

# **Chapter 4. Representations of Anorexia Nervosa in National Media: A Frame Analysis of the UK Press**

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## **Introduction**

While printed press figures over the last decade have declined (Watson, 2021), combined print and online press readership in the UK has remained strong, with the most popular tabloid paper, *The Sun*, having a readership of over 38 million readers and the most popular broadsheet, the *Guardian*, a combined paper and online readership of over 24 million per month (Watson, 2021). Consequently, while the press is considered part of the legacy media (Perreault & Ferrucci, 2020), it is too soon to relegate their influence to historical value compared to social media. In this context, this study explores the representation of anorexia nervosa in the UK press, to consider its impact, the insights it may offer as a barometer of public opinion and opportunities to consider developments in clinical practice. The study is a development of a previous study by the researchers (Bowen, Lovell & Waller, 2020), which employed an inductive approach to analysis of anorexia nervosa in newspaper Twitter accounts, to test the viability of using those findings in a deductive study that would offer future opportunities for longitudinal analysis.

The researchers in this study come from different disciplinary backgrounds—one from mental health clinical practice and research, and the other from journalism practice and research. The shared interests and approaches between the researchers are the ones central to this book of exploring language, stigma and EDs, specifically, how different news frames (Entman, 1993) have been used by the UK press and how these may impact on people's lives. However, as noted in the introductory chapter, the interdisciplinary nature of the approaches

has enabled a braiding of perspectives that we believe creates strengths. The differences have meant that the findings are understood in the context of both wider cultural influences and models of understanding used in clinical practice and research. Further consideration is given to how the insights from exploring media representations could be used both to consider impact on individuals' lives and possibly to enhance and develop clinical approaches. This has allowed an interplay between cultural and clinical perspectives.

This type of research is underpinned by an understanding of knowledge as social production, rather than an asocial discovery of truth. As Berger and Luckman carefully elaborated in 1966 (and revised in 1991), knowledge is socially constructed and needs to be continually refreshed and reproduced to continue to have social saliency. The distinctions then between domains such as clinical practice, academia and mass media start to blur in terms of authority and the impact on the lives of individuals with an ED. This is not to suggest a model of absolute relativism. However, it does emphasize that the production of knowledge is in a constant state of flux, critique and dispute, and further, that there are potential dangers involved in one model dominating over other perspectives and thereby stifling the development of new understandings and practices, including treatment practices. Within mental health, in Western European societies, there is concern that a 'reductive' focus on a neurobiological model has excessive power over the variety of perspectives that can form an understanding of mental distress (Munro, Randell & Lawrie, 2017). An analysis of the media therefore can contribute to an understanding of power and hegemony, including the impact of stigma (Link & Phelan, 2013).

The media, including the press, are understood to play an important role in the public's knowledge and awareness of mental health disorders (Bowen & Lovell, 2013), and what is known as psychiatric literacy (Bullivant et al., 2020). As such, they can be considered as

having an important public health function within society. However, there is not a singular view among clinical experts in understanding mental disorders: these are often disputed territories. Anorexia nervosa (which will be abbreviated to anorexia throughout) is an example where there are several different commonly held models about the aetiology and appropriate treatments. Broadly speaking, there are three fields of knowledge: biological, psychological and sociocultural. Biological research has highlighted the links to genomes that predispose people to genetic vulnerability to developing anorexia (Saffrey, Novakovic & Wade, 2013). A psychological perspective has emphasized the understanding of personality traits and parenting (Martinez & Craighead, 2015), often with a particular focus on trauma. Finally, some research develops a sociocultural understanding that has highlighted the meaning of body shape and size in society and the structures within society that promote low weight and the impact that this has on individuals (Yom-Tov & Boyd, 2014), particularly on women but increasingly on men as well (see Parrott, Bissell, Eckhart & Park, this volume). Many clinicians and researchers in the field argue that aetiology is multifactorial and typically arises from combinations of biological, psychological and social factors (Munro, Randell & Lawrie, 2017).

