Transnational Corporations and the Global Poor:

From Humiliation to Dialogue

Postdoctoral Research Proposal

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Project summary

Since many TNC boards have control over economic resources greater than the gross domestic product of small states, they are central to the dialogue needed between rich and poor for an effective response to the challenges of poverty and marginalisation. We therefore urgently need an empirically-based analysis of the social psychological 'mindsets' within which TNC strategic thinking is formulated. This means penetrating beyond the public ideologies of TNCs as well as the hostile critiques made by ideological opponents.

The core methodology will entail in-depth study of corporate boards using semi-structured interviews, focus group techniques, and attendance at board meetings. The researcher will explore attitudes, assumptions and possible scenarios relating to poverty reduction, and give information about research findings, including the applicant's work on the experience of humiliation among the poor. Access will be gained through existing contacts with sympathetic well-placed individuals and extended through snowball techniques. Depending on the response of the TNC, the researcher will (a) monitor the visible actions and public statements of the TNC, or (b) do this and also present research findings for monitored discussions in TNC focus groups, or (c) do this and also facilitate direct TNC dialogue with spokespeople for the global poor.

The social psychological 'mindsets' of the transnational corporation

The research is intended to address the following questions:

- How much *knowledge* do TNC executives have about the socio-political and socio-psychological effects of their operations in poor countries?
- How much *responsibility* do TNC executives feel for the way their work impacts upon the poor?
- Do they experience any *concern* about current tendencies in global resource allocation (the increasing rich-poor divide) either on grounds of fairness or on grounds of security?
- Does the prospect of a future without (or with very much less) poverty appear *desirable* to them and, if so, does it appear *realistic*?
- What significance do TNC executives attach to the form and content of *communication* between TNCs and the global poor? (Does it matter how they speak to each other and what they say? Are there barriers to communication and dialogue?)
- Do the TNCs enter into *dialogue* with the poor through channels other than corporate advertising and, if so, how? Would the TNCs benefit from an increase in such dialogue? If so, how could it be organised and what might be the benefits?

The three objectives of the research are:
a) to collect data that allow an assessment to be made about the current mindsets of TNC executives with respect to these questions,
b) to assess the dynamics producing openness towards - or resistance against - putting the situation of the global poor on the corporate agenda, and
c) to respond to instances of openness to this agenda by providing relevant information and analysis concerning the global poor and, where appropriate, facilitating TNC-poor dialogue, monitoring its progress as a source of further research data.

This is a flexible and highly efficient research strategy since it may be modulated to different degrees of access to TNCs and different kinds of response from TNCs. Some TNCs will welcome being approached by the researcher, others cautious. Some may desire to enter directly into dialogue with the poor, then the researcher will offer help in facilitating this dialogue. Others may respond with indifference or even hostility to initial approaches. Such reactions will provide valuable data that, when set in a wider spectrum, may be correlated with other aspects of the corporate situation (e.g. business sector, corporate philosophy, managerial style). A differentiated picture will be built up and patterns observed within it.

These research objectives stand in a great Norwegian tradition of innovative inquiry focused upon the psychology of economic action whose most important representatives include Thorstein Veblen[1] (founder of a tradition that includes Schumpeter and Galbraith) and also Arne Næss.[2] Like Veblen's work, this project is concerned with the frame of mind that shapes the attitudes and choices of major business corporations. Like Veblen, a major concern is the impact of such attitudes and choices upon the poor.

The TNCs are at the very hub of the complex network of 'global, regional and local forces and currents' that 'interact, influence one another and establish synergies and conflicts in a rapidly changing, multifarious, heterogeneous world' (The Research Council of Norway, 2000, 8). Their leading executives have day-to-day control over the deployment of economic resources that are, in some cases, greater than the gross domestic product of small states.[3]

This project is in the spirit of Kofi Annan's words in his address to the Millennium Forum in New York, 22nd May 2000: 'I also believe … the cure does not lie in protesting against globalization itself. I believe the poor are poor not because of too much globalization, but because of too little -- because they are not part of it, because they are excluded. I believe the overarching challenge of our times is to make globalization mean more than bigger markets. To make a success of this great upheaval we must learn how to govern better, and -- above all -- how to govern better together.' He continues: 'If there is a lesson to be learnt from recent experience, it is that while globalisation has produced winners and losers, the solution is not confrontation. It is not to make winners of the losers and losers of the winners.'

TNCs have a complex relationship to our current situation. Their power, influence and cross-border outreach can be a major positive factor in bringing about the right kind of investment and development across the world. Their activities have made a great contribution to global job creation, helped a large number of people to escape poverty, and led to a reduction of births in developing countries. However, the prime objective of TNCs is not poverty reduction and they have become drawn into a mutual blaming discourse between the rich and the poor.

