

EASSW-UNAFORIS Conference 2017 (June 26 to 29 – PARIS)

SYMPOSIUM

Stigma, shame and recognition in social work education and practice

- * **Alessandro Sicora (Italy)**
- * **Elizabeth Frost (United Kingdom)**
- * **Holger Schoneville (Germany)**
- * **Veronika Magyar-Haas (Switzerland)**

SYMPOSIA

Stigma, shame and recognition in social work education and practice

- * Philosophers and political scientists, as well as sociologists and psychologists have recently considered shame in a range of publications. Social work theorists have also latterly begun to discuss shame as an emotion with a strong impact on service users but also on social workers. As a painful emotion, due, e.g. to a consciousness of inadequacy, it highlights personal limits and, as any human emotion, is healthy until it is transformed into a more pervasive state.
- * This symposium is aimed at examining shame and some of its implications in social work with special regard to stigma related to elderly people (suffering because of gerontophobia and ageism) and ‘poverty’, but also with regards to its impact on social work students with their failures and mistakes during their placement and the limits of regulation and management of emotions in social workers.
- 1. The social construction of old age as a stigmatized category: understanding and working with shame** (Elizabeth Frost - University of West England, United Kingdom)
- 2. Living in Poverty: Stigmatisation, shame and the struggle for recognition** (Holger Schoneville - Technische Universität Dortmund, Germany)
- 3. Shame and responsibility: an opportunity for social work** (Alessandro Sicora - University of Calabria, Italy)
- 4. Emotional management in social work – and its boundaries** (Veronika Magyar-Haas - University of Zurich, Switzerland)

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Shame and responsibility: an opportunity for social work

*Dr. Alessandro Sicora,
University of Calabria (Italy)*

Kintsugi (金継ぎ?) or Kintsukuroi (金繕い?) is the Japanese art of fixing broken pottery with lacquer dusted or mixed with powdered gold, silver, or platinum. As a philosophy *it treats breakage and repair as part of the history of an object, rather than something to disguise.*

(I am a bit ashamed to say that this text is taken from wikipedia)



Summary

1. **Mistakes** and shame
2. **Feedback** (as a source for improvement) or criticism (as a source of shame)?
3. Shame and SWM **students** in Italy and China
4. **Strategies** for reflection on mistakes and shame in internship experiences
5. **Conclusion**: name it to disempower shame

1. Mistakes
2. Feedback
3. ...students...
4. Strategies
5. Conclusion

Mistakes and shame

Mistakes are: “deficiencies or failures in the judgemental and/or inferential processes involved in the **selection of an objective or in the specification of the means to achieve it**, irrespective of whether or not the actions directed by this decision-scheme run according to the plan” (Reason 1990: 9).



- * Being wrong is an **emotional experience**. It is not only a recognition of a **deviation** from external reality and an internal change in what the subject believes and his/her consequent acts, but is also the condition ‘of being stuck in real-time wrongness with no obvious way out’ (Schulz 2010: 187)

1. Mistakes
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Feedback (as a source for improvement) or criticism (as a source of shame)?

tools and strategies for structured reflection

- * unpleasant feeling ← sight of the damage done + **internal or external voices** blaming not only for the wrong action but also criticise the whole person → **criticism** as
 - * **useful feedback** to give constructive opportunities of learning from mistakes
 - * **an attack** and a sabotage to own self-confidence → defensive reaction aimed at avoiding shame rather than listening and reflecting → **learning from mistakes becomes almost impossible** (Sicora 2017) → **shame is one of the worst obstacle to reflective practice and learning**

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Thinking of your experience of shame during your internship, describe it and summarize the outcome with no more than 160 characters. (Master students, Unical, 06/11/16 – translation and adaptation from Italian) 1/2

To be a novice

- * *At CSM during an interview: shame from a sense of experiential inferiority.*
- * *I was in a situation of shame during an interview with mother and daughter (they have to go away from a possible domestic violence): as a trainee I had not the skills and tools needed in that situation*
- * *Sense of inadequacy caused from awareness of not having some skills required by the tutor.*
- * *Sense of shame during the my first interview because I felt inexperienced and was younger than the service user*
- * *Sense of shame because of the presence of someone I knew from my town during the interview*

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Thinking of your experience of shame during your internship, describe it and summarize the outcome with no more than 160 characters. (Master students, Unical, 06/11/16 translation and adaptation from It

What if you had to go to the post office with a Hollywood star?

