

Stigmatization as a background factor affecting mental health

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UCLUS

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Stigma & Mental Health

“Mental illness strikes with a two-edged sword. On one side is the harmful effects of symptoms and disabilities that prevent people from achieving personal goals. On the other is the egregious effects of stigma, the prejudice and discrimination of a community that blocks personal aspirations.”

Pat Corrigan





Stigma (Greek) = a mark, dot, puncture
Branding of the body of slaves and criminals with knives and branding irons to mark as undesirable

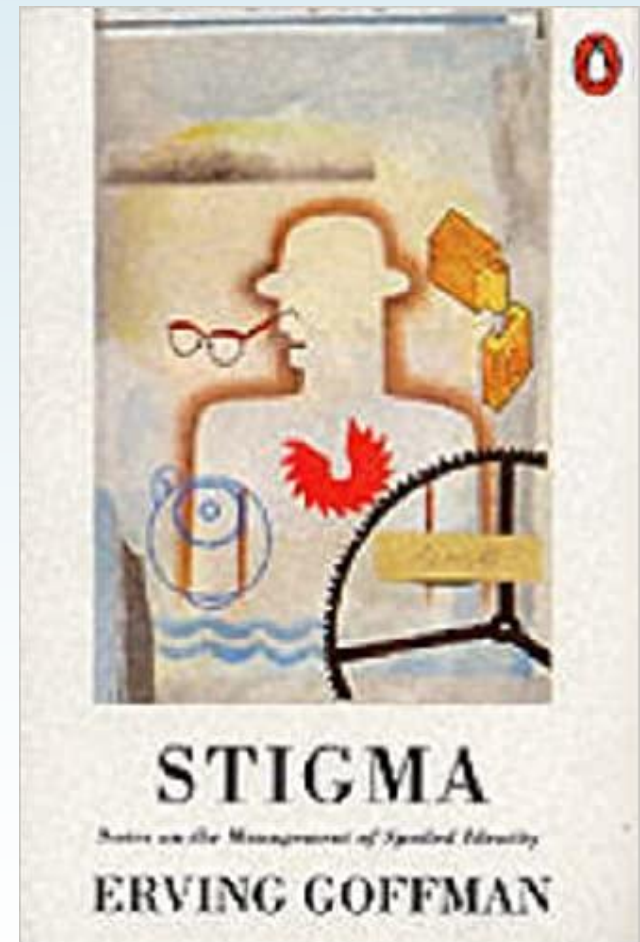


Key definitions of stigma

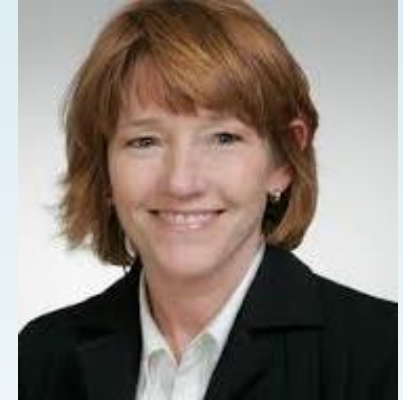
“An attribute that is deeply discrediting” and that “reduces the bearer “from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one.”

“The process by which the reaction of others spoils normal identity.”

Goffman (1963)



Stigmatisation exists when:



1. Individual attributes are labelled,
2. Evaluated negatively, and
3. Labelled individuals experience status loss and discrimination

Link, B. & Phelan, J. (2001).

Conceptualising Stigma. *Ann Rev Sociology*, 27, 363–385.

Types of stigma

- Public stigma: Negative beliefs about a group, prejudice and discrimination towards that group
- Internalised or Self-stigma: Negative beliefs about the self, may result in withdrawal and giving up, e.g., not pursuing social activities or employment
- Courtesy stigma: Devalued through association with stigmatised person. Affiliate stigma: Internalisation of courtesy stigma

The effects of stigma

- Stigma as barrier to accessing good quality health care, education, employment, affordable housing
- Social isolation and reduced access to socially valued roles
- Increased risk of self (internalised) stigma, self-blame and/or 'why try?'
- No or delayed help seeking
- Negative effects on engagement with treatment and recovery

Stigma and Intersectionality



Image: UNHCR

Anti-stigma actions at



➔ **Focus on legislation, policy, societal structures**

- Changes in policy & legislation
 - 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)
 - National Equality Legislation
- Large scale anti-stigma campaigns

England & Wales: *Time to Change, Heads Together*; Scotland: *See Me*;

US: *National Mental Health Anti-Stigma Campaign; Bring Change 2 Mind*;

Australia: *Beyond Blue*; Singapore: *Beyond the Label*

Actions at level of



➔ Focus on interpersonal level

- Education
- Contact

Meta-analysis of 72 public interventions tackling mental illness stigma (N=38,000; Corrigan et al., 2012):

➔ Integrating education and contact approaches appears to be most effective in tackling MH stigma - contact 2x as effective as education

Caution re messages in education based work, e.g. 'mental illness as a brain disease' message may increase stigma

See Corrigan "The stigma effect: Unintended consequences of mental health campaigns"

Actions at level of

STIGMATISED
Self-Stigma

➔ Focus on individual or peer level

Possible interventions:

- Awareness raising of corrosive effects of stigma & risk of self-stigmatisation
- Self-advocacy and social justice activism
- Self-stigma (group) interventions, e.g. Acceptance + Commitment Therapy, Photovoice