A Case of Multiple Personality

Thigpen and Cleckley

1954
Multiple Personality Disorder

• Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) is defined in DSM-III as a dissociative disorder in which two or more distinct personalities coexist within one and the same individual. It is an example of a neurotic disorder.
Please note...

- Multiple Personality is not a form of schizophrenia. Schizophrenia is a type of psychosis where contact with reality and insight are impaired. Other symptoms can include hallucinations and delusions.
The aim of this article was to provide an account of the psychotherapeutic treatment of a 25-year-old woman who was referred to Thigpen and Cleckley because of 'severe and blinding headaches'.
Bell Ringer

- Kim Noble’s Personalities
- Kim's 'Judy' personality
- Kim Noble's personality Artwork
PROCEDURE/METHOD

• The psychiatrists used a case study method. This consisted of interviews with the patient and her family, hypnosis, observation, EEG tests and a number of psychometric and projective tests including, memory tests, ink blot tests and intelligence tests.
FINDINGS/RESULTS

• The patient was referred to as Eve White in the study
• At the first interview she also complained of “blackouts”
• her family were not aware of anything that would suggest a real loss of consciousness or serious mental confusion.
FINDINGS/RESULTS

• During interviews several emotional difficulties were revealed. The psychiatrists believed that she had a number of complex, but relatively commonplace marital conflicts and personal frustrations.

• Puzzled that Eve White had no memory of a recent trip.

• The therapists used hypnosis and the amnesia was cleared.
FINDINGS/RESULTS

• Several days after a visit to the therapists, a letter from Eve White appeared at the therapists’ office.

• The letter concerned her therapy and was written in her usual handwriting, but at the bottom of the page there was a paragraph that looked like a child had written it.
Dear Sara,

Remembering my visit to thought me a great deal of relief, & begin with.
Just being able to recall the trip seemed enough, but now that I've had time to think about it and all that occurred, it's more painful than I ever thought possible.

How can I be sure that I remember all that happened, even now? How can I know that it won't happen again? I wonder if I'll ever be sure of anything again.

While I was there with you it seemed different. Somehow it didn't matter so much, as have forgotten, but now it does matter. I knew it was something that doesn't happen but I can't even recall color scheme and I knew that would probably be the first thing I'd notice.

My head hurts right on top - it has ever since the day I was down there to see you. I think it means it's my eyes. I see little red green specks - and I'm confused with some kind of rash.

Help please be quite kind and don't let me make matters worse. I'm only trying to express and innocent act of my own marque.
FINDINGS/RESULTS

• The next visit, Eve White denied sending the letter, though she recalled having begun one.

• During the interview, Eve White who was normally very self-controlled, became distressed and asked whether hearing an occasional imaginary voice made her insane.

• Reported that she on several occasions over the last few months briefly heard a voice addressing her.

• During this conversation Eve White, suddenly put both hands to her head. Moments later dropper her hands, the therapist observed a ‘quick, reckless smile’ and in a bright voice she said: ‘Hi there, Doc’!
FINDINGS/RESULTS

• It seemed that the usually conventional and retiring Eve White had changed into a carefree person. There also seemed to be a different physical presence in terms of manner, gestures, and eye movements. When asked her name she replied that she was Eve Black.

• This new person ‘had a childish daredevil air, an erotically mischievous glance, a face marvelously free from signs of care’. The voice and language were also very different, to the therapist it appeared to be an entirely different woman.
FINDINGS/RESULTS

• Over the next 14 months, during a series of interviews totaling approximately 100 hours, extensive material was obtained about the behavior and experience of Eve White and Eve Black.

• Eve Black could sometimes ‘pop out’ unexpectedly, but only the therapists could ‘call her out’ when Eve White was under hypnosis. Similarly, after a few hypnotic sessions the therapists could request Eve Black to let them speak to Eve White.
FINDINGS/RESULTS

• After more sessions they found that hypnosis was no longer needed for the changes. The therapists stated that this did complicate Eve White’s life considerably as Eve Black found herself more able to ‘take over’ than before.
• They believed that Eve Black had enjoyed an independent life since Eve’s early childhood and when she was ‘out’ Eve White was not aware of what was happening. However, when Eve Black was not out she was aware of what was happening.
FINDINGS/RESULTS

• Eve Black told the therapists about a number of incidents in childhood where she engaged in acts of mischief or disobedience, which Eve White was unaware of and was punished for. Some of these incidents were later backed up in interviews with her parents and her husband.
Reflective

• Is DID real or created?
• There are different views on the explanation for this disorder.
• There has been much debate about how this disorder comes into being. There are two main views:
Two views - it is a...

- **Spontaneous phenomenon** - The disorder really does exist in the person. The therapist diagnoses and treats this pre-existing mental disorder.

- **Iatrogenic phenomenon** (i·at·ro·gen·ic) - The disorder does not pre-exist in the person but is created by therapist themselves. The therapist creates it by unconsciously imposing the disorder through their own expectations. The patient reacts to the perceived demands of being in therapy and 'lives up' to the diagnosis.
Bell Ringer

- A woman with 7 personalities
FINDINGS/RESULTS

• Eve Black’s behavior was ‘characterized by irresponsibility and a shallowly hedonistic desire for excitement and pleasure’.
• She succeeded in concealing her identity not only from Eve White, but also from her parents and husband.
• Eve Black denied marriage, she despised, and denied any relationship to Eve White’s daughter except that of an unconcerned bystander.
• To her husband, daughter and parents her unpleasant behavior, harshness and occasional acts of violence were explained in terms of ‘unaccountable fits of temper in a woman who was habitually gentle and considerate’.
FINDINGS/RESULTS

• During Eve Black’s longer periods ‘out’ she avoided her family and close friends, and sought the company of strangers and she was also able to remain unrecognized when it suited her by imitating Eve White.

