

Dr Patricia (Trish) Frazer

*With special thanks to Aoife Harmon, Dr Eoin Galavan and all those who participated*

# The Meanings attached to the phrase 'Mental Illness' amongst those who experience it

*"This faraway concept that happens to other people and they should maybe vaguely talk to someone but we don't think about who they'll talk to"*

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# A revolution in understanding



## Mounting criticism of diagnosis and classification

(Insel et al., 2010; Stein et al. 2010; Frances, 2013; Welch, Klassen, Borisova & Clothier, 2013, Kinderman 2014)

Efforts to improve public understanding and perception have not been successful...

(Read & Dillon, 2013)

... or may even have caused significant harm

(Mehta and Farina, 1997; Walker and Read, 2002; Bennett, Thirlaway, & Murray, 2008; Kemp, Lickel, & Deacon, 2014)

# Method

Qualitative- developing a grounded theory?

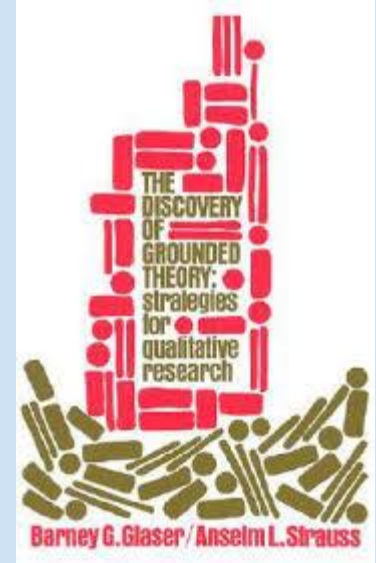
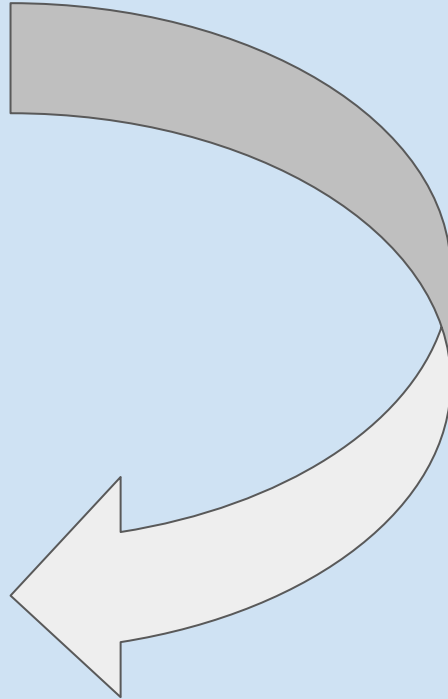
Stage 1: Thematic Analysis

Self selecting sample

43 online respondents

3 interviews

Questions for Stage 2





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**Mental Health Research**

I am a researcher who is looking for the views of people who have experienced mental health difficulties, as I believe these views are currently underrepresented in research and treatment. I am looking for people to click on the link below, and share their views anonymously in writing. I am also looking for people to share their views on this is an interview.

Please share this if you know anyone who has ever experienced mental health difficulties.

If you are interested in finding out more, please click below link:

Since your answers are anonymous, unfortunately it won't be possible to retrieve and remove your answers once you have submitted them if you change your mind about participation.

If you would prefer to take part in a face-to-face interview instead, please contact me [patricia.frazer@dbs.ie](mailto:patricia.frazer@dbs.ie) to find out more.

The results of the research may be published as a journal article, but no answers will be quoted unless you specifically give your permission. No names or other identifying details will be published. Your views are important, and as a person with experience of mental health difficulties or mental illness you can make a valuable contribution to expanding understanding of mental health difficulties for those working and researching in the area, and in society as a whole.

If you have any questions please contact me on [patricia.frazer@dbs.ie](mailto:patricia.frazer@dbs.ie) or 00353 41 78729

Thank you  
Patricia

**\* Required**

Having read the above statement, do you wish to take part in this research? \*

## The meaning of mental illness

### What is mental illness?

Please answer the question in whatever way you like. There is no right or wrong answer here. Please write about what this term really means to you personally. Write as little or as much as you like.

