SOCI 210: Sociological Perspectives

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) 2

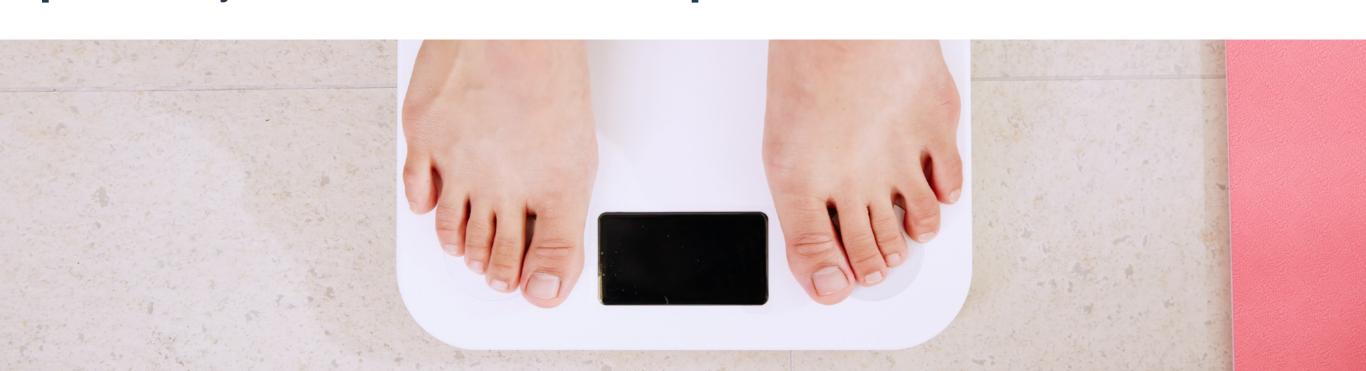
Stigmatized identities

"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
- i *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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