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Psychological Warfare and the Kingdom of Shame

Editor

Title: Psychological Warfare and the Kingdom of Shame

Shame. As a putative explanation for lacking decency, it relates to a famous quote from the Army-McCarthy Hearings of June 9, 1954. From the chief counsel for the United States (U. S.) Army, Joseph N. Welch, to U. S. Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, we can still hear "You've done enough. Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?" (1). More recently, on July 4, 2018, from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, to a senior diplomat from Myanmar, U Kyaw Moe Tun, we can still hear "…I have heard many preposterous claims. That claim is almost in its own category of absurdity…Have you no shame, sir, have you no shame? We are not fools." (2). As well, raising *shame* has been recurrent in attempts to influence—maintain or change—behavior at least as far back as the classical Latin poetry of Catullus (3) and the *Analects* of Confucius (4).

But can *shame* influence behavior? And vital for psychological warfare, (PSYWAR) how predictably? The problems are many whether the targets are some leader, elite decision making group, specific group of military rank-and-file, or masses from the general population. *Shame* can be experienced the same or differently, by the same person or different people, in the same situation or different situations, agonistically or antagonistically, directly or indirectly. There can be many linkages between the *shame* experience and other *qualia*—internal and subjective components of sense perceptions such as thoughts, emotions, images, and motives—and behaviors. In fact, these other qualia and behaviors can have much to do with the very nature of the shame experience as well as whatever independent PSYWAR influence may putatively occur on shame. And effects and linkages are dynamic and time-based, not one-shot, all-or-nothing phenomena.

For example, an adolescent's sense of *shame* may affect whether that adolescent defends someone being bullied or bullies someone--with that adolescent's sense of guilt being only one mediator of *shame*'s behavioral effects (5). The behavioral effects of one's racism-related trauma are mediated through the intensity and quality of trauma-related *shame* (6). Cultures wherein moral judgment is based largely on *shame* often display a sharp dichotomy between one's true and ideal selves, true and false selves, and public and private selves. In turn, these selves are crucial in deciding on, motivating, implementing, and assessing one's morality-based behavior (7). Self-narratives of medical clinicians founded on *shame* have significant effects on their professional behavior with colleagues and patients (8). And paranoid ideation seems founded on a welter of elements encompassing childhood experiences, social comparison processes, experiences of submitting to others, as well as *shame* (9).

So from the perspective of PSYWAR, even when one has successfully induced *shame* within some desired target, the assumption that a desired behavioral payoff will follow—e. g., starting or stopping a war, making and acting on a right or wrong decision—is

problematic. And even from the desired behavior there still is the problematic presumption of achieving some desired strategic goal which is warfare's ultimate aim. Yet a review of English-language psychological and psycho-political research on PSYWAR from the 1940s to the present seems to focus primarily on achieving specific qualia not on behavior and goals (cf. 10).

All the above seems to be the case not just for *shame* but for any psychological element chosen as a key to a successful PSYWAR plan. But back to *shame*.   It didn't influence Senator McCarthy, and U Kyaw Moe Tun to engage in desired behaviors such as admitting deception but to double down on their original positions—an often replicated psychological finding (11). And this is a shame.

References:

(1)*"Have you no sense or decency, sir?"* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8llS0ZkLVGA. **(2)** *Rohingya still fleeing violence, persecution in Myanmar – U.N. rights boss.* http://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/rohingya-still-fleeing-violence-persecution-in-myanmar-u-n-rights-boss. **(3)** *Catullus purified- A Brief History of Carmen 16.* https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://en.wikipedia.org/&httpsredir=1&article=1001&context=classicsfacpub#search=%22Furius%20and%20Aurelius%22   **(4)** *The Analects of Confucius: An Online Teaching Translation.* http://www.indiana.edu/~p374/Analects_of_Confucius_(Eno-2015).pdf. **(5)** Mazzone, A.; Camodeca, M.; & Salmivalli, C. (2018). Stability and change of outsider behavior in school bullying: The role of shame and guilt in a longitudinal perspective. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 38(2),164-177. **(6)** Graff, G. (2011). Everything has changed, but nothin' has changed: Shame, racism, and a dream deferred. *The Journal of Psychohistory, 38*(4), 346-358; **(7)** Etezady, M. H. (2010). Psychoanalysis in a 'shame culture': Japanese psychoanalytic insights. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 91*(5), 242-1245. **(8)** Lyons, B. ; Gibson, M. ; & Dolezal, L. (2018). Stories of shame. *The Lancet, 391(*10130), 1568-1569. **(9)** Carvalho, C. B.; Motta, C.; Pinto-Gouveia, J. ; & Peixoto, E. (2018). Psychosocial roots of paranoid ideation: The role of childhood experiences, social comparison, submission, and shame. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29744971. **(10) (a)** Boring E. G. (1945). Propaganda and psychological warfare. In E. G. Boring (Ed). Psychology for the armed services, Washington, DC: The Infantry Journal, Committee of the National Research Council. (pp. 485-500). **(b)** Doob, L. W. (1949). The strategies of psychological warfare. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 13*, 635-644. **(c)** Ekstein, R. (1942). Ideologies in psychological warfare. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 37*(3), 369-387. **(d)** Martin-Baro, I. (1990). Religion as an instrument of psychological warfare. *Journal of Social Issues, 46*(3), 93-107. **(e)** Schleifer, R. (2009). Psyoping Hezbollah: The Israeli psychological warfare campaign during the 2006 Lebanon War. *Terrorism and Political Violence, 21*(2), 221-238. **(11)** Gausel, N., Leach, C. W., Vignoles, V. L., & Brown, R. (2012). Defend or repair?

Explaining responses to in-group moral failure by disentangling feelings of shame, rejection, and inferiority. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 102(5), 941-960

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Abstract/Description: Psychological warfare is commonly referred to as a battle for hearts and minds.   But inducing desired behavioral change is more complicated as the psychology of *shame* illustrates.

Disciplines: Other Psychology, Political Science, Other Political Science, Psychology, Defense and Security Studies, International Relations

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