

The Role of Humiliation in Collective Political Violence

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Abstract

A humiliating event can generate powerful emotions that can become part of a group's identity. The need for vengeance can erupt into violence decades later, even across generations, especially in situations where physical force is associated with respect or status. Humiliation is a neglected area of the violence literature, yet has the power to turn insult into retribution, and indignation into fury. When humiliation takes the form of extreme degradation, then the resulting fury washes away the shame of helplessness. I take the psychoanalytical theories of child development, social trauma, demonisation of the enemy and the entitlements of victimhood and show how they combine with humiliation to yield violence. Humiliation also interferes with the mourning process, making it difficult to come to terms with loss and leads to an obsession with the past events. Violence against a humiliator is usually paid back in the same currency, so a humiliated people will tend to humiliate their oppressors. Political leaders can manipulate this need for revenge, and if they have personal narcissistic tendencies will merge their personal need to avoid humiliation with that of society at large, potentially embarking on unnecessary conflicts. In societies where security or status relies on a reputation of toughness or a credible threat of violence, any potential challenge or insult must be confronted aggressively to avoid humiliation.

These ideas are brought together in an analysis of Israeli Palestinian conflict in Gaza. Here two societies, each having undergone deep trauma and humiliation, remain locked in violent conflict. The thesis suggests that the daily humiliations of the people of Gaza helps to build a pool of resentful young men and women, and that this becomes a fertile recruitment ground for resistance organisations. Retaliation against aggression results in deeper humiliation and the cycle of violence continues.

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Introduction

“This fuel is dipped in humiliation. If their fuel means humiliation for us, we don’t want it”. Abu Ahmed of Islamic Jihad defends the deliberately targeted attack on the Israeli-controlled fuel depot on which Gazans depend.¹

Collective violent conflict is often explained in terms of relative strengths, cost-benefit analysis, relative deprivation, resource stress or structural problems within society. The above quote shows that there are other forces at work. From the combatants’ point of view what is often at stake is national honour, the righting of historical wrongs, or revenge. By focussing the analysis on the emotional state of the participants, we can gain insights as to why it is that some conflicts, such as the Israeli Palestinian conflict, seem immune to rational analysis and resolution. It is not sufficient to analyse such conflicts solely in terms of economics, opportunism, alliances and other realpolitik concerns. A bloody phenomenon cannot be explained by a bloodless theory.

In this thesis I argue that humiliation; the emotion associated with insulting or degrading treatment, lies at the heart of many violent conflicts. I explore the meaning of humiliation and analyse the extent to which humiliation and violence are linked. In order to do this, the following key questions are examined:

- What is the nature of humiliation?
- When do a humiliated people resort to violence?
- Why do perpetrators of violence use humiliation as a weapon?
- How do cultural factors affect the link between humiliation and violence?

I start from the premise that humiliation and its accompanying need for revenge is an under-studied area of conflict analysis. As Thomas Friedman says “If I’ve learned one thing covering world affairs, it’s this: The single most underappreciated force in international relations is humiliation”.² Bringing together apparently disparate areas of research in psychology, sociology and some areas of political theory will contribute to

¹ Caroline Pesce, "Israel Shuts Off Gaza's Fuel after Depot Attack," *USA Today*, 11 April 2008.

² Thomas L. Friedman, "The Humiliation Factor," *The New York Times*, 9 November 2003, 11.

my analysis. This is primarily a psychoanalytic theoretical framework for examining the role of humiliation in some types of group violence.

Sources and Methodology

When I began researching this topic in 2006, Evelin Lindner's book, the first major work to cover humiliation and violence was published.³ She is the driving force behind the organisation Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies, and their online journal, which, unfortunately, at the time of writing in 2009 appears to be dormant.⁴ This organisation and her book concentrates on the social aspects of humiliation with particular regard to globalisation. While appreciating that others were starting to understand the importance of humiliation, I wished to take a more psychoanalytical approach to examine the underlying forces at work. Consequently, my main sources come from the fields of psychology, psychoanalysis and psychiatry. Vamik Volkan is a professor of psychiatry with experience in ethnic violence, and I build on his ideas, along with those of John Mack, a psychoanalyst with an interest in political psychology. While I have not interviewed any perpetrators of violence, I do make use of those who have. Jerrold Post's interest in political psychology led him to interview Middle Eastern terrorists. In a similar vein, James Gilligan, a psychiatrist, has spent many years interviewing the most violent prisoners in the US prison system. Jessica Stern, a US government advisor on terrorism, has produced an insightful book of her interviews with terrorists, which informed my study of the role of resistance organisations.⁵

My research on cultural differences proved difficult. Since Ruth Benedict's introduction of the concept of honour and shame cultures, there has been little recent writing on the subject.⁶ Anthropologist Raphael Patai had his book *The Arab Mind* republished in 2002,⁷ and the book is apparently used by the US military.⁸ Although

³ Evelin Lindner, *Making Enemies: Humiliation and International Conflict* (Westport CT: Praeger Security International, 2006).

⁴ See their website www.humiliationstudies.upeace.org/index.cfm. Accessed 26 August 2008

⁵ Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill*, 1st ed. (New York: Ecco, 2003).

⁶ Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (NY: A Mariner Book, 2005 (1946)).

⁷ Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind*, 2002 ed. (New York: Hatherleigh Press, 1976).

somewhat cavalier in its generalisations, it nevertheless provided some useful insights. David Pryce-Jones and Harold Glidden, orientalist from military and diplomatic backgrounds rather than academics, also provided some background material. James Bowman's *Honor*⁹ provided insights into how the concept of honour has changed throughout the ages. The linkage between honour culture and reaction to insult has been established by the experiments of the social psychologists Richard Nesbitt and Dov Cohen, and by the psychologist Patricia Mosquera and her colleagues. I discuss these in the thesis.

Friedman's article, *The Humiliation Factor*, lead me to investigate the conflict on Gaza in terms of humiliation.¹⁰ While no source in particular concentrated on the emotional aspects of the Israeli Palestinian conflict, it was quite a straightforward process to extract this type of information from the many standard texts on the conflict, and from news sources.

Main Themes

There are a number of aspects of group violence that seem appropriate to a humiliation / revenge style of analysis.

Firstly, realist and rationalist theories are limited in their ability to explain why military conflict involves mutilation, torture, mass indiscriminate killing, and targeting of civilians. The demonisation of the enemy is a complex process that allows and even entitles vicious and degrading treatment. I show how these atrocities can arise from a rage fuelled by humiliation and justified by demonising the enemy.

Secondly, there has recently been a lot of interest in understanding the nature of non-state terrorism. Evidence suggests that terrorists and even suicide bombers do not suffer from a pathological psychology.¹¹ Nevertheless the build-up of daily

⁸ See a somewhat disparaging review in Brian Whitaker, *Its Best Use Is as a Doorstop* (guardian.co.uk, 2004 [cited 24 August 2008]); available from www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/may/24/worlddispatch.usa.

⁹ James Bowman, *Honor: A History* (NY: Encounter Books, 2006).

¹⁰ Friedman, "The Humiliation Factor."

¹¹ See for example Eric D Shaw, "Political Terrorists: Dangers of Diagnosis and an Alternative to the Psychopathology Model," *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 8, no. 3 (1986): 359-68.

humiliations, resentments and hopelessness helps provide a fruitful recruitment environment for extreme resistance organisations.

Thirdly, as argued by Richard Nisbett, and others, there are identifiable cultural differences in the way people respond to insult.¹² Those who have strong codes of honour react forcefully to perceived insults, and unavenged insults are cause for shame and demand revenge. I argue that humiliation can lurk just beneath the surface in such societies, and confrontation is often the preferred mode of conflict resolution.

Fourthly, a humiliation / revenge analysis may help to explain why some long-term conflicts seem intractable. The cycles of violence which are typical of these types of conflicts can sometimes be understood as a never-ending struggle to overcome a sense of helplessness or loss of self-esteem linked to humiliation.

Humiliation as a driver for group violence is touched on by various researchers in sociology, psychology and the intelligence agencies, but is hardly mentioned by mainstream political theorists. There are only a few scholars who concern themselves with the social implications of humiliation. I build on psychoanalyst Vamik Volkan's concept of the chosen trauma¹³ and psychoanalytical theories of child development, which are central to the discussion of the psychological underpinnings of ethnic humiliation and of demonisation of the enemy.¹⁴ Donald Nathanson's compass of shame adds to the discussion at the level of the individual.¹⁵

While Volkan's contribution is extremely valuable, he is not concerned with cultural factors. If emotions play a significant part in violent conflict, then, in an increasingly interconnected world, how people from different cultures react emotionally becomes an extremely important part of conflict analysis and resolution. While various

¹² See for example Richard Nisbett and Dov Cohen, *Culture of Honor. The Psychology of Violence in the South* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).

¹³ Vamik D. Volkan, "Transgenerational Transmissions and Chosen Traumas: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity," *Group Analysis* 34, no. 1 (2001): 79-97.

¹⁴ John Mack, "The Psychodynamics of Victimization among National Groups in Conflict," in *The Psychodynamics of International Relationships Volume 1: Concepts and Theories*, ed. Vamik D. Volkan, Demetrios A. Julius, and Joseph V. Montville (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1990), 119-30.

¹⁵ Donald L. Nathanson, *Shame and Pride: Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 1992).

anthropologists have examined how respect and pride are maintained in different societies¹⁶, this has not been translated into discussions of how the reaction to humiliation, or the fear of humiliation, can lead to group violence. This thesis examines the links between humiliation and violence, and helps to fill this gap in the literature.

I combine the psychodynamic theories of Volkan, Mack and others with a sociological view of how different types of societies have developed in regard to maintaining pride, dignity and self-respect and how, when this is under threat, violence can result. The case study brings these elements together to show how humiliation can contribute to violence within a particular cultural context. I have chosen the situation in Gaza as it is well-documented and has two well-defined cultural groups which have each undergone trauma on a massive scale. Gaza provides an opportunity to explore how the humiliations of daily life can feed on past trauma to promote violence.

Thesis Structure

Chapter 1. Theories of violence

This first chapter examines a number of theories of violence. It is not intended as a comprehensive review, but rather I have chosen to examine some of the theories that may shed light on the situational, emotional and psychological factors of collective political violence. I cover a range of theories, with a brief look at how some have developed over time, including some well-known and other not so well-known theories. In this chapter the emphasis is on theories of how humiliation acts as a driving force for violent behaviour. In the next chapter I discuss in detail both the role of humiliation in instigating violence, and how that violence is expressed by humiliating others.

I discuss the importance of differentiating between instrumental and expressive violence. Expressive violence which is an expression of an internal state rather than

¹⁶ See, for example, Julian Alfred Pitt-Rivers, "Honour and Social Status," in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. John G. Peristiany (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

goal-driven, is often an indicator of a strong emotional response, including rage and revenge. Very few theories of violence discuss the difference between expressive and instrumental violence and most have an often unstated assumption about the type of violence to which they are referring.

As a theory of humiliation and violence posits both a degrading situation and an emotional reaction to that situation, I explore both the dispositional and situationist theories, looking for those ideas which help link the two perspectives. The situationists stress the importance of the social factors and attempt to demonstrate that, in extreme circumstances, even a normally peaceful group of people resorts to violence. The dispositional viewpoint stresses the innate tendency of people to be aggressive, either through personality, upbringing, or emotional reactions.

In order to explore the link between humiliation and collective violence, this chapter examines theories of violence, looking for those that have the following characteristics :

1. They make a distinction between expressive and instrumental violence.
2. They analyse how a situation can lead to an emotional reaction.
3. The emotional or psychological state of the combatants plays a significant role in the violence.

Such theories would form the basis of a more inclusive view of how humiliation is related to violence.

Chapter 2. The power of humiliation

The second chapter starts with a discussion and definition of some terms dealing with what is collectively called the negative emotions, including guilt and the various forms of shame. This clarification helps to avoid misunderstandings that can arise when discussing the literature on the topic coming from the differing but related disciplines of philosophy, sociology and psychology.

Specifically, humiliation is defined as the emotion associated with being treated in a disrespectful or degrading way by others, and in this context is always regarded as being undeserved.

Human needs theorists, such as Abraham Maslow, regard self-esteem as a deep instinctual need.¹⁷ Humiliation cuts through self-esteem, and I show how rage and even running amok can be viewed as desperate measures to regain self-esteem.

Nathanson's compass of shame describes how shame associated with physical prowess is often associated with a violent response.¹⁸

In this chapter I describe the psychoanalytic object-relations theory, developed by Heinz Kohut among others, and used by Volkan as the basis of his externalization theory.¹⁹ This theory states that an unintegrated sense of self during child development leads to 'bad' characteristics being projected onto other external objects or people. This can lead to the concept of an enemy with evil or even sub-human characteristics. It becomes easy to justify treating such people harshly – *it's the only treatment they understand*. This leads to the need to humiliate, to treat the enemy as not worthy of human consideration and to conquer not only them but the evil they represent.

Volkan also describes how when a group is under stress, or its identity is under threat, it can revert to a state of "magical thinking", with simplistic notions of good and evil, and a strong emotional investment in cultural symbols.²⁰ An historical trauma can become more salient, and old resentments and humiliations are relived and must be avenged. In such a state, violence is easily aroused.

Finally, I compare the concept of unresolved personal mourning to that of group trauma, looking for the similarities. Perhaps it is possible to translate techniques for coping with personal loss to dealing with group trauma, and thus avert the violence which might result.

¹⁷ See Abraham Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50, no. 4 (1943).

¹⁸ Nathanson, *Shame and Pride : Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self*.

¹⁹ Heinz Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self: A Systematic Approach to the Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorders* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1971).

²⁰ Vamik D. Volkan, *The Need to Have Enemies and Allies* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1988).

Chapter 3. The cultural dimension

Discussing the emotions across different cultures is fraught with difficulties. Words are translated with variations in nuance, and similar words have different meanings. Ira Roseman's appraisal theory provides us with a technique for discussing the emotions across cultures.²¹ It breaks down the emotional event into separate stages, allowing us to more carefully investigate the differences in cultural reactions.

As an aid to exploring the cultural understanding of, and reaction to humiliation, I have adopted Richard Shweder's social typologies.²² Those societies that emphasize values of the individual tend to promote autonomy. These values include liberty, human rights, equality, choice, separation of church and state and freedom of religion. By contrast, the values of the collective include obedience, sacrifice, group and family loyalty, courage, abstinence, and knowing one's place in society. In most societies these two codes are in tension, with the values of the individual predominating in modern Western cultures, and the values of the collective tending to predominate within tribal and some Asian, Middle Eastern and African societies.

The differences between collective honour societies and guilt-based individualistic societies are discussed in relation to how these societies react to insult. Collective honour societies place great importance on group loyalty, and the need for the group to defend itself and be respected. The development of honour societies is discussed in terms of survival in an environment where state control is weak, and economic assets are easily stolen. In such circumstances, a reputation for toughness is the basis for safety and security of the family, clan or tribe. This reputation is built by responding aggressively to any perceived threat or insult.

This leads me to a new concept, that of a 'security-based' society, where the prime concern is safety and security. This becomes necessary to explain how in anarchic

²¹ Ira Roseman et al., "Cultural Differences and Cross-Cultural Similarities in Appraisals and Emotional Responses," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 26, no. 1 (1995).

²² Richard Shweder et al., "The "Big Three" Of Morality (Autonomy, Community, Divinity) and The "Big Three" Explanations of Suffering," in *Morality and Health*, ed. A Brandt and P Rozin (NY: Routledge, 1997).

societies where there is little tradition of group loyalty, such as America's 'wild west', and some street drug culture, there is a strong need to appear fierce, and to respond swiftly to any perceived challenge. In situations where safety and security are paramount concerns, this *don't mess with me* attitude tends to override the natural tendencies of collective or individualist cultures.

After discussing nomadic tribal society, I focus on discussing the Arab world, and show how *iharam*, the ability to dominate others, and one of three pillars of prestige (along with generosity and hospitality, and the purity of the female members of the family), can lead to a strong response to perceived insult.²³ Some parts of the Arab world can be seen as examples of an honour society, which are occasionally combined with elements of a security culture when state control is weak.

I include a historical perspective showing how elite European society has moved away from an honour code of chivalry and dueling towards a more individualistic society that became widespread especially in North America and Northern Europe. So much so that few Western diplomats talk in terms of honour, glory or insult, but use less emotive words like prestige and status. However, politicians and the media still use such terms to build support for the defence or promotion of national values.

But there are still large regional differences within the Western world. I look at Nisbett and Cohen's comprehensive study comparing attitudes and behaviour relating to insult between the northern and southern states of America.²⁴ They describe a relationship between violence, gun ownership and honour culture in the American South.

Similarly, Mosquera's study shows how Spaniards and the Dutch behave significantly differently in interpreting and reacting to behaviour as confronting or insulting, and he

²³ Victoria Fontan, "Polarization between Occupier and Occupied in Post-Saddam Iraq: Colonial Humiliation and the Formation of Political Violence," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 2 (2006)., Patai, *The Arab Mind*. And Harold W Glidden, "The Arab World," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 128, no. 8 (1972).

²⁴ Nisbett and Cohen, *Culture of Honor. The Psychology of Violence in the South*.

relates this to deep cultural differences.²⁵ Both these studies showed an increasing likelihood of anger for the more honour based societies

I propose some reasons as to why within individualistic societies insults are not so threatening to self-esteem. I introduce the concept of a status group – that group of people whose opinion matters. In diverse societies people are likely to have many such groups, so loss of status in one group is not so crucial to personal self-esteem. Honour societies tend to have a less diverse civic society, so status loss is more potentially damaging, and in extreme cases can lead to social abandonment or even expulsion.

Chapter 4. The Gaza case study.

The situation in Gaza brings together many of the theoretical elements discussed so far. It combines trauma theory, demonisation of the enemy, the entitlement that comes with victimhood, and the cultural imperatives of an honour society that feels unable to protect itself. Both Jews and Palestinians have undergone trauma, each side demonises the other, and each side believes it is the victim in the conflict. I discuss how victimhood, and its associated entitlements, affect both the Israelis and the Palestinians, and how it derives from each side's social trauma. The trauma of expulsion has become part of the Palestinian identity, and there is an obsession with righting this wrong. Similarly the trauma and deep humiliation of the Holocaust still repercussions through Israeli thinking and policy.

In part, the discussion is placed within the historical context of the conflict to get a sense of its long-term nature. Humiliation plays a role in the daily life of the “open prison”²⁶ of Gaza, and I discuss how this provides the resistance organizations, especially Hamas, with a fertile recruiting ground. Hamas provides an emotional and psychological lifeline to the disaffected youth of Gaza who have no livelihood, no future, and live in despair. It provides an ideology, a purpose and the self-esteem of

²⁵ P Mosquera, A Manstead, and A Fischer, "The Role of Honor-Related Values in the Elicitation, Experience, and Communication of Pride, Shame and Anger: Spain and the Netherlands Compared," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 26, no. 9 (2000).

²⁶ Aleem Maqbool, "Life in the 'Open Prison' of Gaza," *BBC News*, 15 March 2008. (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/7296750.stm accessed 4th May 2008)

being part of a grand social enterprise, supported through provision of employment, welfare and leadership.

The conflict suffers from a cycle of violence in which the role of humiliation plays a significant role. The daily humiliations of living under occupation lead to anger, resentment, frustration and ultimately revenge. When resistance organizations provide the means for revenge, the resulting attacks on Israel are met with harsh reprisals, which increase the sense of helplessness, anger and humiliation, and the cycle continues. . .

Conclusion

The conclusion brings together the psychological and cultural aspects of humiliation to form a model of how humiliation acts as a catalyst for violence. The model presents a set of factors that helps determine if humiliation plays a significant role in collective political violence. Not only does being humiliated increase the likelihood of a violent response, but it also increases the likelihood that the violence will be in the form of humiliating the enemy. The Gaza study shows how a deep pool of resentment can be used as a fertile recruitment ground for an active violent resistance.

The implications are clear. Humiliating an enemy may have a short term advantage in demoralising resistance. In the longer term leaders need to be aware that particularly within some cultures, unavenged humiliation is a powerful driving force that can lead to emotionally-driven conflicts that can emerge years, even decades, after the event.

Chapter 1: Theories of violence

The purpose of this brief review of theories of collective political violence is to examine how they can help in understanding the role of humiliation. In this chapter I consider those theories that help explain how humiliation drives violence.

Humiliation is an emotional response to a degrading situation. In this review I examine theories of violence that are concerned with emotional or psychological factors of economic or political situations. This focus explains why I have not included many significant theories of why states go to war, but have included some less well-known sociological theories. There is a comparatively small number of theorists who examine systematically the emotions of pride, fear, resentment, hatred, shame and humiliation and the part they play in causing violence.

It is useful to differentiate between two types of violence: that which has a goal, instrumental violence, and that which appears to be primarily concerned with inflicting injury for its own sake. Violence is instrumental when it is used to achieve some goal beyond the violence itself. Such goals include taking control over resources, overthrow of regimes, defence of territory, maintaining public order or establishment of political control through fear. This is the type of violence that political theories of warfare tend to consider. They look at resource pressures, military strength, rational choice, national prestige and international structures. While they provide insights into the causes of war, their limited view of the role of the emotions means they are not so relevant to a discussion of the role of humiliation.

Leonard Berkowitz has named the violence where the prime purpose is to cause injury as “emotional”.²⁷ I prefer the term “expressive”, as some instrumental violence can arise from the emotions, for instance fears about security can lead to a pre-emptive attack. “Expressive” also emphasises that the violence is a reflection of an internal state rather than being “for” something. Lashing out, vengeance, and extreme hatred fall into this category. It is the violence born of frustration, resentment, ancient

²⁷ Leonard Berkowitz, *Aggression : Its Causes, Consequences, and Control*, McGraw-Hill Series in Social Psychology. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 11.

hatreds or insult. The angry mob that burns its own neighbourhood is displaying expressive violence. Violence associated with humiliation is emotion-driven and has a strong expressive component, so any theory that includes humiliation needs to differentiate between instrumental and expressive violence. It is difficult to reconcile bloody violence and atrocities with rational and bloodless explanations

However, violence is a complex phenomenon and does not easily succumb to a simple typology. Almost all violence contains elements of both an instrumental and expressive variety. It could be argued that expressive violence has as its goal the satisfaction of emotional urges, and as such has an instrumental aspect. I argue later that some forms of expressive violence have a specific but often unconscious goal of restoring a sense of self-esteem. In fact, it is the main argument of this thesis that violence born out of humiliation can be usefully analysed as a (usually unconscious) strategy to restore pride. Many forms of instrumental violence have an underlying expressive aspect. In addition, there are often different individual motivations for the violence within the group itself. Lindner introduces the phrase “entrepreneurs of humiliation” for those who harness the frustrations of others for their own violent enterprise.²⁸ Similarly, from Jessica Stern, “Leaders harness humiliation and anomie and turn them into weapons”.²⁹ Furthermore, what starts out as instrumental violence can easily slide into expressive aggression. For example, a defensive attack to degrade an enemy’s capability can easily take on the cruel and out-of-control characteristics of expressive violence. It is not uncommon for soldiers to savagely avenge the death of their comrades.³⁰ The phrase “unleashing the dogs of war”³¹ acknowledges the difficulties of restricting violence within defined goals.

Theories that stress the instrumental approach claim that groups are aware of violence as a technique for gaining political ends, and weigh up the possibilities of success in its use. There is a type of cost-benefit analysis at work. Rationalist theory talks about

²⁸ Lindner, *Making Enemies: Humiliation and International Conflict*.

