Lecture Outline
Stigmatization

Stigma
Stigma classifications
Stigma characteristics
Functions of stigmas

Stigma Classifications
(Goffman, 1963)

1. Tribal identities
2. Abominations of the body
3. Blemishes of individual character

Stigma
Consensual beliefs about undesirable attributes or characteristics

Stigma Classifications
(Goffman, 1963)

Tribal identities:
Social groups into which individuals are born
- religious groups
- ethnic groups
- racial groups
- national groups
Stigma Classifications
(Goffman, 1963)

Abominations of the body:

Physical ailments:
- deformities
- illnesses
- paralysis

Blemishes of individual character:

Moral transgressions, weakness of will:
- drug addiction
- prostitution
- homosexuality
- mental illnesses

Stigma

According to Goffman (1963):

Stigmatized groups regarded by many as flawed

People report that they do not emulate, or try to be like, the stigmatized

Stereotypes about stigmatized groups are negative

Individuals with stigmas are victims of prejudice, discrimination, hate crimes
Homophobia Study
Adams, Wright, & Lohr (1996)

Homophobic Men  Non-Homophobic Men

Viewed three sexually explicit video tapes

Heterosexuals  Lesbians  Gay men

Both groups sexually aroused  Both groups sexually aroused  Which group was aroused? You fill it in.

Concealibility

Extent to which a stigma can be hidden from others

Stigma Characteristics

Dimensions along which stigmas can differ

Stability

Extent to which a stigma can change over time
Disruptiveness
Extent to which a stigma disrupts social interactions

Responsibility
Extent to which a stigmatized person is seen as personally responsible for their stigma

Aesthetic Qualities
Extent to which a stigma is physically unappealing to others

Danger (Peril)
Extent to which a stigmatized person is seen as dangerous
What we do know...

Stigma characteristics are not all-or-none

What we do know...

People can hold different beliefs about a stigma's characteristics

What we do know...

Stigma characteristics are not mutually exclusive

Functions of Stigmas

Self-enhancement function
Social identity function
System justification function
Terror management function
Self-Enhancement Function

Stigmatizing out-groups make people feel better about themselves

Based on Downward Comparison Theory

Self-Enhancement vs. Social Identity Theory

Self-Enhancement:
- Derogate the stigmatized
- Feel good about oneself

Social Identity Theory:
- Derogate the stigmatized
- Feel good about one’s group
- Feel good about oneself

Social Identity Theory

Assumptions:
- People categorize others into in/out groups
- Categorization creates a social identity
- People want to be in groups held in high esteem
- People sustain positive identity by derogating out-groups

Self-Enhancement & Social Identity Functions

Limitations

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Self-Devaluation Study
Clark & Clark (1939)

253 African American children
Presented with 4 dolls
- 2 brown with black hair
- 2 white with yellow hair
Children asked questions

Result:
Children correctly identified the doll’s color
- 93% gave the brown doll when asked
- 94% gave the white doll when asked

Identify actual color of doll

Example questions:
“Give me the brown doll”
“Give me the white doll”

Identify racial identity of doll

Example questions:
“Give me the doll that looks like an African American child”
“Give me the doll that looks like a White child”
Self-Devaluation Study
Clark & Clark (1939)

Results:
Children able to identify the doll’s racial identity
- 93% gave the brown doll when asked for the one that looked like an African American child
- 93% gave white doll when asked for the one that looked like a White child

Self-Devaluation Study
Clark & Clark (1939)

Results:
Children not as good at identifying their own racial identity
- 66% gave the brown doll when asked which looked like them
- 33% gave the white doll when asked which looked like them

Self-Devaluation Study
Clark & Clark (1939)

Identify child’s racial identity

Example questions:
“Give me the doll that looks like you”

Self-Devaluation Study
Clark & Clark (1939)

Identify racial preference

Example questions:
“Give me the doll you like best”
“Give me the doll that looks bad”
“Give me the doll that is a nicer color”
Self-Devaluation Study
Clark & Clark (1939)

**Results:**
Children devalued own racial identity:

- 66% liked the white doll best
- 59% said the brown doll looked bad
- only 38% said the brown doll was a nice color

System Justification Theory

**Assumptions:**
Group inequalities in every society

Advantaged groups stigmatize those who belong to disadvantaged groups in order to justify why they have more

Justifications show how the system is fair

System Justification Theory

**Limitations:**
Cannot explain social revolutions that initially heighten intergroup conflict
Terror Management Function

Assumptions:

People are aware of their own mortality

This awareness creates anxiety

People protect self from this anxiety by subscribing to a cultural view that provides order & meaning to an otherwise random world

Terror Management

Stigmatization serves to reject those who are different and who violate and challenge cultural views