

# **Traumatized by Humiliation in Times of Globalization: Transforming Humiliation into Constructive Meaning?**

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## **Overview**

The phenomenon of humiliation is currently gaining significance, not least for victims of disasters and care-givers. In former times, rulers were not held responsible for looking after the well-being of their subjects. Rulers fought their wars over honor and land and the suffering of their subjects went unmentioned. When people perished, through human-made or natural disaster, and if they were traumatized, this meant little.

At present, this state-of-affairs is in the process of changing, albeit only in a piecemeal fashion. Whenever disasters are caused or responded to in negligent or fraudulent ways – for example, when some line their pockets with the funds intended for victims – this is increasingly felt to be humiliating. The reason for this change is that human rights introduce a new moral frame, a moral prerogative that stipulates that every human being deserves to be treated as equal in dignity. Human rights turn practices that were normal for thousands of years, namely that higher beings preside over lesser beings, into an illicit and humiliating violation. Therefore, the deepest trauma, within the new framework of human rights, might in some cases develop post-disaster, from being treated in ways that remove dignity, rather than from the disaster itself.

This chapter lays out the changing role of humiliation for trauma and how it is essential for meaning-making and resilience in the spirit of Viktor Frankl's work, particularly in current times of moral transition. Frankl calls for developing a wider

horizon, both within ourselves and out in the world. In practice, today, this means learning how to walk the talk, both within each individual and in relation to others, and how to build a sustainable global community. Care-givers, in their pivotal role, carry a primary responsibility to help bring about these transformations.

### Introduction

This chapter is part of an anthology with Viktor Emil Frankl's seminal work as guiding paradigm. The author of this paper read all of Frankl's early work when she was fifteen and it helped her survive. She was born in 1954 into one of the many millions of displaced families from Central Europe who lived in Germany. Already as a small child, the horrors of the Holocaust accompanied her – she had nightmares every night and feared she would be killed immediately if found. Her family's trauma of having lost their homeland (her parents are from Silesia) added to her deep sense of anomie. As a so-called "refugee-child," she grew up with a kind of minus-identity of not belonging and of feeling alienated from humanity. Her sense of identity could be described as "here where we live is not our home, but there is no home for us to return to. We are unwelcome guests on this planet."

Her parents' trauma informed also the rest of her life. Even today, sixty years later, her parents have not recovered. They have disengaged from the earthly world that proved to be so hostile to them, and they pray for hours every day – in other words, already before death, they live beyond Earth. The author's work – dedicating her life to "never again" – is the only consolation that she can offer her parents, and she does so in Frankl's spirit.

When we study Frankl's work, we see that he succeeded in creating lifesaving meaning by widening his horizon in two ways, namely outward and inward. Frankl was interviewed when he was ninety years old (Scully, 1995). Let us listen to Frankl's voice and see how he lifted his eyes to the sky, upward and outward:

If you call "religious" a man who believes in what I call a Supermeaning, a meaning so comprehensive that you can no longer grasp it, get hold of it in rational intellectual terminology, then one should feel free to call me religious, really. And actually, I have come to define religion as an expression, a manifestation, of not only man's will to meaning, but of man's longing for an ultimate meaning, that is to say a meaning that is so comprehensive that it is no longer comprehensible... But it becomes a matter of believing rather than thinking, of faith rather than intellect. The positing of a supermeaning that evades mere rational grasp is one of the main tenets of logotherapy, after all. And a religious person may identify Supermeaning as something paralleling a Superbeing, and this Superbeing we would call God (Scully, 1995, quoted from <http://print.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft9504/scully.html>).

Let us now see how Frankl also turned his eyes inward. Even while suffering utter humiliation by sadistic Nazi SS guards, he did not lose his control of his inner life. He found hope and strength by thinking of his wife. Those who had nothing to live for were the first to die in the concentration camp. He wrote, "And as we stumbled on for miles, slipping on icy spots, supporting each other time and again, dragging one another up and

onward, nothing was said, but we both knew: each of us was thinking of his wife” (Frankl, 1985, p. 56).

This chapter is dedicated to analyzing the role of humiliation for trauma and trauma recovery. It argues that humiliation is gaining significance for the field of trauma research in tact with the progress of the human rights movement and the coming together of humankind (a phenomenon that is part of globalization). Humiliation plays a role as soon as a disaster is perceived to be caused by human negligence or disregard (for example, by global warming, or war), and it is as relevant in all post-disaster situations, including natural disasters, when rescue efforts and rebuilding strategies are inadequate.

This chapter makes the point that learning about humiliation dynamics and how to cope with them is essential for meaning-making and resilience, and that Viktor Frankl draws before us the path. Frankl lifted his eyes to a higher order of meaning, and he turned his eyes inward, finding the image of his wife that gave him strength. This chapter attempts to achieve precisely this, the widening of the explanatory horizon for the reader, by offering a journey, a journey of reaching both more outward and more inward.

This chapter has particular relevance for two sections in this book. It is pertinent to the “impact of disasters on the care givers” section because learning about humiliation, so as to be better prepared to tackle it, is not only essential for victims, it is perhaps even more vital for helpers and care-givers. And this chapter is furthermore of core importance if we want to understand the “impact of human-made disasters,” because humiliation is related to intentional human interference – usually, one does not feel humiliated by an animal, or by an accident, or by natural disaster where no consciously intending actor can be identified.

This chapter is written on the background of the transdisciplinary work on humiliation carried out by the author of this chapter. Humiliation Studies is a very new field (see an overview over the current state-of-research further down), due to two main reasons: First, the phenomenon of humiliation itself began to gather significance only very recently, in the wake of a globalizing world that is exposed to the human rights message. Second, studying humiliation needs to be transdisciplinary in order to be comprehensive, a fact that makes it difficult to fit into traditional research – academic disciplines usually also discipline their scholars. In her work, the author draws on political science, sociology, anthropology, history, theology, social psychology and clinical psychology – see <http://www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin02.php>.

