SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL ORIGINS OF VIOLENCE:

A THEORY OF MULTIPLE KILLING

Thomas J. Scheff

Abstract: This essay outlines a cybernetic theory of violence, supporting and extending earlier studies, particularly Gilligan and Websdale. It spells out recursive, interactive processes of alienation and emotion. The theory proposes that the cause of most violence is the interaction between social alienation and what Gilligan called secret shame. Two emotion spirals are described: shame/rage and shame/shame. Studies and accounts of multiple killings offer preliminary support. The idea may be applicable to collective behavior also, such as gratuitous wars. Websdale's cases of calmly planned familicide seems particularly relevant. The origins of WWI provide an example. The last section offers some tentative first steps toward decreasing violence. (7358 words)

This article describes social-emotional processes leading to killings, and preliminary steps that might help avoid future ones[1]. Because there is a large amount of background information about multiple killers, and one large-scale, detailed study, their cases are used to illustrate the theory. To suggest the possibility that the theory may also apply on a larger scale, some historical materials related to the origins of World War I are also included.

The most useful steps toward a general theory of the emotional causes of violence were suggested by Gilligan (1997), based on his experiences with violent men as a prison psychiatrist.

> The emotion of shame is the primary or ultimate cause of all violence... Shame is a necessary but not a sufficient cause of violence, just as the tubercle bacillus is necessary but not sufficient for the development of tuberculosis. The different forms of violence, whether toward individuals or entire populations, are motivated (caused) by shame. (pp. 110-111)

> [There are three preconditions under which shame leads to violence.] The first precondition is that the shame is a **secret**] probably the most carefully guarded secret held by violent men...The degree of shame that a man needs to be experiencing in order to become homicidal is so **intense and so painful that it threatens to overwhelm him and bring about the death of the self, cause him to lose his mind, his soul, or his sacred honor**.

The idea that secret shame is the prime cause of violence is very important, but needs to be elaborated. Normal emotions are hardly overwhelming because they are brief and instructive. Fear is a signal of imminent danger, but usually comes and goes in a few seconds, like other normal emotions. Similarly, normal shame and embarrassment are brief signals of actual or potential rejection by other(s). What kind of dynamic can result

---

1. F[Type text]

in feeling overwhelmed by painful emotions to the point of losing all inhibition? We will return to this question below, after considering Gilligan's other two conditions.

> …The second precondition for violence is met when these men perceive themselves as having **no nonviolent means** of warding off or diminishing their feelings of shame, …such as socially rewarded economic or cultural achievement, or high social status, position, and prestige. (p. 112)

> The third precondition …is that the person lacks **feelings that inhibit** the violent impulses that are stimulated by shame. The most important are love and guilt toward others, and fear for the self. … (p. 113)

Finally, there is a forth issue implied: Since Gilligan worked only in male prisons, his perpetrators are all men. As discussed below, the majority of multiple killers are men, but there is also a small minority of women.

How Much Shame?

The question of conditions in which secret shame leads to violence turns out to be important, because it seems reasonable to assume that shame, or the anticipation of shame, is virtually omnipresent in most people, especially secret shame. The idea that people spend much of their time and energy involved in or avoiding shame or embarrassment, if possible, and managing it if not, was central to much of the writing of Erving Goffman. One example:

> "…there is no interaction in which participants do not take an appreciable chance of being slightly embarrassed or a slight chance of being deeply humiliated." (1959, p. 243, emphasis added).

If this sentence is taken literally, it means that shame and/or the anticipation of shame haunts ALL social interaction. Avoidance of shame/embarrassment/humiliation is the driving force behind Goffman's central idea of impression management. Two studies that suggest a very high frequency of shame-related episodes in ordinary life will be discussed below.

The idea that shame issues are a virtually continuous presence in human affairs seems odd in modern societies because they foster the doctrine of individualism. We are taught that each person is a sovereign entity, self-reliant, standing alone. This emphasis is just a pipedream, since flourishing and even surviving is completely dependent upon recognition and help from others.

Case Studies

In the US, at least, many of the multiple killers have been loners who were harassed and ostracized. Yet most people treated that way don't shoot anyone or even make trouble. What could be special about the killers? It may be that shame, or shame and anger, and isolation can lead to interacting feedback loops that have no natural limit.

 First, however, some examples. Tyler Peterson was a 19 year old who killed six in Crandon, Wisconsin (Oct. 8, 2007 Milwaukee Journal Sentinel). He had gone to his on-again, off-again girlfriend's house in the middle of the night and instead of patching up their relationship, argued with her. One of the persons gathered at her home for a party called him a "worthless pig." He went home, got his AR-17 machine gun, and returned to

kill all of the gathering but one. According to one of his friends, Peterson had been picked on in high school because he was not originally from Crandon, and not an athlete.

