



On Being a Shit: Unkind Deeds and Cover-Ups in Everyday Life, Part 1: Developing a Theory

Jane Gilgun

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This book is part 1 of a five-part book. Part 1 has two main purposes. The first is to take a humorous look at a serious topic of how people do unkind things and then try to cover them up through humor, playing innocent, and blaming others. By using stories, I show what happens when people do unkind deeds and cover up successfully. Their success hinges on the cooperation of others. If others see through them, the cover-ups fail and they are dethroned. I'd like to see more people fail and more former targets do the de-throning.

The second purpose of Part 1 is to introduce the importance of being able to spot cover-ups and not be taken in by them. I give some background to the term "shit" and related terms such as truthiness, swiftboating, prevarication, and humbug. The testing of the theory and explanation of method are not part of this book but are laid out in the full version of the book.

My use of the term "shit" is shocking to some and even offensive. Yet, this book is part of traditional scholarship. The inspiration for the title is philosophy professor Harry Frankfurt's bestseller "On Bullshit." Frankfurt's work is part of a long tradition in philosophy that takes a careful look at slang and its significance in everyday life.

When I read Frankfurt's book, I thought I can do that. I can write a book about being a shit. I sure knew a lot about it after years of doing interview research with perpetrators of interpersonal violence. Those guys were masters at blaming others, using humor, playing dumb, and acting innocent. After a while, I began to notice that many other people use the same tactics to cover up deeds that are not physical or sexual violence but are unkind and hurtful all the same. I could see that when their tactics worked, their targets bought into their cover-ups. Often they believed they were at fault and not the persons who committed the unkind deeds and then covered up. Recipient buy-in is the crowning achievement and marks a person as a successful shit.

I'm a professor at the School of Social Work, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, USA. See my other books and short reads on Amazon, iBooks, Nook, Smashwords and other internet booksellers. I first published "On Being a Shit" in 2008.

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