April 2016

The Evolution of Mental Illness Definitions and Its Effect on Media Representations: A Literature Review

Christopher Isaac, Arcadia University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.arcadia.edu/thecompass

The Evolution of Mental Illness Definitions and Its Effects on Media Representations: A Literature Review

By Christopher Isaac, *Arcadia University*

As world views change, so too do the ways we communicate, providing new definitions to antiquated aspects of our language. However, words can evolve imperceptibly gradually, leaving people perpetuating outdated terms without even realizing. We see this profusely in regards to social issues, such as gender and sexual orientation. Yet, mental illness differs because even today with all we have learned on the topic, there is much less agreement of how to accurately define it, creating frequent misuse of the label. There is a long history of the term "mental illness" being misapplied to various groups of people in ways that lent towards discrimination, and medical professionals still struggle to recognize the myriad of ways mental problems can manifest.

This is why it is critical to not only question how mental illness definitions have evolved, but also how those shifting definitions impact modern conceptions of mental disabilities. If antiquated definitions are put forth in our media, this disseminates outdated information, and potentially lends to a stigma of prejudice against entire groups of people. Media portrayals condition us into treating groups of people differently before we're even old enough to question why. For instance, children learn to distrust strangers from media messages, more so than from interacting with strangers. By examining the historical missteps of mental illness misdiagnoses, and how those misconceptions have bled into our entertainment, news, and media, we can learn from the past, providing a clearer definition of what mental disabilities actually are, and their proper treatments.

What Constitutes a Mental Disability

In "Public Conceptions of Mental Illness," Bruce G. Link—professor of Sociomedical Sciences at the Mailman School of Public Health—and his colleagues state that people often assume they recognize mental disabilities in others, even without any medical consultation.[1] Despite no professional evaluation, steps towards correcting the casually diagnosed problem are already being taken. History has many examples of those lacking professional expertise taking it upon themselves to determine who requires mental help. Those deviating from cultural norms are frequent recipients of the label, as those in the majority view their own practices as correct. Link and colleagues illustrate how even relocating to a new country could garner negative attention, mentioning the advent of asylums in the 19th century in conjunction with rising immigration rates during this period.[2] Today, such a reaction to outsiders is simply labeled "xenophobia."

This demonstrates how the definition of disability relies on conditions placing one on the fringe of the majority. In his book *The Disability Studies Reader*, Lennard J. Davis— professor of Disability and Human Development at the School of Applied Health Sciences—discusses times when the label of disability was applied to ostracize those whose behavior was deemed undesirable, even when such behavior was in that person's own best interest. One term Davis mentions is "drapetomania," a condition defined as causing slaves

---

[1] Bruce G. Link et al., "Public Conceptions of Mental Illness: Labels, Causes, Dangerousness, and Social Distance," *American Journal of Public Health* 89, no. 9 (1999): 1328-1333, doi:10.2105/AJPH.89.9.1328.

[2] Ibid., 1328.

to escape their ownership, for which the cure was to be whipped.[3] By this, he demonstrates how diagnoses could attempt to strip someone of their autonomy. If we accept someone's actions as a choice, that leaves room for dispute over the correct decision. However, if someone's actions are framed as an illness, members of the majority are free to disregard the individual's choice and control them "for their own good."

Such actions have made the term "disability" malleable to the whims of the majority in the past. With the development of psychology, the power to define the term has shifted to those with medical training, who we trust to help people with true impediments to their lives. The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities supplies our modern definition that "intellectual disability is a disability characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and in adaptive behavior, which covers a range of everyday social and practical skills."[4]

The Label of Mental Disability used as Oppression

Though mental health experts now define what mental disorders are, that does not mean distrust towards those who apply the definition has disappeared. If someone breaks a bone, they easily accept treatment at a hospital is necessary. Conversely, people with mental problems are often reluctant to seek treatment. Psychiatric care is not viewed like physical exams to be performed annually. Instead, psychologists are often last resorts, almost like admitting defeat. In "Stigma," Michael Smith—vice-chair of the International Mental Health Collaborating Network—says the profession has become historically contaminated.[5] Some may always regard psychology skeptically due to the association with now disproven conditions and treatments, such as attempts to "cure" homosexuality, supporting the theory of eugenics, and the practice of frontal lobotomies. Psychiatry's admitted missteps during a time when it was burgeoning hurt the profession's credibility in the public eye, and made many leery of accepting mental health treatment as legitimate.

