

# Stigma and the Construction of Self-Concept In *Wicked*: A Psychological Analysis of Elphaba's Identity Formation

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**Abstract.** Stigma is a powerful social and psychological force that shapes how individuals perceive themselves and are perceived by others. While previous studies have frequently explored stigma in realistic or clinical settings, limited attention has been given to how it operates within symbolic or fantastical narratives. This study addresses that gap by examining how stigma influences Elphaba's self-concept and personality in the film *Wicked* (2024). The analysis highlights the urgency of exploring cinematic representations of stigma through psychological frameworks, as films often reflect and reshape public understanding of difference and identity. Using a descriptive qualitative method, this research interprets selected scenes and dialogues that depict Elphaba's experiences of exclusion, conditional acceptance, and identity reconstruction. The study applies the concepts of stigma and self-concept to reveal how social labeling and internalized judgment create incongruence between the self-image and the ideal self, ultimately shaping Elphaba's moral and emotional development. The findings show that her transformation from self-doubt to self-acceptance represents the psychological negotiation between individuality and social conformity. By connecting personality theory and film analysis, this study expands the discussion of how fictional narratives can illuminate the psychological dynamics of marginalization and resilience, offering new insight into the intersection of stigma, identity, and self-concept in contemporary media.

**Keywords:** *identity formation, psychological analysis, stigma, self-concept, Wicked*.

## INTRODUCTION

Personality psychology explains patterns in thought, emotion, and behavior that set individuals apart. It provides a framework for understanding how inner dispositions interact with social environments. These interactions shape human experience over time (Reisenzein et al., 2020; Roberts & Yoon, 2022). Within this domain, stigma and self-concept are crucial constructs. They reveal how external evaluations can influence internal identity. Stigma is a social mechanism involving labelling, stereotyping, and discrimination. It has long been recognized as a key factor affecting psychological well-being (Andersen et al., 2022; Brelet et al., 2021). When internalized, stigma often fragments the individual's sense of self and diminishes self-esteem and emotional stability (Catalano et al., 2021). Recent scholarship increasingly recognizes that the intersection of stigma and self-concept extends beyond clinical or social domains. This intersection is evident in cultural and artistic media, particularly in film (Bradford et al., 2024; Riles et al., 2021).

To deepen the theoretical understanding of self-concept, Carl Rogers defines it as "the individual's tendency to act in ways which actualize himself, lead to his differentiation, and a group of experiences that are symbolized in conscious awareness as self-experiences, the sum of which establishes the individual's self-concept" (Ismail & Tekke, 2015). This definition underscores that self-concept is an organized and dynamic structure that integrates one's experiences, perceptions, and values into a coherent sense of self. Within Rogers's humanistic perspective, individuals possess an inherent actualizing tendency, the innate drive to develop their potential and achieve congruence between their real and ideal selves (Rogers, 1959). A well-developed self-concept enables individuals to maintain psychological balance and respond adaptively to social evaluations. In contrast, incongruence between self-perception and external expectations often leads to anxiety, defensiveness, or diminished self-worth.

Complementing Rogers' humanistic framework, the Big Five Personality Model (McCrae & Costa, 1999) delineates five broad dimensions: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, which describe consistent patterns of emotion, cognition, and behavior. Openness reflects imagination, creativity, and receptivity to new experiences; conscientiousness relates to organization, diligence, and responsibility; extraversion indicates sociability and assertiveness; agreeableness concerns empathy, cooperation, and tolerance; and neuroticism represents emotional instability and vulnerability to stress. These dimensions serve as a comprehensive taxonomy for analyzing how individuals adapt to environmental pressures and negotiate their identities in response to social judgment.

Film serves as a rich medium through which the psychological dimensions of human life can be dramatized and interpreted. Cinematic narratives have the capacity to expose the invisible workings of perception, prejudice, and identity negotiation (Pratama & Wulandari, 2024). Through visual language and narrative immersion, film invites audiences to empathize with characters' emotional and moral struggles, turning private psychological conflicts into shared experiences (Franco, 2023; Harold, 2010). In this sense, cinema functions not only as an aesthetic artifact but also as a psychological text that reflects and critiques the ways individuals internalize or resist social judgment. Research in media psychology has

shown that audience engagement with stigmatized characters often hinges on how those characters embody both vulnerability and resilience (Medero & Hovick, 2023). Thus, studying the representation of stigma and self-concept in film can deepen our understanding of how identity and moral perception are socially constructed and emotionally negotiated.