### **Approaches to Frame Analysis**

To undertake this type of research, it is necessary to have an approach that can identify the use of different models of understanding. One such approach is frame analysis, which was originally developed from the sociological work of Goffman (1974) and sits with research into the framing of social objects in society (Boda, 2017) and research into the cognitive frames that individuals use to understand their world (Ocelík et al., 2017). Media frame analysis is concerned with identifying the dominant ways in which the media represent an issue, rather than highlighting all the nuances of diversity and heterogeneity. The rationale for

this is put succinctly by Entman (1993): ‘if the text frame emphasises in a variety of mutually reinforcing ways that the glass is half full, the evidence of social science suggests that relatively few in the audience will conclude it is half empty’ (p. 56).

Frame analyses of newspaper articles that discuss issues about mental health have explored how articles are constructed and how they encourage readers to adopt a particular stance towards an issue (Sieff, 2003). Research into the representations of mental health in the media have provided some, at times contrasting, evidence about the degree to which the presentations are stigmatizing (Hildersley et al., 2019; Bowen & Lovell, 2019; Rhydderch et al., 2016). As noted in the introductory chapter, there is relatively little research that specifically examines how anorexia has been represented. Saukko (2008) has remarked on an ‘infantilising’ tendency in the 1980s and 1990s coverage of people with eating disorders, wherein women, in particular, are framed as ‘simply sick or under false consciousness’ (p. 60). In contrast, Ferris unpicks a narrative of anorexia heroism in her reading of case study media articles, wherein anorexia is depicted as an external threat, its effects, treatment and the anorexic person’s recovery-seeking are framed as elements of a battle and anorexic bodies are read as existing ‘outside the bounds of cultural intelligibility’ (2003). While useful, these observations rest on isolated case studies and do not look at broader depictions of anorexia.

## **Method**

The research design for this project was strongly influenced by Van Gorp’s use of a news frame matrix (Van Gorp, 2007; Vossen, Van Gorp & Schulpen, 2016) and Entman’s (1993) work on reasoning devices within a news frame, which function to present an issue ‘in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation’ (p. 52). Sieff (2003) advised that a common structure in

newspaper representation is referred to as a syntactical structure in which the most important point(s) are highlighted in the headline. The opening line of a standard hard news article summarizes the remit and angle of the article and refers to the key entities within the story, establishing the who, what, when, where and why (Mast, Coesemans & Temmerman, 2019). The angle is typically devised as something that should be ‘fresh and tied to something of interest to the audience’ (Parcell, Lamme & Cooley, 2011) functioning both as an entry-point for the reader, who is introduced to a perspective on a subject, and as a thematic core around which the rest of the text is assembled. The article then follows an inverted pyramid structure, where the issues considered most important are introduced first and increasingly less significant points are added to the article as it progresses. Both the hierarchical ordering of information and the formulation of an angle which prioritizes or de-prioritizes elements of the article as points of central concern are understood to be relevant to the framing issue of saliency, so that even if two articles include very similar material, the position of the material contributes to the salience as readers attribute greater significance to material that appears earlier in the article (Sieff, 2003).

This study arose from two previous studies conducted by the researchers. The first of these was a study undertaken by one of the researchers who used content analysis as a method to examine the representation of mental health in UK newspaper Twitter feeds (Bowen & Lovell, 2019). When conducting this research, it was observed that tweets about eating disorders were sometimes characterized by sensationalistic images. Informed by this observation, a second study was established that used frame analysis to examine the tweets from UK national newspapers about anorexia (Bowen, Lovell & Waller, 2020). The findings from this study confirmed a pattern of use of sensationalistic images in some of the tweets, and also the use of three other news frames that were repeatedly utilized that we referred to as: society, stress-recovery and illness. The study identified that the textual messages in the

tweets were not typically stigmatizing in their representation of anorexia; however, in some of the tweets, the textual message was undermined by sensationalistic visual images that were often sexualized. The latter was an inductive study that utilized thematic analysis to identify codes that developed into themes and ultimately a frame analysis matrix. This study builds on the preceding work and was established to test the usability of the developed matrix in the context of UK national traditional press outputs. Accordingly, this is a deductive study that aimed to address the following research questions:

**RQ1.** Can the media frame matrix developed for Twitter outputs be adapted for print press outputs?

**RQ2.** To what extent is the UK national press's representation of anorexia nervosa dominated by one news frame?

**RQ3.** How may the blend of media frames used by the UK national press affect and influence readers' knowledge and attitude towards anorexia nervosa?