The author began building a global network entitled Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies (HumanDHS, <http://www.humiliationstudies.org>) in 2001, subsequent to four years of doctoral research on humiliation (Lindner, 2000a). In 1996, she set out to design her research project on the concept of humiliation and its role in genocide and war. German history served as starting point. It is often assumed that the humiliation of the Germans through the Versailles Treaties after World War I was partly responsible for the Holocaust and the Second World War. From 1997-2001, she interviewed over 200 people who were either implicated in or knowledgeable about the genocides in Rwanda, Somalia, and Nazi Germany. Since 2001, she included more cases, and currently studies Japan. Her research indicates that, indeed, the dynamics of humiliation may be at the core of war, genocides, and current phenomena such as global terror.

In the following, it will be shown that the phenomenon of humiliation is currently gaining significance because it is in the process of changing: humiliation presently

transmutes from being regarded as “prosocial lesson,” to being deemed as “antisocial violation.” Understanding the historical dimension of this change, which also deeply impacts on experiences of trauma, represents the lifting of our eyes. Only by understanding the larger context, can we insert humiliating experiences in constructive and meaningful ways into our larger world view. Understanding the historical dimension, however, also facilitates the inward turning of the eyes, humanizing our own inner world. Both movements are essential for meaning-making and resilience in times of crisis, for both victims and care-givers, particularly at the current point of historic crises.

Before delving into the chapter in more depth, two introductory sections are inserted. One gives a brief overview over the current-state-of-the-art of research in humiliation. The other makes the point that care-givers are also victims and that this aspect is often overlooked. Yet, for care-givers to be successful, taking into account their own victimhood might represent the most important intervention.

### **Care-givers are also victims**

When the author started her field work for her doctorate on humiliation in Africa, she was surprised to find that among the most humiliated people she met were the helpers at lower echelons of humanitarian organizations. Many had drifted from idealism to cynicism. Virtually everybody had read *The Road to Hell: The Ravaging Effects of Foreign Aid and International Charity* (Maren, 1997), a book that had touched a nerve in many. Usually, most helpers began their mission inspired by human rights ideals, ideals of equal dignity for all, but soon had to realize, painfully, that they were caught in a larger context, which sometimes included their own superiors, where power was still defined in old top-down ways and not seldom at the expense of human rights.

*Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace - Or War* (Anderson, 1999), was another book that addressed the conundrum of help and its embeddedness into less than efficient global mechanisms and institutions. “Failed and failing states pose perhaps the most dangerous threat to the security of the U.S. and the world community, as well as the millions of inhabitants of those states. However, the international community has not found a reliable way to build sustainable peace and development in many of the world’s neediest areas” (Wisconsin Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies et al., 2003).

The readers of this book, while trying to help traumatized communities, face their own limits and the fact that the larger context traumatizes us all. Currently, the world is dominated by large-scale macro-level power dynamics that do not necessarily serve the common good of humankind. Global warming as much as global terror, combined with a lack of “political will” to solve global and local crises, are conditions that hamper every helper’s work, and victimize everybody.

The author’s personal stance might serve as an example:

I catch myself being envious of people who are able to close their eyes in blissful ignorance and stay uninformed of the crises humankind is facing. I also feel ashamed, ashamed of being part of the species *Homo sapiens* that behaves like locusts, short-sightedly destroying the resources they depend on for long-term survival – I feel ashamed when I hear that our global problems are not tackled properly because of so-

called “lack of political will.” Furthermore, I feel humiliated when some individuals choose to peddle their ignorance as so-called Realism and demean those others who try to fight for more far-sighted awareness. In short, I feel everything, from traumatized, to ashamed and humiliated. I feel traumatized by global crisis, ashamed of global ignorance, and humiliated by people of short-sighted righteousness. I feel even more humiliated by people who indulge in double standards – I mean those who speak of human rights and human dignity and betray their words with their deeds. I resonate with what Stephan Feuchtwang wrote to me on November 14, 2002, in a personal note: “To recognise humanity hypocritically and betray the promise humiliates in the most devastating way by denying the humanity professed” (Lindner, 2006, quoted from her personal notes).

As a response, a response that gives her personal existence deep and fulfilling meaning, the author dedicates her life to building Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies as a global network. She does not wish to work as a helper at a less than global level, because she feels too traumatized from having witnessed hard-working care-givers be destroyed in the brink of a moment by the larger context within which they were trying to help. She believes that we, who consider ourselves “rescuers,” have to at least invest part of our energy into building a *decent* global community, following Avishai Margalit’s call for a *Decent Society* (Margalit, 1996), in which institutions no longer humiliate citizens. In practice, this means working for the Millennium Goals, and for building global institutions that are based on human rights, institutions that free the top global level from the current might-is-right power dynamics that contravene human rights at all levels.

If helpers try to evade the trauma entailed in the larger global context into which we are all embedded, by focusing on “smaller” traumas at national, communal or domestic levels, the interference from the larger world will undermine their motivation. The Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies network therefore attempts to have a global outlook, superimposing a global focus on our attention to the trauma and humiliation that occur at lower levels. This represents the turning of the eyes more outward than usual.

The members of the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies network also attempts to turn their eyes more inward than usual, by being a seed for a new kind of community. The members for the HumanDHS network try to be self-reflective (Nagata, 2005) and walk their talk in their own actions (see <http://www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/annualmeetings.php>). Many human rights defenders, helpers, and care-givers, when accumulating frustration, fall back on old-fashioned authoritarian top-down behavior – some behave aggressively and lash out, even at their own friends and colleagues, thus compounding humiliation and trauma.

