



Ashoka University



WELCOME TO OUR
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
PSYCH!

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ABOUT US

Welcome! As a part of the Psychology Society of Ashoka University, we are thrilled to bring to you our newsletter. Fueled by our passion for psychology, we aim to create a space to share knowledge and foster collaboration in our community. As we delve into the human mind and behavior, we are thrilled to bring you a diverse range of insights, research findings, and practical tips that we hope will enrich your understanding of the fascinating world of psychology. Whether you are an aspiring Psychology Major or simply someone with a passion for the understanding of the human mind, this newsletter is for you! Happy Reading!

Written by Gurnoor Kaur

Reviewed by Anoushka Malik

[Trigger Warning: Mention of Suicide]

With its name and official affliction derived from popular playwright William Shakespeare's Macbeth, the Lady Macbeth Effect has come to be studied as a proposed if not entirely established psychological phenomenon. Albeit lacking the flair to become a completely fleshed-out concept within psychology, this effect uses a popular character as the anchor to explain a concept that can be a bit ambiguous to research independently but nonetheless provides valuable insight into human behavior.



The Lady Macbeth Effect encompasses a very distinct and localized set of symptoms wherein an individual gets the repeated urge to clean themselves—especially their hands—to intrinsically ‘wash off’ their guilty conscience of its morally and/or ethically dubious or sinister actions. In the original play, Lady Macbeth is not responsible for inflicting any direct harm, rather, she manipulates and motivates others to commit these acts of violence—murder being the gravest—because she is highly ambitious and they are necessary for her to achieve her goals. The consequences she comes to face after their completion causes her a great amount of guilt and leads her into a spiral of trying to ‘wash the blood off her hands’ that was never actually there.

The gravity of the results of her high aspirations was unforeseen by Lady Macbeth, which she realizes too late, but even then her motivations do not take rest and she continues to plot her ascent to greatness. It all eventually catches up to her, taking a serious toll on her psyche - and when no amount of scrubbing or washing would rid her of the blood on her conscience, “Out, Damned Spot! Out I Say!” (Shakespeare, 1623) she would find herself crying out but unfortunately the only way out she would find for herself was to commit suicide. Hence, the only actual blood that stained her hands was that of her own self.

To study this effect, in 2006, two researchers, Chen-Bo Zhong and Katie Liljenquist, conducted a study with multiple tests to investigate if presenting a peril to one's morality sets off the need for physical cleaning in individuals and if it has any effect on their conscience afterwards. “We first determined whether a threat to moral purity increases the mental accessibility of cleansing-related words.

We asked participants to recall in detail either an ethical or unethical deed from their past and to describe any feelings or emotions they experienced. Then they engaged in a word completion task in which they converted word fragments into meaningful words. Of the six word fragments, three (W __ H, SH __ ER, and S __ P) could be completed as cleansing-related words (wash, shower, and soap) or as unrelated words (e.g., wish, shaker, and step). Participants who recalled an unethical deed generated more cleansing-related words than those who recalled an ethical deed, suggesting that unethical behavior enhances the accessibility of cleansing-related concepts” (Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006). Attempts to replicate the study have been made in the succeeding years since the original one was released. It still is a researched topic but a rather niche field within psychology. That is not to say that failure to achieve results favoring the effect in every single study conducted is the only way to prove its credibility, but it also does not catalyze the process.

Another reason the Lady Macbeth effect fails to gain its own standing is because the effect is a prolific, and commonly observed symptom of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). OCD is characterized by symptoms like excessive thoughts— obsessions, which may or may not lead to repetitive actions that are called compulsions. For the Lady Macbeth Effect to be established as a function independent of OCD which is a widely recognized disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5 TR), will be a tedious process which involves proving that the very particular symptom it exhibits can in itself be diagnosable when kept apart from the other symptoms of OCD.

A proposed theorem in any field of science requires extensive research, proof of reliability and validity to become an established phenomenon, and the Lady Macbeth Effect serves as no exception.

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Written by Ananya Dubey

Reviewed by Myrah Sahni

Dissociative identity disorder (DID), previously known as multiple personality disorder, is a psychological condition wherein a person develops distinct identities usually as a defence mechanism against traumatic events. As opposed to popular belief, a person with this disorder does not develop different personalities but rather experiences fragmentations of his/her identity. This is why the name of the disorder was changed into dissociative identity disorder from multiple personality disorder. The various identities have their own way of speaking, their own memories and preferences which differ from the mannerisms and memories of the primary identity of the individual. There is no cure for dissociative identity disorder. However with long term therapy, the psychological symptoms attached with this disorder can be reduced thereby improving the individual's functioning.