Question 2 was operationalized by identifying whether one news frame was used for 50% or more of all articles, as a marker that it dominated the discourse about anorexia.

To undertake the study, a dataset of articles was constructed using the LexisNexis database. All articles produced between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2019 that included the words 'anorexic' or 'anorexia' in any UK national broadsheet and tabloid newspapers were identified (i.e., *Daily/Sunday Telegraph*, *Daily/Sunday Times*, *Guardian*, *Independent*, *Daily/Sunday Mail*, *Daily Express*, *The Sun/The Sun on Sunday*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Star*). All articles were downloaded and saved into Word documents, which produced a dataset of 522 articles. Articles that were not relevant were removed and this produced a final dataset of 482 articles. A sample of 35 articles from each of the newspapers was read through by both

researchers to identify how the Twitter matrix needed to be adapted, which involved an iterative process. This sample was then coded by the two researchers to test the inter-rater reliability of the adapted coding framework. Each article was coded only in relation to its dominant news frame, though a proportion of articles were too brief to be aligned to an underlying perspective. Inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cohen Kappa test, which indicated very strong reliability, with all four of the identified new frames having a Kappa value greater than 0.8. The whole dataset was coded by the two researchers, which led to the calculation of the portion of articles that used one of the four news frames (Landis & Koch, 1977). Full ethical approval for the study was not required from the University Research Ethics Board, as the study was based on publicly available data.

## **Findings**

The previous Twitter-based study identified four news frames: social model, illness model, stress-recovery model and clickbait model (Bowen, Lovell & Waller, 2020). As anticipated, the majority of these frames remained broadly applicable in a traditional press context, with several caveats. The most striking difference is the near absence of the clickbait framework, which was primarily a category of tweets where the images were sensationalistic or stigmatizing, irrespective of the content of the accompanying textual messages. This is largely because the research methodology of the current study relies on LexisNexis, an archive that does not store press images. Therefore, a fair and direct comparison with the early Twitter-based data set, which incorporated sometimes extreme images of people with anorexia, was not possible. Attention was directed, in this study, to the textual model of clickbait, that is, exaggerated, vague and potentially misleading ‘news’ prompts designed to encourage readers to access what lies beyond the bait (Andersen et al., 2019). Sensationalized headlines and lead lines may fulfil a similar role in traditional media. Indeed, Braun and

Eklund (2019) note that alongside ‘fake news’ and hoax publishers, ‘legitimate’ publishers have turned to clickbait techniques to generate online audience interest. However, there was no substantial evidence of this format being used in the traditional press format. That said, a relatively small collection of articles were trivializing in their overall approach to anorexia. This included the use of the word anorexia as a metaphor, or its use to criticize celebrities. It was determined that there was a sufficient number of these articles to warrant a discrete news frame of trivialization.

A minor adaptation to the Twitter news frame matrix was to the stress-recovery news frame. This news frame was commonly used; however, a minority of the articles in this model were examples of individuals who experienced life stressors and did not recover and lost their lives. The underlying model was the same, with an emphasis on the impact of personal life stressors; however, adjusting the name of the news frame to ‘personal stressors’ was a more accurate reflection of the body of articles as a whole.

It had been anticipated that the transition from Twitter to traditional press outputs would involve a process of adaptation, and in response to Research Question 1, this study demonstrated that the Twitter anorexia news frame matrix could be adapted for printed press formats—see Table 1 for UK press anorexia news frame matrix.