On the HumanDHS website the following paragraph explains the HumanDHS vision:

Competitive and adversarial behavioral styles that draw their strength from dominating and humiliating others have no room in our work. We wish to encourage “selfless leadership” and would wish to avoid including in our group autocratic “big-ego” styles.... The overall framework for our work that we hold to be important is that we wish to work *for* and not *against*, namely for equal dignity for all. And, even though we aim at raising awareness for the destructive consequences of cycles of humiliation and the suffering of people who are being exposed to humiliating treatment, we do not

wish to engage in violently humiliating humiliators, which would merely turn the spiral of humiliation further. We rather wish to promote respectful approaches also to humiliators and the non-violent humbling of humiliators (quoted from <http://www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/whoweare.php#walkingthetalk>).

### Current state-of-the-art with respect to research on humiliation

The phenomenon of humiliation has become visible only very recently (see explanations further down), and therefore, only very few researchers have studied this phenomenon explicitly so far. Mostly, the phenomenon of humiliation figures implicitly, for example, in literature on violence and war. The view that humiliation may be a particularly forceful phenomenon is supported, however, by the research of some authors (Gilligan, 1996; Hale, 1994; Hartling & Luchetta, 1999; Klein, 1991; Lewis, 1971; Miller, 1993; Negrao et al., 2005; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996; Retzinger, 1991; Scheff, 1990; Vogel & Lazare, 1990; Volkan, 2004). Cultural differences have been highlighted (see, among others, Smith & Bond, 1999).

The notion of *oppression* is related to humiliation (Deutsch, 2006), as is the concept of *domination* (Pettit, 1996). There is, furthermore, a significant literature in philosophy on the *politics of recognition* and *ressentiment* (Honneth, 1995; Honneth, 1997; Scheler, 1912). Using the examples of Ethiopia and Eritrea, Liah Greenfeld suggests that resentment plays a central role in nation building (Greenfeld, 1992; Greenfeld, 1996). The Philosopher Avishai Margalit's (1996) calls for a *Decent Society*, in which institutions no longer humiliate citizens.

According to Goffman, *face* is the positive social value a person wishes to attain for herself in a social interaction. Humiliation can be described as a loss of face; the picture one wishes to present is suddenly discredited (Goffman, 1953; Goffman, 1967). The relationship between *guilt*, *shame* and *aggression* has been addressed (see, for example, Tangney et al., 1992) as has the relationship between *anger* and *aggression* (see, for example, Averill, 2001). The link between *humiliation* and *aggression*, however, has not received much attention among researchers so far. Among the few scholars addressing this topic are Mischel & De Smet, 2000, who explain that *rejection-sensitive* men may get "hooked" on situations of debasement where they can feel humiliated. Furthermore, *malignant narcissism* has been linked to humiliation. Feelings of humiliation and shame may lead to narcissistic rage and acts of aggression meant to lessen pain and increase self-worth; international leaders, when publicly humiliated, in some cases, may instigate mass destruction and war (Steinberg, 1991; Steinberg, 1996). *Hazing* and *bullying* entail humiliation at their core (Olweus, 1993, is a pioneer in research on bullying). And at last, there is also a link between help and humiliation; help may be resented by low-status groups (Nadler, 2002).

The author of this paper has focused on *transdisciplinary* work on humiliation that includes all fields from political science, sociology, anthropology, history, theology, social psychology and clinical psychology – see, among others, Lindner, 2006, and a number of full online texts on <http://www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin02.php>. According to the author, the conflicts in Rwanda and Somali, as much as global terrorism, can be described more

accurately as *clashes of humiliation* than as *clashes between civilizations* (Huntington, 1996).

Let us at this point have a look at the definition of humiliation that emanates from the author's work. The word humiliation refers to three different elements of the experience – the perpetrator's act, the victim's feeling, and the social process (the reader is asked to infer which element is alluded to at any given point, because otherwise language becomes too convoluted). To add to the complexity, different cultures, different groups within a culture, and different individuals within a group often disagree as to whether or not an experience is eligible to be defined as humiliation, and since all such decisions are subjective, each side of a dispute will typically insist on applying the word to its own experience and deny it to the other.

Underlying all cultural variance, however, we find one single core feature in all dynamics of humiliation, namely that it entails the pushing down and holding down of something or somebody (see relevant work on the embodied mind and spatial metaphors by Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). When we search further, in an attempt to understand how this holding down practice may be employed by people, we discern that two contradictory scripts can be built around this practice and that these two scripts permeate all world cultures (if analyzed in the spirit of a Weberian *ideal-type* approach, see a good explanation in Coser, 1977, p. 224). The author labels these two cultural definitions, which are mutually exclusive, *honor humiliation* and *dignity humiliation*.

Hitler played out the script of honor humiliation. He plunged the world into World War II, supposedly remedying the national humiliation of Germany that had been inflicted on Germany by ways of the Versailles Treaties at the end of World War I with the aim to keep Germans down and discourage them from repeating aggression. Unfortunately, this strategy backfired and Hitler invited all Germans into a narrative of national humiliation, for which he offered war as remedy – and millions paid with their lives. Hitler translated feelings of humiliation into atrocious acts of humiliation and turned the cycle of humiliation into suicidal homicide, not unlike today's so-called suicide-bombers, only that Hitler sacrificed millions for his vision of redeeming honor humiliation.

The modern definition of humiliation – dignity humiliation – is very different. This contemporary definition is based on the human rights ideal of equal dignity for all. The first paragraph of Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948, reads: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." Human rights endow every single human being with an inner core of equal dignity that ought not be held down. The human rights revolution turns formerly legitimate humbling of underlings into illegitimate humiliation. Feelings of humiliation among the downtrodden are the very fuel of the human rights revolution. In the world of honor, holding down underlings is no violation; it only becomes a violation in a human rights frame that prescribes equal dignity for all. In the world of honor, only the elites have the right to interpret an attempt to put them down as violation, not their underlings.

Human rights introduce two transformations, (1) the dismantling of the tyrants of our world and (2) the dismantling, in addition, of all tyrannical top-down systems and their ways of defining human conduct, including all dominating practices that we ourselves might still employ.