At the core of the globalisation debate are two mutually conflicting propositions. Representatives of the poor claim that their misery results from the fact that the market has had too much influence over their living conditions.[4] At the same time, the rich and powerful maintain that continuing poverty is to be expected until the marketplace has been fully allowed to do its work.[5] The challenge is to find an interpretative framework which allows both sides to work together constructively in a way that advances the interests of all concerned. In order to make this dialogue possible, we need to know much more about how the TNCs analyse their own situation and interests. The poor and the weak have been studied in depth. Now it is time to turn the spotlight onto the rich and powerful.

Both the TNCs and the poor are constrained within an overarching framework of compelling realities and dominant paradigms. Some realities are difficult to change. Even the kindest TNC executive cannot escape the laws of jungle warfare in the global market. However, progress towards dialogue may be made if the conservative power of dominant paradigms is moderated. Once the paradigms are subjected to rational analysis, some aspects of them may be modified. This can open up new space for creative thinking. If this occurs, dialogue between rich and poor may focus upon negotiating compelling realities in co-operation with each other.

Psychological analysis tells us that blaming and self-justifying discourses have to be 'decommissioned' in order to enable players to engage in constructive dialogue. This research will try to find out what it would take to create constructive dialogue between the rich and the poor. All perspectives (on both sides) that *disable* dialogue have to be carefully identified and analysed, as well as those that *enable* dialogue. This task calls for psychological research and expertise, since many barriers to dialogue may be of psychological nature.

Dialogue of the kind described is a practical exercise in ethical awareness, supported by the ideology of human rights. The human rights approach calls for the dignifying of every human being, irrespective of any secondary characteristics. It also disapproves of overconfidence, arrogance and haughtiness on the part of

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[1] See Veblen, 1899; Veblen, 1965; Veblen, 1970; Smith, 1988, chapters 2 and 3; Smith, 1990, chapter 5.

[2] Næss works with 'deep ecology' and bases his reflections on Ghandi's thoughts, see for example Naess, 1958. In his talks to the corporate sector (for example 19th February 1998 to kompetanseunion a.s.) Næss emphasises the need for dialogue between all players, and especially the inclusion of the corporate sector.

[3] General Motors with annual sales of US$164 billion has an income greater than that of Norway whose GDP is equivalent to US$ 153 billion. By the same measures, Royal Dutch Shell (US$128 billion) towers over Malaysia (US$98 billion) and Mitsui (US$140 billion) over South Africa (US$129 billion).[3] The values, attitudes and behaviour of the TNCs are major factors that have to be taken into account by any agency concerned with strategies to confront the challenge of marginalisation and poverty.

[4] George Kent, University of Hawai'i, in a personal message, 22nd May 2000.

[5] See, for example, Robert Paarlberg's recent essay on *The Global Food Fight* and C. Ford Runge and Benjamin Senauer's piece on *A Removable Feast* in *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2000.

winners.[6] Sir Geoffrey Chandler, chair of Amnesty International's UK Business Group, expects that the number of companies focusing on human rights as a business concern will rise as local communities, non-governmental organisations, consumer groups and the media focus more attention on this issue. It is to be expected that human rights will gain ground as their benefits for corporate activities become more visible.

The rich and powerful have to be encouraged to reflect upon the part they can play to avoid the worst outcomes. A sensible recipe seems to be: the humbling of haughtiness on one side and the dignifying of the humiliated on the other, to the benefit of all.

Research envisaged

The questions to be researched were presented at the beginning of this application. The scientific methodology proposed is an intensive in-depth study of the social psychological mindsets of corporate boards. Semi-structured interviews will be used, as well as focus group techniques, attendance at board meetings, and the administration of questionnaires combining open and pre-coded questions, and Likert scales. Lists of identical propositions to the rich and the poor will be developed; descriptions of 'scenarios of possible worst worlds' and 'best worlds' will be solicited.

The research will involve an attempt to discover what TNC executives believe about the direct and indirect effects of their policies on the economic well-being of various strata of society, including the poor, in the countries in which they operate. The interviews will also investigate their beliefs about how they (and the impact of their policies) are perceived by those who have been marginalised by the processes of economic globalisation.

This aspect of the research will draw upon evidence already collected by the applicant about the reaction of the global poor in selected countries to humiliation,[7] supplemented by further research at the beginning of this project, focusing upon specific reactions to corporate activity.

Finally the interviews will explore TNC executives' feelings of personal and institutional responsibility - their assessments of the trade-offs between economic and social goals and their sense of obligation or accountability in softening the negative impact of their policies on the most vulnerable and marginalised. This will include their understanding of human rights, for example with reference to the right to an adequate standard of living, as articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (article 11).

The ultimate aim is to overcome discourses of blaming and facilitate dialogue on the implementation of global structures that avoid poverty. It is to motivate more TNC executives and decision-makers to create spaces for dialogues with the poor with the goal to work towards joint action plans. The objective is to build trust in the feasibility of co-operation towards an overarching structure that enables fair free market competition within its framework.