Various

- * *Shame when I was going to the post office with a homeless in temporary absence of my supervisor.*
- * *Feeling of shame and embarrassment during an interview with a woman in a multi-problematic family. Fear to answer inadequately and to invade her privacy.*
- * *Shame because I was not able to assess a situation neutrally and felt emotionally paralysed when I knew that this person made again the same mistakes.*

Thinking of your experience of shame and mistake during your internship, describe it and summarize the outcome with no more than 160 characters.
(Master students, SCNU China, , 03/05/17)

What are our and our clients expectations? We are not magician..

Story 1. Hello, This Is Social Worker

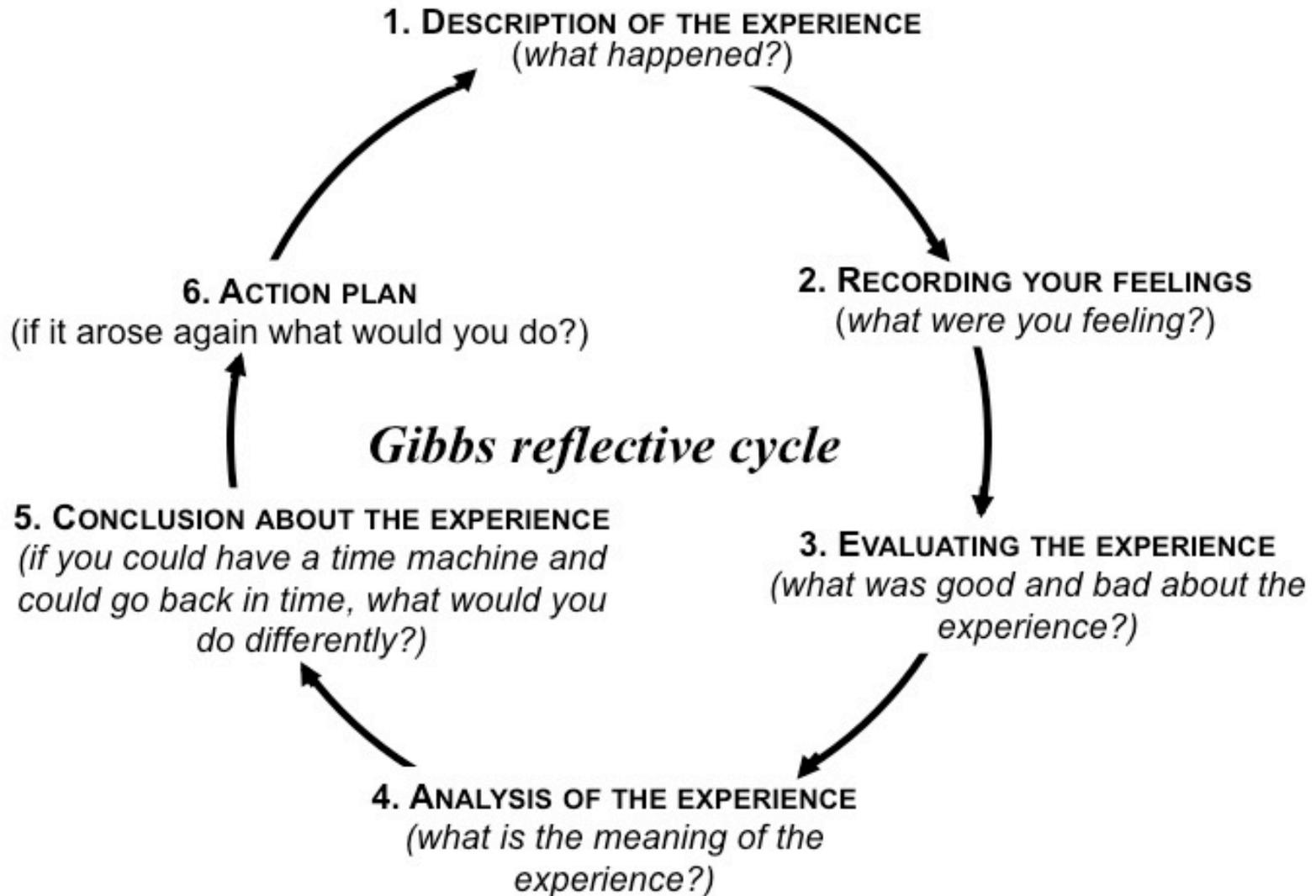
1. **Description:** I temporarily was scheduled to interview the elderly by phone several days ago. During the telephone survey, all the elderly expressed their gratitude to my call, but several elderly were angry, asking a question which was difficult to answer for me.
2. **Feelings:** I felt embarrassed, sad and **shame because I couldn't help those elderly.**
3. **Assessment:** This telephone survey meant that I was exposed to certain weak points, which made me feel defeated and incapable.
4. **Analysis:** Though I failed it, it is undeniable that my assistant director trusted me and arranged work to me which helped me to acquire skills.
5. **Conclusion:** In order to make up for mistake, I should get the picture clear and then recall those elderly to apologies and solve their problem. Above all I must remain flexible and honest about what the elderly ask

