

Social stigma



Sociology of deviance



Violations of social norms

- ∴ Sociology of deviance is concerned with behavior that violates norms, or what is considered “acceptable”
- ∴ Rather than focus on stability of social expectations, sociology of deviance examines places where those expectations are transgressed

Types of deviance

- ∴ Deviant behavior is a very broad category
- ∴ *Small violations* that cause little more than mild discomfort
e.g. standing “too close” to someone while talking with them
- ∴ *Subcultural behavior* that may be accepted within but not outside of a community
e.g. Goth or Furry subcultures
- ∴ *Taboo behavior* that is socially ‘forbidden’
e.g. homicide, cannibalism, incest, arson, ...
(though consider, e.g., death penalty, police/military violence, or deliberate property destruction by state)

Stigmatized identities

“Spoiled identity”

- ∴ Erving Goffman theorized stigma as a social process of *labelling* based on perceived difference
- ∴ Based in *interaction* (negotiation) rather than any specific behavior/trait
- ∴ Inability to make a *credible claim* to an ‘acceptable’ identity

Identity management

- ∴ “Strategies” for managing stigmatized identities
- ∴ **Covering**: hiding or downplaying stigmatized traits
- ∴ **Flaunting**: highlighting a trait to challenge its stigmatization



Stigma and power

Power dynamics

- ∴ Stigma management is tied to social power structures
- ∴ Those with more power are more easily able to manage stigma
- ∴ Economic capital can help with covering a stigmatized trait (e.g. healthcare, prosthetics, lawyers)
- ∴ Cultural and social capital can mitigate the negative effects of stigma, and may facilitate flaunting



Stigma is *intersectional*

- ∴ Stigma is *mediated* by social status
- ∴ E.g. alcohol consumption by a wealthy person versus an unhoused person
- ∴ E.g. multiple sexual partners for a man versus a woman
- ∴ Intersecting identities of race, gender, class, disability, age, language, etc. determine the labelling and consequences of stigma

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