The practical and policy-related contribution of the research

The projected research will be valuable not only to governments and NGOs but especially to the TNCs themselves since it will provide an opportunity for them to engage in a 'stocktaking exercise', to 'discover' what they think. The challenge of globalisation, marginalisation and poverty has risen up the agenda so rapidly

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[6] 'Human rights issues are inextricably tied to the financial success of multinational companies, according to a recent study conducted by Amnesty International UK and the Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum. Corporations that fail to recognize human rights concerns as public scrutiny increases face serious threats to corporate reputation - and the bottom line' (Stavraka, 2000, 1).

[7] The current doctoral research project on humiliation at the University of Oslo (1997-2001) is entitled 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.* See the project description on www.uio.no/~evelinl. 216 qualitative interviews were carried out, from 1998 to 1999 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), and from 1997 to 2000 in Europe (in Oslo in Norway, in Germany, in Geneva, and in Brussels). The topic has been discussed with about 400 researchers working in related fields. The current-state-of-the-art has been mapped, showing that little has been done in this field. A Theory of Humiliation is currently being developed by the author (see for example Lindner, 1999; Lindner, 2000a; Lindner, 2000b; Lindner, 2000c; Lindner, 2000d; Lindner, 2000e; Lindner, 2000f; Lindner, 2000g; Lindner 1999; Lindner, 2000h; Lindner, 2000i), and a book project *The Death of the West* is envisaged. The project is supported by the Norwegian Research Council and the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I am grateful for their support, and would also like to thank the Institute of Psychology at the University of Oslo for hosting it. I extend my warmest thanks to all my informants in and from Africa, many of whom survive under the most difficult life circumstances. I hope that at some point in the future I will be able to give back at least a fraction of all the support I received from them!

during the past two decades that it may have been difficult for some executives to see beyond the torrent of events, especially the hectic contest for market position. The space to reflect has not been easy to find.

The proposed research is vitally necessary and will create important new knowledge. The consciousness and psychology of TNC executives cannot be 'read off' from their economic roles any more than the mindset of a labourer can be deduced from the simple fact that he or she engages in physical exertion for a living. Material conditions and organisational roles obviously have some effect on structures of perception and feeling but they are far from being the whole story. The psychology of economic decision-making regarding poverty needs urgent investigation; the social psychological mindsets of the TNC boardroom have still to be discovered.

The proposed path-breaking qualitative research will make a positive practical contribution in the following way:

- Evidence will be obtained about boardroom perceptions of, and attitudes towards, the plight of the poor, especially in less developed societies. The object will be to assess how these perceptions and attitudes are related to the investment objectives and resource allocation strategies adopted by business corporations for poor societies. This will provide new insights into the deep structure of decision-making processes that have a major impact on patterns of poverty and processes of marginalisation.
- As already stated, parallel evidence will be obtained, in the initial phase of the project, from representatives of the poor, concentrating upon the effects of poverty, especially the danger of backlashes caused by resentment and humiliation.
- Depending on the reactions of respondents to these initial inquiries, the researcher will arrange focus and dialogue groups both among groups of TNC executives and, if appropriate, with executives and spokespeople from the global poor, focusing on the possibilities for developing co-operative strategies for overcoming marginalisation and global poverty.
- The information obtained during the research will also be helpful to other actors (such as governments and NGOs) who wish to make effective approaches to TNCs in order to win them as allies in the battle against poverty.

The social psychological mindsets of the poor

Poverty becomes socially and politically explosive when impoverished groups perceive that they are being forced into accepting living standards that are less than they have a right to expect. Poverty is a painful experience not simply because of the low living standards but also because of the feeling of being trapped and deprived. For example, American pioneers on the frontier in the nineteenth century endured immense material hardship but the dominant theme of their culture was 'freedom' and 'opportunity.' Although they were 'on the edge,' they did not necessarily feel marginalised. The opposite is the case with most of the poor in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The Norwegian Research Council has rightly drawn attention to the very urgent need for research addressing the fact that globalisation is marginalising a significant section of the world population. In the Council's words, 'Major changes are underway in many developing countries and it is important to understand why some countries achieve a positive development with regard to democratisation, social conditions, economy and reduction of poverty, whereas others stagnate both socially and economically' (The Research Council of Norway, 2000, 6).

The term 'marginalisation' is deceptively neutral-sounding. This disguises the fact that its effects are devastating for its victims. As George Kent points out, 'Each year, about twelve million children die before their fifth birthdays, about half of them from causes associated with malnutrition. This is a silent holocaust, repeated year after year. Malnutrition leads to death, illness, and significantly reduced quality of life for hundreds of millions of children, adolescents, and adults' (Kent, 2000, 7).

Between 1960 and 1989 the share of global income received by the richest 20% of the world's population rose from 70.2% to 82.7% while the share received by the poorest 20% fell from 2.3% to 1.4%. The difference in income share between the richest and the poorest increased from 30:1 to 59:1. The people at the bottom of this global hierarchy are stuck in a position of hopelessness.

Marginality and poverty represent much more than a 'statistical tail' of people 'left behind.' Marginalisation and impoverishment are social processes that impose separation, estrangement and exclusion. These processes occur within social and political relationships that have a fundamentally important psychological dimension. The emotional and perceptual aspects of marginalisation and poverty are vital and it is essential to understand these psychological aspects if we are to be effective in our efforts to transform the social and political relationships in which they are embedded.

