Stigma and empathy: an organising principle for the continuum of social understanding

Samuel Gerard Finnerty

Dept. of Cognitive Science,
University College Dublin
samuel.finnerty@ucdconnect.ie

Abstract. Stigma is a universal social phenomenon of significant importance to our understanding of social cognition. Stigma, and in-group out-group distinctions, have been shown to affect perception of emotions, intentions, and actions of people marked as members of a stigmatized category. Noting the lack of literature that conceptually organizes the concepts of stigma and empathy this paper reviews the relevant literature and proposes an organizing principle. This principle is derived from the continuum of social understanding. This principle states that the amount, and type, of information available on each point of this continuum enables stigmatization and empathy, to greater or lesser degrees.

Keywords. Stigma, empathy, labelling, stereotype, social cognition.

1 Introduction

Stigma is a universal social phenomenon [1]. There is an extensive sociological [1, 2, 3, 4] and social psychological [5, 6, 7] literature on the topic, which cover its conceptual definition [1, 2, 3], and the many diverse forms of it concerning issues of mental health, disease, race and ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and others. Stigma is, for the individual, or a group of people, to be distinguished from the norm, to be marked as possessing an undesired difference [2]. It has important implications for our understanding of social cognition (SC) in how people construct and use categories in navigating the social world. These are employed in day to day face-to-face (f-to-f) interactions with other people, in mediated interactions (MI), and in cases of linguistic reference (LR) e.g. 'those people are like that'. Understanding this would aid our grasp of SC[1]. Of interest is its effects on social understanding in general, and for this paper, empathy in particular. Despite this it has been neglected in the wider cognitive science literature.

Theories of SC should be able to account for stigma, and related phenomena of 'in-group' 'out-group' distinctions [8], and cases of dehumanization [8, 9, 10, 11]. Com-

---

[1] I will use abbreviations to avoid repetition. SC will stand for social cognition, f-to-f for face to face interaction, MI for mediated interaction, LR for linguistic reference, ST for simulation theory, TT for theory theory, ToM for theory of mind, and DP for direct perception.

peting understandings of SC have deliberated over the cognitive and affective mechanisms of SC. Debates over framing and conceptualization of SC phenomena continue [12]. Various approaches, 'Theory-theory (TT) [13, 14, 15], 'Simulation-theory' (ST) [16, 17, 18], empathy [19, 20], theories of direct perception (DP) [21, 22, 23], have been proposed, though each has its particular limitations. The empathy concept, which in a basic sense, refers to seeing the other person as a 'you' as opposed to an 'it' [24], that is, someone with their own subjective cognitive and affective experience, is a starting point for looking at social perception of people who are marked as 'different'.

Stigma's effects on cognitive and affective forms of inter-personal and social understanding could provide insights into SC. A number of neuro-imaging studies have demonstrated that perception of pain in another person is modulated by whether they are in an out-group [25][2] or a stigmatized category [26][3], with a reduction in empathic neural and behavioral responses to their pain. Other research demonstrated that negative beliefs about out-groups, can affect the ability to recognize emotions, as well as intentions, and actions, in out-group members [27]. Stigmatization of people may also lead to dehumanization, where that person's very humanness is diminished to the point of them being perceived as non-human, or sub-human, as having no 'inner life' [8, 9]. They are perceived as lacking the same qualities, normatively valued as good, of the in-group. Basic empathy in these cases seems to be entirely missing. In cases of extreme violence dehumanization helps overcome revulsion against killing, which is seen on an unsettling scale in war and genocide contexts [28]. What is most significant is that correctly perceiving emotions, intentions and actions of stigmatized members of out-groups can be affected to a greater or lesser degree by these distinctions.

Noting the lack of literature that attempts to conceptually organize stigma and empathy, in this exploratory paper I propose to attempt an organizing principle to unite these literatures. My aims are twofold. Firstly, to review the literature, and secondly to propose a continuum of social understanding and an organizing principle. I will argue that both the diverse phenomena and research concerning stigma and empathy can be linked by a principle based on our cognitive tendency to categorize the environments in which we are embedded, and of which other people are a most salient part. The formation of these categories depends on the available information. This hinges on whether it is gained in an informationally rich f-to-f embodied interaction with another person, along a continuum of available information to instances of LR. With that in mind we can begin.

