

**THE REPRESENTATION OF MALCOLM RIVER'S  
DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER IN *IDENTITY* MOVIE  
DIRECTED BY JAMES MANGOLD**

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This project aims to analyze the character Malcolm River in *Identity* movie. The result of analyzing the figures Malcolm Rivers is that he suffered multiple personality syndrome or now known as Dissociative Identity Disorder. Malcolm was abused, neglected, and finally abandoned by his mother was a prostitute when he was a child. He felt extremely insecure so he made a new personality or a new identity to protect his original identity. However, this new identity was in fact a killer. As time goes on he made new identities to fight against the identity of the killer and also protect him from any threat.

Keywords: trauma, identity, Dissociative Identity Disorder.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Background of the Study**

People enjoy watching movies since then until now. A movie entertains people by showing an extreme rapid sequence of images that is packed into a video. For some people, watching movie is more interesting than reading a novel. They usually love to watch a certain movie based on a genre they love. According to thefreedictionary.com,

“Movie is a recorded sequence of film or Visual images displayed on a screen with sufficient rapidity as to create the illusion of motion and continuity. Any work, as of art or entertainment, having this form, usually including a soundtrack”.

A movie often has a story for people to enjoy. The story of a movie often brings people to a catharsis, a feeling of relieve or purge through its moral value. It means that movie is kind of literature work which conveys its story through sequence of Visual images displayed on a screen. In the "Identity" movie (2003), director James Mangold showed the movie as well as one of the literary works that also contain elements that can be reviewed through literature window.

This movie indeed has a twisted-ending inside its psychological thriller genre and that is very interesting to watch for some people while some is not. However, despite of its twisted-ending genre, the movie also has a moral value to be earned. Therefore, the project is made to analyze the "Identity" movie in order to know deeper the message from Mangold.

## **1.2. Research Problems**

1. What are the causes of Dissociative Identity Disorder in Malcolm Rivers?
2. What are the forms of identities in figure Malcolm Rivers?

## **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

By writing this project, the writer hopes that we will be able to know and understand the causes of Dissociative Identity Disorder in Malcolm River and the meaning of every existence of an identity in Malcolm River.

#### **1.4. Research Method**

The writer uses library research method in analyzing the *Identity* movie. Factual data about the topic is needed to support the analysis. The writer collects the data from articles, books and some sources from internet. Objective approach is also used to analyze the *Identity* movie from the movie itself such as the narrative and cinematic aspects.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Intrinsic Aspects**

There are two parts in analyzing intrinsic aspects of a movie. Those are narrative aspects and cinematography aspects.

#### **2.1.1. Narrative Aspects**

##### **2.1.1.1. Characters**

According to Baldick in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms. 2nd ed*, “a character (or fictional character) is a person in a narrative work of arts (such as a novel, play, television series or film) (2001: 37)”. The person must have a relation to the events of the work. So the events will connect as a story. Mostly, there is more than one character in a work but there is only one main character that is the focus of the story.

### 2.1.1.2. Conflict

#### 2.1.1.2.1. Internal Conflict

According to Ross in *Write Now*, “with "man against self" conflict, the struggle is internal. This is a conflict that is usually associated with an external conflict (1993: 108)”. There will be a conflict inside a character and it usually is the main character who suffers internal conflict. The character must overcome his nature or make a choice between two or more paths - good and evil; logic and emotion.

#### 2.1.1.2.2. External Conflict

According to Maria in *Aesthetic Approaches to Children's Literature: An Introduction*, “characters are forced to make moral choices or frustrated by social rules in meeting their own goals (2005: 100)”. A conflict in literature is defined as any struggle between opposing forces. Usually, the main character struggles against some other force. This type of conflict is what drives each and every story.

### 2.1.1.3. Settings

According to Levin in *Get That Novel Started*,

“in works of narrative (especially fictional), the literary element setting includes the historical moment in time and geographic location in which a story takes place, and helps initiate the main backdrop and mood for a story (1992: 110-112)”.

Although the form of a movie is different to a novel, they still have the same elements like setting. The difference is that movie is a work that has been visualized

while novel demands the readers' imagination. However the function of setting in movie is still the same as novels. Setting is vitally connected to the main story of a work.

### 2.1.2. Cinematography Aspect

There are some aspects in cinematography such as costume, make-up, lighting, and camera-take techniques. These aspects are called *mise-en-scene*. According to Hill and Gibson in their *Film Studies Critical Approaches*,

“Analysis of the form of the cinematic text concentrates on the two basic building-blocks of film, the shot and the cut, and on the structure that comes into being when the film is assembled, the combination of the shot and cut that is the finished film (2000: 13)”.

There are some techniques of shot that directors often use such as close-up, medium close-up shot, medium shot, medium long shot and long shot. Every technique of shot has different meaning and purpose depends on what director wants to convey for his/her meaning.

### 2.2. Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID)

Multiple personality syndrome or now known as Dissociative Identity Disorder is a mental illness that make the person split their personality or identity. According to American Psychiatric Association,

“dissociative identity disorder (DID), previously known as multiple personality disorder (MPD), is a mental disorder on the dissociative spectrum characterized by at least two distinct and relatively enduring identities or dissociated personality states that alternately control a person's

behavior, and is accompanied by memory impairment for important information not explained by ordinary forgetfulness (2000: 526-529)".