Cho Seung-Hui was the 23-year old killer in the spree at Virginia Tech in 2007. Like Peterson and all of the other school killers, he was an isolated male loner who felt rejected. Many of his written complaints imply that he was rejecting those that he felt had rejected him, a strong indication of shame. There are also plentiful indications of isolation. One of his teachers reported, "He was the loneliest person I have ever known." His roommate commented that often he didn't respond at all when spoken to, or with only one word.

In Cho's writings, there are many indications of shame and humiliation. He often mentioned others' disrespect for him and those like him. In one instance he referred directly to humiliation: "Kill yourselves or you will never know how the dorky kid that [you] publicly humiliated and spat on will come behind you and slash your throats." (Washington Post, August 29, 2007).

His claim to being publicly humiliated could be either true or imagined, since there is at this writing no outside support for it. However, there is such support in the case of Jennifer San Marcos. She was the 44-year-old killer in the Goleta, California post office spree in 2006, killing 7 persons and herself. An investigator who requested anonymity spoke with many of Jennifer's co-workers for several weeks after the spree.

The investigator was surprised to find that with only one exception, the 18 co-workers interviewed expressed deep sympathy not only for the victims, but also for Jennifer. They all told roughly the same story. She was fired because of her mental illness, which had led to periodic misbehavior on the job. On the night she was fired after her latest outburst, she was handcuffed to a mail cart by the management, awaiting the arrival of the police. During the extended period of waiting, she was in full view of her co-workers, as if she were in stocks. Because this part of the story shows management in a bad light, it has not been mentioned in the media. Perhaps anyone, mentally ill, or not, would feel intense humiliation under these circumstances.

Shame and Violence

The role of humiliation in multiple killing was suggested by Gaylin (2003, p. 60) in his analysis of hatred:

> The rampage of an ex-employee at the workplace is often the product of …a perceived public humiliation, where the "public" may be only his fellow employees at the post office.

Gaylin's statement, made several years before the event, is nevertheless a telling comment particularly on the Goleta multiple killing. In an earlier study, Diamond (1997) also emphasized shame and humiliation, stating clearly that workplace violence seems to be based equally on management mistreatment and the killers' shame dynamics.

Websdale (2010), finally, in the largest and most systematic study so far, found evidence of intense shame in almost all of 211 cases of multiple killings within families: one partner kills the other partner, and one or more child. This type of murder is a multiple killing, but usually enclosed within a single family. (In a few of the cases, however, bystanders were also killed.)

A substantial majority of Websdale's cases contained many, many details about each case, obtained not only from media reports, but also police records and in some cases actual interviews with persons who knew the family. Most of these sources were available to Websdale through the domestic violence fatality review movement, a sizable group judging from the many persons acknowledged by the author.

The author patiently sifted through these materials in order to understand each case separately. Judging from my own reactions this part of his study must have required considerable emotional fortitude on his part: a detailed viewing of some 150 tragedies, one after another.

Websdale's findings strongly support Gilligan's idea that violence is caused by shame. However, in addition, Websdale discovered that that most of the killings took two seemingly different forms: the <u>livid coercive</u> hearts, and the <u>civil reputable</u> hearts. The first type of violence, a majority of the cases, is clearly parallel to the commonsense idea of violence exploding out of rage. The second is quite different, involving killers with no history of violence whatever, and clearly and quietly premeditated, sometimes during lengthy periods of time. The idea of a type of premeditated violence turns out to be quite important in several ways, but particularly in understanding collective violence.

The theory outlined here, like Gilligan's and Websdale's, proposes shame as a causal agent, but also has a social component, alienation, equally important. When these two components interact without limit, the stage is set for either withdrawal or extreme violence. Fortunately for the survival of the human race, withdrawal seems to be by far the most frequent reaction.

Isolation and Feeling Traps

A theory of violence requires a way of explaining the extraordinary, indeed unlimited force and loss of moral and other inhibitions that produces violence in our civilization. In this section, two main kinds of <u>recursive</u> loops will be considered: a social loop of rejection/isolation on the one hand, and a shame loop, a <u>feeling trap</u> (Lewis 1971), on the other.

The idea of a rejection/isolation loop is straightforward. Being or even just feeling rejected by a group leads toward alienation, and the more alienated, the more likely further rejection, a spiral. This process is social rather than psychological, although it is related to shame-based loops, because rejection and isolation are the basic causes of shame.