Mandela – in contrast to Hitler – demonstrated how the explosiveness of feelings of humiliation can be channeled into constructive social change. This constructive channeling, incidentally, is at the core of recovery from trauma, both mass trauma and individual trauma. In Frankl’s spirit, it means redeeming humiliation by ending cycles of humiliation.

The historical beginning of the transition from honor humiliation to dignity humiliation can be pinpointed quite accurately, at least in the English speaking world. The core feature of humiliation – the holding-down movement – saw a differentiation around 250 years ago, when honor humiliation split from the newly emerging dignity humiliation. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the earliest recorded use of *to humiliate* meaning “to mortify or to lower or to depress the dignity or self-respect of someone” does not occur until 1757. Prior to 1757 (and still today, in some world regions), holding down a person – demeaning, denigrating, degrading her – was not necessarily regarded as illegitimate. The verbs *to humble* and *to humiliate* were used rather interchangeably. Around 250 years ago, the meanings of those two verbs separated and developed into diametrically opposed directions in the English language: *humility* remained to be seen as a virtue, while *humiliation* acquired the taste of an illicit violation.

Apart from being a complex phenomenon, with two fundamentally irreconcilable cultural definitions and scripts, humiliation has another important feature, namely that of potency. In *Making Enemies: Humiliation and International Conflict* (Lindner, 2006), chapter seven is entitled “The Humiliation Addiction,” explaining that feelings of humiliation can turn out to be as strong and compelling as an addiction. For drug addicts, for example, self-interest is replaced by their craving for the next fix. Likewise, people who feel humiliated may hunger for revenge and might act in ways that lead to suicide and homicide. Trauma experts need to understand the potency of humiliation. Philosopher Avishai Margalit proposes that some people may become obsessively attached to feeling humiliated, not least because this secures the “benefits” of the victim status and an entitlement for retaliation (Margalit, 2002).

The potency of humiliation calls upon trauma experts to be very aware and extremely cautious when bringing human rights to the downtrodden, marginalized and underprivileged, for example, to those who are neglected in disaster scenarios. Human rights defenders need to do more than nurture and teach a sense of violation. They have to show and embody the Mandela and Frankl way out of feelings of humiliation, because these feelings are so strong that they can lead not only to depressed apathy or noble empowerment, but also to violent backlashes.

If human rights promoters are not cautious, the “fuel” of the human rights revolution – feelings of humiliation – are so awesome that they can eat their own children. In Rwanda, not the masters, but the former underlings, the Hutus, when they had the means, attempted to eradicate their former master in a genocide. The wisdom of Mandela saved the white elite in South Africa from this fate. Feeling victimized by honor humiliation can lead to Hitler-like mayhem, while feeling victimized by dignity humiliation causes even deeper wounds, since it means being excluded from the family of humankind altogether. Trauma experts and care-givers in disasters have to channel those explosive feelings into constructive advocacy of social change in the spirit of Mandela and Frankl, because otherwise helpers may contribute to compounding trauma rather than alleviating it.



Let us now trace the transition from honor humiliation to dignity humiliation and how it played out in history.

### **The historical transition from honor humiliation to dignity humiliation**

Natural disasters, disasters that are not human-made, traumatize people, but they do not humiliate them. The aspect of humiliation is missing when there is no perpetrator (unless one believes in God wishing to humiliate his sinful followers by sending disasters). Victimhood and trauma are less intense in natural disasters than when the same pain is flowing from fellow human beings, particularly when this happens in the framework of human rights. The reason for this is that the phenomenon of humiliation is deeply relational.

The first question asked about the 2003 blackout in North America, for example, was “Was it terrorism?” The relief was almost palpable, when it became clear that there was no terrorism involved. The hardship was identical, but it was easier to bear when people knew that the inconvenience was not the result of another terrorist “message of humiliation.” The academic term for this phenomenon is the so-called *controllability dimension*. Research shows, that we only get angry and want to harm others, either overtly or covertly, when we believe they could have avoided hurting us (Allred, 1999; Averill, 1993).

Humiliation seeps in, whenever we conclude that disasters are caused by human negligence (global climate change, for example, that could have been avoided with more care), or when disasters are responded to in negligent and fraudulent ways, for example, when some line their pockets with the funds intended for victims. In the latter case, the deepest trauma might develop post-disaster, from being defrauded in ways that remove dignity, rather than from the disaster itself. In other words, we can have trauma without humiliation, but also trauma caused by humiliation.

The point intended here is that the weighting of human responsibility, the gauging of what can be excused or not, is not fixed, but subject to the larger normative frame that people employ. And this frame has changed over the past millennia. In this chapter, it is argued that much of the trauma that is experienced in today’s world is related to this historical shift. Merely becoming aware of this larger context can calm desperation; after all, the current human rights movement is only very young and there is no reason to lose hope and give up support.

### ***Humiliation was once seen as negligible pain, or even as prosocial lesson***

Earlier the historical turning point of 1757 was introduced, when the practice of “holding down people” moved from being recommended as “prosocial” to being condemned as “antisocial.” Let us now try to make meaning out of this transition and understand in which context it occurred. To do that, we need to go much farther back in history. The lifting our eyes up to this larger historical context may be vital for helpers and victims.

There are people, who believe that it is futile to think that humankind can be improved. Homo sapiens, they say, is hard-wired to focus on narrow self-interest, disregard others’ sufferings, maim, kill and perpetrate mayhem. However, this is a

misconception. There is no archeological evidence for systematic war prior to 10,000 years ago. There is no proof of organized fighting among early hunters and gatherers (Ury, 1999). “The Hobbesian view of humans in a constant state of ‘Warre’ is simply not supported by the archaeological record” (MacArthur, 2003).

In other words, when we study the historic facts, we find that for millions of years, hominids evolving towards *Homo sapiens* roamed the globe as hunters and gatherers without engaging in systematic war. They lived in small bands of approximately 200 individuals who enjoyed rather egalitarian societal institutions and remarkably high qualities of life.

