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## [Hollywood not proper place to tackle mental disorders](#)

in [Columns](#), [Opinion](#) / by [Mazie Bryant](#) / on March 19, 2013 at 12:00 AM /

For centuries, mental illnesses have struggled for attention in the realm of social issues and inequalities. In the state of Alabama, the challenge has been more extreme than most.

In the 1800s, activist Dorothea Dix traveled the country lobbying the U.S. Congress and state legislatures to institute a then-nonexistent mental health care system. While her message was eventually heeded by the states, including Alabama, underfunding and other problems have plagued the system. Still, there is another problem that stands in the way of effectively addressing mental care as a society.

Sometime between Dix and now, a combination of many factors – the unknown aspects of mental disorders, the poor treatment of patients at the state level and the manic actions of some people affected, I believe – led to a stigma that spread into the media landscape.

In movies and television shows, no one made bad decisions or simply died. Negative actions were committed by someone deemed “crazy.”

It wasn't until the 2012 mass shootings in Aurora, Colo., and Newtown, Conn., that society as a whole took a step back to evaluate the condition of mental health care and concern in the United States, whether justifiable or not. It wasn't until the lives and thoughts of the country were tainted by the catastrophic and unthinkable actions of a killer that people thought, “What can we do to make sure this doesn't happen again?” By that point, mental disorders were dirtied by violence and death, again recycling the stigma.

Society, however, seems to disregard the daily struggles that lead up to manic episodes.

The recent blockbuster “Silver Linings Playbook” has done much to spotlight the very real battle of mental illnesses. It follows the lives of a young man suffering from bipolar disorder and a young woman with depression and their eventual romance. It captures the denial, hurt, agitation and relapses of a troubled mental state, yet true to Hollywood standards, the movie tracks an exaggerated storyline, unnecessary dramas and, of course, the “happily ever after” ending.

Is it possible for a movie that addresses all of the key issues of mental health that have been avoided for so long to still give a misleading representation of the disorders? And is it possible that maybe mental illness has become a slightly glamorous health concern?

The modernist belief of unnoticed beauty in the idea of the outsider seems to have spread into a societal fad. It is now popular to have flaws or imperfections for interest's sake, and the narcissistic "I want that too" attitude has infiltrated the younger generations. How far will it go?

Already, OCD, or obsessive compulsive disorder, is a phrase thrown around to explain one's cleanliness, strange habits or superstitions. And recently, the latest trend among students is to fake troubles focusing or to subvert self-will for a prescription meant to treat attention deficit disorder.

The popularity of using these medical illnesses as an easy way out burdens the already difficult daily struggles of the people truly affected.

The truth is not everyone with a mental disorder will function well in society, or have a family to support them, or fall in love. There are problems that are too sensitive to fit into the Hollywood mold. And for the time being, mental health is one of them.

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