Table 1. Matrix of anorexia nervosa news frames in the printed press

News frame	Definition	Causal reasoning	Consequenc es	Possible actions	Moral judgement
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Social model	The causes of anorexia lie in social factors	Social/cultural values and structures place undue pressures on individuals	People express the pressure of these structures through anorexia	Cultural shift in values and/or legislation to force change	Anger at social pressure
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Illness model	Anorexia is a health condition	The causes of anorexia are a combination of biological and psychological	Biological and psychological treatment should be available	Further medical research into causes and investment in treatment	Frustration at inconsistent treatment and excitement at possible future
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Personal stressors model	Anorexia arises from challenging personal life experiences	Experiences such as bullying, relationship breakdowns,	The distress caused is expressed through anorexia	Personal relationships and empowerment lead to recovery, or distress	Sympathy for the challenges and admiration at recovery,
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		social pressures		leads to fatality	or sympathy for loss of life
Trivialization model	Anorexia used as a metaphor or in a flippant/trivializing manner	Anorexia is both associated with oddness and has physical markers of its presence	Anorexia is something that can be used to add a quality of 'oddness' to something or someone	Anorexia is used either to add oddness to phenomena or to engage in trivializing celebrity speculation	Intention is to heighten reader engagement with the issues

### *Illness model*

The most commonly used news frame was the illness model. From this perspective, an emphasis was placed on anorexia as a health disorder: 'I suffered with anorexia for 13 years. It wasn't a diet, it was a mental illness' (*Daily Express*, 5 January 2019); 'The illness is still there raging within me' (*Mail on Sunday*, Hastings, 2019). Typically, this emphasized research that supported a biological cause of anorexia, such as genetics: 'Anorexia down to genes' (*Daily Mail*, Allen, 2019); 'anorexia can be a genetic disorder' (*Daily Mirror*, Bagot, 2019) or hormones 'metabolic anorexia link' (*The Times*, 16 July 2019). While there is not a psychopharmacological treatment for anorexia, the emphasis within this model was seeking

treatment from health providers, typically within a hospital, that at times the courts could impose, for example, ‘Mr Justice Peter Kelly made orders yesterday for the 16-year-old’s detention in hospital’ (*Daily Mirror*, Faolain, 2019). However, there was hope that a biological treatment would be found, and this message was emphasized, alongside the need for further research in this area, for example, ‘Anorexia gene find raises treatment hopes’ (*Daily Telegraph*, 16 July 2019); ‘Brain hack: the quest for new treatments for eating disorders’ (*Guardian*, Montague, 2019). In terms of a moral response to this message, the most common one was to highlight failings within the healthcare system. This was a repeated pattern, and the newspapers took a strong advocacy role in highlighting failings and the need for improved services, for example, ‘Anorexia care crisis in NHS as coroner links 5 deaths’ (*Sunday Telegraph*, Ward, 2019); ‘NHS bed crisis sees anorexia patient living 400 miles from home’ (*Independent*, Lintern, 2019).

### ***Social model***

The social model was a commonly used news frame in the dataset. Within this perspective, social structures are heavily implicated in the causation of anorexia, for example, ‘Amazon widely condemned for selling books that promote anorexia as a “healthy lifestyle”’ (*Independent*, Young, 2019). There was a particular emphasis on the role of social media, for example, ‘child anorexia rise blamed on social media’ (*The Times*, Burgess, 2019) and particularly social media formats that are image-based, such as Instagram, for example, ‘Instagram led Zoe to a dark place; we buried her in a beautiful spot’ (*Sunday Times*, Griffiths, 2019); ‘The number of Instagram posts that glamorise eating disorders is spiralling out of control, psychiatrists warn’ (*The Sun*, 21 March 2019). However, it also included other institutions such as fashion, for example, ‘I was working with a high fashion brand and they were measuring me and said, “If you were just a little bit smaller”’ (*The Sun*, Bannon, 2019),