²⁹ Jessica Stern, "The Protean Enemy," *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 4 (2003): 28.

³⁰ See for example Josh White, "Report on Haditha Condemns Marines," *Washington Post*, 21 April 2007.

³¹ Actually a misquote from William Shakespeare’s play *Julius Caesar*, Act 3, Scene 1. “Cry ‘Havoc’ and let slip the dogs of war”.

weighing up the benefits of various courses of action, and Charles Tilly especially claims that violence is a tactical choice for political ends.³²

The rationalist approach suffers from some well-known problems at the level of the individual. Firstly, there is the free-rider problem. If individuals assume that they personally would be unlikely to make a significant difference to the success of a violent enterprise, why should they expose themselves to the risks of violence when they would gain the benefits of the group's success anyway? Secondly the risks of serious injury, torture or death in a violent encounter are usually highly uncertain, making it impossible to rationally assess the risks and benefits of taking part.

There is another complication to this instrumental and expressive typology. Albert Bandura believes that to admit to ourselves that we are acting irrationally out of anger or frustration or fear can feel demeaning, as if we are not in control of our actions. So we rationalise, and put an instrumental gloss on our behaviour. As he states "What is culpable can be made righteous through cognitive reconstrual".³³ Responding to insult becomes protecting our reputation. Revenge becomes retaliation and places it within the moral context of retributive justice. For the group retaliated against to regard the retaliation as balancing out the scales of violence would be to suggest that their initial attack was unjustified, which would be socially and psychologically difficult. So the group that is retaliated against will most likely see this as a new offence, itself requiring retaliation, and the cycle of violence continues. Retaliation has the underlying ethic of deterrence, to "teach them a lesson", to show them it isn't a good idea to attack. This belief is often difficult to reconcile with the empirical evidence that attack is most usually seen as provocation.³⁴

There are many ways that groups can be violent while attempting to maintain or alter the power structure: warfare between states, violent protest demonstrations, terrorist attacks, ethnic riots, liberation movements, coups, state oppression of a minority, genocide, gang assaults targeting particular groups, ethnic cleansing, religious

³² Charles Tilly, *Politics of Collective Violence, Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics*. (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

³³ Albert Bandura, "Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement in the Exercise of Moral Agency," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 71, no. 2 (1996).

³⁴ Rachel Macnair, *The Psychology of Peace* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 8.

persecution, and there are many more. These violent episodes vary in a number of ways. Some are likely to be lethal, others only involve damage to property. Some simmer for years, others are one-off events. Some events, such as feuds, are defined by strict rules of engagement. Some involve the forces of the state, others do not. The participants can be professional soldiers, mercenaries, volunteer armies, occasional fighters, tribal warriors, untrained terrorists, renegade soldiers, private armies or an angry mob. Wars are carefully planned, with strategies, supply chains and troop movements, while riots can be uncoordinated, spontaneous and leaderless.

Collective violence is not a single phenomenon. The question should not be what causes collective violence, but in what particular circumstances do different types of violence occur? It is unreasonable to expect that a single theory of collective violence could explain such a diverse range of behaviours with so many variables. For a theory of violence to be useful either to gain insights into violent behaviour or as a predictive tool, it would need to consider such variables as goals, timing, targeting, severity, duration, organisation, scale, and effectiveness. Given the scale of such a task, it would seem more fruitful to build a theory pertinent to the conditions surrounding specific types of violent episodes. This would also make such a set of theories more capable of targeted empirical testing. An overarching theory of the causes of violence would have to consider a street riot a similar phenomenon to the invasion of a foreign country. A multi-theory approach could describe the conditions and causes of a local riot in different terms from that of warfare between states.

While acknowledging the need for a range of theories, it may still be possible to highlight some common psychological processes that operate in different conditions to produce a variety of types of group violence. In fact, later in this thesis I show how humiliation can lead both to personal violence and state-wide conflicts. Within this chapter I review existing theories of violence to see how they can contribute to an understanding of the role humiliation plays in violence.

When analysing theories of violence it is important to be aware of the often hidden assumptions as to the nature of the violent episodes being presented. An angry mob is not always behaving irrationally, and a war is not always driven solely by perceived national interests.

The expressive – instrumental dimension is a way of classifying types of violence, whether it achieves a political or sociological purpose, or whether it expresses an inner turmoil. It is also possible to categorise theories by where they look for the underlying causes of violence. The dispositional approach looks for causes within the individual and concentrates on personality, upbringing, crowd psychology, emotional reactions, and innate tendencies. The situationist approach takes the opposite view. Circumstances are crucial, not just extenuating and in the background, and can help explain how it is that apparently peaceful people can behave violently and sadistically. It is the situation itself that is toxic, that causes the behaviour, and is largely independent of the motivations or predispositions of the people involved. However, while the situationist approach can lead us to look closely at certain types of social and political factors as precursors to violence, there still remains the fact that some people are more prone to violence than others in the same situation. This implies that there is a dispositional as well as a situationist effect at work. I examine some theories along this dispositional – situationist spectrum to see how they shed light on the role of humiliation.

Even though the focus of this study is violence committed by groups of people, it is reasonable to posit that group behaviour requires a coming together of individual drives and motivations expressed through and focussed by the group. Therefore I consider some relevant theories of violence that operate at the level of the individual as well as theories of group violence.

Dispositional view of violence

Innate Aggression

As individuals, are we innately aggressive? The founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud came to believe that countering the lust for life (libido) is a death instinct that craves the removal of stimulation, tension and excitement.³⁵ Although this should logically lead to suicide, the life force channels this destructive urge outwards to

³⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, *International Psycho-Analytical Library* ; No. 4. (London: Hogarth Press, 1950).

others, and aggression becomes a satisfying need, or as he states in *Civilisation and its Discontents*, “Men are not gentle, friendly creatures wishing for love, who simply defend themselves if they are attacked, but that a powerful measure of desire for aggression has to be reckoned as part of their instinctual endowment”.³⁶ Freud did not greatly elaborate on these concepts, and it is difficult to see how such ideas can help us explain under what circumstances aggression and violence are likely to be expressed, and at what intensity. The concept of aggressive drives that well up internally and have to be expressed leads to the idea of catharsis, where negative emotions are allowed to “let off steam” in a safe environment and become depleted. However, various studies have subsequently found that expressing hostility is usually associated with further aggression, thus disputing this “pressure-cooker” view of aggressive impulses.³⁷ The concept of aggressive drives without a now-disputed theory of catharsis becomes simply an unwarranted elevation of a description (people are aggressive) into an explanatory theory (people have an aggressive instinct). Without a description of how this innate aggression is aroused, or how it is linked to insult or a feeling of being devalued, the theory does not offer much directly to a discussion about the role of humiliation. It is included here, as the concept of an aggressive instinct helps to lay the foundation for the development of the dispositional view of aggression.

For different reasons, the ethologist Konrad Lorenz also posits that aggression is innate, and in his view can be described as an evolutionary imperative. In his book *On Aggression*, he developed the thesis that we can gain greater understanding of aggressive human behaviour by extrapolating from animal behaviour in the natural habitat.³⁸ His view was that much innate behaviour is a reflection of evolutionary processes and is programmed through the generations. Aggression in animals is driven by the need to preserve the species from over-population, defending the young, survival of the fittest, defence of territory and the establishment of stable pecking orders. However, as Greg Cashman points out, the extrapolation from animal species

³⁶ Sigmund Freud and Joan Riviere, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, *International Psycho-Analytical Library* ; No. 17. (London: Published by Leonard & Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press, 1930).

³⁷ Macnair, *The Psychology of Peace*, 27.

³⁸ Konrad Lorenz, *On Aggression* (New York,: Harcourt, 1966).

to humans is not satisfactorily described or explained.³⁹ And again, this theory does not explain in what circumstances this “innate aggression” is expressed.

The angry crowd

Gustave Le Bon, a contemporary of Freud, considered the dynamics of crowd psychology and describes an attitude towards the masses where individuality is subsumed into a crowd identity, rationality is lost, instincts prevail and violence erupts.⁴⁰ According to Le Bon, individuals in crowds behave psychotically⁴¹. Freud agrees, and compares Le Bon’s characterisation of a crowd to a stage of child development with elements of hypnotic fascination and neurosis.⁴² Freud believes that the members of a group project their ego-ideal onto their leader, and this sharing leads to an immediate sense of intimacy between members of the group. With the ego now relieved of moral constraints, a more primitive response built on basic drives unhampered by a sense of responsibility can now be stimulated and directed by the leader, the mob’s source of moral authority. Freud sees a regressive mob as being driven by primitive forces such as excitement and rage. Under such a theory, a crowd would be more susceptible to expressing moral outrage as violence against unjust institutions, or their proxies. Such theories of crowd behaviour mesh with Milgram’s concept (discussed later) of individuals allowing their own sense of responsibility to be overridden by an external moral authority. A mob can feel less socially inhibited about committing violence if it believes that it has been given authority to avenge injustice. This also echoes Zimbardo’s thesis (see later) that the personal anonymity experienced within the mob, and violence sanctioned by an external moral authority, will likely promote sadistic behaviour.

While being aware that mobs can be aroused to revenge injustices, we should be mindful that angry crowds are not always as emotionally driven as Le Bon would have us believe. Horowitz has produced one of the most comprehensive accounts of crowds behaving destructively, and it is clear from his portrayal that although a riot is

³⁹ Greg Cashman, *What Causes War? : An Introduction to Theories of International Conflict* (New York: Lexington Books, 1993).

⁴⁰ Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd : A Study of the Popular Mind* (London: Unwin, 1908).

⁴¹ Psychotic behaviour implies delusions and losing touch with reality. Neurotic behaviour is less pathological, and is typically driven by stress and anxiety, with impaired functioning.

⁴² Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 3rd ed., *International Psycho-Analytical Library ; No. 6.* (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1945).

usually driven by passion, there are also many rational elements at play.⁴³ For example, the rioters often take special care to ensure their victims are correctly identified (no false positives), and that there is reduced risk to the rioters themselves. To quote Horowitz : “the riot is not an unstructured frenzy, made possible by a gap in public order”.⁴⁴

The Narcissistic Personality

Freud’s theory of the narcissistic personality sheds some light on the role of humiliation in violent behaviour. Freud introduced the psychological concept of narcissism in his 1914 essay “On Narcissism – an Introduction”.⁴⁵ According to his theory, self-love is the basis for self-esteem, and helps to overcome the normal psychological difficulties of growing up. Narcissism is where the self-love becomes obsessive.⁴⁶ The obsession can develop when a difficult childhood results in an intense need for love coupled with a fear of rejection.⁴⁷ This type of narcissistic personality is preoccupied with fame and success and is in constant need of the approval of others. For such individuals, any undermining of their status requires immediate retaliation and as they have little empathy for the feelings of others, they can be ruthless. For the extremely narcissistic individual, the removal of the approving mirror of follower adulation is tantamount to humiliation. Acting aggressively converts this sense of helplessness to mastery, thereby regaining lost self-esteem.⁴⁸

Jerrold Post describes what he calls the malignant narcissist, an extremely dangerous variant of this personality type. Such a person has four characteristics:

1. Extreme grandiosity and self-absorption with no capacity to empathise with pain or suffering of others
2. Defective social conscience

⁴³ Donald L. Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 522-66.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 523.

⁴⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Narcissism - an Introduction*, ed. James Strachey, vol. 14, *Standard Edition* (London: Hogarth Press, 1914), 73-101.

⁴⁶ For a full discussion of this concept, see Blema Steinberg, *Shame and Humiliation: Presidential Decision-Making on Vietnam* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 14-15.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

3. The unconstrained use of aggression in the service of his or her own needs
4. An extremely paranoid outlook, suspicious (usually with good reason) and ready for betrayal.⁴⁹

Two examples of political leaders that fit this profile are Stalin and Saddam Hussein.⁵⁰

When extremely narcissistic individuals are driven enough to become successful politicians, this personality trait affects how they respond to political events. The link between humiliation and violence has at least two dimensions for the narcissistic leader:

1. The need to be perceived as powerful overrides any sense of national interest. In a sense, the need for the leader to appear powerful *becomes* the national interest in the psyche of such a leader.
2. A grandiose leader automatically assumes that victory is inevitable in any political or military adventure, and regards any advice to the contrary as insulting and demeaning. There is a strong need for close advisors to feed the ego of the leader, and those that fail in this respect are removed.

For example, Blema Steinberg describes Nixon's reaction to the communist incursion into South Vietnam. He thought it "was a deliberate test, clearly designed to take the measure of me and my administration at the outset. My immediate instinct was to retaliate".⁵¹ The personal and the national become intertwined.

The tendency of strongly narcissistic leaders to conflate the national interest with their own psychological needs, and to ignore or refute information or advice that contradicts their view of the world makes such individuals exceedingly dangerous. They demand to be heard but refuse to listen. While such leaders often emerge in times of crisis, as they can offer a strong sense of moral certainty in troubled times,

⁴⁹ Jerrold Post, "Current Concepts of the Narcissistic Personality: Implications for Political Psychology," *Political Psychology* 14, no. 1 (1993): 113.

⁵⁰ See Jerrold Post, "Saddam Hussein of Iraq: A Political Psychology Profile," *Political Psychology* 12, no. 2 (1991).

⁵¹ Quoted in Steinberg, *Shame and Humiliation: Presidential Decision-Making on Vietnam*, 174.

such a potentially aggressive personality is not best suited to defusing volatile situations.⁵²

Such an analysis helps to understand how individual narcissistic leaders behave in order to avoid what they see as the ever-present danger of humiliation. Also such leaders often have powerful personalities that can appeal to the population at large. The followers can sense that their leader is driven by the need for esteem, and can relate to his calls for the restoration of former glory, or revenge for a previous defeat. As the leader conflates his own psychological needs with that of the state as a whole, the group can act out the psychological drama of its grandiose leader.

Critique of the dispositional view

Those that hold the view that aggression is an innate human drive or instinct have a larger question to answer. Why is it that the huge majority of human beings live in peace for most of their lives? Most people find it difficult to kill or inflict suffering on others. For example, MacNair reports that S.L.A. Marshall found that only 15% to 20% of soldiers actually fired their guns at an exposed enemy in World War II, and that Grossman reviewed such data in other wars to conclude that soldiers have to be thoroughly trained to overcome an innate psychological resistance to killing.⁵³ It seems that more are prepared to die for their country than to kill for it. The evidence appears to suggest that if aggression is instinctual, then its opposite, the desire to cooperate peacefully must also be present, and often gains the upper hand. Therefore the view that humans are innately aggressive does not in itself explain individual violent episodes. If we cannot explain aggression simply as an innate part of human nature, then we are compelled to look deeper. It is my contention that the emotional responses to how we are treated by others is an important factor in producing violent behaviour, and this is explored throughout this thesis.

⁵² Vamik D. Volkan, *Blind Trust : Large Groups and Their Leaders in Times of Crisis and Terror*, 1st ed. (Charlottesville, Va.: Pitchstone Pub., 2004), 179.

⁵³ Macnair, *The Psychology of Peace*, 5.

Situationist view of violence

The situationist view has developed along two theoretical strands. The first was based on the Frustration-Aggression hypothesis, in which violence was deemed the result of a denial of aspirations or expectations. The second grew from the work of Milgram, who was trying to understand why the Nazis in the Second World War behaved sadistically, and from Zimbardo and his prison experiment, where the social dynamics of the environment promoted violence. The following sections outline some of these situationist theories, observations and experiments.

The Frustration-Aggression hypothesis

John Dollard's famous theory in his book *Frustration and Aggression* states that every aggressive act could ultimately be traced to a previous frustration.⁵⁴ Dollard defined frustration as the denial of satisfactions when the person was expecting them, and aggression as the intention to cause injury. This is a direct example of a situationist perspective, as the nature of the individual concerned is considered secondary to the situation. The theory has been very influential, and has led to a large number of experimental investigations.⁵⁵ Many of these experiments have been concerned with the nature of the expectation and its denial.

For a comprehensive appraisal of the state of Frustration-Aggression theory, see Berkowitz.⁵⁶ While the theory is useful in examining causes of violence, its limitations are reasonably apparent. It is evident that not all thwarting leads to aggressive behaviour, due to many personal and cultural factors. Also, aggression can be caused by a number of factors apart from frustration: insult, security fears or even greed, for example. James Gilligan quotes from a review of the frustration literature:

Curiously, when psychologists have tried to produce anger in the laboratory, even when they have written about their results in terms of the consequences of frustration, they have not relied much on frustrating

⁵⁴ John Dollard, *Frustration and Aggression* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939).

⁵⁵ Berkowitz, *Aggression : Its Causes, Consequences, and Control*, 30.

⁵⁶ Leonard Berkowitz, "Whatever Happened to the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis?," *The American Behavioral Scientist* 21, no. 5 (1978).

people but have much more commonly insulted people – possibly because it is very difficult to make adults angry by frustrating them.⁵⁷

At the heart of the frustration-aggression hypothesis is the concept of a denial of an expected goal. While Dollard et al were quite specific in defining frustration as a set of external events (the denial of an outcome) rather than the emotional reaction to such events, this is most likely the result of the stimulus-response orientation of behavioural psychology at the time rather than a denial of the role of the emotions per se.

How does the frustration-aggression theory relate to humiliation? It is difficult to relate a “hopes dashed” form of frustration, where an expected improvement in the situation is denied, with humiliation, the emotion associated with degrading treatment. However, if the concept of frustration is extended to include any expected pleasant outcome, rather than only those associated with improvement, then the denial of decent and respectful treatment does fit within the frustration-aggression theory. The concept of ‘expectation’ is more complex than it seems at first. We might expect to be treated civilly within society at large, yet at the same time know that it is unlikely. And yet we can still feel the frustration from the generalised expectation without being surprised at an individual instance of disrespect. This suggests that the frustration-aggression hypothesis can hold even when a yearning for decent treatment is known to be an unrealistic expectation.

This interpretation of frustration as denial of respectful treatment fits with the concept of being devalued experienced as humiliation. Thus the frustration-aggression theory has some relevance in examining the role of humiliation as a precursor to violence.

Relative deprivation theory

Some theorists argue that the structure of a society produces frustrations and helps determine whether violence will erupt. Some concentrate on mass uprisings or revolutions, others on more general grievances between different sections of society.

⁵⁷ James Gilligan, "Shame, Guilt and Violence," *Social Research* 70, no. 4 (2003): 1159.

Relative deprivation theory concentrates on the gap between expectations and realities, which is almost a definition of frustration. It claims that when people's expectations are thwarted they tend to rebel. This can be regarded as a collective version of Dollard's frustration-aggression theory.

Gurr describes various patterns of relative deprivation.⁵⁸ Decremental relative deprivation is the loss of what was previously enjoyed or anticipated. Rebellions when economic conditions collapse are examples of this. The Russian sacrifices during World War I provided the deprivation as the basic ingredient for the Russian Revolution. Aspirational relative deprivation occurs when aspirations increase while conditions of normal life remain constant. Unfulfilled promises of changes for the better can lead to violent protest. Progressive relative deprivation is the combination of the other two: increase of expectations accompanied by a decrease in quality of life. A short period of sharp reversal after a long period of social development can cause fears of losing overnight what has been gained over a long period. As humiliation can be described in terms of the denial of the esteem or status that one is due, it fits within deprivation theory. The theory supports the concept that the frustration of not being treated as expected can lead to violence. The difference however, is that relative deprivation focuses on material deprivation, rather than the emotional sense of degradation..

Relative deprivation theory is mainly concerned with economics and politics, and not directly concerned with the loss of self-esteem. Violence is analysed in these theories as primarily an instrumental remedy against unjust distribution of resources. I would argue that considering the humiliating aspects of relative deprivation would strengthen deprivation theory and also help explain expressive elements of the resulting violence.

Galtung's structural theory of aggression

Galtung believes that violence is most likely when the complete underdog becomes capable of gaining some physical or emotional resources that provide assistance in

⁵⁸ Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970).

aggressively pursuing change.⁵⁹ This is a generalisation of Gurr's relative deprivation theory as it includes emotional as well as material resources. Galtung's theory emphasises that a deprived group will promote its cause once it has some other resources available to it. Galtung is concerned with status disequilibrium. When a group has a high ranking in some realm, but is low in another, then this increases the possibility of aggression and possibly violence. This possibility increases if the mobility in that realm is blocked, and the group has a predisposition for aggression. For clarity of argument he takes the case of there being just two rankings, topdog (T) and underdog (U). If there are, say, three criteria; for example wealth, power and status, then a topdog group could be expressed as TTT, and the underdog group as UUU. He theorises that a UUU group has no choice but to accept its plight. However, if the underdog group becomes wealthy TUU, then its status disequilibrium encourages aggression through resentment at being denied power and status, with the TTT group more likely to become a reference group for the underdog. A complete underdog group has no physical, psychological, ideological or informational resources to draw on. But what makes a criterion relevant for this theory? It could be the area of land, resources, per capita income, military might, control of the bureaucracy, level of education, access to employment or some other measure. Galtung is well aware of the difficulty in choosing relevant criteria.⁶⁰ The areas of relevance are to some extent likely to be made clear by the nature of the grievance spelt out by the aggressive group, such as an educated work force with no access to jobs, or an emerging power not being treated with respect. The theory has some practical application in reminding those who wish to raise up underdog groups of the dangers of one-sided development, such as increasing education without provision for job creation.

Although this theory has some explanatory power, it does not differentiate between instrumental and expressive violence. It touches on the themes of resentment, and so may be relevant to humiliation. However, it is a general theory based on social structure, and it does not elaborate on the processes that lead from status disequilibrium to violence.

⁵⁹ Johan Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Aggression," *Journal of Peace Research* 1, no. 2 (1964).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 105-6.

Human Needs theories

Human needs theory specifies those needs that we are prepared to fight for. Maslow outlines a hierarchy of basic needs that he believes are common across humanity.⁶¹ The most basic are the physiological needs of hunger, shelter and warmth (“*all I want is a room somewhere*”) followed by safety and security. Once these have been to some extent satisfied, the need for love, or belonging, becomes dominant. Human needs theorist John Burton includes the need for a sense of identity under this heading, followed by the need for self-esteem and the esteem of others.⁶² The final basic need to arise is for self-actualisation, or the need to fulfil potential. While Maslow posited that these needs must be satisfied in a specific order, others have argued that the order can be reversed; for example some may strive for esteem before acceptance, as either they value respect more than love, or they see respect as a means to becoming accepted by the larger community.

Burton classifies human motivations into three broad types: needs that are universal, values that are cultural, and interests that are transitory.⁶³ Needs are an immutable and integral part of being human, and cannot be compromised or denied without a fierce struggle. According to Burton, violence is the natural reaction to placing these needs under threat.

Values are the beliefs, habits and customs that help define different cultures, and can change slowly over time. The set of values that are part of a culture also are a part of the individual’s identity, and for this reason a threat to them also threatens the more basic needs of the group. Defence of values can elicit extreme measures, and many a war has been fought over core beliefs. Values are not generally perceived as negotiable as they define the identity of the group or individual, even though they may evolve over time.

Interests are negotiable, according to Burton, and conflicts of interest can often be resolved through a give and take compromise. The danger is that in order to

⁶¹ Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation."

⁶² John W. Burton, *Conflict : Resolution and Provention* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), 39.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 36-9.

strengthen a claim, interests are upgraded to questions of values and beliefs, which makes compromise more difficult.

