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Important Dates

- ◆ Spring Semester Begins on: 1-8-2018
- ◆ Drop/Add Ends: 1-13-2018
- ◆ MLK Holiday: 1-15-2018
- ◆ Graduation Application Deadline: 1-22-2018
- ◆ Spring Break: 3-5-2018
- ◆ Psych in a Box: 3-23-2018
- ◆ Last Day for W: 3-23-2018
- ◆ Spring Holiday: 3-30-2018
- ◆ April Fool's Day moved to 4-2-2018 due to leap year
- ◆ Fall Registration: 4-9-2018
- ◆ Last Class Day: 4-23-2018
- ◆ Graduation: 5/6/2018



Split: A Psycho-Movie Report

Kevin Malley

Dissociative Identity Disorder in M. Night Shyamalan's *Split*: Fact vs Fiction

Warning: Contains Spoilers!

Released in January of 2017, *Split* centers on Kevin Wendell Crumb (James McAvoy) who has 23 personalities. His psychiatrist, Dr. Karen Fletcher, calls it Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID).

In the movie, Kevin switches through the personalities by bringing them to "the light," during which time that personality dominates his actions. The first identity we are introduced to is Dennis, a clean freak with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder who kidnaps three young girls to dance for him. Over time these girls are held hostage by several of Kevin's personalities. Mainly, though, the two personalities that seem to

childhood trauma. Subjected to physical or emotional torture that a child cannot cope with, the young mind copes by creating an alternate, or split, personality that may be discarded once the traumatic event passes. The new personality is very different from the host identity, therefore being stronger and better able to protect itself. As future traumas occur, more identities are created to protect the host.

The manifestation of *The Beast* is where fiction begins to show through in *Split*. While it is true that some physical characteristics can change as a result of identities switching, *The Beast* takes it to a new level. It is possible that an individual's

"Split got a lot of DID correct but stretched itself too far when it changed Kevin's entire biological makeup to become The Beast."

capture the most screen time are Dennis and Patricia, an English-accented woman.

The movie plot is simple: Dennis and Patricia work together to keep the three girls so Kevin's 24th personality, *The Beast*, can consume them.

So how much of Kevin's DID appears in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders and how much is movie magic? To begin, the DSM-V states "*the defining feature of DID is the presence of two or more distinct personality states...*" Kevin more than fits this description with his 23 defined personalities. The second criterion involves recurrent gaps in the recall of everyday events, important personal information, and/or traumatic events that are inconsistent with ordinary forgetting. When Kevin switches from *The Beast* back to himself, he immediately says "*What did I do?*"

DID is believed to be caused by

handedness or voice can change with each personality; but *The Beast* literally increases the size of its muscles, becomes impenetrable to bullets and other weapons, and gains the ability to scale walls. *The Beast* is portrayed as a violent creature that seeks out "impure" humans and consumes them. However, in the real world DID develops as a coping mechanism, not a weapon. They are actually more likely to hurt themselves than others. The one personality that seems to help Kevin cope with his trauma is the nine year old boy, Hedwig, who appears when Kevin needs to relieve stress and act like a kid again.

It comes down to how much impact the brain actually has on biology and how quickly it can affect it. *Split* got a lot of DID correct but stretched itself too far when it changed Kevin's entire biological makeup to become *The Beast*.

Crisis in Psychology!

Students who have taken my research methods course may recall having heard me say that replication is supposed to be an important part of the scientific process. These students might also recall a conversation about two truths when it comes to publishing research: First, journals limit publications to studies that show significant outcomes (not significant = not published), and second, journals also do not like to accept articles that demonstrate what previously published articles already have shown. So, it shouldn't take much thinking to realize that the idea of replication does not mix well with the limits journals put on what constitutes acceptable publishing material.