Despite the growing academic interest in stigma and its representation in media, much of the existing literature has concentrated on realistic portrayals of mental illness, disability, or ethnic discrimination (M. Chen, 2023; X. Chen, 2022). Only a limited number of studies have explored how these dynamics manifest in fantasy or allegorical narratives, where difference functions symbolically to represent broader systems of exclusion and power. Figures such as witches, monsters, or outcasts frequently serve as collective metaphors for fear, prejudice, and social control (Epkenhans, 2020; Puliselic, 2021). However, the psychological construction of these characters has rarely been analyzed through the lens of personality psychology. This oversight limits our understanding of how fantasy reconfigures stigma into inner conflict and transformation. The absence of interdisciplinary research that bridges personality theory, stigma studies, and film analysis, therefore, represents a notable gap in the current discourse (Aleksandrovich, 2022).

The recent film *Wicked* (2024), adapted from the Broadway musical and Gregory Maguire's novel *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*, offers an illuminating context for such exploration. The story's protagonist, Elphaba, is born with green skin—a visible mark of difference that subjects her to rejection and discrimination. Her psychological journey from shame and alienation toward self-acceptance exemplifies the internalization and reformation of stigma. Through Elphaba's evolving self-perception, *Wicked* dramatizes how societal labelling shapes identity and emotional adaptation. The film's reimagining of the archetypal "wicked witch" invites a reconsideration of moral judgment, illustrating how individuals resist the social scripts imposed upon them (Lestari & Damayanti, 2024; Sisiana & Febrian, 2024). In this light, Elphaba's narrative becomes both a personal story of resilience and a broader commentary on how societies moralize difference.

From a theoretical standpoint, Elphaba's psychological personality can be situated within contemporary frameworks that view personality as an integrated system encompassing cognitive, affective, and social processes (Shaw et al., 2020). Personality functions as a dynamic network of traits, motives, and self-representations that adapt to environmental demands. Stigmatization acts as a destabilizing external force, eliciting defensive or compensatory mechanisms (Steiger et al., 2022). Foundational theories such as Cooley's "looking-glass self" (1902) and Higgins's self-discrepancy theory (1987) elucidate how individuals internalize others' perceptions and attempt to reconcile discrepancies between their actual, ideal, and socially prescribed selves. These perspectives offer a useful analytical framework for interpreting Elphaba's internal dialogue and behavioral shifts throughout the film.

Scholars of self-concept have emphasized its developmental and relational underpinnings. Self-concept is defined as an individual's perception of themselves, shaped by their experiences and feedback from others (Chu & Lowery, 2024). It is also conceptualized as a structured cognitive schema encompassing one's traits, values, and aspirations (Kapıkir and Gündoğan, 2021). When external stigma

conflicts with internal self-evaluation, individuals often adopt coping mechanisms such as cognitive reframing, self-affirmation, or social withdrawal (Sun et al., 2022). Within film, these processes are dramatized through symbolic imagery and character transformation (Claresta et al., 2024). Interpreting Elphaba's coping behaviors through this lens thus illuminates how narrative form can render visible the invisible dynamics of self-construction under social constraint.

Recent interdisciplinary research has sought to connect film analysis and psychological theory, particularly by examining how cinematic characters embody universal emotional or cognitive patterns (Berezhna, 2024; Krysanova & Shevchenko, 2022). Yet, many of these studies remain primarily descriptive, emphasizing emotional depiction without systematically linking it to established psychological models. Integrating personality psychology with stigma theory, as this study proposes, enables a more rigorous and layered approach, one that links the sociocultural construction of stigma with the intrapersonal mechanisms of identity negotiation. This analytical synthesis clarifies how fictional portrayals of "difference" mirror authentic psychological processes of self-defence, transformation, and meaning-making.

