

Name and Shame - Modern day pillory?

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Dictionary definition of pillory:

- 1) A wooden frame to hold the head, hands and/or feet. People were locked in the 'stocks' for a period of time as a punishment.
- 2) If someone is pilloried they are criticised severely, especially in newspapers or on radio and television. "He was pilloried in the newspapers and his resignation demanded".

Emotions are such an effective way to get people to do what you want. Dare I say it, emotions are a powerful way to control people. Look at these examples that parents can use with children:

Anger - "If you don't clean your room mummy will get angry"

Guilt - " If you don't say you love mummy she will feel sad"

Fear - " If you don't behave mummy will go away" (Fear of abandonment)

Shame - "You should be ashamed of your self for thinking sexual thoughts"

However shame is in a group of its own in this way. The psychiatrist and prolific writer Charles Rycroft has stated: "Shame is the Cinderella of the unpleasant emotions".

Of all the emotions shame really hurts, it is painful as all readers undoubtedly would know. Thus people quickly learn that it is an effective tool to get people to do what you think is right. Parents are a good example. Many a parent has said "You should be ashamed of yourself for" (Hitting your sister, not eating all your dinner, for masturbating and so on endlessly.)



However that is not the end of the story. If you thought shame was the Cinderella of the unpleasant emotions then you are wrong. It is nothing compared to public shaming. Humiliating someone is bad enough, but publicly humiliating or shaming them is 10 times more powerful. To threaten to publicly shame someone is one of the most potent threats that can be made.

So what's the problem?. All children have to learn how to behave and what is right and wrong. One could not disagree with that. Shame lets a child no what is

right and wrong. That would then seem to be a good learning experience for them. There is just one problem. Shaming a person, especially publicly shaming a person has one unfortunate side effect. It shreds their self esteem. If you publicly humiliate someone then its like putting their self esteem through one of those shredder machines. It cuts to the person's core sense of self, chews it up and spits it out.



As any counsellor will tell you, if you are dealing with a person who's parents used shame as the primary means of socialising a child then you are going to be dealing with a person who's self image has been butchered. Such a person will not feel very highly of them self at all.

However it is not only parents who can begin to understand the power of publicly humiliating someone. Teachers have for a long time used such a technique. Controlling a class of 25 students is no easy task so public humiliation can be an effective tool. This reminds me of event that occurred many years ago when I was in second year high school. I recall being in the chemistry lab class and there was a fellow student who was joking down the back of the class. In fact I even remember his surname - Bebbington-Smyth - who could forget a name like that!

The chemistry teacher decided to put an end to all this joking and pulled Mr Bebbington-Smyth out to the front of the class. He was going to make him stand in front of the class and squirm - public humiliation in action. A smart move on the teachers behalf as it also showed to all other students that if you misbehave then you get publicly humiliated.

So standing out in front of the class the teacher stated to Mr Bebbington-Smyth that since he was such a comedian why doesn't he let us all in on the joke. The expectation was that he would stand there in silence feeling humiliated, being pilloried. However Mr Bebbington-Smyth then proceeded to tell his brief funny story to which everyone laughed at the humour of it all! The teachers attempt a

public shaming had completely backfired!

Here is a picture of pillory from the past. It has a long history, this technique.



Here is a quote from the editor of the *Guardian Express* newspaper, (March 28 - April 3, 2006.), which is a local newspaper where I live.

"However, the fact remains that three AFL footballers involved had taken illicit drugs. Had they been caught with these illicit substances by the police, they would have been charged and, in all likelihood, named and shamed" Editorial (Page 6)

AFL football is the major sport where I live and three footballers have tested positive for recreational drugs. The press are in a frenzy because a court has ruled that their names cannot be published. They can't be named and shamed in public.

The press in the state where I live have a policy of naming and shaming members of the public. What does naming and shaming mean?. It means that they will put your name in the newspaper, often with a photograph, often with the name of the suburb and street in which you live, and then a statement of what you have done that is, in their view shameful or immoral. They have no hesitation in using their naming and shaming policy. They will publicly shame members of the general public with great regularity.

I must say this is a little disconcerting because it makes one wonder who is next? What is the next group of the general public who the press will decide deserve to be named and shamed. Maybe its anyone who has had an affair, or anyone who has had a messy divorce, or anyone who has driven whilst being over the blood alcohol limit and hasn't been caught, or anyone who has been involved in a domestic dispute. As far as I can tell they can pick anyone or any group they like to publicly humiliate. There seems to be no restriction at all on this policy of naming and shaming by the press.

Put up your hand if you have something in your past that you would feel humiliated if it became public knowledge. Everyone who read this just put up their hand. This is the other thing about naming and shaming, it breeds mediocrity. The press are of the view that anyone who becomes a public figure is fair game for naming and shaming. It goes with the territory they say and they will hunt for things in the person's past to name and shame them with. Its called investigative journalism. This it would seem would have an inhibiting effect on people making public statements on important issues or seeking some form of public office because they know the press will sooner or later be digging into their past because naming and shaming makes money.



So here he is the head honcho, Rupert Murdoch. Namer and shamer. Public humiliator. Rupert you should be ashamed of yourself. Just think of all the angst, pain and distress that you have caused for those thousands and thousands of people who you have publicly humiliated.

OMG I suddenly realised!!!!. Have I crossed the line, have I gone over to the other side. Have I become!!!, surely not!!!, heavens no!!!, a namer and shamer. I should be ashamed of my self for doing so.