The hunter-gatherer way of life dominated the globe until about 10,000 years ago, when it “hit the wall,” and experienced a turning point, akin to the one 10,000 years later, in 1757. Around 10,000 years ago, rather suddenly in terms of long-term history, hunter-gatherers no longer could merely wander off and find untouched abundance of wild food in the next valley. The reason was that other people were already there (*circumscription* is the anthropological term). All the easily accessible parts of planet Earth were inhabited by *Homo sapiens*. We could call this the first round of globalization for humankind.

William Ury, anthropologist, and director of the Harvard University Project on Preventing War, draws up a simplified depiction of history (Ury, 1999). He pulls together elements from anthropology, game theory and conflict studies to describe three major types of society: a) simple hunter-gatherers, b) complex agriculturists, and c) the currently emerging knowledge society.

In Ury’s system, simple hunter-gatherers lived in a world of coexistence and open networks, within which conflicts were negotiated, rather than addressed by coercion. The abundance of wild food represented an *expandable pie of resources* that did not force opponents into win-lose paradigms.

10,000 years ago, when the globe had filled up, and hunting and gathering turned increasingly unfeasible, humankind came up with a response, namely agriculture (*intensification* is the anthropological term). However, as Ury spells out, this response was rather problematic. No longer did abundance of wild food offer an expandable pie of resources. Land is either mine or yours and represents a *fixed pie* that pushes antagonists into win-lose situations. Complex agriculturalists therefore lived in a world of coercion, within closed hierarchical pyramids of power.

If we look at Ury’s theory, we can add that dependence on land, with its inherent win-lose framing, also triggered what international relations theory calls the *security dilemma*. (Collins, 2004; Jervis et al., 1985; Herz, 1950; Snyder, 1985). The term was coined by John Herz in 1950, to explain why states who have no intention to harm one another, may still end up in competition and war. The security dilemma could be described as follows: “I have to amass power, because I am scared. When I amass weapons, you get scared. You amass weapons, I get more scared.” Thus an arms race and finally war are likely to be triggered. The security dilemma can be heightened or attenuated. A culture of male prowess tends to be a response to a strong security dilemma and makes it even stronger. In Germany, for example, at the outset of World War I, a cult of the offensive, a cult of militarism, a cult of having to hit before being attacked, increased the problem instead of solving it. (The security dilemma can also get weaker. This happens, when more actors play a role than only heads of states, as, for example, civil society. Its logical

underpinnings disappear in tact with global community defining and structuring itself as one single unit.)

In other words, the world of honorable domination/submission could be regarded as an adaptation to a strong security dilemma, which emanated from the fact that land became the resource of most of humankind, a resource that by definition is not expandable. In a world of honorable domination/submission, nobody doubts that it is God's will or nature's order that some people are born higher and ought to hold down lesser beings. From kow-towing to regular beatings and killings so as to "remind" underlings of their "due lowly place," even the most atrocious methods are seen as "honorable medicine." Victims have no right to invoke the notion of humiliation as a form of violation. Only the masters themselves, when their privileged position were questioned, can appeal to humiliation as an infringement on their honor and redeem it, for example, by going to duel.

Human rights, in contrast to honorable domination/submission, represent an adaptation to new circumstances, namely to the current round of globalization that leads up to a global knowledge society, which removes the security dilemma as defining principle.

***Today, humiliation is regarded as a violation of human dignity***

Ury posits that a knowledge society resembles the hunter-gatherer model because the pie of resources – knowledge – appears to be infinitely expandable (there are always new ideas to be developed), lending itself to win-win solutions. This type of society moves away from rigid hierarchical structures toward the open network of our earliest hunter-gatherer ancestors. Negotiation and contract replace command lines, and coexistence is the primary strategy.

Under the security dilemma, the negative emotion that ruled the world was fear, fear of attack. One community feared the other, the enemy. Human rights, in contrast, invite all human beings into one single human family, where everybody enjoys equal dignity. All are "neighbors," no longer "friends" versus "enemies." Everybody is told that he or she can expect to be treated with respect. And everybody feels humiliated if this respect is failing. Thus, while the period of honor was defined by fear, collective fear of attack from outgroups, human rights introduce humiliation as defining negative emotion – feelings of humiliation as a reaction to failing respect for equal dignity on the part of each individual qua being an individual, no longer qua being part of a collective.

Prior to globalization, as long as humankind lived in a world of fragmentation between "us" and "them," all were steeped in a host of malign framings and biases. People skewed reality and developed biases that favored ones self and ones ingroup and disfavored others (so-called *attribution errors*). People created *moral boundaries* where individuals or groups inside the moral ingroup boundary were seen as deserving a better moral treatment than those outside this boundary (Opatow, 1995, Coleman, 2000).

All these malignancies are undone by the *ingathering* of the human species into one single ingroup, the family of humankind that is jointly responsible for maintaining their home planet (*ingathering* is the correct anthropological term). Human rights offer the appropriate all-encompassing moral framework that includes all human beings (and increasingly also other living creatures).

The fact that we live in times of transition toward an all-embracing moral ingroup becomes particularly visible when it fails. When we think back to Nazi-Germany, we believe that German neighbors ought to have stood up and not stood by when their Jewish neighbors were transported away. We do not accept excuses of “we were afraid of reprisals, after all we have our family to think of; and by the way, we had a sick grandmother to take care of.” We believe that Germans ought to have had a larger horizon. Their responsibility for their family ought not to have overridden their compassion for their neighbors. They ought to have protected all human beings, equally, from persecution. We deem it to be deeply immoral to treat some lives as being worth less. No price should have been too high to protect the overarching value of equal dignity for all human beings. We expect that everybody in Germany ought to have turned their eyes up to this overarching value.

