

# REINTEGRATIVE SHAMING

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## *Shame and Crime*

The pivotal concept of the theory in *Crime, Shame and Reintegration* (Braithwaite, 1989) is reintegrative shaming. According to the theory, societies have lower crime rates if they communicate shame about crime effectively. They will have a lot of violence if violent behaviour is not shameful, high rates of rape if rape is something men can brag about, endemic white-collar crime if business people think law-breaking is clever rather than shameful.

That said, there are ways of communicating the shamefulness of crime that *increase* crime. These are called stigmatization. Reintegrative shaming communicates shame to a wrongdoer in a way that encourages him or her to desist; stigmatization shames in a way that makes things worse. So what is the difference?

Reintegrative shaming communicates disapproval within a continuum of respect for the offender; the offender is treated as a good person who has done a bad deed. Stigmatization is disrespectful shaming; the offender is treated as a bad person. Stigmatization is unforgiving - the offender is left with the stigma permanently, whereas reintegrative shaming is forgiving - ceremonies to certify deviance are terminated by ceremonies to decertify deviance. Put another way, societies that are forgiving and respectful while taking crime seriously have low crime rates; societies that degrade and humiliate criminals have higher crime rates.

### *Low Crime Societies*

African societies are among those which use reintegrative shaming quite extensively. The Nanante is an example of what I would call an institution of reintegrative shaming that deals with crime in a ritually serious but reintegrative way.

#### **THE NANANTE**

An Afghan criminologist at the University of Edinburgh, A. Ali Serisht, pointed out after the publication of *Crime, Shame and Reintegration* that the Pushtoon, the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, had an institution called Nanante similar to the conferencing notion I discussed in that book. The Nanante is a ceremony where the criminal offender brings flour and other food and kills a sheep for a community feast. Often this will be held at the victim's house, where the victim will participate in cooking the food the offender brings. At the ceremonial part of the event, the offender will not be told that he is bad and in need of reform, but rather that "You have done an injustice to this person". At the same time the offender will be assured that "you are one of us and we accept you back among us". The police and courts have virtually no presence in communities that rely on the Nanante.

Japan is the developed society which has perhaps the heaviest reliance on reintegrative shaming as an alternative to humiliating or outcasting criminals. It has a very low crime rate and is the only nation where the evidence indicates a sustained decline in the crime rate over the past half century. This has been accomplished with a low imprisonment rate - 37 per 100,000 population, compared to over 500 in the US. Guy Masters' (1995, 1997) research shows that Japanese schools use reintegrative methods for controlling delinquency

very similar to the restorative justice conferences we will describe later (see DELINQUENCY IN THE JAPANESE CLASSROOM).

### **DELINQUENCY IN THE JAPANESE CLASSROOM**

“The students would then be asked by their home room teacher to explain their actions. This would often be done at the child’s home in front of the parents. Finally, a meeting with all the students and parents would be arranged, and with any other people that might be involved. For instance if a fight had occurred with students from another school, or an item had been stolen, then these individuals would also be present. The Police might also attend, and make comments. In these meetings, the teachers would start by talking about the student and then the incident. Those involved would be expected to talk about the effect that it had had. The students would be expected to explain why they did it, and to apologise to everybody there. The parents would often then apologise to the injured party, as would the teachers. The students would then have a separate meeting with their home room teacher again, to discuss that meeting, and, as teachers said to me, to stress what the individual student had learnt from the situation. The more serious the incident the more meetings would be arranged...For these incidents there was never any specific punishment per se, just the process of the meetings...There was a strong feeling that students should not be given up on...Even with the persistent trouble makers a common comment was always that, ‘This time - I think that they might learn’. ... When talking about persistent trouble makers one teacher commented that: ‘Young children make mistakes. They do bad things, but that doesn’t make them bad people. Our job is to look after them when they make these mistakes, until they learn to look after themselves.’ It would appear that they look after them by showing them how serious what they have done is, and how it has hurt others’ (Masters, 1995, p. 27-29)”. Lewis (1989, p. 35) identified the following four principles from her observations of discipline in Japanese classrooms: “(1) minimising the

impression of teacher control; (2) delegating control to the children: (3) providing plentiful opportunities for children to acquire a 'good girl' or 'good boy' identity; and (4) avoiding the attribution that children intentionally misbehave".

