

# ***Shame: Interdisciplinary Applications and Therapeutic Approaches***

**Online Conference - Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> March 12-6pm (BST)**

## **Speakers' abstracts**

### **Aileen Alleyne: *Shame and its role in black identity wounding***

Shame overarches much of what we meet in the consulting room, and it is ever-present in the therapeutic work with trauma and black identity wounding. I will discuss how inter- and transgenerational trauma carry a particular shame- transmission that leaves toxic and epigenetic wounds on the black psyche. To understand the unheeded dimensions of this phenomenon, I will also address how white shame plays a significant role in the formation and workings of my concept, *the internal oppressor* (Alleyne, 2022, 2004c, 2005b), that contributes to black identity wounding. I will include a case vignette or two, to highlight dimensions of this complex shame trauma and its interruptions to the black individuation process. The talk themes are elaborated in Chapter 6 (of the same talk title), and Chapter 5 'Shame and its vicissitudes', of my recently published book, *The Burden of Heritage: Hauntings of Generational Trauma on Black Lives*. Pub: Karnac: 2022.

### **Jonathan Asser**

In this session, Jonathan will reflect on the roots, mechanics and legacy of his Shame/Violence Intervention (SVI) work with prisoners at HMP Wandsworth. Jonathan will focus on the role of his training in the development of SVI, and on how he was able to metabolise his own experiences into therapeutic interventions for others, as well as the role of shame in an institutional context.

### **Luna Dolezal: *Shame Competence: Why We Need to Understand Shame and Its Effects***

Shame is a strong driver of decision-making and behaviour, and as a result is a significant force to consider when delivering human services (e.g., healthcare, policing), where power imbalances, vulnerability and the possibility of shameful exposure are often inherent to interactions between clients/patients/service users and the professionals that are trained to help them. In addition, understanding shame and its effects is central to understanding post-trauma states and achieving trauma-informed practice, a paradigm which is increasingly adopted in human services to facilitate more empathic and sensitive care. However, a consideration of shame, along with its impacts and effects, is rarely considered when developing principles and policies for practice within human services. For instance, despite shame's centrality in experiences of trauma and post-trauma states, it is rarely mentioned in the academic and grey literature about trauma-informed approaches, nor addressed as an issue when considering how to implement trauma-informed practice. The aim of the presentation is to introduce the idea of "shame competence" and to demonstrate why practitioners need to understand shame and its effects.

**Liz Frost:** *Shame in Social Work*

In the world of social work, peopled with service users and social workers, it is apparent to all that struggle, mess and confusion are ubiquitous, and most forms of 'all-rightness', let alone wellbeing, are extraordinarily difficult to attain and/or maintain. Hurt comes in many forms, though particularly insidious is the damage to the internal world of the individual perpetrated when it comes under attack from the internalised and self-appropriated toxicity of the policy and political contexts of its existence. Shame and moral injury are two such instances, where failures of care, even of humanity, generated by governments and systems, are absorbed and experienced by individuals and groups as their own shame, and their moral failures. In this paper I will discuss 'shame in social work' to illustrate how psychosocial theory offers our best chance of understanding and addressing this complex, and destructive state.

**Roman Gerodimos**

In this session, Roman will introduce *Interdisciplinary Applications of Shame/Violence Theory: Breaking the Cycle* (Palgrave Macmillan 2022) - an edited volume bringing together scholars and practitioners from a diverse range of fields and disciplines, including psychoanalysis, philosophy, gender studies, sociology, filmmaking and architecture. The book examines the drivers, manifestations and implications of shame, reflects on its relevance and power in today's world, and makes the case for therapeutic interventions based on shame awareness.

**James Gilligan:** *Shame: Constructive and Destructive*

This presentation will review the conditions under which shame serves a constructive emotional purpose, encouraging maturation and development, and when it becomes destructive, motivating violence toward oneself or others (or both).

**Barry Richards**

His chapter in the book focusses on the psychoanalytic understanding of shame and humiliation as inevitably arising in the developmental process of emergence from infantile narcissism. For the omnipotent self, the fact of dependence on others, and the inability to control the real world, is existential humiliation. However, to the extent that omnipotence is replaced by an acceptance of dependence on others, i.e. by humility, the more extreme pains of humiliation are avoided and can no longer drive violent retaliations. That transition requires sufficient trust in the world for dependence to be tolerable.

**Candida Yates:** *Researching the psychosocial dynamics of political shame*

In this session, I will address the theme of shame by discussing a series of reflective psychosocial group-based explorations of emotional experiences of 'Leavers' and 'Remainers' that were held in Southwest England following the result of the Brexit referendum in 2016. The group method deployed in that project allowed my colleague Iain

MacRury and I to explore the underlying structures of feeling constituting psychosocial and political life in the UK 2016-2018. The work of the groups highlights powerful psychosocial dynamics related to a lack of emotional containment including prevalent expressions of shame, and the challenge of working through the destructive winner /loser dynamics of the referendum that continue to resonate in the post-Brexit political scene.