



Managing the dynamics of shame in breastfeeding support

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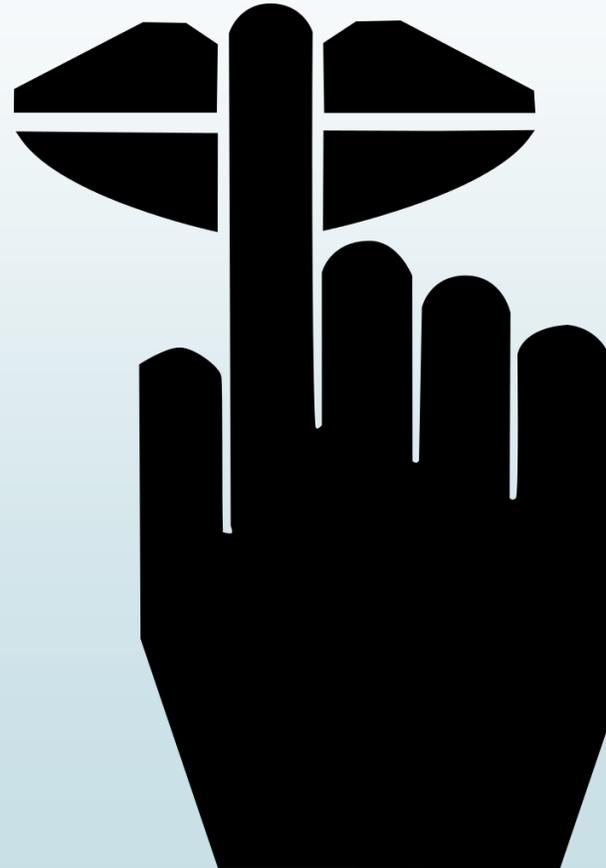


Question:

What can we learn about supporting breastfeeding women from the literature on shame and shame management?

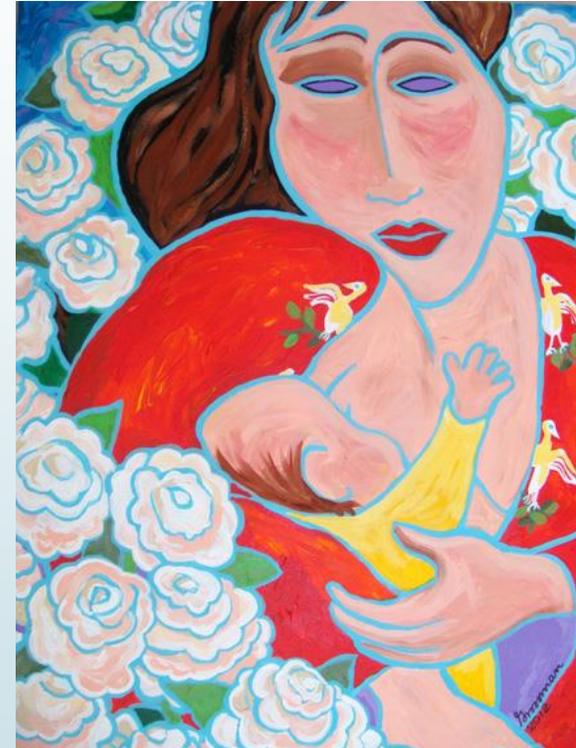
Shame - the invisible dynamic

Shame is a taboo
in Western
countries
(Scheff, 1995)



Breastfeeding:

*'Shame if you
do, Shame if
you don't'*
(Thomson et al, 2015)





When struggling is seen to represent failure or inadequacy...

*I just cried and cried and cried 'cos it was just such a big disappointment **I felt like I had failed really, almost as a woman really**, you feel like this is a natural thing, why can I not do this?... my baby would die if he was in a country where they didn't have bottles*

*It ['topping up' with a bottle of formula milk] also made me feel very, um, just like **a really crap mother**, to be honest . . . I just felt that I couldn't um, produce what she was needing . . . **It just made me feel very inadequate.***

Williamson et al (2012)

(See also e.g. Burns et al., 2010; Guyer et al., 2012; Mazingo et al., 2000; Shakespeare et al., 2004; Thomson et al., 2014)



Shame vs guilt:

Negative judgement of self vs negative judgement of behaviour:

'I'm a bad mother & a failure as a woman' (shame)

vs

'I'm not trying hard enough at breastfeeding' (guilt)

Flaws exposed before the other vs breaching own moral standards:

'Everyone can see I'm a bad mother & a failure' (shame)

vs

'I'm doing something morally wrong by formula-feeding' (guilt)



Guilt

Self (able)

- Source of hurt
- Intact and capable
- Focus on own actions
 - Wrong doing
 - Putting it right

Other (unable)

- Needful, hurt
- Incapable

(Gilbert et.al,1994; Gilbert, 2003 - adapted from Lewis,1986)

Shame

Self (unable)

- 'Bad' self in focal awareness
- Object of scorn, ridicule
- Inferior, smaller, weaker
- Involuntary body response (rage, blush..)
- Functioning poorly (mind blank, desire to hide, paralysed, helpless..)

