

## Two Small Steps Toward Avoiding War

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This note proposes two steps toward decreasing wars between nations in terms of emotions. But understanding in the realm of emotions is beset by an elemental difficulty: the meaning of words that refer to emotion are so ambiguous that we hardly know what we are talking about. Virginia Woolf stated it succinctly: "The streets of London have their map; but our passions are uncharted" [1]. Compared to the study of behavior, thought, money, property and the rest of the material world, the realm of emotions is still terra incognita.

Some of the causes of violence and war may be emotional. The threats of nuclear war by the ruler of North Korea, Kim Jong-Un, and Trump's responses, can be analyzed using social and psychological theories of emotion. Several ideas about the emotional causes of violence were suggested by Gilligan [2,3], based largely on his experiences with violent men as a prison psychiatrist.

For many years Gilligan made a habit of asking those convicted for murder a simple question: "Why did you do it?" Most of the answers took the form "Because he disrespected (disrespected) me." This answer implied to Gilligan that they had used anger and violence to hide their shame and humiliation not only from others, but especially from themselves [4-6].

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 (my underlining) 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 painful that it threatens to overwhelm him and bring about the death of 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. Most 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 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 fourth issue implied: since Gilligan worked only in male prisons, his perpetrators are all men. As it turns out in the total population, the great majority of multiple killers are also men, there are only a few women, a small percentage of the multiple killers. For example, Websdale's study [7] described 211 persons who murdered their own family. Only 15 of them were women, about 14 percent.

As the absolute dictator of North Korea, Kim Jong-Un is the leader of a country that has been defeated continually since its inception, by South Korea, Japan, China, and the US. Ashamed of his country because of the defeats by more powerful countries, Kim seems to have taken the emotional road of hyper-masculinity described by Gilligan.

Kim appears to fulfill all three of Gilligan's conditions for the way of violence: 1. He is ashamed of himself and his country, but he keeps his shame totally secret. 2. His country is smaller and weaker than its enemy nations. He feels driven to violence because he sees no non-violent means of warding off or reducing feelings of shame. 3. Kim, of course, has no reason to love and/or respect the enemy nations.

Kim and Trump's example of dangerous negotiation by a hyper-masculine male may also be seen as an example of the unnecessary risk of having men, rather than women, as negotiators between nations [8]. Kim's attitude is probably shared by the other all-male officials in his government. An example is provided by this comment made by another North Korean government official during an interview with an American reporter:

We are small in terms of people and area, but in terms of dignity we are the most powerful in the world. We will die to protect that dignity...(my underlining) [9].

This analysis of a single case can be used to make two general points. First, since the recent US record of war is particularly long we should try to have only women presidents and negotiators. This one step might decrease what Capps [10] calls the recent record of five wars in ten years. The reigning US president seems to be as hyper-masculine as Kim, even if somewhat restrained by the governmental power structure of which he is only a part. Kim, a dictator, seems to have no restraint at all, making him extremely dangerous both to his own country and to the US.

Secondly, instead of ordinary language in negotiation, perhaps exaggerated respect could be shown to the potential enemy nation. No matter how unfelt, respect might help reduce some of the humiliation of the possible enemy, and therefore anger, shame and violence. Especially since the possibility of nuclear war is involved, we need to try to find new approaches. Unfortunately, our own President often responds in a hyper-masculine way, thus increasing the possibility of war rather than peace. No matter how many meetings are needed, even at great expense, negotiations are still vastly cheaper than most wars, even for the victors.

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