---

[2] When subjects, in a fMRI study, (Caucasians or Chinese) viewed members not of their racial group undergoing painful needle penetration to the face, decreased activation in the anterior cingulate cortex (thought to be associated with some forms of empathic response) was observed, when compared with viewing members of their own racial group [25].

[3] Using fMRI and behavioural measures, they found that participants were less likely to perceive pain in a HIV+ person who contracted it through intravenous drug use, when compared to a HIV+ person who contracted it through a blood transfusion, and the healthy control [26]. fMRI has severe limitations, both temporally and in terms of resolution, in its current form. Also this study used video footage of people in pain as opposed to having people there directly. It is missing the crucial f-to-f interaction which is the most basic encounter people have with one another.

2   The literature on stigma and empathy

2.1   Social organization and stigma

"Imagine a society of saints, a perfect cloister of exemplary individuals. Crimes properly so called, will there be unknown; but faults which appear venial to the layman will there create the same scandal that the ordinary offence does in ordinary conscious. If, then, this society has the power to judge and punish, it will define these acts as criminal and will treat them as such" [29].

Durkheim [29], in this quote, captures a general sense of the inevitability of the emergence of difference in society. A group by defining what it is, invariably excludes what it is not. Stigma is an outcome of this process. Stigma may be seen as a relationship between, or a co-occurrence of, "an attribute and stereotype" [2], where attribute refers to a 'mark' or label, that may define membership in a stigmatized category of persons [5], and "stereotype refers to a generalized set of beliefs that are invoked by that category membership" [3]. This view says nothing about the intrinsic goodness or badness of a stigmatized category. What is stigmatized at one time, in one place, or with certain people, can shift dramatically [7], e.g. attitudes to sexuality and marriage have changed considerably over the past few decades. It is in the specific context where normative values are ascribed. It is possible for marked differences to be positively valued e.g. framing it as exotic, which may prompt a desire for more contact, rather than ostracism or discrimination. However, on the whole, difference from the norm, whatever that might be, is often negatively valued.

For our purposes we are concerned with general principles. Though it is context specific, this is not a case for relativism, as stigmatization, in some form or other, is universal, with a long and varied history [7]. The universal aspect of stigmatization is categorization. In the heterogeneous social worlds, we inhabit, social categories employed in instances of stigmatization could be viewed as being cognitively efficient. This says nothing about their correctness, but they aid in handling the amount of possible information available, in addition to making predictions about the behaviors of people that will not be interacted with directly. In addition, such categories may be useful for maintain social cohesion by delineating outsiders from insiders [4], [29].

2.2   The debate on empathy and social cognition

A wide range of researchers invoke some variation of empathy to explain successful social interaction [17, 18, 19, 20]. Others [30] have extended the concept, suggesting a widening arc of empathy as enabling our modern globalized civilization, where much of our engagement with one another is not local or involves bodily presence. Due to space constraints I will have to pass over the literature rather spritely, see [12], [20], for detailed reviews. What is meant by empathy, how it is possible, and which activities qualify as empathy, are maddeningly unclear. This problem was recognized early on its

conceptual development [31][4]. In psychology it has hindered the empirical investigation of it [32, 33]. The merging of the empathy concept with the multi-dimensional concept of sympathy in some social psychological work, has been a source of particular confusion [34][5]. This paper is not concerned with prosocial behavior, where someone is motivated to act on behalf of another by feeling sympathy or compassion for them, but whether they empathize with that person or not, based on the known presence of social salient stigma.

