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# From Norway: Research on Political Psychology and Humiliation

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Abstract. This article was written by Dr. Evelin Gerda Lindner, a cross-cultural social psychologist and physician at the University of Oslo, Institute of Psychology. Its focus on psychological research on humiliation is very relevant to political psychology given that this construct of emotion often may be salient in motivating insurgency movements, terrorism, war, low-intensity conflict, human rights violations, the breakdown of peacekeeping and peacemaking operations, and the incidence and prevalence of crime. Dr. Lindner can be reached at P.O.Box 1094 Blindern N-0317 Oslo, Norway...Tel no +47 91789296...e.g.lindner@psykologi.uio.no...<http://www.uio.no/~evelinl>

-----From Dr Lindner

I would like to give you a short summary of my research on humiliation accomplished in the last four years. The project breaks new ground. For example, in its effort to be truly interdisciplinary, it incorporates methodological aspects not only of cultural psychology, social psychology, and anthropology, but also history, philosophy and even literary analysis. Furthermore, it features an unusual specific methodology--viz., a reflective approach to interviewing that avoids humiliating interlocutors. The research essentially weaves a kind of tapestry around the central theme of humiliation in its many manifestations (some obvious, but some rather subtle and non-obvious) in three genocides involving three very different cultures.

The project has the title *The Feeling of Being Humiliated: A Central Theme in Armed Conflicts. A Study of the Role of Humiliation in Somalia, and Rwanda/Burundi, Between the Warring Parties, and in Relation to Third Intervening Parties*. I have carried out 216 qualitative interviews addressing Somalia, Rwanda, and Burundi and their history of genocidal killings with the background of the Holocaust perpetrated in Hitler's Germany. From 1998 to 1999, the interviews were carried out in Africa: in Hargeisa, capital of Somaliland; in Kigali and other places in Rwanda; in Bujumbura, capital of Burundi; in Nairobi in Kenya; and in Cairo in Egypt). From 1997 to 2001 interviews also were carried out in Europe: in Norway, Germany, Switzerland, France, and in Belgium. I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to all those who contributed to this fieldwork with their views, reflections, feelings, and practical help.

The humiliation project has been financed and supported by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry and the Norwegian Research Council. It has been conducted at the Department of Psychology at the University of Oslo. I would like to thank these three organisations for their immeasurable support

I would also like to thank very much all those who supported me during the writing process and upon whose academic work I could draw. I submitted a doctoral thesis (31st October 2000) that is entitled *The Psychology of Humiliation: Somalia, Rwanda/Burundi, and Hitler's Germany* to the University of Oslo. I am also writing a book together with Dennis Smith, sociology professor at Loughborough University in England, entitled *Globalisation and Humiliation* that highlights the humiliating aspects brought about by current mechanisms of globalisation; a handbook for the United Nations and international organizations highlighting the importance of humiliation--especially learning about the pitfalls of unintended

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humiliation and how to avoid it; and World house-A Vision for the Future. I am also developing several other book projects and plans for articles.

Among the articles written for this project and submitted to academic journals during this year and last year are the following: (Some pieces are published; others accepted and under revision; others under review.)

Humiliation and the Human Condition: Mapping a Minefield. (*Human Rights Review*, October 2000, 2/2, 46-63.)

What Every Negotiator Ought to Know: Understanding Humiliation. (Under review)

The Framing Power of International Organizations, and the Cost of Humiliation. (Under review)

Humiliation, Human Rights, and Global Corporate Responsibility. (Under review)

Humiliation and Rationality in International Relations. The Role of Humiliation in North Korea, Rwanda, Somalia, Germany, and the Global Village. (Under review)

Recognition or Humiliation-The Psychology of Intercultural Communication. (Paper presented at the ISSEI Millennium Conference, *Approaching a New Millennium: Lessons from the Past-Prospects for the Future*, The 7th Conference of the International Society for the Study of European Ideas, Bergen, Norway, August 14-8; later submitted to a journal and undergoing referee process.)

Humiliation-The Worst Form of Trauma: An Analysis Based on Fieldwork in Germany, Rwanda / Burundi, and Somalia. (Under review)

How Humiliation Creates Cultural Differences and Political Divisions: The Psychology of Intercultural Communication. Germany and Somalia as Cases. (Under review)

How Research Can Humiliate: Critical Reflections On Method. (Under review)

Social Constructionism, Logical Positivism, and the Story of Humiliation. (Under review)

The Concept of Humiliation: Its Universal Core and Culture-Dependent Periphery. (Under review)

The Anatomy of Humiliation and Its Relational Character. (Under review)

Humiliation in the Flesh. Honour Is FACE, Arrogance Is NOSE UP, And Humiliation Is TO BE PUT DOWN. (Under review)

Humiliation, Rape and Love: Force and Fraud in the Erogenous Zones. (Under review)

How Globalisation Transforms Gender Relations: The Changing Face of Humiliation. (Under review)

Gendercide and Humiliation in Honour and Human-Rights Societies (in the process of being published, *Journal of Genocide Research*)

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Were Ordinary Germans Hitler's 'Willing Executioners'? Or Were They Victims of Humiliating Seduction and Abandonment? The Case of Germany and Somalia (in the process of being published in IDEA: A Journal of Social Issues)

Love, Holocaust, and Humiliation. The German Holocaust and the Genocides in Rwanda and Somalia. (published in Norske leger mot atomvaapen, 1999)

Hitler, Shame and Humiliation: The Intricate Web of Feelings Among the German Population Towards Hitler (published in Norske leger mot atomvaapen, 2000)

Were the Germans Hitler's 'Willing Executioners'? (published in Norske leger mot atomvaapen, 2000)

Were Hitler and Siad Barre 'Robin Hoods' Who Felt Humiliated by Their Own Followers? (published in Norske leger mot atomvaapen, 2001)

Apart from writing articles and a thesis, I have presented the project in various settings, from seminars to radio programmes. (See a list on <http://www.ub.uio.no/ubit/forskdok/> (search for Lindner, Evelin).)

Please contact me for further information! It would be a pleasure to send you a "Summary of Results," if you wish. I would be very grateful for your feedback! Also, I believe it would be useful if the results of this work were more widely available beyond the academic community, and I would very much appreciate any information about potential sponsors. Again, I express my sincere thanks and many very kind regards! (Keywords: Humiliation, Lindner, Norway.)