In the article "Women and Hysteria in the History of Mental Health," Cecilia Tasca—Department of History, Cultural Heritage and Territory, University of Cagliari, Italy—and her colleagues outline how women have historically and continuously been viewed as mentally unsound. While the term "hysterical" is today used interchangeably with words like "panicked," it has a long medical history attached to its literal definition: "a mental disorder characterized by emotional outbursts, susceptibility to auto-suggestion, and, often, symptoms such as paralysis that mimic the effects of physical disorders."[6] In the past, the common notion was that a woman in a mercurial state of mind wasn't experiencing valid emotions, but rather, something dangerous to be cured of. In Ancient Egypt, the belief was that a woman's uterus was shifting inside of her body, disrupting other organs, and creating mental disharmony. As understanding of basic physiology grew, explanations to justify the belief that women succumb to emotional irrationality continued into the Greek age. This would eventually become the foundation for incidents such as witch burnings in Salem, as it was believed that the frail minds of women made them ripe for demonic possession. Superstitions of evil entities hijacking women's minds then gave way to early psychiatry, which, again, fixated on something innate in women's bodies causing emotional distress, and became the justification for hysterectomies.[7]

Cures for these "conditions" ranged from engaging in more sexual activity, to abstaining from sexual activity,

---

[3] Lennard J. Davis, *The Disability Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 20.

[4] "Frequently Asked Questions on Intellectual Disability," American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, accessed 2013, https://aaidd.org/intellectual-disability/definition/faqs-on-intellectual-disability#.VtJubPkrKM8.

[5] Michael Smith, "Stigma," *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* 8, no. 5 (2002): 317, doi:10.1192/apt.8.5.317.

[6] "Hysteria," Dictionary.com, s.v., accessed 2015, http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/hysteria.

[7] Cecilia Tasca et al., "Women and Hysteria in the History of Mental Health," *Clinical Practice and Epidemiology in Mental Health* 8 (2012): 110–119, doi:10.2174/1745017901208010110.

drastic surgery, confinement in asylums, even death. Though women aren't subjected to such treatments nowadays, that historical belief of women being irrationally emotional still lingers. Many prominent figures in public spheres still feel comfortable joking, or even seriously asserting, that women's viewpoints can't be taken seriously due to such things as where women are in menstrual cycles. In April of 2015, *TIME* magazine published the article "Hillary Clinton is the Perfect Age to be President." The article's reasoning was that Hillary Clinton has passed the age of being menopausal, therefore, she would be an emotionally stable president.[8]

Members of the LGBT spectrum have likewise had to push back against a history of being viewed as mentally damaged. Homosexuality was, and still is in some parts of the world, a crime punishable by death. It has been compared to pedophilia, mis-attributed as the cause of the AIDS virus, and resulted in many people being institutionalized, castrated, and lobotomized. As with women, past treatment of the LGBT community from the medical community isn't espoused as overt hatred, but as concern that the group must be protected for their own good, and the good of others. Homosexual people have been identified as being at a higher risk for suicide according to various studies over the years. The percentages on those conclusions vary, as do the interpretations for why this occurs. Proponents of gay rights say this clearly is a symptom of a homophobic society which drives gay people towards depression. Those against gay rights say those percentages are not a symptom of society, but simply of a gay person's mind, which they claim substantiates why homosexuality should be condemned as dangerous.

These are not debates of some long-gone era. Gay marriage was legalized nationwide in this country in 2015, but homosexuality itself was only decriminalized nationwide in 2003 due to the ruling of *Lawrence v. Texas*.[9] As transgenderism becomes more well-known due to public figures like Caitlyn Jenner, transgender people are also becoming a greater part of the conversation. Several news publications have debated the legitimacy of being transgender, whether it is a ploy for attention, or even a mental illness in itself. Fox News made headlines recently when political analyst Andrea Tantaros asked in a discussion concerning Jenner whether she could then declare herself as a cat to avoid paying taxes. "We're opening the door to a very crazy debate," said Tantaros. "Some who might not be mentally stable—some who may be—are going to come out and say, 'I self identify as' insert animal, insert race, insert spaceship."[10]