Transnational corporations and the poor

The present applicant has collected extensive material from the poor during research in Africa currently being completed (1997-2001), including interviews in Africa with Rwandans, Burundians, Kenyans, Somalis, and Egyptians, and during the years the author worked as a psychological counsellor with and among the poor as well as the rich (Egypt 1984-1991). The proposed research will enable these findings to be complemented by an investigation of the TNCs. Some initial hypotheses that can be tested in exploratory interviews are as follows:

- TNCs are strategically focused upon conquering segments of the market, a challenge that includes competition with business rivals in a relatively unregulated global environment that encourages a ruthless spirit of jungle warfare. The intensity of this inter-corporate competition may be so great that it forces executives to relegate the issue of the effects of their operations upon the poor to a very low position on the corporate agenda. While possibly acknowledging the point that a 'winner-takes-all' competition adds to the woes of the poor, and that their pursuit of market domination may have negative consequences for people, executives may simply lack time and energy to focus upon such issues and upon how they feel about their obligations in this regard.
- TNCs may continue to be influenced to a considerable degree by the old bifurcated Cold War discourse of 'them' against 'us,' though more recently the 'terrorist' has replaced the 'communist' as the principal enemy, thus recycling today's reality through yesterday's paradigm.
- This relates to a further hypothesis that the preoccupation with business rivalries and the perception of a bifurcated world will not be the only element in the mental framework of TNCs. These themes will be interwoven with a commitment to an ideal of shared gain, in other words, the belief that the pursuit of profit for shareholders should, preferably, coincide with the distribution of benefits to employees, subcontractors, creditors and customers.[8]
- It is also anticipated that no TNC executive will express a desire to be responsible for bringing about serious deterioration in the social or political global environment within which their company operates.

It is further hypothesised that the business executives to be investigated will fall into the following categories:

- those who, when presented with evidence about the occurrence of humiliation processes, reject the view that they may be a key factor in social and political action in the poorer countries where they operate;
- those who consider that humiliation processes may be a key factor in their operating environments but do not regard their effects as serious for their companies, either actually or potentially;
- those who acknowledge that the poor may be in a state of humiliation, but claim that their business-oriented approach is the only appropriate remedy for that humiliation;
- those who do regard such effects as actually or potentially serious but cannot envisage a feasible strategy for avoiding the potentially damaging consequences of hostile political and social action stimulated by humiliation; and
- those who not only take the threat of hostile political and social action seriously but have also considered possible strategies for coping with it. Within this last group, distinctions may be made among those who place emphasis upon action by public sector agencies and those who emphasise the part that may be played by business, either by individual companies or by companies acting together.

A further distinction is to be expected between those who focus exclusively upon short-term consideration such as share-price level and profit figures and those who give consideration to longer-term issues including the future tendencies in the political and social environments in which their companies operate.

The importance of psychology

Economics is the social science most commonly employed to explain the behaviour of both the TNCs and the marginalised poor. At the base of economics is a set of assumptions about the psychology of economic actors. It is the psychology of rational choice, utilitarianism and profit maximisation. As Veblen pointed out long ago, these assumptions are, in many key respects, inadequate or wrong. Psychological research carried out by the applicant reveals another powerful set of motivational forces: those triggered by the experience of humiliation. Young political activists in the Middle East, for example, who carry out suicide bomb attacks in order to defend their cause are casting aside 'profit maximising behaviour' together with their own lives.

For such 'martyrs' and the many who applaud them, the TNCs have become a symbolic focus for rising dissatisfaction with growing inequality. Marginalisation is increasing and, even more important, this increase is painfully felt. As a result, the TNCs are becoming more and more vulnerable to the backlash of humiliation-induced resentment.

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[8] See Lee Ross's important findings that people are inclined to prefer equal distribution (see bibliography for publications).

TNCs are aware of these practical dangers such as for example terrorist acts, including kidnapping. But it is hypothesised that many leading corporate executives remain, to a great extent, uninformed about the dynamics of humiliation or the nature and extent of their companies' involvement in it. Because of this, they have paid little attention to the measures that they may take to reduce the damaging humiliation they impose upon the poor, to a great extent unintentionally.

However, there are important exceptions. To cite a well-known example, in September 1997 Ted Turner, vice-chairman of Time Warner Inc., gave $1 billion to the United Nations. This could be belittled as a personal gesture. But such gestures suggest that within the boardrooms of the TNCs are to be found certain patterns of thought, perception and response that acknowledge the need to consider the perspective of the global poor.

The issue underlying this research is how the rich and the poor may be brought towards a relationship of constructive dialogue and co-operation directed at the objectives of raising the living standards of the marginalised poor, and providing the means for greater social and political inclusiveness. Those who control the leading transnational business corporations have the material and organisational capacity to bring about beneficial change. They possess vital skills. It is important to discover how they perceive the global situation in which they are embedded, how much responsibility they feel for bringing about change, and how strong is their will to alleviate the damage that is to be observed.