and athletics, for example, ‘Pressure on female distance runners to lose weight has left them vulnerable to eating disorders and brittle bones’ (*Sunday Times*, Myers, 2019). Further, there was an example of a feminist perspective that the pervasive values of a patriarchal society have a causal responsibility in the aetiology of anorexia, for example, ‘It didn’t take me very long to learn part of being a girl is dieting, monitoring your appearance and being attractive’ (*Daily Mirror*, Crabbe, 2019). Within this model, the social structures were seen as the causes of personal distress, and then a direction for individuals to express this stress through the preoccupation with weight and severe weight loss that characterizes anorexia. As these are structures rather than characteristics of individuals, the appropriate response proposed within the press was around legislation and control of the structures, for example, ‘Facebook and Instagram will ban images of ribcages, concave stomachs and “thigh gaps” that glamorise eating disorders after pressure from charities and campaigners’ (*Sunday Telegraph*, Dodds, 2019). The moral response to this was one of outrage and anger and by implication the need to protect, for example, ‘Having survived anorexia in her teens, the actress Jameela Jamil is waging a war against the body-shaming of women’ (*Sunday Times*, Hargrave, 2019).

### ***Personal stressors***

Within the personal stressors model, articles emphasized how individual life experiences were implicated in the aetiology of anorexia. This often included experiences of bullying, for example, ‘relentlessly bullied at school, Alisha, now 19, became anorexic and weighed just six stone at 13’ (*Daily Mirror*, Small, 2019), and stressors at school, for example, ‘she was stressed about her exams and felt isolated at school and home [...] it caused her to become obsessive about food and to stop eating’ (*Daily Mail*, Hull, 2019). There was also a pattern of linking traumatic experiences such as sexual assault as a cause, for example, ‘the alleged abuse resulted in long-term depression, anorexia’ (*Independent*, Michallon, 2019); ‘her life

had been transformed for the worse after two sexual assaults at parties from the age of 11 and being raped by two men when she was 14' (*Sunday Times*, Conradi, 2019). Anorexia was seen as a response to and expression of the distress caused by these life stresses. Individuals' responses to their experiences of anorexia therefore often focused on a wider personal life journey rather than being limited to behaviours around eating and weight loss or gain, for example, "'Now I have this thing called life": How art, family and my dog helped me overcome anorexia' (*Independent*, Collins, 2019). This often included the importance of close and supportive relationships with friends and family, use of physical activity, and improving self-esteem, for example, 'I would say to anyone, if you don't feel OK in yourself the best medicine is fresh air and exercise. Go outside and do something physical. It is the best thing' (*The Sun*, O'Reilly, 2019). However, as noted earlier, there were also examples where the causation of an individual's anorexia was attributed to personal life stresses and these were then seen as the cause of their loss of life, for example, 'Successful student, 20, fell to death from department store as "life started to unravel"' (*Daily Star*, Blair, 2019). The moral response to this news frame was, therefore, divided between sadness at those who lost their lives and anger and at the causal stressors, and celebration and admiration for those who had recovered and established a different way of being-in-the-world.

### ***Trivialization***

In the trivialization news frame, individuals with anorexia were not overtly stigmatized. However, there was a pattern of some trivialization of anorexia. This included examples of anorexia used as a metaphor, for example, 'The margins in the food industry are anorexically thin' (*Sunday Times*, Bowditch, 2019), or in a way that minimizes, for example, 'She added a couple of extracurricular eating disorders, too—anorexia from the age of 15' (*The Times*, Mulkerrins, 2019). It also included examples of excitable celebrity gossip when there was no

formal diagnosis of anorexia, for example, ‘she’s not slavish about maintaining her slender frame. “I’m not anorexic—I’m eating French fries, everything”’ (*The Telegraph*, Abraham, 2019) and as part of broader opinion pieces about body shape and size in society, for example, ‘toxic obesity is akin to heroin chic anorexia’ (*Daily Mirror*, O’Connor, 2019). As noted in the introductory chapter, these findings are consistent with previous studies that have highlighted the link with entertainment and gossip as part of process of trivialization (Shepard & Seale, 2010). It appeared that because anorexia includes physical and observable markers of the condition, this contributed to its employment in these more trivializing texts and at times added an oddness quality to the articles. The moral or attitudinal response that it attempted to evoke in readers was contextual to the overall message but typically it was used to heighten the emotional response, as a form of engagement.

