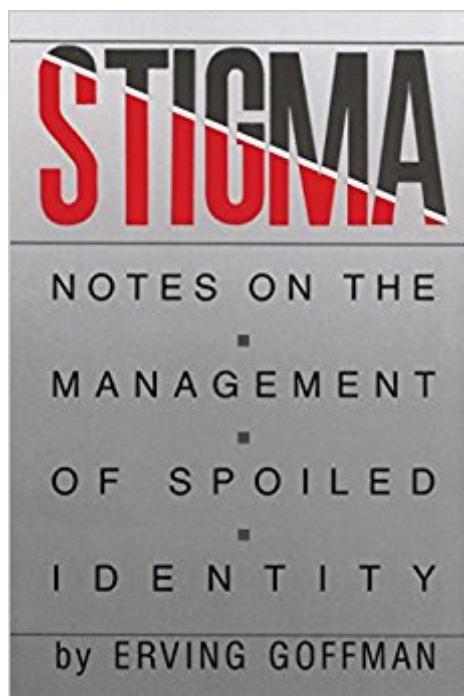


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Stigma: Notes On The Management Of Spoiled Identity



Synopsis

From the author of *Asylums*, *Stigma* analyzes a person's feelings about himself and his relationship to people whom society calls "normal." *Stigma* is an illuminating excursion into the situation of persons who are unable to conform to standards that society calls normal. Disqualified from full social acceptance, they are stigmatized individuals. Physically deformed people, ex-mental patients, drug addicts, prostitutes, or those ostracized for other reasons must constantly strive to adjust to their precarious social identities. Their image of themselves must daily confront and be affronted by the image which others reflect back to them. Drawing extensively on autobiographies and case studies, sociologist Erving Goffman analyzes the stigmatized person's feelings about himself and his relationship to "normals." He explores the variety of strategies stigmatized individuals employ to deal with the rejection of others, and the complex sorts of information about themselves they project. In *Stigma* the interplay of alternatives the stigmatized individual must face every day is brilliantly examined by one of America's leading social analysts.

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Customer Reviews

Stigma is an illuminating excursion into the situation of persons who are unable to conform to standards that society calls normal. Disqualified from full social acceptance, they are stigmatized individuals.

Erving Goffman was born in Manville, Alberta (Canada) in 1922. He came to the United States in 1945, and in 1953 received his Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Chicago. He was professor of sociology at the University of California at Berkeley until 1968, and thereafter was Benjamin Franklin Professor of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Dr. Goffman received the MacIver Award in 1961 and the In Medias Res Award in 1978. He was a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He died in 1983. Dr. Goffman's books include *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, *Encounters*, *Asylums*, *Behavior in Public Places*, *Stigma*, *Interaction Ritual*, *Strategic Interaction*, *Relations in Public*, *Frame Analysis*, and *Gender Advertisements*.

I'm only giving 4 stars because the theoretical material of the book is awesome, but the quality of the actual material the book is made from is terrible. The book is very flimsy. The print on the back is huge. It feels like a knock off. I am glad to have the book, but if I could go back in time I would wait to find a better copy that would last as this is something I plan to keep reading and have on my bookshelf the rest of my life.

These the second Erving Goffman book that I've read this year (the other being "Asylums", please see my review on .com if interested). I work as a criminal defense attorney and I read "Asylums" in an effort to gain perspective on the attitudes of institutionalized persons (i.e. convicts). I was surprised by how brilliant "Asylums" was, so I picked up "Stigma". I was similarly impressed with *Stigma*. Where "Asylums" dealt with the relationship of individuals and institutions, "Stigma" deals more with inter personal relationships. The role of institutions in forming identity is noted in footnotes throughout, but the primary focus is in discussing the relationship between identity and stigma. Goffman, of course, defines the dickens out of his concepts. If you gain nothing else from this book, you will have a thorough understanding of what it means to have a "stigma". The heart of the book consists of Goffman defining a five phase process which individuals with stigma go through. First you learn what it is to be "normal". Then you learn you're not "normal". Then you learn to control disclosure of information about your stigma, then you learn to "pass" as someone without a stigma and then you learn how to "voluntarily disclose" your stigma. I don't have a degree in sociology, so I'm not sure about the theoretical backgrounding of this approach, but it made sense to me. The best part of this book was the end, where Goffman argues (persuasively, I thought) that even "Normal" people have to deal with some sort of stigma at some time in their life. In that way, by studying people with stigma we study the interactions of "normals" with each other. So really there's

no difference, just a continuum of stigma, ranging from those who are always suffering from stigma, to those who rarely ever have to deal with it. I thought that was an interesting insight. I recommend this book highly, and I look forward to reading his classic: "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life."

Erving Goffman was a brilliant sociologist. His true gifts were analysis, organization, and analogy. In his landmark signature work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, he drew parallels between social behavior and theatrical performance. In *Stigma*, he examines what it means to be "different" from "normal" society and how both "normals" and the stigmatized behave at those times when they are thrown together. There are different kinds of stigmas. Some, such as homosexuality or being an ex-inmate, are often invisible, but others, like facial disfigurement or being of a minority race are often the first things anyone notices about the person. Both the stigmatized and the normals try different strategies. Sometimes the stigmatized are able to "pass" for normal by controlling information about themselves, thus becoming "discreditable" instead of "discredited." But in those cases where the stigma is obvious, they can resort to cynicism, or to playing a role that caricatures his more stereotypical fellow stigmatized. The normals also try different strategies to mask their discomfort. Goffman examines the strategies employed, and which strategies are most effective. I would very much recommend this book to teachers or anyone else who deals with people in social situations. Five stars.

It was very helpful. It allowed me to understand how stigma was related to the research I was doing in a class that I had to create a research study. Since stigma was my focus, the information Goffman presented expand my knowledge and understanding of stigmas effects on people. I am very pleased that the professor recommend *Stigma*.

Thank you

Awesome book! This guy explains everything very clearly and deeply as to what stigma is as well as deviance and status in society. This book is important for anyone taking sociology.

worked for what I needed it for

I've probably read this book ten to twelve times (I teach a Senior Capstone course with this book), and not only do I discover new ways in which to interpret or added depth to his work each time but I see my students blossom as they think through the issues he is discussing! Phenomenal book!

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