

Chapter 10

Different Sides of a Reality: “Positive Stigma”

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ABSTRACT

This study's aim is to initiate a discussion of the other side of stigma: that is positive stigma. In this chapter, we discuss different sides of the stigma phenomenon with three major concepts; intelligence quotient, chaos theory, quantum theory with the last unverified part of the Standard Model of particle physics- Higgs Boson and also known as the God Particle. Lastly, we focus on positive stigma in terms of leadership as a case of future trends for this discussion. This discussion is expected to trigger off a high level of academic and research interest in the field of stigma.

INTRODUCTION

This study is about stigma, which is a naturally chaotic phenomenon in terms of its effects on the stigmatized individuals. This study's aim is to initiate a discussion on the other side of the stigma conundrum: which is positive stigma. We know that the word “positive” and the word “stigma” look like antithetical. In this chapter, we discuss different sides of the stigma phenomenon with three major concepts; intelligence quotient, chaos theory, quantum theory with the last unverified part of the Standard Model of particle physics- Higgs Boson and also known as the God Particle. Lastly, we focus on positive stigma in terms of leadership as a case of future trends for this discussion. This chapter is the first part of the discussion on positive stigma.

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What Is Stigma and How about Positive Stigma?

Stigma is defined as a concept alluding to ostracized individuals and/or groups, which have unaccepted characteristics by society. Stigma is attributed to characteristics of any individual or group due to a feature of them that cannot be acted or cannot be seen as human by society. Stigma is a widespread phenomenon which can be rediscovered in all societies and cultures in different contexts (Kazashka, 2013). Goffman (1963) was the first person that used the stigma term publicly in sociological literature (Weidner 1981). Goffman (1963) described stigma as a sign or a mark designating the bearer as “spoiled,” or flawed, compromised, and less than fully human.

People who do not comply with social norms are not considered as normal by society. So society exposes some consequences to these people such as ostracism, discrimination, mobbing, stigmatization. Stigmatization is a very powerful phenomenon that has far-reaching effects on the victims (Major ve O’Brien, 2005). Although stigmatized people’s nature as human is not better or worse than others (Smith, 2006) they are almost not perceived as human by others (Goffman, 1963).

Stigma is a phenomenon that is based on prejudices, stereotypic thoughts and labeling. If we think about the stigma experience process and effects on lives of individuals and groups, we can say that stigma is a double-way concept. There are studies on stigmatization of disabled people, mental illness, race that occur basing on negative labels that people have. On the other hand, individuals who have lives that over the standards of society and have qualifications that attract public attention are seen as inconsistent by society and they are living with negative results of stigmatization. In fact, if we consider the definition of stigmatization, this situation is a stigma also.

Beautiffulness stigma, successfulness stigma, intelligence stigma, wealth stigma, sexiness stigma, independence stigma, happiness stigma, powerfulness stigma, prophet-hood stigma and so on... are exemplified, if someone who is stigmatized as rich experiences financial difficulties and s/he reveals this situation, other people cannot believe this and they expect this person to continue life as rich. The opposite sex can be afraid of getting close to someone who is stigmatized as beautiful or attractive because they cannot believe that a stigmatized person is alone or his/her loyalty, this stigmatization process condemns that person to loneliness. A successfully stigmatized person’s any smallest failure can be perceived as a very big event by society. We can define all these similar situations as positive stigma in general. Effects of positive stigma on people’s life are negative also. “Cannot be seen as human...” Society tries to control people who have positive stigma so these people’s normal and daily routine events becomes extraordinary. Because of society seeing these people as different, their lives are limited and controlled by society, even ordinary things that they do are exaggerated. All in all, stigmatized people try to live normal and do routine things hidden. To sum this up, positive stigma is a process that complicate lives of individuals, causes loneliness, restricts people to living ordinarily in daily life, and psychological distress. The challenges that famous individuals face in their life are the most beautiful examples of positive stigma.

Positive Stigma in Terms of Intelligence Quotient

The word “positive” and the word “stigma” look like antithetical. Stigma concept has negative meanings in terms of life experiences of stigmatized individuals and effects on them. This is not a controversy. We know that stigmas which lead to the stigmatization process of individuals are generally negative according to society such as mental illness, handicapped nature, AIDS patients etc. There are many

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