

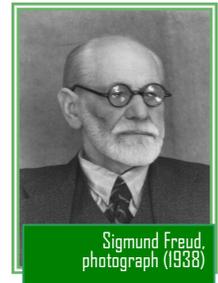


The Freudian Slip

March 2012

CSB/SJU Psychology Department Newsletter

College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University



Sigmund Freud, photograph (1938)

LUCK OF THE IRISH

By Natalie Vasilj

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With the festivities of St. Patrick's Day drawing near, it is easy to feel as though the luck of the Irish is with you regardless of your nationality. The Irish are known for their beliefs and superstitions. Leprechauns, fairies, and unique good luck charms are all a part of the magic and mystical folklore of the green isle. However, all the tradition and mythology can be distracting and cause us to forget the true history of the Irish.

From famines to wars, the Irish have had their fair share of suffering, and yet we still perceive the nation as a "lucky" one and hold onto our shamrocks and horseshoes hoping that a little Irish luck will pass our way. Is it all just a bunch of blarney?

Surprisingly, psychologists say no. According to Lysann Damisch and her collaborators at the University of Cologne, there is evidence that

having quirky rituals and lucky charms in your life may actually enhance your physical and intellectual functioning.

In Damisch's paper soon to be published *Psychological Science*, she focuses on a few experiments that show us that having a little luck in our lives is a good thing.

In one experiment subjects were asked to perform 10 golf putts with a ball that was dubbed "lucky" or "a ball that everyone has used so far." Those who putted with the "lucky" ball made 6.42 putts on average, while those who had the plain ball made an average of 4.75 putts.

Another study asked participants to generate as many words as possible from a set of eight letters. Before doing so, participants took a survey rating their self-efficiency and goals for how many words they wished to create. One group was allowed to use their lucky charms during the experiment

and one was not. Those who used their lucky charms persisted much longer in assembling words, averaging about twelve minutes compared to the other group who only lasted seven. Those with lucky charms also found 50% more words than the other group. Researchers believed this was due to an increase in confidence which was brought on by the good luck charm.

So on St. Patty's Day, wear your green and keep your rabbit foot near. Indulge in your superstitions and quirky rituals knowing that they just might bring you good fortune. Search for that pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, and may the "luck of the Irish" be with you.



UPCOMING EVENTS:

Spring Break,
March 2nd- March 11th

Little Sibs Weekend,
March 16th- March 18th

Thinking About Graduate School?,
March 26th, 4:30-5:30 pm
Academic Services Building 222, CSB

MARCH 5TH: DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER DAY

By Jill Lenzen

For many of us, March 5th is simply another day of Spring Break, but March 5th is also Dissociative Identity Disorder Day, formerly known as Multiple Personalities Day. This day was created to raise awareness of Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) and to help spread information about this disorder.

Dissociative identity disorder (DID), formerly called multiple personality disorder or split personality, is an illness that is characterized by the presence of at least two clear personality states, called alters, which may have different reactions, emotions, and body functioning. Although there is no one specific cause of DID, it does seem to be a reaction to childhood trauma. The overall theory is that a child will try to get rid of or “wall off” specific memories, and when this reaction is taken to the extreme, DID forms.

There are several different symptoms of DID. Some of these symptoms include:

- lapses in memory (dissociation)
- experiencing blackouts in time
- being frequently accused of lying when they do not believe they are lying
- finding items in one's possession but not recalling how those things were acquired
- encountering people with whom one is unfamiliar but who seem to know them sometimes as someone else

- being called names that are completely unlike their own name or nickname

- hearing voices inside their head that are not their own

- not recognizing themselves in the mirror

- feeling unreal (derealization)

- feeling like they are watching themselves move through life rather than living their own life

- and feeling like more than one person.

While some of these symptoms may be present the morning after a night out with friends, actually being diagnosed with this disorder is fairly rare and is often not diagnosed alone.

Statistics regarding this disorder indicate that the incidence of DID is about 3% of the patients in psychiatric hospitals and is described as occurring in females nine times more often than in males. To diagnose DID, mental-health professionals perform a mental-health interview, ruling out other mental disorders, and referring the client for medical evaluation to rule out a physical cause for symptoms. Professionals usually gather facts about the individual's childhood and ask questions to explore whether the symptoms that the client is suffering from are not better accounted for by another mental disorder, dissociative or otherwise.

Individuals with DID will

often experience other emotional mental illnesses. These include posttraumatic stress disorder, borderline personality disorder, and a number of other personality disorders, as well as conversion disorder.

Some professionals continue to question whether or not DID actually exists. One main concern is that not every individual who suffered childhood trauma develops DID. Another concern is that the diagnosis of DID is fairly rare and many more children experiencing childhood trauma will not be diagnosed then will be diagnosed with DID. Even with all of the research being conducted today, there are still many mysteries concerning the highly complex and unknown nature of the brain and psyche, but we are coming closer every day to understanding how our mind is connected to mental illness as research continues.

So on March 5th, do not forget to tell your friends, family or significant other about Dissociative Identity Disorder and help spread awareness!





STUDENTS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

By Rachel Heying

Each year, a number of psychology students work incredibly hard on an honors thesis. However, not everyone is always aware of the research being conducted by these students. Let's take a moment to learn about the research some of this year's students have done, and to appreciate all of their hard work!

Alex Lenzen is studying the recognition of gender microaggressions and its relationship to gender, self-esteem, and ambivalent sexism. She chose this topic because of its connection to multicultural and counseling psychology, two fields she has an interest in.



Alex Lenzen

Microaggressions are "brief and common verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities that can be intentional, but are oftentimes unintentional, that communicate hostility to the target person or group", whether it is based on gender, race, class, or sexual orientation. Alex focused on gender microaggressions, because women often do not even realize that the encounter is discriminatory.