Story 2. Keeping things in perspective

1. It's the first time to carry out activities by my own. However, **the performance was not that good due to the lack of thoughtful mind.**
2. I was very upset. I felt **shame**, disappointed to myself and sorry for the others.
3. The activity was a great blow to me, but when I did the summary, I realize that there's improvement needed to be done.
4. This event has extraordinary significance and was unforgettable to me. The mistakes rose in the activity alert me not to do it again in the future work.
5. After introspection and summary, I know that I need to switch the view and think divergently in the future work.

From Gibbs to a reflective framework focused on errors and failures in social work (Sicora 2017)

1. Mistakes
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reflective
framework
focused on
errors and
failures in
social work
(Sicora 2017)

1. DESCRIPTION

1. What happened, where and when? Who was involved? Where were you? Who else was with you? Why were you there?
2. What was the context of the event (e.g. routine or normal)?
3. What were you doing? What were the other people doing?
4. Which part in what happened did you play? Which part did the others play?
5. What was the purpose of the intervention/challenge?
6. What was the result?

2. FEELINGS

1. What were your emotions (positive and negative) and thoughts before the event started? During? After? Now?
2. Were there physical reactions and symptoms associated with emotions?
3. At what point of the experience did you specifically start to feel each of these emotions, or were they present at the outset?
4. Were there feelings or emotions that were present at the outset of the event or during the event that may have contributed and how?
5. What did the words, the interventions, the challenges and the actions of other participants make you think? How did they make you feel?
6. What did the other people involved in the event do, think and feel? How do you know this?

3. ASSESSMENT

1. What would you describe as positive and what might be described as negative in the experience?
2. Which specific parts of this event are most important for you?
3. What do you think specifically went wrong and what right? For whom? According to which technical ideas or ethical principles?
4. Why did you interpret the situation in the way you interpreted it?
5. What other interpretations could there be?

4. ANALYSIS

1. Why did you behave like you did?
2. What were the consequences of your actions for yourself and for others involved?
3. What were your assumptions about this error/failure, held by yourself and others involved? What has shaped these assumptions?
4. In a very few words, how would you label this mistake? What more general failure is this error/failure a specific and concrete example of?
5. Had you made a similar error/failure in the past? When? How often? How is this different from the previous ones? What prevented you from putting a stop to the repetition of this kind of error/failure?
6. What chain of events led to the error/failure? What was the role of each of the following stages/levels?
7. top level decision makers (social policies, direction, resource allocation);
8. line management (i.e. implementation by the executive level of the strategies defined at the above level);
9. preconditions (motivations, physical and psychological conditions, etc.) of the subjects and factors directly involved in the implementation of social work services such as users, practitioners, material resources, etc.;
10. productive activities (when the event occurred);
11. defence systems (experienced colleagues, control procedures, etc.).

5. CONCLUSION

1. What factors caused the error/failure to happen? What are the three most important factors?
2. How would this change if X (that is a change in one or more factors mentioned in the previous answer) happened? How would things be different if X had not happened or happened to a greater (or lesser) intensity?
3. What needed to stop in order to fix the problem or for behaviour to change? What evidence do you have to consider these factors as relevant? How much can you eliminate or to what extent can you reduce the strength of these casual factors?
4. If you could go back in time, what would you do differently? What would the result have been?

