Contents

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Shaming 2.0. Social Interaction and the Construction of Shame and Shaming

Abstract

With the rise and spread of the Web 2.0 culture the nature of "old"/"traditional" social interaction, including shame and shaming, is changing as more and more attention is given to online vs. offline social interactions. Amongst those on-going changes lies the construction of Shaming 2.0, i.e., a public attempt to impose shame on "the Other" by using Web 2.0 technological capabilities. Thus, Shaming 2.0 can be defined as a pragmatic social negotiation regarding the boundaries of what is allowed and forbidden, what is acceptable and unacceptable while performing on-line and off-line social interactions.

The illustration of Shaming 2.0 was conducted by utilizing Israeli rabbinical court decisions in the era of Web 2.0 cultural features. Via the implementation of critical discourse analysis, the rise of the 'Virtual Mirror' is portrayed side by side with "new" social interactions behind the scenes of Shame 2.0.

Keywords: shame, shaming, social interaction, sharing, cyber-mob, moral panic

1. Introduction

In 1999 Darcy DiNucci introduced the notion of Web 2.0 (DiNucci, 1999) while predicting its power of distribution and its multiple penetrations into our lives. A few years later, Tim O'Reilly and Dale Dougherty brainstorming in the O'Reilly Media Web 2.0 Conference in late 2004 (O'Reilly, 2007) switched focus from networks depending on the hardware or the content, to networks concentrating on the participation of large-scale social communities committed to collecting and annotating data for other users (Jenkins, 2009). Namely, according to Jenkins (2006, 2009, 2012), Web 2.0 features have become the frameworks of 'participation' and 'sharing' thus paving the way to a "convergence culture" or better yet a "participatory culture" when producing new ideas of what it means to participate in social, political and institutional life (Lewis & Rosen, 2010). But beyond the hype of participatory online culture lays not just a new form of content production, but also a new process for the continuous creation and extension of knowledge and art by collaborative communities – the *produsage* (Bruns, 2008).

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The *produsage* are members of the participatory culture, who engaged themselves with the social and symbolic construction of discursive pickets as they applicate and animate with their everyday thought, decision making, and action (Bakardjieva & Gaden, 2012). The *produsage* are the ones that implement Foucault's idea regarding technologies of the self-utilization. Using Foucault's ideas and terminology, the technologies of production, sign systems, and power reshaped the technologies of the self, in a way that "*permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations (…) so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality*" (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). In the Web 2.0 culture, technologies of the self are expressed through interactive systems that enable the participation of users in production and social interaction while empowering users' capacities socially and politically (Jarrett, 2008).

Web 2.0 Storytelling, for instance, improves knowledge management and enables employees to participate in knowledge creation and sharing (Meret, Iannotta & Gatti, 2019). Moreover, knowledge sharing practices positively impact organizational performance through cost reduction, organization growth, and intangible benefits (Ali, Paris & Gunasekaran, 2019). The applications and systems on the Web 2.0 also improve medical professionals' decisions through their knowledge sharing (Razzaque & Hamdan, 2020), upgrade classroom communication processes via free expression of ideas (Harris & Rea, 2019), promote and ease the cultural exchange of information hence allows students' practice in foreign language learning (Kuznetsova & Soomro, 2019) and so on. However, side by side with the celebration of self-expressing, sharing, and participating lies guilt, shame, and shamming.

Shame is one of the foremost social mechanisms that act to preserve desirable values and acceptable behavioral norms. To a large extent, social attitudes towards shame are the result of an agreed routine of interactions between individuals and collectives. Such a routine largely depends on the activities of initial socialization agents (Monroe, 2008), in conjunction with developing awareness of social values (Bradshaw, 2005), as well as the fear of social judgment (Biddle, 1997) and its implications (Womersley, Maw & Swartz, 2011). However, with the rise and spread of the Network Society (Castells, 2011) and the Web 2.0 culture, the emergence of Shaming 2.0 seems inevitable. Especially, since "new" communications technologies have challenged the nature of shame and shaming by generating Shaming 2.0 by converging two authentic forms – offline and online symbolic interaction. As in other Web 2.0 outcomes, preserving the authenticity of Shaming 2.0 demands an understanding of the symbolic value of shame as well as the blending, and blurring of borders among the social, physical, and virtual worlds in which Shaming 2.0 flourishes. Hence, the following research objective is to portray Shaming 2.0 via the rise of the "new" shame while utilizing Israeli rabbinical court decisions regarding the usage of communication technologies as a platform to give visibility to multiple voices.