Broadly speaking empathy has been proposed as one means of coming at the problem of other minds, that is, how it is that we come to understand one another as having minds [19]. Two current streams of thought can be put forward. One stream, constituted by TT and ST approaches, under the rubric of 'Theory of Mind' (ToM) [35], have framed the problem, since the late 1970's, in terms of access to the other person's mind. It stems from the assumption that other minds are to a fundamental extent 'unobservable constructs' [36]. Observed behavior and actions of another person are not meaningful unless some interpretation is added in. Some have dubbed this the 'principle of imperceptibility' [10]. This manifests an epistemic gap[6] which must be overcome by some perceptual or extra-perceptual mechanism. TT approaches have attempted to bridge this gap by working from an assumption that the attribution of mental states, comes via the application of an innate naïve theory of psychological states [13, 14], or 'folk psychology' [15]. Beyond this assumption there is considerable debate over the specifics of TT. Some dispute whether ToM is innate and modularized in the brain [13, 14][7], or is acquired in the way of ordinary scientific theories [37]. A criticism of TT is that it excludes the intuition that the experience of attributing mental states does not always seem to involve inference, except in more explicit cases where we try to reason about, or question, what the other person's intentions and affective states were. TT approaches struggle to account for the automaticity and habit formed embodied aspects of interaction.

ST approaches taking up this intuition, assume that a person understands another, by imaginatively presenting herself into the situation of the other thus enabling an approximation of that person's affective or cognitive state [19]. In essence, we use our own minds as a model for the other person. As with TT, there are debates over the finer details of ST approaches. Some argue that simulation is conscious but non-inferential in nature [38], whilst others argue that simulation is not explicit or conscious but is

---

[4] "As Lipps, Scheler, Husserl and others all quickly recognised, empathy does not constitute a single phenomenon but is rather a loose term for a large constellation of interrelated and many-layered experiences and activities, central not only to philosophy and psychology, but also to sociology, moral theory, political science..." [31]

[5] Sympathy, in the work of David Hume and Adam Smith referred to-"… a family of psychological mechanisms that would allow us to explain how an individuals could be concerned about and motivated to act on behalf of another human being" [20].

[6] It is possible to descend into a solipsistic nightmare where we can never be sure of anything beyond our own subjective experiences. Yet, resurrecting this Cartesian thought experiment would still fail to explain how SC and our immersion in social communities is possible.

[7] This account would struggle to account for stigma as the categories are informed to a large extent by the surrounding cultural and social context.

implicit and sub-personal [39][8]. A major criticism of ST approaches is that they stress the role of the psychological and neurological similarity between an empathizer and the target's psychological state in empathic forms of understanding. By stressing the similarities between the experiences of two individuals, one of which empathizes with the other, simulation based approaches deemphasize the dissimilarities. In a basic sense human beings share a particular embodiment and phylogenetic endowment. However, this view struggles to account for barriers such as stigma and in-group, out-group distinctions, and especially dehumanization, to a perception of shared embodiment, shared cognitive states, shared affective states, shared identity etc. Both ST and TT approaches have been criticized as shutting off minds from the world in a way that reanimates the Cartesian problem of mind and the world [12].

Recognizing these deficits and difficulties others have approached the problem in terms of direct perception of emotions, intention and action [12]. Adapting the work of Husserl [42], Scheler [43], and Merleau-Ponty [44], from phenomenology, and Wittgenstein's remarks on psychology [45][9], some consider empathy to be an irreducible, perception based understanding of the other that requires no inference or simulation [21, 22, 23], [46]. Their central assertion is that the phenomenology of everyday perception should not be reduced to extra-perceptual processes, at the sub-personal level, which lift up an inadequate perception [10]. By framing empathy and SC this way, the problem of other minds disappears to an extent, though it raises problems of its own. How is it that we directly perceive and thus understand one another? Interaction theorists and related scholars [47, 48] are attempting to answer this problem by arguing that social understanding is possible primarily through embodied social interaction, rather than simulation routines, or inference. Regarding social categorization and its manifestation in stigma, in-group, out-group distinctions, and cases of dehumanization, can DP account for this? In these cases, especially in case of dehumanization, social perception as DP seems not to be direct since it can be interrupted by the cultural beliefs and social categories of the surrounding culture[10].

The debates on SC and empathy are complex, and will not be resolved any time soon. Gallagher [12] favors pluralist accounts of SC which suggest inference, simula-

---

8 Gallese and Cuccio have suggested that the embodied sub-linguistic sensorimotor system is the means by which the self can know others, through embodied simulation [18]. They argue for an intersubjectivity that is derived from embodied simulation. This theory is supported by research into mirror neurons (MNs) [40, 41] which are used as a means of naturalising empathy. However, MNs' existence and their role in SC continues to be debated [23].