Nevertheless, the literature still lacks a comprehensive framework explaining how cinematic characters internalize and resist stigma within personality systems. Prior studies (Berezhna, 2024; Schock, 2023) have explored audience empathy toward marginalized figures but have seldom examined the characters' cognitive architectures (Berezhna, 2024; Schock, 2023). Moreover, much of the discussion in media psychology privileges external social critique over the introspective complexity of self-concept. Addressing this gap, the present study situates Elphaba's story as an example of psychological resilience under symbolic marginalization. By integrating theories of personality, stigma, and narrative analysis, this research seeks to uncover how Elphaba constructs, defends, and redefines her identity in the face of moral and social othering.

Accordingly, the current study aims to analyze Elphaba's psychological personality in *Wicked* (2024) through the interrelated lenses of stigma and self-concept. It examines how processes of labelling and stereotyping shape her identity formation, how internalized stigma influences her emotional world, and how her eventual self-acceptance exemplifies adaptive personality functioning. The study's novelty lies in its interdisciplinary synthesis, which merges personality psychology with cultural and film analysis, thereby extending theoretical discussions beyond empirical psychology into the symbolic domain of art. By focusing on Elphaba as both a character and a psychological metaphor, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how narrative imagination can illuminate the enduring human struggle between social judgment and self-definition.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach as outlined by Cresswell (2012) to analyze the psychological aspects of stigma and self-concept in Elphaba's character from *Wicked* (2024). A qualitative design was chosen because it enables in-depth exploration of complex psychological phenomena within their social and narrative contexts.

The primary data of this study consisted of selected scenes, dialogues, and visual elements depicting Elphaba's experiences of social stigma and self-concept development. The film *Wicked* (2024) was chosen purposively because its narrative explicitly dramatizes issues of marginalization and identity formation. Scene selection followed three criteria: first, the scene explicitly portrays interactions involving labeling, discrimination, or social exclusion; second, the scene includes verbal or nonverbal expressions that reveal Elphaba's internal responses or changes in self-perception; and third, the scene provides visual or narrative cues relevant to personality psychology concepts such as self-concept, incongruence, or coping mechanisms. Using these criteria, nine key scenes were identified, each representing a distinct psychological phase in Elphaba's character development.

The selected scenes were viewed repeatedly to ensure contextual accuracy. Dialogues were transcribed verbatim in English from the film's audio and verified against the subtitle text. Nonverbal aspects such as gestures, camera angles, lighting, and facial expressions were also noted as they contributed to the interpretation of psychological meaning. Each scene was labeled with a time code (minute:second) to maintain transparency and replicability, while supplementary notes were written to capture the emotional tone and interactional context of each event.

Data were analyzed using thematic content analysis following the interactive stages proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which include data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, transcribed dialogues and visual observations were coded using open codes related to stigma, self-concept, and personality traits such as labeling, internalization, openness, incongruence, and resilience. The coded data were then displayed in tables connecting film segments, dialogue excerpts, and psychological interpretations to identify recurring behavioral and emotional patterns. In the final stage, conclusions were drawn and verified by comparing emerging themes with theoretical constructs, particularly Rogers's self-theory, Goffman's stigma typology, and the Big Five personality framework, to ensure interpretive consistency.

The interpretation process connected the thematic findings with broader psychological theories. Elphaba's behavioral and emotional responses were analyzed as representations of internal psychological processes shaped by social labeling. Through the integration of film analysis and psychological interpretation, the study revealed how cinematic elements, such as narrative, visual framing, and dialogue, symbolically express the dynamics of stigma and self-concept formation.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### **The Stigma Affecting Elphaba's Self-concept**

The analysis revealed that stigma plays a central role in shaping Elphaba's self-concept throughout *Wicked* (2024). Two key scenes, at minutes 00:15:35–00:15:45 and 00:26:30–00:26:34, illustrate the dynamics between external labeling and internalized self-perception. These moments demonstrate how Elphaba's interactions with others lead to psychological incongruence between her self-image and her ideal self, a phenomenon central to the development of self-concept under stigma (Kumar & Dagar, 2023). These findings reflect what Creswell (2014) describes as the process of meaning construction through social interaction, in

which identity develops through responses to external validation and rejection. In Elphaba's case, the reactions of others, such as Galinda's shock and Madame Morrible's conditional praise, function as mirrors through which she evaluates her worth.