There is one complexity about isolation that will be considered. A few multiple killings were committed by two persons, not one. We are tempted to say that in these cases, the perpetrators were not completely isolated, since they at least had each other. This issue will be discussed below by considering a second kind of alienation other than isolation, engulfment or fusion. It can be argued that the pairs of killers were just as alienated as the isolated ones, but in the engulfed mode of alienation.

The part played by emotions in violence is more complex. It seems to be based on shame, but the kind of shame that goes unnoticed and unmentioned. Helen B. Lewis, a psychologist and psychoanalyst, used a systematic method (Gottschalk and Glaser 1969) to locate emotion indicators in many transcripts of psychotherapy sessions (Lewis 1971).

She found that shame/embarrassment was by far the most frequent emotion, occurring more than all the other emotions combined. Her findings suggest that shame/embarrassment, unlike pride, joy, grief, fear, or anger, was so frequent in the many sessions she studied that it almost always seemed to be unnoticed.

In addition to this study, there is another one that suggests that episodes of unacknowledged shame are frequent occurrences, yet don't result in violence. Retzinger (1991) showed that in the filmed marital quarrels of four couples, all 16 angry escalations she found were preceded by an insult that was not acknowledged. She showed that in each instance the insult generated a triple spiral of shame, anger and isolation, one spiral between the partners, and one within each of them, but there was no violence.

As indicated, Lewis (1971) found that the frequent occurrences of shame were virtually never mentioned by patient or therapist. The episodes involving other emotions, such as sadness, fear, or anger, were often referred to by either patient or therapist or both. However, in the many instances of shame/embarrassment/humiliation, no emotion was named. She called the unreferenced instances "unacknowledged shame."

She went on to note that when shame occurs but is not acknowledged, it can lead to an intense response, a feeling trap: one becomes ashamed of one's feelings in such a way that leads to further emotion. Since normal emotions are extremely brief in duration, Lewis's idea of a feeling trap opens up a whole new area of exploration. Emotions that persist over time have long been a puzzle for researchers, since normal emotions function only as brief signals.

The particular trap that Lewis described in detail involved shame/anger sequences. One can rapidly become angry when ashamed, and ashamed that one is angry. She called the result "humiliated fury." She found many word-by-word instances of episodes in which unacknowledged shame was followed by either hostility toward the therapist or withdrawal. In her examples of the latter, withdrawal takes a form that she called depression. She refers to the shame/anger/withdrawal sequence as shame and anger "short circuited into depression" (1971, p. 431 and passim). In a later chapter (The Role of Shame in Depression over the Lifespan, 1987, pp. 29-49), Lewis reviewed many studies by other authors using various measures that showed strong correlations between shame and depression.

Lewis's references to the kind of shame that leads either to withdrawal or to anger always involved unacknowledged shame, a term quite parallel to Gilligan's secret shame. Neither Gilligan nor Lewis, however, explained why it is this particular type of shame that leads to trouble.

The explanation, it turns out, is not simple. What their work implies is that when shame is kept secret, or unacknowledged, there is little chance that it will be resolved. How is shame ordinarily resolved? Although this question is rarely addressed explicitly, it seems to me that both authors seem to assume that normal shame is resolved through verbal means and through humor. However, in the case of intense humiliation, lengthy verbal or at least cognitive consideration might be needed before any humor can be found in the offending incident.

In many of my classes, I have asked students volunteers to tell the class about the most embarrassing moment in their lives. Invariably some of the volunteers, during the course of their story, become convulsed with laughter. Often these same students tell me afterwards that the public telling touched not only the unresolved embarrassment from the particular incident, but also shame from other incidents that was also unresolved, a backlog of shame.

It appears that when shame is not resolved, it can build up a backlog of unresolved shame in the form of bodily tension. When there is considerable backlog, then any new incident is felt in itself, but also reverberates with the backlog, making the new incident, even if seemingly trivial, extremely painful. Even without the spirals to be described below, backlogs of shame can lead to trouble.

The case of John Silber, as described in Milburn and Conrad (1996), provides an example of the link between suppressed shame and anger in a public setting. Silber is the ex-president of Boston University, and was a powerful conservative force in Massachusetts politics. His approach to political issues is a prime example of the politics of rage. As Milburn and Conrad (1996) suggest, it was an outburst of rage during a TV broadcast on the eve of the election that seemed to cost him the race when he ran for governor.

In an earlier interview, Silber stated that his sixth grade teacher laughed at him for wanting to be a veterinarian, since Silber had a withered arm. When the interviewer asked him how he felt about being laughed at, Silber replied that he wasn't humiliated, it made him stronger. This episode can be interpreted to mean that Silber's rage as a person and as a politician might have arisen from the suppression of shame.