Add item



After page 2

Continue to next page

## The meaning of mental illness

### What does mental illness mean to your friends, family or others close to you?

### What does mental illness mean to the general public?

**Is the term 'mental illness' helpful?**

**Do you think any changes should be made to the language mental health professionals use to describe these conditions?**

**If you feel comfortable, you can share information about your mental health here.**

For example, you might say whether you have received a diagnosis of mental illness, what the diagnosis was, who diagnosed you and how you feel about this.

**Please read and comment on the definition of mental illness provided by the charity National Alliance on Mental Illness below:**

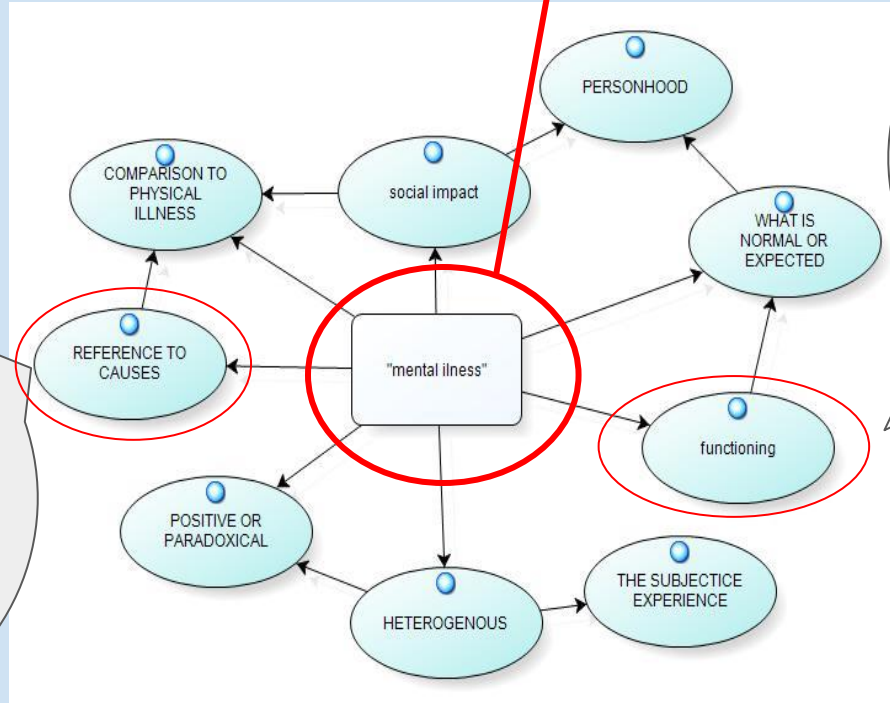
"Mental illnesses are medical conditions that can disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning. Just as diabetes is a disorder of the pancreas, mental illnesses are brain-based conditions that often result in a variety of symptoms that can affect daily life". National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI, 2013, p 1).

Online data:  
What does  
'mental  
illness'  
mean?

"Being in need of psychological  
help"

"When your typical way  
of **functioning** on a  
**daily basis becomes**  
**affected** to the  
extent it interferes  
with going about your  
day as you usually would  
in a relatively carefree  
manner."

"I believe in **two**  
**kinds of mental**  
**illness**: the kind  
that is organically  
occurring, and the  
kind that happens  
as a result of  
various  
conditions/events"



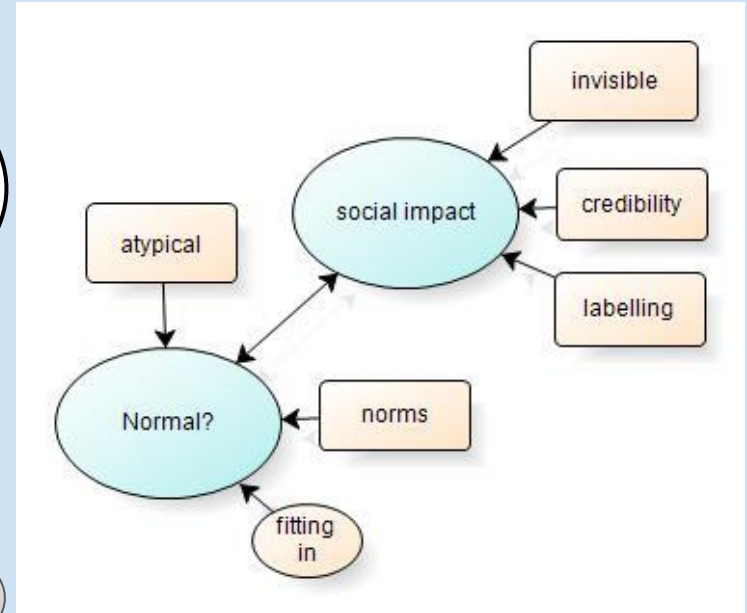
"...can make you an outsider from society"