Stigmatizing other human beings is a common human frailty because stigmatizing the debased identity of others is a way of shoring up our own identity. Stigmatization is an ineradicable fact of existence in all societies, including Japanese society. Reintegrative societies, however, have well developed cultural scripts and rituals for ending stigmatization with ceremonies of apology and forgiveness. **PIG, PIG, PIG** is another example from the work of Masters (1997) of how stigmatization can be responded to by reintegrating the offender back into a community of care.

### **PIG, PIG, PIG**

The incident began during the morning roll call when the boy in charge called a girl by her (unappreciated) nickname of "pig". The girl was offended and refused to answer, so the boy raised his voice and yelled the word several times...Later that morning during the break several children gathered around the girl and chanted "Pig, pig, pig". Deeply hurt...she ran away from the group. For the remainder of the school day she did not speak a word; that afternoon she went home and would refuse to return for a week. The teacher in charge of the class had not been present during the periods when the girl was insulted, so she did not appreciate what had happened.

Later that day the girl's mother called to ask what had gone on. Immediately the principal began a quiet investigation in co-operation with the teacher. By that evening, parts of the story were known, and the principal visited the child's home to apologise to her parents.

The next day, and on each successive day until the problem was solved, special teachers' meetings were held with all present to seek a solution. On three occasions the principal or the girl's homeroom teacher went to the girl's home and talked with her. The final resolution involved a visit by the entire class to the girl's home, where apologies were offered along with a request that the insulted girl forgave her friends. Two days later she returned to school, and two weeks later the teacher read a final report to the regular teachers' meeting and then apologised for having caused the school so much trouble (Cummings, 1980, p. 118-119, cited in Masters, 1997).

### *Reintegrative Shaming in Western Societies*

Contemporary Western societies are rather stigmatic compared to much of Africa and Asia. However, they are not as stigmatic as they used to be. We no longer put criminal offenders in the stocks, where they could suffer all manner of degradation up to and including rape. We no longer require poor students to wear a dunce's cap. Indeed our schools and our childrearing practices in families have become much more reintegrative over the past two centuries.

Moreover, the evidence is strong that American families that confront wrongdoing while sustaining relationships of love and respect for their children are the families most likely to raise law-abiding citizens (see Braithwaite, 1989: 71-83). Laissez-faire families that fail to confront or that just "natter" at misbehaviour (Patterson, 1982) and stigmatizing families that reject and degrade both experience a lot of misbehavior (Baumrind, 1971, 1978).

Robert Sampson and John Laub's (1995: 122) celebrated analysis of the Gluecks' data on the life course of American offenders and non-offenders supports this conclusion: "what seems particularly criminogenic is harsh, unreasoning, and punitive discipline combined

with rejection of the child. Stigmatizing punishment, by the family as well as the State ...appears to backfire”.

Research Toni Makkai and I have conducted on the enforcement philosophy of nursing home inspectors in Australia, the US and UK suggests that inspectors are ineffective when they are tolerant and non-judgmental in the face of failures by nursing home management to meet standards of care for old people required by the law (Makkai and Braithwaite, 1994). Nursing home compliance with the law actually declines following inspections by tolerant and understanding inspectors. It declines even more sharply after inspectors with a stigmatizing approach to wrongdoing have been in. The inspection teams that did best at improving compliance were those who believed in clearly communicating that failure to meet legal standards would not be tolerated, yet who believed in doing so in a way that showed respect, avoided humiliation, used praise when things improved, who believed in being both tough and forgiving.

Lawrence Sherman (1993) has interpreted his research on US policing as suggesting that when police stigmatize offenders, this engenders defiance. Respectful policing, which involves procedural fairness, politeness and giving the offender the benefit of a presumption that they are a good person who may have done a bad act, builds commitment to the law. Sherman has embarked on an ambitious program of experimental criminology to test these hypotheses more directly.