#### a. Physical Stigma and the Formation of Self-Image

In the first scene (00:15:35–00:15:45), at Shiz University, Galinda meets Elphaba for the first time and reacts with visible shock at her green skin (see Figure 1):



Figure 1. *Galinda's initial reaction upon seeing Elphaba's green skin*

Galinda : "Oh, oz"

Elphaba : "What? What are you staring at? Do I have something in my teeth?"

Galinda : "No, it's just... you're green"

This exchange highlights a classic example of *physical stigma*, where visible bodily difference becomes a marker of social exclusion. The reaction "you're green" functions as an instance of spontaneous labeling, a moment when difference becomes immediately salient and socially meaningful. According to Goffman's (1963) foundational theory, such stigma reflects an "abomination of the body," where physical traits are perceived as deviations from normative appearance. Similarly, Dayanti & Legowo (2021) emphasize that stigmatization often arises from visible bodily differences that society interprets as signs of inferiority or abnormality.

Galinda's reaction thus symbolizes society's tendency to define individuals by their visible deviations rather than their intrinsic worth. This process reinforces the psychological message that acceptance is conditional upon conformity to social norms of appearance. As Kumar & Dagar (2023) argue, self-concept develops through one's interaction with and reflection upon social feedback. For Elphaba, this encounter signals that her identity is already marked by difference, shaping an early tension between self-image (how she perceives herself) and ideal self (how she wishes to be perceived). Such incongruence can foster self-doubt and internal conflict, mirroring Rogers's (1959) concept of incongruence as a source of psychological distress. Physical stigma, therefore, aligns with Goffman's notion of the "abomination of the body," where visible difference triggers exclusion and reinforces negative self-perception. The labeling of Elphaba as "different" initiates a cycle of self-doubt, solidifying incongruence between her self-image and her ideal self (Kumar & Dagar, 2023).

a. Conditional Acceptance and Reactionary Stigma

A further manifestation of stigma appears in the scene at minutes 00:26:30–00:26:34, when Madame Morrible praises Elphaba's magical abilities (see Figure 2):



Figure 2. Madame Morrible conditionally praises Elphaba's magical ability

Madame Morrible: "If you can learn to use your powers in the right way"

At first glance, the statement appears to validate Elphaba's talent. However, the conditional phrase "if you can learn to use your powers in the right way" reveals a subtler form of *reactionary stigma*. Rather than genuine acceptance, this statement conveys that Elphaba's worth is contingent upon aligning her abilities with the expectations of authority and social conformity. Such conditional praise reinforces social hierarchy by defining value according to compliance, not individuality. Madame Morrible's words represent what Link and Phelan (2017) term *stigma management*: rather than removing the stigma, it is temporarily suspended if the stigmatized individual proves "useful" within dominant norms.

Mulyanto et al. (2023) note that self-concept encompasses identity, emotion, and self-evaluation; thus, conditional acceptance may lead Elphaba to internalize the belief that she is only valuable when serving others' agendas. This dynamic illustrates how power structures sustain stigma through conditional validation—what Corrigan and Watson (2002) describe as the "if-only" condition of social acceptance. The psychological consequence of such conditional acceptance is an enduring sense of inadequacy. Elphaba's self-concept becomes fragmented between her authentic sense of self and the version demanded by society. This aligns with Higgins' (1987) self-discrepancy theory, which posits that conflict between the actual self and the ideal self produces emotional discomfort and reduced self-esteem.

Conditional acceptance, as reflected in Madame Morrible's statement, thus extends stigma beyond the physical into the moral domain. The notion that Elphaba's value depends on conforming to authority exemplifies what Nicola et al. (2022) term "conditional validation." This dynamic sustains stigma by rewarding conformity while penalizing authenticity, producing what Schlechter et al. (2022) define as self-discrepancy as a persistent psychological tension between who one is and who one feels pressured to become. Furthermore, consistent with (Sarraf et al., 2022), individuals who experience prolonged stigmatization often develop negative self-schemas that diminish self-esteem and agency.