Mostly, DID is caused by extreme traumatic events in childhood such as physical or sexual abuse from other people or an extreme attack from people or animal. It is possible for people who suffer DID to have more than two identities inside them. Each identity cannot recognize other identity because they cannot appear in a same time. Every identity has a reason why he/she is created inside the host body.

### **3. THE REPRESENTATION OF MALCOLM RIVER'S DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER IN *IDENTITY* MOVIE DIRECTED BY JAMES MANGOLD**

#### **3.1. The Causes of the Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID)**

An extreme or intense trauma is the cause for most DID case. In this movie, Malcolm River also had an intense trauma in his childhood. Dr. Mallick, as the expert on DID in this movie, said that when faced with an intense trauma, a child's mind may fracture, creating dissociate identities. It was also mentioned in the movie that Malcolm's mother was a whore and he had also been abused, neglected and finally abandoned by her when he was a child.

The news which was on June 11 1972 said that boy (9-years-old Malcolm) was found abandoned at Local Motel. It was also said that he was neglected and abused. He said he was waiting for her mom in bathroom. It means that Malcolm's mother

neglected, abused and abandoned him at a motel and Malcolm still thought that his mom will pick him up again. This was one of his traumatic events on his childhood.

There was another event which indirectly mentioned in the movie. There is a scene when Edward asked if the little boy (Timmy) was alright to George, Timmy's father. Then he answered that Timmy used to have a little-temper-problem father and He was his stepfather. Many people who watched the movie will predict that Timmy was Malcolm's childhood identity, his origin identity since born. It means that Malcolm had a father with temper problem and he may get a physical abuse from his father. This also may be the cause for his traumatic childhood.

So Malcolm had been abused by his father and mother. His childhood was totally ruined by his parents. A child needs a lot of affection but what he got was intense traumas by his own parents. However, as a child, many people will try to forget the bad, traumatic event.

### **3.2. The Forms of Identities in Malcolm River.**

Many identities are formed inside Malcolm River when he was a child. The writer would like to discuss some of them which seemed had an important role. Those are the character Timmy, George, Alice, Edward, and Paris. The character Timmy, the little boy, he was pictured as the childhood of Malcolm Rivers. He got traumatic childhood from his biological father who had temper problem and it is possible that violence was occurred to Timmy. It revealed after Edward asked George if Timmy was all right. Below is the picture of Timmy's first time appearance in the movie. He was with his parents on the way back to home. Even the situation of Timmy and Malcolm

was same Timmy did not represent the original identity of Malcolm. Timmy represented the killer identity of Malcolm. The killer identity appeared because of the hatefulness of Malcolm River on his parents. We will know this fact after watching the movie until the end. So where was the original identity?



Picture 15. Dead body found (53:59)

The scene on **Picture 15** uses Medium shot that we can see the dead body from his belly up. It showed a dead body found in a freezer after Paris tried to escape from Larry's thread and accidentally opened the freezer. The dead body was the manager of the motel and Larry was just a person who just ran into the motel earlier and found him dead sitting on his desk. The dead manager represented the original identity of Malcolm. He used to be the manager of the motel but he was dead and frizzed, so did Malcolm's original identity. He was also dead frizzed, lack of love.

We knew that Malcolm had parents who abused him. Of course he had a wish that he had good parents and got a lot of affection from them. These wishes became his identities in order to protect him. The identities were represented by George and Alice, Timmy's parents. They were Malcolm's dream parents.



Edward, the man who described himself as an ex-cop, was also Malcolm's identity. He was the one who possessed Malcolm's body when the hearing is ongoing. Everyone must have a mindset that a cop is a good figure, protects other people from a thread, so does the little Malcolm.

Even Malcolm already had his expected mother identity, he was not able to forget his own mother even she was a whore and abandoned him. He thinks that she was still able to protect him, to give him love. So there appeared Paris Nevada.



Picture 17. Paris Nevada



Picture 18. Malcolm River

The pictures above are the scenes when Paris Nevada was on her way back to her mother house. She was the only one who survived from the murder at the motel. At the same time, **Picture 18** shows Malcolm's expression when he had a blackout and was possessed by Paris. His expression had deceived Dr. Mallick, the Judge and others that the killer identity was gone and finally the death penalty was cancelled. Those pictures use Close-up shot in order to show the details of their expression after such situation. However, other identities are formed from collective unconsciousness that may capable to protect him from his parents or even his killer identity.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The *Identity* movie directed by James Mangold shows Malcolm River who suffered Dissociative Identity Disorder had a lot of identities inside him. This happened because Malcolm River suffered abuse from his temper-problem father that is explained or delivered by Timmy's step-father and his mother (a whore) who also abused, neglected and abandoned him when he was a child. This traumatic childhood made the killer identity and other identities appear. Malcolm felt insecure so he created all the ten identities to protect him. Every identity has a reason why he/she exists. Such as Paris Nevada, she represented Malcolm's mother. She appeared because Malcolm still believed that she would protect and love him even she was a whore but the fact, she did not. Moreover, his blackout is the way he changes the identities, randomly and of course he cannot control the blackout.

The lessons to be learned from this movie is (probably for the parents and other family members) to pay attention to the child's childhood and give them affection and love as much as possible and do not do a violence to the child so that the child does not experience any childhood trauma.

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