#### *Why Should Shaming Reduce Crime?*

Most Westerners believe we learn to refrain from crime by fear of punishment. Does this fit your own behaviour very well? Some of the time it probably does. But think about the person who has done most to make your life difficult in the past year. Did you consider

murdering them to deal with this? For most readers of this book, the answer will be no. You refrained from murdering that difficult person not because you considered that option and then concluded that the risks outweighed the benefits from getting the person out of the way. More likely you refrained from murder because it was simply unthinkable to you; it was right off your deliberative agenda. My theory is that it is exposure early in our lives to the idea of the shamefulness of murder that puts it off the deliberative agenda of responsible citizens. This is why it makes no difference to most people whether the punishment for murder is the electric chair or prison.

What matters, according to the theory, is moral clarity in a culture about the evil of killing other people. This is why homicides go up after wars (Archer and Gartner, 1976). It is why television that communicates the message that the best way to deal with violence is through violence, that those who wrong us can sometimes deserve to die for it, is a problem. Sadly, the ethnographic evidence is that murderers in America often believe they are agents of justice, purifying the world of the evil person they are wasting (Katz, 1988).

When we do something wrong, the people who are in the best position to communicate the shamefulness of what we have done is those we love. A judge waving his finger at us from on high is in a rather poor position to be able to do this. We do not care so much about his opinion of us because we have been given no reason to respect him as a human being and we will probably never meet him again. It is family we love, friends we respect who have most influence over us. Precisely because their relationships with us are based on love and respect, when they shame us they will do so reintegratively (respectfully).

*Why Should Stigmatization Make Things Worse?*

In contrast, when people shame us in a degrading way, this poses a threat to our identity. One way we can deal with threat is to reject our rejectors. Once I have labelled them as dirt, does it matter that they regard me as dirt? There is a profound connection here between the theory of reintegrative shaming and subcultural theory in criminology. When respectable society rejects me, I have a status problem; I am in the market for a solution to this status problem. Criminal subcultures can supply that solution.

Albert Cohen (1958), for example, speaks of a child who does poorly at school as rejected in the status system of a school that values respect for property and control of aggression. A delinquent subculture of children who have been similarly rejected by the status system of the school can proffer a collective solution to that status problem. The subculture of school failures may value contempt for property and toughness rather than control of aggression. The very values against which disrespected children fail can be the basis for respect in a delinquent subculture.

Stigmatization therefore increases the attractiveness of criminal subcultures. Disrespect begets disrespect. Because you don't respect me, I won't respect you or the rules you value. I have no hope of eeking out a respected identity under your values; delinquent subcultures look more promising to me as a basis for respect.

Criminal subcultures neutralize the shame that would otherwise be experienced as a result of lawbreaking. Often subcultures invert shame, so that it is mobilized against those who are too "weak" to stand up to the law and the authorities. In the Mafia, for example, it is a matter of great shame to cooperate with law enforcement.

Mainstream law and order cultures that are highly stigmatizing therefore nurture criminal subculture formation; they create a market for an oppositional identity. Once those who



are rejected by the stigmatizing culture are in the clutches of the criminal subculture, it does more for them than allow them to take pride in what the stigmatizers take to be a matter of shame. The criminal subculture also provides more practical resources - communicating knowledge, for example, about how to disarm an alarm system, how to sell drugs, how to evade tax.

### *Integrating Criminological Theories*

The reintegrative-disintegrative (stigmatizing) distinction is a shunt that switches the criminologist onto different modes of explanation. When there is stigmatization, we have just seen that the propositions of subcultural theory are more likely to come true. When shaming is reintegrative, the propositions of control theory are more likely to be true. By this I mean that attachment to parents and other agents of conventional morality is more likely to reduce crime. Young people are more likely to continue to believe in the rules those agents of conventional morality uphold and to be influenced by them.

Labelling theory is obviously the other mainstream theory that has the conditions of its validity specified by the theory of reintegrative shaming. Labelling, according to the theory, will actually reduce crime when it is respectful, focused on the act rather than the person and where disapproval is terminated by ceremonies of forgiveness and apology. It will only make things worse when it is stigmatizing.

The entire framework of the theory can be accommodated within a differential association framework (Sutherland and Cressey, 1978). Differential association is a useful theoretical framework (see Chapter X). But it lacks specificity in what it implies and rejects. The theory of reintegrative shaming can give it some specificity of meaning. Reintegrative shaming is the key process for communicating definitions unfavourable to crime.