In 2015 a slightly embarrassing (for psychology) article was published in the prestigious journal *Science* ("Estimating the reproducibility of psychological science"). The authors summarized the monumental efforts of many (330) researchers and research labs (125) to attempt replications of 100 already published psychology studies. Of the 100 studies they attempted to replicate, **only 35** were found to replicate. **YIKES!**

Trying to be fair, the researchers also took into account measures of reproducibility beyond mere p-values. When they took into account effect sizes and confidence intervals, they concluded that **68%** of the studies were

at least technically replicated. So, if we were the grading-sort, a 68% for a final grade gives us an underwhelming "D" for the field of Psychology. *Yikes again!*

How about some irony? Not surprisingly, the kinds of studies that tended to fail replication attempts were those that produced findings that most would consider to be surprising. On the other hand (surprisingly), the original researchers' expertise seemed to be entirely *unrelated* to whether the study replicated! That could be interpreted as good news - the idea that relatively inexperienced researchers are as good as (or, not any worse than) relatively experienced researchers in doing "good" research.

There have been others who have tried and failed to replicate psychology findings. Typically these tend to target the more interesting (surprising?) discoveries such as the **facial feedback hypothesis** (smiling will make you feel happier, frowning will make you feel bad); **ego-depletion theory** (the idea that self-control is a limited resource, so you can only say "no" so many times before saying "yes"); **priming-induced behavior changes** (e.g., reading words related to old age will make you behave older like slower walking); **the Macbeth Effect** (washing your hands will symbolically wash away your guilt); and so on.

Is *Warm Bodies* an Analogy for Depression?

Have you ever seen the movie *Warm Bodies*? It's a movie about a romance between a zombie and a human in a post-apocalyptic world. The movie starts out with *R* questioning what he is doing with his life, wondering why he cannot connect with people, and saying that he needs get out more and eat better. The zombies do not socialize aside from grunts and sometimes they suggest getting food. When *R* has to go out for food he steals things to try and find something to make him feel alive again. Eating brains is one way that makes him feel alive again. He sees the person's memories and feels what they felt. It is his way of feeling. If he were to give up hope and feelings he would become a "boney" (the worst type of zombie; furthest from human possible).

All of the symptoms of being a zombie

can also relate to symptoms of depression. A depressed person generally has a change in their diet; in this movie that change is the need to eat human flesh. Trouble sleeping is another symptom; the zombies do not sleep. Difficulty in thinking or decision making is also a symptom of depression; *R* displays these symptoms when trying to act normal and when he wanted to keep Julie with him at the airport. Another symptom of depression is slower moving or speaking; *R* displays both of these, but as the movie progresses these symptoms dissipate. In fact, each of the "symptoms" decrease throughout the movie as *R* becomes more human. The boneys were not able to be saved, though. They gave up. To me this represented suicide.

As the movie progresses *R* is curing

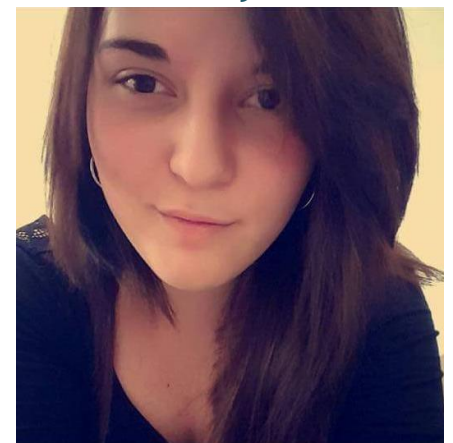
By Dr. Paul

Psychology isn't the only field to have some attention placed on replication. Cancer biology research is also on the chopping block and it could be argued that failure to replicate in this field may have wider reaching (more serious) consequences than psychology's failures!

For now, though, the take-home message from these failures of replication should not be about "catching" researchers at doing bad research. The failures of replication do not have to mean that bad research (or fraud) was actually done. There are other plausible explanations (e.g., the ways journals choose publications I first described above).

Instead it should serve as a warning and reminder that there are a lot of forces in play when it comes to a research outcome. We should not be focusing so heavily on trailblazing new paths through our fields or assume that every statistically significant outcome represents gospel truth. Rather, we should take more time to explore the boundaries and applications of what we have already identified. It is in this type of research environment that spurious outcomes wither away.