2. Social interaction and the construction of shame

Western societies utilize shame as part of their attempt to maintain social order. The classical Greek period, for example, has been characterized as a "culture of shame" (Dodds, 1957), followed by the Judeo-Christian cultures, which added guilt to shame. The sanction of behavioral shame functions as a means of social control and it has a formal dimension side-by-side with an informal one. In his book, *The Civilization Process* (1939/1978), Nor-

bert Elias described what he referred to as a civilization process in which shame and embarrassment became a social mechanism that deliberately allows upper-class people to distanced themselves from the ordinary people. Moreover, the bourgeoisie promotes individuals' duty to impose upon themselves internal mental punishment, e.g. feelings of shame, guilt, disgust, and remorse. Consequently, the need for formal sanctions and external social punishment was reduced. Yet, the informal dimension of the shaming sanction is of course more effective in a predominantly collective rather than in a predominantly individualistic social structure (Bechtel, 1991). Meaning, the civilization process highlighted the social and cultural role of shame (Tangney, Stuewig & Martinez, 2014) as it activates the fear of social stigma, inadequacy, and rejection (Chapple, Ziebland & McPherson, 2004). So, if "others" have a dramatic influence on the creation and ability to cope with a sense of shame a question may be asked – who are these "others"? Or, better yet, what is the source of their influence on the individual? In order to answer this question, we will turn to Charles Cooley and the "Looking-Glass Self" theory.

Cooley examined the link between the manner in which individuals perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others. He claimed that shame and pride are images reflected in the social mirror originating from how we perceive others' points of view. The monitoring of the self's social makeup and its developing personal-social perceptions is carried out while adhering to three principles: a) observing a social "other" that resembles us in its social characteristics; b) observing a social "other" that activates social considerations similar to ours; c) observing a social "other" that arouses an emotional response, such as shame or pride (Cooley, 1992). In simpler terms, we are ashamed because we think and feel that others are ashamed of us (Scheff, 2003).

Inspired by Cooley, Irving Goffman examined the social connection between shame and embarrassment. According to Goffman, embarrassment is a dominant emotion in the daily face-to-face interactions in which individuals are involved. When individuals feel embarrassed, they acknowledge how important social ties are for them (Scheff, 2005). However, traditionally, face-to-face interaction characterizes small groups of people, and it shapes what is generally called "minor behaviors". Minor behavior is constructed through decoding a person's or group's physiological and verbal expressions. It also considers the influence of the interaction setting, whether in a private, public, or institutional one (Goffman, 2005). Such interactions generally have a defined and clear structure or internal organization (Duncan & Fiske, 2015) and are largely reliant on visual signs that the individual gathers from his surroundings in the course of the interaction. Thus an important step in creating face-to-face interactions is identifying intentions using eye contact, which is the central indicator of social interaction (Emery, 2000). This is not merely the ability to identify facial expressions revealing psychological or social situations; it means that eye contact enables deep psychological readings and reveals the profound aspects of social logic (Goffman, 2005), aspects that are in effect translated into creating the mirror image by self-monitoring (Shaffer, 2005).

Self-monitoring is anchored both in a sense of pride and in a sense of shame. We do not always recognize these situations since they are frequently experienced at low intensity or at what is called a "low exposure" to pride and shame (Scheff, 1988). Conversely, the threat to the social self is an important factor in experiencing shame (Gilbert, 2000). This being the case, it is possible to define shame as a negative self-image based on anticipated or actual devaluation by others as a result of not meeting up to behavioral standards (Creed, Hudson, Okhuysen & Smith-Crowe, 2014). The source of shame is not always the result of an indi-

vidual's gazing into the social mirror and imagining its social aspect. At times a sense of shame is caused by a shaming mechanism, a universal fixed mechanism of adherence to moral norms is enforced (Jarvis, 2016). Such a mechanism is activated by means of social-public rites managed by actors in the social community having power and representing social values (Garfinkel, 1956).

So, social power is the key to the construction of shame via the external imposition of self-image. The individual's self-image is based on various resources, including personality, family, society, culture, profession, etc. Among the various resources from which individuals are drawing their self-image lies the prior knowledge regarding their position in the social group. Namely, via self-categorization into "in-groups" people differentiate themselves from the "others" and establish imaginary boundaries between various "in-group" and "out-group" (Tajfel, 1978). It is generally thought that belonging to a social group is rooted in striving to receive social approval and a desire to facilitate social interactions (Leary, 2007) and is likely to contribute to a person's social identity (Ellemers, Kortekaas & Ouwerkerk, 1999). The tremendous impact of social interactions on the self inspired John Braithwaite's work on crime, shame, and reintegration, and led to the notion of re-integrative shaming (Braithwaite, 1989).