### *The blend of news frames used*

The articles were all coded for their dominant news frame and when this process was completed, the number and proportion of articles that fell within each news frame was calculated. See Table 2 for results.

Table 2. The number and proportion of articles that used each news frame

News frame	No. of articles	Proportion of dataset
Illness model	146	30%
Social model	128	27%
Personal stressor model	117	24%

Trivialization	31	6%
Not enough information	60	12%
Total	482	*

\* NB. Total of proportion does not add to 100% due to rounding up and down of each element.

The results of coding the dataset indicated that the illness news frame was the most commonly used frame. However, in response to Research Question 2, the results did not indicate that the articles were dominated by the illness news frame and there was a reasonable balance between the three most commonly used news frames.

## **Discussion**

The absence of textual clickbait content in the full articles surveyed here—many of which are simultaneously printed and circulated online—suggests traditional hard news, opinion and feature formats persist as the structures of choice in traditional media discussions of anorexia, both online and offline. It is worth noting this study also tracked the *Independent*, which is now an online-only entity. Here, too, clickbait was not in evidence. While there are sometimes stigmatizing, Othering, misleading and other problematic discourses evident in traditional media articles, there is little indication that these nationally syndicated newspapers have adopted the ‘junk news’ and ‘low journalistic production standards’ detected by Burger et al. on social media websites (2019) in relation to depictions of anorexia. An unanticipated outcome of this study, therefore, is that it has enabled some level of quality comparison between the overall Twitter outputs of the UK press and their traditional outputs. However, it should be noted that the results of the previous study identified that the clickbait tweets were limited to tabloid press Twitter outputs, rather than a reflection of the industry as a whole,

and that they arose specifically through the use of sensationalistic images rather than stigmatizing language.

Overall, there was a relatively straightforward process of adapting the frame matrix from the earlier study to be used in this study and this offers an opportunity for future deductive research in both traditional and Twitter press representations of anorexia.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the findings of this study is that there was a fairly equitable mix of the three dominant news frames (illness, social, personal stressors) used to underpin the articles in the dataset. There has been concern expressed in some quarters about the medicalization of human distress and the pervasive—and at times hegemonic—power of a medical model (Mahaffey, 2019). For a model to truly exert a hegemonic influence, it would need to reproduce a particular vision in multiple domains, including academic, clinical, and cultural. It is this dominance of power that is of most concern. Natural sciences have produced great insights and knowledge into health conditions and with anorexia are striving to better understand the aetiology, with the reasonable hope that this will improve treatments for a clinical group that is characterized by high mortality (Moskowitz & Weiselberg, 2017). The illness model was certainly present, and indeed was the most commonly used frame, emphasizing the hope of improved treatment through a better understanding of genetics, for instance, ‘Anorexia gene find raises treatment hopes’ (*Daily Telegraph*, 16 July 2019) and ‘brain hack: the quest for new treatments for eating disorders’ (*Guardian*, Montague, 2019). As such, it was entirely appropriate that the press were emphasizing the importance of this perspective, but this was not the only perspective.

One of the interesting elements of the personal stressor model is that the emphasis on the impact of life experiences meant that articles were often centred around one or a small number of individuals, as part of a human interest genre of journalism. This meant that many



of the articles included direct quotations from people with lived experience of anorexia, for example, ‘Now I have this thing called life’ (*Independent*, Collins, 2019). This is important because, as media guidelines have highlighted, it is an important mechanism for de-stigmatizing mental health by allowing readers to have direct access to individuals’ thoughts and also presenting individuals as being inherently competent to contribute directly to the news (Time to Change, n.d.). This may well reflect another divergence between the representation of anorexia in the UK press and other mental health conditions. This study confirms that the representation of anorexia is not characterized by a theme of dangerousness that has been found in the representation of other disorders, particularly schizophrenia and personality disorder (Hildersley et al., 2020). The use of the journalistic technique of direct quotations can be viewed as a way of emphasizing a sympathetic stance from the readers towards people with anorexia.