In her experiment, Alex created six short passages that illustrated a microaggression. The passages were followed by questions that assessed recognition. Alex's hypothesis was threefold: 1) Women would have greater recognition of microaggressions than men, 2) Ambivalent sexism, including hostile and benevolent sexism, would negatively correlate with recognition of gender microaggressions, and 3) Body image and self-esteem will be correlated to recognition of gender microaggressions.

Alex sees a lot of value in research. "I really view research as a way to promote social justice," she said. "Knowledge is power. By doing research with underprivileged populations, I hope that the knowledge that is generated can help produce the power to change this discrepancy in privilege." She plans to go on to grad school to pursue a degree in counseling psychology and continue researching underprivileged populations, particularly women and those in the GLBT community.

To learn more about Alex's research and see her results, please attend her thesis defense on April 19th at 4:30 pm in New Science Center Room 250. All are welcome!

Stephanie Kaplan has been researching gender differences in the ability to recognize individual facial features. Her topic came about in an interesting way. "Funny story, actually!" she said. "In the fall of 2011 I was studying abroad in Australia and my roommate abroad was Hmong. One day we were talking about some of the different experiences and ideas we had due to our cultural heritage and upbringing, and what that meant for us today. She jokingly told me that "all White people look the same," when the conversation turned to ideals of beauty. We didn't talk about it much after that but it made me start considering what we really observe when looking at unfamiliar faces." Stephanie is also very interested in gender research, and so the two topics seemed to naturally merge.



To study the gender differences in recognizing facial features, Stephanie used the program Psyscope to create five stimuli group for five different features: eyes, nose, mouth, hair, and jaw line. With each group, the participants in her experiment were shown a series of whole faces, and then were later shown individual features and were asked to identify them as previously seen or new. She then used confidence ratings and raw scores to calculate the accuracy of the participants' answers.

Stephanie will be presenting and defending her thesis on April 16th at 4:30 pm in Gorecki 107. "The process has been very challenging at times," she said, "but overall incredibly rewarding." Come show your support and find out the results of Stephanie's experiment!

Pierce Edmiston is studying the effects of behavioral mimicry on perceived social relationships. Pierce has noticed that mimicry is all around us; people unconsciously take on the posture, gestures, and even speaking styles of those around them ("Look for it in your next lecture!" he suggests).



Pierce Edmiston

Pierce is interested in the cognitive mechanisms behind this behavior matching, and how the tendency of people to mimic is related to the ability to learn by imitation. Pierce plans to continue exploring the topic of mimicry in grad school.

Past research has shown a connection between mimicry and relationships. "Both being mimicked and mimicking someone

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else have been shown to promote positive social behavior in a people outside of the dyad.” With that in mind, Pierce designed an experiment to look at how mimicking one person and not mimicking others affects how all of the people in the experiment were liked.

Pierce will be defending his thesis on April 26th at 4:00 PM in Quad 254. All are welcome to attend to learn more about his research and the results of his study!

Alyssa Sinner researched evaluative conditioning with “not.” Her idea came from Dr. Wielkiewicz, who was particularly interested in the implications that the word “not” might have in political speeches. “When Nixon said, “I am not a crook,” she explains, “it was meant to assert his innocence; however, it also paired “Nixon” with “crook” in the public

mind.” Alyssa is very interested in language development, and so decided to tackle this topic. Though it does not relate specifically to the field of psychology she plans to study in graduate school, the research process has been “immensely valuable.”

Alyssa set up a computer program for her experiment and attempted to condition the participants by showing them names on the screen while they simultaneously heard adjectives through their headphones, one adjective with each name. One name was always paired with positive adjectives, such as happy and healthy, while one name was paired with negative adjectives like sad and sick. In the second condition, the word “not” was added to each of the adjectives,



Alyssa Sinner

so that the positively conditioned name was paired with “not sad” and “not sick”, while the negatively conditioned name was paired with “not happy” and “not healthy,” for example. This was done in an attempt to see if people processed the phrases by either integrating or ignoring the word “not.” Interestingly, Alyssa found that males and females actually process the “not” differently.

To find out more about this, attend her thesis defense on April 13th at 4:30 pm in the Theresa Reception Center Board Room in the Main Building. Come show your support!

All of the honors thesis students will also be presenting their theses on Scholarship and Creativity Day. Stay tuned for more details as the date comes closer! Also, look for more students in the spotlight in our next issue!

IRISH PROVERBS:

It is more difficult to maintain honour than to become prosperous.

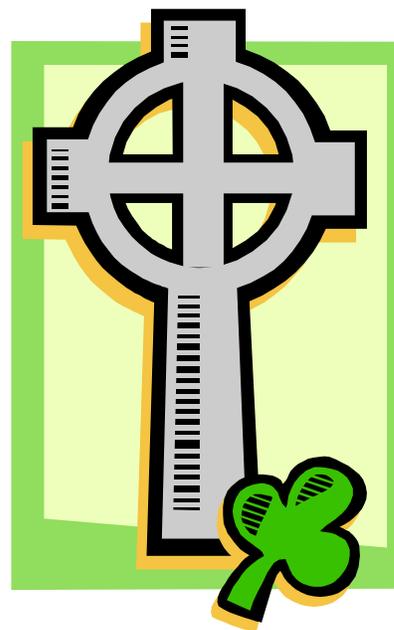
There are fish in the sea better than have ever been caught.

You never miss the water till the well runs dry.

Everyone feels his own wound first.

However long the day, night must fall.

If God sends you down a stony path, may he give you strong shoes.



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Luck of the Irish

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March 5th: Dissociative Identity Disorder Day

http://www.medicinenet.com/dissociative_identity_disorder/article.htm