Elphaba's progression from internalized shame toward congruence therefore represents the reconstruction of self-concept under sustained external devaluation. Her experience demonstrates that stigma operates both socially and psychologically: it enforces exclusion through labeling while simultaneously fragmenting the self through conditional approval. Ultimately, Elphaba's journey in

*Wicked* reflects the struggle to reconcile self-definition with societal expectations, revealing how resilience and self-awareness enable identity reconstruction within an oppressive social environment.

### ***Manifestations of the Big Five Personality Dimensions in Elphaba***

The analysis of *Wicked* (2024) reveals that Elphaba's personality embodies multiple dimensions of the Big Five Personality Theory: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. These dimensions emerge across several key scenes (00:23:13-00:26:30; 01:10:32; 01:28:42-01:33:13; 02:09:20; 02:10:12), offering a nuanced portrayal of her psychological complexity and showing how personality development occurs under the pressure of stigma and social expectation.

#### **a. Openness to Experience**

At minute 00:26:30, Elphaba demonstrates a high degree of openness when she reveals her uncontrollable magical powers to Madame Morrible (see Figure 3):



Figure 3. *Elphaba reveals her uncontrollable magical powers to Madame Morrible*

Elphaba: "Talent? Ah... No, something just takes over me, and something I can't control, and when it does, bad things happen."

This moment illustrates Elphaba's willingness to acknowledge and explore her unique experiences, even when they challenge conventional understanding. According to Bahri et al. (2024), openness to experience encompasses imagination, creativity, and curiosity toward novel phenomena. Elphaba's self-awareness and acceptance of her magical abilities reflect a readiness to engage with new dimensions of identity and power, despite emotional turbulence. Her openness, however, also exposes her vulnerability to social judgment, reinforcing the film's broader tension between individuality and conformity. This trait demonstrates that what Bahri et al. (2024) identify as cognitive flexibility is an adaptive means of coping with adversity through creative self-expression.

#### **b. Conscientiousness**

In the scene at minute 02:10:12, Elphaba's dialogue with the Wizard reflects a high level of conscientiousness and moral responsibility:

Elphaba: "If you wanted spies, why wouldn't you just make them yourself?"

Here, Elphaba challenges the ethical implications of using animals as spies, revealing her commitment to moral principles and personal accountability. As Bahri et al. (2025) note, conscientiousness is characterized by discipline, dependability, and a sense of duty. Elphaba's response demonstrates her integrity and resistance to unethical practices, underscoring her principled stance against exploitation. This conscientiousness not only defines her personality but also supports her resilience against oppressive authority, showing that moral reasoning can function as a stabilizing force amid stigma. Her conscientiousness thus becomes the foundation of her ethical independence and a marker of psychological maturity under social pressure.

#### c. Extraversion

At minute 01:10:32, Elphaba's low extraversion becomes evident during the ball scene. When she attempts to dance, her peers ridicule her appearance and isolate her socially. Despite her effort to participate, she ends up feeling alienated and uncomfortable.

This scene aligns with the observation that individuals with low extraversion tend to be reserved and may experience insecurity in social situations (Card & Skakoon-Sparling, 2023). Elphaba's discomfort signifies an inward focus and emotional sensitivity rather than a lack of sociability. Her withdrawal from the group reflects her struggle with acceptance and the internalization of others' judgment, reinforcing her position as both an outsider and a reflective individual. In the context of stigma, this introverted tendency operates as both protection and limitation, which shields her from further rejection while fostering a deep sense of introspection and self-awareness.

#### d. Agreeableness

At minute 01:30:52, Elphaba exhibits a complex expression of agreeableness through empathy and moral concern for a caged lion cub:

Elphaba: "Can you imagine a world where animals are kept in cages and they never learn to speak? This poor lion cub seems so frightened. What are we gonna do? Well, someone got to do something."

This dialogue underscores Elphaba's compassion and strong sense of justice. She empathizes with the suffering of others and actively advocates for intervention. Bahri et al. (2024) emphasize that individuals high in agreeableness are cooperative, empathetic, and altruistic. However, Elphaba's emotional intensity also reveals the *dual nature* of her agreeableness; her empathy coexists with anger toward injustice. Rather than passive compliance, her empathy manifests as assertive compassion—an evolved form of agreeableness grounded in ethical conviction. This pattern resonates with Reisenzein et al. (2020), who claim that personality is contextually adaptive, evolving in response to moral and emotional challenges. Elphaba's agreeableness thus becomes a vehicle for moral resistance, showing that empathy can coexist with defiance when confronting systemic injustice.