Stigmatization pushes the stigmatized away from those definitions and into the clutches of criminal subcultures that communicate definitions favourable to crime - e.g. "rich people can afford to be robbed and they themselves rob people like me all the time by their rip-offs".

The connection of opportunity theory to the theory of reintegrative shaming is more indirect, but nevertheless powerfully important. Unemployment and school failure close off legitimate opportunities. However, they also cut off their victims from interdependency with other citizens. School failure tends to sever ties of interdependency with the school as the school failures reject their rejectors from the school community. Unemployment takes the employed out of interdependence with other citizens in the world of work. Because the unemployed often deal with the shame of losing their job by rejecting the world of workmates and employers, they become less vulnerable to their reintegrative social control.

But there is a much more profound way that unemployment breaks up communities of care. Families racked by unemployment are more likely to disintegrate. When children lose the caring love of a mother, father and other extended family members whose attachment is primarily to the alienated partner, the webs of reintegrative influence become less powerful. Those whose presence or love is lost to us are no longer in a position to shame us reintegratively when we err, to praise our fortitude when we turn our back on opportunities for wrongdoing. If dad is a hated male identity in a family culture dominated <sup>by</sup> a bitter mom, then a boy is more at risk from the supportive male identity a criminal subculture may supply. A boy will always be in the market for some sort of male identity. If it is the case that unemployment (and poverty and failure more generally) opens up conflicts in struggling families, splits them physically or emotionally by disrespect, then the love and respect needed to render socialization effective will not be there.

Blocked opportunities therefore undermine interdependence and community and this weakens reintegrative capability (and promotes stigmatization). Stigma further reduces legitimate opportunities. Once we are labelled a criminal, it is hard to get a job (Hagan, 1993).

Conditions of widespread stigmatization and unemployment are breeding grounds for criminal subcultures that offer solutions to those who have status problems as a result of these afflictions. They also offer practical illegitimate opportunities - ways of making a living by selling drugs, for example.

This latter set of processes apply equally, I argue, to crimes of the powerful. The nursing home owner is stigmatized by the state as a crook, a rapacious person who preys on vulnerable old people. A nursing home industry subculture of resistance to the regulatory requirements of the state can supply a solution to his status problem. It is nit-picking bureaucrats with their red-tape and winging old people who have never had it so good (together with their anti-business advocacy groups) who are bringing the country down. It is aggressive business people like them who make the country strong. The business subculture of resistance also helps share knowledge about legal tactics to resist the demands of the regulators and the resident advocates.

So the theory works at the top of the class structure as well as at the bottom. Regulatory stigmatization closes off a legitimate opportunity to accumulate wealth (say through enjoying a positive reputation as an ethical provider). This fosters criminal subculture formation. The criminal subculture of the business community then constitutes illegitimate opportunities of a much more damaging sort than can be created in the slum. If you have the capital of Nelson Bunker Hunt and W Herbert Hunt, you can even try to manipulate an entire global market for a commodity like silver (Abolafia, 1985). Great wealth means both

enormously superior capability to constitute both legitimate and illegitimate opportunities (Braithwaite<sup>✓</sup> 1991). The blocked legitimate opportunity of un<sup>n</sup>employment or school failure is not relevant to them; but when their opportunities are blocked by say a new tax law, they have inexorable capabilities to constitute new illegitimate opportunities through off-shore tax havens and other schemes. Societies that structure their opportunities very unequally will have more of both crimes of the powerless and crimes of the powerful. There will be more systematic blockage of legitimate opportunities to the poor. And there will be more capacity for ruthless exploitation of illegitimate opportunities by the rich when more unsystematic causes block their legitimate opportunities. For both the crimes of the powerful and the crimes of the powerless, stigmatization is relevant to formation of and attraction to criminal subcultures. And reintegrative shaming is vital to the control of both types of crime.

