

## Controversies and Current Research in Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID)

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### DESCRIPTION

Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), formerly known as Multiple Personality Disorder, has been a subject of fascination and debate within the field of psychology. The condition involves the presence of two or more distinct identities or personality states, leading to significant disruptions in an individual's sense of self and memory. While the diagnosis of DID has gained recognition in recent years, it remains a controversial and complex disorder. This article aims to explore the controversies surrounding DID and shed light on the current understanding of this unique psychological phenomenon.

### Understanding dissociative identity disorder

DID is characterized by the coexistence of two or more distinct identities or personality states within an individual. These identities, often referred to as "alters" may have their own unique characteristics, memories, and behaviors. Switching between identities can be spontaneous or triggered by certain stimuli, causing a disruption in a person's normal functioning.

### Controversies surrounding DID

**Diagnostic validity:** The diagnosis of DID has been met with skepticism and criticism from some experts. Critics argue that the disorder is iatrogenic, meaning it is created or worsened by the therapist through suggestive questioning or other therapeutic techniques. They contend that the reported cases of DID are merely a product of suggestion and social influence.

**Cultural influence:** Some argue that the prevalence of DID varies significantly across cultures, raising questions about the cultural construction of the disorder. Critics claim that DID is more commonly diagnosed in certain Western societies, where it may be influenced by media portrayals and societal beliefs about the self and identity.

**Overlapping symptoms:** DID shares symptomatology with other mental health conditions, such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), and Somatic

Symptom Disorder (SSD). The overlapping symptoms and co-occurrence of these disorders can complicate accurate diagnosis and lead to misattributions of DID.

**Therapeutic approaches:** The treatment of DID often involves long-term psychotherapy, including techniques such as integration therapy, where the goal is to integrate the different identities into a cohesive whole. However, controversies arise regarding the effectiveness of these therapeutic approaches; with some critics arguing that they may inadvertently reinforce the existence and separation of alters.

### Current understanding and research

Despite the controversies, research on DID has advanced our understanding of the disorder. Neuroimaging studies have shown structural and functional differences in the brains of individuals with DID, supporting the notion of distinct identities. Furthermore, advances in trauma research have highlighted the strong association between childhood trauma, particularly severe and chronic abuse, and the development of DID.

Experts in the field emphasize the importance of conducting rigorous clinical assessments and utilizing evidence-based treatment approaches. Improved diagnostic criteria and the development of standardized assessment measures, such as the Structured Clinical Interview for Dissociative Disorders (SCID-D), aim to enhance diagnostic accuracy and reduce the risk of misdiagnosis.

### CONCLUSION

Dissociative Identity Disorder continues to be a controversial diagnosis that elicits diverse perspectives and debates within the field of psychology. While skepticism and criticism persist, the growing body of research supports the existence and unique characteristics of DID. Ongoing studies in neuroimaging, trauma, and dissociation contribute to a deeper understanding of this complex disorder. As the field continues to evolve, it is crucial to balance skepticism with open-mindedness, ensuring

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that accurate diagnoses and appropriate treatments are provided to individuals who genuinely experience the distressing symptoms associated with DID. The integration of multiple

perspectives and ongoing research will pave the way for further advancements in our understanding and management of dissociative identity disorder.