

Global Dignity & Humiliation Assessment Team

Status May 2008

Summary

Among the most important results of the Workshop on Humiliation and Violent Conflict that was held at Columbia University on December 13-14, 2007, was that we made the next step in the Dignity & Humiliation Assessment Developing Initiative, as envisaged by Alan B. Slifka. Please see further down a description of the development of this initiative from 2005 onwards, when Alan B. Slifka expressed the idea at first.

Here is a short summary: Evelin Lindner met Alan Slifka for the first time in 1999 in Belfast, where he launched his Coexistence Initiative in a conference that had more than 1,000 participants. The idea to found Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies was born in December 2001 in a discussion Evelin had with Alan Slifka in New York. Central to this idea was the need to make research on dignity and humiliation relevant for public policy planning. Evelin met with Alan every year thereafter. In a meeting on December 7, 2005, Alan again highlighted the need to measure dignity & humiliation in societies so that we can show to policy makers that humiliation is relevant and needs to be included into public policy making. Alan explained that he thinks that humiliation and coexistence may be deeply connected (humiliation hampering coexistence) and that we need a Humiliation Survey, and a Humiliation Index for every country.

Alan recommended that the HumanDHS network get in touch with Professor Arye Rattner of Haifa University, who is working with large surveys. Professor Rattner was so very kind as to follow the HumanDHS invitation and attend the Workshop on Humiliation and Violent Conflict that was held at Columbia University on December 14-15, 2006. Since then, he kindly offers to advise and lead this effort as needed, provided funding is available.

On November 13, 2006, Evelin met again with Alan B. Slifka. He explained his idea that public policies ought to be researched from the point of humiliation. Alan developed the idea that a postdoctoral student could perhaps take a number of public policies and scrutinize them from the perspective of humiliation. For example, if a state were to legislate that a minority language can no longer be spoken, clearly this would have humiliating effects.

In the Workshop on Humiliation and Violent Conflict in December 2007 at Columbia University in New York, we were able to move the emerging Global Humiliation Assessment Initiative into its next stage. William McConochie (<http://humiliationstudies.org/research/assessmentteam.php#mcconochie>) kindly came forward during our workshop and offered to support this initiative based on work that he had been doing for the past two decades.

For the members of the emerging Global Humiliation Assessment Team, please see <http://www.humiliationstudies.org/research/assessmentteam.php>.

Timeline of How this Initiative Incepted

Please see here Evelin Lindner's message to Professor Arye Rattner on December 8, 2005, subsequent to her meeting with Alan B. Slifka the day before:

I visited Alan yesterday and, during our meeting, he reflected on how the notion of humiliation can help with public policy planning. He thinks that humiliation and coexistence may be deeply connected (humiliation hampering coexistence) and that we need a Humiliation Survey, and a Humiliation Index for every country.

Alan explained that you carried out a survey in Israel asking whether people felt at home. He told me that you had expected that Arab Israelis would feel at home in the Middle East. However, the results were astonishing. 85% of Israelis felt at home, however, only 33% of Arab Israelis.

Alan asked: Why do so many Arab Israelis not feel at home? Perhaps they feel humiliated? If so, by what exactly?

Perhaps it would be an idea to carry out a pilot study and ask questions probing whether it is the government, or specific ministries, or the police, or the neighbors, or civil society, or attitudes in general that have a humiliating impact. I told Alan that I usually end my papers and articles by calling for a "Moratorium on Humiliation." He rightly points out that this can only be done if we have operationalized what exactly causes humiliation and where the points of improvement can be identified.

I told Alan about two large research projects that I have assembled, Refugees and Humiliation, and Terrorism and Humiliation (www.humiliationstudies.org/research/projects.php).

He proposed to build a third one, Minorities and Humiliation, with a focus on public policy planning. He suggests that government would perhaps be interested in funding such a project. He suggests to study minorities such as the Arab Israelis in Israel, the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Catholics in Northern Ireland, the Algerians in France, the Afro-Americans in the US, the Aborigines in Australia, the Maoris in New Zealand, the Muslims in Russia...

Professor Arye Rattner was so kind as to attend our 2006 NY Workshop on Humiliation and Violent Conflict, and Linda Hartling thanked him on 16 December 2006:

Dear Arye!

It was DELIGHTFUL to meet you at the workshop on humiliation and violent conflict. Thank you so much for your special contribution to the program, which stimulated a number of important discussions.

Your enthusiasm for developing measures of humiliation energized the whole group. In support of your efforts, I'm attaching an article describing my scale to assess the experience of humiliation, which includes the final questionnaire. I'm also attaching a graphic organizer describing some of the similarities and differences between humiliation and other constructs as well as a short paper on humiliation, social pain, and violence. I hope these are helpful in some way.

If there is anything I can't do to support your research efforts, please let me know. I would be happy to help.

Thank you again for joining us for the workshop!!

Warmest wishes to you,

Linda

Professor Arye Rattner wrote on 4 March 2007:

Dear Evelin and Linda

I feel bad for not responding to some of your former messages and notes but I have read each of them carefully and I am aware of all your concerns and problems you have raised since we met in December in NY.