There have been many cases of individuals developing dissociative identity disorder and Jeni Haynes' is one of them. She was abused by her father as a child till the age of 11 and as a result of this abuse, she developed 2500 different identities as a way to survive. The first identity that she developed was a girl named Symphony who was four years old.

Jeni Haynes in an interview conducted by BBC said that when her father was abusing her, he was actually abusing Symphony and not her (Jeni). Throughout the abuse, she continued to develop many other identities and the persona and memories of the various identities differed. Each of these identities would experience and contain different aspects of the abuse inflicted by Jeni's father. This prevented Jeni from experiencing the entire abuse all by herself and therefore, allowed her to survive. A few of the 2500 identities that Jeni developed include an eight year old boy named Ricky, a "tall" and "slender" lady named Linda, a short red haired boy named Judas. In 2019, Jeni and her various alters testified in court against her father. Not only Jeni but also Symphony, Judas and others provided their statements in court, recounting the pain and terror they experienced because they were also victims of the abuse that Jeni's father thought he was inflicting on only her.

"I want my 10-year struggle for justice to literally have been the fire that ripped through the field so that people behind me have a much easier road," said Jeni to BBC. Jeni Haynes was the first person in Australia to testify against her abuser from the combined viewpoints of both her and her alters.

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SHOULD BE WATCHED WITH CAUTION

Written by Mohadisa Rizvi

Reviewed by Aayushee Bhat

With the rise of What I Eat In A Day videos on social media, it is important to recognize their potential harms.

Beyond inspiring people to eat healthy meals, they can be quite problematic.

“What I Eat in a Day” videos have been gaining immense popularity on social media. They can serve as sources of inspiration and encourage people to eat more healthy foods, try different recipes, and become more mindful of what they eat. While the intention of these videos may be good, they often do a poor job of realistically representing what one should eat. They are created to be visually appealing and engaging, but have the potential to do more harm than good.

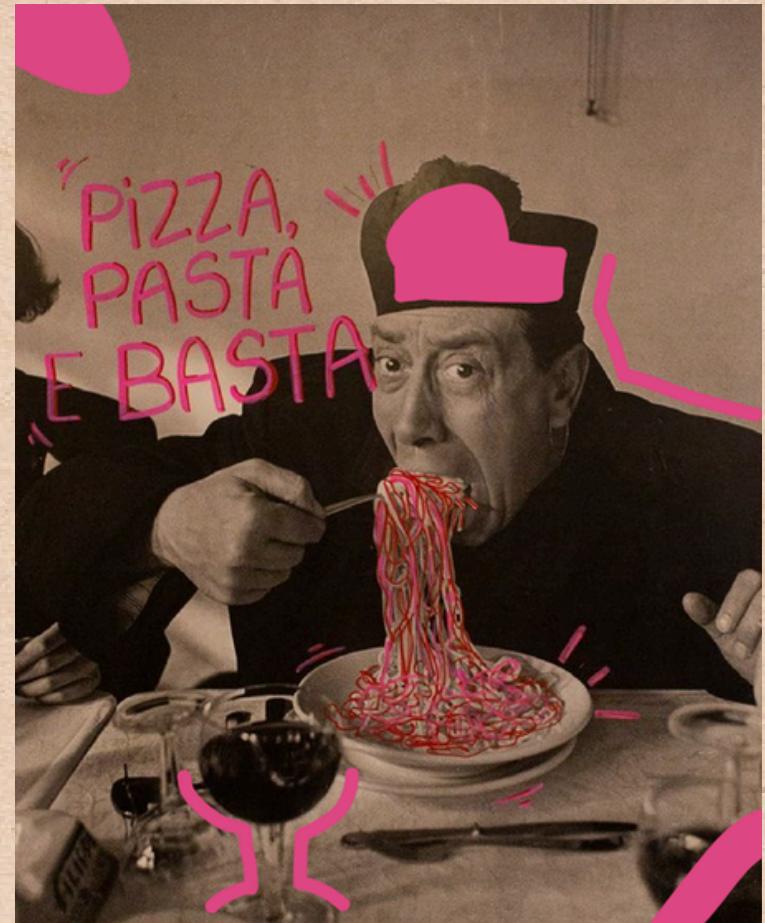
These videos often begin with a body check and offer some nutritional advice, and more often than not, the influencers giving the advice are not certified dieticians or experts. Rather, lifestyle gurus and influencers, who are not necessarily certified experts, use personal testimony and social media credibility to promote health practices, often giving advice that contradicts established medical opinions (Topham & Smith, 2023). The videos are frequently sponsored by a nutritional brand, and the influencers promote their products in order to sell them. While it is important to recognize that WIEIAD videos are not inherently bad, it is also important to watch them with a critical eye and always be on the lookout for red flags. Here are some of the ways in which these videos can be problematic:

