the form of identification of certain physical facts about James as figured out in certain lexicalization referring to his age when he died (*30*), what happened to him (*died*) and his origin (*from Bracknell, Berkshire,Born and raised in Bracknell,*) .In another part of the article, connotation has also been realized as a physical identification rather than nomination:

40 "[H]e… possessed many special qualities that made him unique as well as having a loving family that supported him in everything he did".

Here, three propositions have been triggered to confer James aspects of physical status (possessingspecial qualities, being unique and having a loving and supporting family). The three distillation instances have been detected in three scattered lexicalization in the article (*man*, *son* and *brother)* which grant James a general identification as a member in a family within the society.

The analysis above leads to the inference of a number of social roles assigned to James. The neutral ones are that of an autistic person who faces challenges as a society member and that of a family member who leads a normal life (being a son and brother). There is also a positive social role of a persevering person who could overcome the difficulties and challenges of autism.

8. ' "Unbreakable" bed transforms life for disabled York woman', 2018, (320 words):

The eighth article is about an autistic 20- year-old Ruby who has kept breaking beds (due to her unusual movements related to her abnormal behavioral issues) until she has got an unbreakable bed from a charity organization (Children Today). There are two cases of single determination in the article located in the two propositions of:

41. "[H]er daughter … has … autism spectrum disorder";
42. "[H]er daughter … is attending a specialist college for young people with disabilities".

These propositions are single determination instances since they assign Ruby no extra social role other than being an AI. As for overdetermination, it has occurred 13 times in the article in the form of connotation (10 times) and distillation (three times). Four of the 10 connotation cases are nomination ones in which the reader is introduced with the autistic girl's mane (*Ruby Merritt* and *Ruby*). The other six connotations have occurred as reference to certain physical aspects of Ruby utilizing lexicalization to identify her age (*20-year-old*), place of residence (*from York*) and abnormal traits (*learning disabilities and behavioural issues, her bouncing on a bed and rocking backwards and forwards*). Physical connotation has also embedded in two propositions describing the abnormal behavior she does in bed and the way she sleeps:

43. "She would bang her feet against the bed as well which would make a huge amount of noise and mean that it would take her quite a while to settle down at night".

In the three cases of distillation, Ruby has been granted generic identification reference in the phrase *her daughter* in reference to the mother who has been stated describing Ruby's condition.

As for the social roles, there is the only negative role of the an AI who shows unusual negative disturbing behavior as indicated in the three propositions that carry physical connotation found in (43). In addition, this negative role has been reinforced in the proposition:

44. "This bed means we now have so much more peace of mind that Ruby can't hurt herself if she tries to break it …."

According to (44) above, the new unbreakable bed is a source of *peace of mind* against the devastating behavior of Ruby.

9. 'Nail hit into boy's head by plank-throwing "bully" ', 2017, (333 words):

The article explains how the autistic boy, Romeo, was assaulted by a bullyboy who threw a plank

at Romeo causing a nail to stick in Romeo's head. Two cases of single determination have appeared in the article in two propositions which restrict the personality of Romeo to an autistic boy:

45. "Romeo is autistic";
46. "[D]ue to his ASD … he is very vulnerable".

Overdetermination has been detected eight times; three are distillation cases identified twice by the words *son* (which is used twice associated by Romeos' mother and father) and once by *boy*. Both words have granted Romeo a generic identification being aligned with an autistic boy. The other overdetermination cases are connotation; four of which are in the form of nomination using the proper noun *Romeo* (to refer to the autistic boy) and one identified in the phrase 'nine-year-old' (referring to his age).

This article portrays the autistic character in a negative way assigning Romeo two vivid negative connotations: weakness and alienation. Weakness is generally elicited from the assault and bully themselves and specifically located in the propositions of:

47. "[H]er … son had been bullied all week";
48. "Romeo's father… said he saw his son being confronted by two boys";
49. "As Romeo was walking away one of the lads came running up behind him and threw a bit of wood with a nail in it…. Romeo started screaming and running towards me";
50. "I can't let him out on his own…. I wouldn't be able to let him".

