

The Portrayal of Dissociative Identity Disorder in Films

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Abstract

Frequent and repeated exposure to media can influence perceptions of reality. Therefore, film portrayals that are incorrect and stigmatizing can contribute to the public's unfavorable opinion of mentally ill individuals. This study focuses on the portrayal of dissociative identity disorder (DID) in films from the last 25 years. Through a content analysis, the author coded eight films to determine the prevalence of inaccurate stereotypes associated with DID and mental illnesses. The findings of this study suggest that misconceptions about violence, criminal behavior, extreme alternate identities, and treatment-related incompetence were frequently portrayed. Furthermore, disparagement was common, in which it was customary for other characters to ridicule the DID character. The recurrent use of negative stereotypes in the selected films suggest that the public may continue to have negative opinions about people suffering from DID.

I. Introduction

In 2018, U.S. adults spent an average of three hours and 44 minutes watching television each day (Statista, 2019). From the hours spent consuming TV, it is apparent that the images flashing across the screen can have a significant influence on people's perception of reality, evidenced by the principles of cultivation theory (Vogel et al., 2008). The central hypothesis of this theory is that the more time people spend watching television, the more likely they are to perceive the real world as a reflection of the one depicted on the screen (Stacks et al., 2015).

Television has perpetuated many stereotypes that people have come to view as accurate representations of society (Diefenbach & West, 2007). However, the film and TV industries have continually shown a shaky and inaccurate version of mental health that individuals in society may have accepted to be true and correct (Vogel et al., 2008).

One mental illness presented in modern-day films is dissociative identity disorder (DID), a rather misunderstood condition that is characterized by a person having at least two distinct personality identities or states. DID affects between one and two percent of the U.S. population (The Recovery Village, 2020a), but mental illnesses overall affect about 46 million U.S. adults (National Institute of Mental Health, 2019). Many people cannot differentiate one mental illness from another, and even cultural differences can impact the understanding of what is a mental illness and what is not, as "what might be normal in one society may be a cause for concern in another" (Mayo Clinic, 2019, p. 6).

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Hollywood has increasingly portrayed mental illnesses on screen, and DID in particular, by producing films depicting various stereotypes and myths associated with this condition (Trifonova, 2010). Considering this disorder is not understood by most of the population, the inaccurate portrayal of DID in these films could influence the public opinion on dissociative identity disorder. This study analyzed the content of these movies to determine the prevalence of DID stereotypes in these films. This content analysis gives an insight into the portrayal of mental health in the film industry, and the accuracy of DID movies in particular.

II. Literature Review

Dissociative Identity Disorder and Film

Dissociative identity disorder (DID) has been previously referred to as multiple personality disorder (Cleveland Clinic, 2016). According to the American Psychiatric Association, DID is often related to overwhelming experiences, severe childhood abuse and/or traumatic history. DID is a subgroup of dissociative disorders, which are mental illnesses that involve problems or breakdowns of memory, identity, perception, consciousness, emotion, and behavior (Cleveland Clinic, 2016; American Psychiatric Association, n.d.). When disruptions in these mental functions occur, dissociative symptoms can arise and could potentially interfere with a person's overall functioning (Cleveland Clinic, 2016).

DID is characterized by the presence of two or more distinct identities, or personality states (Snyder, 2017). These identities repeatedly take control of the individual and they are often accompanied by changes or alterations in affect, behavior, consciousness, cognition, memory, perception, and/or sensory-motor functioning (Snyder, 2017). Oftentimes, people suffering from DID are not conscious of the existence of their alternate personality states (Snyder, 2017). Other criteria for the diagnosis of DID includes ongoing and recurrent gaps in memory about everyday events and personal information, as well as the disturbance causing significant anxiety in the individual (APA, n.d.).

A history of trauma is a key feature to this mental illness because about 90 percent of individuals suffering from DID had experienced severe abuse in their past (Cleveland Clinic, 2016). Research has shown that DID is more common in women because they experience childhood abuse more frequently than men (Snyder, 2017; The Recovery Village, 2020a). DID is so prevalent in individuals who have experienced abuse, violence or trauma because dissociation is often used as a coping mechanism to help people manage their distressing memories (The Recovery Village, 2020a). When people use dissociation to block the horrors about their past experiences, they are able to function at a relatively healthy level (Cleveland Clinic, 2016).