Psychology has much to contribute, for example by showing that empowered and dignified employees and customers are more motivated and creative, and are likely to increase corporate earnings. Psychology also plays a vital role in assessing dangers stemming from emotions. Research currently being carried out by the applicant indicates that feelings of humiliation among the marginalised and poor, deepened by the increasing gap between the promise of human rights and the reality of poverty, may increasingly lead to a break-down of constructive co-operation at all levels. This endangers not only social peace at large, but also corporate activities.[9] The task at hand here is to assure human dignity, which, if violated, may lead to social unrest.

The challenge of understanding and healing humiliation

Evidence collected during the past years by the applicant suggests that to be poor in the twenty-first century is intensely humiliating and may lead to adverse reactions that are relevant to all, also to TNCs, - irrespective of the causation of poverty. This evidence supports the thesis that the condition of estrangement produced by poverty stems from a perception that the needs of the poor are disregarded, that the poor are defined as 'inadequate people', 'less human' and with fewer rights than others. Ironically, globalisation of the concept of universal human rights intensifies the marginalising effect of poverty. The poor see themselves excluded from civic and economic rights that ought to be enjoyed by all.

The typical response to humiliation is resentment, resistance and revenge. It is therefore essential that the poor be given dignity, respect and the right to be heard. They must be made equal partners with the rich in the task of working to overcome poverty. Only under such conditions is there any chance of converting the vicious cycle of estrangement, hostility and destruction into a virtuous cycle of understanding, co-operation and construction. As the quotation from the Norwegian Research Council suggests, there is a close relationship between 'positive development with regard to democratisation' and progress with respect to 'social conditions, economy and reduction of poverty' (The Research Council of Norway, 2000, 6).

The proposed research is fully in accord with this approach. It builds upon and extends the researcher's previous work that provided useful and innovative evidence on the dynamics of humiliation. This earlier project is part of the Norwegian Research Council's Research Programme on Multilateral Development Assistance. One of its findings is that the occurrence of humiliation in relationships between groups leads to a wide spectrum of dysfunctional outcomes ranging from a failure to cooperate effectively to a willingness to engage in violent aggression, including massacres and genocide.

The focus of that earlier research was upon societies that had suffered civil war (Rwanda/Burundi, Somalia and, in the background, Hitler's Germany[10]). The societies studied had become militarised arenas in which third-party interventions had occurred. On the basis of the findings, a handbook is being produced for UN personnel on the nature of humiliation processes, indicating how to recognise them and cope with their consequences, and how to avoid introducing further humiliation by thoughtless behaviour.
Four related points should be emphasised:

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[9] Elites often have blind spots and psychological barriers concerning correctly evaluating such dangers; many among the French aristocracy 'understood' only on the guillotine. Alexis de Tocqueville, born 1805 to a proud French aristocratic family, may serve as a model to be followed by the rich; he despised the 'new world' where aristocratic honour was not in demand anymore, but decided to shape it instead of closing his eyes. He is known to Americans as the herald of their human rights regime, a man who praised the stability of their infant capitalist democracy. I owe this reference to Dennis Smith.

[10] Elias, 1996; Haffner and Bateson, 1978.

- The doctoral research just described examined extreme situations in which humiliation processes, the resentment that accompanied them, and the violence that resulted could be seen with vivid starkness;
- by looking at extreme cases it was possible to discern clearly processes that exist in a modified and sometimes hidden form in a much wider range of situations elsewhere;
- an important example of such a situation is the marginalisation of the poor in the course of globalisation processes that are dominated by societies that proclaim the principle of universal human rights;
- the proposed research will generate knowledge and insights that will make a practical and theoretical contribution to the large task of identifying and reversing the social and psychological damage caused by the marginalisation of the poor - *before* it reaches extreme proportions with potentially disastrous consequences.

Fortunately for the West, the global poor have not yet found their Hitler. However, it is not difficult to see that such a leader could create a global following among the humiliated by arguing, for example, that the human rights' rhetoric of the rich was merely a hypocritical device to divert attention from the fact that the divide between rich and poor is greater than before. Banners protesting against 'double standards' are already commonplace at demonstrations in India, Africa and the Middle East.

Such leaders may come to the fore in view of the fact that the gap between rich and poor is getting worse. Especially those in the middle segment, who still enjoy a fair amount of wealth and security, are bound to be anxious lest they are driven down into the ranks of the poor. Between 1960 and 1989 the share of global income received by the middle 60 percent of the world's population - for example in China, India, Russia, Iran, or Iraq - decreased from 27.5 per cent to 15.9 per cent. Leaders may emerge, for example, from within rich countries like the United States, or from other countries, such as China, India, Russia, Iran, or Iraq. Also already established people such as Usama Bin Laden[11] or Hamas leaders may have the potential to draw larger followings. Finally leaders such as Swami Agnivesh,[12] though committed to peace today, may feel 'pushed' to confrontation instead of co-operation. Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe has demonstrated the political 'usefulness' of direct attacks upon white farmers. It remains to be seen whether his example will be more powerful than Mandela's promotion of peace and reconciliation.

