

INSANE IN THE MEMBRANE: VARIATIONS IN PORTRAYALS OF MENTAL ILLNESS ON TELEVISION BY TIME PERIOD, STATION AND PROGRAM TYPE (2011-2016)

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Previous research has shown that television has strong influences on the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of both children and adults. Given the rise in mental illness (including addiction and suicide) over the past several decades, what do viewers learn about mental illness from watching television? The current longitudinal content analysis is an extension and replication of earlier studies by Gomez & Hochberger (2015) and Bevan (2017) using a larger sample of 689 television programs videotaped from 2011-2016 for the Center for Research on the Effects of Television (CRETV) archive. Both fiction (soap operas, dramas, crime/action, sitcoms, children's shows, and teen shows) and nonfiction (news, talk shows, magazine shows, and reality/re-enactment dramas) programs were included. The data reported in this analysis include the proportion of shows in each program type that contained content related to mental illness, the number and type of incidents in each program, the context (humorous/serious, positive/negative) and how those data varied by program type, station, time period and year. Mental illness portrayals occurred in more than 60% of the programs studied, including over 85% of dramas, talk shows, magazine shows and sitcoms. They were least likely to appear on prosocial/education children's shows and local news programs.