

Dissociative Identity Disorder in Hitchcock's Psycho

Psycho is a black and white film that was made in the 1960s. This movie was, at the time, groundbreaking in the way Alfred Hitchcock portrayed the story from both a storyline and cinematographic point of view. One key feature of the movie that is largely overlooked is an analytical part of the movie in which without the audience realizing, Hitchcock changes the main character halfway through the movie after building up the original main character, which in hindsight mimics the experience of the disorder that the main character experiences. In doing so the audience begins to sympathize with the main character, Norman Bates. To start the movie, character Marion Crane is shown as an office worker who has the desire to pursue a more serious relationship with her lover, Sam Loomis. Unfortunately for Ms. Crane, Mr. Loomis is in a situation in which this cannot become a reality, largely due to financial problems. Upon going back to work Ms. Crane is presented with an opportunity to steal \$40,000, for reference this is the equivalent to \$400,000 accounting changes over the years. After taking the money and running away to the city in where Mr. Loomis lives, she encounters the Bates Motel. Here she meets our new main character, Norman Bates. Norman is a timid character who is rather socially awkward and works as the grounds keeper for his family's motel. As we soon see, Norman's mother becomes jealous of Ms. Crane and kills both her and the investigator who goes looking for her. It isn't until Ms. Crane's sister and Mr. Loomis visit the motel and uncover everything that has been happening up to that point. The twist of the movie is that Norman's mother has been dead for many years and in fact Norman (albeit only physically) has been murdering people. Thus, Norman actually lost himself to a split personality where the new "mother" personality has completely taken over.

The category of dissociation disorders is classified by a disruption in different areas of cognitive functioning. This disruption in functioning many times affects both personality, perception, and memory. The main topic of focus in this write-up is dissociative identity disorder (DID) which falls under this classification. DID is a psychopathology that is mainly categorized by first, greater than one distinct personality, and second, recurrent episodes of dissociative amnesia. Other criteria that follow those two main criteria are distress or impairment of social, occupational, or other functional capacities. In the case of Norman, social capacities were limited and could be noted by the awkwardness of the interactions that Norman has with others. Next is, disturbance not being a normal part of a religious or social practice, this is clearly not the case in the United States, especially in the 1960s when this issue would likely have been discounted by the then disorder of gender dysphoria or transvestic disorder, which was seen in the movie as the police officers discounted the problems as the two issues noted above. Finally, the criterion is being not attributable to the physiological effects of a substance or another medical condition, which in Norman's case is not the problem as it started more as a psyche break and inability to cope with reality than a physiological or pharmacological trauma.

As discussed, there are two main criteria that make this diagnosis special which are there being multiple distinct personalities and dissociative amnesia. As far as the multiple personalities being concerned, it is clear that Norman was not always Norman in so far as the construction of his mother would take control of Norman's physical body. Therefore, in this scenario there were two distinct personalities that would take control of the body and act as independent ages, the first was Norman and the second was his mother. For the issue of dissociative amnesia, it seemed as if Norman's mother never truly experienced the amnesia

but rather Norman did as his mother became the dominant personality as seen in the end of the movie, as the mother sits in the police station not realizing that she is not herself but physically Norman. Norman is shown to not remember any of the murders and feeling the anxiety of trying to protect his mother, but simply be covering for his mother who committed these murders. This indicates that Norman fits all the criteria of dissociative identity disorder.

In conclusion, Norman clearly meets the criteria for DID and the scenes that portray the criteria are rather explicit in hindsight but may be overlooked when originally watching the movie. From having the distinct personalities of both himself and this new construction of his mother to Norman losing the memory of events that his physical body has committed due to the fact that he, himself, was only physically committing the crimes but not in his own state of mind. The remaining criteria fall into place as the movie goes on, but these two criteria are the true distinguishing factors of DID amongst other psychopathologies.