9 "Look into someone else's face, and see the consciousness in it, and a particular shade of consciousness. You see on it, in it, joy, indifference, interest, excitement, torpor, and so on. … Do you look into yourself in order to recognize the fury in *his* face?" [45]

10 For a thorough defence of DP in light of these social phenomena see [10]. In this case, perception itself is modified by the surrounding culture-"In the case of dehumanization, for example, one is not trained to make bad inferences; one is conditioned to directly perceive others as non-persons. … social interaction processes are shaped by forces external to the individual, and by social and institutional practices that impact intersubjective understanding to the extent that they form and sometimes deform perception (Gallagher 2013a), as well as any further cognitive processes involved in our understanding of others" [10].

tion, imagination, DP, are different strategies to deal with the milieu of social understanding. These must also account for the interaction processes themselves in terms of their framing of social understanding and the wider social and cultural landscape [12][11]. To put forward a pluralist account it is necessary to describe the breadth of SC, which I suggest may be framed as a continuum of social understanding.

3   The continuum of social understanding

Stigma and empathy are concepts that are continuously evolving. Their importance is indicated by the way in which they have transcended any one field. How can we make sense of this literature so as to begin to make headway? If we are to understand observations of empathic forms of understanding being affected by in-group, out-group distinctions, and stigmatization, then it is prudent to speculate that empathy, seeing the other as human (basic empathy), and especially seeing someone as being like yourself, must have something to do with categorization. Whether these categories are explicit, or fuzzy, vary from person to person, vary in size, and scope, from culture to culture, are primarily utilized through embodied habitual processes through social learning, or require inference or simulation, is the remit of future work.

There are a myriad number of ways in which we interact and learn information about one another. Any theory of stigma and empathy which wishes to provide a good account of SC needs to account for this range. Social interaction takes places not within a vacuum but in a heterogeneous, and structured social world [49]. ST and TT approaches, in their efforts to posit sup-personal processes for explaining SC, lack this careful analysis of the social worlds in which people are embedded. We bring knowledge to our encounter with the other person, knowledge of a general sort (this could be interpreted as support for some notion of folk psychology which concerns people in general), and knowledge about the person as target e.g. their habits, interests, inclinations etc., [49]. Schutz [49] distinguished understanding of the other based on whether they belong to the world of associates, contemporaries, predecessors or successors [46], [49]. He distinguished interpersonal understanding along lines of whether the person is bodily present or removed from us through either space or time. Stressing the multilayered character of the social world, he argued that when understanding a contemporary you conceive of her as an instantiation of a type as opposed to being a unique person i.e. those who are your associates in your *Umwelt* [49]. The understanding is framed by 'structures of typicality', rather than by direct expressions through f-to-f contact and the surrounding context. Using his distinctions as a lodestone I would like to expand on this by describing the continuum of social understanding. This list is not exhaustive but is illustrative of the vast scope of SC.

---

[11] "The ultimate pluralist model would cut across all of these dimensions – conscious, non-conscious, personal, sub-personal, brain, body, the physical, social and cultural environments, individual processes and intersubjective interaction. … A pluralist account would weigh each factor in a multitude of situations before deciding where there is just one general rule, or that across all situations there is just one default strategy of process that determines social cognition" [12].

3.1 Face to face: the importance of bodily presence

To be co-present with another person is the most basic form of interaction. It is for this case that the early phenomenologists initially conceptualized empathy [20], [42], [49]. The stock example involves engaging with a person who is bodily present before you. Empathy in this case is theoretically easier than in cases of LR. Basic empathy, seeing the person as a minded creature, is supported by the living person before you. They can reach out and grab you, talk with you (which can be supported further by sharing a common language), cry, laugh, shout etc. Their idiosyncrasies e.g. particular verbal ticks, their unique features e.g. tone of voice, smell, posture, manner of speaking etc., are available. It is informationally rich.

Empathy in the sense of sharing category membership that you ascribe both to your-self and the other person is also possible, as the other person's actions may reveal some commonality e.g. you are from the same community, you both like similar things such as particular sports, foods, music, places, etc. You can feel anger towards this person, joy, indifference, attraction etc., but you cannot deny their presence entirely. It may still be possible to stigmatize, focusing on some available features over others e.g. you learn they are HIV+, which you may associate with immorality or contagion etc. However, there is a higher likelihood that you will learn more than the stigma about them. This could possibly cause you to adapt your categories, either by including that individual in some categories though not necessarily all, changing your categories by expanding them or modifying them, or reinforcing certain categories if the person confirms them.