Human needs theory helps explain why humiliation expressed as a loss of self-esteem is so powerful as a motivator for violence. While the theory implies that a violent response would be an instrumental act (to stop degrading behaviour by others), it also includes the cases of violence as an expressive act that helps the perpetrator feel he or she has some power over the situation. The priority that self-esteem takes in various cultures helps determine the strength of the reaction. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 on cultural differences.

Social dynamics

Having explored some theories of violence which are variants of how frustration can contribute to aggressive behaviour, I now examine the effect of the social situation and how obedience and permission to behave sadistically affect behaviour.

There are a number of experiments, observations and recorded violent episodes in which ordinary people with no obvious violent tendencies behave sadistically. These include the Stanley Milgram experiments⁶⁴, Philip Zimbardo's Stanford prison experiment⁶⁵, and Hannah Arendt's analysis of the banality of evil.⁶⁶ An extreme example is the case in Nazi Germany, where the mass murder of 38,000 Jews in four months in remote Polish villages was carried out by elderly family men recruited for the job.⁶⁷ These men were too old to be drafted, and had no military training. They were just ordinary men, but they had official encouragement to act brutally against those labelled as enemies.

⁶⁴ Stanley Milgram, "Behavioural Study of Obedience," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67, no. 4 (1963).

⁶⁵ Philip Zimbardo's prison experiment is fully described at www.prisonexp.org. The ethical questions it raised are described in Philip G. Zimbardo, "On the Ethics of Intervention in Human Psychological Research: With Special Reference to the Stanford Prison Experiment," *Cognition* 2, no. 2 (1973).

⁶⁶ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem : A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963).

⁶⁷ Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men : Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1993).

The Milgram experiments

The experiments of Stanley Milgram proved that the destructive power of obedience was greater than many psychologists of the day thought possible.⁶⁸ The mere fact of being told to continue administering shocks was enough to compel 26 of 40 subjects to apply shocks marked as 'intense' to human subjects in Milgram's first experiment. Milgram's theory is that it is the nature of authority that caused the violence, not an innate desire to cause suffering.⁶⁹ All of the subjects showed signs of intense stress and there was clearly no desire to inflict pain, yet 26 subjects obeyed their orders to inflict maximum shocks. Milgram believes the nature of authority plays two distinct roles.

1. Authority defines reality and its meaning. A legitimate and expert authority can define what is important and what should be ignored. If that authority states that suffering is secondary to other goals, then that becomes the reality.
2. An individual feels responsible to an authority that he or she respects, and this overrides personal responsibility for his or her own actions.

In a variation of the experiment, a faked rebellion in front of the subjects led to a dramatic drop in obedience; an alternative definition of priorities diminished the power of authority. There are other situations in which there are dramatic falls in the obedience rate. As Bandura points out about other variants of the experiment:

what is rarely noted is the equally striking evidence that most people steadfastly refuse to behave punitively, even in response to incessant authoritarian commands, if the situation is personalised by having them see their victim or requiring them to inflict pain directly rather than remotely.⁷⁰

While Milgram's experiments are not specifically related to humiliation as a precursor to aggression, they do show that the situation itself can promote aggression. The importance of this is expanded later.

⁶⁸ Milgram, "Behavioural Study of Obedience."

⁶⁹ As explained in Macnair, *The Psychology of Peace*, 10-11.

⁷⁰ Bandura, "Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement in the Exercise of Moral Agency," 369.

Zimbardo's prison experiment⁷¹

In 1971, 24 students of Stanford university underwent an experiment involving role-playing in a realistic prison setting. They were selected as being 'normal and healthy in every respect'.⁷² Half were randomly assigned to be prison guards, and half as prisoners. The experiment was due to last two weeks, but was abandoned after only six days. Some prisoners suffered emotional breakdown due to the sadistic treatment by the guards. Zimbardo himself started behaving like a prison administrator rather than a researcher. As a psychological experiment it became out of control, and was closed down.

The personality tests administered before the start of the experiment showed no discernible difference in the least and most abusive of the guards. Thus Zimbardo believes it was the social dynamics of the situation that encouraged abusive behaviour rather than psychological tendencies. There was some correlation for the prisoners between authoritarian attitudes and the ability to cope with the abuse of the guards.

Zimbardo attributes the generated sadistic behaviour of the guards to two main factors:

1. Anonymity. Prisoners were shaved, and given numbers. Guards wore sunglasses and uniforms to enhance anonymity.
2. Implied sanction. The institution of a prison gave guards the permission to control others.

Bandura's discussion of moral disengagement helps explain how the situation became so sadistic.

⁷¹ Summarised in Philip Zimbardo, "A Situationist Perspective on the Psychology of Evil: Understanding How Good People Are Transformed into Perpetrators.," in *The Psychology of Good and Evil*, ed. A Miller (NY: Guildford Press, 2004), 38-41. For more information about this experiment, see www.prisonexp.org.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 39.

Moral disengagement

Albert Bandura discusses how disengagement of moral inhibitions can be used to allow or even justify aggressive and inhumane behaviour.⁷³ This disengagement is an essential part of theories of violence that emphasise the affect of the social environment. When aggressive behaviour is construed as serving a valued social or moral purpose then the behaviour becomes justified. Punishing behaviour to act as a deterrent, to “teach them a lesson” can be almost a moral imperative. And in so-called honour societies violence can be seen as valuable in terms of protecting reputation.⁷⁴ Depersonalising the aggressive encounter by distancing from the suffering also disengages moral inhibitions. It is psychologically easier to kill by dropping a bomb than by facing your enemy with a handgun. Euphemistic language can disguise or lessen the moral implications of violence. Examples are “collateral damage”, or the use of “casualties” to include both fatalities and the wounded, effectively hiding the deaths. Mack shows how vilification of enemies makes it possible to think of them as sub-human or non-human, and so not subject to the usual moral considerations.⁷⁵ Sub-humans do not have human sensitivities, and harsh treatment is then justified as the only language they understand.

The Situationist emphasis

By shifting the emphasis away from innate tendencies, personality traits or psychopathological risk factors, the situationist view of violence can help explain how it is that normal people can become violent perpetrators. According to this view, some of the factors that facilitate violence include:

- Frustration in achieving social goals
- Presenting an acceptable justification (e.g. removal of evil)
- Providing official sanction to behave sadistically
- Being anonymous in that nobody can trace the action back to the individual perpetrator
- Increasing the level of aggression in gradual steps

⁷³ Bandura, "Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement in the Exercise of Moral Agency."

⁷⁴ See chapter 3 on Cultural Differences where I discuss Honour cultures.

⁷⁵ Mack, "The Psychodynamics of Victimization among National Groups in Conflict."

- Removal of responsibility - others are held responsible, if at all.⁷⁶

Within the situationist perspective, the main driver of the violence is the social dynamics of the environment in which people find themselves. Milgram showed that an environment that demands obedience, and a type of emotional attachment to authority, allows people to behave destructively and violently towards others. Similarly, Zimbardo's experiment showed the destructive effect of a setting where individuals are depersonalised and one group is given power over another. This has clear implications for how group animosity can become violent, especially when Bandura's tricks that dissipate moral inhibitions come into play.

The situationist view helps in understanding how ordinary people become perpetrators. Most of the analysis has been about how the use of authority can promote sadistic or vicious behaviour, and how inhibitions can be bypassed. One of the important aspects of the situationist view is that it is possible to measure the external world and so devise experiments that can test the effectiveness of situational factors in promoting aggression. Milgram's and Zimbardo's experiments are prime examples. Also, in the next chapter I discuss the work of Nisbett and Cohen where provocative behaviour (bumping and shoving) was correlated with expressions of anger. While it is not possible on ethical grounds to create further social experiments that more precisely define the environmental factors that increase the likelihood of a violent response to humiliation, it may be possible to analyse such episodes historically, as I have done with my analysis of the situation in Gaza (see Chapter 4).

Milgram, Zimbardo and Bandura base their experiments on individuals or small groups. But as their emphasis is on the situation rather than the personality of the perpetrators, it is comparatively easy to believe in the effectiveness of scaling up such a toxic environment for mass aggression and violence. It is important to be mindful, however, that with both Milgram and Zimbardo, not all the participants resorted to sadistic behaviour. While the situation undoubtedly played a significant role, there still remained, at least for some participants, a reluctance to go down the aggressive

⁷⁶ From Zimbardo, "A Situationist Perspective on the Psychology of Evil: Understanding How Good People Are Transformed into Perpetrators.." And Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority : An Experimental View* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1974).

route. If we could get a better analysis of the motivations and psychological factors that affect the behaviour of such individuals then we could better understand the combinations of situation and disposition that lead to violence.

Nevertheless, the situationist perspective reminds us that social conditions can have a strong effect on how people react, and that extreme conditions can produce extreme responses from an otherwise peaceful population.

The psychosocial perspective on group violence

The dispositional view concentrates on the internal state of mind, and while providing insights into the need for self-respect and the power of shame to affect behaviour, it has little to say about the conditions under which the behaviour of a group is likely to become violent. On the other hand, while the situationist view helps predict when violence may occur, it tells us little about the emotional reactions to events. Neither alone, therefore, can give us a basis for a theory of emotion-based collective violence, as this requires both a description of the social situation, and an explanation of how an emotional reaction to these conditions would lead to violence. A theory of humiliation needs both a situational and dispositional analysis.

I now present three theories of collective violence that combine the dispositional and the situational.

Unacknowledged shame

Sociologist Thomas Scheff builds on his experience of family systems⁷⁷ and the theories of Helen Block Lewis⁷⁸ to present a case for shame and pride as being the master emotions. He regards shame as primary for a number of reasons. Firstly, shame is automatically expressed when trespassing moral conventions, and is thus an important component in an individual's social conscience. Secondly, he believes that the shame and embarrassment signals in human interaction are used to indicate the

⁷⁷ Thomas J. Scheff, *Bloody Revenge : Emotions, Nationalism and War* (Lincoln, NE: Authors Guild BackInPrint.com, 2000).

⁷⁸ Helen Block Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* (New York,: International Universities Press, 1971).

state of the social bond. Individuals display embarrassment signals to indicate if they are feeling too close or engulfed, or too invisible or isolated. In this way, sensitivity to shame signals can indicate our humanity. Thirdly, and this is critical to his thesis, shame or humiliation that is unacknowledged can be masked by anger or even blind rage. This can lead to a shame-rage spiral, where the individual is ashamed at being angry at a trivial incident (seemingly trivial because the shame is unacknowledged), and then becomes angry about being ashamed. In extreme situations this cycle leads to violence and even murder.⁷⁹

Scheff's analysis appears to work well within family systems as a description of communication breakdown and marital violence. It also suggests techniques for repair of the marital bond. The concept of unacknowledged shame or humiliation driving an individual to anger and rage is an important addition to the literature of violence. However, it is unclear how the personal psychology of unacknowledged shame could be applied to the collective. His claim that this theory of alienated and dysfunctional relationships can be extended to the family of nations seems strained. Much of his analysis of the World Wars is concerned with emotional reactions to personal interactions between world leaders, which, while instructive, remains only a small part of the forces at work in international relations. Unfortunately Scheff apparently has not applied these ideas of unacknowledged shame to intrastate group conflict, where, I would argue, humiliation and shame can play a significant role.

Petersen's emotion based theory of ethnic conflict

Roger Petersen is unusual as a political scientist in that he presents an emotion-based approach to ethnic conflict.⁸⁰ He applies it to Eastern Europe, where there has been collapse of empire, multiple occupation by brutal regimes and a somewhat arbitrary drawing of state boundaries. His theory is based on the structure of the ethnic status hierarchy when central controls are weak.

⁷⁹ Scheff, *Bloody Revenge*, 68.

⁸⁰ Roger Dale Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence : Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Petersen regards emotions as enhancing the readiness to address concerns. Each emotion focuses on and emphasises an urgency to address a particular concern, often blocking out all other distractions. In particular, he considers fear as addressing security concerns, hatred in acting on historical grievances and resentment as addressing status discrepancies. Rage, however, is by comparison to the other emotions, non-instrumental. It can distort reality and lead to counterproductive actions, such as searching for scapegoats.

Petersen sums up his theory as a set of predictions about which groups are targeted when institutional constraints on violence are removed.⁸¹ An ethnic group concerned for its safety and security is driven by fear and therefore targets the group that it regards as the biggest threat. Similarly, a group driven by hatred attacks the group that has been frequently attacked in the past with similar justification. When the status hierarchy of ethnic groups has been rearranged, such as a change of language policy or a rearrangement of the ethnic composition of the political elite, then resentment will drive a group to target that group as far up the hierarchy that can be brought down through violence. Naturally, these are not mutually exclusive conditions. A group can be feared, resented and hated. But if the status of the target group is lower than the instigating group, then resentment is not indicated. When a group is driven by rage, emotion precedes and clouds cognition and belief formation leading to a distorted view of reality. The urge to commit violence overrides other concerns, leading to an incoherent selection of the target group. Rage can be brought about by an accumulation of unresolved frustrations and resentments, possibly inflicted by multiple sources. This echoes the Frustration-Aggression theory discussed earlier.

Petersen also hypothesises about the intensity of violence.⁸² Abrupt status reversals are most likely to yield intense resentment and intense violence. Slow changes of group status, say through modernisation, yield a less intense hostility that may be resolved through peaceful means.

Petersen tests his theory against the many and varied ethnic conflicts in Eastern Europe, specifically the Baltic States and the regions of Yugoslavia. He covers the fall

⁸¹ Ibid., 25.

⁸² Ibid., 256.

of the Ottoman empire, the Russian and German occupations and withdrawals, and the collapse of Yugoslavia, during which there were many times when institutional control disintegrated, leading to opportunities for ethnic violence. The result of his analysis showed that resentment was the main driver of violence, rather than ancient hatreds (what he calls the journalistic view) or security fears (the political science view). Much of the violence he examined was the result of status reversals within society, with the usurped group becoming resentful of their new masters, and using violence against the newly raised group to restore the 'natural order'.

Petersen's theory of ethnic violence sheds some light on timing, target selection, and on the intensity of group violence, and deserves more recognition in the conflict studies literature. It is one of the few theories that differentiates between resentment and rage. His consideration of resentment as an emotional driver for violence fits well within this thesis, as extreme status discrepancy is often associated with humiliation.

Volkan's chosen trauma⁸³

Volkan's chosen trauma theory is a psychoanalytic view of how groups deal with major incidents that threaten their existence or identity. His theories are examined in some detail in Chapter 2, and so here I present them in summary form. Volkan builds on object relations theory as originally espoused by Melanie Klein⁸⁴, and expanded by Heinz Kohut⁸⁵, to explain how the process of developing a well-integrated personality can go awry. In order to integrate both the nurturing aspects of a carer with occasional denial behaviour, the child has to recognise that others, and themselves, have both good and bad aspects of personality. In most children this uniting of opposing images of self and others is mostly complete by the age of three. Those for whom this integration was unsuccessful, see the world in absolute terms of black and white, good and evil. For most individuals there are still some unintegrated elements, and Volkan

⁸³ Volkan's ideas are presented in three books. Volkan, *The Need to Have Enemies and Allies.*, Vamik D. Volkan, *Bloodlines : From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998)., and Volkan, *Blind Trust : Large Groups and Their Leaders in Times of Crisis and Terror*. A good summary of his ideas appears in Vamik D. Volkan, "An Overview of Psychological Concepts Pertinent to Interethnic and/or International Relationships," in *The Psychodynamics of International Relationships Volume 1: Concepts and Theories*, ed. Vamik D. Volkan, Demetrios A. Julius, and Joseph V. Montville (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1990).

⁸⁴ Melanie Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms," *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 27 (1946).

⁸⁵ Heinz Kohut, *The Restoration of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1977).

believes that by attaching these good or bad aspects to external objects or individuals, the self can maintain its sense of integrated equilibrium. Ethnic symbols, such as flags and food, or familiar landmarks can represent safety and comfort, and bolster a sense of well-being. Bad aspects, such as laziness, being unclean, or being deceitful can often be best dealt with by externalising them onto other objects, such as animals, or even other ethnic groups.

One of the duties of a carer is to offer possible targets for externalising these good and bad aspects of character, and thus to help the development of a well-integrated child. As carers tend to select culturally ‘suitable targets of externalisation’⁸⁶, these good and bad images can become part of the ethnic and cultural identity of the group. This theory therefore helps to bridge the gap between individual and group psychology.

Volkan believes that under times of stress, such as when the identity of the group is being threatened, the group tends to regress to a more childish set of responses, which includes a strengthening of the emotional investment in cultural symbols, and the need for a strong authoritarian figure to provide guidance. The externalisation of a culture’s bad aspects is manifested as the vilification of the enemy, and allows and justifies its destruction. Purity, imperilled by the existence of evil, is protected.

Associated with these cultural symbols can be what Volkan calls a chosen trauma. The trauma can be a genocide, forced displacement, or even the passing of a golden age of prosperity, benevolence and military prowess. Such trauma has similar characteristics to an individual’s grief at a great loss, and is associated with a mourning process. In the next chapter I show how humiliation interferes with this mourning process. If the traumatic loss is not properly mourned, there develops an obsession with the past that prevents the group from moving on, as in the grieving process. Revenge for a loss can become all-consuming, and even part of the group’s identity down the generations unless the mourning process is allowed to complete. For example, in *Blood Lines*, Volkan describes how the Serb obsession with their defeat by the Ottoman Turks at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 became conflated with their

⁸⁶ Volkan’s phrase.

war against the Bosnian Muslims. Mladic, Karadzic and Milosevic saw themselves as bearing the responsibility of restoring Serb pride, lost centuries ago.⁸⁷

Volkan's social trauma theory, together with its externalisation aspects, provides an explanation of violence that is deduced from psychoanalytical concepts, and fits well with many types of ethnic and other group violence. The role of the emotions is central, and the need to control and eradicate evil, expressed as externalised negative aspects of the self, provides clues in understanding what drives mass violence and atrocities.

Conclusion

I have briefly outlined some of the main theories of violence, well aware that limitations of space have deprived them of the detailed discussion that most of them deserve. This thesis is specifically interested in the role that humiliation plays in collective violence, and this critical review has shown that some of the existing theoretical frameworks for analysing violence do consider the influence of humiliation, or its lesser version of status loss, although often as a secondary effect. It is worthy of note that almost all of the theories discussed have emerged from Western academia, and none considers the different cultural attitudes towards violence as a conflict resolution mechanism where different values are placed on pride and honour. This is crucial to an understanding of the felt humiliation and the need for vengeance.

From this review of the literature of violence, I conclude that for humiliation to be a driver for collective violence two distinct steps are required. Firstly, a situation must exist where a people feel oppressed (loss of control over their destiny) or degraded (loss of self-esteem). This could be a historical loss of respect, or oppression by another group. Situationist theories such as relative deprivation provide a useful way of describing and analysing such social conditions. Secondly, there must be a link between a degrading situation and the resulting violence. This involves a psychosocial analysis such as provided by Petersen and Volkan. The cultural aspects of this link are

⁸⁷ See the chapter entitled 'Ancient Fuel for a Modern Inferno' in Volkan, *Bloodlines : From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*, 50-80.

discussed in Chapter 3, but first, in Chapter 2, I elaborate on why humiliation is such a powerful emotion

Chapter 2: The power of humiliation

This chapter develops the core concepts of humiliation based primarily on psychoanalytic ideas, but also drawing on social and political psychology. Terms such as shame, humiliation and rage are defined. Following this I develop the work of Volkan and others to show how individual psychology can aggregate to a group emotion. Important concepts of unresolved mourning, chosen trauma, external reservoirs of “badness” and demonising the enemy are examined in some detail as well as the transmission of group identity across the generations.

The negative self-conscious emotions.

In order to discuss the causes and effects of humiliation, some definitions are needed. There is a range of emotions that correspond to feeling bad about ourselves, including shame, embarrassment, humiliation and guilt. In general usage, each of these words can have overlapping meanings and are often used to describe similar emotions in daily conversation. For a systematic study it is important to define these terms with more precision. Each discipline that studies these emotions at the personal and group level: psychology, sociology, and the cross-disciplinary field of political psychology. use these terms without clearly defining them.⁸⁸ The different fields often use similar words to describe different effects. Shame can describe personal guilt, or private loss of self-esteem or merely public disapproval. Humiliation can be used to describe anything from a national defeat to degrading torture to public embarrassment.⁸⁹ Coleman notes that when humiliation has been considered in conflict studies, it is often used interchangeably with shame and embarrassment.⁹⁰ Sometimes definitional problems arise because of the failure to see that the same word is being used to describe quite different concepts with overlapping emotional undertones. I adopt a more precise usage of these terms and

⁸⁸ This complaint is also expressed in Dov Cohen, "The American National Conversation About (Everything but) Shame.," *Social Research* 70, no. 4 (2003).

⁸⁹ See for example the various implied definitions in the chapters of Paul Gilbert and Bernice Andrews, eds., *Shame: Interpersonal Behavior, Psychopathology, and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁹⁰ P Coleman, J Goldman, and K Kugler, "Emotional Intractability: The Effects of Perceptions of Emotional Roles on Immediate and Delayed Conflict Outcomes" (paper presented at the 19th Annual Conference of the International Association for Conflict Management, 2006), 4.

by doing so hope to tease out the different personal and social processes that lead to these negative emotions.

Shame is used both in a private and a social sense and part of the confusion in the literature arises from different writers concentrating on ‘shame’ without being clear about which of these senses they are referring to. I maintain that private and behavioural shame are two substantially different concepts, though like most negative emotions, they can be felt at the same time, and can reinforce each other. The English language captures the difference with the phrases “being ashamed”, a private emotion; and “being shamed”, a public event instigated by others.

Private shame is the emotion associated with the unwanted discovery that there is something wrong with our very self. This could include revelations of weakness, helplessness, stupidity, being sexually defective, unlovable, ugly or just being unacceptable in some way to one’s peers. This loss of self-esteem can be devastating to the individual, as there is no clear way to remedy the situation. The problem is not an action that can be repaired or forgiven; the individual perceives himself or herself as being defective. The shame is deserved, because that is how individuals see themselves. As Lewis explains, the underlying threat implied by shame is abandonment by others, becoming a social pariah.⁹¹ Of crucial importance to the intensity of shame is the question: who observes the defect? The individual will be on the alert, always anxious that others are secretly aware of what is wrong with them, always looking for signs of recognition. The strength of the emotion of shame is magnified if they believe that others can see the inherent flaw. Once an individual believes that their defect is visible to others, then whether or not this is true, their shame intensifies. It is what others think that is important here. The public aspect of the private shame can become unbearable, so strategies are developed to hide or deflect attention from the defective self. These strategies are discussed later in the chapter.

As self-esteem is to a large extent dependent on the respect of others, the sense of being defective can flow from the social sphere to the private. If an someone’s peers

⁹¹ Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis*, 22.

behave as if that individual is in some way unacceptable to them, only the very thick-skinned or highly self-assured could avoid believing that they are in fact defective. This type of social pressure can induce private shame, especially in those people who do not already have a strong sense of self-worth.

This definition of shame is consistent with psychologists' use of the concept and in extreme forms represents a psychopathology. However, the social inhibitor that the expression "*you ought be ashamed of yourself*" represents is what I call behavioural shame. This is a much milder emotion associated with public disapproval for acting inappropriately for our social status. Such shame is socially useful in inhibiting anti-social behaviour, or behaviour that contradicts social norms. Embarrassment is the mild form. To quote Barbalet "embarrassment is the emotion associated with a violation of convention, or a breach of manners".⁹² This type of shame relies primarily on the judgement of others, and is how pressure to conform to social norms is often expressed. This form of shame is often regarded as a positive socialising force, as its opposite "shameless" implies.