Emotion Spirals

Lewis's idea of humiliated fury as a feeling trap can be a first step toward a theory of the emotional origins of either withdrawal or extreme violence. Since none of the therapy sessions she studied contained physical aggression, she didn't consider the kind of feeling traps that could result in violent aggression, on the one hand, or long lasting or total withdrawal (as in clinical depression).

Lewis described feeling traps as emotion sequences. The sequences described by Lewis involve at most three steps, as in the case of the shame/anger sequence short-circuited into depression. It will be necessary, however, to go beyond three steps, even as far as an endless spiral. Such a process would be a doomsday machine of interpersonal and inter-group withdrawal or violence. The combination of isolation and denial of shame can lead to self-perpetuating loops that generate either complete withdrawal or extreme violence.

Some emotion sequences may be recursive to the point that there is no natural limit to their length and intensity. Blushers provide an everyday example: some who blush easily tend to become embarrassed that they are blushing, leading to more intense blushing, and so on. The actor Ian Holm reported an extreme instance. During a live performance when he forgot his lines, he became embarrassed, realized he was blushing, which embarrassed him further, ending up paralyzed in the fetal position. He had to be carried from the stage. This feeling trap would not be a shame/anger spiral, but rather shame/shame: being ashamed that you are ashamed, etc.

Recursive shame-based sequences, whether shame about anger, shame about fear, or shame about shame need not stop after a few steps. They can spiral to the extent that they rule out all other considerations. Perhaps collective panics such as those that take place under the threat of fire are caused by shame/fear spirals, one's own fear and that of others reflecting back and forth can cause still more fear, leading to a triple spiral: a spiral within each person, and a spiral between them.

Although Lewis didn't consider the possibility, depression might be a result not only of a shame/anger spiral, but also shame/shame, or a combination of both. Judging from her own transcriptions, withdrawal after unacknowledged shame seems to be much more frequent than hostility toward the therapist.

The less frequent shame/anger spiral, humiliated fury, or a shame/shame spiral with the anger hidden, might be basic causes of violence to the extent that they result in self perpetuating loops. A person or group caught up both in an alienation loop and in a shame/anger spiral might become oblivious to all else, whether moral imperatives or danger to self or to one's group. Limitless quarrels can be generated by a triple spiral: shame/anger and/or shame/shame spirals within each quarreling party, and an isolation spiral between them.

It is conceivable that shame spirals could be a predominant cause of violence, with shame/anger playing only a hidden part. This might be the case in killings that are carefully and lengthily premeditated. Shame spirals and shame/anger spirals could be equally involved, as will be discussed below in a consideration of collective violence.

Perhaps the idea of a spiral of social alienation might be a more general way of referring to Gilligan's second and third conditions, the absence of socially acceptable ways of avoiding shame, such as high status, and the inability to feel love, guilt or fear. Feeling completely excluded by other persons and/or groups can dominate all other feelings.

Recursion of Emotions and Alienation in Killers

It has been recently suggested that recursive thinking is unique to human beings, differentiating their mental processes decisively from other species (Corballis 2007). The theory presented here proposes that recursion of feelings, feeling about feeling, would also differentiate humans from other species, and explain episodes of depression or rage of extraordinary intensity and /or duration.

Gilligan's explanation of the way in which secret shame leads to violence is largely metaphorical, as already indicated:

> The degree of shame that a man needs to be experiencing in order to become homicidal is so **intense and so painful that it threatens to overwhelm him and bring about the death of the self, cause him to lose his mind, his soul, or his sacred honor**.

The model of recursive loops explains how laminations and spirals of shame could lead to pain so unbearable as to feel like one is dying, or losing mind or soul.

The idea of isolation and shame/anger spirals seems to fit most of the recorded cases of multiple killing: the killers were not only isolated but also may have been in unacknowledged shame states. In her book Rampage (2004), the social scientist

Katherine Newman analyzed 25 school killings that took place in the U.S. between 1974 and 2002. The 27 killers all had been marginalized in their schools. That is, they had been harassed and ostracized to the point that they were completely alienated. Although Newman did not often mention shame or shaming, her descriptions suggest that the killers may have been in a state of unacknowledged shame prior to their rampages.

In another study of school killings, Fast (2008) considered 13 cases, and also suggests isolation (he calls it lack of integration into the school social milieu). Like Newman, some of his terminology (e.g., self-hatred) implies shame without naming it explicitly.

A multiple killing that occurred after the publication of Newman's book and is not mention in the Fast book, (Santa Barbara News-Press. March 25, 2005) suggests both reasons and clues for unacknowledged shame and for alienation. At the Red Lake Senior High School, in Minnesota, Jeff Weise killed 7 people and himself. He was a very obese (6 feet, 250 lbs.) 16-year-old, whose father had committed suicide ten years earlier. His mother, driving drunk, was brain damaged in an accident in 1999. According to Jeff's online postings, since her accident, she had been beating him mercilessly, but he never stood up to her.