Dehumanization is possible but this requires particular supporting conditions e.g. a wider social, cultural, political and infrastructural framework (these include MI and LR), that serves as a backdrop to the interaction. This was the case in Nazi Germany's extermination of Jewish people, and in the political and media campaign of the Hutu majority government in Rwanda to foment mass killings of Tutsis (stigmatized group) and some moderate Hutus. Alternatively, any psychological condition which contributes to a perception of other people as objects or less than human is another qualifying supporting condition for dehumanization.

On the whole f-to-f interaction is a dynamic, informationally rich, form of activity. It depends on the history of similar interactions with people who you may have associated with a stigmatized category. This may support or challenge these in-group, out-group distinctions. It is also highly context dependent. In a work setting you may be prompted to adhere to particular observed behaviors and practices, which may guard against overt discrimination. At home you may feel the need to extend hospitality, regardless of your beliefs about the person, or you may act with little concern for the person due to the privacy afforded. Alternatively you may cease any further interaction with a person once the stigma is revealed to you, as a pragmatic action taken against a perceived threat [50][12]. There are many other instances of f-to-f interactions which cannot be covered here[13].

---

[12] "Stigma, we hypothesize, *threatens the loss or diminution of what is most at stake, or actually diminishes or destroys that lived value.*" [50]

[13] Engaging with a person in a shared social setting with other people present, e.g., a dinner party. Similar to the above but the social setting and other people afford certain activities e.g.,

3.2 Mediated interactions

MI consist of interactions that are mediated by a physical object e.g. a wall or fence, a theatrical device for live performance e.g. a theatre or designated performance space, or interface e.g. WhatsApp, Facebook, email, text, telephone etc. In the case of refugees, a physical space such as a fence or camp, that separates them from the general population, aids stigmatization by making it easier to distinguish the in-group from the out-group, the general population and the migrant community respectively. The opportunity for interaction, especially f-to-f interaction, is curtailed by the barriers in place. Within these camps there may be a diversity of languages, religions, cultures, and people, but this may not be immediately knowable. The idea of a common humanity in the sense of basic empathy may be curtailed by this demarcation. There is distance. The extent of the interaction might be to witness the physical demarcation, to see the faces of the people on the other side of the barrier, and no more. They may wear attire that is not like your own, they may speak languages that you do not, the color of their skin may not resemble yours. It is still possible for empathy to take place. The available information may correspond to some categories that you ascribe to yourself e.g. being a parent and seeing parents of an out-group with their children. Again context is important and the exact form of mediation plays a significant role in supporting either empathy or stigma.

3.3 Abstracted from interaction: imagination and linguistic reference

Virtual reality, cinema, television, video games, audio recordings, newspaper articles, books, utterances etc., can be grouped at this end. These are abstracted almost entirely from f-to-f and MI, though it can be argued that, especially regarding video games and virtual reality, the person is interacting with the representations. Each of these can provoke empathic, as well as stigmatizing responses. Feeling empathy in these cases, in the sense of sharing some category membership, is imagined or speculative, as you are now engaging with representations of people. These may be fictitious in the case of visual and aural mediums for entertainment, or representations, of varying accuracy, that are placeholders for the people they refer to e.g. news reports. The ability to go beyond f-to-f enables people to form complex societies and group identities that persist through time, through imagined connections between people in the sense of shared category membership. The literature on 'imagined communities' [51][14] is instructive here.

---

other people becoming involved in the interaction, and constrain others e.g. other people may not permit you to learn certain kinds of information, or may intervene in the case that you engage in discrimination. Of course this also depends on you knowing the rules of the social setting i.e. what is considered acceptable behaviour which, to a greater of lesser extent, determines your behaviour. Other forms of bodily present interaction include participation in group activities e.g. ritual activity, football chanting, etc.

[14] "In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" [51]. Anderson noted the infrastructural and technological requirements e.g. the printing press, that were necessary to bring about the imagined community of the nation.

