

# 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

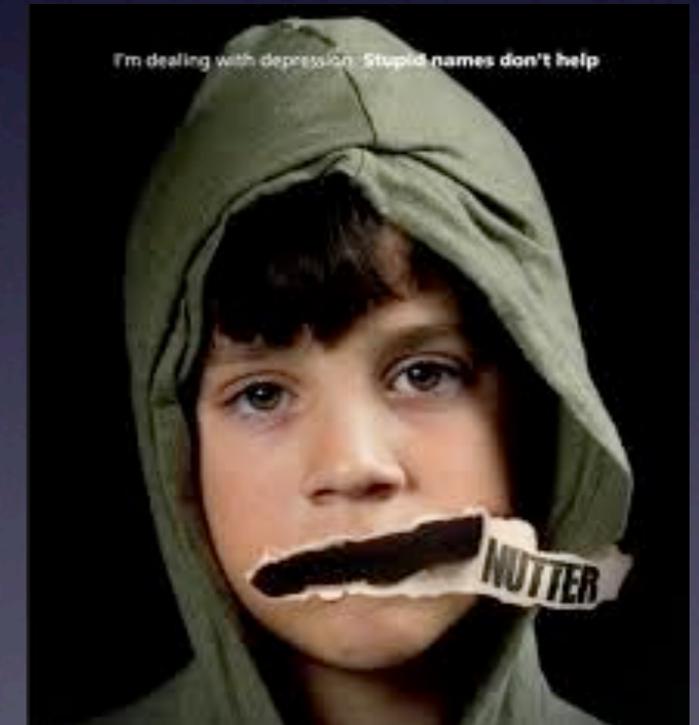
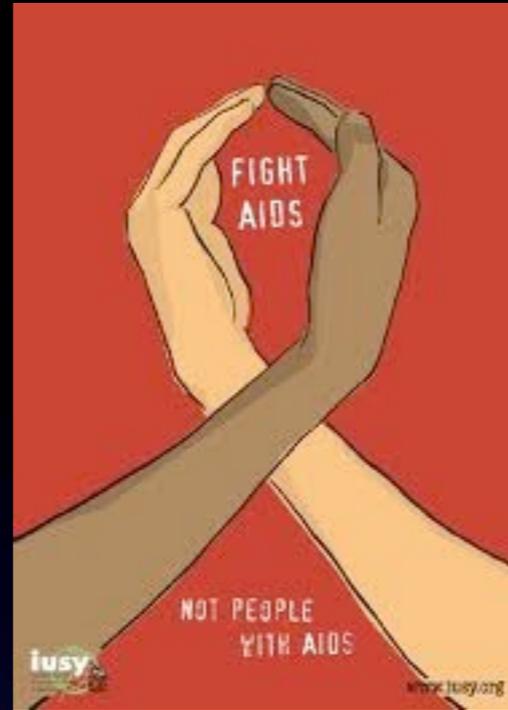
Addiction

STDs

Colon cancer

Leprosy

TB



# STIGMA

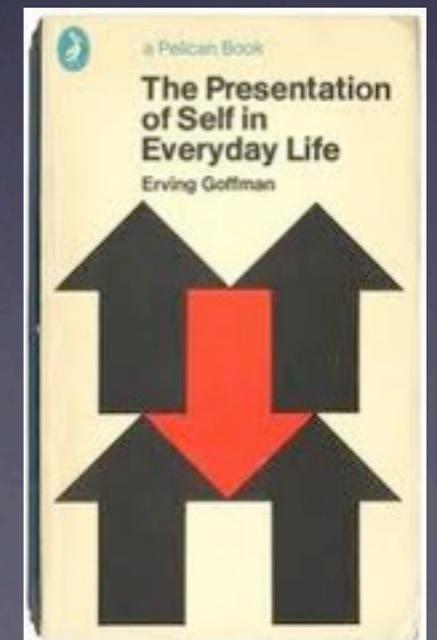
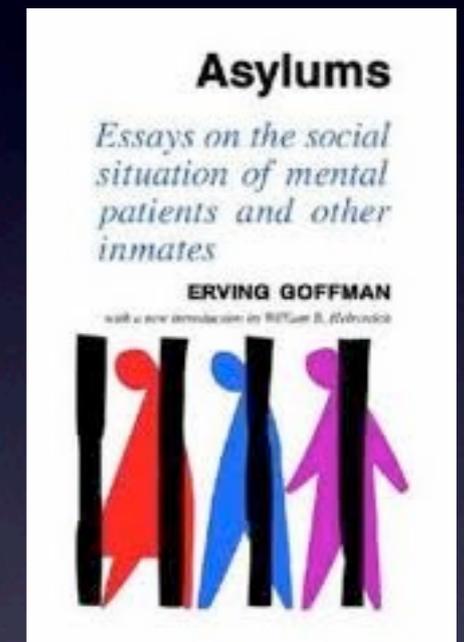
## What is it?

- 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



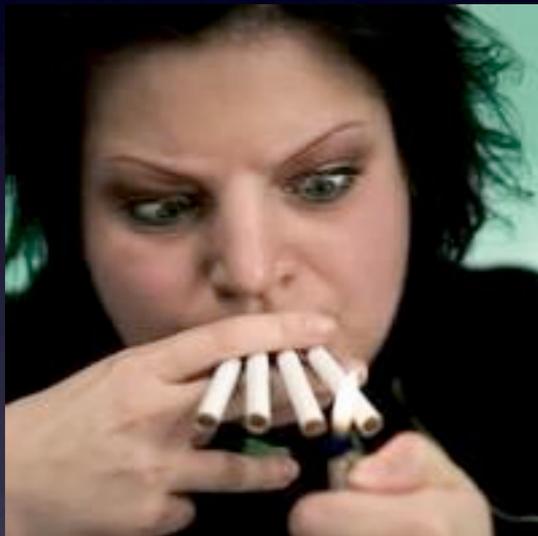
# Goffman: 3 forms of Social Stigma

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?

