All Stigmas are Equal, but Some are More Equal than Others: Connecting Self, Social Stigma, and Global Health

Alexandra Brewis, PhD
President's Professor
School of Human Evolution and Social Change
Arizona State University

Alexandra Brewis is a biocultural anthropologist at Arizona State University, where she founded the Center for Global Health. She is trained in human biology, demography and medical anthropology, and works across disciplines to understand and solve complex health and environmental challenges, like water insecurity and stigma in health care.

Professor Brewis will talk about her recent research, including her book, Lazy, Crazy, and Disgusting: Stigma and the Undoing of Global Health (2019 Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore.)

Stigma is the process by which people are pushed down and out in society because of an arbitrary, morally-discrediting characteristic, like a disease label. And it is increasingly recognized as a major (albeit often invisible) driver of health disparities. As such, anti-stigma work is arguably central to the core goals of global health. Stigma doesn’t only create disease. It also creates the pathways through which disease or health-related statuses then change fundamentally who we are – how we see ourselves, relate to each other, and fit within society. Dr. Brewis will introduce her team’s recent research using very different cases -- people undergoing bariatric surgery in the US, smallholder farmers in Ethiopia, and urban women in India. Their focus is on the iterative connections between self, social stigma, and health conditions, testing mechanisms that connect people’s experiences of socially-sanctioned rejection to health outcomes. The observation that stigma and its management operate at multiple levels through highly varied pathways suggests the need for developing a more nuanced approach to challenging it through -- but also within -- global health practices.

Tinkham Veale University Center
11038 Bellflower Rd., Cleveland, OH 44106
Senior Classroom

Thursday
October 27, 2022
4 p.m.