These large scale social imaginaries [52][15] are unstable, shifting considerably over time which is down to the minute activities of people in the f-to-f and mediated interactions that constitute such imaginaries.

What is important at this end of the continuum is the people being referred to are not present. They may not be engaged with. There is only representation and reference. Empathy is possible in that a person may feel themselves to be like the representation in some sense of shared category membership. Stigmatization is more possible at this end of the continuum than in f-to-f because all that is available may be a simple reference e.g. those people have AIDS and they are intravenous drug users. This does not include all the other information that is available in f-to-f and MI which may contradict the stereotype that is associated with that category. I suggest that f-to-f, MI, and LR, can be thought of as a continuum of related activities. These are phenomenologically distinct, and require different strategies of SC i.e. inference, imagination, simulation, direct-perception, but are related through a principle of available information, and their role in constructing, maintaining and breaking down categories. In the heterogeneous social and cultural worlds, we inhabit, the reality of our interactions with one another are far more complex than described above. You may engage in activities that are simultaneously f-to-f, mediated etc., whilst talking about some people in terms of LR. This is a continuum of social understanding. The demarcations are purely illustrative of the vastness of possible interactions and activities that constitute SC.

4   Information and categorization: an organizing principle

I do not propose to solve the debates on SC, but having made the argument for taking stigma, in-group out-group distinctions, and dehumanization seriously in cognitive science, I suggest that the literature on empathy and stigma can be unified through a tenet of available information. One element that is crucial to each form of social understanding is the total amount and type of information that is present in each instance. This principle suggests that as information increases empathy should be easier whilst stigmatization harder, and the reverse would also be true. LR on its own makes it easier to say that 'those people are like that' and are thus 'not like me', as you are not encountering anyone who meets that distinction who can thus challenge, or confirm, your stereotyping. This has important implications when such forms of reference are then used to inform future interactions with perceived members of that group, or are used in government policy e.g., immigration and foreign policy. This principle has the benefit of being able to link up the diverse phenomena concerning stigma and empathy. If adopted it would facilitate a more productive discussion across the range of SC. It requires that in each instance of social understanding concerning stigma and/or empathy careful attention is paid to available information and the framing of the phenomena. It is a plu-

---

[15] "I am thinking rather of the way in which they imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" [52].

ralist strategy for approaching SC, recognizing the sheer span of SC, and the complexities and nuance of the cultural and social contexts in which people are embedded. As a guiding principle it could be used to generate hypotheses about the relationship between information and social categorization. For example, you could speculate that on average an increase of information, depending on the reliability of the type of available information, should increase the likelihood of empathic understanding whilst decreasing endorsement of stigma categories. To achieve this target requires interdisciplinary collaboration across fields as diverse as anthropology, sociology, psychology, cognitive science, pedagogy, political science, and history.

It suggests means by which to tackle stigma and increase the likelihood of empathy (whilst acknowledging that it is possible to stigmatize a person in some respects, but empathize in others). This involves increasing f-to-f interactions with people of stigmatized categories, in addition to changing the narratives that represent said people, and any infrastructural elements which make it easier to delineate in-groups from out-groups e.g. ghettoization, economic disparity, refugee camps. It also requires programs that promote openness to difference[16] by providing people with a different strategy than stigmatization[17]. Successful advocacy programs such as that of Treatment Action Campaign in South Africa combatted AIDS stigma by changing the narrative using this shift in narrative to campaign for access to treatment, and a political voice [53][18].

5   Conclusion and future work

I have made the case for including stigma and in-group out-group social phenomena in our models of social cognition. I have reviewed the literature on stigma, empathy and SC, arguing that it is productive to frame it as a continuum of social understanding from f-to-f interaction to LR. I have proposed a principle of information and categorization as a means of understanding the related phenomena of stigma and empathy. This has the benefit of being able to span the gamut of social understanding and can be used to generate testable hypotheses. However, in addition to the heavy lifting that is required to operationalize this principle, there are limitations to this view that must be addressed by future work. Why is it that difference is predominantly negatively valued? Are certain cultures more likely to endorse stigmatizing categories than others? Are people driven to maintain their category structures, or instead are people driven to seek out new information and novelty which modify or breakdown these categories? What will a truly expansive pluralist theory look like? These are questions for future research.

