

Stigma

Week 14

Stigma

- What is it?
- Is it universal?
- How does it affect individuals?

What do these conditions have in common?

Anorexia Nervosa

Obesity

Cancer

Scars

AIDS

Depression

Mental Illness

Lice

Abuse

Alcoholism

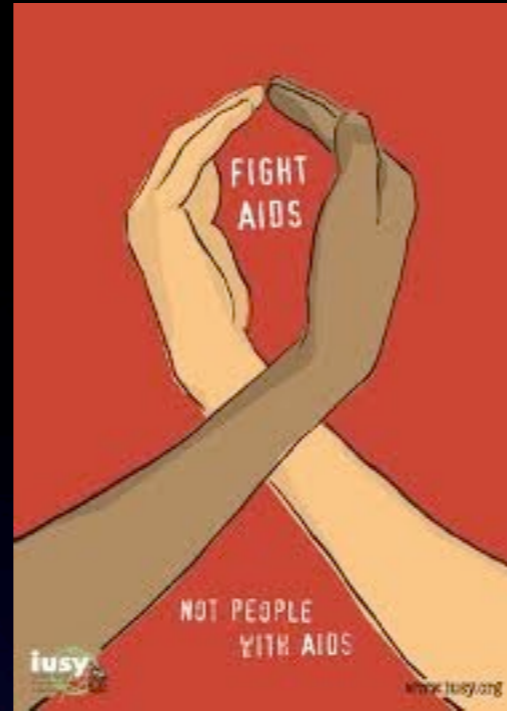
Addiction

STDs

Colon cancer

Leprosy

TB



STIGMA

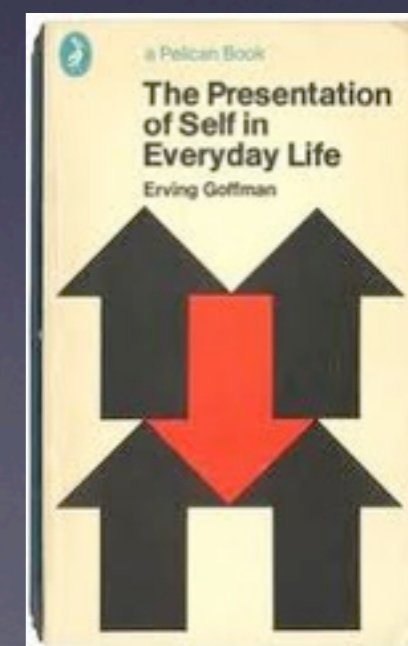
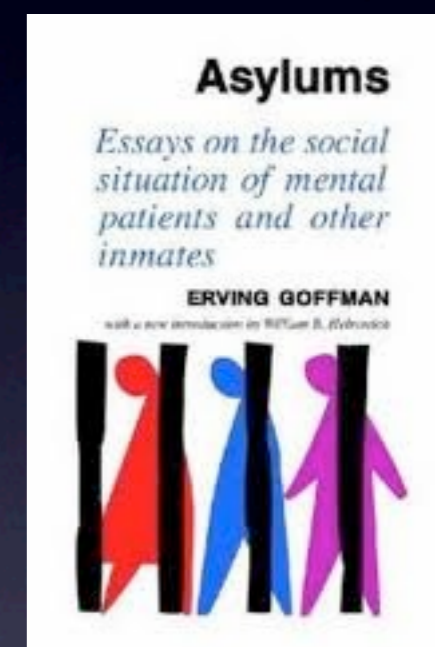
What is it?

- the negative social attribution placed on people because of their disability or illness

Erving Goffman

1922-1982

- attribute, behavior or reputation that was discrediting
- defined stigma as a social phenomenon in which an individual is devalued and shunned because the illness or disability makes him or her different or “not normal”
- the process by which the reaction of others spoils normal identity
- stigmatized condition becomes the “master status” that overpowers all other social attributes



Goffman: 3 forms of Social Stigma

1. Overt, or external, deformations
2. Deviations in personal traits
3. Tribal stigmas

Overt / external deformations



Deviations in Personal Traits



Tribal Stigmas



Stigma: Is it Universal?

- Mental illness in the US v. Tanzania
- Leprosy in India, Africa, and the US
- What do these cases tell us about stigma?

Stigma: How does it affect individuals?

Illness Experience (Kleinman 1988)

- patient-centered view of illness, especially the social and psychological aspects
- human aspects of the illness experience
- major weakness of biomedicine

Stigma and individuals

- discrimination
- damaged self-concept
- social ostracism
- social suffering

Chronic illness and stigma

- Coping with Stigma: Lifelong Adaptation of Deaf People
- Genital Herpes: An Ethnographic Inquiry into Being Discreditable

Social dimensions of chronic illness

- chronic illnesses have different and more complex social dimensions than acute illness
- rights and responsibilities of the sick role usually refer to time-limited illness experience

Social dimensions of chronic illness

- chronic illnesses become a part of people's core social identities (I am a diabetic v. I have diabetes.)
- suffering related to the social and psychological dimensions of illness may be worse and last longer than the disease itself

Deafness in the US



- 2 to 4/1,000 in the US are “functionally deaf”
 - more than 1/2 become deaf later in life
 - less than 1/1,000 became deaf before 18 years
- if people with severe hearing impairment are included, the number rises to 9 to 22 /1,000
- if everyone who has any kind of trouble with hearing is included, the number rises to 37 to 140/1,000

Deaf in America



- ~28.8 million people comprise the American Deaf Community
- changes to this community following WWII, and during 70s



Coping with Stigma: Lifelong Adaptation of Deaf People

- Summary
- What is an invisible disability?
- How might this invisibility complicate life for those with it?
- What is meant by the term “normalizing”?

Cochlear Implants

- controversial surgery that enables a child to “hear” & possibly understand language
- mainstreaming deaf to hearing world?
- threat to deaf American Sign Language
- being deaf is not a disability but a cultural identity
- child in liminal space - between cultures



Herpes

- chronic, lifelong viral infection
- at least 50 million people in the US have genital HSV infection
- transmitted through vaginal, anal, and oral sex
- transmission from men to women more likely than women to men

Herpes symptoms

- flu-like symptoms - fever, headache, muscle aches (usually get better within a week)
- tingling, burning, itching and redness at the site where the outbreak is about to occur
- painful, itchy blisters (oozing sores)
- swollen lymph nodes in the groin
- painful urination
- abnormal vaginal or urethral discharge
- months or years for symptoms to appear

Herpes Treatment

- no cure
- antiviral medication shorten and prevent outbreaks

Genital Herpes: An Ethnographic Inquiry into Being Discreditable

- Summarize
- Why is information management important?
- What is meant by being “discreditable”?
- What was the role of the media in shaping this illness and its illness experience?

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks

In what ways did stigma
affect Henrietta's life?