Hollywood has long had a fascination with mental illnesses (Dolphin, 2014), and DID is no exception. Multiple personality disorder was first introduced to the big screen in 1920, with the release of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Since then, there have been almost 75 films featuring a character suffering from DID symptoms (IMDb, n.d.). Hollywood has become proficient at using "doubling" and multiple personalities to create a new genre of films shaped around multiple realities or identities (Trifonova, 2010).

Mental Health Misconceptions in Film and Television

In 1957, Jum Nunnally began one of the first scientific investigations of mental health issues in the media (Diefenbach & West, 2007). Since then, multiple studies have been published about this connection. The findings in these studies have been mostly consistent, in which the media's portrayal of mental illnesses tend to be false and negative (Diefenbach & West, 2007). Furthermore, the people suffering from mental health issues tend to be characterized as violent and aggressive (Diefenbach & West, 2007).

In one such 2016 study, about 9 percent of film and television characters experienced a mental health condition, and the portrayals of these mentally ill individuals were often negative and exaggerated (Vogel et al., 2008). Mentally ill characters are often depicted as perpetrators of crime: 46 percent of film characters and 25 percent of television characters used violence against others (Smith et al., 2019). The fallacious notion that individuals suffering from mental illnesses are dangerous criminals is often reinforced by the media (Smith et al., 2019).

There has been research conducted about the interactions between mentally ill characters and other characters in film and television. One study found that almost 48 percent of mentally ill characters in film and

about 40 percent of characters in television were belittled by other characters (Smith et al., 2019). Some types of ridicule included “name calling, dehumanizing phrases, and stigmatizing behavior” (Smith et al., 2019, p. 2). The public’s media exposure to this disparagement towards mentally ill characters has corresponded to the overall decrease in tolerance toward the mentally ill (Vogel et al., 2008).

Research has found that very few DID patients commit acts of crime (Peisley, 2017) or act violently or aggressively towards others (The Recovery Village, 2020b), yet stereotypes and misconceptions about the disorder often appear in film. As one example, an evil alter-identity is the often a premise in a DID movie, but that is not supported by research conducted on this disorder (The Recovery Village, 2020b). Other misconceptions include the idea that DID and schizophrenia are the same, that the public understands that DID films are exaggerated and sensationalized, and that the alternate identities are obvious and extreme (The Recovery Village, 2020b; Peisley, 2017).

Public Opinion and Mental Illnesses

Public stigma of mental illness has been a widespread issue throughout U.S. history. In a 2002 poll, about 82 percent of Americans perceived a stigma attached to mental illnesses—a 5 percent increase from a 1978 poll (Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 2015). In that same year, nearly half of the population reported that they would feel uncomfortable living next door to someone with a mental illness, and two-thirds of parents said they would not be comfortable having a mentally ill individual work in the school where their children attended (Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 2015).

The vast majority of the population prefers to be socially distant from the mentally ill (Parcesepe & Cabassa, 2013). Adults with mental health issues are perceived by many to be dangerous and incompetent. Additionally, the mentally ill were perceived by others to be less competent when it came to making “treatment-related and financial decisions” (Parcesepe & Cabassa, 2013, p. 10), and those suffering from schizophrenia and drug abuse disorders were recognized as the least competent of all individuals with a mental illness.

The public’s stigma associated with mental health is further validated by George Domino’s study of the impact of a mental health film on college students (Diefenbach & West, 2007). Domino administered attitude questionnaires to the subjects prior to the film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, as well as after the viewing of the movie. For the subjects who watched the film, attitudes toward mental health conditions shifted in a negative direction, while the control group’s attitudes stayed about the same (Domino, 1983).

Dissociative identity disorder is a relatively new mental disorder: It was only recognized as a mental illness in the publication of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) in 1980 (Peisley, 2017). Therefore, the public does not have a thorough understanding of the disorder and, most often, they have learned most of their knowledge from television and films. Many believe that movies like *Split* have some truth to the symptoms portrayed, even though they are most often false representations of the illness (Peisley, 2017). Therefore, a stigma is often created about this disorder, and this stigma is further perpetuated by television and movies.