Behavioural shame arises from public disapproval of our actions; for example, queue-jumping, or public disgust at amassing wealth through cheating others. However to be shunned for being ugly, or mocked for sexual failure: this is the public disapproval of what a person is, not what they do. This type of public shame is almost intolerable for the individual and has a much more powerful effect than behavioural shame, which is primarily concerned with maintenance of social norms.

Guilt is the emotion associated with remorse for doing wrong. Guilt can be addressed. Reparations can be made, punishments received, the act can be forgiven. Guilt can be resolved and dealt with, unlike private shame. As feelings of guilt come from within, we can feel guilt even if we are not found guilty in a court of law. This remorse acts as a social brake on antisocial behaviour and represents a force for conformity that is separate from the likelihood of punishment. As Lewis states, the difference between shame and guilt is that while shame is the devaluation of the

⁹² J. M. Barbalet, *Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure : A Macrosociological Approach* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 117.

person, guilt concentrates instead on behaviour.⁹³ However, guilt and shame have close links, especially where moral transgression is concerned – “*what have I done – and how could I have done it?*”. The failure to live up to moral codes can lead to a complex pathology involving guilt, private shame, and if being judged by others, behavioural shame as well.

Humiliation also has varying connotations with different usage. Within everyday speech it is often used to denote the feeling associated with exposure of inadequacy. However, for the purposes of examining collective violence, I restrict its usage to a more specific socio-political definition that Coleman derived after reviewing the conflict literature: *an emotion, triggered by public events, which evokes a sense of inferiority resulting from the realization that one is being, or has been, treated in a way that departs from the normal expectations for fair and equal human treatment.*⁹⁴ Note that this definition involves public events of which all can be aware, and that the normal expectations are of those affected, not those doing the humiliating, and so does not rely on the intention of the other party. For example, colonial paternalism may be well-meaning, but be perceived as humiliation. Humiliation denotes the emotion associated with being treated disrespectfully and undeservedly by others. “*How dare they treat me like that?*”. Humiliation occurs when others treat an individual or group as if they perceive their worth or status to be lower than the individual or group perceives it to be. Unlike shame, humiliation in this usage, is never deserved. Like private shame, it is what the individual believes others think about them that intensifies the emotion.

At a large-group level, humiliation can be the result of ethnic discrimination, a national defeat in war, the trauma of a genocide or ethnic cleansing, or mistreatment by an occupying force. When an individual identifies strongly with an ethnic group that suffers unjustified discrimination, then all negative social experiences tend to be viewed through the filter of that discrimination. In turn this can be used to justify and strengthen the sense of resentment and humiliation, and the sense of group identity. “*I didn’t get the job because I’m not one of them?*”.

⁹³ Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis*.

⁹⁴ Coleman, Goldman, and Kugler, "Emotional Intractability: The Effects of Perceptions of Emotional Roles on Immediate and Delayed Conflict Outcomes", 5.

Like guilt, humiliation can be overcome. The portrayal of the underdog overcoming great difficulties to become accepted as being worthy is a familiar and common theme in popular culture. The little guy who gets his revenge on the bully. “Turning the tables” on the oppressor is satisfying in that it appeals to a raw eye-for-an-eye sense of justice, and revalidates hapless victims as being worthy in their own estimation.

Private shame, however, can arise from the more extreme forms of humiliation, as humiliation often involves being helplessly under the control of others. Steinberg quotes Gershen Kaufman “There is no more humiliating experience than to have one’s relative lack of power, in relation to another, continually rubbed in one’s face”.⁹⁵ Being the victim of maltreatment and not being able to control the situation intensifies the private shame of helplessness.

The private shame of helplessness that accompanies overpowering degrading treatment is very difficult to confront. Fantasies of violent revenge can be mixed in with fears of reprisals, and frustration builds. Frustration can lead down many avenues. Despair and hopelessness can lead to a submissive, downtrodden compliant population. Revenge can lead to calculated plans of targeted attacks to bring down the oppressor. But there can also be a lashing out, a humiliated fury, a rage that consumes. I argue that this rage phenomenon as a reaction to humiliation contributes significantly to group violence and deserves further analysis.

Rage is hot, revenge is cold. Revenge seeks to redress a wrong through calculated and usually violent action against a chosen target. However, rage knows no calculation. To quote Petersen “Rage often produces cognitive distortions that lead to irrelevant or counterproductive actions (such as searching for scapegoats).”⁹⁶ For rage, the violence itself is more important than the target. The explosive nature of a fit of rage, along with the complete disregard for personal safety makes an enraged person fearless and formidable, reassuring them that they are no longer helpless in

⁹⁵ Steinberg, *Shame and Humiliation: Presidential Decision-Making on Vietnam*, 11.

⁹⁶ Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence : Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*, 19.

the hands of their enemies. Rage primarily deals with the private shame aspect of humiliation, not the affront itself, as it is the overcoming of helplessness that is the driving force, not the righting of wrongs. The target of the violence need not be directly related to the humiliation, as the vengeance aspect is secondary to relieving the build up of frustrations. To quote Petersen again “an individual in the grasp of Rage is seeking an outlet for his or her frustration and is looking to take it out on someone, or perhaps even anyone”.⁹⁷ When individuals become enraged, it is often difficult for them to offer justifications for their violence, partly because they may be responding to the latest minor incident, whereas the fury is the result of a slow build up of frustrations.⁹⁸ In practice it can be difficult to disentangle the rage and the vengeance elements of violence generated by humiliation, but knowledge of the two forces at work may help to explain why sometimes the justifications and targets of violence may seem bizarre to outside observers.

In some societies in Southeast Asia, especially Malaysia, there was a tradition of an insulted or humiliated male wreaking terrible revenge in a fit of extreme rage. In cases where insults and humiliation have built up over time and are unresolved, the insulted male (it is only a male phenomenon) will go into a period of anxious brooding or depression. He then emerges in a fit of manic frenzy and starts killing everything and anyone in his path until he is stopped or killed. He is known as a *pengamok*, and is often described in terms of a hero battling impossible odds. This is the derivation of the English expression “running amok”.⁹⁹

Gilligan has studied extreme violent behaviour in American society, and his work yields insights into the underlying forces at work in normal behaviour.¹⁰⁰ Gilligan has interviewed literally thousands of violent criminals over many years in the US and believes that for many the shame and humiliation of disrespect is a major influence on their behaviour. “I never got so much respect before in my life as I did when I pointed a gun at some dude’s face”. When asked why they assaulted or killed, a typical response was “He dis’ed [disrespected] me”.¹⁰¹ Gilligan describes

⁹⁷ Ibid., 30.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 79.

⁹⁹ Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*, 102-8.

¹⁰⁰ Gilligan, "Shame, Guilt and Violence."

¹⁰¹ Ibid.: 1149.

cases where violent prisoners would prefer to die than be humbled by prison officers. Several hundred violent criminals in the United States each year commit “suicide by cop”, where they go to their deaths in a hail of gunfire, killing as many as possible. According to Gilligan, this is a common fantasy of violent prison inmates. For some, being disrespected by their enemies is such torment that they are willing to die in a blaze of glory for pride and self-respect and to be honoured by their peers. They run amok.

Gilligan believes that the fear that criminals provoke in their victims is a type of ersatz form of respect.¹⁰² However, violence, or its credible threat, is a way of taking charge, so the respect is not fake, but real. The perpetrator of violence is in control of the situation, all attention revolves around him or her, and the enhanced status gained by his or her actions is the closest many criminals get to self-esteem. According to Gilligan, self-esteem is often lacking in the psyche of violent criminals. I argue later that the need to take control is often the reaction to humiliation. Gilligan reports that many of the most violent inmates were humiliated, abused and neglected during their childhood, severely undermining any sense of self-worth at an early and formative stage. He believes this leads to a lack of empathy with their victims, and little or no sense of remorse or guilt, almost as if what little love they possessed they needed for themselves.

Gilligan’s in-depth interviews with violent prisoners convinced him

that the basic psychological motive, or cause, of violent behaviour is the wish to ward off or eliminate the feeling of shame and humiliation – a feeling that is painful and can even be intolerable and overwhelming – and replace it with its opposite, the feeling of pride.¹⁰³

Using these more precise definitions of shame, guilt and humiliation it becomes easier to clarify the separate aspects of these negative emotions. Guilt is the private emotion of remorse associated with morality and disobeying social norms. Private shame is associated with revelations about ourselves that we prefer hidden from view. Behavioural shame is concerned with peer disapproval of our actions.

¹⁰² Ibid.: 1151.

¹⁰³ Ibid.: 1154.

Humiliation is the result of treatment perceived as degrading. Expressed in this way, it is easy to see how guilt, private shame, behavioural shame and humiliation can provide a psychologically toxic mix in malfunctioning families or societies.

Within different cultures the extent of the negative consequences may differ for each of these emotions. In Chapter 3, I discuss how in cultures with a strong emphasis on honour, self-esteem is almost completely defined by social approval. In such societies, behaving honourably and the fear of behavioural shame are prime, as opposed to those where honour is more often seen as secondary to personal gain or political interests.

Strategies for dealing with shame and humiliation

Prolonged periods of intense shame or humiliation can severely damage self-esteem. I maintain that the need for self-esteem and respect is a deep instinctual need. Maslow, for example, places this after the need for belonging and love in his hierarchy of human needs.¹⁰⁴ The ego, in its drive to maintain self-esteem uses many strategies to avoid the damage of shame and humiliation. Nathanson, through observation and his clinical work, has developed his “compass of shame” to classify these various strategies.¹⁰⁵ The four points of this shame compass are: withdrawal, attack-self, avoidance or disavowal, and attack-other. Nathanson’s compass is a way of classifying the strategies of repairing or avoiding psychological damage associated with the public observation of private shame, humiliation and to a lesser extent, behavioural shame and guilt, as I have defined them earlier in the chapter.

Withdrawal is a strategy for both repairing and avoiding the shame effect. After a shaming event, individuals withdraw from the glare of the public eye to give themselves time and space to lick their psychological wounds and rebuild their self-esteem. Privacy allows the individual to minimise the public aspects of private shame. This need to escape explains why public punishment can be so painful. Being put in the public stocks for ridicule removes the opportunity to rebuild

¹⁰⁴ Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation."

¹⁰⁵ Nathanson, *Shame and Pride : Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self*.

psychologically and exacerbates the punishment, as the victim's sense of shame is reinforced rather than being allowed to recover.

When the private shame is based on a social defect (dysfunctional sexuality or belief that one is unlovable or otherwise unacceptable) then withdrawing from close human contact is a way of avoiding the associated pain. Shyness can be a mild form of this withdrawal.

The attack-self strategy involves controlling and defusing public disapproval. Making small self-deprecating jokes is the most healthy version of this strategy, where the individual makes his or her deficiencies acceptable through fun and laughter, defusing public shame. Another technique under this heading is to admit to some social embarrassment. Once we accept mild social shame, we put ourselves at the mercy of others, but in most social circles this produces positive results, as most people are willing to accept and forgive the social mistakes of others when they admit them. Although shyness is essentially a means of social withdrawal, there may be an element of attack-self defence strategy. "*Don't attack me, as I am socially insignificant anyway*". Masochistic behaviour may also have an element of this attack-self strategy as a way of controlling degradation, hence making it less psychologically damaging.¹⁰⁶

Avoidance, or disavowal, relates to a set of strategies designed to combat the public shame associated with a real or imagined physical defect or inability to be loved or accepted. A child living in an abusive family or even one unable to show love chooses the safest option. Rather than accept the situation that their parents are incapable of love and protection, children believe that their parents behave in an unloving way because they have a bad or defective child. The child accepts shame rather than terror.¹⁰⁷ As adults, such people will have either accepted and internalised their shame, or be determined to overcome their (possibly imaginary) defects. Those who have internalised their shame want to distract the public gaze (and if possible their own internal gaze) away from the danger areas, and display their strength, wealth, beauty, intelligence, or sexual prowess as alternative aspects

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 332-34.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 341.

of themselves. Those determined to overcome their defects become obsessed with self-improvement, not as a way of reaching their true potential, but as a shame avoidance strategy.

When an individual's sense of size, strength or ability is being undermined or devalued in some way, then Nathanson argues that the attack-other mode becomes the most likely form of defence, especially when societal or family norms sanction such behaviour.¹⁰⁸ There are two intermingled modes of behaviour being described here. A private sense of inferiority can be publicly masked by put-downs, sarcasm, and confrontational behaviour to persuade the world (including the self) that there is nothing weak or defective here. Similar behaviour, though often more explosive, is associated with being humiliated, the active devaluing by others. The attack-other response in this case is designed to right a wrong, and re-establish the proper status hierarchy. As explained earlier, humiliation and private shame are closely related, and the combined effects are more likely to lead to aggression than either alone. The range of the attack-other reaction can vary from social snub all the way to furious physical attack. It can be expressed as a sudden explosive rage, or a cold calculating put-down. An attack-other incident provoked by humiliation has the primary psychological purpose of reducing the status of the other, rather than to gain power for other purposes¹⁰⁹, so we should not be too keen to look for 'rational' motives in violent reaction to oppression (though neither should we use such thinking to ignore real grievances).

However, if the attack is driven by private shame it switches the attention away from the self, as it is designed to hide a sense of inadequacy. This has the important consequence that in deflecting attention from our own inadequacy we now have to have a target for our aggression, the enemy. Later I show how Volkan and Mack use this concept to explain how and why we demonise others. For now we can say that by attacking others we have externalised our problems and given them a physical embodiment that we can rail against. "*It's all their fault, and once we have got rid of them, everything will be fine*". We have created an enemy for our own purposes.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 360-77.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 371.

Where does “the enemy” come from?

Sometimes we find people or ethnic groups to hate or be worthy of our contempt. They are unclean, untrustworthy, cowards, and work to undermine us often in secret ways. How does it happen that sometimes we need to create a collective malevolent “other”? The answer, I believe, is not only one of political opportunism by those wishing to distract us from other problems or gain popularity by defending core values, though this obviously plays a part. There is also the underlying psychosocial need that leaders can either use to their advantage, or recognising the dangers, move to mitigate.

To understand this process it is necessary to consider the psychoanalytic object relations theories of Klein¹¹⁰, Kohut¹¹¹, Kernberg¹¹², Volkan¹¹³ and others regarding how we develop and cope with flaws in our character. Freudian psychoanalysis concentrates on the structure of the id, ego and superego, and the structural conflicts that arise within the psyche.¹¹⁴ Object relations theory takes this idea further by adding other concepts that add to our understanding of psychic processes. Object relations theory describes how an infant develops a sense of self through relationships with objects and other people. These relationships help to shape the structure of the id, ego and superego, and how they interact. As an infant starts to see himself or herself as separate from those around him, he or she at first sees the caretaker (usually the mother) as two different ‘others’ – the one that gratifies his or her needs, and the one that thwarts and frustrates him or her. Similarly the child cannot realise that he or she is one person and capable of being both contented and miserable. The child has to develop his or her concept of identity to integrate these opposing images. According to Volkan, this integration of good and bad aspects of our self and of others is largely complete after 36 months, when the child integrates

¹¹⁰ Melanie Klein, *Envy and Gratitude, and Other Works, 1946-1963* (London: Hogarth Press, 1975).

¹¹¹ Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self. A Systematic Approach to the Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorders*.

¹¹² Otto F. Kernberg, *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism* (New York: J. Aronson : Distributed by Scribner, 1985).

¹¹³ Volkan, *The Need to Have Enemies and Allies*, 23-29.

¹¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, ed. James Strachey, vol. 19, *Standard Edition* (London: Hogarth Press, 1923).

opposing images of self and other.¹¹⁵ At this stage of development the child understands that various, even opposing, emotions and self-images can be merged into a single identity.

Volkan believes that for most of us this melding of opposites is never quite completed, and so we must somehow deal with the tensions of opposing self-images.¹¹⁶ One coping technique is to cast out these good and bad opposing images onto external objects. Kohut describes a similar concept of “splitting” where individuals with a damaged sense of self split off their bad traits and devalued weaknesses and project them onto others.¹¹⁷ Staub believes harsh treatment during a child’s development leads to difficulties in liking and accepting oneself. Rather than seeing, examining and accepting conflicting and problematic aspects within oneself, one projects them onto other people, thus creating a hated other.¹¹⁸ These theories maintain that this externalisation helps to resolve internal tensions, and allows us to maintain an integrated sense of self. These targets of externalisation (or reservoirs, as Volkan calls them) provide a sense of identity comfort.¹¹⁹ Good self-images are cast onto external objects as a form of safekeeping for later retrieval. For example, borscht (a beetroot and potato soup) beloved by Russians and Eastern Europeans is often a comfort when under stress, or a “nice cup of tea” for the English. Bad self-images of untrustworthiness, criminal tendencies or secrecy are transferred onto other groups or objects. For example, parents let their children know who their appropriate friends should be. Other religions’ places of worship are where secret evil plans are hatched under the guise of piety. Dogs and pigs in some cultures represent uncleanliness and disgust. These good and bad “containers” tend to be culturally defined, and are adopted almost instinctively from the parents by children as they learn what is good and what is “other” or hateful. As these children mix with other children who share the same “containers”, so a sense of group cohesion develops that in later years becomes the basis of cultural identity. As the child becomes an adolescent and starts to look beyond the family for a sense of identity,

¹¹⁵ Volkan, *The Need to Have Enemies and Allies*, 29.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

¹¹⁷ Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self. A Systematic Approach to the Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorders*.

¹¹⁸ Erwin Staub, "The Roots of Evil: Social Conditions, Culture, Personality, and Basic Human Needs," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 3, no. 3 (1999).

¹¹⁹ Volkan, *Blind Trust : Large Groups and Their Leaders in Times of Crisis and Terror*, 37-40.

the differences of language, skin colour and religion can become the basis for more abstract concepts of race and culture, and the bad reservoirs become more defined in terms of cultural or ethnic identity.¹²⁰ The good and bad aspects of the group identity and culture can be to some extent recognised and integrated into the personality of the individual, but there will still be the external “containers” that can be called upon when under stress. For example, when in a foreign land, hearing one’s own language spoken can be comforting, as is eating food from home. Bad “containers” can be used to shift responsibility away from dealing with a group’s problems. For example “they” are stealing our jobs, raping our women, stirring up trouble.

Demonising the enemy

Having an enemy can therefore be psychologically beneficial. It provides a place to “hold” flawed aspects of our character so we can externalise and confront them, and thus it also purifies us – they are evil, treacherous and violent, we are trusting and peace loving. Once an evil enemy has been established, the allocation of “good” and “bad” becomes automatic. To quote Moses, “The more the enemy is the demon, the more pure we become ourselves – and, of course, the more difficult it is for ourselves to be self-critical”.¹²¹ Waller’s analysis of social categorisation states that in-group assumed similarity (all of us are like me) and out-group homogeneity (all of them are similar) leads to easy stereotyping, and exaggerates the differences between us and them.¹²² This also results in a bias towards information that stresses differences rather than similarities between groups. Similarly, Shaw points out that there is a basic human tendency to attribute negative personality attributes to people whom we dislike and who do things of which we disapprove, whereas if those same things are done by people we like, we rationalise this as being primarily the result of environmental circumstances.¹²³ So behaviour described as unfortunate but necessary if performed by our brave men in difficult circumstances is labelled

¹²⁰ Volkan, *The Need to Have Enemies and Allies*, 42-48.

¹²¹ Rafael Moses, "Self, Self-View and Identity," in *The Psychodynamics of International Relationships Volume 1: Concepts and Theories*, ed. Vamik D. Volkan, Demetrios A. Julius, and Joseph V. Montville (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1990), 52.

¹²² James Waller, *Becoming Evil. How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 239-40.

¹²³ Shaw, "Political Terrorists: Dangers of Diagnosis and an Alternative to the Psychopathology Model," 361.

treacherous and vile when the enemy does it. When we call a ceasefire, it shows we want to give peace a chance, but when they call a ceasefire, it is so that they can have time to regroup and rearm.

Strong adherents of one side of the conflict tend not to see atrocities committed by their own side. When such matters are mentioned, they refuse to focus on the issue, and divert attention immediately to the atrocities committed by the other. The rhetoric of the Irish troubles and the sectarian violence in Iraq show such selective blindness. *In extremis*, this can lead to the idea that the enemy is so devious that it commits atrocities against itself just to blame their enemy, as that is the only psychological way to square the undeniable fact of the event with an idealised self-view.¹²⁴ Each side has selective recall of events, so that only those aspects of history that conform with its self-image are given any importance. Each claims history is on its side. In short, the entire world view is manipulated and mythologised both unconsciously and intentionally to reflect our goodness and their badness.

If “they” are nasty, evil and treacherous, then the rules of normal moral conduct do not apply. As somehow a lower form of humanity, they are not subject to natural human sensitivities, so they will only respond to harsh treatment. Demonising the enemy gives permission for and even justifies and entitles their destruction.¹²⁵

Where people would normally feel guilty about harming others, the demonising removes that guilt. There is an obvious danger here, however. By devaluing others we are denying them their humanity and blocking out any sympathy for or empathy with their situation – in fact we have shown ourselves to be lacking in humanity.

All of the above does not deny the existence of real threats from others who want to conquer, kill and steal, but I hope helps explain some of the ferocity felt towards the

¹²⁴ For example, the 9/11 attack on the twin towers in New York is still widely believed in the Muslim world to have been an American plot to discredit Islam. See Pew Global Attitudes Project, *The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other* (2006 [cited 3 February 2008]); available from <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=253>.

¹²⁵ See also Staub, "The Roots of Evil: Social Conditions, Culture, Personality, and Basic Human Needs," 183. and Jerrold Post, "Terrorist Psych-Logic: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Psychological Forces," in *Origins of Terrorism : Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*, ed. Walter Reich (Washington: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1990), 28.

enemy, and the difficulties in resolving such conflicts rationally. Each side often has its own set of often mutually exclusive “facts” to justify its hostility and violence.

The need to humiliate.

If a group poses a real security threat to another, then there are a number of ways to remove that threat. For example, politically you can convince the group that the gains from carrying out the threat would not be worth the effort, losses and pain required to carry it out. Militarily, you can remove their ability to carry out the threat by disabling their means of aggression – destroying their army or weapons. Within such a calculus there is no mutilation, rape, slaughter of civilians, torture, or ethnic cleansing which is so often a part of conflict. So why do such horrific acts get played out in the name of “defending ourselves”? I argue that this type of behaviour can be partly understood as an attempt to control the demons that the enemy represents. In order to make ourselves pure we have to conquer evil, and this means eradicating those reservoirs, those containers, that hold the bad images of ourselves. All things lazy, treacherous, dirty, cheating, scheming, underhand, and, ironically enough, violent and aggressive must be completely overcome, violently if necessary.

There are two ways to overcome a psychological threat – either banish it or completely control it so it is no longer a threat. At a raw visceral level, atrocities against civilians are proof of power and control. The instigators of an atrocity against another person is proving both to themselves and the other that they have complete and utter control over the other, thereby humiliating him/her.¹²⁶ When a single movement can bring terror or hope, torturers know they have complete control over the innermost thoughts and feelings of the victim. This may explain why sometimes people are tortured before being killed. The bad reservoir, or person, is completely controlled and then removed. The victims have been subjected to atrocities, treated as if they are less than human, completely humiliated and suffered terrible degradation so that the aggressors can battle their demons.

¹²⁶ David Shapiro, "The Tortured, Not the Torturers, Are Ashamed," *Social Research* 70, no. 4 (2003).