### *Communities*

Reintegrative shaming, according to the theory, will be more widespread in societies where communities are strong, where citizens are densely enmeshed in loving, trusting or respectful relationships with others. Obviously, it follows from the theory that shaming is more likely to be powerful and reintegrative where communities are strong and caring. Strong communities are also the key resources for the prevention of criminal subculture formation. Frank Cullen (1994) has reviewed the considerable evidence that “social support” is of central importance to crime prevention. Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls (1997: 918) have shown that “collective efficacy, defined as social cohesion among neighbors combined with their willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good, is linked to reduced violence”. Chicago neighbourhoods with more collective efficacy, more social trust, had less crime. Consistent with the theory I have outlined above, the negative effect of poverty on crime was mediated through collective efficacy. Across US cities,

Chamlin and Cochran (1997) have shown that more “altruistic” cities, as measured by charitable contributions, have lower crime rates, an outcome which they interpret, in part, in terms of the communitarian aspects of the explanation of crime in *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*.

### *The Structure of Shame and the Pattern of Crime*

Relations of power explain why some kinds of crime are defined as more shameful than others. In societies where women are particularly powerless, violence against women by those who own them will not be defined as very shameful. As a result, the theory predicts that violence against women will be among the deepest crime problems in such societies. Where business power reigns supreme and workers have little clout, occupational health and safety crimes will not be defined as very shameful. So there will be a lot of that kind of crime. Where bankers define what is shameful, bank robbery will be shameful and insider trading by bankers will not. This class structure of shame will cause people to believe that bank robbery is a major problem when it is not. It will cause them to be blind to the corporate crimes of bankers as a central crime problem, when the reality is that the best way to rob a bank is to own it.

An interesting implication of this analysis is that our deepest crime problems are the very problems we are in the best position to do something about. Social movement politics is the crime prevention strategy I have in mind. If structural inequalities of power are the reason family violence and corporate crime against workers and bank customers are not shameful (and therefore widespread) then a women’s movement that communicates the shamefulness of violence against women, a trade union movement that denounces health and safety crimes and a consumer movement that exposes the rip-offs of banks can have major effects.

### *Restorative Justice*

This kind of social movement politics seems to me the most important crime prevention implication of the theory. A second important implication is that restorative justice will be more effective than retributive justice. The *Nanante* and the disciplinary practices in Japanese schools are examples of restorative justice at work in civil society. Civil society rather than the state is the most important site for restorative justice. Families, schools and indigenous communities are the preeminently important sites for restorative justice in civil society for preventing crimes of the powerless. Workplaces are the most important sites for restorative justice to prevent crimes of the powerful.

In recent years state-run restorative justice programs as an alternative to court have become increasingly important in the criminal justice systems of all Western societies. Restorative justice means restoring victims, restoring offenders and restoring communities. These objectives take priority over punishment. Key *values* of restorative justice are healing rather than hurting, respectful dialogue, making amends, caring and participatory community, taking responsibility, remorse, apology and forgiveness. Restorative justice is also a *process* that involves bringing together all the stakeholders - victims, offenders and their friends and loved ones, representatives of the state and the community - to decide what should be done about a criminal offence.

The native peoples of North America have strong traditions of restorative justice that are being revitalized through healing circles or sentencing circles. These circles traditionally put the problem, not the person, in the centre of a community discussion about a crime (Melton, 1995). In many if not all US states now and all Canadian provinces, European-Americans are learning from the restorative justice wisdom of the first American nations.

Circle processes are being discovered as richly applicable to people brought up in a European civilization. There is appeal in the sheer simplicity of victims and their loved ones, offenders and their loved ones and caring members of the community sitting in a circle to discuss the consequences of a crime and what can be done to put it right. At the end of a circle or a restorative justice conference an agreement is reached, which will often <sup>R</sup>by signed by the offender, the victim and a police officer. The idea is that if this agreement is implemented, there will be no need for the matter to go to court. Agreements can include compensation payments to victims, apology, community work, undertakings to enter drug rehabilitation programs, surrender of weapons or ownership of a motor vehicle, moving from living on the street to living with an aunt, and so on.

Most programs seek to reduce the imprisonment rate by pre-trial diversion. But others cut in at more advanced stages of the criminal justice process. For example, the John Howard Society of Manitoba has a program mostly limited to running restorative justice conferences in cases where a prosecutor has already recommended prison time of more than six months (Bonta, Rooney and Wallace-Capretta, 1998). The idea is to see if the meeting can come up with an agreement that will persuade a judge to keep the offender out of prison. The program seems to be having some success in accomplishing this.