While there are quite a number of movies showcasing DID, there are few academic studies examining the portrayal of DID in films (Trifonova, 2010). Therefore, this article contributes to fill this gap by studying the portrayal of DID in modern films and the presence of negative stereotypes, or lack thereof. This study analyzed eight films that included characters who have DID to determine how these characters and their mental illnesses were presented. This study sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: In what ways was DID portrayed accurately in the movies under study, according to the DSM-5 criteria for DID?

RQ2: In what ways was DID portrayed inaccurately in the movies under study, by using stereotypes and exaggerations? What were the stereotypes and exaggerations most used in these movies?

III. Methods

This study analyzes the content of eight films, produced in the last 25 years, that feature at least one character who exhibits dissociative identity disorder (DID). Content analyses study the content of different materials and analyze the salience of words, themes, and concepts from a set of texts (Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, n.d.), and this interpretive method includes the analysis of films.

The eight films analyzed in this research project were chosen from IMDb, an online database. The website allows people to refine their movie search based on certain keywords, such as dissociative identity disorder and mental illness. After filtering the options by choosing both of these categories, a refined list of 35 movies was displayed. For this analysis, the sample of eight films was selected from that initial list of 35 movies based on their popularity and relevance, because the researcher wanted to end up with modern, current movies that were most likely to be watched by the public today, and hence, might have influence on the public's opinion of DID.

From the refined search, the eight most popular films on IMDb released within the last 25 years were chosen for this study. The movies selected were *Fight Club*, *Hereditary*, *Glass*, *Split*, *Primal Fear*, *Identity*, *The Hours*, and *Secret Window*. Although *Glass* is a sequel to *Split* and therefore includes the same DID character, the researcher chose to keep the film in the sample.

To determine the accuracy of DID in the chosen films, each character suffering from this mental illness was evaluated using the DSM-5 criteria for DID. To be diagnosed with DID, an individual must have two or more distinct identities or personality states, amnesia or gaps in memory, and significant distress about this disorder. Additionally, the mental illness cannot be due to cultural or religious practices and the symptoms cannot be associated with the physiological effects of substance use or a medical condition (APA, n.d.).

After recording the rating and genre of the film, each movie was evaluated for five categories: whether the character with DID exhibited violent/aggressive behavior or not, whether the character with DID exhibited criminal behavior or not, whether extreme alternate identities were presented or not, whether the theme of treatment-related and financial incompetence was presented or not, and whether DID was mistaken for schizophrenia or not in the film.

While most of these stereotypes were described in the literature about the misconceptions related to the disorder itself, financial incompetency and treatment-related incompetency were associated with the literature about the perceptions people have about those suffering from a mental illness like DID. Therefore, it was incorporated as a category for this study. In addition, any type of degrading or belittling statements were recorded because academic research has found that mentally ill characters are often mocked by other characters in films (Smith et al., 2019). Therefore, all stigmatizing behaviors showcased by other characters were documented in an effort to discern if there was any discrimination toward the mentally ill in these movies.

Before coding each movie, each stereotype was described. *Violence* and *aggression* occurred anytime the DID character intended to physically harm another person who did not wish to be harmed or deliberately harmed him or herself (Rutherford et al., 2007). Additionally, the researcher included any aggressive actions the character inflicted on his or her surroundings, such as breaking or throwing an object. *Criminal behavior* was defined as any type of law-breaking conduct or any behavior that required police intervention. Any drastic states or that were obvious to the casual observer as being extreme or opposite from the character's personality were defined as *extreme alternate identities* (Peisley, 2017). The character's *incompetency* was defined as his or her inability to successfully manage his or her finances and treatments for DID. Furthermore, work-related incompetency would fall within the financial category and treatment-related incompetency would incorporate any attempts by the character to kill his or her alternate identities. *DID being mistaken for schizophrenia* was defined as the use of any other terms, such as schizophrenia, hallucinations, or delusions, made in reference to the character suffering from DID.

Lastly, it was necessary to define any type of stigmatizing behavior and disparagement that could appear in the films. There are 17 terms that are often used to negatively refer to characters with a mental health condition, and these selected words were documented if mentioned by other characters to refer to these individuals with DID (Smith et al., 2019). These words include the following: crazy, creep, different, freak, idiot, monster, nitwit, nutjob, nuts, problem, psycho, ruined, scumbag, silly, sociopath, unstable, and weird (Smith et al., 2019).