If we turn our eyes inward, and ask where moral courage comes from, then it emanates, not least, from using our brain properly. New research on emotions indicates that our behavior is regulated by *feedback loops* that are organized hierarchically (Powers, 1973, Powers, 1998). Superordinate loops attend to longer-term, abstract goals. Embedded within them are subordinate loops for short-term tasks. We create or maintain destructive conflict, when we allow lower-order mechanisms to supersede higher-order mechanisms. We invite failure when we permit phylogenically more immediate and automated emotional processes to override more abstracted regulatory processes. Long-term goals require that we refrain from jumping at them with short-term mental tools. In other words, the evolution of the human brain’s structure mirrors the lifting of the eyes to higher-order contexts and solutions.

Let us now turn to research on trauma and disaster coping, and how the increasing significance of the experience of humiliation needs to be taken in into both theory and practice.

### **How humiliation gained significance for research on trauma and coping with disaster**

In the following, a continuum will be drawn – see Table 1 – that maps out the transition from trauma without humiliation to trauma that is precisely traumatic because of humiliation (this section is adapted from Lindner, 2001).

As discussed earlier, natural disasters such as an earthquakes, floods, or draughts, cause trauma without humiliation, when the natural disaster occurs arbitrarily and no actor can be made responsible. Even an accident involving an actor may fall into this category. After a car accident, a driver, who involuntarily caused the accident, may apologize to the traumatized victim. The relationship between actor and victim may thus entail trauma, but no humiliation.

Humiliation may enter a relationship also by chance. For example, rebels may kidnap arbitrary victims and treat them in humiliating ways. The hostages will feel humiliated and develop resentment and hatred towards the kidnappers. People who formerly were not party to any cycle of humiliation may thus, inadvertently, be drawn into it. The infamous strategy of “divide-and-rule” instrumentalizes this dynamic.

Humiliation may also enter a relationship in a piecemeal fashion. Intimate relationships such as, for example, marriage may develop into humiliating relationships

over time (Vogel & Lazare, 1990). The same dynamics may unfold at macro levels; history shows that dictators may be loved and welcomed at first, just to bring humiliation over their followers later. Somalia enthusiastically welcomed Siad Barre in 1969. Hitler started his career as a “Robin Hood” figure (Lindner, 2000b), poised to “rescue” Germans and Germanness. The Rwandan Hutu elite lifted up formerly suppressed Hutu and aimed at creating a state in which Hutu could live with dignity. Utter humiliation of neighbors and minorities, even genocide, was the result in all three cases, Somalia, Hitler-Germany, and Rwanda.

Trauma might also be brought on a person intentionally, to teach this person humility, and the victim may even accept this lesson humbly. The *Bible* recounts how Job learned to “understand” that God wanted to teach him humility – the true believer learns from Job’s struggle that his efforts are exemplary, namely not to reject God’s strikes as “gruesome humiliation” but accept them as “beneficial humbling.” Indeed, it is typical for hierarchical honor societies, where humiliation is a routine to maintain the ranking order, that masters bring trauma on people intentionally, to teach them that they are lowly or unworthy, and, sometimes, people may accept this as perfectly legitimate. History books describe how duels were means to calibrate ranks in honorable ranking orders. At the micro level, “breaking the will” of children was recommended as child rearing method – the aim was to teach children obedience in a hierarchy (see Miller, 1983).

In other cases, however, victims may react differently, and not accept that they are being rightfully humbled. A prisoner waiting for capital punishment, for example, perhaps just too poor to pay a lawyer who could prove his innocence, may be expected to object to the views of the judge that this situation is to be described as “beneficial humbling.” In hierarchical societies, “masters” may generally believe that any abasement they inflict on underlings is “good for them,” while the supposed “happy beneficiaries” may violently object to this definition. Typically, in a democratic society that is built on human rights principles and where citizens expect to be treated with respect as equals among equals, victims subjected to trauma that aims to teach them that they are unworthy, will perceive this as an illegitimate violation.

Table 1 lays out a spectrum ranging from trauma that does not entail humiliation (left pole) to trauma that is traumatic precisely through the presence of humiliation (right pole). It becomes apparent that the right pole is introduced by human rights ideals that protect individual dignity and turn its violation into trauma.

<b>Trauma and humiliation</b>			
<b>Trauma without humiliation</b>		<b>← →</b>	<b>Humiliation as core of trauma</b>
No actor	Actors are involved, but not intending to humiliate me, at least not initially		An actor intends to humiliate me

(1) A natural disaster happens to me, and I see no perpetrator	(2) An accident happens to me and the perpetrator apologizes	(3) An accident happens to me and the perpetrator treats me in a humiliating way	(4) An accident leads to a humiliating situation after some time	(6) An actor wants to teach me unworthiness in a context where this is routine behavior and everybody behaves in this way	(7) An actor wants to teach me my unworthiness in a context where this is not routine but illegitimate and violates my inner core of dignity
Earth-quake, flood	A car accident; the driver apologizes	Rebels arbitrarily kidnap people	Some cases of marriage; dictators	Duels; “breaking the will” of children; torture, in an honor context	Mobbing and bullying, in a human rights context

Table 1: Trauma and humiliation

If we think of possible future research, the topic of humiliation is not just a psychological issue; it is inherently transdisciplinary, transcultural, and transreligious. In many cultures and religions we find “liberation” branches that define humiliation as violation of equal dignity, in contrast to more traditional branches that equate the practice of humiliating underlings with their “due humbling.” *Ubuntu*, for example, the African philosophy and practice that is based on “I am because you are” can serve as an example for a “liberation” culture.

As soon as equal dignity for all has become the guiding principle in a community, the academic community included, the topic of humiliation is bound to gain significance, because no longer do underlings suffer in silence. Disasters caused or compounded by human negligence and disregard are no longer accepted, on the contrary, they are deemed to be profoundly humiliating. Scholars need to study these dynamics in order to help channel them in Frankl’s spirit toward constructive action.