1) Unrealistic Representations

What we see on social media is often just a small glimpse of someone’s life. It is very rare to see someone describe exactly what and how they eat every day. Yet people tend to believe that this is how these influencers eat consistently. Watching influencers eat a “healthy” and “clean” diet can cause other people to feel guilty about what they eat, even when occasionally indulging in a treat is completely normal. As viewers, it is important to recognize that not everything we see on social media is the absolute truth.

2) Unhealthy Comparison

Social media is already well known to foster unhealthy comparisons. When watching these influencers with a ‘thin’ body post about what they eat, people may compare their diets with what they see online. Influencers often tend to portray that there is one ideal healthy diet that everyone should follow.



This myth can cause people to change their diets to be similar to what these influencers eat, which is problematic because not everyone has the same nutritional requirements. Modelling your diet based on someone else's can lead you to ignore your body's needs, which can further cause under- or over-eating. Even if you eat exactly the same way as the influencer, it is very likely that you still won't look like them. How our body looks is determined by many factors, such as genetics, environment, activity level, sleep, and stress level. The WIEIAD trend ignores these factors and often contains the underlying message that 'if you eat like me, you will look like me'. And, as we just saw, it is much more complicated than that.

3) Risk of Disordered Eating

These videos can also lead to disordered eating habits as they can increase unhealthy eating habits such as dieting, bingeing, overly restricting or avoiding certain foods, and obsessing over food choices. Their restrictive nature causes and reinforces guilt, shame, and discontent, making the perfect environment for eating disorders to thrive. The body checks at the beginning of these videos can also cause issues with body image and self-esteem as they perpetuate the idealized beauty standards that society has created. There is also a tendency to moralize food and label it as good or bad, which further perpetuates disordered eating habits. What this shows is that influencers can, even unintentionally, give advice or promote behaviors that may be triggering for people at risk of an eating disorder.

So, if you do find yourselves watching these types of videos, try to view them just for enjoyment and fun. It is natural to start comparing what these influencers eat to your diet and try to mimic them, but doing so has a lot of consequences. Following what these influencers eat is not the best option, as they don't know what is best for you. Instead of watching these videos for comparison or as a nutritional guide and following their diet, you can try being more attentive and responsive to your body's needs. Research has shown that eating intuitively is a better and more sustainable option than dieting or restricting to build a healthy relationship with food and your body (Engeln, 2021). It is essential to be more mindful of the risks of consuming such content and be more vigilant about the potential harm that these videos can cause. Remember, not everything is as perfect and glamorous as it looks on social media.

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Written by Kabir Dev Mittra

The night bird sings in the dead of night,
As I lay my head on the pillow,
The monster creeps out from under my bed,
And asks me why I am so mellow.

I have nothing to answer,
No anecdote to recant,
No poem to recite,
Nothing but a story,
A story which begins from the end,
The dead of night.
Even in the bleak midwinter,
The warmth of fear doesn't seem to pass.
Crippling through my bones,
Crawling up my spine,
Sitting alone in the silence,
As the darkness falls in line.

The blood on my hands doesn't seem to fade,
Blood which is not red,
Blood which doesn't belong to someone else.
I grasp my hands together,
As I sink deeper in myself.
Alone, I think, I feel,
I have no one to cradle except my own anxieties.

I wake up,
Still in the dark,
The elder clock chimes,
As I break apart.
I shut the windows;
I lock the doors.
But I know that this won't be enough to keep
my thoughts at bay.





They barge in like savages,
They grasp my heart and condemn my soul.
I feel it, I feel it again.
The pestilence of temptation coursing
Through my veins,
Poisoning my mind,
Getting deeper inside my brain.

Noon is afraid to come,
And it shadows my heart to repeat,
As they assume their seat,
And send out their discrepancies,
Meddling with something that doesn't belong
to them,
That doesn't belong to me.

Even as I recant,
I feel the chill rushing through me.
The feeling of bloodshed,
The smell of blood on a battlefield.

But this war is worse,
Worse than the gallows and terrains,
Worse than the Trojans and Spartans,
whose sieges were in vain.
This is not a war between men,
But, a battle within oneself.