"Having people not believe you are unwell because you do not have physical symptoms"

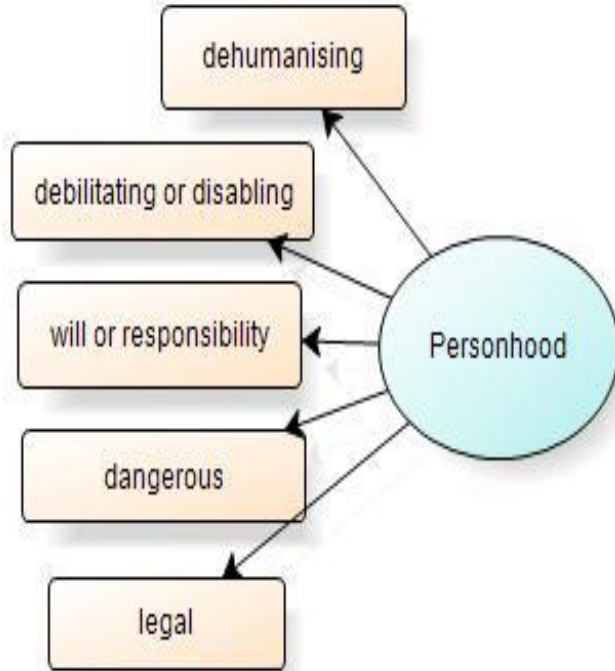
"Mental illness is something other, an important concept and path to understanding and route for help (when acknowledged)

**some experiences are not 'right'."**

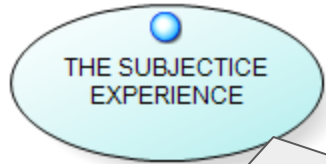
"Every person who is not able to live a "normal" Life on his or her own, caused because of mental issues."







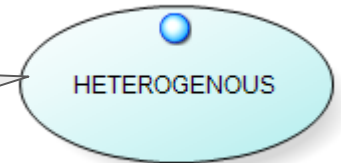
*"Being labelled with a mental illness has meant the **degradation of my human, legal and constitutional rights...**I may **never serve on a jury; may not apply for a position with the gardai or defence forces; may not write a will or sign a contract** without first providing **MEDICAL** proof of my capacity to do so... **Those labelled mentally ill by a psychiatrist must, instead, PROVE their sanity** and are not entitled to any legal aid or defence when attempting to do so."*

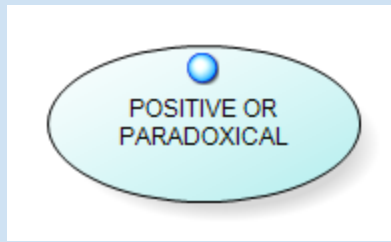


"Mental illness is being tormented in one's mind. No joy only despair"

"mental illness is a state of being unable to remember what it is like to be able to perform tasks, work, go to college or exist in a 'normal' way. **Everything is difficult. Everything sends you off into a spiral** of just not being able to function properly"

"Like physical illness, it's really broad, it can mean totally different things. "





"As someone suffering with numerous mental illnesses, **each take their toll in a different way**. One mental illness can make you a more sensitive person, another may make you incapable of living a meaningful life. Mental illness in general is something that, **once the label of 'mental illness' is mentioned, can make you an outsider from society**. It can pull you away from loved ones, **but on the other hand, it can also bring you closer to a community of people** going through a similar process. **To me, my mental illness is what has made me myself**. And throughout the ups and downs, I am glad to be me after many years of not feeling that way."

# References

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\* The DCP position statement. Find it here: <http://www.bps.org.uk/system/files/Public%20files/cat-1325.pdf>