As discussed earlier, the core feature of meaning-making in Frankl’s work is the widening of our horizon, both inward and outward. For the case of research on trauma, humiliation, recovery and resilience, this means that these phenomena need to be studied in a transdisciplinary fashion, starting at the micro level, for example, with neuropsychology and psychotherapy (turning our eyes inward), while at the same time proceeding through the entire gamut of disciplines up to political science, theology, and history (turning our eyes up and outward). As we have seen, feelings of humiliation are no stand-alone phenomena, but embedded into scripts that are provided by larger cultural and religious contexts, which, in turn, are subject to long-term anthropological adaptations throughout history. Not only emotion research is called upon to take these topics seriously, also all other social disciplines. Psychology of coping with trauma and humiliation can influence not only mainstream psychology but the entire array of other social sciences up to the macro-level of political science, and vice versa.

To illustrate this point, suicide bombing, for example, motivated by humiliation, is a phenomenon worth studying by psychology as much as by political science, or theology. The current chasm between the “West” and the “East” is as much psychological as political. Disasters, natural or human-made, are embedded into these larger contexts. Whenever “political will” is lacking to prevent genocide (see Darfur, for example), this humiliates not only its immediate victims, but the humanity in all who have been touched by human rights message and Frankl’s work.

The Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies network has therefore three main agendas, Research (transdisciplinary), Education, and Intervention. The members of the network combine transdisciplinarity, including bridging the gap to practice, while at the same time self-reflectively focusing on themselves and making sure that they walk their talk (in other words, they turn their eyes upward and inward).

### **The role played by gender**

As long as humankind lived in a world of fragmentation between “us” and “them,” caught in the security dilemma, identity constructs such as patriotism were developed as was the so-called gender division. Joshua Goldstein, 2001, shows how war and the gender division are interlinked. The world of honor was divided, among others, into a female domestic sphere, and a male public sphere.

For centuries, domestic chastisement, for example, was an entitlement and duty for masters to carry out – a disobedient wife or child or slave had to accept being brutally punished. The pain that was inflicted was seen as “prosocial pain,” as a “necessary lesson,” necessary to achieve calm and stability in the hierarchical system.

To use the author’s person as an example, she grew up in a rather conservative family where a “good woman” is called upon to be subservient to her husband. The author struggled for years with this definition and was less than efficient in making the transition to redefining what a “good woman” means for her, namely a woman who deserves equal dignity as compared to a man and to a husband. For a long while, she merely felt bad.

If we describe her identity in the world of ranked honor, her identity of a “good woman” is to be a respectful and subservient daughter and wife and thus protect the honor of her men; her worldview is that it is nature’s order that she is born as lesser being and that justice is being done when she is chastised in case of disobedience; she sins against her religion and her spiritual orientation when she does not know her due lowly place; for her to demonstrate leadership is to show her daughters the path of due respectful subservience; disaster relief and development need to underpin this framing; conflict transformation is successful when unruly underlings are made to quietly and thankfully accept the authority of their patrons; and the term trauma, like humiliation, is a word that only elites are entitled to invoke.

The author worked as a clinical psychologist in Egypt for seven years (1984-1991), and this indeed represents a definition that is common in the non-Western world.

In contrast, if we translate her identity into a human rights framing, her identity of a “good woman” is to be treated as equal in dignity with her brothers and her husband; her worldview is that it is nature’s order that she deserves to be treated as equal in dignity with everybody else and that justice is being done when her dignity is respected; she sins

against her religion and her spiritual orientation when she allows humiliation to occur, both for herself and others; for her to demonstrate leadership is to show her sons and daughters the path of respect for equal dignity for all; disaster relief and development need to underpin this framing; conflict transformation is successful when underlings are given a voice and elevated to the same level of dignity as everybody else; and the term trauma, like humiliation, is a concept that can be used to bring help to the downtrodden.

Human rights are not just a moral call; they are also very practical and advantageous. They free human abilities that were suppressed under the conditions of the security dilemma. A world of equal dignity for all is favorable for everybody, because the old division of elites dominating inferiors handicapped all participants: subordinates were disallowed to bring their leadership into society, and superordinates had no chance to enjoy caring and nurturing. Fathers, for example, did not take pleasure in domestic life; they would not change the diapers of their babies, play with them, and see them mature. Inversely, their wives would refrain from strategic decisions and follow their husbands' guidance. Both were at a loss, both sacrificed the fulfillment that life in its entirety has on offer, in caring and in leadership. Also society at large was at a loss, because it underutilized available talents for leadership, innovative creativity, and nurturing.

To employ the metaphor of the body, men were permitted to only use their right sword arm while their nurturing arm was bound behind their back. Correspondingly, women did not strategize and lead; they were only permitted to use their left arm for maintaining the private sphere. Human rights free both arms for everybody. This is why human rights are so humanizing, not only are they morally compelling, but also deeply useful as defining frame for structuring human life. It is not least therefore that human rights may be regarded as universal and not just a Western scheme.

### **Concluding remarks**

At present, feelings of humiliation abound around the world and traumatize everybody. The problem is that two irreconcilable normative frames currently compete, namely norms of ranked honor versus human rights norms of equal dignity for all. And the problem is compounded by the fact that human rights in many cases are preached, but not realized in the same tact. The result is that from the point of view of one normative frame, the respective other normative frame seems "mad" or "evil." For human rights defenders, for example, people who condone the domination of lesser beings (women, for example) by higher beings (men, for example), seem wicked. And vice versa: People who hold the opposite to be true, namely that God ordained precisely that superiors are placed above inferiors, feel that human rights poke holes into the very rock of true morality. And the powerful in the world, the national elites, even those who use the terminology of human rights, for reasons of "national security" and "national stability," often side with the dominators of the world in practice by ways of "double standards." The result is that all sides feel that the other side humiliates the core of their most treasured moral beliefs, and denigrates their most noble motives. All are at an impasse that traumatizes everybody.