 In another posting, he stated "I have friends, but I'm basically a loner in a group of loners." I've never shared my past with anyone, and I've never talked about it with anyone. I'm excluded from anything and everything they do, I'm never invited, I don't even know why they consider me a friend or I them…"

This boy seems to have been without a single bond, rejected continually and relentlessly by everyone around him, including his mother and his so-called friends. It is little wonder that his writing contains many clear indications of shame; for example, "I really must be fucking worthless…"

The Columbine multiple killing has evoked the largest amount of research. Larkin (2007), already mentioned, has described in detail the circumstances that led up to the killings. It is quite clear from his investigation that the killers, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, were quite isolated from others, but engulfed with each other. In the writing they did in secret, it is also clear that they both felt humiliated by the treatment they received from the high school cliques that rejected them.

Alienation

The idea of two types of alienation, mentioned earlier, in connection with killings done by two persons jointly will be further considered here. The founder of family systems theory, Murray Bowen (1978), distinguished between two kinds of dysfunctional relationships, engulfment (fusion) when the bond is too tight, and isolation, when it is too loose. In engulfed relationships, one or both parties subordinate their own thoughts and feelings to those of the other(s). In true solidarity, each party recognizes the sovereignty of the other, but balances respect for the other's position with respect for one's own, no more and no less.

Elias's (Introduction, l987) discussion of the "I-self" (isolation), the "we-self" (engulfment) and the "I-we balance" (true solidarity) makes the same point. Elias proposed a three-part typology: independence (too much distance), interdependence (a balance between self and other), and dependence (too little distance).

Engulfed relationships are alienated because at least one of the parties gives up vital parts of the self in order to be loyal to the other party. That is, one or both parties are alienated from self, in service to the other. In this kind of relationship, the kinds of negotiations that can be called upon by two independent parties are lost. All of the pairs of killers that I have examined seem to have been alienated in this mode. One person dominates the other. This was certainly the case of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold in Columbine. Eric completely dominated Dylan, and Dylan idolized Eric (Larkin 2007, pp. 144-148).

Clearly a majority of the cases have involved killers who were male, but female killers are not unknown. One example was mentioned above, the post office employee who killed 6 and herself. A recent school killer, Amy Bishop, a neurobiologist at the U. of Alabama, is another (NY Times, Feb. 13, 2010). In the U. S., overall women represent only a small proportion of killers. Why men? Perhaps men are less likely to acknowledge shame than women, since most men learn early that emotions other than anger are not considered manly[2]. The discussion below of the difficulties in attracting male students into my class on emotions/relationships is relevant.

Collective Violence

Perhaps multiple killings occur at the collective level also, in the form of gratuitous assaults, genocides and wars. The individual and interpersonal emotion spirals would be the same, but there would also be a recursive process between media and people, as suggested below.

The origins of World War I can serve as an example. The differences that divided the countries that fought this extraordinarily destructive war might have been negotiated, had there been last-minute negotiations to avoid war. But there weren't. Historians have so far been unable to explain the causes of this war.

My book on the politics of revenge (1994) proposed that social scientists have been looking in the wrong places. The basic cause of the war, I argued, was not economic or *real politic*, but social/emotional. The German and French people seem to have been caught up in alienation and shame spirals. The French defeat by the Germans in 1871 led to national desire for vengeance. The French leaders plotted a war for over 40 years, including a secret understanding with Russia for the purpose of defeating the Germans. (For a more recent and broader discussion of emotions, revenge, and conflict, see Frijda 2006, Ch. 7)

Media and Masses[3]

During this period, the role of mass media in both generating and reflecting collective humiliation and anger is quite blatant. The French public and its leaders experienced their defeat in the Franco-Prussian War (l870-71), and the Treaty of Frankfurt, which ended the war, as humiliating (Kennan, l984, Sontag, l933, Weber, l954).

---

[2] There are many studies that show men to be much less involved with emotions than women. Several books on <u>alexthymia</u> (emotionlessness) don't discuss gender directly, but most of the case studies are men. Salminen, et al (1999), used an alexthymia scale. They found evidence for emotionlessness in almost twice as many men as women.

[3] This section summarizes part of Chapter 6 of Scheff (1994).

Going against Bismark's warnings (he feared revenge), the Germans had annexed two French provinces (Alsace and Lorraine). Revenge brought about through the return of the two lost provinces, *revanchisme*, became the central issue in French politics of the whole era.

Leading political figures such as Gambetta and General Boulanger talked about revenge openly in their campaigns (Boulanger was known in the popular press as "General Revenge.") Vengeance against Germany was a popular theme in newspapers, magazines, poetry and fiction.