Other (able)

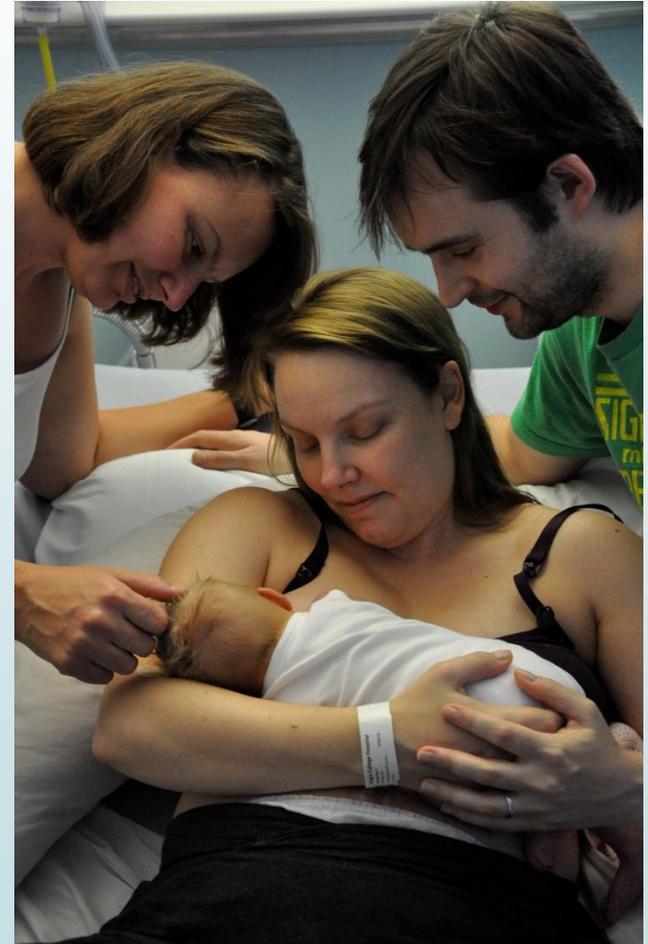
- Source of scorn, ridicule
- Laughing, rejecting
- Superior, bigger, stronger
- Adult & in control

(Gilbert et.al,1994; Gilbert, 2003 - adapted from Lewis,1986)

Shame and the expert gaze

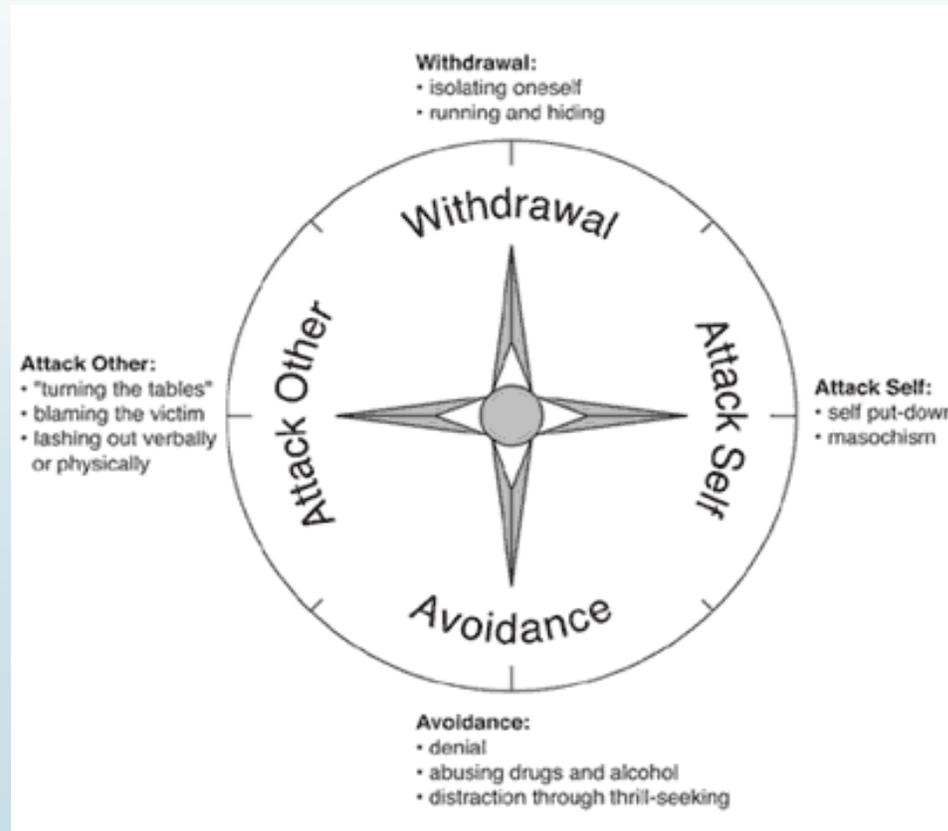
*“I didn't well I didn't want my baby screaming if nobody else's baby was screaming I ...didn't want the nurses coming in all the time or the midwives thinking **what's wrong with her (.) she's not managing very well.**”*