The research project's contribution to the development of the field

The proposed research will make an important contribution to the rapidly growing theoretical and empirical literature on the socio-psychological dynamics of globalisation[13] with particular reference to the relationship between TNCs and the marginalised poor.

Some of this literature has been prescriptive: for example, the Council on Economic Priorities report entitled *Child Labor: The Cutting Edge of Human Rights* and the *Principles for Global Corporate Responsibility* drafted by interfaith organisations from Canada, UK and the USA (see also Lowry, 1996). See also the annual reports by the International Labour Organization ILO on www.ilo.org/.

There has also been a substantial analytical literature concerned with critically reviewing globalisation and TNC involvements in the less developed world. Robert Reich warns that the well-off have to understand that they invite a backlash that will hurt them (Reich, 1991); Lester Thurow (Thurow, 1999) and Noam Chomsky share these worries (Chomsky, 1999) as do writers such as Batra, 1994, Brecher and Costello, 1994, Ekins and Max-Neef, 1992, Estes, 1996, Hurell and Woods, 1999, and Karliner, 1997. Irwin Stelzer is among the more optimistic writers and believes that we will have more equitable relations in time and that everybody may be better off (Stelzer, 1999).

The proposed research is focused upon empirical and theoretical issues that have a direct bearing upon how, *realistically and in practice*, it is possible to avoid what is undesirable and to achieve what is desirable. Some relevant evidence is contained in the recent report by Glen Peters and Georges Enderle entitled *A Strange Affair. The Emerging Relationship Between NGOs and Transnational Companies* (Peters and Enderle, 1998) that surveyed 133 NGOs in order to ascertain their views on TNCs. They discovered 'a surprising and

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[11] On 7th August 1998, bombs exploded outside the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. In the Nairobi bombing alone, more than 200 were killed and thousands injured. The U.S. suspected dissident Saudi extremist Usama bin Laden.
[12] Swami Agnivesh is a highly influential Indian holy man. He is the president of the Bonded Labour Liberation Front and a prominent Arya Samaj leader in India. He abhors the destructive conflict running through his country's politics and urges the Indian 'government and all political parties, scientists, labour and socio-religious organisations to wage a united battle against starvation, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, bonded labour and other social evils' (see The Indian Express, 1998). However, in 1998 this man, dedicated to peace, congratulated Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee for conducting a series of nuclear tests. He approved of the tests because, in his view, they showed that India would not bow down before the 'nuclear blackmail' of foreign countries like America.
[13] The importance of new information communication technologies in organising decision making within companies and the new flexibility of boundaries this produces is, for example, studied by Hooley, Loveridge, and Wilson, 1998; Casson, Loveridge, and Singh, in Boyd. and Rugman, 1997.

encouraging mood of optimism amongst NGOs concerning their future relationship with TNCs.'[14] Corporate business begins to actively express awareness, for example on sites as www.ResponsibilityInc.com.[15] Conferences are being arranged with titles such as *Corporate Citizenship in the 21st Century: What Can Business Do for Peace and Sustainable Development?* (May 2000, London). The Second World Congress of Business, Economics and Ethics is about to take place (July 2000, São Paulo).

Both the difficulties of the challenge of overcoming suspicion and resentment in order to pursue reconciliation and constructive co-operation and the need to find strategies to meet it are reported in works such as Desmond Tutu's *Out of the Shadows* (Tutu, 1999), in the life works of a Nelson Mandela (Mandela and Clark, 1993) or, further back in time, Gandhi, who is reported to have said 'The first principle of non-violent action is non-participation in everything humiliating.'[16] This work needs to be integrated with an empirically-based and theoretically-sophisticated theory of humiliation which encompasses the experience and perceptions of both the global rich and the global poor.

Important contributions to such a theory have been made by Albert Bandura, Daniel Bar-On, Zygmunt Bauman, Michael Billig, Michael Harris Bond, Dov E. Cohen, Johan Galtung, Anthony Giddens, Liah Greenfeld, Asbjørn Eide, Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Mike Featherstone, Johan Galtung, Herbert C. Kelman, George Kent, Bernt Hagtvet, William Ian Miller, Richard E. Nisbett, Suzanne Retzinger, Lee D. Ross, Anatol Rapoport, Thomas Scheff, Richard Sennett, Dennis Smith, Ervin Staub, William Ury, and Vamik D. Volkan.[17] Avishai Margalit describes how a 'decent society' without humiliating institutions may look like (Margalit, 1996), and Francis Fukuyama asserts the significance of trust for prosperity (Fukuyama, 1996). Humiliation and its psychological effects have been addressed by other authors.[18]

The applicant has developed several insights into the relationship between humiliation, cultural divisions and inequality within a global context in several published and forthcoming papers (see bibliography). This work has received an enthusiastic response from, among others, Desmond Tutu, and the BBC reporters attending the Burundi peace talks. Also, in work carried out in collaboration with Dennis Smith, Professor of Sociology at Loughborough University, UK, the applicant has identified a number of distinctive aspects of humiliation. A book project focusing on globalisation, poverty and humiliation is currently being planned.