Humiliation is also used as a weapon of war to demoralise the enemy and make them less eager to fight. Raping women humiliates the men who are unable to defend them. Displaying tortured bodies of murdered compatriots can be a military strategy to discourage further resistance. The main thread of my argument in this thesis is that a humiliated people will sooner or later take revenge, so such tactics have at best a short-term benefit. A military strategy of humiliation through degradation does not, however, explain how torture and atrocities can be carried out in cold blood, or even with some enthusiasm, unless there are other factors at work. For some, the “demons” that the enemy represents make it possible for them to carry out such horrors: demonising the enemy makes it practicable to use atrocity as a weapon.

The urge to humiliate can be passed through to the victims by example. For instance, a colonial power can express its power by suppressing its citizens. The oppressed, although hating the oppressor, can also respect the power implied in the casual day to day humiliations that a coloniser inflicts on its victims. When the colonial power leaves, the new power elite may wish to establish its credentials as a powerful force, and may well copy the colonialist style of governing to prove that they are indeed the new masters. Franz Fanon found that colonised peoples, once freed, often imitated the violence of their oppressors, as they admire the power and control that oppressors possessed, while hating them for it.¹²⁷

There is also another force at work. A humiliated people can have a sense of retributive justice which demands a type of “equality of suffering”.¹²⁸ Only when an oppressor has experienced the same type of hardships do the victims feel that the situation has been resolved, that balance has been restored and justice done. “*Only when you are attacked at random, only when your daily life is wrecked by violence, only then will you realise what you have done to us. Now you know how it feels.*” Then humiliation begets humiliation, which not only balances the scales, but also refutes the original humiliation, as the ability to respond displays in itself the overcoming of a demeaning powerlessness.

¹²⁷ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 52.

¹²⁸ Nico Frijda, “Lex Talionis: On Vengeance,” in *Emotions: Essays on Emotion Theory*, ed. S Van Goozen, N Van de Poll, and J Sergeant (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1994).

The role of historical trauma

According to Volkan, some ethnic groups have a major traumatic experience that has become part of their cultural identity.¹²⁹ This experience may have been a defeat in battle, or a genocide, or a major loss of prestige or status. The humiliation of this event lives on in the collective memory, and it becomes the job of the next generation to either resolve the loss or reverse the humiliation. No attempt to set the record straight will have any effect, as it is not the facts of the event that are relevant, but its mythologised nature as handed down the generations. Examples of such chosen trauma include:

- Shi'a – the martyrdom of Hussein at Karbala 680¹³⁰
- Serbs – battle of Kosovo 1389
- Andalus syndrome – Muslim expulsion from Spain 1492
- Czechs – battle of Bila Hora 1620¹³¹
- Scots – battle of Culloden 1746
- Navajo Indians – Long Walk 1864
- Lakota Indians – battle of Wounded Knee 1890
- Armenians – Turkish genocide 1915-17
- Jews – Holocaust WWII
- Crimean Tartars – deportation 1944
- Arabs – defeat by Israel 1967

This trauma may lie dormant for a long time, and not be particularly evident in the group's psyche. But when a group is under stress, or needs to reassert its identity it can become a strong psychological force, available for a leader to manipulate for political ends.¹³² No matter how distant the original trauma, there is a sense of immediacy when the fears and anxieties from a new threat conform with those of the historical trauma, and the new enemy will be perceived as having the characteristics

¹²⁹ Best expressed in Volkan, "Transgenerational Transmissions and Chosen Traumas: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity."

¹³⁰ Assaf Moghadam, "Mayhem, Myths and Martyrdom: The Shi'a Conception of Jihad," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 1 (2007): 129-30.

¹³¹ Volkan, *Bloodlines : From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*, 48.

¹³² Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*, 155-56.

of the ancient enemy. This new threat then becomes a new opportunity for the current generation to regain what was lost, or revenge the past humiliation – to fulfil historical destiny. This closeness between the current threat and ancient trauma leads to the feeling that the ancient trauma happened just yesterday, as the emotional effects become alive in the group psyche. An opportunistic leader can manipulate such social forces for nationalistic ends, or to identify himself with a historical heroic figure from a more glorious past. Volkan describes in chilling detail how Milosevic did exactly this in Serbia during the break-up of Yugoslavia.¹³³

The transmission of this trauma is not simply a matter of relating a story of loss to the next generation. Through studies of individual cases of trauma, it has been observed that the mother's anxiety, unconscious fantasies, and the perceptions and expectations of the external world for her child, can pass through to the child's developing sense of self.¹³⁴ This process enables the trauma to pass through the generations. Rita Rogers regards the transmission of historical enmity as a form of child abuse which is taken for granted in schools and in the military as a form of cultural identity formation.¹³⁵ Children, especially adolescents, are acutely aware of their parents' fallibility. They listen to their rage against the cruel oppressor, and they see the shame and humiliation of their inaction – the excuses and interpretations that display their sense of failure and loss of self-esteem. Youth not only wants to prove itself stronger than the previous generation, it wants to revenge the indignities of the elders. But having seen the failure of the past generation, and seeing them as weak, they can no longer trust their parents' guidance. Peer groups and revolutionary leaders are uncontaminated by this past failure, and so can provide a path for revenge. This is discussed in some detail in Chapter 4, the Gaza case study.

¹³³ Volkan, *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*, 50-60. Chap 4.

¹³⁴ Volkan, "Transgenerational Transmissions and Chosen Traumas: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity."

¹³⁵ Rita Rogers, "Intergenerational Transmission of Historical Enmity," in *The Psychodynamics of International Relationships Volume 1: Concepts and Theories*, ed. Vamik D. Volkan, Demetrios A. Julius, and Joseph V. Montville (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1990).

On being a victim

Nico Frijda argues that revenge for victims can be very effective in showing that they are in control of events, proof that they no longer have to submit to the power of others.¹³⁶ The need to restore self-esteem after being subjected to wilfully inflicted harm is essential to one's sense of worth and identity. He believes that a strong emotional driver for revenge is one of equalising the suffering, so that the oppressor feels the same extent of hurt or pain as the victim.

There is a psychological benefit in a victimised ethnic group keeping its victimhood a priority. Mack describes what he calls the "ego of victimization", the incapacity of a traumatised ethnic group to empathise with the suffering of another group.¹³⁷ He describes it as being the group form of the narcissism or self-centredness of some individuals who see themselves as having been so hurt or deprived in the past that they can attend only to their own needs, feeling little or no empathy for the hurt they inflict on others. Wearing the label of victim can provide a group with an assumed entitlement to wreak revenge. Entitlement is the belief that a group can override normal moral concerns and can demand special rights and privileges. This belief of being an exception can be triggered by the extent of suffering endured. "*I may do wrong because wrong has been done to me*". It is possible that the urgency and righteousness of one's own claim for retribution can completely override any recognition of the injury this causes the enemy. Horowitz, in his study of deadly riots, talks of the complete absence of remorse in a post-riot atmosphere. Most people find the revenge killings justifiable in terms of "they had it coming", "taught them a lesson", "deserved it".¹³⁸ Nadler reports that both Israelis and Palestinians became attached to their victim status, as they use it to morally justify their aggression towards each other.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Frijda, "Lex Talionis: On Vengeance."

¹³⁷ Mack, "The Psychodynamics of Victimization among National Groups in Conflict."

¹³⁸ Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*, 367.

¹³⁹ A Nadler, "Social-Psychological Analysis of Reconciliation: Instrumental and Socio-Emotional Routes to Reconciliation," in *Peace Education Worldwide: The Concepts, Underlying Principles and Research.*, ed. G Salomon and B Nevo (2002).

Losing self-esteem and mourning

Mourning has been described as the psychological process through which an individual learns to bear a loss through repeated and painful remembering.¹⁴⁰

Humiliation involves the loss of self-esteem, and the resolution of that loss is a type of mourning. The study of the mourning process may yield insights as to how a person, or a people, can deal with humiliation.

The process of mourning that an individual undergoes after a personal loss of a loved one has been well studied. It is generally accepted that there are reasonably well-defined stages in the mourning process.¹⁴¹ The naming and number of these stages can differ, but the gist of these various descriptions does not vary widely. I describe here the three stages of mourning as presented by Rando. Note that the two later stages have considerable overlap.¹⁴²

Avoidance.

The first reaction is denial. After the initial shock and bewilderment, a type of emotional anaesthesia sets in to deny the reality of the event. This allows time and emotional space for the mourner to slowly absorb the reality of the loss.

Confrontation

The loss has now to be confronted and dealt with. At first, separation anxiety is the prime feature of the grief. Images associated with the loss are recalled obsessively. During this confrontation phase there is an excruciating learning process, where the mourner has to accept the new reality. Gradually the

¹⁴⁰ Margarete Mitscherlich-Nielsen, "The Inability to Mourn - Today," in *The Problem of Loss and Mourning: Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, ed. David R. Dietrich and Peter C. Shabad (Madison, Conn: International Universities Press, 1989), 405.

¹⁴¹ See for example S Shuchter and S Zisook, "The Course of Normal Grief," in *Handbook of Bereavement: Theory, Research and Intervention*, ed. M Stroebe, W Stroebe, and R Hansson (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 23-24.p23-4, and George Pollock, "Process and Effect : Mourning and Grief," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 59 (1978): 258.

¹⁴² See, chapter 2 of Therese A. Rando, *Treatment of Complicated Mourning* (Champaign, Ill.: Research Press, 1993), 19-77. I have used her terms for the three phases of mourning. Note that in Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving : Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss* (London ; Sydney: Simon & Schuster, 2005). She showed that the five stages of loss (denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance) which were originally applied to those with a terminal illness could also be applied to any catastrophic loss.

unconscious desire to deny the loss fades as the harshly learnt new reality gets accepted into the daily life of the mourner, and the past no longer continually intrudes. In Freudian terms, the ego has succeeded in freeing its libido from the lost object. The deceased is no longer idealised, and both positive and negative aspects of the relationship are recognised.

As in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) there is a strong need for others to acknowledge the suffering and pain to help establish the conditions for recovery.¹⁴³

For many, a loss can involve a shake-up of their entire assumptive world. Core beliefs about how they interact with the world and who they actually are no longer have the same validity. The familiar world can seem strange. “*How can I be a father without children, or a tribesman without a village?*” As well as having to deal with the separation grief, they also have to deal with the stress of losing part of their identity.

Accommodation

Once the reality of the loss has been accepted, this last phase deals with re-establishing an integrated personality. The loss has to be integrated into the psyche in such a way as to not interfere with new plans and projects. The memory is not forgotten, but is under the control of the mourner and no longer debilitating. It is reactivated and respected during anniversaries or other memorial occasions. It has been observed that during this final stage of mourning a great energy is released that lifts a burden from the mind, as if a psychic drag has been removed.¹⁴⁴ New projects no longer betray the significance of the loss.

There are many ways in which the mourning process can go awry, and the final accommodation phase remain incomplete. Most common is chronic mourning,

¹⁴³ D Foy, "Group Therapy," in *Effective Treatments for PTSD*, ed. E Foa, T Keane, and M Friedman (New York: Guilford Press, 2000), 157.

¹⁴⁴ Pollock, "Process and Effect : Mourning and Grief," 267.

where the acute symptoms of anxiety and agitation persist interminably.¹⁴⁵ There remains a continual obsession with the loss, life gets stuck in a futile attempt to reunite with it, and all other priorities become insignificant. There is a sense that the loss is very recent, though it may have occurred years previously.

Traumatic loss associated with humiliation differs from other types of trauma in that whenever the event is recalled, the humiliation is relived. Coleman, Goldman and Kruger present a list of studies that show that pain and fear can be recalled without being felt anew – there is the memory of the pain and fear, but not more pain and fear itself.¹⁴⁶ However it has been shown that this is not necessarily so with humiliation – the more it is remembered, the more keenly it is felt. This, incidentally, directly contradicts catharsis theory (expressing negative emotions weakens them). Margalit writes, “[W]e can hardly remember insults without reliving them... The wounds of insult and humiliation keep bleeding long after the painful physical injuries have crusted over”.¹⁴⁷

As humiliation does not dissipate on recall, the repetition compulsion remains strong, and the mourning cannot be completed. This compulsion to relive the event to try to gain some mastery over it is described by Mirscherlich-Nielsen and she believes that “the process of mourning frees the individual from a neurotic compulsion to repeat the same thing over and over again”.¹⁴⁸

Extreme humiliation is in itself a traumatic loss. Status, self-esteem and regard are all gone; a sense of helplessness, anger and despair haunts the victim. The victim’s world is destroyed, and the sense of self severely damaged. The reserves of strength required to come to terms with a new reality are badly depleted. Chronic mourning, with its interminable anger and despair, is the most likely result.

¹⁴⁵ Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: BasicBooks, 1997), 86.

¹⁴⁶ Coleman, Goldman, and Kugler, "Emotional Intractability: The Effects of Perceptions of Emotional Roles on Immediate and Delayed Conflict Outcomes". See p10 for a list of empirical studies that suggest that rumination over humiliating events increases anger.

¹⁴⁷ Avishai Margalit, *The Ethics of Memory* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 120.

¹⁴⁸ Mitscherlich-Nielsen, "The Inability to Mourn - Today," 408.

Judith Herman describes the process of mourning traumatic loss for the individual, and believes that the mourning process can stagnate or remain unresolved when the resistance to mourning takes the form of a magical resolution through revenge, forgiveness or compensation.

The revenge fantasy is often a mirror image of the traumatic memory, in which the roles of perpetrator and victim are reversed. . . The revenge fantasy is one form of the wish for catharsis. The victim imagines that she can get rid of the terror, shame and pain of then trauma by retaliating against the perpetrator. The desire for revenge also arises out of the experience of complete helplessness. In her humiliated fury, the victim imagines that revenge is the only way to restore her own sense of power. She also imagines that this is the only way to force the perpetrator to acknowledge the harm he has done her.¹⁴⁹

She also notes that those who do carry out revenge do not find themselves cured, but suffer the most severe emotional disturbance.¹⁵⁰

While we are mostly familiar with the personal mourning process described above, I maintain that there are substantial similarities between personal mourning and the processes of a group coping with a trauma associated with loss, such as a mass slaughter, forced displacement or a military defeat. The mourning process in both cases, goes through similar phases and can encounter similar problems, though different aspects can take on a greater priority with group trauma.

The need for acknowledgement and redress often defines the struggle for a group to come to terms with a loss. For example, the failure of the Turks to acknowledge the 1915 Armenian genocide is still an important and unresolved issue in Armenian and Turkish relations nearly a century later.

Volkan's description of an ancient trauma being awakened when a sense of identity is under threat has certain parallels with chronic mourning.¹⁵¹ There is the need for public acknowledgement of the pain and suffering, the obsession with the past that overrides all other priorities, the time collapse giving immediacy to an historical event and thus adding emotional intensity, and the need to somehow make the

¹⁴⁹ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 189.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ See also Volkan, *The Need to Have Enemies and Allies*, 155-79.

trauma explicable often by unrealistically assigning blame. All these effects are magnified when humiliation plays a part in the trauma, and makes it more likely that chronic mourning results.

Perhaps it is possible to adapt the techniques that are used to help deal with personal loss to help groups better cope with a traumatic past. For example, it may be possible in some cases for an oppressor to help with the mourning process by acknowledging the injury they have inflicted. This revalidates the injured party and raises their self-esteem, and could be taken as a signal to complete the mourning process and move on.

Conclusion

As we have seen, group violence and humiliation are closely linked. Not only is it likely a humiliated people eventually take revenge, but the violence humiliation provokes will have an element of humiliation to equalise the suffering, to balance the scales of retributive justice. Demonising the enemy as a means of controlling and destroying the hated other can lead directly to acts of humiliation, both as a means of control, and a proof of control. In extreme cases, this can lead to genocide, rape, torture, population displacements and all the concomitant horrors of group violence.

Those groups who have suffered terrible loss or trauma with a strong element of humiliation may not be able to come to terms with that loss, because humiliation complicates the mourning process, and can lead to an interminable sense of injustice that can last for generations. For a group to move forward and to plan new ways to develop can feel like a betrayal of years of emotional investment in the necessity to right an ancient wrong. This emotional investment effectively paralyses the development of the group. Revenge, or a pining for former glory, becomes part of the group's identity, and this in itself can lead to it inflicting humiliation on others, and if retaliation occurs, further humiliation for the group.

In the next chapter I will investigate how social and cultural norms play their part in the feeling of humiliation, and how different cultural forces affect the response.

Chapter 3: The cultural dimension

In the previous chapter, I showed how humiliation can lead to violence when the need for self-esteem demands a response. We are social animals, and what we regard as humiliation and what is permissible as a response is largely influenced by social and cultural considerations. In this chapter I investigate how individuals in different cultures experience loss of status and humiliation, and how they react to it. What a Japanese person may find deeply humiliating, an American may not even notice. A street gang boss aggressively confronts any insult, whereas an employee in a company may remain outwardly calm but silently resentful. In Iraq, a woman directing traffic is humiliating to the drivers, but not in London or New York.¹⁵²

The study of emotions across cultures is fraught with difficulties. There are problems of translation and the differences of nuance that each culture displays in the use of not quite equivalent words. For example, to consider the Japanese word *on* as translating to *obligation* misses the inherent nuances of love, loyalty and indebtedness. Australian aborigines use the word *shame* in the context of propriety and respect, and it has little to do with low self-esteem.¹⁵³

Cultures are not easily encapsulated. With constant interaction between societies, the set of shared beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that comprise a culture are continually changing as the cultural influences from different parts of the world take root. The speed of change also varies within different parts of a society, so culture can vary in the way it is both felt and expressed. Traditional village life may differ significantly from a more liberal metropolitan lifestyle and beliefs in the same society. However, despite this dynamic heterogeneity, there remain core beliefs and values that distinguish different cultures, and it is these underlying differences that I wish to explore.

¹⁵² Fontan, "Polarization between Occupier and Occupied in Post-Saddam Iraq: Colonial Humiliation and the Formation of Political Violence," 218.

¹⁵³ Jean Harkins, "Linguistic and Cultural Differences in Concepts of Shame," in *Shame and the Modern Self*, ed. D Parker, R Dalziell, and I Wright (Kew, Vic: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1996), 87.

In an attempt to cut through these complexities, a small fraternity of social psychologists believes that breaking down the emotional response to its various components can provide a framework for studying cultural differences in emotions.¹⁵⁴

The components include :

- Appraisal – how the event is judged by the affected person
- Action tendency – what actions are the result of the appraisal
- Associated feelings – escape, positive or negative feelings, need to control the situation.
- Social sharing – the need to share feelings with others

Roseman believes that an analysis of appraisal: the ways different people judge situations, is the prime indicator of cultural difference. He tested for anger, sadness and fear comparing Americans and Indians and showed that once one knows how an event is judged, then the action tendency and the associated feelings are more predictable across cultures.¹⁵⁵ For example, the death of a loved one through natural causes leads to sadness. However, if the death is caused by another person who could have been stopped, the associated emotion would be anger. Fear is the likely response when a punishing event is likely and the victim has no power to prevent it. However, Mosquera showed that for pride, shame and anger in Spain and the Netherlands, the action tendencies were significantly different.¹⁵⁶ I return to this research later.

According to this appraisal theory, similar events would be judged differently in different cultures. In cultures where individuals feel they have little control over outcomes, they tend to feel more detached from events so anger would be a less common response than in those cultures where any personal misfortune is regarded as the work of an enemy, or an adversary's conspiracy or curse.

In the previous chapter I defined humiliation as occurring *when others treat an individual or group as if their worth or status is lower than the individual or group perceives it to be*. Note that neither the intention nor the attitude of the offending party

¹⁵⁴ See Roseman et al., "Cultural Differences and Cross-Cultural Similarities in Appraisals and Emotional Responses," 24.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Mosquera, Manstead, and Fischer, "The Role of Honor-Related Values in the Elicitation, Experience, and Communication of Pride, Shame and Anger: Spain and the Netherlands Compared."

plays a part in the humiliation. The *as if* is in the mind of the humiliated individual. The affected party feels humiliated only if they believe they are being treated disrespectfully, so appraisal theory is part of the definition.

Roseman gives us a framework with which to examine humiliation across cultures. We can look at what type of events are interpreted as humiliating and how cultural considerations affect the resultant action. Also we can assess how the feeling is shared socially.

In a similar vein, Coleman contends that there is a set of emotional rules and norms that govern the value placed on certain emotions, and how individuals in any given culture should respond to them.¹⁵⁷ These emotional rules are divided into three broad categories:

1. Privileges. These define the emotional circumstances under which behaviour that would normally be condemned is allowable. For example, an angry outburst by a man grieving the death of his wife.
2. Restrictions. The limitations on behaviour after or during an emotionally intense episode. An example here would be courting shortly after the death of a spouse.
3. Obligations. Behaviour that is socially required after an emotionally intense episode, such as wearing black at a funeral.

These emotional rules are part of the culture, and to a large extent determine the nature, extent and intensity of the behavioural response. I refer to these core concepts later in this chapter.

In particular, Coleman contends that the extent to which humiliation yields an emotional and aggressive response is related to how social roles and norms restrict aggressive reactions. His experiment with 56 English speaking males (with internet access), asking them to respond to different scenarios, did indeed confirm this

¹⁵⁷ Peter T. Coleman, Kathrin Kugler, and Jennifer S. Goldman, "The Privilege of Humiliation: The Effects of Social Roles and Norms on Immediate and Prolonged Aggression in Conflict," (SSRN eLibrary, 2007), 8.

hypothesis.¹⁵⁸ The implications are clear: a violent reaction to humiliation is largely tempered by social expectations and cultural norms.

Cultural tendencies

In this section I show that by placing different cultures along a continuum from collective to individualistic, it becomes possible to make some generalisations about how people from these cultures perceive and react to humiliation.

Any generalisation or classification of whole societies will obviously be too crude a device to predict how particular events unfold at a particular time, or how different people within that society act or react. As stated earlier, cultures are neither static nor monolithic. Nevertheless, I hope to show that by abstracting some features of how people in different societies respond and behave, I can make some generalisations that help to understand how humiliation and shame relate to violence.

Shweder presents a useful way to analyse what societies define as ethical or moral behaviour.¹⁵⁹ Although most societies share many values: loyalty, obedience, freedom, duty, honesty, courage, equality, choice, liberty. According to Shweder they tend to cluster into two types of ethical code.

The morals of the individual comprise a set of values which promote individual autonomy. These include liberty, human rights, equality, choice, dignity, curiosity, personal rights, rule of law, democratic ideals and freedom of religion. Moral authority resides within the individual. Individuals partake in a give and take transaction with society. These ideas gained prominence during the Enlightenment, along with the advance of science, and the separation of church and state. In such societies, self-esteem is based primarily on how one perceives oneself. The northern United States is an exemplar of the individualistic society, where freedom, ambition and self-interest are highly prized values.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Richard Shweder, "Toward a Deep Cultural Psychology of Shame," *Social Research* 70, no. 4 (2003).

The morals of the collective emphasise those values which promote the individual as part of a collective endeavour. The individual is defined primarily by his or her role in a larger enterprise which has its own history. The moral code is designed to promote the purpose of the collective, and defend it from internal decay and external threat. It promotes obedience, sacrifice, duty, honour, loyalty, knowing one's place, courage and abstinence. In such societies the moral authority resides outside the individual within the collective. Self-esteem is based primarily on the status within the group, and the perception of others.

All societies wrestle with the tension between these two opposing ethical codes, and which code takes dominance may shift according to circumstance.¹⁶⁰ For example, in individualistic societies during times of external threat the pendulum swings towards the collective ideals of loyalty and sacrifice, and individual freedoms may suffer. We could view the development of secular Western society as the gradual prioritising of the individual over the collective.¹⁶¹ In Western Europe, the age of chivalry was all about the collective precept, but through the slow infiltration of Enlightenment ideas, honour was replaced eventually by dignity, courage by virtue and obedience by initiative. Within Western society today, a few groups, such as the military and the church, actively promote a collectivist moral code.

