

A triangulated approach to media representations of the British women's suffrage movement

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- Subject of historical debate
- Gap in historical research

The *Times* Digital Archive (TDA)

- <http://archive.timesonline.co.uk/tol/archive/>
- Example:

THE WOMAN SUFFRAGISTS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I can no longer keep silence, but must perforce record the deep resentment and anger in the hearts of many, many Englishwomen at the conduct of the suffragette shouters. Thousands of women like myself would be glad of some means to help in putting an end to such unwomanly rowdyism; but we shrink from publicity and can do nothing. I have, however, a strong desire to assure the men of England that there are very many of us who are deeply ashamed of our sex, and that we hope that neither Conservatives nor Liberals will be coerced by violence into giving votes to those who, by their violent and unbalanced behaviour, show how unworthy they are to legislate.

Again, many poor people are beginning to feel much aggrieved at the leniency shown to these law-breakers because they are so-called “ladies,” whereas if they were of the very poor classes only, and defied the police and forced their way into people's houses, they would get what they deserved.

I have been chosen to address these few lines as I have much property, and might therefore claim a right to vote; but I am more than content to leave government and law-making in the hands of our Englishmen, whose whole nature and training produces more evenly-balanced minds and judgment.

I enclose my card, but must request you not to print my name, or perhaps my house would be attacked by hysterical females. Your obedient servant,

Y. Z.

The *Suffrage* corpus

- Extracted from xml files provided by TDA
- *suffrag**
 - Includes *suffrage, suffrages, suffragist, suffragists, suffragette, suffragettes*
 - Excluded *Suffragan* – ecclesiastical terminology
- 1908 – 1914
- Average of 546 texts per year
- 7,089,889 tokens (running words) in text

Terminology from historiography

- SUFFRAGIST
 - considered the more inclusive term
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Terminology from historiography

- SUFFRAGIST
 - considered the more inclusive term
 - constitutionalists who campaigned by lobbying Parliament
- SUFFRAGETTE
 - originally a pejorative coined by the *Daily Mail*
 - saw the vote as an end unto itself
 - prepared to engage in direct action
 - members of a militant organisation
 - challenged the constitutionalist approach

Frequencies in Suffrage corpus

	<i>suffragist</i>	<i>suffragists</i>	<i>suffragette</i>	<i>suffragettes</i>
1908	165	302	30	57
1909	139	311	16	35
1910	156	197	9	11
1911	81	104	2	10
1912	388	502	18	30
1913	527	615	34	19
1914	263	270	15	21

*suffragist** is the preferred term, even when discussing issues strongly associated with suffragettes and which suffragists rejected e.g. militant direct action

Methodology

- Mutual Information
 - Measure of collocation strength
 - Both directions
 - "Hunston (2002: 71) proposes an MI score of 3 or higher to be taken as evidence that two items are collocates" (McEnery, Xiao and Tono 2006: 56)
- Functional categories
 - Derived from historiography
 - Corpus-driven

Categories

- From historical research
 - Constitutionalist vs militant
 - Geography (regional vs London)/places
 - Gender/gender roles
- Corpus-driven categories
 - Direct action
 - Legal and prison
 - Organisational
 - Political
 - Opposition
 - Proper nouns