A great deal of research is underway in many nations on the effectiveness of restorative justice processes. So far the results are most encouraging (Braithwaite, 1999), but it is far too early for criminologists to be able to form an opinion as to whether they really work as a better way of doing justice. The theory of reintegrative shaming predicts that restorative justice processes will be more effective than criminal trials in reducing crime because by putting the problem rather than the person in the centre, direct denunciation by someone who you do not respect (e.g. a judge, the police) is avoided. At the same time, shame is difficult to avoid when a victim and her supporters, as well as the family of the offender, all

talk through the consequences that have been suffered, emotionally as well as materially, as a result of the crime. This discussion of consequences structures shame into a restorative justice process; the presence and support of those who care most for us structures reintegration into the ritual. The objective is to get the offender to acknowledge shame through apology and making amends; this, according to Retzinger and Scheff (1996) is better than by-passing shame, leaving shame to fester below the surface in a variety of unhealthy ways. Equally, it is an objective to help victims to heal the shame they so commonly feel.

*Payson*

### *Integrating Normative and Explanatory Theory*

Let us now think about the difference between explanatory and normative theory. So far we have been discussing an explanatory theory of crime - an ordered set of propositions about the way the world is. A normative theory is an ordered set of propositions about the way the world ought to be. My research agenda has been to integrate explanatory and normative theory, something that is not common in contemporary criminology. Jeremy Bentham's theory of crime is the most influential example of an attempt to unify an explanatory theory (deterrence) and a normative theory (utilitarianism).

It seems to me that the theory of reintegrative shaming could be a dangerous theory (albeit less dangerous than deterrence) unless it is integrated with a normative theory of what should be shamed. My argument is that conduct should only be subject to shame when doing so will increase freedom as non-domination. Freedom as non-domination or "dominion" has been conceived by Philip Pettit and I (Braithwaite and Pettit, 1990; Pettit, 1997) as a republican conception of freedom. This normative theory implies that a more decent way to run a criminal justice system is with the minimum level of punishment that is possible while enabling the state to maintain its promises to the security of citizens. It



means that punishing people only because they deserve it makes no moral sense. Equally, shaming people for no better reason than that they deserve it, in a way that increases the amount of oppression in the world, is morally wrong.

Republican political theory also means active citizenship and community building. This commends the kind of social movement politics and restorative justice which we argued was also an implication of the explanatory theory in *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*.

### *Conclusion*

There has not been space in this essay to recount why I think the theory of reintegrative shaming explains the most powerful relationships that have been demonstrated by criminological research - why women commit less crime than men, why young people commit more crime than older folk, why big cities have more crime, why residential mobility (moving house) is associated with crime, why school failure is a cause of crime, why entering a happy, secure relationship with a partner and getting a satisfying job turns people away from crime, why crime in the suites does more damage than crime in the streets (see Braithwaite, 1989).

This is the first ambition of the theory: to give a better fit to the established facts than is provided by other theories. I found the best way to accomplish that was to integrate the explanatory power that does reside in other criminological theories. The theory of reintegrative shaming is an explicit attempt to integrate the insights of control, subcultural, opportunity, learning (e.g. differential association) and labelling theories of crime. Integration with opportunity theory has been especially important as a key ambition was a theory that accounted for both crimes of the powerless and crimes of the powerful. My first contribution to criminological theory in the book *Inequality, Crime and Public Policy*

(Braithwaite, 1979) was a work in the opportunity theory tradition (for the paper where I do most to work through this integration, see Braithwaite, 1991). Finally, I seek to integrate normative and explanatory theory because of the belief that integration with explanatory theory is the path to more powerful and morally convincing normative theory and integration with normative theory is the path to more powerful explanatory theory. In the process of mutual adjustment of the categories of explanatory and normative theory, my conclusion is that the republican prescription of liberty, equality and community (fraternity/sorority) is the path both to a more decent society and a safer one. The agendas of liberal-egalitarian social movements such as the women's movement, the environment movement, the human rights movement and the social movement for restorative justice seem to me practical vehicles for such transformation. It is therefore the impacts of their work which is particularly commended to the critical scrutiny of criminological researchers. This means a less state-oriented criminology than we have now.

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