

4-2017

# The Case of Harleen Quinzel

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## Recommended Citation

Shehadeh, Bayan, "The Case of Harleen Quinzel" (2017). *Student Writing*. 18.  
[http://commons.vccs.edu/student\\_writing/18](http://commons.vccs.edu/student_writing/18)

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The Case of Harleen Quinzel

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### Abstract

From the DC Comics, TV shows, and the recent movie *Suicide Squad*, everyone knows Harleen Quinzel, aka Harley Quinn. Harley Quinn started out working at a Gotham Hospital then as a psychiatrist at Arkham Asylum. While working at Arkham she met the Clown Prince of Crime, the Joker. She instantly fell in love with the Joker breaking him out of Arkham Asylum. Harleen then changes her name to Harley Quinn and goes to the chemical plant that changed the Joker's appearance and changes hers. With a new name and the infamous Joker at her side, does she gain Histrionic Personality Disorder?

### The Case of Harleen Quinzel

Everyone knows Harley Quinn as the Jokers' girl, but how did she become Harley Quinn? Personality Disorder, specifically, Histrionic Personality Disorder plays a key part in Harley Quinn's life. People with Histrionic Personality Disorder are "pervasive and excessive emotionally and display attention-seeking behavior" (Bornstein 1998). Harley Quinn started out as Harleen Quinzel, a teenager with 3 brothers and someone who was interested in how a criminal's mind works. Just like anyone, Harley had a first crush named Bernie Bash. They met at a party where Bernie continued to ask, "Hey, if you could kill one person in this room, who would it be?" (Tomasi et al 2014). Harley said she would kill Bonnie Harper, a girl who has tormented Harley throughout her life, Bernie also said Bonnie and when asked why, he told her "because she bothered you" (Tomasi et al 2014).

However, Harley and Bernie's romance died quickly when Bernie killed Bonnie Harper and was arrested. That was the first time Harley cried. Bernie was later on killed in jail and Harley started her life as a psychiatrist at a Gotham Hospital. Harley did not feel like she was doing anything amazing at Gotham Hospital so she went to Arkham Asylum. Once she got to Arkham Asylum, Harley noticed the patients would only talk to one another so with a little sexual convincing towards the Warden she was able to join the patients where she met the infamous Joker or whom she likes to call her "Puddin". The Joker saw right through Harley, knowing she is a Doctor at Arkham and Harley fell right in love saying, "this man had a power over me, as if he knew my whole life" (Tomasi et al 2014). Eventually Harley was exposed when someone killed the warden, but instead of leaving quietly, she broke the Joker and herself out. Harley did the ultimate sacrifice and jumped into a vat of acid so she can look like the Joker.

With the Joker at her side, does she develop Histrionic Personality Disorder, which might lead to a life of crime and constantly seeking approval from the Joker?

Adrian Furnham, a Professor at the University of London, states that there are eight facets where Histrionic Personality Disorder was expected. They are self-consciousness, warmth, gregariousness, excitement-seeking, positive emotions, fantasy, feelings, and trust. A person with HPD would express those personality traits by always wanting attention, approval, and chooses not to live in reality. While Harley Quinn is not self-conscious or warm in personality she is absolutely an excitement-seeking gregarious, sociable, fantasy girl who very much trusts her Puddin. However, the list of symptoms does not end there. People with HPD also "act or look overly seductive, are easily influenced by others, dramatic, sensitive, believe relationships are more intimate than they actually are, and are constantly seeking reassurance and approval" (Histrionic Personality Disorder 2016). Just by reading the symptoms of HPD, it is clear that Harley Quinn must have it; why did no one notice this early on? It is because people with HPD are "usually able to function at a high level and can be successful socially and at work" (Histrionic Personality Disorder 2016). Meeting the Joker was the extra push Harley Quinn needed to become diagnosed with HPD. By reading any of the comics or watching any of the old TV shows, one can see that Harley Quinn constantly seeks the Joker's approval even though we as the audience see that the Joker could care less about her when he hits her and occasionally leaves her to be caught by the police.