Along with Smith, a theory of humiliation is currently being built, encompassing humiliation as a social process involving radical changes in power balances within social structures as well as a psychological dynamic within intergroup and interpersonal relations. The central point is that humiliation entails a radical degradation of the victim that painfully emphasises his or her subordinate place in the scheme of things. The emerging theory connects the fields of psychology, anthropology, sociology and political science.

There is, at present, an asymmetry between the progress made by psychologically inspired analyses of violent conflict in militarised political arenas and the application of psychological analysis to the sphere of business. In spite of the valuable contribution of writers such as Albrow, Fineman, Friedman and Hochschild,[19] the penetration of empirically-based psychology into the world of business decision-making has been inhibited by reluctance to challenge the explanatory power of the market model with its own 'psychological theory' of maximising rational actors. It is time to overcome this reluctance and undertake a realistic and open-minded examination of the social psychological mindsets of the boardroom.

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[14] The NGOs believe that 'Co-operative relationships are important in establishing a productive climate of trust within which future global business can be conducted.' They also insist, however, that 'The unrestrained pursuit of competitive advantage is clearly rejected' and point out that such behaviour 'cannot be compensated for by ethical behaviour in other respects' (51-52).

[15] 'An online magazine reporting on the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility and its relationship to corporate success with employees, consumers and investors. Coverage includes news, reputation management, benchmark practices, consumer attitudinal changes and public relations' (quoted from 'about us' on www.ResponsibilityInc.com).

[16] I owe this quote to Linda Hartling, in a personal note in September 1998. There is a growing body of literature on reconciliation, see for example, Kelman, in Rothstein, 1999; Lumsden, 1997; Rothstein, in Rothstein, 1999; Tavuchis, 1991, Zehr, 1990.

[17] Bandura, 1999; Bar-On, 1996; Bauman, 1998; Billig, 1995; Smith and Bond, 1994; Nisbett and Cohen, 1996; Eide and Hagtvet, 1996; Eriksen, 1993; Galtung, 1996; Giddens, 1991; Greenfeld, 1992; Featherstone, 1990; Kelman, in Rothstein, 1999; Kent, 2000; Kent, 1999; Miller, 1993; Rapoport, 1995; Ross and Ward, in Brown, Reed, and Turiel, 1996; Ross and Nisbett, 1991; Ross and Samuels, 1993; Ross and Ward, 1995; Ross, in Arrow, Mnookin, Ross, Tversky, and Wilson, 1995; Scheff, 1990; Scheff and Retzinger, 1991; Scheff, 1997; Scheff, in Kemper, 1990; Sennett, 1999; Smith, 1983; Smith, 1999; Smith, 2000a; Smith, 2000b; Staub, 1989, Ury, 1999; Volkan, Demetrios, and Montville, 1990; Volkan, 1988; Volkan, 1997.

[18] Baumeister, Wotman, and Stillwell, 1993; Føllesdal, 1996; Hartling and Luchetta, 1999; Gilligan, 1996; Vogel and Lazare, 1990.

[19] Albrow, 1997; Fineman, 1993; Friedman, 2000; Hochschild, 1983.

Undertaken in this spirit, the proposed work on TNC executives will contribute vital evidence that will have both a theoretical and a practical, policy-relevant payoff. The research will make a theoretical contribution by increasing our understanding of the complex relationships between three factors:

- the perceptual framework and attitudinal repertoire of key corporate decision-makers as compared to welfare advocates;
- the global economic and socio-political processes, to which corporate decision-makers contribute, and which create situations of marginalisation and impoverishment; and
- the operation of humiliation processes that generate resentment, misunderstanding and hostility between the groups involved.

Beyond this, the research will give practical guidance to endeavours trying to mobilise business support in strategies to overcome the damaging effects of marginalisation and poverty. It will supply an important missing link in the chain of action and understanding.

Work programme

The research is scheduled to last 36 months, as follows:
Phase I, months 1- 6 (01.04.2001-30.09.2001)

- Analysis of available statistical data and scientific literature concerning global stability, poverty and inequality, especially data on trends over time;
- collection of materials containing evaluations from TNCs about the scope of their responsibilities when operating within or dealing with poor countries as part of their global activities; identification of specific TNCs to be approached in connection with the research; negotiation of access (the corporations finally selected will depend upon a number of factors including: the extent of access that it is possible to negotiate; the relative viability of comparisons between business sectors, managerial functions, dominant nationality of managerial boards, and/or the principal geographical areas in which the companies operate globally;
- formulation of interview strategies and questionnaire materials relevant to the specific TNCs to be investigated, including development of lists of identical propositions to the rich and the poor, and questions whether they agree or disagree with each of them (with the aim to ultimately produce a substantial set of statements on which all agree, including statements on how to move forward); soliciting descriptions of 'scenarios of possible worst worlds' and 'best worlds;' invitation to enter into direct dialogue with the poor;
- interviews will be conducted with representatives of the poor, people belonging to or in close contact with impoverished and marginalised populations (including expatriates and exiles): the object will be to obtain evidence of the way the activities of the TNCs are perceived by local populations and the psycho-social dynamics set in motion or otherwise influenced by those activities (these interviews will complement the material that has already been collected within the framework of the current doctoral research, - these interviews will therefore not be too extensive, - also in order to not dominate the work schedule).