Alienation is generally identified by Romeo's failure in communication and confrontation of the bullies and specifically in proposition (51) below:

51. "This has been happening and he hasn't even told me about it …. [H]e probably wouldn't mention it".

The boy has been unable to communicate with even his parents and, as a result, resorted to concealing his suffering instead of sharing it with his family.

10. 'Gareth Malone's Choir winner "thankful" for having Asperger's', 2016, (321 words):

Michael Luya is an autistic 22- year- old student who has won a price, together with his Choir, for his fascinating singing of an emotional song on stage. No case of single determination identified, but there are 14 cases of overdetermination found. As for inversion, it has occurred four times, distributed as one for anachronism and three for deviation. The anachronism case is located in the contradictory propositions found in (52) stated by Michael:

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52. "[B]ecause of the challenges to connect, it gave me a drive to find something even deeper and even more personal".

Though he has faced difficulties to connect with people surrounding him, he has managed to communicate with a large number of people on stage as a singer. The three deviation cases have been identified in three propositions, expressed in (53), (54) and (55) below, for Michael in which he expressed how thankful he has been for autism for directing him towards a better track in life:

53. "A student … has said he is 'thankful' for having Asperger's syndrome";

54. "He said Asperger's, a form of autism, pushed him to be the best he could be";

55. "I'm really thankful for the fact I've got Asperger's…. I wouldn't be where I am today without it".

In addition to inversion, nine cases of connotation have existed in the article; four are nomination in which the reader has been produced with the autistic man's name (*Michael* and *Michael Luya*) and the remaining five are connotation through some physical identities of Michael located in the phrases of "praised singing" and "22-year-old" and the self-evaluation of Michael saying:

56. "I tend to get very socially anxious. I also have difficulties recognising how other people are feeling and reading other people's emotions".

In his self- evaluation, Michael has informed the readers of three propositional facts about himself: being *socially anxious*, facing difficulties in inferring people's feelings and finding it difficult to predict people's emotions. Moreover, one distillation case has been located in the article represented by the noun phrase "A student" which appeared at the beginning of the article giving the main character of the article a general identification before it moves to providing more details about Michael.

The article has put Michael in a positive stand as an AI who has invested his disorder as a means for better achievements in life. Autism here has been introduced as a positive motivation that might easily guide people to be better individuals in the society. This notion is clearly identified in the phrases "thankful for having Asperger's syndrome" and the propositions expressed in (57), (58) and (59):

57. "[A]utism, pushed him to be the best he could be";

58. "I'm … thankful … I've got Asperger's. It's a part of me and I wouldn't be where I am today without it";

59. "[I]t gave me a drive to find something even deeper and even more personal".

Putting the analysis of the ten articles above in an ample and comprehensive frame, the following statistical tables is accomplished:

Table (1): Frequency of occurrence of single determination and overdetermination (with its subtypes) in the ten ONAs.

ONA No.	single determination	Overdetermination		symbolization	connotation	distillation
		inversion				
		anachronism	deviation			
1		1	1		7	
2	3	1	6		2	
3		1	2		4	
4	1				4	
5	1				8	2
6	1				9	
7	1	1	1		12	3
8	2				10	3
9	2				6	2
10		1	3		9	1
Total cases	11	5	13		71	11
		18				
		100				

Table (2): the social roles, together with their attitude, assigned for the AIs in the ONAs.

No. of ONA	positive social practices/ roles	neutral social practices/ roles		negative social practices/ roles	
1		student	1	criminal autistic,	2

					mentally dangerous autistic	
2	fairly social person, doing his GCSEs successfully	2	autistic, schoolboy	2		
3	volunteer for social services	1	autistic	1		
4					weak autistic, unconfident autistic	2
5					autistic with learning disabilities, a burden on school	2
6			autistic	1	murderer, thief, drug addict and liar	4
7	persevering person	1	autistic, a family member	2		
8					autistic (having unusual negative disturbing behavior)	1
9					autistic alienated, autistic weak	2
10	autistic motivated for better achievements	1				
Total	5		7		13	
Total attitudes	25					
Percentage	20%		28%		52%	

According to Table 1, over determination exceeds single determination in far more than the double. However, there has been some focus on certain overdetermination categories rather than the others with connotation coming on the top list of the others followed by inversion, distillation and symbolization which has settled in the bottom of the list with zero occurrence cases.