Racial differences have also been a well-documented source of oppressive diagnoses, particularly in regards to viewing black people as mentally inferior. Obviously, asserting that nonwhite races are less intelligent is today viewed as abhorrent. Yet, many also point out disparities in how black people are still treated, such as black criminals being described in animalistic terms, while white murderers are described in sympathetic terms, i.e., lonely or troubled. Frustration over what many feel is excessive police force has led to constant riots after the deaths of Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, and Freddie Gray, to name a few. Some in the black community feel while the words used to describe them may have evolved (thug being a common adjective for black criminals) that these are just synonyms for past racial slurs, and psychology's history of viewing them as subservient creates a greater backlash when a black person is seen as stepping out of line.[11]

---

[8] Julie Holland, "Hillary Clinton is the Perfect Age to be President," *TIME*, April 3, 2015, http://time.com/3763552/hillary-clinton-age-president/.

[9] *Lawrence v. Texas (02-102) 539 U.S. 558 20033.*

[10] "Dolezal Speaks Out After Resigning NAACP Post Over Race Controversy." 2015

[11] CalvinJohn Smiley and David Fakunle, "From 'Brute' to 'Thug:' The Demonization and Criminalization of Unarmed Black Male Victims in America," *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 26, no. 3-4 (2016): 350-366, doi:10.1080/10911359.2015.1129256.

Regardless of how influential the past of these oppressed groups is on affecting the present, it's undeniable that psychology has done harm to all of them. With damage that is still being undone, it's understandable that many people might be leery of trusting psychology. However, too far down that line of thinking runs the opposite risk: being so distrustful that one starts overlooking the good, suspecting problems where there are none.

Whether Modern Skeptocism of Psychology is Justified

Modern psychology has made great strides towards acceptance, and is now applied towards many people. Yet, as psychiatry also gains prevalence in treating children, apprehension is increasingly vocalized by media reports questioning if children are over diagnosed. There is large debate whether labels of ADHD, autism, and Asperger's are distributed too liberally among schoolchildren. Whereas physical ailments are quickly deferred to professionals, many in society are skeptical whether learning disorders are legitimate mental illnesses.

One of the most prominent ongoing debates centers on whether vaccinations are a cause of autism among children. Model Jenny McCarthy has become a spokeswoman about what she believes are the dangers of vaccinations after her son was diagnosed with autism. She has spoken to many publications about her beliefs, and says she is not anti vaccinations, but instead wants vaccines made safer. She believes there are safe vaccines, such as for tetanus, but believes chemicals such as aluminum make other vaccines a concern. In a 2009 Q&A with *TIME* magazine, McCarthy says that until vaccine safety is improved, "If you ask a parent of an autistic child if they want the measles or the autism, we will stand in line for the f___ing measles."[12] Measles was once nearly eradicated in the United States, but recent years have seen a resurgence in the disease, likely attributable to children not being immunized. Many who dispute her claims point to this as one reason that her advocacy is not only misinformed about mental disabilities, but promotes actions with dangerous consequences.

There have been many studies about any possible link between autism and vaccinations over the years. Jeffrey S. Gerber and Paul A. Offit—Division of Infectious Diseases at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia— shared their study "Vaccines and Autism: A Tale of Shifting Hypotheses" in 2009, the same year McCarthy shared her earlier views that she admits come largely from looking at studies online. The two doctors thoroughly cite an abundant number of test studies performed over the years devoted to finding any correlation between vaccines and autism. They mention several countries investigating possible links by examining their medical databases of children who were immunized and comparing them to children with autism. Finland, for instance, looked at the records of 535,544 children between 1982 and 1986, and of the 309 people hospitalized for autism, found no pattern of the disorder appearing around the immunization period. Denmark examined 537,303 children immunized between 1991 and 1998, and also found no pattern. Similar studies are also cited from California, London, and Canada, among others.[13]

Gerber and Offit also looked into whether the administration of multiple vaccines into an immature immune system could create a risk of autism. They found this theory unlikely due to autism not being a disease affected a result of genetic disposition. They added that even if vaccines could cause such a thing, the number of autism cases should be dropping, rather than rising as they are. The doctors state that even though children receive double the number of vaccinations today compared to the past (14 today, compared to 7 in the '80s), bacterial and viral proteins are far lower in modern vaccines (200 today, compared to at least 3000 in the

---

[12] Jeffrey Kluger, "Jenny McCarthy on Autism and Vaccines," *TIME*, April 1, 2009, http://content.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1888718,00.html.