---

[16] Research into why some differences are perceived positively rather than negatively would be useful as it is a product of the same principle of available information.

[17] This may be difficult due to the normative element of stigma. Also categorization itself won't be eradicated, nor could it. To think about anything beyond immediate experience is to categorise to a significant extent. What is pertinent is that stigma categories modulate or interrupt empathic and related forms of self-other understanding.

[18] They challenged the negative associations of being HIV+ by promoting positive messaging, e.g. inscribing HIV+ on t-shirts in protests, thus challenging the prevailing narrative about people living with HIV/AIDS through an expansion of the discourse.

6   References Cited

1. Link, BG., Phelan, J.: Conceptualizing Stigma. Annual Review of Sociology. 27, 363-385 (2001)
2. Goffman, E.: Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity. Simon and Schuster, New York (1963).
3. Ainlay, S.C., Becker, G., Coleman, L. M., The Dilemma of Difference: A multidisciplinary view of stigma. Plenum Press, London (1986)
4. Falk, G.: How we treat outsiders. Prometheus, New York (2001)
5. Jones, E., Hastof, A., Markus, H., Miller, D., Scott, R. Social stigma: The psychology of marked relationships. Freeman, New York (1984).
6. Crocker, J., Major, B., Steele, C. Social Stigma. In: Gilbert, D., Fiske, S. T., Lindzey, G. (eds) The Handbook of Social Psychology. 4th ed. Vol. 2, pp 504-553. McGraw Hill, New York (1998)
7. Dovidio, J. F., Major, B., Crocker, J.: Stigma: Introduction and Overview. In: Heatherton, T. F., Kleck, R., E., Hebl, M., R., Hebl., Hull, J. G. (eds) The Social Psychology of Stigma. Guildford Press, New York (2000).
8. Haslam, N.: Dehumanization: an integrative review. Pers Soc Psychol Rev. 10, 252-264 (2006)
9. Bastian, B., Haslam, N.: Excluded from humanity: the dehumanizing effects of social ostracism. J Exp Soc Psychol. 46, 107-113 (2010)
10. Gallagher, S., Varga, S.: Social constraints on the Direct Perception of Emotions and Intentions. Topoi. 33, 185-199 (2014)
11. Harris, L. T., Fiske, S. T.: Dehumanising the lowest of the low: neuroimaging responses to extreme groups. Psychol Sci. 17:847-853 (2006)
12. Gallagher, S. The new hybrids: Continuing debates on social perception. Consciousness and Cognition. 36, 452-465 (2015).
13. Carruthers, P.: Language, Thought and Consciousness. Cambridge University Press, UK (1996)
14. Baron-Cohen, S.: Theory of mind in normal development and autism. Prisme. 34, 174-83 (2001)
15. Frith, C. D., Frith, U.: Social cognition in humans. Curr Biol. 17, R724-R732 (2007).
16. Goldman, A.: In defence of the simulation theory. Mind and Language. 7, 104-119 (1992).
17. Goldman, A., Shanton, K.: Simulation Theory. Wiley Interdisc Rev: Cog Sci. 1, 527-538 (2010).
18. Gallese, V., Cuccio, V.: The Paradigmatic Body: Embodied simulation, intersubjectivity, the bodily self, and language. In: Metzinger, T., Windt, J. M.: Open Mind. 23, 1-23 (2015).
19. Stueber, K: Rediscovering Empathy: Agency, Folk Psychology, and the Human Sciences. MIT Press, MA (2006)
20. Stueber, K.: Empathy. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (2014)
21. Zahavi, D.: Empathy and direct social perception. Rev Phil and Psychol. 2, 541-58 (2011).
22. Gallagher, S.: Direct perception in the intersubjective context. Consciousness and Cognition. 17, 535-543 (2008)
23. Gallagher, S., Zahavi, D.: The phenomenological mind. Routledge, London. (2008).
24. Froese, T. Breathing new life into cognitive science. Avant. II, 1, 113-129 (2011).
25. Xu, Y., Zuo, X., Wang, X., Han, S.: Do you feel my pain? Racial group membership modulates empathic neural response. J Neurosci. 29 (26), 8525-8529 (2009)
26. Decety, J., Echols, S., Correll, J.: The Blame Game: The effect of responsibility and social stigma on empathy for pain. J Cog Neurosci. 22 (5), 985-997 (2010).