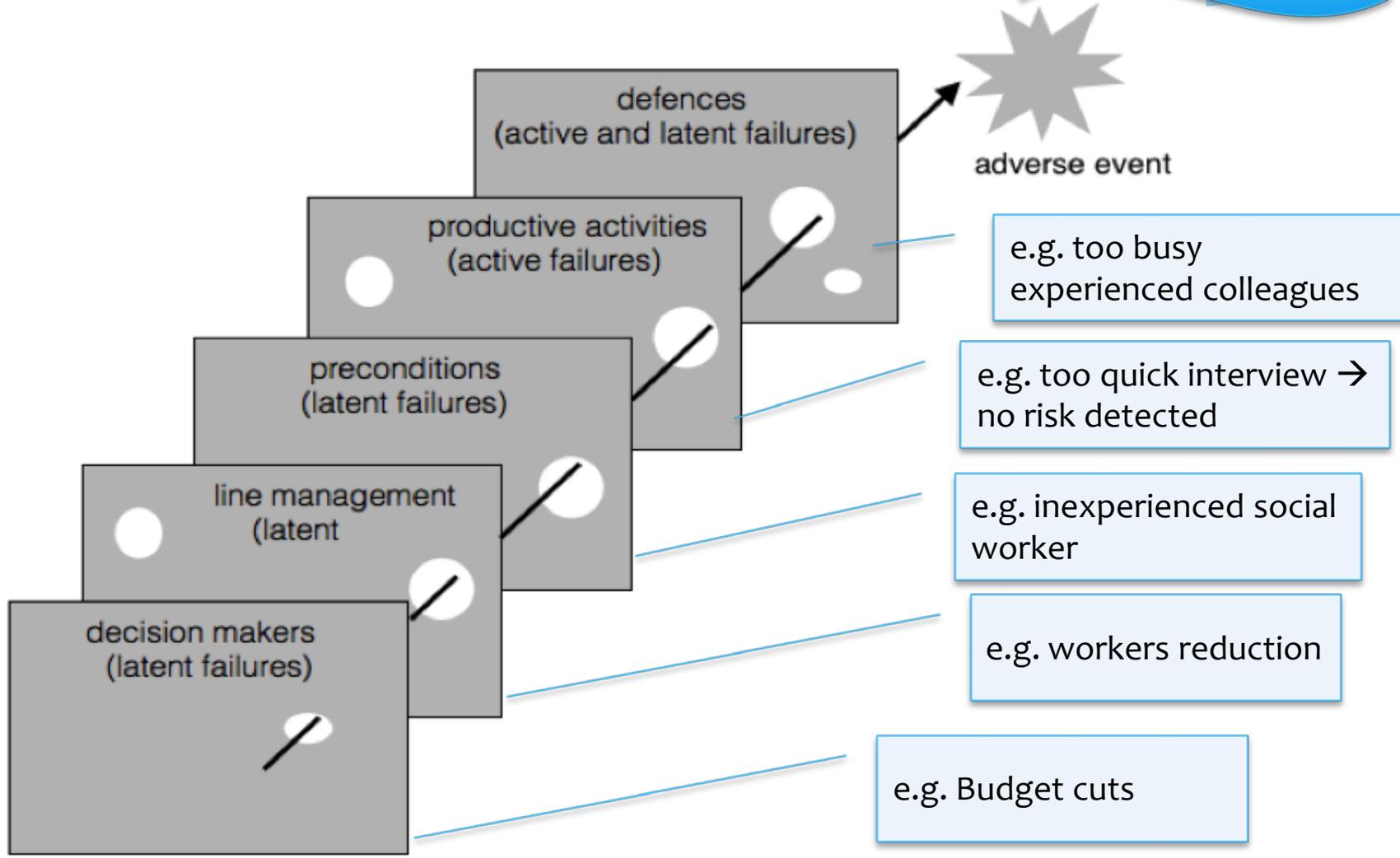
6. ACTION PLAN

1. What can you do differently next time you deal with a similar case? What actions can be taken to prevent this error/failure in the future? When can you do this? What can you do right now? How will you know you have fixed the problem and the same mistake will not happen again?
2. What is the goal of improvement that you can choose? What steps should you take to reach your goal? Which resources do you need to achieve your goal? How long does it take for each of these stages? What will be the result of each of these stages? How could you put aside the things that prevent you from improving?
3. What have you learned from this experience? How has your understanding developed? ¹²
4. How will you apply this new understanding in the future on another occasion? What more do you need to know and how do you plan to learn more?

Latent errors: Reason's swiss model (1990): nobody is guilty, everybody is responsible

Child/elder abuse

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Conclusion: name it to disempower shame

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- * “unacknowledged shame leads to a sense of isolation, personal crisis and the dissolution of societal bonds, and the results of this scoping review certainly support such views. Indeed, being able to identify and name such experiences as shame may be the first step in being able to develop personal resilience and organisational sensitivity to such feelings. An organisational response to someone feeling shame may be very different to someone feeling fear and so it becomes vital that such experiences are accurately identified” (Gibson 2014: 561)

Thank you!

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