#### e. Neuroticism

The final personality dimension, neuroticism, is visible in minute 02:09:20, when Elphaba confronts the Wizard after realizing his betrayal:

The wizard: "you're right. That's a very harsh word. Oh, scouts. What about scouts? Because they're gonna be flying around Oz reporting back on any seditious animal activity"

Elphaba: "seditious animal activity? What does that mean?"

Elphaba: "It's you. You're behind all of this. You're the reason why people are turning against the animals. It's all because of you."

This emotional outburst reflects Elphaba's sense of betrayal and moral indignation. Her reaction exemplifies high neuroticism, characterized by emotional volatility, frustration, and anxiety (Purba & Gultom, 2023). The discovery that the Wizard, a figure of authority, has manipulated her values triggers a loss of trust and control. While this moment exposes her vulnerability, it also humanizes her struggle for integrity amid deception. Thus, her neuroticism functions as both a weakness and a source of emotional authenticity, aligning with the Big Five model's view of personality as contextually adaptive. In the face of stigma, her emotional volatility represents not instability but heightened sensitivity to injustice, a trait that propels her moral awakening.

The findings indicate that Elphaba's character integrates diverse and sometimes conflicting traits from the Big Five dimensions. Her openness fuels creativity and self-discovery, while her conscientiousness sustains moral integrity. Conversely, her low extraversion and high neuroticism highlight emotional sensitivity and social anxiety, traits that both isolate and deepen her inner life. Her agreeableness, though fluctuating, manifests as empathy-driven resistance to injustice. Together, these traits portray Elphaba as a psychologically complex character whose personality evolves amid tensions among individuality, morality, and societal rejection.

Elphaba's personality traits, as analyzed through the Big Five framework, further illustrate how stigma influences personality development. Her high openness and conscientiousness reflect cognitive and moral flexibility, aligning with Bahri et al. (2024), who argue that openness fosters creative coping strategies in response to adversity. Elphaba's openness allows her to reinterpret her difference as a source of empowerment, while conscientiousness underpins her moral resistance to unjust authority. In contrast, low extraversion and high neuroticism signify emotional vulnerability, which aligns with Purba & Gultom (2023), who observe that stigmatized individuals often exhibit social withdrawal and emotional sensitivity as adaptive responses to rejection. These traits serve both as protective mechanisms and as constraints, limiting Elphaba's ability to engage with others while deepening her introspective strength. Her agreeableness, particularly in her empathy toward the caged lion cub, demonstrates the moral complexity of her character. Rather than passive compliance, her empathy manifests as assertive compassion, challenging injustice while maintaining emotional sensitivity. This pattern resonates with Reisenzein et al. (2020), who claim that personality is contextually adaptive, evolving in response to moral and emotional challenges rather than remaining static.

Overall, the interplay of these personality traits reveals that Elphaba's psychological development is inseparable from the social context that stigmatizes her. Stigma not only shapes how others perceive her but also influences how she negotiates her moral identity and emotional resilience. The intricate integration of the Big Five dimensions demonstrates that personality is not fixed but dynamic, an evolving response to the tension between personal values and societal judgment (Cervone & Pervin, 2023; John & Robins, 2022). Through this lens, *Wicked* portrays Elphaba as a figure of psychological depth whose struggle for authenticity embodies the transformative potential of personality under pressure.

### ***Types and effects of stigma on the character of Elphaba***

The analysis of *Wicked* (2024) reveals two dominant manifestations of stigma affecting Elphaba: social stigma and public labeling. Both forms highlight how acts of discrimination and exclusion shape her self-concept, personality development, and progression toward self-congruence. The findings indicate that stigma operates not merely as a societal tool of marginalization but also as a psychological force that molds self-awareness and drives the evolution of personal identity.

#### **a. Social Stigma**

Social stigma against Elphaba is first observed in the scene between 00:09:37 and 00:10:00, where neighborhood children ridicule her while she plays with her sister, Nessarose.

Kids: "Elphaba Tropp... Green on top!"

Kid 1: "Ew, green and ugly."