By Keira Fierst



himself. *R* starts getting more exercise from running around with Julie and he eventually is even able to sleep. The key to the cure was connecting with others, learning to live again, and being accepted.

The Rise of Depression in Student Athletes

The pressures of being a student-athlete often go unrecognized in the world of mental health. Discussing mental health has been a constant struggle in the sports community. When mental health is addressed in college athletics, it is often too late. That was the case for University of Pennsylvania track star, Madison Holleran who, on January 7, 2014, took her own life.

Madison struggled with the workload of her academics while trying to balance the intensity of being a Division I athlete. Being a collegiate athlete comes with high expectations to succeed in the classroom and in the sport. When the news came out about Madison's death no one understood why she would end her life. Madison had a track scholarship at a Division I, Ivy League University. She was beautiful, had great grades coming into college, and she even received a 3.5 GPA her first semester of college.

Maybe one reason for Madison's death was that she was struggling with her school work. A 3.5 GPA wasn't good enough for Madison because she had higher expectations for herself; expectations that her parents explained were unacceptable.

Madison isn't the only college athlete to struggle with the demands of balancing academics and athletics. According to Donohue et al. (2004), student athletes sustain higher risks for depression because of the number of stressors they face relative to non-athletes. In fact, the authors further



argued that the risks were greatest for female athletes.

Even though sports can provide psychological benefits, the increased number of stressors puts the collegiate athletic population at a higher risk for mental health impairments. The stressors athletes deal with include those normally associated with college life, but in addition such things as increased time demands, decreased autonomy, increased competition, anxiety related to retirement from the sport following graduation, and overall performance anxiety (Proctor & Boan-Lenzo, 2010).

According to a study done by the National Institute of Mental Health (2009), suicide is the second-leading cause of death among college students. Women outnumber men 2 to 1, which makes this issue especially significant given the greater incidence

mostly contact on Thursday's after school. Knowing this, Vermont schools can better address issues of bullying, especially on Thursdays. The best part about the data provided by the *Crisis Text Line* is that it is free and open to the public on crisistrends.org.

There are data for every crisis counselor, which is amazing. I know this because I volunteer as a crisis counselor and it is an incredible experience. The most common words my texters say to me are "help" and "thank you." It is not always easy, but it is an amazing experience I would not want to lose. So, if you are in a crisis

Ashlee Groover (#17)

of depression among female student athletes (Donohue et al., 2004).

The benefits of competing in athletics at the collegiate level are partially offset by disadvantages. The workload and extraordinary pressures that student-athletes face on a daily basis can trigger and intensify the onset of depression. For freshman athletes like Madison Holleran, they experience a certain shock that stems from starting at the bottom. They are no longer the best one on their team as may have been the case in high school, and the competitions are no longer just played for fun. Their lives are now filled with up to three workouts a day, and somehow time must be made for studying, maintaining good grades, and nurturing some form of a social life. The collegiate sport's community must work harder to provide college athletes, like Madison Holleran, with the emotional care and awareness that they deserve.

References

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- Proctor, S., & Boan-Lenzo, C. (2010). Prevalence of depressive symptoms in male intercollegiate student-athletes and nonathletes. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 4*, 204-220.

Data from Times of Crisis

When the *Crisis Text Line* started in 2013, the main goal was to help people in crisis through text messages. The secondary goal was to collect data on people in crisis. The text line did a soft opening in Chicago and within four months the Crisis Text Line was in every area code in the United States (Lublin, 2015).

After every conversation the crisis counselor and the person helped filled out a survey about their reasons for using the help line (plus demographic information). Because of this survey, we know that Vermont has the highest incidence of bullying, and the texters

Micki Brant

and need help text 741-741 and someone will be there for you. If you have between 2-12 hours a week to volunteer, consider going to the *Crisis Text Line* page and apply to become a crisis counselor.

If you are interested in the data, there is a lot to be learned from these people in crisis, and an abundance of data waits to be looked at (crisistrends.org).