Leeming et al., 2013

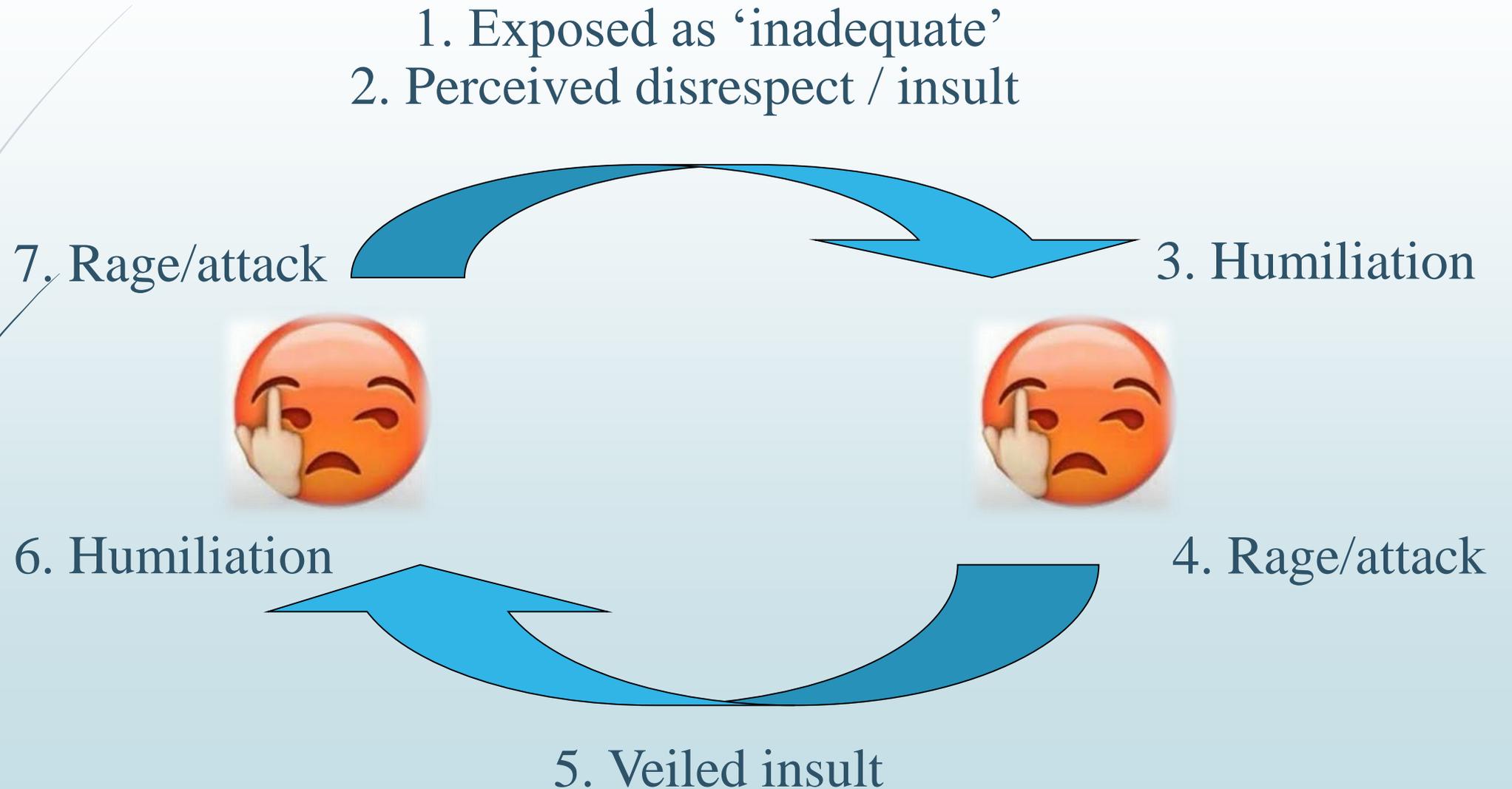


Responding to the threat of shame

Nathanson's 'Compass of Shame':



Scheff & Retzinger: Mutual shaming cycles



Resisting shame in breastfeeding promotion

Lift focus on responsibility of individual mothers to make healthy 'choice'

Increase emphasis on challenging constraints on women's right to breastfeed



To normalise breastfeeding difficulties or not?



Art work credit: Lucy Scott/Running Press

Shame resilience

Connection

Acceptance,
validation, empathy

Articulating &
acknowledging
shame



Normalisation &
contextualisation
of experiences

Rebuilding self

Empowerment

Art work credit: Hero-in-shame,
Deviantart.com

(Brown, 2006, 2008; Dayal, Weaver & Domene, 2015; Leeming & Boyle, 2013; van Vliet, 2008)

A dark blue arrow points to the right from the left edge of the slide. Below it, several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey sweep across the left side of the slide.

Shame resilience

“Shame needs three things to grow exponentially in our lives: secrecy, silence and judgement”

Brene Brown, 2013