A simple example of the different attitudes of collective and individualistic societies is hiring practice. In a society with strong collective instincts it would be regarded as outrageously disloyal to offer a job to a stranger rather than to a member of one's own circle, whereas in an individualistic culture it would be regarded as discrimination and nepotism.

By examining more closely self-respect and how it relates to social behaviour, we move into the realm of societies with a strong shame component, guilt component or fears about security.

¹⁶⁰ Shweder proposes a third set of ethics, the ethics of divinity, which however is not considered relevant to the present discussion.

¹⁶¹ Bowman, *Honor: A History*, 68-92.

Ruth Benedict first introduced the idea of shame-based and guilt-based societies to help explain Japanese culture to an American readership. While some theorists have rejected this shame / guilt classification¹⁶² I maintain that it nevertheless remains a useful tool to help understand core cultural values. In her definition

true shame cultures rely on external sanctions for good behaviour, not, as true guilt cultures do, on an internalized conviction of sin. Shame is a reaction to other people's criticism. A man is shamed either by being openly ridiculed and rejected or by fantasizing to himself that he has been made ridiculous.¹⁶³

Benedict presents Japanese society as having a strong shame component, compared to a guilt-driven American society. This is not to deny any role of shame in the US, nor of guilt in Japanese society, but highlights the cultural tendency of each society. The sanction in shame societies is the fear of being discovered transgressing the behaviour code. Behaviour tends to become oriented toward the verdict of others, actively discouraging non-conformist behaviour. Some writers view shame-based societies in a more positive light by stressing the honour aspect of these societies.¹⁶⁴ In guilt societies, the sanction is an internal one, and does not much rely on the judgement of others.

Shame driven societies tend to be complex, with many layers of obligations and loyalty. The rules of behaviour infiltrate family relationships, the workplace, religious affairs and most of the public sphere. These behavioural rules govern the level of respect to be shown to those above and below in a hierarchy of social worth. The stratified nature of such societies tend to rely on an established set of roles and obligations.

Within the category of honour societies there are certain sets of behaviour that are of particular relevance to this study of humiliation and violence. In some honour

¹⁶² See Millie R. Creighton, "Revisiting Shame and Guilt Cultures: A Forty-Year Pilgrimage," *Ethos* 18, no. 3 (1990). for a full discussion of this controversy.

¹⁶³ Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, 223, Moghadam, "Mayhem, Myths and Martyrdom: The Shi'a Conception of Jihad."

¹⁶⁴ For example, Mosquera, Manstead, and Fischer, "The Role of Honor-Related Values in the Elicitation, Experience, and Communication of Pride, Shame and Anger: Spain and the Netherlands Compared.", and Dov Cohen, Joseph Vandello, and Adrian Rantilla, "The Sacred and the Social: Cultures of Honor and Violence," in *Shame: Interpersonal Behavior, Psychopathology, and Culture*, ed. Paul Gilbert and Bernice Andrews (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

societies, social respect is based on the ability to support and protect one's family and friends. Typically, these societies develop in conditions where state protection is weak and wealth easily stolen.¹⁶⁵ The credible threat of violence or connections to powerful friends secures status within the community, and is a major part of social prestige. In order to distinguish this set of behaviour codes from the more general case of honour societies, I label this as "security based" behaviour, as it is primarily concerned with safety and security, often in an anarchic and dangerous social or political environment. Those societies where such behaviour dominates the response to threat or challenge I call security societies.

Honour societies and security societies share some characteristics in that they both rely on the opinion of others for prestige and ultimately self-respect. However they can differ in significant ways. In honour societies there is a large range of behaviour driven by the regard of others and social norms, whereas in security societies it is restricted primarily to the response to threat or implication of weakness. Within security societies it can often be the case that revenge is disproportionate to the offence, as this increases the deterrence effect. However, within honour societies, the level of revenge is often strictly codified, and to break this code would in itself be cause for social disapproval. Also, honour societies are collectivist in nature, whereas there are examples of security societies that are quite individualistic. The anarchic American "wild west" had an extreme example of a security code. A "don't mess with me" reputation guaranteed respect in a highly individualistic society, whereas the Bedouin demands the same respect but within a highly structured collective tribal society.¹⁶⁶

Within honour cultures, any behaviour that challenges the social norm is in itself shameful, and if the rank of an individual is questioned the humiliation is immediately felt. An aggressive response is required not to avoid humiliation as in security societies, but to reverse the already inflicted stain upon one's character. Within hierarchic shame societies, the response to insult must be carefully calibrated so as to be at an appropriate level, and not to disturb the hierarchy itself.

¹⁶⁵ Nisbett and Cohen, *Culture of Honor. The Psychology of Violence in the South*.

¹⁶⁶ Patai, *The Arab Mind*, 83-88.

Shame and security codes can become entwined. Most shame societies have adopted some elements of the security code, with some, such as some modern Arab societies having strong elements of both. In shame societies the collectivist ethos means that status is to a large extent determined by how well one conforms to social norms. Prestige can be lost by one's own nonconformist actions, or by others challenging one's place or role in society.

From the above analysis, we arrive at a rough but nevertheless useful guide to cultural differences. Collectivistic cultures tend to be shame based. Individualistic cultures tend to be guilt based. However, overriding both these considerations, a weak central authority combined with easily stolen economic assets tends to produce a security based behaviour code, within either a collectivistic or individualist society.

Now we examine some examples of these cultural types in the context of status, self-respect, and prestige, and their opposite, humiliation.

Nomadic tribal society

Security societies tend to develop where economic wealth is portable and easily stolen, and the state is weak and ineffective in policing theft.¹⁶⁷ In such circumstances, a reputation for toughness is necessary to defend the family's fortunes. The most likely place that security societies develop is in remote uplands, semi-deserts and steppes, where animal grazing is the only viable means of support. In these remote areas, the state is typically unable to have an effective policing role, and disputes are resolved locally. Wealth, in the form of animals, can be rustled away literally overnight and easily hidden or sold. Grazing rights are difficult to defend. Honour has little to do with good character but is the ability to defend (with violence if necessary) insecure economic assets.¹⁶⁸ In such an environment, a man's reputation for toughness is his most important asset, which must be defended at all costs and against all challengers, and relies on a credible threat of violence.

¹⁶⁷ This theory is discussed in Nisbett and Cohen, *Culture of Honor. The Psychology of Violence in the South*, 4-11.

¹⁶⁸ Jane Schneider, "Of Vigilance and Virgins: Honor, Shame and Access to Resources in Mediterranean Societies," *Ethnology* 10 (1971): 5.

Stephane Voell provides a modern example of the honour code re-emerging after the collapse of strong centralised state control. He has shown that in Albania the revival of the *kanun* honour code in remote areas has taken over the role of the state as a security mechanism providing retributive justice.¹⁶⁹

The main social grouping in nomadic cultures is the family or small tribe, as thinly-spread grazing flocks can only support small groups. Sons are required to guard the flock, so women as providers of progeny are important resources to be protected and jealously guarded. In some nomadic societies, for women to marry outside the extended family is regarded as an act of sabotage.¹⁷⁰ The measure of an honourable man is his power to protect and support his extended family, especially the women who are to continue the family lineage. In order to survive the harsh conditions of nomadic existence, the group must develop behavioural and ethical codes to support one another and the group as a whole. Collectivist traits such as loyalty, obedience, courage and duty define a clan, extended family or tribe as a strong independent force to be respected.¹⁷¹

Pryce-Jones describes a power-challenge culture in tribal societies in which dominance is determined by the ability to mount and defeat challenges by force. Disputes between neighbouring parties are often resolved through violence or its credible threat.

Indeed, violence is an essential ingredient in the process of decision making, it is proof of serious intention, of the will to proceed in the group interest, no matter what the rights and wrongs.¹⁷²

In a culture where prestige is based on the reputation of dominating others, it is not a challenge or insult itself that is humiliating, but the failure to respond with appropriate force. Any sign of weakness implies a loss of prestige and influence. The response is judged in terms of effective aggression within the norms of the security culture, and if

¹⁶⁹ Stephane Voell, "North Albanian Customary Law Kanun as A "Habitus", in *8th EASA Conference, Dept of Social and Cultural Anthropology* (University of Vienna: 2004).

¹⁷⁰ Schneider, "Of Vigilance and Virgins: Honor, Shame and Access to Resources in Mediterranean Societies," 20.

¹⁷¹ See chap 1 of David Pryce-Jones, *The Closed Circle : An Interpretation of the Arabs* (Paladin, 2002), 21-33.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 22.

found wanting, the insulted individual or group is treated with disdain, and is humiliated for not responding forcefully enough. Within limits, the more forceful the response, the more respect is granted. The culture itself compels those who have been insulted to respond aggressively and confront those who malign their reputation, even if there is little chance of success. From the above discussion it follows that the males especially are always on the alert for behaviour they can construe as demeaning to them or their family because their reputation relies on their ability to respond aggressively to defend their honour.

In such societies one cannot back down from a conflict without loss of reputation and hence influence. So it makes sense to take care not to offend others one regards as dangerously volatile. There are strong codes of etiquette and politeness to ensure that social behaviour does not accidentally spill over into conflict. Such societies mostly have the reputation of being polite and friendly places, but if offence is taken this can change very quickly.

The Bedouin core of Arab society

As populations urbanised, the security culture moved to the cities and either adapted to the more densely populated urban environment, or became subsumed into the larger culture. Patai observes that within Arab society the Bedouin ethos of blood revenge has survived in the urban society.¹⁷³

Arab society still has at its core Bedouin values. Today the Bedouins make up less than 10% of the Arab population¹⁷⁴, yet have a significant influence as the perceived guardians of the Arab ethos. As outlined by Patai, this ethos includes hospitality, generosity, courage, honour, and self-respect.¹⁷⁵ Within Arab society, self-respect is a reflection of the respect afforded by others, and is judged according to how well an individual conforms to society's mores. This represents an honour society. Also, the harsh nomadic existence of the Bedouin leads to aspects of the security code being adopted, as described in the previous section.

¹⁷³ Patai, *The Arab Mind*, 85.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 89-102.

Ahmed Abou-Zeid describes the effect of the honour code of the Bedouins of the Western Desert as follows:

A slight offence inflicted against a lineage or a lineage-segment is taken as an unforgivable humiliation requiring immediate retaliation to wipe out the shame, regain honour and restore the same relations as formerly between the groups. This strict defence of honour stands as a guarantee against misconduct and unjustified aggression. The fear that the offended group will retaliate with violence is an effective check on the behaviour of individuals and groups alike. On the other hand, the shame which strikes an aggressor or culprit and the consequent humiliation he brings on himself as well as on his kin-group is an additional factor in regulating social behaviour.¹⁷⁶

The influence of the Bedouin over the Arab moral code is complex and not easily distilled to a simple cause and effect. However, the sensitivity to any infringement of their honour is reflected in the Bedouin code, and is internalised in Arab culture as extreme pride combined with a wariness of any possible challenge.¹⁷⁷ A recent example is of an Iraqi soldier shooting US troops after being slapped. "The Iraqi Interior Ministry said the soldier opened fire after he had been publicly slapped by an American colleague. Many Iraqi men, especially in the military, are intensely proud and conscious of any perceived slight to their honour."¹⁷⁸

Fontan portrays the three aspects of honour in Arab culture as *sharaf*, *iharam* and *ird*.¹⁷⁹ *Sharaf* refers to social class either through birth or through acts of nobility, benevolence and hospitality. *Ihtaram* refers to respect gained through the use or credible threat of physical force. *Ird* represents the preservation of a woman's purity. The purity of a woman is crucial to the honour of her family, and a woman perceived to be sexually deviant (which includes being raped) can sometimes be killed in order to cleanse the family honour..

¹⁷⁶ Ahmed Abu-Zeid, "Honour and Shame among the Bedouins of Egypt," in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. John G. Peristiany (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 259.

¹⁷⁷ Patai, *The Arab Mind*, 97.

¹⁷⁸ James Hider, "Slapped Iraqi Soldier Shoots Dead Two Us Troops," *The Australian*, 13 November 2008.

¹⁷⁹ Fontan, "Polarization between Occupier and Occupied in Post-Saddam Iraq: Colonial Humiliation and the Formation of Political Violence," 219.

Glidden describes a major attribute of prestige in the Arab value system as the ability to dominate others, the *ihthiram* aspect of honour.¹⁸⁰ Shame is reversed through revenge. The need for revenge remains strong in Arab society. For example, in Egypt, of 1070 cases of murder, 20% were based on a desire to wipe out shame, 30% to avenge real or imaginary wrongs and 31% on blood revenge.¹⁸¹ In Coleman's terminology, it would seem that a shamed male is not only entitled to seek revenge (privilege) but is expected to do so (obligation).¹⁸²

I contend that within an urban environment where there is weak central control, security is based on violence or its credible threat, just as in the rural environment described above. The family head can extend his support and protection to his associates and friends, and so increases his prestige, security and his sphere of influence. These extended families in some societies can become powerful clans and wield significant political and social influence.¹⁸³ In an anarchic system, smaller players ally themselves with those who can protect and support them. They offer allegiance to those groups that have the reputation for vigorously defending their turf and their people, thus increasing their power and influence further. Eventually large powerful families or honour groupings tend to dominate the social and political landscape. For example, the historian Salah Khalaf writes about Lebanon:

The whole political history of Lebanon may be viewed as the history of a handful of leading families competing to affirm their name, power and prestige in their respective communities.¹⁸⁴

As it is regarded as the duty of extended families and clans to look after their own, it follows that that nepotism and diversion of public funds are common in such societies. Government office is primarily a means of securing the interests of the family or clan, often at the expense of other sections of society.

¹⁸⁰ Glidden, "The Arab World," 986.

¹⁸¹ Reported in *Ibid.*: 985.

¹⁸² Coleman, Kugler, and Goldman, "The Privilege of Humiliation: The Effects of Social Roles and Norms on Immediate and Prolonged Aggression in Conflict," 8.

¹⁸³ A similar process describing the development of leaders in Arab societies is described in Pryce-Jones, *The Closed Circle : An Interpretation of the Arabs*, 21-33.

¹⁸⁴ Patai, *The Arab Mind*, 39.

The security code combined with a collectivist ethos produces a type of multiplier effect when responding to challenges of power or security. If an individual is challenged, his honour is at stake. Within a collectivist society this honour is also shared and reflected amongst his intimate acquaintances and family group, so it is not just one person being challenged. Nor is it just one person doing the challenging, but the challenger is seen as a representative of a family or clan or other power group that is attempting to assert themselves at the other's expense. The ethos of loyalty and courage means "*we are all in this together*" and unless a mediator can expedite a face saving formula for both sides, it can easily spiral out of control and into violence. The group nature of the interaction makes it much more difficult for either side to back down, as the protagonists must not only show the other side that they must not be underestimated, but also it is crucial to prove to one's own side that one is tough enough to justify the group's support and respect.

The European link

Europe has a strong tradition of honour culture associated with violence. The stories of the chivalric knights of the Middle Ages showed combat being used to settle questions of virtue, and the concern for reputation overriding actual behaviour.

In a later age, duelling was used not only to resolve moral disputes, but also to wash away in blood, stains on one's reputation. A slap in the face was a humiliation that demanded the formalised violence of the duelling sword or pistol. Pitt-Rivers believed that such ritualised violence was endowed with divine sanction, as God would not support a perjurer or scoundrel in combat.¹⁸⁵ Duelling was part of the social fabric of the aristocratic classes up to the early 19th century. Even one of the most liberal and forward thinking of the American Founders, Alexander Hamilton, felt obliged to accept a duel and was killed in 1804. He believed that if he refused, his public standing would be compromised.¹⁸⁶

As early as the beginning of the 18th century, notions of honour start to take on aspects of an internal dignity rather than merely public reputation. Consider Addison,

¹⁸⁵ Pitt-Rivers, "Honour and Social Status," 29.

¹⁸⁶ Bowman, *Honor: A History*, 74.

quoted in Bowman.¹⁸⁷ He believed it more honourable to forgive rather than avenge an insult, and to guard reputation with virtue rather than courage.

This move away from the importance of public reputation relieved the pressure to avenge insults, and allowed the possibility of Christian forgiveness. Also, the Enlightenment brought with it concepts of equality, which to some extent undermined the entitlement to demote challengers to a lower place in the social hierarchy, or even kill them.

The changing nature of war also worked to undermine the honour culture. When World War One started, the volunteer armies were full of enthusiasm for defending the honour of their country, and in the case of the British, the honesty, pluck and fair play they believed it represented. By the end of the war, after a generation of young men was almost wiped out in the slaughter of the trenches, there was enormous disillusionment with warfare and violence as a means of settling questions of honour.

John Ellis writes

If a machine gun could wipe out a battalion of men in three minutes, where was the relevance of the old concepts of heroism, glory and fair play between gentlemen? ... In a war in which death was dealt out to so many with such mechanical casualness how could the old traditional modes of thought survive?¹⁸⁸

Some of the changes in Western society regarding acceptable behaviour concerning honour have been quite recent. It was only in 2005 that provocation was removed as a defence against murder in the Australian state of Victoria. Acting Premier John Thwaites said “the law of provocation was an anachronism that no longer had a place in a modern, civilised society. . . [I]t had been created when ... it was acceptable for men to have a violent response to a breach of their honour. . . judges would still be able to take provocation into account during sentencing”.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 72.

¹⁸⁸ Quoted in Ibid., 108.

¹⁸⁹ AAP, "Govt Abolishes Provocation Defence," *The Age*, 20 January 2005.

However, honour culture still exists today within Europe. For example, consider *omerta*, the code of honour of Southern Italy and Sicily, and note the security ethos of retributive justice it entails :

Whoever appeals to the law against his fellow man is either a fool or a coward. Whoever cannot take care of himself without police protection is both. It is as cowardly to betray an offender to justice, even though his offences be against yourself, as it is not to avenge an injury by violence. It is dastardly and contemptible in a wounded man to betray the name of his assailant, because if he recovers, he must naturally expect to take vengeance himself.¹⁹⁰

In some Western cities, the gang and drug-dealing culture has a strong security element. In order to get respect you have to be tough. The law does not get involved, and so disputes are resolved through force or its credible threat. The sociologist Peter Moskos describes the drug-dealing culture in Baltimore.

You hang out with your friends. People “respect” (i.e. fear) you. You project glamour. You get laid. You also become otherwise unemployable...To survive on the street you learn to react violently and pre-emptively to the slightest challenge. This is a useful trait for a drug-dealer, but, oddly, managers at Starbucks do not value it.¹⁹¹

Also, Mosquera has made a study of how honour and individualistic values affect shame, anger and pride by comparing the cultures of Spain and the Netherlands.¹⁹² He and his colleagues asked Spanish and Dutch participants to imagine how they would respond to prepared vignettes involving shame, pride and anger situations which also varied the extent to which friends and family were involved. The results of the anger vignettes, in which the participant was to imagine being insulted in front of others, showed that the Spanish, part of a more honour-bound society, were much more likely to feel anger than the Dutch, who are more individualistic.¹⁹³ Mosquera also found that the more honour-bound individuals reacted more aggressively when insulted by members of their own circle.

Once again, we see signs that intimate others play a crucial role in offense situations. We suggest that this relates to the strong interdependence between one's own honor and the honor of intimate others in honor cultures. This has

¹⁹⁰ R Porello, *The Rise and Fall of the Cleveland Mafia: Corn, Sugar and Blood* (Barricade Books Inc., 1995), 23.

¹⁹¹ "Back from the Brink," *The Economist*, 19 April 2008.

¹⁹² Mosquera, Manstead, and Fischer, "The Role of Honor-Related Values in the Elicitation, Experience, and Communication of Pride, Shame and Anger: Spain and the Netherlands Compared."

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*: 843.

two important consequences. First, one's own honor is more vulnerable to humiliations and insults by intimates than by nonintimates, leading to angrier feelings and a stronger need to restore one's honor. Second, being offended by others in front of intimates may lead to more negative feelings, especially of shame, in honor cultures than in nonhonor cultures because one's own honor has implications for the honor of intimate others: If the self is offended and one's honor is thereby diminished, the honor of one's intimates also will be diminished.¹⁹⁴

While this study did not go as far as Nisbett's (described below) in looking at violence, the link between honour and how it generates anger points to a link between insult and violence in European honour societies.

The American South

As well as in parts of Europe, the honour culture is alive and well in the American South. Nisbett and Cohen carried out a series of experiments comparing Southerners and Northerners in the US in their reaction to honour and insult.¹⁹⁵ The results dramatically confirm that there is a regional culture of honour associated with violence in the US.

Nisbett and Cohen examined white non-hispanic male violence in the South, and compared it with the North using a number of different methods and indicators. In questionnaires Southerners were more opposed to violence in general than Northerners but when asked whether a man has the right to kill in self-defence or protect his family or defend his house, the Southerners were much more likely to support violence. Also Southerners were more likely to support punching someone who insults them. Questionnaires also showed that Southerners were much more likely to support shooting someone who sexually assaults their daughter or steals their wife.¹⁹⁶

The culture of gun ownership in the South coupled with the culture of honour leads to an extremely dangerous environment. Nisbett and Cohen spell this out :

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Nisbett and Cohen, *Culture of Honor. The Psychology of Violence in the South*.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 25-31.

In a culture where honor is so important, arguments lead to affronts that demand retribution. The availability of guns increases the chance that the retribution may be deadly. In addition, the knowledge that the other person may be armed and may begin acting violently may lead to pre-emptive first strikes. Once conflicts escalate, a man may be more apt to take a first strike as a matter of self-protection before he himself gets shot.¹⁹⁷

They also carried out experiments with students from the South and from the North and compared their reactions to having their physical space intruded upon by being “bumped” in a corridor. The anger ratings were much higher for the Southerners. Perhaps more significantly, Southerners’ cortisol and testosterone levels rose dramatically after an insult, while Northerners’ levels were hardly affected. Cortisol is a hormone associated with stress and anxiety, and testosterone is associated with aggression and dominance. The result of these experiments lead Nisbett and Cohen to observe that “for the Southerner, the insult has something to do with himself and his reputation; for the Northerner the insult has something to do only with the person who delivered the insult”.¹⁹⁸ This shows the extent to which those in honour societies, such as the American South, are more generally on their guard, even at a physiological level, to defend their reputation that is so hard won yet can be lost in a single incident.

Nisbett and Cohen also examined a range of social policy measures in the South, and compared them to those in Northern states. They analysed gun control; defence of home and property; attitudes towards domestic violence; corporal punishment at home and school; and capital punishment. The results were striking. In all the above cases, the legal and social policies of the South were more pro-violent than the Northern states.¹⁹⁹

Nisbett and Cohen also sent out letters to employers across the country inquiring about a job. In the letter, the “applicant” admitted a conviction for manslaughter for killing in defence of his honour when provoked by a man claiming to have slept with his fiancée. Southern employers responded more favourably to the “honour” version of the letter than an otherwise identical control letter.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 38.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 41-53.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 57-73.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 73-75.

The American South as described by Nisbett and Cohen shows that the concern for security of family and property, combined with a sense of being judged by others, produces a very strong security culture. The approval of certain types of violence that support these security concerns appears to be built into Southern culture. Laws that support aggressive defence of reputation, property and family, use of corporal punishment for socialising children, and the high incidence of capital punishment are all indicators of a security culture sanctioning the selective use of private and social violence. Not surprisingly, leaders in the South during the American Civil War rallied support by appealing to the sense of Southern honour.²⁰¹ The use of violence as defence against insult plays a crucial part in this social dynamic.