[13] Jeffrey S. Gerber and Paul A. Offit, "Vaccines and Autism: A Tale of Shifting Hypotheses," *Clinical Infectious Diseases* 48, no. 4 (2009): 457-458, doi:10.1086/596476.

past).[14] They believe less undiscovered cases explains rising autism rates. Though fears about autism have been repeatedly investigated and turned up nothing, the doubts of many still persist, and demonstrate the influence of celebrities like McCarthy. If nothing else, it shows the entertainment world can play a big role in shaping other people's beliefs, for good or for bad.

DEPICTIONS IN ENTERTAINMENT

While our entertainment isn't the catalyst for our biases, it does propagate the values of our culture. For instance, older films focused primarily on white male characters, with other races and female characters shown more in deferential roles. It wasn't until our values in reality began to change that the roles of characters in films changed as well. So logically, looking at how mental disabilities are depicted in modern entertainment should offer insight into our current societal views of the topic. This is especially valuable when examining what media children consume, as they are particularly impressionable, and what they witness growing up will normalize certain world views to them.

Dr. Claire Wilson and her fellow researchers—the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Science at the University of Auckland—found in their study "How Mental Illness is Portrayed in Children's Television" that characters who displayed symptoms of mental problems were used quite frequently, though often as antagonists or comedic relief. Nearly half of the shows examined featured references to mental problems in ways that were reprimanding, or carried negative connotations. Furthermore, most of the representative cartoon characters with disabilities had ridiculous physical features to further accentuate their weirdness. Results were obtained by looking at one complete week of television aimed at children under age 10. Wilson and colleagues watched 46 different TV series, amounting to 128 total episodes and totaling 57 hours and 50 minutes of children's TV in one week. The results found that 59 episodes (46.1%) contained one or more references to mental illness, primarily through calling something "crazy" or "insane" to imply a situation was out of control, or fun. The findings go on to say that within those 59 episodes, there were 159 references to mental illness.[15]

Professionals believe that these findings indicate a problem not just for children, but for people with mental disabilities as well. Lesley Warner—press and public relations manager for the Mental Health Foundation (MHF)—commented on the research, saying that the media has an important role in influencing perceptions. *BBC News* reported in their article "Children's TV 'Stigmatises Mental Illness' " that around the same time as Wilson's study on children's television, the MHF published a report stating that 70% of mental illness sufferers feel they are discriminated against. Dr. Peter Byrne—psychiatrist and Senior Lecturer at University College London's Department of Mental Health Sciences—also commented in the *BBC News* report, comparing these depictions of mental conditions to past images featuring racism. "If children's first exposure to mentally ill people is overwhelmingly negative," said Byrne, "then there is a risk they will start to demonize the mentally ill." [16]

Of course, that danger is not limited to children's shows. In her article "Media Portrayal of Mental Illness and its Treatments," Dr. Heather Stuart—professor of Community Health and Epidemeolgy at Queen's University—notes how much power entertainment media wields in shaping perceptions of disabilities. However, she states that when characters with mental disabilities are featured in entertainment, half will inflict

---

[14] Gerber and Offit, "Vaccines and Autism," 459-460.

[15] Claire Wilson et al., "How Mental Illness is Portrayed in Children's Television," *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 176, no. 5 (2000): 441, doi:10.1192/bjp.176.5.440.

[16] "Children's TV 'Stigmatises Mental Illness,' " *BBC News*, May 1, 2000, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/729504.stm.

violence against another character during the depiction, and one out of four kills someone.[17] Horror movies alone are hugely reliant on characters like Michael Meyers and Jason Voorhees, whose mental trauma is used as justification for their killing sprees. There is seldom justification for this other than assuming that anyone whose mental process we do not understand could be capable of anything; therefore, they are terrifying. Stuart claims such portrayals teach viewers to fear and insult people with mental problems. Furthermore, she says they make people with disabilities reluctant to seek help due to the stigma that will be assigned to them.[18] *The Sopranos* illustrated this throughout its TV series with mob boss Tony being highly secretive about going to a psychiatrist for his panic attacks. He is constantly fearful of how people will react, and that his crew will view him as weak if they find out. Tony resents having to express his feelings to alleviate his illness, articulating his disdain for vulnerability by repeatedly lamenting the loss of the days of the strong silent types like Gary Cooper.