References

- Lublin, N. (2015). How data from a crisis text line is saving lives. ted.com/talks/nancy_lublin_the_heartbreaking_text_that_inspired_a_crisis_help_line

Psychology of Learning Zoo Trip

On 11-3-2017, Dr. Paul's *Psychology of Learning* class took a behind-the-scenes trip to the zoo to see how the principles of behaviorism (operant conditioning) were applied to the care and management of the animals. Operant conditioning is the use of reinforcements and punishments to shape behavior.

The zoo trainers explained to us that they only use positive reinforcement (treats) and negative punishment (ignore an animal if it misbehaves) for training. In fact, the animals are never even forced to train. They only work with the animals if the animals want to work! When training occurs, it is used primarily for the benefit of the animals, such as healthcare. For example, the animals are trained to open their mouths on command so their teeth can be checked or to walk up to the side of their enclosures to

receive needed shots or medications.

The first animal we saw was a Blue and Yellow Macaw named Napoleon. The trainer, Beth, asked the macaw to do different things, such as say hello, laugh, or turn its head and when done correctly, Napoleon was rewarded with food. Macaws can take a long time to train and require lots of patience. Beth said she has worked with Napoleon for 17 years.

Next, we saw sea lions. The male sea lion was the largest, weighing up to 900 pounds depending on the time of year. The class observed a typical training session in which each sea lion had its own trainer and the trainer used fish and squid as rewards for completing tasks. Tasks included spinning in circles, doing flips in the water, opening their mouths, lifting flippers, showing their bellies, and swimming to the far wall until the trainer cued them to return. We then got to meet with the sea lion trainers

and talk about their jobs and heard about their passion for these animals and for training them.

Our next stop was the sea otters. We learned that these animals are the most expensive animals in the zoo to feed because they only eat human-grade seafood. We watched as the sea otters ate their food out of a floating ball with small holes in it. This method of feeding is used because it takes the animals longer to get to the food, since they have to work for it. The trainers do this and other enrichment activities to keep the sea otters mentally occupied. Otherwise the otters would eat quickly and want to continue eating all day.

Overall this trip was a great way to see applications of class concepts as well as how psychology is used in ways that may be overlooked in other psychology classes.

Kelli Rojtas

RMU Psychology Club Update

The Psychology Club's updated vision includes providing opportunities beneficial to students professionally, academically, and socially.

Around midterms the club shared some sweet treats while they made stress release fortune tellers. Students tailored their fortune tellers to reflect how they release stress.

Students also took a break from their studies in the "Psych Olympics" which was this year's theme for the *Psychosocial*. Students signed up for teams and were assigned mystery team captains (psych professors). Each team first created a team flag and then competed in "minute-to-win-it" style games like *Separation Anxiety*, *Freud Lost His Bow Tie*, and *Stack Attack*. Congrats to Team Fidget Spinner on winning the games!

Psi Chi FYI

The RMU chapter of Psi Chi currently boasts 127 members and in April 2018 will hold its 11th Induction Ceremony

Also, congratulations to Dr. Wheeler on winning the Professor Faceoff Cotton Ball Challenge, as he was up against tough competition via Dr. Pandit and Professor Paul!

To help students professionally the Psych Club held a practicum discussion session. Students currently completing their practicum offered words of advice and answered audience questions. To finish off the fall semester both the Psychology Club and Psi Chi have joined with the Career Center to sponsor a GRE Strategy Session. A speaker from the Princeton Review will be on campus to talk with students about the exam and how best to prepare for it.



Megan Racioppo

The club vision plan will be applied to the upcoming spring semester. The event to look forward to is the Mocktail (where students have practice job interviews with, and constructive feedback from, local professionals in the field).

Have a suggestion for a club meeting? Please feel free to email us at rmupsychclub@gmail.com to share your idea! Also note that you do NOT have to be a psychology major to join the Psychology Club! All you need is an interest in psychology. If you would like to join the Psychology Club, or, if you have any questions, please contact Dr. Wheeler (wheeler@rmu.edu)!

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