Moving to Table 2, the social roles allocated for the AIs have been classified according to their attitude towards the autistic character itself ranging from positive, neutral and negative. The autistic social role is supposed to be neutral if it is associated with neither negative nor positive aspects of the individual assigned. However, when autism is seen as responsible for negative deeds committed by the autistic individual, it tends to have negative features and, thus, more associated with negative social roles. If autism leads the individual towards positive social acts, it becomes the feature more associated with positive social roles. The statistical results in Table 2 show that, unfortunately, the negative social roles attributed to AIs has occupied the top rank in the frequency of occurrence occurring 13 times out of 25 with the percentage of 52% of the total number of the three categories of social roles. The second rank goes to

neutral social roles of AIs forming 28% for occurring 7 out of 25 total social roles. They are embedded in the lexicalization of a *student (*or*a schoolboy), autistic* (as a merely defining attribute)*,* and a *family member*. No definite ideologies can be figured out here since such neutral social roles render any ideology null and void. The positive social roles come in the bottom of the list to form 20% (5 out of 25) of the social roles.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis above has revealed a number of concluding points that can help figuring out the way ONA discourse recontextualizes AIs and theirs states and social roles. As for the categories of determination, overdetermination exceed single determination cases in more than nine times the double, leading to the fact that ONAs endow wide rather than narrow role for AIs in society. There has been heavy focus on employing the overdetermination subcategory of connotation. This stems from the fact that the ONAs selected for analysis deal with real AIs in society and the reporters concentrated on identifying these individuals by nomination and physical identification.

The heavy reliance on overdetermination has assigned AIs different social roles other than being

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autistic. These roles are framed according to the attitudes they are marked with in the articles as being positive, neutral or negative depending on the meaning of the lexicalization and the kind of propositions utilized for their reference in the texts. At first glance, one might think that ONAs do not diminished the abilities of AIs to the realm of neuropsychiatrically disordered individuals because the frequency of occurrence of positive and negative social roles exceed that of the neutral one which imprison the AIs in the body of autism. However, ONAs have diminished the abilities of AIs to the realm of neuropsychiatrically disordered individuals by tackling negative issues related to real AIs who are put in negative social roles generated from their disturbed neuropsychiatric personalities as mentally disturbed individuals, with learning disabilities, weak unconfident personalities and conducting illegal and immoral behavior.

As for the negative social roles designated for the AIs, they seem to arise from the misunderstanding, ignorance and unfairness of society. For example, in the fourth ONA analyzed, the harm comes from society represented by the schoolmates who bullied the autistic girl Charlotte, not from the girl herself, enhancing here to develop negative personality components of weakness and lack of self- confidence. Her autism does not seem to have any negative reflection on society. However, (except for the second and only article), the positive social roles of the AIs do not seem to be generated from society. The AIs are usually the ones who make the initiative steps to be more active, beneficial and positive social members.

Whether positive or negative, the social roles occupied by the AIs have led the ONAs to show multi-attitudinal ideologies towards AIs. Depending on the concept of attitude, they are classified into two positive ideologies (socialization and perseverance) and four negative ones (criminalization, mental disturbance, a burden on the pedagogical system and personality disorder). Apparently, the ONAs clearly show more negative tendencies than positive ones towards AIs.

From this small data set, a clear problem can be identified in the attitude of the dominant social roles of AIs and the ideologies they represent. Such tendencies of ONAs can potentially cast a shadow on the psychological state of autistic readers and their family members and loving ones. As a socially empowered discourse, online news media need to be more aware of the attitudes and ideologies they adopt and publicly displayed in their articles as well as the hegemonic power of their discourse. In that sense, news media need to take their

social responsibility and inform the public from a positive perspective on AIs. In practice, that would contribute positively to the efforts made by therapists, caretakers and family members to empower AIs so that they can develop into active social participants.

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