Intracoder reliability was measured for this research to ensure consistency in the categorization of content. The researcher coded two of the eight films (25 percent of the sample) using the categories of analysis, and then she coded these two movies again on a different day to discern how much the second coding matched the results of the first coding. The overall intracoder reliability after coding *Fight Club* and *Hereditary* twice was 90.5 percent.

IV. Findings

RQ1 asked in what ways DID was portrayed accurately in the chosen movies. Table 1 shows the results regarding whether the characters from the selected films met all of the DSM-5 criteria for DID.

Table 1: Films that met the DSM-5 criteria for Dissociative Identity Disorder

Films	Two or more distinct identities	Amnesia or gaps in memory	Person is distressed by the disorder	Not part of culture or religion*	Not due to substance/condition ¹
<i>Fight Club</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Hereditary</i>	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
<i>Glass</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Split</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Primal Fear</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Identity</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>The Hours</i>	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Secret Window</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Six out of eight of the films successfully met all the DSM-5 requirements for DID. For *Hereditary* and *The Hours*, it was apparent that none of the characters suffered from this disorder, even though these were films described as having at least one character with DID (according to the database IMDb, used to select the movies for this study, as explained in the Methods section). While it appeared as if some of the characters in these two movies had a mental health condition, there were no specific indicators or symptoms of DID. Notwithstanding, this study continued to record any stereotypes present in these movies.

RQ2 asked in what ways was DID portrayed inaccurately in the movies through the use of stereotypes and exaggerations. In the following sections, this study outlines how often these misconceptions (violent behavior, criminal behavior, extreme alternate identities, incompetence, and DID being mistaken for schizophrenia) were portrayed throughout the films.

Rating, Genre, Violence and Criminal Behavior

The most popular genre that the eight films fell under was drama, followed by mystery and thriller. Other genres included horror, sci-fi, crime, and romance. All of the films were either rated PG-13 or R, due to the level of language, violence, drug use, and nudity shown in them.

After recording the rating and genre(s) of the eight films, all occurrences of violent and criminal behavior shown during the entire film were tallied, as indicated in Table 2.

* Within some cultures or religions, it may be common for individuals to dissociate from themselves and undergo experiences of possession (APA, n.d.). These types of spiritual practices are considered normal and should not be treated as a dissociative disorder.

¹ Signs of DID may resemble symptoms of an underlying medical condition or the physiological effects of substance use, like loss of memory and blackouts (McKee & Brahm, 2016; Domingo & Zhang, 2019). Therefore, it is important to verify that the symptoms are not the direct result of substance abuse or a medical condition.

Table 2: Violent and criminal behavior in eight different films

Films	Rating	Genres	Instances of violent behavior	Instances of criminal behavior
<i>Fight Club</i>	R	Drama	10	12
<i>Hereditary</i>	R	Drama, Horror, Mystery	8	0
<i>Glass</i>	PG-13	Drama, Sci-Fi, Thriller	12	9
<i>Split</i>	PG-13	Horror, Thriller	8	5
<i>Primal Fear</i>	R	Crime, Drama, Mystery	4	3
<i>Identity</i>	R	Mystery, Thriller	13	12
<i>The Hours</i>	PG-13	Drama, Romance	4	0
<i>Secret Window</i>	PG-13	Drama, Mystery, Thriller	7	6
Average			8.25	5.87

In almost every film, instances of violent behavior were depicted more frequently than criminal behavior. Every character suffering from DID acted violently at least four times, either toward themselves, others, or the space around themselves. Almost every DID character, except for one, deliberately and physically harmed at least one other character. In *The Hours*, none of the characters hurt another individual; only one of the main characters attempted to harm herself. In *Fight Club*, *Hereditary*, *Identity*, *The Hours*, and *Secret Window*, the five characters intentionally harmed themselves either by burning, punching, stabbing, shooting, choking, or drowning. Additionally, three of the characters from *Fight Club*, *Hereditary*, and *Secret Window* inflicted damage on the space or objects around them. Examples of these aggressive actions included smashing cars, kicking tables, breaking artwork, and throwing objects at a wall.