Anyone one who knows Harley Quinn knows that she would do anything for the Joker, even if it means living a life of crime. Just as someone with HPD, Harley Quinn seeks out Jokers approval and when she was discovered pretending to be an inmate without second thought she broke the Joker out. It is believed that "the central theme of the delusion is that another person is

in love with the individual" (O'Donohue and Bowers 2006) Professors of Psychology at the University of Nevada. Therefore, since Harley Quinn is in love with the Joker, she is willing to sacrifice her reputation for him and become a criminal. Another statement O'Donohue and Bowers say is "The delusion often concerns idealized romantic love and spiritual union rather than sexual attraction". That statement means that the person wants to be in love and is not in it for the sexual pleasures of life. This means that Harley believes that she loves the Joker and would do anything for him and vice versa. Unfortunately, the Joker could care less about Harley and just uses her for his criminal acts and perhaps sexual needs.

Whether or not an individual has HPD everyone seeks approval; it could be from parents, friends, teachers, or lovers. However, if the person is not aware he or she is seeking approval, that characteristic could be linked to HPD. Harley Quinn will do anything to get the Joker's approval, but with her having HPD, she is not aware she is seeking it. People with HPD might "seek control of their partner through emotional manipulation or seductiveness on one level, whereas displaying a marked dependency on them at another level" (Bornstein). We see Harley Quinn use her good looks and revealing clothes all the time trying to entice or seduce the Joker; however, the Joker is focused on more important things like killing The Batman. Bornstein states that people with HPD use "denial to keep underlying dependency outside of awareness". This means that the individual denies that are dependent. Which explains why Harley keeps on trying to get approval from the Joker; she just denies his un-interest in her.

Other fans would argue about Harley Quinn having HPD and would say she has Hybristophilia. Hybristophilia is defined by Professor John Money as "a sexual paraphilia in which an individual derives sexual arousal and pleasure from having a sexual partner who is known to have "committed an outrage or crime, such as rape, murder, or armed robbery".

Hybristophilia is also known as “Bonnie and Clyde Syndrome”; however, in the DC world, it’s not Harley Quinn and the Joker it’s just the Joker with Harley at the back jumping through obstacles trying to grab the Joker’s attention through any means necessary. While the Joker is known for all the crimes he has committed, Hybristophilia is not why Harley Quinn stays with him. Just by observing Harley Quinn’s attire one can see that she does dress in a sexually appealing way and she and the Joker sometimes share passionate moments, but that does not mean she gains pleasure from watching the Joker commit crimes. She commits crime with the Joker because she wants his approval and attention just like someone with HPD would want approval and attention from a significant other.

Not only do people believe she has Hybristophilia they also believe she has Stockholm syndrome. Michael Adorjan et al (2012) defines Stockholm syndrome as a “disorder whereby abductees bond with or express loyalty toward their captors in an effort to save their lives or make their ordeal more tolerable”. Stockholm syndrome would only work in Harley’s case if the Joker abducted her. In addition, the abductee or abductees “have a false emotional bond towards the captor” (Adorjan et al 2012) and Harley’s emotions are on fast-forward with the Joker. Harley willingly broke the Joker out of Arkham Asylum after falling in love with his smooth talking ways, so when one thinks about it, there was never a kidnapping, just an Asylum escape. All in all, these two mental illness are far from what Harley Quinn has.

Harley Quinn was once a somewhat ordinary young women growing up before she met the Joker. She had a normal family an education and of course, her first crush. She had ambitions to become a psychiatrist and cure even the toughest of patients. This was a challenge for her since the patients refused to talk to the Doctors. She devised a plan to where she would dress up as an inmate and get close to the patients in hopes of curing them. However, sexually bribing the

Warden, a sign of HPD, to allow her to carry out her plan opened up a new door for her a door that leads her to a life of crime. The devil himself or as we know him the Joker was standing outside that door ready to use Harley for his own personal needs. One of those needs was to break out so after Harley accomplished this and she changed herself psychically and mentally to commit herself to the Joker.

In summary, Harley Quinn possesses all of the traits of having Histrionic Personality Disorder. HPD is when you “act or look overly seductive, are easily influenced by others, dramatic, sensitive, believe relationships are more intimate than they actually are, and are constantly seeking reassurance and approval”(Histrionic Personality Disorder 2016). Harley Quinn wears revealing attire to get the Jokers attention. She also constantly seeks his approval by committing any crime he desires whether it is murder or theft. The day that Harley Quinn met the Joker was the day she acquired Histrionic Personality Disorder, which lead her to a life of crime and constantly seeking approval from the Joker.

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