Revenge themes were common in the popular literature of the time. The poetry and novels of that era serve as examples. The war poems of Deroulede, <u>Chants du Soldat</u> (Songs of a Soldier, l872) were wildly popular. Here is a sample stanza (quoted in Rutkoff, l981, p. l61):

Revenge will come, perhaps slowly

Perhaps with fragility, yet a strength that is sure

For bitterness is already born and force will follow

And cowards only the battle will ignore.

Note that this poem not only appeals to the French to seek revenge, but also contains a coercive element. In the last line, anyone who might disagree with the poet's sentiments is labeled a coward. There are many other instances of appeals to vengeance, honor, and glory in the other poems: these are the main themes. By l890 this little book had gone through an unprecedented 83 editions, which suggests that it had a vast audience.

The extraordinary acclaim that greeted <u>Chants du Soldat</u> (Soldiers' Songs) prompted Deroulede to publish further books of similar thrust, most of them devoted to military glory, triumph and revenge. For example, in l896 his <u>Poesies Militaires</u> (Military Poetry) continued in the same vein. The following is a representative stanza:

French blood! -- a treasure so august

And hoarded with such jealous care,

To crush oppression's strength unjust,

With all the force of right robust,

And buy us back our honor fair...

Although revenge is not mentioned explicitly, the last line implies what might be called the honor-insult-revenge cycle (Scheff and Retzinger, l991).

Also indicative of open *revanchism* was the rash of novels about the plight of Alsace and Lorraine under German occupation, which became popular in the l5 years preceding WWI. The best-known author of this genre, Maurrice Barres, published two: <u>In the Service of Germany</u> (l905) and <u>Collette Baudoche</u> (l909). These books, like many others of their ilk, were not works of art, but "works of war," to use the phrase of Barres' biographer (Boisdeffre 1962).

Websdale's idea of a type of multiple killer who not acting in a fit of rage, but carefully and with considerable planning seems to be applicable to wars like WWI. The ruling

emotional spiral is not shame-anger, but shame-shame. A person or a nation can become so lost in a spiral of being ashamed of being ashamed that it becomes the dominant force in their existence, as it seems to have been in the French nation 1871-1914. The violence that results is not because of lost of control, but submerging the inhibitions that prevent killing.

The alienation loops in the case of collective violence are more complex than those of persons in two different ways. The first way has already been mentioned, the loop that develops between the media and the public. The second complexity is that a double type of alienation develops between the contending groups: isolation between the groups (too far) and engulfment within them (too close). My earlier study (1994) named this double type of alienation bimodal, and proposed that it is a necessary condition for aggressive wars, that is wars that don't involve self-defense.

The idea of bimodal alienation has already been discussed with respect to pairs of multiple killers, suggesting that just as they were isolated without, they were engulfed within. This idea might help understand the type of multiple killing that Websdale called civic respectable, a spouse killing a spouse and one or more of the children. In ordinary terms, it seems difficult to understand any killing, but especially a parent who would kill his or her own children. The theory presented here suggests the possibility that the civil reputable parent who kills is so engulfed with his family, and so isolated without, that he or she projects his own unbearable emotional pain on the family members. If that were the case, the killer would think that he or she is helping by ending their unbearable pain.

The philosopher of emotions Robert Solomon suggested a parallel but much broader idea: "**emotionworlds**." For example, he compares the loveworld to the angerworld. The **loveworld** (1981, p. 126) is "woven around a single relationship, with everything else pushed to the periphery..." By contrast, in the **angerworld** "one defines oneself in the role of the offended' and someone else….as the offender. [It] is very much a courtroom world, a world filled with blame and emotional litigation..." Perhaps in the **shameworld** of the civic reputable killer, where the family receives nothing but insults and rejections, life is not worth living.

Response of Historians

With only a few exceptions, my explanation of emotion origins was not well received by most experts in history and political science. It seems to me that they are caught up in the denial of the importance of the social-emotional world, assuming that causes lie in the material world, and/or in thoughts and beliefs. They share this denial with most of the members of modern societies, lay and expert alike, as discussed above (see also Scheff 1990; 1994; 1997; 2006; Scheff and Retzinger 1991).

The current Iraq war might also be understood as a multiple killing occasioned, at least in part, by humiliation. The motivation of the leaders who launched the war is more complex than that, but even for them the war can be seen as partly motivated by revenge, and the use of revenge to placate the public. Rather than acknowledge the shame caused by 9/11 happening on their watch, and apologizing, they masked it with an attack on a nation that played no part. Like other spree killers, most of their victims are mere bystanders.