Criminal behavior occurred less frequently than violence, with an average of less than six occurrences per film. Six out of the eight characters participated in at least three criminal activities during the duration of the movie. The characters in *Hereditary* and *The Hours* did not break any laws or behave in any way that required police intervention. In regard to the other six films, the most popular crime committed was murder: five of the six characters killed at least two other individuals. In addition to murder, Kevin's character, from *Split*, kidnapped three girls and consumed one of them; Aaron's character, from *Primal Fear*, attempted to flee and escape from the police; and Mort's character, from *Secret Window*, committed arson and covered up the bodies of a murder. In *Fight Club*, the character did not kill anyone, but he committed the most various types of crimes than any other character. For example, he stole a car, trespassed on private property, launched an underground fight club, robbed various businesses, vandalized cars, blackmailed his boss, and planted bombs and blew up several buildings.

Extreme Alternate Identities, Financial Incompetence, and Treatment-Related Incompetence

As shown in Table 3, most of the characters from the eight films possessed extreme alternate identities and experienced financial or treatment-related incompetence.

Table 3: Extreme alternative identities and instances of incompetence

Films	Extreme alternate identities	Instances of Incompetence	Financial Incompetence	Treatment Incompetence
<i>Fight Club</i>	1	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Hereditary</i>	0	No	No	No
<i>Glass</i>	18	Yes	No	Yes
<i>Split</i>	7	Yes	No	Yes
<i>Primal Fear</i>	1	Yes	No	Yes
<i>Identity</i>	11	Yes	No	Yes
<i>The Hours</i>	0	Yes	No	Yes
<i>Secret Window</i>	1	No	No	No

All the identities that were physically presented by the character during the films were recorded. Therefore, even though Kevin --from *Split* and *Glass*-- possessed 24 distinct alternate states, this study only documented the identities that were shown in the films. Three-quarters of the characters suffered from at least one extreme alternate identity that was recognized as extremely different from the character's personality. Additionally, some of the side characters in these films were able to notice when an alternate identity presented himself or herself in the character. For example, in *Glass*, *Split*, *Primal Fear*, and *Identity*, at least one other character was able to quickly identify the change in personality in the DID character. In the films that had the DID character suffer from more than one alternate identity (*Glass*, *Split*, and *Identity*), another character could specifically recognize and name which identity had presented itself from his or her characteristics.

While some of the films chose to have the same actor portray each identity, in the other movies, the states were illustrated as a completely different character. In *Fight Club*, *Identity*, and *Secret Window*, the alternate states were played by other actors and often, the character did not realize until the end of the film that this "person" was in fact an alternate identity.

Six out of eight characters had instances in which they were deemed incompetent because they were unable to successfully manage their finances or treatments. Only one of the characters was financially inept, which was shown in *Fight Club* when the Narrator was sent home from work by his boss, and he quit his job to focus on managing the fight club.

Treatment-related incompetence was a far more common trait depicted in these films. For example, the Narrator from *Fight Club* shot himself in the head to kill his alternate identity; Kevin from *Split* killed his therapist and thus, stopped seeking treatment for his disorder; Kevin from *Glass* escaped from the mental institution; Aaron from *Primal Fear* never sought treatment for his blackouts; Malcolm from *Identity* killed 10 of his alternate identities and killed his doctor who was treating him; and Virginia from *The Hours* did not follow her doctor's orders regarding her mental health.

Dissociative Identity Disorder Being Mistaken for Schizophrenia

There were few findings related to DID being mistaken for schizophrenia. Only two of the eight films had any mention of schizophrenia, hallucinations, or delusions. In the last scene of *Fight Club*, when the Narrator tried to understand how it was possible for him to visually see his alternate identity (Tyler) but was unable to shoot him, Tyler made a remark about it being a hallucination. Similarly, in *Glass*, the doctor in the film tried to explain to the main characters, including Kevin, that their beliefs that they were supernatural were a type of delusion. Besides these two movies, there was no reference to schizophrenia-related symptoms in the other films.

Stigmatizing Behavior and Disparagement

Almost every film had some type of stigmatizing behavior or disparagement about the character suffering from DID. As shown in Table 4, seven out of the eight films presented belittling remarks about the mentally ill character.