Depictions in News Media
Some defend unfavorable depictions of mental problems in entertainment, reasoning that in works featuring dragons or aliens, inaccurate depictions are expected. Were inaccuracies about mental illness limited to fiction, then perhaps such a defense could be palatable. In "News Media Portrayal of Mental Illness," Otto F. Wahl—professor of Psychology at Hartford University—examined mental illness depictions in news media. He found that mental disability sufferers were overwhelmingly mentioned in news relating to incidents of violence.[19] He utilized a computer database to search for the term "mental illness" in news stories in 1999 from six major publications (*The New York Times, Washington Post, St. Louis Post Dispatch, Boston Globe, Los Angeles Times, and the St. Petersburg Times*) and randomly selected 50 article results from each publication to draw his findings. Other groups of people, such as American soldiers, receive human interest stories showing them as actual people accomplishing nonviolent things. Conversely, people with mental disabilities are hardly ever even spoken to about stories focusing on them. Instead, those in the medical field are consulted to provide a professional perspective on the topic, while those with personal experience are left unnoticed.

Despite this trend, the occasional sympathetic media coverage towards mental illness in the past yielded positive results. In 1960, journalist Jack Nelson won a Pulitzer for chronicling abuse of psychiatric patients in Georgia, and the public was outraged by the conditions they learned of.[20] This suggests that negative views towards mental illness are not innate, but altered by exposure to different stories. News media's job is to inform, and if they inform people with continuous coverage of disability sufferers being dangerous, that is how society perceives them.

The Impact of Familiarity on Perception
Some might still believe that aversion to mental illness sufferers is some ingrained defense mechanism, and that this could not be altered regardless of sympathetic media portrayals. Patrick W. Corrigan—Distinguished Professor of Psychology at Illinois Institute of Technology—and his colleagues decided to test how prior experience with mental disorders would affect people of various backgrounds. They documented this experiment in "Familiarity with Mental Illness and Social Distance from People with Schizophrenia and Major Depression." The experiment was conducted by collecting several thousand interviews in Germany from

---

[17] Heather Stuart, "Media Portrayal of Mental Illness and its Treatments," CNS Drugs 20, no. 2 (2006): 100, doi: 10.2165/00023210-200620020-00002.

[18] Ibid., 103.

[19] Otto F. Wahl, "News Media Portrayal of Mental Illness: Implications for Public Policy," *American Behavioral Scientist* 46, no. 12 (2003): 1595-1596, doi:10.1177/0002764203254615.

[20] Ibid., 1594.

people at least 18 years old. Participants were shown footage of someone with a mental disorder, and their reactions were gauged. Results showed that the more exposure viewers had to mental illness in their own lives, the more sympathetic they were to the footage they viewed. Those with least negative reactions were those who had received psychiatric treatment themselves. More negative were those only with family who had been in treatment, then those with friends in treatment. Lastly, the most negative, were those who didn't know anyone who had ever been in treatment. The latter group had the largest number of respondents that reacted fearfully to the footage, or labeled the person they viewed as "dangerous."[21]

Lacking familiarity with a group, you would assume people would refrain from forming impressions about the members until meeting them. Kim A. Smith—professor at Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication at Iowa State University—and Olan Farnall—assistant professor at the School of Communication at California State University-Fullerton—explain why this is not so in their article "Reactions to People with Disabilities: Personal Contact Versus Viewing of Specific Media Portrayals." As the previously mentioned research has stated, people at least partially acquire these conceptualizations through television. What is surprising, however, is that Smith and Farnall's article suggests that people who watch more TV have an increased likelihood to make such attributions. Heavy TV watchers wind up deriving more of their world views from the characters and media personalities they see presented to them. Deprived of exposure to the multifaceted nature of real people, TV becomes a surrogate for genuine human interaction.[22]

Smith and Farnall say media portrayals fill that void by inculcating negative clichés. TV usually features someone with a mental disorder being portrayed as overcoming a great challenge just to function. Such characters seldom strive for more remarkable achievements that other characters would reach, such as love or heroism. This places low expectations of what someone with a mental disorder can accomplish. Furthermore, characters with mental disorders who can't function on their own often do not even get the sympathy of the viewer. Rather, their caretaker is portrayed as the sympathetic one for dealing with someone who is a burden.