Phase II, months 7-12 (01.10.2001-31.03.2002)

- Conduction of semi-structured interviews with key informants in the selected TNCs, beginning with retired CEOs some of whom have already shown a willingness to discuss these topics openly;
- identification of TNCs responses to the proposition to enter into direct dialogue with the poor;
- facilitation and monitoring TNC dialogues with spokespeople from the poor;
- organisation of TNC board member focus groups; administration of initial questionnaire; followed by audio-visual presentation of evidence on the repercussions of poverty, based on material from available literature and previous research conducted by the applicant, supplemented by propositions concerning worst and best scenarios, to be given before TNC board member focus groups;
- follow-up semi-structured interviews with board members referring both to the initial questionnaire responses, the audio-visual presentation and the propositions;
- monitoring TNCs that were unresponsive to offers to either enter into direct TNC-poor dialogue or participate in TNC focus groups;
- continuing work on the conceptual and theoretical framework of the research.

Phase III, months 13-24 (01.04.2002-31.03.2003)

- Continuation of TNC dialogues with spokespeople from the poor, organisation of TNC board member focus groups, and monitoring TNCs that were unresponsive; continuing work on the conceptual and theoretical framework of the research.

Phase IV, months 25-36 (01.04.2003-31.03.2004)
- Analysis and evaluation of the empirical results of the empirical part of the study;
- integration of the findings into theoretical analysis;
- composition of articles and a book, including a strategy handbook designed to be useful to leading executives in TNCs and policy-makers potentially in partnership or negotiation with them;
- dissemination of the empirical results, theoretical conclusions and policy implications through focus groups, seminars, colloquia and mass media outlets, with the ultimate aim to reach a fruitful dialogue between all parties involved.

	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV
Analysis of available literature and statistical data, preparatory conceptual and theoretical work	X	X	X	
Interviews with representatives of the poor	X			
Interviews with representatives of the economic powerful (e.g. TNC executives)	X	X	X	
Facilitation of dialogues between rich and poor		X	X	
Focus group discussions with TNC executives who are not yet prepared for a direct dialogue with the poor including administration of questionnaire before and after presentation of evidence		X	X	
Monitoring of TNCs who react in an unreceptive way		X	X	
Analysis and evaluation of the empirical results, building of theory, dissemination of results, e.g. through writing of articles and book			X	X

For academic co-operation partners for the project and corporate contacts see CV

A global network of academic co-operation partners and corporate contacts exists at present, see CV for more details. The academic network is interdisciplinary and includes leading scientists from Norwegian universities (in addition to departments of psychology in Oslo, Trondheim, Bergen and Tromsø, departments of sociology, political science, business studies, anthropology, and cultural studies). The international academic network includes leading scientists from Loughborough University (Dennis Smith, Ruth Lister and others), Hawai'i University (George Kent), Stanford University (Lee D. Ross), University of Geneva (Pierre Dasen), Maxwell School, Syracuse University (Marshall Segall). Corporate contacts have been built since 1984 in all parts of the world (see CV). The applicant began operating as a business consultant in Egypt in 1984, from 1994 in Germany and recently in Norway.

Innovative and appropriate aspects of the proposed research
- Nearly all poverty research studies the poor and does not study the rich and powerful. This project turns the lens onto the powerful;
- incorporation of psychological notions related to the dynamics of humiliation into the discourse of poverty eradication in the context of globalisation;
- strengthening of the linkage of poverty eradication to the issue of universal economic rights;
- incorporation of an awareness-raising dimension into the research procedure (presentation of evidence in TNC focus groups);
- the preceding three points unite the following targets within the Globalisation and Marginalisation Programme of the Norwegian Research Council: globalisation, poverty, education and human rights;
- psychological analysis is used as the basis for an interdisciplinary approach that draws on the strengths of sociology, political science, business studies, anthropology, international relations and cultural studies.

Results expected

A contribution to overcoming discourses of blaming between the rich and poor, thus facilitating dialogue on the implementation of global structures that avoid poverty; motivation of more TNC executives and decision-makers to create spaces for dialogues with the poor with the goal of making joint action plans; building trust in the feasibility of co-operation in building an overarching structure that enables fair and free market competition to take place within it. Concrete results will include: TNC-poor dialogue groups and internal TNC focus groups that work on a joint action plan to confront global poverty; several articles and books, including a strategy handbook designed to be useful to leading executives in TNCs and policy-makers

potentially in partnership or negotiation with them; dissemination of theoretical and policy implications to relevant global decision-makers through focus groups, seminars, colloquia and mass media outlets.

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