In the eyes of its neighbors, Japan, for example, fails to apologize adequately for the atrocities they committed in the past. Or, Turkey is criticized for not acknowledging the Armenian genocide. Both respond to this criticism from within a culture of national



honor that equates apology with weakness. Honor societies (as defined in this chapter) – including many national leaders – believe in the validity of structuring society and relationships top-down, strong masters ruling over subservient underlings. In contrast, human rights defenders think and feel within the equal dignity framework, where relationships are structured through mutual connection and negotiation. All buzzwords – freedom, security, trauma, humiliation, resilience, healing – have diametrically opposing significations within each of those two frameworks.

This conundrum contributes to creating a world that is split into “terrorists” and “heroes,” responded to by “war on terrorism” on one side, and “heroic resistance of freedom fighters” on the other side. And this split forecloses what the world needs most in order to make globalization humane and fair, including adequate responses to local and global disasters, namely cooperation and joint caring for the survival of humankind and its planet. This split is a global disaster that calls upon all of us to be tackled. We all need to turn our eyes upward in Frankl’s spirit and work for a more meaningful global context.

The task to be tackled is the completion of the historic transition toward human rights, a transition that at present proceeds in a much too jumbled and incomplete fashion. In certain regions of this world, for example, the suffering of people is not yet deemed to be important. When the American Embassy in Kenya was bombed in 1998, American psychiatrists flew in. My Kenyan friends were thankful. However, they shared with the author of this paper, with a certain amount of bitterness, that millions of Africans live under circumstances of poverty and conflict that are more traumatizing than the bombing – trauma represents “normality” for them – and they all have to cope on their own. There are no helpers, care-givers, or funds available to help them, either because of disregard or lack of resources. They are traumatized by normality and they are expected to accept the wounds of trauma quietly and refrain from crying “humiliation!”

Not only in Africa, all around the world, millions live in abject traumatizing poverty. And the transition toward betterment is progressing only in a one-step-forward-two-steps-back fashion. A report drawn up by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2005, found that the gap between rich and poor is now wider than it was a decade ago, both globally and locally. And there is little help in sight. The so-called Doha round of talks which began in 2004, failed again in July 2006. World Trade Organization (WTO) director general Pascal Lamy warned the rich countries: “We have missed a very important opportunity,” and Charity Christian Aid said that the collapse of talks struck “a terrible blow” for the world’s poor (read on <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/5209010.stm>).

The only feature that is on the increase, exponentially, everywhere, is humiliation. Those, who understand the human rights message, feel ever more humiliated. And this humiliation traumatizes us all. To deal with these feelings in the spirit of Viktor Frankl is of utmost importance, because otherwise these feelings could lead to destructive cycles of humiliation.

Helpers and caregivers have a responsibility to not only focus on local disasters but must help build a *decent* global community, in the spirit of Margalit’s call for a *Decent Society* (Margalit, 1996), within which local disasters can be embedded more efficiently. Political will, both globally and locally, has to be mobilized. This entails working for the Millennium Goals and building superordinate global institutions that bring human rights

to global levels, where currently might-is-right power dynamics sour all human rights efforts.

In our history books, the players were usually the rulers, their battles, victories, and defeats. Rebels and revolutionaries received already much less attention. The media or public opinion were absent. The average individual was not worth listening to. The masses or the crowds did not count. They were fodder for the rulers' plans. For thousands of years, rulers fought their wars, and the suffering of their people went unmentioned. People perished, lost their homes, their cities were plundered and burnt, men were killed and women raped and abducted. If they were traumatized, this meant nothing. If they felt humiliated, this meant nothing either. The common man and woman endured the actions of their rulers like sad but unavoidable natural disasters. Their rulers were not held responsible for taking care of the well-being of their subjects. The author's grandmother said to her once, "Wir kleinen Leute können ja sowieso nichts tun. Die da oben machen ja doch was sie wollen," meaning that the masses, the "little people" as she called it, had no power. This was how the older generation felt; this was what dominated their views on life and the world.

The readers of this book, presumably all human rights defenders, disagree with the view that nothing can be done. The author of this paper certainly disagrees. But how should a human rights worker, a helper, a trauma expert, the reader of this book, act efficiently in such a disarray? In the new world of technology, every single individual can become a Hitler, a terrorist, or a Viktor Frankl or Nelson Mandela. The old order honor, a harsh adaptation to the brutal security dilemma, entailed many maligns aspects. Human rights offer a much more benign moral framework. In the spirit of Logotherapy, these benign aspects can be identified and given preeminence, both to enable us to turn our eyes outward and inward. Frankl, at the age ninety, explains "Logotherapy sees the human patient in all his humanness. I step up to the core of the patient's being. And that is a being in search of meaning, a being that is transcending himself, a being capable of acting in love for others... You see, any human being is originally – he may forget it, or repress this – but originally he is a being reaching out for meanings to be fulfilled or persons to be loved" (Scully, 1995, quoted from <http://print.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft9504/scully.html>).

Paul Ray and Sherry Ruth Anderson have surveyed American society for the past thirty years. They wrote a book entitled *The Cultural Creatives* (Ray & Anderson, 2000). They describe how "modernism," or the value orientation of the Wallstreet journal, for example, has triggered two main counter movements, first, the "Traditionals," fundamentalist Christians, for example, who dream of returning to an imagined past, and second the Cultural Creatives, a movement that began with two trends. First there were those who went out to the streets to protest and demonstrate for peace (turning their eyes outward), and then those who focused on inner development, meditation, and "New Age" experiences. The latter two movements initially despised each other; however, at the current point in time, according to Ray and Anderson's surveys, these two trends merge. Already about 25 million Americans, and as many Europeans, fit into the profile of what Ray and Anderson label Cultural Creatives, or those who turn their eyes both inward and outward.

We could conclude that this is reason to be hopeful. The spirit of Viktor Frankl bears fruit. The full title of Ray's and Anderson's book is: *Cultural Creatives: How 50 Million People are Changing the World*.

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