3. Methodology

According to Braithwaite, shaming is a mechanism of moral control based upon criticism that paves the way for reintegrating the individual by leaving room for forgiveness (Harris, 2017). Such re-integration might occur in formal, bureaucratic settings, or within an un-formal setting in the social community (Harris, 2009). In both cases, the exposer of personal information is used to protest against anti-social behavior (Rashi & Rosenberg, 2017). Yet, a question can be posed: is the exposer of personal information in Web 2.0 used to protest against anti-social behavior?

Or, better yet, how does Shaming 2.0 re-shape the notion of shame? In order to construct and analyze Shaming 2.0, the following research was conducted.

Research field – According to Israeli law[1], the marriages and divorces of Jewish citizens are conducted by the law of the Torah. In cases of divorce, the husband grants his wife a divorce, thus terminating the marriage. However, if he refuses to do so, the wife remains married, even if she no longer lives with her husband and shares his life (Shahak, 2003). From 2012 to 2017, 382 men were declared divorce refusers by rabbinical courts in Israel (Aaronson, 2017).[2]

Elected case study – *Yaron and Mazal Attias* – From 2016 to 2018, various rabbinical courts enabled three women who had been refused divorces to publish the latest court decrees regarding their cases enabling the publication of the husbands' names while calling their social milieu to ostracize them until they granted the divorces. One of the three women was Mazal Attias.

Data collection – Yaron Attias' refusal to divorce his wife, Mazal Attias, was wildly reviewed in the Israeli media, both the traditional media and the "new" ones, amongst them the *Srugim* website – the home site of the Zionist religious sector with which Yaron Attias and his wife, Mazal, were affiliated. The *Srugim* site (www.srugim.co.il) was established in 2010 as a news and features site directed at the religious Zionist community. In the month between May 5th and June 5th, 2018, the *Srugim* site published 22 articles directly dealing with the Attias case, eliciting 340 reader responses, and an additional 239 discussions. Also, on the Face-

book page of the *Srugim* site, responses appeared to articles dealing with the case. In general, social media sites dealt intensively with the matter and were divided between supporters of Yaron and supporters of Mazal. A campaign was launched in the latter's support under the hashtag #Supporting_Mazal_Dadon 1#Say_no_to_divorce_refusers.

Analysis – The representation of Shaming 2.0 was conducted by implementing critical discourse analysis (CDA). Inspired by Van Dijk (2001), the analysis focused primarily on social problems rather than on current paradigms and fashions, while embracing Fairclough's and Wodak's (1997) claim that discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory, and that discourse is a form of social action. Discourse in Web 2.0 also focuses on language and language use. It is a set of methods grounded in linguistic discourse analysis for mining networked communication for patterns of structure and meaning, broadly construed (Herring, 2013). Hence, the current analysis followed the CDA tradition of seeking to analyze discourses as the building blocks of social interactions (Friedman, 2015).

4. Results

Critical discourse analysis of the 22 articles directly dealing with the Attias case, 340 eliciting readers' responses, and 239 web surfers discussions, in the *Srugim* site reveal some of Shame 2.0's social interactions features: shifting from "interaction" to "sharing" and "participation", flowing between establishment and anti-establishment public space, transforming the community into a mob, converting social morality into a moral panic and favoring "authenticity" over "objectivity".

A) Shifting from "interaction" to "sharing" and "participation"

Information technology (IT) has laid the foundation for the transition from "interaction" to "sharing" and "participation". While in offline interaction, much attention is paid to creating and cementing social ties, in online communication, more attention is paid to deriving advantages from the participants' activities that are dependent on one another. Thus, online shaming is not only interested in creating and strengthening social ties, but also, perhaps specifically, in gaining an advantage using emotional involvement in the shaming. On May 9th, 2018, the *Srugim* site first published the following article: "*The Haifa Municipal Rabbinical Court has imposed the punishment of distancing and ostracism on the divorce refuser Yaron Attias…. In their ruling, the judges wrote that his name and photograph are to be disseminated to any party who is capable of convincing him to release his wife…The court's decision was posted on Facebook by his aguna (a wife whose husband refuses to divorce her)*" (Sheiman, 2018, May 9).

The couple's castigation of each other in their struggle elicited 29 likes and nine responses on Facebook, all of which shamed the divorce refuser, Attias: "*I wish they would lock the dog up… a primitive man like him who belongs in previous centuries in an Islamic country should be put in prison until he breaks* (For the full text, see https://www.facebook.com/srugim.co.il/?fref=ts)." In opposition to the responses on the *Srugim* social media site, the posts on the home page tend to attack the rabbinical court judges for calling for the public humiliation of the husband, while supporting the wife's humiliation: "*I declare my support of Yaron Attias! This is a man who has been forced to lose his very ex-*