Role of the status group

In order to consider how humiliation plays out within different types of societies, consider the status group. I define this as the group of people whose opinion of the status of an individual matters to that person. The group can be family, work colleagues, professional associates, sporting fraternity, local church or voluntary organisation.

Societies that stress the role of the individual tend to be diverse. There are many ways for an individual to interact with others. Community organisations, professional groups, sporting clubs, cultural societies provide different status groups. With many status groups, a person can develop a sense of belonging and respect from many areas of public life. Being a worker, having a family, playing in a band or supporting a team all provide different ways to participate in a group and develop a sense of self and of self-respect. Each status group has its own set of codes and ideals, and no one status group has a monopoly on the social prestige of the individual. Hence loss of status within one status group need not affect an individual's status within other groups, and the social and psychic damage can be limited, though this may not be so true for public personalities such as politicians or celebrities. Although humiliated within one social sphere, it may even be possible to gain some support within others "*my family supports me during these troubled times*", or "*my colleagues continue to express their*

²⁰¹ Ibid., 63.

support". An insult or humiliation is less likely to lead to complete social abandonment, and so is less threatening.

There is another mitigating effect. In societies that stress the dignity of the self, such as the individualistic societies of Northern America and some Northern European countries, the opinion of others is not as crucial to self-respect as in the more collective societies, so loss of respect in the eyes of others is not such a strong factor. Humiliation is less likely to be felt, and to be less intense when it occurs.

Within collective societies the status group is large and all-embracing. It is the tribe, social caste or extended family with very little else in terms of civic society. Disgrace within such a society is more difficult to deal with, as there are very few support structures for those who fail to conform to the collective ideals. The fear of being an outcast means that any stain of ridicule or disgrace must be washed away immediately, usually through an aggressive response.

Conclusion

Within different types of societies, insult and humiliation lead to aggression and sometimes violence for different reasons and with different intensities. In honour societies, one's prestige is built on the opinion of others, so where such a culture demands an aggressive response, it must be forthcoming. Security societies, such as mountain nomads and the American South, are built around the credible threat of violence as a deterrent against loss of insecure economic assets, so any insult must be dealt with decisively. Some Arab societies represent a mix of both honour and security moral codes, and feel humiliation more keenly than most.²⁰² Individualistic societies, such as North America and Northern Europe, provide more diverse status groups, lessening the psychological impact of insulting behaviour and also the need for revenge.

²⁰² An example of the preoccupation with humiliation is provided by Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, *Speech by the Prime Minister of Malaysia* (2003 [cited 11 June 2005]); available from www.aseansec.org/15359.htm. Also partly quoted in chapter 4 of this thesis.

The Role of Humiliation in Collective Political Violence. Chapter 3

These cultural factors play an important part in the social dynamics of Gaza, which I examine in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: The Gaza case study

The economic, political and social situation in Gaza lends itself easily to many theories of collective violence outlined in Chapter 1. Many factors play a part in Gazan society including frustration, relative and absolute deprivation, inability to resolve grievances through peaceful means and unmet human needs. All these theoretical frameworks can be used as a lens to analyse the Israeli Palestine conflict in Gaza, but I propose that there are other psychoanalytical aspects to this conflict, including revenge as part of the social narrative, social trauma and unresolved mourning. The situation in Gaza also provides a fertile area for exploring the concepts of humiliation, group trauma, demonisation of the enemy and the entitlements that come from a sense of victimhood, and how they relate to violence. It is not my contention that this view should take precedence over other ways of viewing the conflict, but would rather add to an understanding of the social forces at work.

Both the Jews of Israel and the Palestinians have been subjected to intense social trauma – the Nazi Holocaust and the Palestinian expulsion of 1948. Each keeps their trauma at the forefront of their social identity. The Jews talk of “never again”, and the Palestinians “the return”.

Each side believes that ultimately their fate lies in their own hands. The Jews remember how the world looked the other way during the Holocaust, and many believe it would again if access to Arab oil made international intervention inconvenient. Similarly, Palestinians realise that their fate is of little practical interest to the surrounding Arab states, and see Arab leaders shaking hands with the West.

Both sides demonise the other and have an image of the other that primarily represents the more extreme elements of the other’s society. The only Israelis most Palestinians come into contact with are soldiers in the Israeli army or the settlers in Palestinian areas. Similarly most Israelis only come into contact with Palestinians as either uneducated day labourers or perpetrators of violence.

In this chapter I discuss the concept of victimhood from first the Israeli point of view, and then the Palestinian. This is followed by a short historical discussion of events before a more complete discussion of the conditions in the Occupied Territories up to 2008. The last part of the chapter discusses how resistance organisations, such as Hamas, provide a social and psychological framework for Gazans, especially the disaffected youth, to avenge their perceived humiliations often through violence.

In the following analysis, the description of events in the conflict is taken from a number of sources.²⁰³ There is a chronology of major events, taken from these sources, at the end of the chapter.

As at 2008, Gaza's population was 1.5 million, of which 99.3% is Muslim (predominantly Sunni), and 0.7% Christian. The Jewish settlements there were disbanded in 2005. Most of the Christian Palestinians in the Occupied Territories live in the West Bank. Of Israel's population of around 7 million, approximately 75% are Jewish, 17% are Muslim, and the rest Christian, Druze and other religious groups.²⁰⁴ Within this thesis, reference to Israelis usually refers to Jewish Israelis.

Victimhood (and its entitlements)

Both sides view themselves as the victim in the situation. The Palestinians are under a harsh occupation, having been driven from their lands. The Israelis see themselves as a tiny nation surrounded by hostile neighbours threatening to drive them into the sea, while being subjected to suicide bombings and violent attacks.

²⁰³ A number of sources combined to provide the historical background of the conflict for this chapter. James L. Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict : One Hundred Years of War*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).; Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), Muhammad Muslih, "History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," in *The Struggle for Peace: Israelis and Palestinians*, ed. Elizabeth Fernea and Mary Hocking (Austin: University of Texas, 1992), Leanne Piggott and Suzanne D. Rutland, *One Land, Two Peoples : A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Sydney: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993), David Shipler, *Arab and Jew. Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land* (Penguin, 1987).

²⁰⁴ Population figures are from CIA, *The World Factbook* (2008 [cited 1 November 2008]); available from www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook.

Victimhood is the psychological state that comes with being subjected to an extreme or persistent low level sense of mortal vulnerability. Montville claims that this depends on at least three factors:

1. The victim or someone close to them must have suffered physical or psychological violence.
2. The violence is felt to be unjustified by almost any standard. The victim knows that civil and human rights are being violated
3. The assault is part of a continuous threat that generates a fear of annihilation.²⁰⁵

The psychology of victimhood has two important outcomes. Firstly, the victims become aware that passivity ensures victimisation.²⁰⁶ Unless they respond forcefully, they will continue to be victimised. Secondly, the “egoism of victimisation”, best described by Mack, allows for no recognition of suffering by the enemy:

The egoism of victimization is the incapacity of an ethno-national group, as a direct result of its own historical traumas, to empathize with the suffering of another group. It is analogous to the narcissism or self-centredness of some individuals who see themselves as having been so hurt or deprived in the past that they can attend only to their own needs, feeling little or no empathy for the hurt they inflict on others.²⁰⁷

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict demonstrates the dynamics of victimhood being played out by both sides.

Jewish Victimhood : the Holocaust

An important aspect of humiliation is the feeling of a lack of control, of being helpless and at the mercy of your enemy. The Holocaust was an extreme case of deep humiliation and helplessness for the Jews of Europe. The Jewish Israelis have the threat of annihilation built into their psyche, and are continually reminded of the precariousness of their situation when Arabs refuse to recognise their right to exist and threaten to wipe them out. After the Nazi Holocaust, the threat of extermination

²⁰⁵ Joseph V. Montville, "The Psychological Roots of Ethnic and Sectarian Terrorism," in *The Psychodynamics of International Relationships Volume 1: Concepts and Theories*, ed. Vamik D. Volkan, Demetrios A. Julius, and Joseph V. Montville (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1990).

²⁰⁶ From an unpublished manuscript by Jeanne Knutson, quoted in *Ibid.*, 174.

²⁰⁷ Mack, "The Psychodynamics of Victimization among National Groups in Conflict," 125.

for many Jews takes on enormous emotional and psychological significance. What may appear to some as overblown rhetoric, the Arab threat to “push Israel into the sea” reawakens annihilation anxiety, and brings to the fore the determination not to be passive in the face of the enemy. Many Jewish Israelis recognise that Jews have in the past paid a terrible price for passivity, and an essential part of the Israeli ethos is that “*this time we fight*”. Shalit argues that Zionism offered an alternative identity of strength and power that appeals to the Jewish psyche.²⁰⁸ With the safe haven from the expulsions and mob attacks of the past being under threat, the defence of Israel takes on an existential urgency.

When Israel was declared a new state in 1948, the Israelis defeated the combined armies of the surrounding Arab states that attempted to destroy the fledgling Israeli nation. For many Jews, this victory defined a new identity; the Jew who isn't going to get pushed around any more, the Jew who does whatever is necessary to defend the safe haven, as there is nowhere left to run to. This annihilation anxiety released a determination and a fervour to repel the attack. The fact that many Palestinians were expelled from their homes, and villages destroyed was unfortunate, but larger considerations were at stake. One third of all Jewry was killed in the Nazi death camps, and a strong Israel must exist to ensure that cannot happen again. This attitude reflects the “ego of victimhood” that Mack refers to, where there is little emotional empathy with the suffering of the enemy if one assumes the mantle of victimhood.²⁰⁹

Many believe that the Jewish experience of Holocaust lies behind the harsh treatment the Palestinians suffer, and there may well be an element of truth in this. Berel Lang, for example, finds it relevant that there has been little in the way of revenge against the German nation, and posits that there is an element of displaced revenge against the Arabs.

I would argue that at least in degree, certain disfigured representations of Arab character and rights -- and the expression of self-assertion and force directed against those representations -- reflect an emergence from powerlessness that in recent Jewish history was epitomized in the Shoah and that has since found in

²⁰⁸ Erel Shalit, "The Relationship between Aggression and Fear of Annihilation in Israel," *Political Psychology* 15, no. 3 (1994). In brief, Zionism is a movement started by European Jewry to establish a Jewish homeland, in response to persecution and pogroms during the 19th and 20th centuries.

²⁰⁹ Mack, "The Psychodynamics of Victimization among National Groups in Conflict."

the Arabs an available target for compensation -- that is, for revenge. Discussion, for example, of the "transfer" of the Arab population recalls that earlier precedent both substantively and in its perversion of language. A more superficial but also more obvious manifestation of this tendency appears in the slogan "Never again," with the "again" an obvious invocation of the Shoah, directed now, however, not against Nazis but their successors. (A notable variation on the latter was Menachem Begin's justification to the Israeli cabinet on the eve of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982: "The alternative is Treblinka, and we have decided there will be no more Treblinkas.")²¹⁰

Donald Neff describes the "ego of victimhood" syndrome in his analysis of how the 1967 war was reported:

With only a few notable exceptions, stories coming out of Israel and printed in the major US dailies during this period were almost invariably focused on the glory of Israel's achievements and the humanity of its occupation policies. They were mute about the plight of a people suddenly rendered captive or homeless in their own land, silent now that victims of the past had suddenly become oppressors of the present. This blindness to a whole people's suffering and the unrestrained glorification of Israel was widely shared and partly explained by the lingering Holocaust guilt of the West. The Christian West experienced a sense of relief, of expiation, with Israel's triumph. There was in the West an undercurrent of feeling that finally its guilt over the Nazi atrocities was at last exculpated.²¹¹

But still there is the underlying fear, here described by Shipler:

That essential feel for the trauma, the tragedy, the aloneness of the Jews in that dark period is simply missing from the Arabs' sense of history and from their grasp of the present. And therefore they cannot understand Israel. They cannot understand the fierce sensations of vulnerability, the lusty devotion to military strength, the stubborn resistance to international criticism, the waves of guilt that soften the core of the hardness. They cannot comprehend the gnawing fear of powerlessness that grinds beneath the arsenal of tanks and planes, the lurking conviction that it could happen again, and that again the world would look the other way.²¹²

Palestinian Victimhood : the Expulsion of 1948

The expulsion of 1948 was a devastating and traumatic event for the Palestinians. Many fled to Egypt-controlled Gaza, but were not granted Egyptian citizenship. Unlike millions of refugees in the 1940s in the aftermath of World War Two and the

²¹⁰ Berel Lang, "Holocaust Memory and Revenge: The Presence of the Past," *Jewish Social Studies, New Series* 2, no. 2 (1996): 13.

²¹¹ Donald Neff, *Warriors for Jerusalem* (Brattleboro, Vt: Amana Books, 1988), 297.

²¹² Shipler, *Arab and Jew. Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land*, 339.

Hindu / Moslem conflict in India, the Palestinians have been unable to find a new home. The Arab League passed a decree in 1949 that no Arab state should offer citizenship to a Palestinian or their descendants.²¹³ While the decree's intention was to avoid dissolution of their identity and protect their right of return, it effectively made Palestinians incapable of settling anywhere. The "right of return" to Palestine has since become an integral part of the Palestinian identity. The Palestinian historian Abd al-Latif Tibawi describes the intensity of the emotion regarding the 'return'.

It embraces not only those adults, men and women, and their children who are now homeless, but also children of refugees born in exile. All are being thoroughly and systematically instructed in the mystique of 'the return' in schools and through all the modern media of communications.²¹⁴

The Palestinians are placed in a situation where it is impossible for them to come to terms with the loss of their homeland. The inability to settle elsewhere in the region and the continued occupation of the refugee camps mean that they are constantly reminded of their loss.²¹⁵ Not only that, but their daily lives revolve around the implications of that loss, and their identity as an ethnic group is defined by it. Many Palestinians pass on the key of their original home down the generations as a token or symbol of the right of return.²¹⁶ Young Gazans feel they belong to villages they have never seen.²¹⁷ The loss of homes and homeland has been described by Said Farhain

People hang on to their homes like snails to their shells. When people have to leave their home, there is a scar at that very place where people and walls met so closely.²¹⁸

It is probably better described as a scab rather than a scar – a scab that is continually worried and picked at, and never heals, especially when Israeli bulldozers destroy

²¹³ While I have not been able to locate this Arab League proclamation, there are references to it in both the Israeli and Arab press. For example Abdul Ghafour, "A Million Expatriates to Benefit from New Citizenship Law," *Arab News*, 21 October 2004.

²¹⁴ Quoted in Muslih, "History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," 73.

²¹⁵ In Gaza about 33% of the 1.3m population still live in camps. See BBC, *Gaza Crisis: Key Maps and Timeline* (2009 [cited 14 March 2009]); available from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/5122404.stm.

²¹⁶ Loren D. Lybarger, *Identity and Religion in Palestine : The Struggle between Islamism and Secularism in the Occupied Territories, Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics*. (Princeton, N.J. ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 111.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 188.

²¹⁸ Said Farshain, "Homes Don't Travel," (London: Word Into Art exhibition at the British Museum, 2006).

Palestinian homes in the Occupied Territories.²¹⁹ In this way the losses of the expulsion are continually refreshed in the minds of the Palestinians, and the past trauma made fresh again.

Edward Said believes the mutual recognition of suffering of the Holocaust and of the expulsions of 1948 is part of the necessary basis for coexistence of Israelis and Palestinians.²²⁰ The experiences of both are connected, and must be acknowledged as such for there to be any progress. He expresses the frustrations of a society that sees no future for itself, and accepts no responsibility for its own development, stuck in victimhood and mourning for a lost land.²²¹ Said is describing the symptoms of unresolved mourning, and his plea for the trauma of expulsion to be acknowledged as such recognises the healing processes associated with mourning.

As outlined in Chapter 2, Volkan describes the process of chosen trauma, and how the psychological responsibility to reverse the group's humiliation is passed down the generations.²²² The example of the Palestinians fits well with his theory of generational revenge transmission. The Palestinian demography adds a chilling edge to this conclusion. Over half the population is under the age of fifteen, and will be growing up in an atmosphere of unresolved humiliation.²²³

Hassan Salameh, a member of Hamas, was asked by Jessica Stern whether he feels remorse for lost lives in suicide attacks. "The terrible things that have happened to the Palestinian people are far bigger and far stronger than feeling sorry or guilty. As a Palestinian, I feel that my people and I have been murdered in the soul by the Israeli occupation". He is expressing clearly Mack's "ego of victimhood".²²⁴

²¹⁹ Since 1967, over 18,000 Arab homes have been demolished by the Israelis. The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, ([cited 1 November 2008]); available from www.icahd.org.

²²⁰ Edward Said, *The End of the Peace Process* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 208.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 231-33.

²²² This concept is best summarised in Volkan, "Transgenerational Transmissions and Chosen Traumas: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity."

²²³ Jimmy Carter, *Palestine : Peace Not Apartheid* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 175.

²²⁴ Stern, *Terror in the Name of God : Why Religious Militants Kill*, 59.

There is another aspect of this dual trauma that emerged from a TRT (To Relate and Trust) session between Palestinians and Jews.²²⁵ While both sides related their sense of being a victim, it emerged that some Palestinians felt that the Holocaust somehow devalued their own problems, and that the portrayal of trauma became a type of competition that they were destined to lose. Yet another cause for resentment.

After the 1948 war

The next major war after 1948 was the Six Day War in 1967; a humiliating defeat for the surrounding Arab states. Rather than wiping Israel off the map, the result was the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Heights and the Sinai. In 1967, the threat of annihilation, or death anxiety, Shalit believes, led to a release of tremendous strength that saved the Israeli nation. This victory led to a sense of grandiosity and omnipotence, confirming the sense of historical destiny.²²⁶

The Yom Kippur war of 1973 caught Israel unprepared for the attack by Syrian and Egyptian forces. Eventually it was repulsed, but both sides suffered heavy losses. The initial success of the operation restored the Arabs' sense of honour, and damaged the myth of invincibility of the Israeli forces. After the war Sadat managed to break a negotiation deadlock by coming to Israel to address the Knesset. "The Arab-Israeli conflict," he later told a U.S. Congressman, "contains 70% psychological problems and 30% substance."²²⁷ This extraordinary political gamble led to the Camp David Accords of 1978, in which Egypt and Israel normalised relations. The implicit recognition of Israel isolated Egypt within the Arab world, and was seen as a betrayal by the Palestinians.²²⁸ The Camp David accord only allowed for Palestinian autonomy, not statehood, and was subsidiary to the main purpose of the treaty.

While the major themes of Arab wars and agreements were being played out on the international stage, a guerrilla war was taking place within and outside Israel during

²²⁵ Dan Bar-on and Fatma Kassem, "Storytelling as a Way to Work through Intractable Conflicts: The German-Jewish Experience and Its Relevance to the Palestinian-Israeli Context," *Journal of Social Issues* 60, no. 2 (2004).

²²⁶ Shalit, "The Relationship between Aggression and Fear of Annihilation in Israel," 416.

²²⁷ Quoted in "Sadat's 'Sacred Mission'," *TIME*, 28 November 1977.

²²⁸ Piggott and Rutland, *One Land, Two Peoples: A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 138.

the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The various Palestinian factions were intent on damaging Israel and terrorising Israelis. The Palestinian attacks included bus bombings and hostage taking within Israel; rocket attacks; multiple airline hijackings; the Munich Olympics massacre; the airport massacres at Lod²²⁹, Athens, Vienna and Rome; and the hijack of the cruise ship Achille Lauro. The Israeli response was often disproportionate, and sometimes in the form of collective punishment. Israel retaliated with raids on Palestinians and their supporters, including targeted assassinations, bombardment of refugee camps, blowing up 13 Arab aircraft at Beirut airport in 1968, and bombing the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) headquarters in Tunis in 1985. While Abu-Sharif maintains that one reason for the attacks was to gain publicity for the Palestinian cause²³⁰, the resulting reprisals, often heavy-handed to act as a deterrent, would have added to the sense of helplessness and outrage felt by moderate Palestinians.

The Occupation and Intifada.

Occupation aims, at its core, to deny Palestinians their humanity by denying them the right to determine their existence, to live normal lives in their own homes. Occupation is humiliation. It is despair and desperation.²³¹

The Israeli occupation of the territories gained in the 1967 war provided the Palestinians with many reasons for resentment. The Israeli Civil Administration within Gaza presents them with constant day-to-day humiliations, as the above quote demonstrates. Stern quotes from Israeli reporters Schiff and Ya'ari:

Since the occupation began, Palestinians have been at the mercy of the Israeli Civil Administration in every sphere of economic life. Each requirement for a permit, grant or dispensation entailed an exhausting wrestle with a crabbed bureaucracy of mostly indifferent but sometimes hostile clerks and officials – a veritable juggernaut of four hundred Jewish mandarins managing thousands of Arab minions bereft of all authority.²³²

²²⁹ By the Japanese Red Army on behalf of a Palestinian faction.

²³⁰ Bassam Abu-Sharif and Uzi Mahnaimi, *Best of Enemies* (Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 87-88.

²³¹ Sara Roy, *Failing Peace. Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 22.

²³² Stern, *Terror in the Name of God : Why Religious Militants Kill*, 37.

All travel is severely restricted by checkpoints throughout the Occupied Territories, and at the entry points and exit points. The simplest of journeys can be delayed by apparently arbitrary searches. Here is an account of a Palestinian travelling to Gaza:

The endless lines of other travellers and children, waiting for the unwelcoming and belligerent faces of their occupiers to place a single stamp in their travel document giving them approval to return to their home; or to arbitrarily interrogate them; imprison them; or deny them entry. The strip searches.²³³

The checkpoints are one of the most hated practices within the Occupied Territories.

Checkpoint stories abound among Palestinians. The Israeli human rights group B'Tselem has documented the cases of 19 Palestinian civilians shot dead without provocation at roadblocks. There have been many cases of Palestinian ambulances being blocked from reaching patients and of pregnant or ill Palestinians being barred from hospitals.

For many Palestinians, the main problem is more mundane. Checkpoints have driven up the price of goods and transport. Journeys of a few miles now take hours, as Palestinians skirt the roadblocks on mud roads. The roadblocks prevent students getting to college and adults getting to work.²³⁴

The checkpoints highlight the humiliating aspect of the occupation. They demonstrate that the occupying force has control over the daily lives of the Palestinians. The checkpoint procedure appears arbitrary: the same person is allowed through one day but not another. ID is demanded but not checked against a blacklist, cars are stopped but not searched. But always there is the waiting. Sometimes the humiliation is obvious: young men have to stand for hours with their hands on their heads before being turned back, others are bullied in front of their children.²³⁵ While the Israelis claim the checkpoints serve to increase security, the anger they generate radicalises the Palestinian population, and makes checkpoints the target for attacks. This of course makes the soldiers there more nervous and thus more likely to overreact to anything suspicious, inciting yet more anger.

For many Palestinians, earning a living is at the mercy of the Israelis. While it is possible for Palestinians to work in Israel and sell their produce there, the frequent

²³³ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 38.

²³⁴ Phil Reeves, "Hated Checkpoints Top List of Palestinian Targets.," *The Independent*, 22 February 2002.