The only reason for not responding was (and still is) that I am busy and overwhelmed with two giant research projects, one, our ISJP - International Social Justice project (which as a matter of fact is going very well) and the 2nd is a project on violence in Israel funded by the Israel Ministry of science. These are both interesting and Challenging projects and they consume much time. I am not sure if you know that I have returned to my regular academic activities including research after five years of involvement in academic administration, being dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences here at the University of Haifa. All this does not mean that I have no interest, time, etc. for the humiliation project, on the contrary! I think that this is a project with great potential, the question(s) is of course how to materialize this potential, and here are few points:

1. As to myself, I have realized recently that I have very little patience for things that remain on the paper and do not materialize. I do think however that under certain circumstances and conditions the humiliation project does have a potential to materialize

into something more practical. For example. As I have indicated several times one thing that I see is the development of a scale that can be used internationally in the format of a survey (this has to be of course face to face) , in countries and among members of groups who experience different kinds of humiliation. The findings of such a study done annually or every 2-3 years can draw a lot of attention and can serve as the focus of an annual meeting ...

2. The construction of a scale and later the survey in various countries require of course budget. I have no idea at that point how much it can be but this can be figured out. I have also no idea where budget for such a purpose can come from. Someone like Alan B. Slifka can be perhaps a resource both for helping by himself and helping also to recruit budget from other sources. I met Alan two weeks ago here in Israel in a big conference where I have presented our recent findings on the Social Justice scale in Israel. Alan keeps expressing his interest in ideas related to feelings of people living in a country but not feeling that this is their home. He is talking as far as I can translate it to academic terms to ideas close to anomie, alienation, estranged, etc. He even asked me to send him a copy of our Social Justice scale in the English version.

3. Budget is of course not everything. In order to construct a scale and conduct a study a research team must be set up! The term humiliation as both of you know better than I do has many angles. It involves a psychological perspective, and also a sociological one, it can be approached more from an individual angle but also from a group and collective angle. This means that such a team must involve both psychologists, sociologists, methodologists, and perhaps more. At the same time such a team can be effective if it will be a rather small group of experts who can bring their different perspectives and ideas and turn it into a questionnaire and later on be also in charge of carrying on the with the study.

These are only some of the points which I have at the moment in my mind. The Big question of course is where does it all take us. To discuss and promote some or all of the ideas might require a meeting of few of us together perhaps with some other people who can help make decisions (financial for example).

If you think that any of the above ideas has any value and can help promote your ideas I will be glad to continue discuss it with you. I >don't think that ideas regarding such a big and challenging project can be discussed and promoted only through e-mail. This of course brings again matters such as financial support for meetings etc.

I would love to remain in touch and come to the next meeting, however even in my case I don't have an unlimited travel budget and coming from Israel to North America makes my trips quite expensive, so I have think about this aspect as well and make some priorities with all my other obligations.

Hope I have brought up here some constructive ideas.

Yours

Arye

Linda Hartling kindly wrote on 12 April 2007:

Dearest Arye,

I would be so delighted to work on developing a new instrument to assess humiliation, e.g., "a scale that can be used internationally in the format of a survey, in countries and among members of groups who experience different kinds of humiliation." In particular, I would like us to develop a tool that has "global portability," meaning that many, many people can access this instrument.

Since humiliation is such a complex experience, it is an extremely challenging experience to assess. My scale is quite limited. It assesses the internal state of victims of humiliation living in the US. I would love to develop an assessment that had a global perspective, if that is possible. I also wonder about assessing other aspects of this complex experience, including:

1. The experience of those who witness humiliation.
2. The types of experiences/events/conditions that trigger humiliation.
3. What promotes resilience in response to experiences of humiliation?
4. What increases or reduces our vulnerability to humiliation?
5. Are there periods of human development in which people are especially vulnerable to humiliation?

I have so many, many unanswered questions I would love to explore. Thanks to you, dear Arye, I'm glad that Evelin has suggested that we form a "Humiliation Scale Developing Team.

I wonder if we could have this team meet at some point during the NYC conference? Also, dear Arye, I have been developing a website for people to have ongoing conversation about projects. Would you be willing to try it out? The site might be a way to get started on this project??

Thank you so much, dear Arye, for your enthusiasm for this type of research.

Many warm wishes to you and all,
Linda

On 13 November 2006, Evelin Lindner met again with Alan B. Slifka. He explained his idea that public policies ought to be researched from the point of humiliation. Alan developed the idea that a postdoctoral student could perhaps take a number of public policies and scrutinize them from the perspective of humiliation. For example, if a state were to legislate that a minority language can no longer be spoken, clearly this would have humiliating effects. Jennifer Goldman is a brilliant doctoral student at Morton Deutsch's ICCCR at Columbia, and she is very

interested to do that when she has her PhD in the middle of this year. She will speak with Alan, among others on funding for such a postdoctoral research.

Please see here Evelin Lindner's message to Alan B. Slifka on 24 November 2006:

Dearest Alan!

We have a great student who is interested in carrying out your idea of researching public policies from the point of humiliation!

Her name is Jennifer S. Goldman. She is a Member of the HumanDHS Global Core Team and Research Team, and a doctoral student in Social-Organizational Psychology at Teachers College, Columbia University, and a Graduate Research Fellow with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

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I send you both my warmest appreciation for your important and brilliant work!

Evelin