Kid 2: "She's so green."

Kid 3: "Where did you come from?"

These utterances reveal how Elphaba's green skin becomes a visible marker of difference, used to justify social exclusion. The children's comments reduce her identity to a single physical trait, reinforcing the idea that she is not normal and does not belong to their social group. Statements such as "everyone can smell her" or "green and ugly" further intensify the dehumanization process, suggesting impurity and disgust. This depiction reflects the concept of social stigma, in which individuals are marginalized due to perceived deviations from social norms (Altay & Erbas 2021). Through labelling and ridicule, Elphaba is constructed as an outsider—someone inherently othered by her appearance. In Goffman's (1963) terms, such labelling damages the individual's social identity and internal sense of worth, creating a feedback loop of exclusion. Elphaba's visible difference thus functions as both a physical and symbolic marker of inferiority in the collective imagination of Oz society.

At the same time, the persistence of this stigma sets the foundation for Elphaba's later resistance. Her early exposure to ridicule represents what Kritzler & Luhmann (2021) describe as the early stage of incongruence, where self-perception is dominated by external judgment. Yet, this rejection also initiates her gradual movement toward autonomy. As Meadows & Higgs (2022) argue, confronting stigma can eventually lead to self-redefinition when individuals reinterpret imposed

difference as a source of self-understanding. For Elphaba, such ridicule becomes the initial catalyst for her later pursuit of self-acceptance.

b. Labelling and Public Stigma

A more institutionalized form of stigma occurs later in the film, at 02:17:12–02:17:58, when Madame Morrible publicly denounces Elphaba as an *evil witch*.

*Madame Morrible: "Citizens of Oz, there is an enemy who must be found and captured... Her green skin is but an outward manifestation of her twisted nature. This Wicked Witch."*

Here, Madame Morrible's speech demonstrates public labelling, a process where power figures construct and disseminate stigmatizing narratives to legitimize exclusion. The repeated label "*Wicked Witch*" transforms Elphaba's physical difference into moral deviance. The assertion that her green skin reflects her "twisted nature" fuses external appearance with inner corruption, blending physical and moral stigmas into a single, destructive label. According to labelling theory, social identity is shaped by how others define an individual rather than by inherent traits. Once Elphaba is named "wicked," this identity becomes publicly fixed, regardless of her actual intentions or behavior. Altay & Erbas (2021) note that labelling fosters internalized shame and social alienation. In Elphaba's case, the collective acceptance of Madame Morrible's narrative causes her complete social isolation and erodes her ability to be seen as anything other than "the other." From a psychological standpoint, this act of public labeling represents a pivotal moment in Elphaba's reconstruction of self-concept. At first, she absorbs the negative identity attributed to her, experiencing what Kritzler & Luhmann (2021) describe as the tension between her actual self and her ideal self. In time, however, her defiance, expressed through the statement "I'm through accepting limits," signifies a process of self-redefinition and the attainment of congruence. As noted by Meadows & Higgs (2022) those who challenge stigma, those who challenge stigma are often able to rebuild a coherent self-narrative that accepts difference as part of their identity rather than rejecting it. For Elphaba, refusing the label "wicked" represents psychological liberation, as she turns a socially imposed image of deviance into a personal expression of authenticity.

Overall, the findings reveal that stigma in *Wicked* functions on both external and internal levels, being socially reinforced through labelling and psychologically absorbed through shame. Nevertheless, Elphaba's transformation demonstrates how resistance can evolve into empowerment. Through the redefinition of her identity, she progresses from marginalization toward self-acceptance and independence. The film ultimately portrays the complex relationship between social exclusion and identity formation, illustrating that genuine personal growth can arise from the very experiences of rejection that attempt to constrain individuality.

***Elphaba Her Self-concept Management Throughout the Wicked***

Elphaba's management of her self-concept throughout *Wicked* (2024) reflects the tension between her internal identity and external perceptions. The findings, grounded in Rogers' theory of self-concept, illustrate the evolving relationship between Elphaba's ideal self, self-image, and the degree of congruence or

incongruence she experiences as she navigates stigma, self-acceptance, and identity reconstruction. The analysis shows that her journey toward congruence unfolds gradually through self-realization and resistance to external validation.