• Both personalities were given a series of psychometric (i.e. IQ and memory tests) and projective tests (i.e. Rorschach and drawings of human figures) by an independent expert with the following results:
FINDINGS/RESULTS

• IQ test results:
  • Eve White IQ - 110
  • Eve Black 104.

• Memory Test results: Eve White had a superior memory over that of Eve Black

• Rorschach test (ink blot test) and drawings of human figures results:
  – The profile of Eve Black was far healthier than Eve White. Eve White was repressive showing obsessive-compulsive traits, rigidity and an inability to deal with her hostility.
FINDINGS/RESULTS

• During therapy sessions it became clear that Eve Black had little compassion for Eve White, and could not be persuaded to help with the therapy.
  – For example, the therapists noted that Eve Black had ‘often misled the therapist into believing she was cooperating, when in fact her behavior was particularly detrimental to Eve White’s progress’.

• As Eve White became aware of Eve Black’s existence through the therapy, she became able to prevent her ‘getting out’ on occasions, and so negotiation was necessary for Eve Black to get more time ‘out’.

• After 8 months of treatment Eve White seemed to be making progress. Her ‘blackouts’ had ceased and she was working well at her job (as a telephone operator) and ‘was reaching some acceptable solution to her marital problems’.
FINDINGS/RESULTS

• As the treatment progressed, EW’s headaches returned and so did the ‘blackouts’. EB denied all responsibility and said that she also experienced lack of awareness during these ‘blackouts’.

• EW’s state of mind was deteriorating and confinement (hospitalization) was considered. It became easier for the therapist to call up whichever personality he wanted under hypnosis.

• During one episode, EW appeared to relax into a sleepy state. ‘After 2 minutes, her eyes opened, blankly staring about the room trying to orient herself. When her eyes finally met those of the therapist, slowly, with an unknown husky voice and immeasurable poise, she said, ‘Who are you?’’
• The therapists believed that another personality had emerged who called herself Jane. The other personality, they argued, was more responsible than Eve Black and more confident and interesting than Eve White.

• After Jane appeared the 3 personalities were given electroencephalogram tests (EEG). It was possible to make a clear distinction between the readings of EB and the other two personalities. Although it was not possible make a clear distinction between EW and Jane’s EEG.
**FINDINGS/RESULTS**

- Having been able to work with the 3 personalities for several months, the therapists concluded that if Jane could take possession of the personalities the patient would regain full health and find her way to a happy life.

- Jane was aware of both Eves’ thoughts and behavior but did not have complete access to their memories prior to her appearance.

- Jane had learned to take over many of EW’s tasks at home and work to help EW and showed compassion to EW’s daughter.

- The therapists could work with Jane to determine whether EB had been lying, Jane had not found a way to communicate through EB.
**FINDINGS/RESULTS**

- It was decided the Jane was the person most likely to bring a solution to the troubled mind, and that her growing dominance over the other personalities to be an appropriate resolution.

- A postscript to this remarkable story came in the revelation in 1975 by Eve that she had experienced many other personalities before the original therapy and after it. She recalled a total of 22 and suggested that the fragmentation of her personality had been to protect herself from things she could not bear.
Thigpen and Cleckley were convinced that they had witnessed an example of multiple personality.

Although Thigpen and Cleckley do not point to the cause of MPD, the received wisdom is that MPD is usually a response to child abuse - a way for the individual to protect him or herself.
STRENGTHS

• Case studies are particularly useful in building up a long and detailed case history, case studies can be used as an aid to understanding and helping the client.

• A major strength of this study: lots of data. It contained an in-depth picture producing rich qualitative data (e.g. the interviews and hypnosis) and also lots of quantitative data such as the results from the psychometric tests. It also involved Eve's relatives to help verify certain recollections, and to add information, and in this way throw light on the case. They also asked independent experts to give a variety of tests including an EEG test, psychometric tests and projective tests.
WEAKNESSES

• Case studies only **relate to one individual.**
• Unable to generalize
• No way of assessing how typical this individual is of other people with multiple personality
• If the study is retrospective (if the individual is asked to look back over his/her life) then **memory may not be accurate** and indeed, people may deliberately mislead the researcher. The data may therefore be **unreliable.**
WEAKNESSES

• The close relationship between researcher and participant may = bias.
• There are many ethical issues to consider in this study. Firstly it could be considered whether Eve White was treated more of a subject than a patient. The dilemma of deciding what involvement should be in helping a patient when they noted that ‘we have not judged ourselves as wise enough to make active decisions’ about how the drama should develop’
• When they note the moral problems with ‘killing’ one or more of the personalities.
EVALUATION OF EXPLANATION

• It is possible that the therapists could have been conned by a successful actress.
• The diagnosis of MPD is very unreliable.
• There are many more cases reported in the US than say the UK.
• This perhaps demonstrates that some psychiatrists are more likely to diagnose MPD than others.
EVALUATION OF EXPLANATION

• Women are more likely to be diagnosed than men.
• The case study of Eve was made into a movie, ‘The Three Faces of Eve’. The public did not hear anything else about the case until 1975 when Eve revealed that she had approximately 22 personalities some of which she experienced before and some after the therapy.
• In 1977 Chris Sizemore (Eve’s real name) with her cousin, wrote ‘I’m Eve’ and revealed herself as the famous Eve in TV interviews.
Eve White, Eve Black, Jane, or Chris?

- Chris Sizemore Interview