27. Gutsell, J. N., Inzlicht, M.: Empathy constrained: prejudice predicts reduced mental simulation of actions during observation of outgroups. J Exp Soc Psychol. 46, 841-845 (2010)
28. Hinton, A.: The Dark Side of Modernity: Toward an Anthropology of Genocide. In: Hinton., A., Annihilating Difference: The Anthropology of Genocide. University of California Press, London (2002).
29. Durkheim, E.: The Rules of the Sociological Method. Steven Lukes (ed). Palgrave Macmillan. London (2013 [1895])
30. Pinker, S.: The Better Angels of our Nature: How violence has declined. Viking, New York (2011)
31. Sengen, R. T., Moran, D.: Introduction: intersubjectivity and empathy. Phenom Cogn Sci. 11 (2), 125-133 (2012)
32. Davis, M.: Empathy: A Social Psychological Approach. Westview Press: Boulder (1994).
33. Batson, C. D. These Things Called Empathy: Eight Related but Distinct Phenomena. In: Decety, J., Ickes, W. (eds) The Social Neuroscience of Empathy, pp. 3-15. MIT Press, MA (2009).
34. Wispe, L.: The Distinction between Sympathy and Empathy: To call forth a concept a word is needed. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 50, 314-321 (1986).
35. Premack, D., Woodruff, G.: Does the chimpanzee have a theory of mind? Behavioral and Brain Sciences. 1, 515-526 (1978).
36. Johnson, S. C.: The recognition of mentalistic agents in infancy. Trends Cogn Sci 4, 22-28 (2000)
37. Gopnik, A., Meltzoff, N., Kulh, P.: The Scientist in the Crib. NY, Harper Collins (1999).
38. Gordon, R.: Folk psychology as simulation. Mind and Language. 1-158-171 (1986)
39. Gallese, V.: The manifold nature of interpersonal relations: The quest for a common mechanism. Phil Trans Royal Soc London B. 358, 517-528 (2003).
40. Freedberg, D., Gallese, V.: Motion, emotion and empathy in esthetic experience. Trends in Cognitive Sciences. 11, 197-203 (2007)
41. Rizzolatti, G., Craighero, L.: The Mirror Neuron System. Annu Rev Neurosci. 27, 169-92 (2004)
42. Husserl, E.: Cartesian Meditations. Cairns, D (Trans). Kluwer, Dordrecht. (1988 [1931]).
43. Scheler, M.: The Nature of Sympathy. Routledge & Keegan Paul, London (1973 [1954])
44. Merleau-Ponty, M.: The phenomenology of perception. Routledge, London (2002).
45. Wittgenstein, L.: Zettel. In: Anscombe, G. E. M., von Wright G. H. (eds), Anscombe, G. E. M. (trans). University of California Press, Berkeley. (1967)
46. Zahavi, D.: Empathy, Embodiment and Interpersonal Understanding: From Lipps to Schutz. Inquiry. 53 (3), 285-306 (2010)
47. De Jaegher, H., Di Paolo, E., Gallagher, S.: Can social interaction constitute social cognition? Trends Cogn Sci. 14, 441-447 (2010)
48. Gallager, S., Hutto, D.: Primary interaction and narrative practice. In: Zlatev. J., Racine, T., Sinha, C., Iktonen, E. (eds).: The shared mind: perspectives on intersubjectivity, pp 17-38. John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp 17-38 (2008).
49. Schutz, A.: The Phenomenology of the Social World. Walsh, G., Lehnert, F. (trans). Northwestern University Press, Evanston (1967).
50. Yang, LH., Kleinman, A., Link, BG., Phelan, JC., Lee, S., Good, B.: Culture and stigma: Adding moral experience to stigma theory. Soc Sci Med. 64 (7), 1524-35 (2007).
51. Anderson, B.: Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism. Verso, London (1991).
52. Taylor, Charles.: Modern Social Imaginaries. Duke University Press, Durham (2004)
53. Robbins, S.: From Revolution to Rights in South Africa. James Currey, Suffolk (2008).