CONCLUSION: THE CHANGES THAT HAVE BEGUN TO OCCUR

Despite so much bad history, time shows that society can change. In the article "Mental Health Literacy," writer Anthony F. Jorm—past President of the Australasian Society for Psychiatric Research—discusses public knowledge of mental disorders, and the obstacles that have been preventing better understanding of the topic. A significant hurdle Jorm discusses is how well the media integrates education about mental illness into the public sphere. Problems like cancer and heart disease have long been addressed through advertisements to increase awareness of their respective causes and treatments. However, mental disorders did not receive concentrated campaigns to better inform the public until the 1980s. The effects were quickly apparent though, as public surveys around this time from people who viewed the ads already showed more positive outlooks towards people with mental disorders.[23]

Today, commercials talking about the dangers of depression, and offering encouragement to contact mental health professionals are frequent in advertising. Less common, though still significant, are ads featuring celebrity advocates, such as singer Adam Levine's commercials about living with ADHD. Mental health is

[21] Corrigan, Patrick W. et al, "Familiarity with Mental Illness and Social Distance from People with Schizophrenia and Major Depression: Testing a Model Using Data from a Representative Population Survey." *Schizophrenia Research* 69, no.2–3 (2004): 175–182, doi:10.1016/S0920-9964(03)00186-5.

[22] Kim A. Smith and Olan Farnall, "Reactions to People with Disabilities: Personal Contact Versus Viewing of Specific Media Portrayals," Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly 76 (1999): 659-672, doi:10.1177/107769909907600404.

[23] Anthony F. Jorm, "Mental Health Literacy: Public Knowledge and Beliefs About Mental Disorders," *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 177, no. 5 (2000): 399, doi:10.1192/bjp.177.5.396.

gradually finding public forums, leading to greater understanding of how common such disorders are. The National Institute of Mental Health states that in 2013, there were an estimated 43.8 million adults over 18 in the United States (18.5 percent of all adults) with some form of mental illness.[24] This doesn't even include children.

Dr. Peter Byrne wrote the article "Stigma of Mental Illness and Ways of Diminishing It" to discuss why education alone is not enough to create change. He says those with stigmatic views of mental illness will hardly volunteer to be better educated. Byrne surmises to integrate true change, practices supporting those with mental disorders must be made compulsory in our legal and education systems. He compares the stigma surrounding mental disorders to past antipathy towards an illness like AIDS. Some of the breakthroughs in combating negative perceptions of AIDS were done in courtrooms by challenging the status quo of discriminatory practices. Byrne states that disputing legal sanctions omitting consideration for people in need of care creates ripples of change, regardless of the legal outcome, just from having people speak up.[25] Although the media's ability to promote positivity and dissuade others in perpetuating old stereotypes is not negligible, only places like courtrooms, schools, and hospitals can enact widespread change.

In addition to accepting psychiatry as a viable form of treatment, we are growing cognizant of how depictions can influence actions. As stated earlier, the horror genre of entertainment is especially reliant on mental illness stereotypes. Now, independent game developers are participating in events like Asylum Jam, which challenges creators to make horror games that do not depend on cliché asylums to craft frightening environments, or using mental patients as antagonists. "Mental illness is an intensely personal thing that is often vilified by society and the tropes that exist in our media perpetuate misinformation," said Asylum Jam organizer Lucy Morris in *Vice*. "Video games aren't innocent of that at all—games have the same accountability as film and books and music to stop spreading misinformation and stigma about mental illness."[26]

Times have changed, and casual usage of mental health terms like OCD and ADD are now discouraged from being thrown around as quirky descriptors for behavior. The word "retard" is now regarded as a slur akin to pejoratives used against someone's race. Groups stigmatized by mental health terms in the past are gaining more equal rights, and psychiatric terminology is moving away from ostracizing and towards understanding. While these signs of progress must contend with what came before in defining our world view, acknowledgment of these problems is undeniably gaining prevalence in an attempt to erode the longstanding stigma.

---

[24] "Any Mental Illness (AMI) Among Adults," National Institute of Mental Health, accessed 2015, http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/any-mental-illness-ami-among-us-adults.shtml.

[25] Peter Byrne, "Stigma of Mental Illness and Ways of Diminishing It," *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* 6, no. 1 (2000): 65-72, doi:10.1192/apt.6.1.65.

[26] Joe Donnelly, "Asylum Jam is Challenging Misinformed Gaming Stereotypes Around Survival Horror and Mental Health," *Vice*, February 12, 2016, http://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/asylum-jam-is-challenging-misinformed-gaming-stereotypes-around-survival-horror-and-mental-health-955.

