

FROM HUMILIATION TO HUMAN DIGNITY

Helping people move out of humiliation and into dignity, "enlarging the boundaries of compassion," is the theme of an international conference being held in Dunedin at the end of this month. It is the 17th conference of the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies (HumanDHS) network, that holds two annual conferences, one in New York and the other elsewhere in the world, and comes to New Zealand for the first time.

'Studies on the effects of dignity and humiliation on human behaviour, violence and peacefulness are new' says Brian Ward, a New Zealand member in HumanDHS's Global Core Team. 'Central to these studies' he says 'is the understanding of the cycle of humiliation and violence, and how it might be overcome so that mutual respect and dignity can be nurtured.

'It's of particular relevance to New Zealand in light of our government's new green paper on vulnerable children' he says.

The International Conference on dignity takes place at the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Otago in Dunedin from August 29 through September 1.

Conference topics are relevant to those exploring the roots of domestic violence, child abuse, and school bullying, adolescent transitions, youth suicide and violence, safety in the workplace, and the family-worklife balance.

Founder of HumanDHS (Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies) is Dr. Evelin Lindner who has dedicated her life to the cause, living for several years as a 'global citizen' without the 'normal' coordinates of salary, house and car.

She has a Ph.D. in medicine and a second Ph.D. in psychology and did part of her last year of medical studies in Dunedin in 1983. At that time she also took flying lessons and learned how to fly a single motor machine. She has not been back in NZ since and is very excited to reconnect.

She is the author of three seminal books that contribute to delineating the foundations of the new field of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies. *Making Enemies: Humiliation and International Conflict*, 2006, with a Foreword by Morton Deutsch, is the first book on dignity and humiliation and how we may envisage a more dignified world. It has been characterized as a path-breaking book and been honored as "Outstanding Academic Title" by the journal *Choice* for 2007 in the USA. *Emotion and Conflict: How Human Rights Can Dignify Emotion and Help Us Wage Good Conflict*, 2009, is her second book. *Gender, Humiliation, and Global Security* was published by Praeger in 2010 and is her third book. Archbishop Desmond Tutu contributed with a Foreword.

'Over the years my intuition grew that, basically, all human beings yearn for connection, recognition, and respect, and that its withdrawal or denial, experienced as humiliation, may be the strongest force that creates rifts between people and breaks down relationships' she says. 'I believe that the desire for connection, recognition, and respect indeed unites us human beings, that it is universal and can serve as a platform

for contact and cooperation.' She continues: To me, humiliation can be described as the nuclear bomb of the emotions, and be identified in international, intercultural, intergroup, or interpersonal settings.'

Closing the conference is a public event, 'From Humiliation to Compassion and Dignity,' chaired by the University of Otago's Professor Kevin Clements. Both founder Dr. Lindner and HumanDHS director Dr. Linda Hartling will give talks: Dr. Lindner on 'Gender, Humiliation and Global Security' and Dr. Hartling on 'Appreciative Enquiry and Humiliation.'

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