Direct action

1912

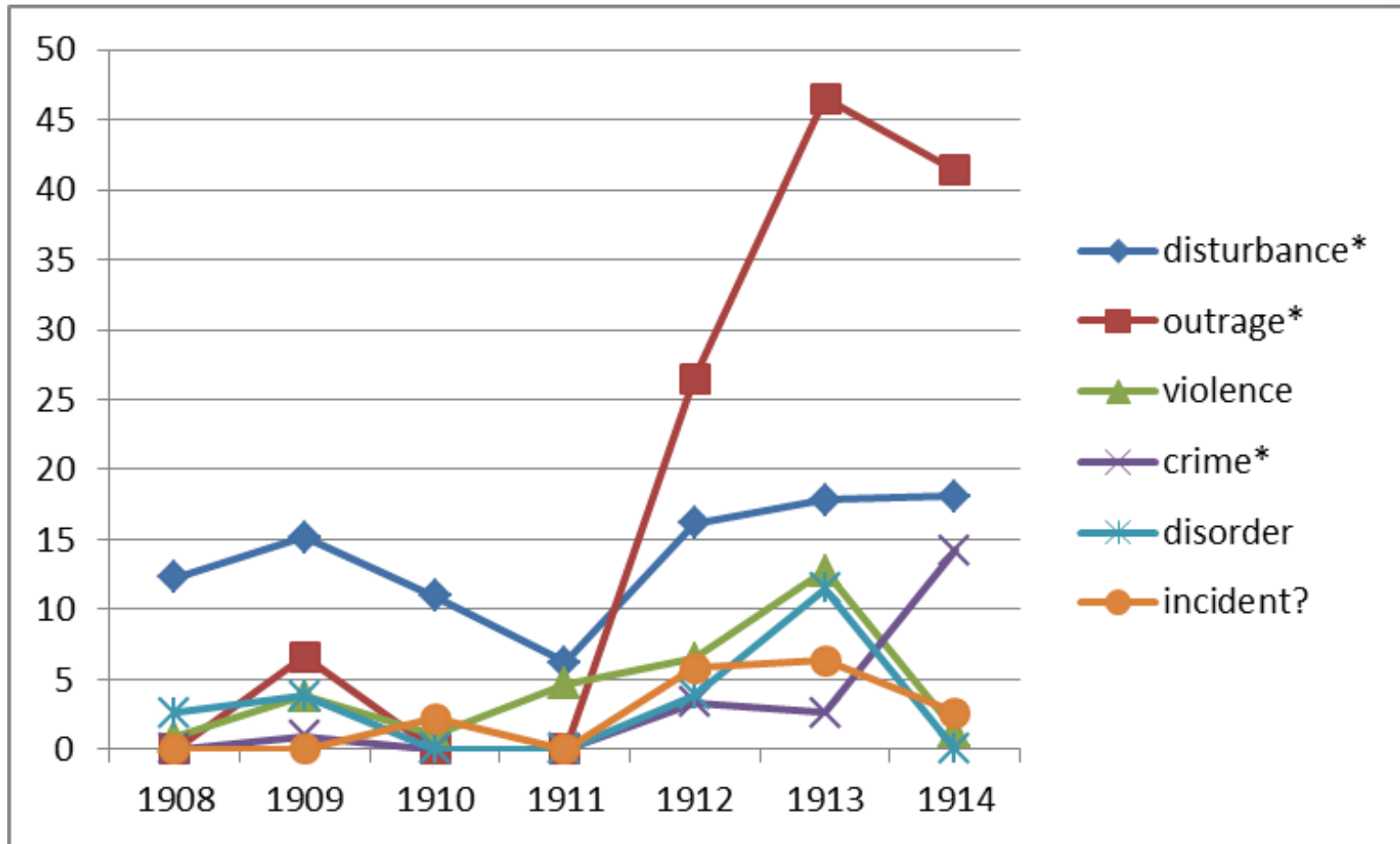
Suffragette: a, of

Suffragettes: by, have, militant, that, the, to

Suffragist: a, after, an, anti, at, by, convicted, **disturbances**, dublin, english, even, every, feeding, forcible, friends, further, **incident**, last, leaders, liberal, london, meeting, militant, miss, movement, mrs, other, out, **outrage**, **outrages**, police, prisoners, recent, released, sentenced, she, speakers, suffragists, tion, treatment, trial, two, up, views, well, who, whole, whom, **window**, woman, women

Suffragists: among, anti, are, at, being, believe, both, **breaking**, by, case, constitutional, **damage**, done, dublin, **ejected**, english, extreme, four, have, held, imprisoned, **interrupted**, labour, last, liberal, london, militant, miss, night, non, now, number, out, passed, point, police, political, prison, released, section, set, should, some, support, their, treatment, trial, two, well, were, when, who, **window**, **windows**, woman, women

Direct action



Frequencies of *suffrag** collocates normalised to 500 texts

Emily Wilding Davison

4th June 1913



Emily Wilding Davison's funeral

14th June 1913



Public figure & private nuisance

- Member of the Women's Social and Political Union who had already taken part in several types of direct action: stone throwing, window breaking, arson, imprisonment and hunger strikes
- Sometimes fraught relationship to the WSPU leadership due to her habit of acting independently and unwillingness to follow the strict guidance of the leadership
- Her death at the Derby put the leadership in a difficult position

Social actors

- **Nomination** – social actor is “represented in terms of their unique identity”
- **Identification** – social actor “defined, not in terms of what they do, but in terms of what society (or some sector of society) believes them to be, unavoidably and more or less permanently ”
 - **Classification** – “social actors are represented in terms of the major identity categories of a given society or institution [...] Each is realized by a closed set of nouns which form rigid, bony-structured categories in which all people must fit, even if in reality many people do not, or not easily”
- **Association** – “groups formed for the purpose of engaging in a common activity or pursuing a common interest”

(van Leeuwen 2009)

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Emily Wilding Davison as a social actor

	Action	Aftermath	Death	Inquest	Funeral	Hewitt
Nomination	5	3	5	12	2	9
Classification	19	-	-	1	-	3
Association	5	4	2	2	2	-

Nomination

	Action	Aftermath	Death	Inquest	Funeral	Hewitt
Nomination	5	3	5	12	2	9

- Used in all stages of the diachronic news narrative
- Peaks at the inquest into her death
- Also used when drawing comparisons between Davison's and Hewitt's actions
- Stresses the individual rather than her political identity

Classification

	Action	Aftermath	Death	Inquest	Funeral	Hewitt
Classification	19	-	-	1	-	3

- Most frequently used when reporting Davison and Hewitt's actions
- Possibly used to limit speculation
- Stresses a shared quality – a gender identity – rather than the different motivations for their actions

Association

	Action	Aftermath	Death	Inquest	Funeral	Hewitt
Association	5	4	2	2	2	-

- Identified in terms of association relatively infrequently but consistently
- Not identified in terms of association when reporting Hewitt's actions

Conclusion

- Triangulation of corpus linguistic approaches, critical discourse analysis and historiography
- CDA and corpus linguistics used to move between the broad picture of thousands of texts offered by corpus analysis to the close analysis of a limited number of texts offered by critical discourse analysis
- An analysis that does not take into account the historical context – the political, social and cultural world of the suffrage movement – cannot adequately account for the complexities of the suffrage movement.

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