Table 4: Instances of stigmatizing behavior or disparagement

Films	Stigmatizing terms/words	Terms/Words used
<i>Fight Club</i>	4	Nutcase, crazy, psycho, freak
<i>Hereditary</i>	3	Idiot, crazy, crazy
<i>Glass</i>	0	
<i>Split</i>	2	Monstrous, unstable
<i>Primal Fear</i>	2	Crazy, psychopath
<i>Identity</i>	3	Scumbag, crazy, monster
<i>The Hours</i>	1	Monster
<i>Secret Window</i>	6	Crazy, crazy, nutjob, nut, nuts, weird

While there were no terms of belittlement about Kevin in *Glass*, there was some stigmatizing behavior toward him in *Split*. Out of the eight films, there were 21 degrading words spoken by other characters toward/about the DID character or his or her alternate states. The most common word used to ridicule DID characters was “crazy,” which was mentioned seven times throughout all the films. While “monstrous” and “nutcase” were not words included in the study’s initial list of disparagement terms, they were still cataloged since they were variations of the terms “monster,” “nutjob,” and “nuts.”

In addition to the findings previously mentioned, it is worth noticing that, in half of the selected films, the DID character was completely overtaken by one of his or her extreme alternate identities. In *Hereditary*, *Split*, *Identity*, and *Secret Window*, the films conclude with one of the violent, aggressive alternate states obtaining absolute control over the character and forcing the original personality out.

V. Conclusion

This study sought to determine if dissociative identity disorder is accurately portrayed in modern films. Furthermore, this research attempted to identify the prevalence of negative DID stereotypes and misconceptions in these films. Based on the results of the content analysis, it is apparent that most of the misconceptions about mental illnesses and DID were portrayed in the majority of the selected films.

This content analysis showed that most of the characters met the DSM-5 criteria for DID. However, the characters from *Hereditary* and *The Hours* did not meet all of the requirements for a positive diagnosis of DID. Therefore, according to the DSM-5 criteria for DID, these movies did not accurately portray this mental illness.

While three-quarters of the selected films had a character who successfully met the DSM-5 criteria for DID, these movies commonly depicted exaggerated stereotypes and misconceptions about this disorder. Every film had scenes involving the DID character acting out violently or aggressively, and the majority of films included some kind of criminal behavior exhibited by the character with DID. Additionally, three-quarters of the characters had extreme alternate identities and were incompetent in some way, further indicating that these films inaccurately portrayed this disorder through the use of all four of these stereotypes.

Although characters’ incompetency was common in these films, there was a substantial difference between financial-related and treatment-related incompetency. If the film decided to show the character as inept, oftentimes it was displayed through their treatment of DID, rather than their finances. Therefore, financial incompetence was not a noteworthy stereotype displayed in these films. Furthermore, the misconception of DID being confused as schizophrenia was not prevalent in these films either. Only two films used words associated with schizophrenia and thus, this stereotype was not substantially significant in this content analysis.

Almost all of the films had some kind of stigmatizing behavior displayed from one character toward the DID character. This type of disparagement often was shown through name calling. Hence, the belittlement identified in this study’s findings is consistent with previous research about how film and television characters ridicule other mentally ill characters (Smith et al., 2019).

While most of the selected films are accurate in the criteria needed for a person to have dissociative identity disorder, the results from this study indicate that inaccurate, exaggerated stereotypes of mental illnesses are still common. The findings of this content analysis support the notion that films tend to portray mental illnesses negatively and that they stigmatize and condemn those suffering from DID (Diefenbach & West, 2007; Smith et al., 2019). Furthermore, they contribute to the misperception already present in public opinion that DID individuals are incompetent, violent criminals who have extreme alternate identities (Peisley, 2017; Parcesepe & Cabassa, 2013).

Limitations and further research

As mentioned in the findings, two of the selected films did not have any characters suffering from DID and thus, they were not particularly relevant to this study. Therefore, if this research was replicated in the future, it would be beneficial to conduct a more thorough search of DID films to ensure the characters present all symptoms of the disorder. Also, a larger sample of films could help provide more detailed results on trends and patterns in the portrayal of DID.

While this content analysis studied films over the last 25 years, there was no research completed about how stereotypes of DID may have changed over time. Therefore, a future avenue of research could be to investigate how DID and mental health misconceptions have changed over the years. Furthermore, it would be interesting to explore any differences in the portrayal of this mental illness in films when DID was previously called multiple personality disorder.

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