



# **Destigmatising mental illness?: Professional politics and public education in Britain, 1870-1970 (Disability History MUP)**

*Vicky Long*

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This historical study of mental healthcare workers' efforts to educate the public challenges the supposition that public prejudice generates the stigma of mental illness. Drawing on extensive archival research, this book argues that psychiatrists, nurses and social workers generated representations of mental illness which reflected their professional aspirations, economic motivations and perceptions of the public. Sharing in the stigma of their patients, healthcare workers sought to enhance the prestige of their professions by focussing upon the ability of psychiatry to effectively treat acute cases of mental disturbance. As a consequence, healthcare workers inadvertently reinforced the stigma attached to serious and enduring mental distress. This book makes a major contribution to the history of mental healthcare, and critiques current campaigns which seek to end mental health discrimination for failing to address the political, economic and social factors which fuel discrimination. It will appeal to academics, students, healthcare practitioners and service users.

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