#### a. Formation of the Ideal Self and Self-Image

Elphaba's desire to be recognized and accepted shapes her early self-concept. In the scene at 00:28:12–00:28:16, she says:

Elphaba: "When I meet the Wizard, once I prove my worth"

This expression demonstrates her belief that personal value and social acceptance are contingent upon external validation. Elphaba imagines that being acknowledged by the Wizard will affirm her worth and allow her to fulfill the image of her ideal self. According to Muris & Otgaar (2023), the ideal self represents the person one aspires to become, while self-esteem is the emotional evaluation of one's value. Elphaba's self-esteem, therefore, is dependent on the Wizard's approval and on the validation of those in authority.

A later sequence (01:08:32–01:19:25) reveals a contrasting self-image defined by guilt and self-blame. Elphaba confides to Galinda that her mother's death and Nessarose's disability were the consequences of her own existence. Her words, "None of which would've ever happened if it wasn't for me. So it's my fault," show how she internalizes responsibility for tragedy, which distorts her self-image into one dominated by shame and unworthiness. As Card & Skakoon-Sparling (2023) explain, self-image encompasses both internalized perceptions and external reflections. Elphaba's narrative illustrates how guilt and perceived failure erode her self-esteem, reinforcing the incongruence between her real self and her ideal self. This state of incongruence exemplifies the early psychological struggle that Rogers describes as a conflict between authentic self-perception and socially imposed expectations.

#### b. Shifting from Incongruence to Congruence

Elphaba's confrontation with Madame Morrible at 02:09:40–02:09:48 marks a turning point. When she realizes that her acceptance was conditional and manipulative, she says, *"And you've known all along. Since the day you met me."* This realization reveals her growing awareness of incongruence, the gap between her ideal self, shaped by others' expectations, and her true self, which seeks authenticity. Rogers' theory emphasizes that incongruence occurs when self-perception and experience are misaligned, often due to conditional acceptance and external judgment. The awareness of this misalignment pushes Elphaba toward a deeper understanding of her intrinsic values and the need for self-determination.

In the final scene (02:20:27–02:20:32), Elphaba asserts, *"I'm through accepting limits, cause someone says they're so."* This declaration signifies her movement toward congruence, as she begins to live according to her intrinsic values rather than societal approval. She no longer seeks validation from others, instead embracing her individuality and autonomy. This transformation reflects the realization of congruence, in which her self-image aligns with her ideal self. Through

this process, Elphaba reconstructs her self-concept as independent, self-directed, and resilient.

Taken together, the findings position *Wicked* not only as a narrative of social discrimination but also as a cinematic case study of self-concept formation under stigma. The interplay between personality, stigma, and self-perception demonstrates that identity evolves through continuous negotiation between social structures and internal meaning-making. This supports Cresswell's (2014) view that individual development emerges from the dialectic between the self and its social environment. Through Elphaba, *Wicked* visualizes how difference, initially a source of exclusion, becomes a site of empowerment once redefined through self-acceptance. Her transformation reflects broader psychological principles: stigma can fragment identity, but awareness and resistance can restore coherence and self-worth. The film thus offers a nuanced portrayal of how individuals navigate the boundaries between imposed identity and chosen selfhood within systems of judgment and power.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Elphaba's psychological development in *Wicked* (2024) is profoundly shaped by social stigma, conditional acceptance, and internal incongruence, revealing how identity formation is negotiated under pressure between individuality and societal expectation. The findings show that stigma functions not only as an external force of exclusion but also as an internalized mechanism influencing self-esteem, moral reasoning, and emotional resilience. Through her progression from dependence on external validation to self-acceptance, Elphaba embodies the transformation from incongruence to congruence as described in Rogerian theory. Her personality traits, particularly openness, conscientiousness, and emotional sensitivity, further illustrate the dynamic interplay between personal integrity and social constraint. The study contributes to the interdisciplinary dialogue between psychology and film studies by illuminating how cinematic narratives can mirror real psychological processes of marginalization and identity reconstruction. Future research may expand this perspective through cross-cultural or comparative analyses of stigma and self-concept in other media forms, deepening understanding of how narrative art reflects and reshapes perceptions of difference and acceptance.

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