

# Using Meisenbach's Typology to Classify Stigma Management Strategies and their Effects

Jamie Shapiro & Lia Lombino

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

## Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine if communicative strategies for managing stigma impact an individual's perceptions of stigma and emotional state related to the stigma.

## Content Analysis

2 RAs coded the videos of these interactions and searched for key behaviors and view points that indicated a specific stigma management strategy.

RAS would partake in weekly meetings, with thorough discussion in the case of a disagreement regarding management strategies.

## Results

- 21 participants (25.6%) accepted stigma
- 29 participants (35.4%) avoided stigma
- 18 participants (22%) evaded/reduced stigma
- 14 participants (17%) rejected stigma

- Two one-way ANOVAS were used to determine if participant's orientation toward their stigmatized trait is associated with outcomes
- The one-way ANOVA for affect improvement was significant,  $F(3, 78) = 3.24, p < .05, \eta^2 = 0.11$ . Follow-up tests with a Bonferroni correction revealed that participants who accepted their stigma during a supportive conversation reported significantly lower affect improvement compared ( $M = 3.49, SE = .26$ ) to participants who avoided their stigma ( $M = 4.15, SE = .09, p < .05$ ).
- The one-way ANOVA for perceptions of stigma was also significant,  $F(3, 78) = 11.73, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.31$ . Follow-up tests with a Bonferroni correction revealed that participants who accepted personal and private stigma during a supportive conversation reported higher perceptions of stigma ( $M = 2.93, SE = .15$ ) compared to people who avoided their stigma ( $M = 2.05, SE = .11, p < .001$ ), evaded or reduced their stigma ( $M = 2.06, SE = .11, p < .001$ ), and rejected their stigma ( $M = 1.79, SE = .15, p < .001$ ).

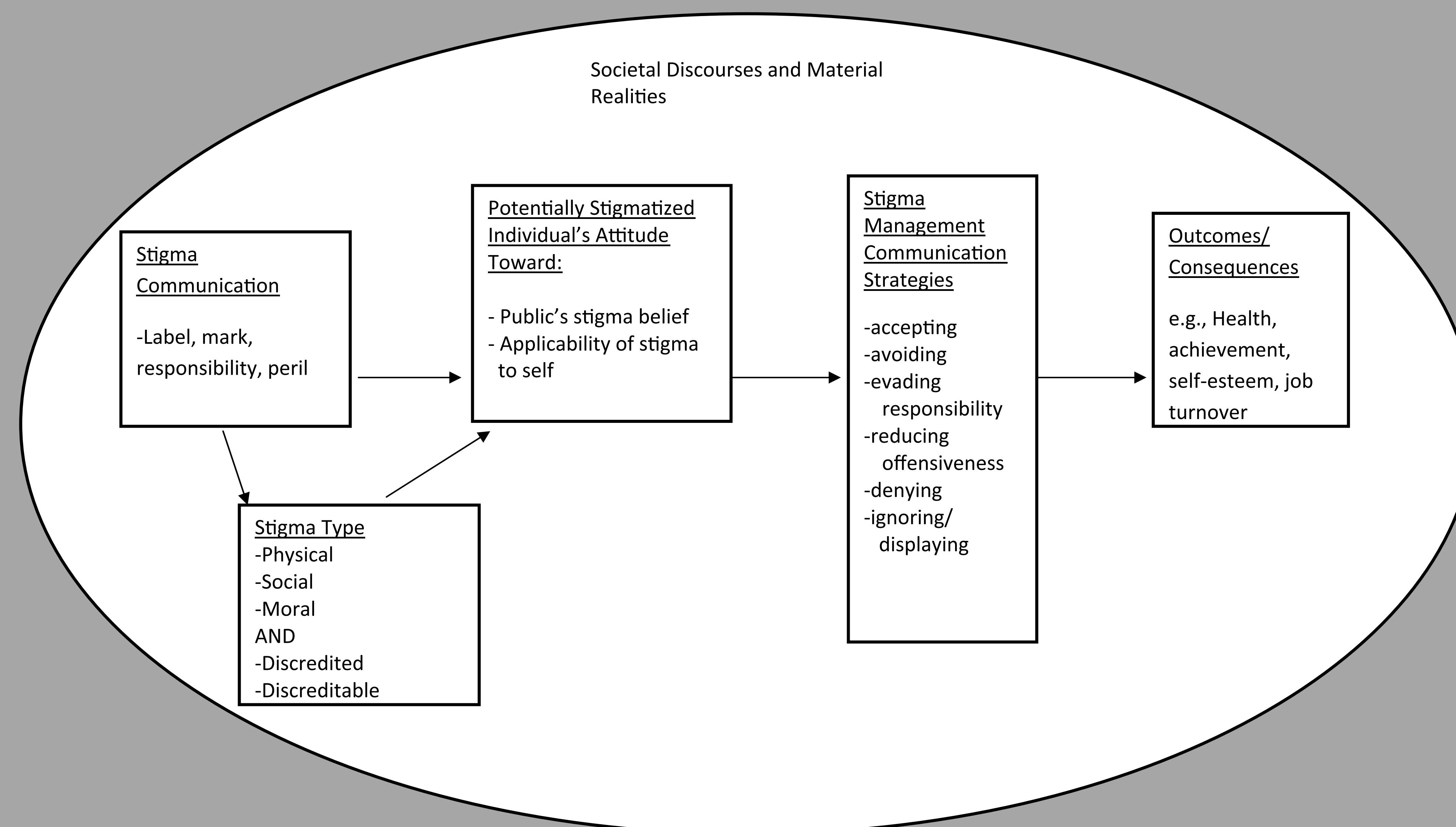


Figure 1. Model of Stigma Management Communication.

## Participants and Procedures

Participants ( $N=82$ ) were students at a Midwestern University. Participants were on average 20 years old and 82.9% of participants were female. 85.3% participants identified as white, 7.3% Hispanic, 4.87% Asian, and 3.65% Black.

Participants were primed to view the communication studies major as stigmatized, then engaged in a supportive interaction in a laboratory setting. Following the conversation participants assessed outcomes of the interaction.

## Measures

**Affect Improvement:** 5 items (e.g., 'After this conversation, I felt better about things') were measured on 5-point Likert-type scales ( $M=3.82; SD=.83; \alpha=.92$ ).

**Perceptions of Stigma:** 10 items (e.g., 'I'm embarrassed of my college major.') were measured on 5-point Likert-type scales ( $M=2.24; SD=.75; \alpha=.89$ ).

## Works Cited

Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Meisenbach, R. J. (2010). Stigma management communication: A theory and agenda for applied research on how individuals manage moments of stigmatized identity. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 38, 268-292. doi:10.1080/00909882.2010.490841