Perhaps the crucial question is not about the leaders, but the public. Why have they been so passive about a war that is obviously fraudulent, and for which they must pay with their earnings, and some with their lives? It is possible that the only thing they have to gain is continuing to mask their fear, grief, and humiliation with anger and violent aggression committed in their name. Needless to say, this is only a hypothesis, like all the others proposed here. Given the current world situation, further exploration and study is urgently needed.

Remedies

If the idea of interacting isolation/rejection and shame/anger and shame/shame spirals turns out to be a step in the right direction, what kinds of remedies might be possible? For the sake of discussion, I will mention two, one concerning emotions, the other, isolation.

The first possible remedy would be to offer classes to children and young adults that encourage them to notice and acknowledge their emotions. The most effective location would probably be high schools, a vale of low grades, cliques and rejection for a substantial part of the student body.

In seminars with varying titles, I have taught college freshmen in this kind of class for many years. Because my intention was to help both male and female students, I noticed early on that if the seminar title had the word emotion and/or relationship in it, male students wouldn't enroll. So I called it "Communicating." The new title picked up a few males, but not nearly enough for gender balance. Because this problem touches on central issues, I will describe two further steps I took to get male involvement.

After the title change, I took a more drastic step: for registration, I divided the class into two, one for men, the other for women. The trick is to arrange that the two classes meet at the same time and place. This step proved to be effective. It apparently corrects for the different amount of interest in the seminar between men and women. It seems be a first option for many women, but a last option for many men. The splitting of class registration keeps places open for the slow-moving males, because the fast-moving females cannot take their slots.

The last problem in the seminar has been keeping the men involved in the class. Most of the them liked it so long as we were discussing student's real life dialogues. In the language that students use, emotions are seldom referred to directly. References that are made are usually indirect. For example, there are many metaphors that refer to embarrassment, such as "It was an awkward moment for me." As long as the discussion of emotions in the students' dialogues is absent or indirect, the men are involved as much as the women. The class discussions were linked to learning communication skills that both the men and the women appreciated.

However, when women begin to make open references to emotions, such as anger, grief, fear, or shame/embarrassment, most of the men slow down. Although the women are vitally interested, a large majority of the men grow silent. Occasionally one of the more vocal men complains about what seems to him excessive attention to emotions. Most of them just withdraw. What to do to get this group involved again?

After a while, I found a way. The first time a dialogue leads to direct discussion of emotion, perhaps halfway through the quarter, I gave a five-minute talk about "How

Emotions are Like Sex" (See, under a different title, Scheff 2006a). This sentence alone seems to remove the glaze from men's eyes. I say that the major emotions are not only signals, but also states of bodily arousal. Each of these states, I continue, has a climax or orgasm. For example, crying can be the orgasm for grief. This tactic has never failed to bring the recalcitrant men back into discussion.

Presently I am teaching classes with the same goal on the topic: The Social-Emotional World of Pop Songs. It seems to have the same effects as the earlier class, but recruits from a much broader group of male student. I believe that these classes could be as beneficial to men as they are to women.

Alienated Students

Learning to identify and acknowledge one's emotions is only half the problem. The other half concerns the extreme alienation, especially in high school, of those who get low grades or are not accepted by mainstream students. One approach would be to encourage these students to organize their own club, an anti-clique clique. Students who feel rejected by mainstream students could join forces. Perhaps they could use a name like The Outrider Club, or some less revealing title. In the aftermath of the Columbine killings, there was much discussion of the Mafia Trenchcoats, but it turned out to be a myth. To the extent that such clubs were organized, extreme isolation of marginal students might be lessened.

A possible effect of the emotion classes might also help in two different ways, if only indirectly. The mainstream students who benefit from the class learn to identify and acknowledge their own shame and humiliation, as well as other vulnerable emotions, like grief and fear. This change might make them more hesitant to humiliate others. Another way is that students make new friends in the class. I know only because it is a question asked in the official course evaluation form. From past experience with other mainstream courses, and from complaints I hear from students, making new friends at college seems to be difficult. Many students who complete 4 years still have friends only from high school.

However, to actually change the atmosphere in schools, many mainstream students would have to take the classes, a tall order. I have been teaching such a class for many years at UCSB; it always gets good reviews from students. Yet being quite small (20-30), it reaches only a tiny proportion of the student body. The suggestions made here are only a first step to what might be a long struggle.

Conclusion

This note has described a social-emotional process that might be the cause of multiple killings. Killers seem to be persons that are both extremely alienated and also have completely suppressed their experience of shame/embarrassment/humiliation. This combination usually leads to withdrawal, but it can also generate a machine of self-perpetuating coupling of social isolation and shame and shame/anger spirals. This process could be the doomsday machine referred to above, the social-emotional equivalent of a chain-reaction. If there is no intervention, this process can lead to complete withdrawal or acts of violent aggression against others and/or self.