So, I ask the monster under my bed,
What he thinks?
He looks in my eyes and says,
“I don't know from where to begin”.



Clubs and Societies fair

To introduce the Psychology Society to the new batch, we put up a stall which included a game of “pin the tongue on Freud”, with stickers and toffees. We also had an F1 reaction time game.

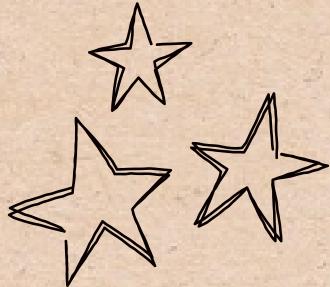
Gratitude Wall

We conducted this to promote a sense of gratitude. People came and wrote down one thing they're grateful for. We also sold stickers and posters. The Freud and Van Gogh ones were the most popular ones!



PSA wide meeting

Our first meeting with the full team. We organised a game of Psych Taboo.



The image shows the cover art for the first episode of the Psy-Kicks podcast. It features a vintage television set displaying a grayscale image of a brain being dissected. The title "PSY-KICKS" is written in large, bold, white letters across the top. Below the TV, the text "AN ASHOKAN PRODUCTION" is visible. At the bottom, the episode title "Ep.1 - Introduction/Psychology at Ashoka" is displayed in white, along with the name "Psy-Kicks". A Spotify logo is at the bottom left.

Launch of PSY-KICKS

The launch of the first episode of the official PsychSoc Podcast. The episode covers navigating Psychology at Ashoka through fun antidotes. Please do check it out!!



PSYCHOLOGY FACT OF THE MONTH

Lie Detectors are not accurate



Though often portrayed as crucial for catching liars in media, the reality of polygraph tests is far less reliable. Although it is referred to as the “lie detector” test, the test only measures physiological changes including heart rate, perspiration, blood pressure, and skin conductivity (Gonzalez, n.d.). These tests use a structured format where subjects are asked both control questions and relevant questions. The test works on the assumption that if the individual is guilty, they will exhibit heightened physiological responses to the relevant questions.

However, this detection method is flawed. Some people might show heightened responses due to nervousness while someone guilty can be completely calm passing through undetected. The idea that an individual’s veracity can be detected by analysing psychophysiological changes is more myth than fact (Saxe, 1991). Essentially, the polygraph is just a fear detector. Many individuals feel dread simply because they believe the test can catch them in a lie causing physical responses, which might explain why the test appears effective in some cases (The Truth About Lie Detectors (Aka Polygraph Tests), 2004).

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A RECAP OF EXCITING PSYCHOLOGY NEWS

New research finds that the brain can accurately recall song pitches even without conscious effort



It's a nearly universal experience: out of nowhere, a tune starts playing in your head. These persistent musical snippets, known as "earworms," or Involuntary Musical Imagery (INMI), affect almost the entire population at least once a month. While earworms can be irritating sometimes, especially if it's a catchy jingle you'd rather forget, they offer a unique glimpse into how our brains process musical memory. If a song is stuck in your head, you would either be able to easily recognize it or feel like it's just on the tip of your tongue even if you cannot recall the name.

Recent research conducted by Matthew G. Evans and his colleagues suggests otherwise (Evans et al., 2024). In the study participants that were non-musicians without perfect pitch were asked to record themselves humming tunes stuck in their heads. Surprisingly, nearly 45% of the recordings matched the original key, and 69% were within one semitone.

This study revealed that even without perfect pitch, our brains can recall musical pitch with remarkable precision. Furthermore, the accuracy of pitch recall wasn't dependent on how recently participants heard the song, suggesting that our brains store pitch information more robustly than previously thought. These findings highlight the sophistication of musical memory in the general population, suggesting that even passive exposure to music trains our brains to store pitch information subconsciously, enhancing our ability to recall it later—whether we're conscious of it or not.

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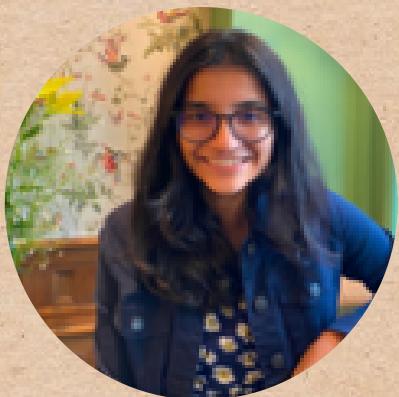
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