An equally striking element of the personal stressor frame is that the reasoning devices employed within this model emphasize not only life events as having a causal factor, but also that a wider life journey plays a vital part in recovery. This message chimes strongly with a recovery model that has developed within clinical practice and research in the field of mental health broadly and has started to inform clinical practice with people with anorexia (Dawson, Rhodes & Touyz, 2014). What is interesting is that a perspective that is still considered somewhat innovative in practice evidently is relatively easy for readers to understand, apparently without having to unpack that it is innovative at all. It is unclear whether innovations in practice and research have filtered down into the wider public or whether indeed such clinical innovations were catching up with more commonly held understandings in the public about the importance of life journey on the road to recovery. Further research may be able to explore this and the degree to which there is evidence of a recovery perspective in the cultural domain before its significant influence on research and practice.

Although within research there is a tradition of a sociocultural, and often feminist, perspective on understanding anorexia, researchers have often lamented that this has not readily translated into clinical practice (Holmes et al., 2017). The latter has been dominated by interventions that focus on individuals, or families, rather than interventions aimed at wider social structures or emphasizing the impact of these social structures on individuals within the treatment modality. It is interesting, therefore, to note that this somewhat marginalized perspective within practice appears to have a great deal of saliency for the public. There were repeated examples of concerns about different social structures such as athletics and the fashion industry, for instance, ‘I was working with a high fashion brand and they were measuring me and said, “If you were just a little bit smaller”’ (*The Sun*, Bannon, 2019). Whereas an overtly feminist perspective was barely present; the major focus of preoccupation was social media, and particularly image-based media, notably Instagram, for example, ‘child anorexia rise blamed on social media’ (*The Times*, Burgess, 2019). These findings have some resonance with Gulec’s study (Chapter 5), which similarly found a pattern of frequent references to social factors as an explanatory model in the aetiology of EDs in Turkish newspapers. It could be argued that the general public take a more progressive view on anorexia than is commonly demonstrated in clinical practice, and indeed in research, in terms of identifying salient social structures and often supporting public health interventions around control of these structures as the appropriate way forward. This may well be true, and it may well be of use to be aware of this when developing clinical interventions. For example, if the public, including people with anorexia and their family and friends, see social structures as playing an important part in aetiology, then maybe treatment models should be addressing this. Ideally, this approach would operate both in terms of understanding and also in terms of developing resilience against social structures that pose a risk, and developing social skills to challenge the expression of the structures in individuals’

interpersonal lives. These findings would suggest that such approaches would have resonance with individuals.

While the findings of this study highlight the use of a dominant news frame within each of the articles, it is important to note that many articles drew on more than one news frame within the article. As noted before, this is standard practice to present objectivity in journalism (Fahy, 2018). The overall impact of this mix of news frames appears to be positive. Several national and international advocacy groups for people with eating disorders argue that a more nuanced approach to depicting the causes of the disorder would be beneficial in terms of self-recognition of illness and encouraging help-seeking behaviours, as well as demythologizing anorexia and breaking down stereotypes (see [beat.org](http://beat.org), 2011; National Eating Disorders Collaboration, 2020). Framing anorexia as having a purely social, stress or biological-psychiatric cause may prevent self-recognition, as the lived experiences of individuals may not fall into the model depicted within singular news articles. However, individual publications display a blend of frames within their data sets, so regular readers are likely to encounter different models.

## **Conclusion**

The significance of the findings of this study is twofold. In the first instance, the findings from analysing the 2019 newspaper articles provide compelling evidence that the press draws on a range of underlying perspectives in their presentation of anorexia. This is both heartening in terms of the range of views presented to the public, and may provide some support for adaptations to practice in terms of the saliency of the social model. The second and equally significant outcome is that the study progressed a previously inductive study leading to an idiographic framing matrix to adapt and test its usability for future deductive studies of press representations of anorexia. This will enable future research to examine

longitudinal changes concerning press representations of anorexia and establishes an approach that could be extended to other specific mental health disorders.

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