Two suggestions were made that might become first steps toward decreasing violent aggression. On the one hand, a high school class could teach students how to identify and acknowledge their emotions, and on the other, encouraging outcast students to form a club of their own, to decrease their extreme isolation. Even if these two steps in combination turned out to be effective on a large scale, further ideas will be needed.

Summary

This essay outlines a causal model of multiple killing, based in the social-emotional world: unacknowledged shame, spiraling with anger and/or more shame, can result in a feedback loop ending in unlimited violence. Because much more information is available about multiple killers, this approach may also be relevant as a first step to understanding all kinds of massive violence.

References

Barres, Maurice. l905. Au Service de l'Allemagne. Paris: A. Fayard

l909. Colette Baudoche. Paris: Juven.

Boisdeffre, Pierre. 1962. Maurice Barres. Paris: University Editions.

Bowen, Murray. 1978. Family therapy in clinical practice. New York: Jason Aaronson.

Corballis, Michael. 2007. The Uniqueness of Human Recursive Thinking. American Scientist 95, May-June, 240-248.

Deroulede, P. l872. Chants du Soldat. Paris.

l896 Poesies Militare. Paris.

Diamond, Michael A. 1997. Administrative Assault: A Contemporary Psychoanalytic View of Violence and Aggression in the Workplace. American Review of Public Administration, V. 27, 3, 228-247.

Fast, Jonathan. 2008. Ceremonial Violence: A Psychological Explanation for School Shootings. New York: Overlook Press.

Frijda, Nico. 2006. The Laws of Emotion. Mahwah, N. J.: LEA.

Gaylin, Willard. 2003. Hatred. New York: PublicAffairs

Gilligan, James. Violence – reflections on a national epidemic. New York: Vintage Books (1997)

Goffman, Erving. 1959. Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. New York: Anchor.

Gottschalk, Louis, Winget, C. and G. Gleser. 1969. Manual of Instruction for Using the Gottschalk-Gleser Content Analysis Scales. Berkeley: UC Press.

Kennan, George. l984. The Fateful Alliance. New York: Pantheon.

Larkin, Ralph W. 2007. Comprehending Columbine. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Lewis, Helen B. 1971. Shame and Grief in Neurosis. New York: International Universities Press.

_____ 1987. The Role of Shame in Symptom Formation. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Milburn, Michael, and Sheree Conrad. 1996. The Politics of Denial. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Miller, William. 1993. <u>Humiliation</u>. Ithaca: Cornell U. Press.

Newman, Katherine. 2004. <u>Rampage: the social roots of school killings</u>. New York: Basic Books.

Retzinger, Suzanne. 1991. <u>Violent Emotions</u>. Newbury Park: Sage.

    1995. Identifying Shame and Anger in Discourse. <u>American Behavioral Scientist</u> 38: 541-559.

Rutkoff, P. M. l981. <u>Revanche and Revision</u>. Athens: Ohio U. Press.

Salminen, J. K., Saarijärvi S, Aärelä E, Toikka T, Kauhanen J. 1999. Prevalence of alexithymia and its association with socio-demographic variables in the general population of Finland. Journal of Psychosomatic Research. 46 (1): 75-82.

Scheff, Thomas. 1990. <u>Microsociology: Discourse, Emotion, and Social Structure</u>. Chicago: University of Press.

          1994. <u>Bloody Revenge: Emotion, Nationalism and War</u>. Westview Press (Reissued by iUniverse 2000)

          1997. <u>Emotions, the Social Bond, and Human Reality: Part/Whole Analysis</u>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

          2006. <u>Goffman Unbound: Toward a New Paradigm in Social Science</u>. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.

          2006a. Catharsis and Other Heresies: A Theory of Emotion <u>Journal of Social, Evolutionary and Cultural Psychology</u> 1 (3), 98-113

Scheff, Thomas and Suzanne Retzinger. 1991. <u>Emotions and Violence: Shame and Rage in Destructive Conflicts</u>. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books. (Reissued by iUniverse 2000)

Solomon, Robert. 1981 Love : emotion, myth, and metaphor. Garden City, N.Y. : Anchor Press/Doubleday.

Sontag, Raymond. l933. <u>European Diplomatic History</u>. New York: Appleton-Century.

Weber, E. l968. <u>The Nationalist Revival in France</u>, l905-l914. Berkeley: U. of California Press.

Websdale, Neil. <u>Familicidal Hearts: The Emotional Style of 211 Killers</u>. Oxford: Oxford University Press   7457spree5jun22-10