American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. "Frequently Asked Questions on Intellectual Disability." Accessed 2013. https://aaidd.org/intellectual-disability/definition/faqs-on intellectual disability#.VtJubPkrKM8.

Byrne, Peter. "Stigma of Mental Illness and Ways of Diminishing It." *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* 6, no. 1 (2000): 65-72. doi:10.1192/apt.6.1.65.

"Children's TV 'Stigmatises Mental Illness.' " *BBC News*. May 1, 2000.http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/729504.stm.

Corrigan, Patrick W., Matthias C. Angermeyer, and Herbert Matschinger. "Familiarity with Mental Illness and Social Distance from People with Schizophrenia and Major Depression: Testing a Model Using Data from a Representative Population Survey." *Schizophrenia Research* 69, no. 2–3 (2004): 175–182. doi:10.1016 S0920-9964(03)00186-5.

Davis, Lennard J. *The Disability Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Dictionary.com, s.v. "Hysteria." Accessed 2015. http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/hysteria.

"Dolezal Speaks Out After Resigning NAACP Post Over Race Controversy.". 2015. TV programme. Fox News.

Donnelly, Joe. "Asylum Jam is Challenging Misinformed Gaming Stereotypes Around Survival Horror and Mental Health." *Vice*, February 12, 2016. http://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/asylum-jam-is-challenging misinformed-gaming-stereotypes-around-survival-horror-and-mental-health-955.

Gerber, Jeffrey S. and Paul A. Offit. "Vaccines and Autism: A Tale of Shifting Hypotheses." *Clinical Infectious Diseases* 48, no. 4 (2009): 456-461. doi:10.1086/596476.

Holland, Julie. "Hillary Clinton is the Perfect Age to be President." *TIME*, April 3, 2015. http://time.com/3763552/hillary-clinton-age-president/.

Jorm, Anthony F. "Mental Health Literacy: Public Knowledge and Beliefs About Mental Disorders." *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 177, no. 5 (2000): 396-401. doi:10.1192/bjp.177.5.396.

Kluger, Jeffrey. "Jenny McCarthy on Autism and Vaccines." *TIME*, April 1, 2009. http://content.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1888718,00.html.

Lawrence v. Texas (02-102) 539 U.S. 558. 2003. The Court of Appeals of Texas.

Link, Bruce G., Jo C. Phelan, Michaeline Bresnahan, Ann Stueve, and Bernice A. Pescosolido. "Public Conceptions of Mental Illness: Labels, Causes, Dangerousness, and Social Distance." *American Journal of Public Health* 89, no. 9 (1999): 1328-1333. doi:10.2105/AJPH.89.9.1328.

National Institute of Mental Health. "Any Mental Illness (AMI) Among Adults." Accessed 2015. http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/any-mental-illness-ami-among-us-adults.shtml.

Smiley, CalvinJohn, and David Fakunle. "From 'Brute' to 'Thug:' The Demonization and Criminalization of Unarmed Black Male Victims in America." *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 26, no. 3-4 (2016): 350-366. doi:10.1080/10911359.2015.1129256.

Smith, Kim A., and Olan Farnall. "Reactions to People with Disabilities: Personal Contact Versus Viewing of Specific Media Portrayals." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 76 (1999): 659-672. doi:10.1177/107769909907600404.

Smith, Michael. "Stigma." *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* 8, no. 5 (2002): 317-325. doi:10.1192/apt.8.5.317.

Stuart, Heather. "Media Portrayal of Mental Illness and its Treatments." *CNS Drugs* 20, no. 2 (2006): 99-106. doi:10.2165/00023210-200620020-00002.

Tasca, Cecilia, Mariangela Rapetti, Mauro Giovanni Carta, and Bianca Fadda. "Women and Hysteria in the History of Mental Health." *Clinical Practice and Epidemiology in Mental Health* 8 (2012): 110–119. doi:102174/1745017901208010110.

Wahl, Otto F. "News Media Portrayal of Mental Illness: Implications for Public Policy." *American Behavioral Scientist* 46, no. 12 (2003): 1594-1600. doi: 10.1177/0002764203254615.

Wilson, Claire, Raymond Nairn, John Coverdale, and Aroha Panapa. "How Mental Illness is Portrayed in Children's Television." *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 176, no. 5 (2000): 440-443. doi:10.1192bjp.176.5.440.