²³⁵ Muhanned Tull, "And They Wonder Why We're Angry," *Washington Post*, 16 August 2001.; Molly Moore, "Checkpoints Take Toll on Palestinians, Israeli Army; Civilians Describe Abuse; Troops Lament Conditions," *Washington Post*, 29 November 2004.

closures of the border checkpoints and travel restrictions emphasise the fragility and the one-sidedness of the economic bond. All goods into and out of the Gaza Strip are subject to Israeli checkpoints. Thus the Palestinians feel that they are at the mercy of their oppressors for even food, fuel and other basic necessities. While Israelis are concerned about security issues, the Palestinians feel their livelihoods are being held hostage.

The frustration engendered by 20 years of occupation, no improvements in conditions and collective punishments for attacks on Israelis led to the Intifada of 1987. “The uprising was a universal outburst of suppressed dismay, frustration and anger against economic exploitation, land expropriation, daily harassment, Jewish settlements and the sense of no escape from a long-endured occupation.”²³⁶ The Palestinians were taking matters into their own hands, no longer reliant on apparently unconcerned Arab states or a weakened and distant PLO. There was also the need to assert control. Living under an occupation where daily life is subject to the whims of the occupying force robs people of self-esteem. The intifada was an outlet for the Palestinians’ need to assert themselves, to be in charge of their own lives. The violence was both expressive of the internal need to take independent action, and instrumental in pushing the Israelis to reconsider their policies.

Sucharov believes that the Palestinians throwing stones in the Intifada was too close to the narrative of David and Goliath, and made many Israelis realise that the IDF’s (Israeli Defence Force) Goliath role was incompatible with that of the “defensive warrior”. She argues that this contradiction ultimately led to the Israeli willingness to sign the Oslo accords.²³⁷

Some Israelis, however, reacted with righteous indignation to the stone throwing, and felt anger for being stoned for who they were, rather than for what they had done, presumably unaware of the irony of Israeli policy condoning collective punishment.²³⁸

²³⁶ Ilan Pappâe, *A History of Modern Palestine : One Land, Two Peoples*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 234.

²³⁷ Mira Sucharov, *The International Self: Psychoanalysis and the Search for Israeli-Palestinian Peace* (SUNY Press, 2005).

²³⁸ Personal communication with Australian Jews reflecting on their experiences in Israel. Sydney, October 2008.

The intifada was met with a harsh response, with extreme harassment, arbitrary arrest and violent repression in order to crush it. This included closure of schools, sealing and demolition of houses, destruction of olive and fruit trees, destruction of furniture, verbal and physical abuse, and the beating of fathers in front of their children.²³⁹

The Oslo accords of 1993 appeared at first to be a real chance for peace. The Palestinians celebrated the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza city and other urban areas, and many Israelis were optimistic about the future.²⁴⁰ However, the accords suffered the fate of many phased agreements – the time and opportunity it gave for extremists on both sides to undermine it. Settler violence increased, as they feared that even limited self-rule would compromise their position, and threaten Israel's sovereignty over all of Palestine. Hamas stepped up their attacks as they opposed the accord because it failed to promise Palestinian statehood, address the problem of refugees or the status of Jerusalem. With the assassination of Rabin in 1995 and the new prime minister Netanyahu being opposed to the agreement, it degenerated into angry recriminations about compliance. Some Palestinians believe Oslo made the PLO an arm of the Israeli state, by making it responsible for containing the anger of its own people without Palestinians getting anything substantial in return.²⁴¹

In 2000, a number of events combined to feed the anger, hope and desperation of the second intifada. In May the steady stream of casualties inflicted by Hezbollah forced the Israelis to withdraw from southern Lebanon, setting a precedent for the success of guerrilla warfare against the IDF. In July, Arafat returned from Camp David empty-handed from failed peace talks. This further discredited the PLO as there had been no improvement in the plight of the Palestinians since Oslo.²⁴² Soon after Palestinians mourned the 18th anniversary of the Sabra and Chatilla massacres²⁴³, for which many

²³⁹ Elia Awwad, "From Enmity to Peaceful Coexistence: The Search for Meaning," *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture* 4, no. Autumn (1994).

²⁴⁰ Dona Stewart, *The Middle East Today: Political, Geographical & Cultural Perspectives* (Taylor & Francis, 2009), 171. and Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict : One Hundred Years of War*, 230.

²⁴¹ Baylis Thomas, *How Israel Was Won. A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Lexington Books, 1999), 266-67. and Roy, *Failing Peace. Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*, 215.

²⁴² Roy, *Failing Peace. Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*, 215.

²⁴³ In 1982, the Christian Phalange were allowed into the Sabra and Chatila Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon by the IDF and massacred thousands of Palestinians. After an international outcry and mass protests within Israel, Sharon was removed as head of Defence. He was later reinstated.

held Ariel Sharon responsible, Sharon visited the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. This provocative act provided the spark for the second intifada. During the civil unrest from 2000 to 2005 in both the West Bank and Gaza approximately 3000 Palestinians and 1000 Israelis died.²⁴⁴ Attacks by Palestinians were met by reprisals by the IDF including targeted assassinations, destruction of infrastructure in Gaza, demolition of homes and other collective punishment. After five years of violence on both sides the Sharm-el-Sheik agreement of 2005 led to the withdrawal of all military forces from Gaza, and all the settlements in Gaza and some in the West Bank were evacuated.

The failure of the PLO to deliver, combined with their reputation for corruption, provided Hamas an opportunity to assert themselves during the elections in Gaza and gave them a surprise victory.²⁴⁵ To their dismay, the Gazans found that democratically electing a government did not bring international approval. Donor countries denied aid to Gaza because Hamas refused to recognise Israel and uphold previous agreements between the Gaza authorities and Israel. Israel withheld the collected taxation due to the authorities, and the dire economic situation within Gaza deteriorated further.

A desperate economic and humanitarian situation arose in Gaza. With all land, sea and air access to and from Gaza controlled by Israel they have completely isolated the area. The economy, largely dependent on trade with Israel, was at a standstill in 2007 with only about 10% of its industry in operation.²⁴⁶

Hamas has increased the Qassam rocket attacks into Israel since 2005, leading to many punitive responses from Israel. The infrastructure of Gaza was deemed as a retaliatory target by the Israelis. For example, electricity and water supplies in Gaza were bombed by the Israeli Defence Force in 2006 in response to attacks, adding further disruption to daily life, and further worsening the living conditions.²⁴⁷ Gaza is

²⁴⁴ Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict : One Hundred Years of War*, 244.

²⁴⁵ Roy, *Failing Peace. Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*, 221.

²⁴⁶ Matthew Price, "Isolated Gaza a Jail for Its People," *BBC News*, 9 August 2007.

²⁴⁷ Scott Wilson, "Israeli Panel Declares Gaza a 'Hostile Entity'," *Washington Post*, 20 September 2007. and Chris McGreal, "Israeli Tanks Turn Screw on Besieged Gaza Strip," *The Guardian*, 29 June 2006.

also dependent on Israel for half of its electricity, and for the transport of fuel through the checkpoints for its emergency generators.²⁴⁸

According to the World Bank figures in June 2008 :

Unemployment is highest in Gaza, at nearly 33% of the active work force. This rate is likely to become much higher as the layoffs in the industrial sector become permanent. . . . The percentage of Gazans who live in deep poverty has been steadily increasing, rising from 21.6% in 1998 to nearly 35% in 2006. . . . If remittances and food aid are excluded and poverty is based only on household income, the poverty rate in Gaza jumps to almost 67%.²⁴⁹

The UN Works and Relief Agency (UNWRA) report for 2007 describes the living conditions:

From 16 June [2007], Israel closed the borders of the Gaza Strip. . . . The drastic decrease in commercial foodstuffs entering the Gaza Strip resulted in higher prices, making it more difficult for the population to supplement UNRWA food rations (which provide 61 per cent of the daily caloric intake) with fruits and vegetables. With businesses unable to import raw materials or export agricultural and other products, the private sector in Gaza came near to collapse. An estimated 75,000 people lost their jobs, and 90 per cent of all industrial establishments were closed at the end of the year. The loss of livelihoods led to a crisis in municipalities as the fees needed to ensure services such as garbage collection were not paid. . . . Hospitals struggled to repair and maintain such life-saving hospital equipment as incubators, respirators and kidney dialysis machines. Several hundreds of patients sought treatment abroad every month, though many were denied permission to leave Gaza. . . . There were cases in which patients in critical condition died while waiting to exit the Gaza Strip.²⁵⁰

These are extreme conditions, with an economic and humanitarian disaster imminent, and an oppressor force with a single objective; security, overriding all other humanitarian concerns.

The history outlined above presents a painful and unedifying picture of almost continual animosity between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis for over 80 years, with only an occasional relaxation of hostilities. The slow but necessary building of trust

²⁴⁸ Martin Prentice, "Gaza's Infrastructure Suffers," *BBC News*, 29 June 2006.

²⁴⁹ World Bank, "Economic Developments and Prospects " *West Bank and Gaza Updates*, no. June (2008).

²⁵⁰ Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency, "Report of the Commissioner-General of the UNRWA for Palestine Refugees in the Middle East for 2007," (NY: UN, 2008). Numbered paragraph 13

between the two sides is easily cancelled out by a single incident by extremists, and both sides then revert to the safety of hatred and vilification. The cycle of violence has led to what Eyad Hallaq calls “Trauma Organized” societies, where the victim-perpetrator cycle becomes the normal mode of behaviour, with devastating psychological and social consequences.²⁵¹

Listen to psychiatrist Eyad Sarraj, as interviewed by Omar Karmi:

This is a society that glorifies. Many of the suicide bombers of today are the children of the first intifada, who witnessed the beating of their fathers and their humiliation. The bottom line is that this is an expression of despair. Despair is expressed in the sense of impotence, despair is expressed in depression.²⁵²

In this environment, a resistance organisation that can offer an alternative to despair is likely to attract followers. In the following section I explain how resistance organisations take advantage of a deeply felt humiliation to help recruit followers in this dire economic, social and political situation.

Humiliation and the resistance organisation

There are many social and psychological forces that operate within a climate of oppression such as that of the Palestinians in the Gaza strip. For those whose sense of self-esteem is primarily based on the ability to protect and support their family, there is a double humiliation. Firstly they are subject to the whims and excesses of their oppressors. Secondly the severe economic disruption means that many cannot earn a living and feed their families, becoming reliant on foreign food aid. As much of this comes from Europe or the UN, there is the extra humiliation of being reliant on the charity of the institutions of the West, while rich Arab states seem reluctant to provide *zakat*, Islamic charity.

Resistance organisations provide a psychological lifeline, a way to salvage self-respect from a hopeless situation. They offer hope, identity, and a feeling of

²⁵¹ Eyad Hallaq, "An Epidemic of Violence," *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture* 10, no. 4 (2003).

²⁵² Omar Karmi, "Defiant, Helpless and Demoralized," *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture* 10, no. 4 (2003): 58.

empowerment to Palestinians, along with an ideology that entitles them to act out their frustrations. The first steps in building trust are for the organisation to show that they actually care about the plight of the people. Hamas, the most successful resistance organisation in Gaza, conducts extensive social welfare activities. They provide food, help with housing, and organise sports and social clubs. This helps to spread the Islamic ideals of benevolence and self-sacrifice to areas where the poor are not catered for by the deteriorating and corrupt governing institutions. Over half of Hamas's budget goes to social welfare: schools, libraries, mosques, orphanages and clinics.²⁵³ Having a large welfare program also helps with raising funds, as donors claim they are giving to a charitable cause.

Within Gaza, the authority of Hamas defines the social atmosphere. Stern presents a few reports of what the social situation was like in Gaza during the first Intifada:

Palestinians living in Gaza at the time of the first Intifada talk about the social pressure to participate, even for youth not living in the camps. It was just what everyone did, one young man told me. Interviewees in a study overseen by psychiatrist Jerrold Post also talked about social pressure, and the feeling that they would be ostracised if they didn't participate in the violence. One said a friend recruited him to join Hamas, but that joining was just "the normal thing to do, as all young people were enlisting. With my Islamic leanings and the social pressure from the Islamic Center, it is only natural that I joined in Hamas activities in the camp".²⁵⁴

Hamas provides the social atmosphere in which resistance is normal and expected. The three arms of Hamas, social welfare, political, and military provide various opportunities for Palestinians to take part in the struggle with varying levels of commitment to resistance, confrontation and violence, and provide many opportunities for Hamas to promote their cause.

The ideology of resistance organisations provides a grand social project infused with noble rhetoric, an irresistible alternative to despair and depression, especially for impressionable teenagers. Adolescents look for ways to validate themselves and crystallise their personality outside the family situation.²⁵⁵ The approval of their peers is crucial during this stage of development, and this is where resistance organisations

²⁵³ Stern, *Terror in the Name of God : Why Religious Militants Kill*, 49.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

²⁵⁵ Volkan, *The Need to Have Enemies and Allies*, 36-39.

can play a significant role. These organisations offer a noble alternative to the humiliations and excuses for inaction in the home environment at the time when developing adults are looking for ways to define themselves in the world. This is especially true when there are few other sources of self-esteem or ways to express pride in achievements. As Post reports, “the profile of a typical Palestinian suicide bomber is age 17-22, uneducated, unemployed, unmarried. Unformed youth”; defined by what they are not, not by what they are.²⁵⁶ While this analysis holds for the extreme case of suicide bombers, it also resonates with the profile of resistance fighters in general. The resistance group focuses on filling gaps, providing an ideology, a purpose, a livelihood and a cause. This leads to a fusing between individual identity and that of the group, especially among the more radical individuals. The individuals appear to have no goals beyond that of the group whose cause they serve.²⁵⁷ The organisation’s success is the only route to individual self-esteem. The conflation of individual and group personality and aims is described by Freud in his analysis of group psychology.²⁵⁸ Post also explains the psychological advantages of the group: “By belonging to a radical group, otherwise powerless individuals become powerful”.²⁵⁹ A quote from one of Post’s interviewees:

An armed action proclaims that I am here, I exist, I am strong, I am in control, I am in the field, I am on the map.²⁶⁰

As Post points out, this has obvious policy implications. If a terrorist’s main source of self-esteem arises from being a terrorist, then renouncing violence would be psychologically damaging.²⁶¹ In a world of political corruption, unemployment, poverty and despair, the attractions of a well-funded organisation offering a purpose, discipline, benevolence, and a way of resolving problems is immensely attractive. Especially if the group’s ideology validates and reinforces the idea that the problem is

²⁵⁶ Jerrold Post, Ehud Sprinzak, and Laurita Denny, "The Terrorists in Their Own Words: Interviews with 35 Incarcerated Middle Eastern Terrorists," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15, no. 1 (2003): 184. It is generally accepted that this profile does not fit suicide bombers in all terrorist organisations. Those who destroyed the twin towers in New York on 11 September 2001 were well-educated and middle class.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: 175.

²⁵⁸ Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*.

²⁵⁹ Post, Sprinzak, and Denny, "The Terrorists in Their Own Words: Interviews with 35 Incarcerated Middle Eastern Terrorists," 176.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 183.

²⁶¹ Post, "Terrorist Psych-Logic: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Psychological Forces," 38.

a “them” that can be overcome. Externalising the problem makes it possible to defeat, and offers hope.

The resistance organisations use a sense of helpless outrage to justify acts that would seem to counter the well-being of the Palestinians. On the 9th April 2008, fighters from Gaza attacked a fuel depot in Israel that was being used to supply the Gaza strip²⁶². USA Today reports that Abu Ahmed of Islamic Jihad defended the deliberately targeted attack on the fuel depot on which Gazans depend. “This fuel is dipped in humiliation. If their fuel means humiliation for us, we don’t want it”²⁶³. Being in the position of having to accept the basic necessities of life from the enemy is a degradation that requires a contemptuous response, hence the attempt at destruction. This plays well to the sense of injured pride of some militant sections of the Palestinian population.

When Hamas fires rockets into Israel, or organises other attacks inside Israel, there is usually a swift retaliation, which Hamas interprets as a new provocation, and more recruits become available, strengthening Hamas’s influence. This cycle of violence, humiliation and revenge is well described by Mahathir Mohamed, the then prime minister of Malaysia, in his opening address of the 10th Islamic summit in 2003. The following is an extract from that speech (complete with its numbered paragraphs):

29. Today if they want to raid our country, kill our people, destroy our villages and towns, there is nothing substantial that we can do. . . .

30. Our only reaction is to become more and more angry. Angry people cannot think properly. And so we find some of our people reacting irrationally. They launch their own attacks, killing just about anybody including fellow Muslims to vent their anger and frustration. Their Governments can do nothing to stop them. The enemy retaliates and puts more pressure on the Governments. And the Governments have no choice but to give in, to accept the directions of the enemy, literally to give up their independence of action.

31. With this their people and the ummah²⁶⁴ become angrier and turn against their own Governments. Every attempt at a peaceful solution is sabotaged by more indiscriminate attacks calculated to anger the enemy and prevent any peaceful settlement. But the attacks solve nothing. The Muslims simply get more oppressed.

²⁶² Griff Witte and Islam Abdulkarim, "Gaza Fighters Attack Fuel Depot inside Israel," *Washington Post*, 10 April 2008.

²⁶³ Pesce, "Israel Shuts Off Gaza's Fuel after Depot Attack."

²⁶⁴ The worldwide Islamic community

32. There is a feeling of hopelessness among the Muslim countries and their people. They feel that they can do nothing right. They believe that things can only get worse. The Muslims will forever be oppressed and dominated by the Europeans and the Jews. They will forever be poor, backward and weak. . . .

33. But is it true that we should do and can do nothing for ourselves? Is it true that 1.3 billion people²⁶⁵ can exert no power to save themselves from the humiliation and oppression inflicted upon them by a much smaller enemy? Can they only lash back blindly in anger? Is there no other way than to ask our young people to blow themselves up and kill people and invite the massacre of more of our own people?²⁶⁶

The response to humiliation is also of prime concern to the Islamic Brotherhood, as stated in the ideological section of its official English version website IkhwanWeb.

To confront the Western and US domination, the Muslim Brotherhood thinks that fighting domination requires adopting several factors, including:

1. Spreading Islamic concepts that reject submission to humiliation, and incite to fighting it, and to be on to rise to support the oppressed.²⁶⁷

Jessica Stern also recognises the extent to which humiliation plays a role in resistance organisations.

Halfway through my study, I asked a terrorist leader if I was getting it right. I laid out for him what I'd heard again and again, that terrorists were motivated by their perceived humiliation, relative deprivation and fear -- whether personal, cultural or both. I told him how this seemed to me to be what motivated terrorists around the world, including American ones, and that everything else was just sloganeering and marketing.

After a silence that stretched almost to the point of discomfort, my interlocutor finally responded. "This is exactly right," he said. "Sometimes the deprivation is imagined, as in America. In Kashmir, it's real. But it doesn't really matter whether it's real or imagined."

Holy wars take off when there is a large supply of young men who feel humiliated and deprived; when leaders emerge who know how to capitalize on those feelings; and when a segment of society is willing to fund them. They persist when organizations and individuals profit from them psychologically or financially. But they are dependent first and foremost on a deep pool of humiliation.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ There are 1.3 billion Muslims, one fifth of the world's population.

²⁶⁶ Mohamad, *Speech by the Prime Minister of Malaysia*.

²⁶⁷ Muslim Brotherhood, *Muslim Brotherhood Official English Website* (2007 [cited 28 September 2008]); available from www.ikhwanweb.org/Article.asp?ID=818&LevelID=2&SectionID=11.

²⁶⁸ Jessica Stern, "Militant Groups: Beneath Bombast and Bombs, a Cauldron of Humiliation," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 June 2004.

Conclusion

Many factors play a part in Gazan society including frustration, relative and absolute deprivation, unmet human needs, revenge as part of the social narrative, inability to resolve grievances through peaceful means, social trauma and unresolved mourning. Most of these factors apply to the population as a whole, and yet the vast majority of Palestinians in Gaza do not partake in violence. My argument is that those who feel humiliation the most acutely are those who will most likely resort to violence. Humiliation provides an emotional and psychological trigger for aggression; one that can convert a dire social, political or economic situation into a dangerous and violent one. The build-up of resentments from daily humiliations, a sense of abandonment and hopelessness, the breakdown of normal economic life and reliance on aid, the shame of being unable to provide for and protect the family, the trauma of the expulsion, and the accompanying entitlements of victimhood all provide a fertile recruiting ground for resistance organisations. While Hamas provides the organisation and the mechanisms for the violence to be expressed, and for it to continue, it relies on a growing supply of resentful and humiliated young men and women for its front line.

Chronology of major events

1800s	Russian pogroms against the Jews caused an exodus of over two million Jews who fled to the US and Europe.
1894-1906	The Dreyfus affair in France, and its accompanying anti-Semitic fervour, helped to promote the Zionist ideal of a Jewish homeland, safe from continual expulsion and mob attack.
Early 1900s	The start of Jewish immigration to Palestine.
1917	The Balfour Declaration sanctioned a Jewish homeland in Palestine. But the British had also promised the land to the Arabs in return for help in defeating the Turks.
1930s-36	Mass Jewish migration to Palestine in order to escape Nazi Germany.
1936-39	The Arab Revolt against Jewish immigration and land ownership.
1939-45	Britain's vacillating immigration policy turned away Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, but at other times angered Arabs by allowing immigration into Palestine. Six million Jews, one third of the Jewish population, killed in the Holocaust in Europe.
1948	Establishment of the state of Israel. Expulsion of 600,000 Palestinians. Atrocities of Yeir Dassin and Kfar Etzion on both sides. Arab states declare war, which Israel wins. Expulsion of

	400,000 Jews from Arab lands.
1964	Formation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to rid Palestine of the Jews.
1967	Crushing Israeli defeat of the surrounding Arab states in the six day war. 300,000 more Palestinians flee the West Bank and Gaza. Israel occupies the West Bank, Gaza, Sinai and the Golan Heights. The Arab states reject a land for peace offer at the Khartoum Conference, with “No peace, no recognition, no negotiation”.
1970	The PLO expelled by force from Jordan, forms a new base in Southern Lebanon.
1973	Yom Kippur War with Syria and Egypt. Heavy losses on both sides, but the attack eventually repulsed. Arab honour restored, and the myth of Israel invincibility exposed.
1978	Peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. Palestinian problem downplayed.
1982	Israel invades Lebanon to drive out the PLO. Sabra and Chatilla massacre in Southern Lebanon. The Israeli army stay in Lebanon for 18 years.
1987-1992	First intifada erupts in Occupied Territories.
1991	PLO supports Iraq during the first Iraq war, weakening their position in the Arab world.
1993	The Oslo accord. Israeli troops withdraw from Gaza city and other urban areas. The accords have since collapsed with angry recriminations on both sides.
1994	Massacre of 30 Arabs in a mosque by Baruch Goldstein. Peace treaty between Jordan and Israel downplays the Palestinian problem.
2000	Israel leaves Lebanon after many years of harassment by Hezbollah.
2000-05	The second intifada is met by severe reprisals by the Israelis.
2002	Israel begins construction of the security barrier enclosing the West Bank.
2005	The Sharm-el-Sheik agreement lead to the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, and the evacuation of settlements there.
2006	Hamas wins elections in Gaza, and has international sanctions imposed upon it.
2006	Hezbollah capture Israeli soldiers, and Israel retaliates with an attack on southern Lebanon. Hezbollah resists and Israel withdraws, leaving the situation unresolved.
2006-8	Hamas intensifies rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel. Israeli punitive measures include destruction of Gaza infrastructure, and declaration of Gaza as ‘hostile entity’.

Conclusion

There are many cases and classes of political violence that do not necessarily involve extreme resentment felt as humiliation. The violent overthrow of a government may have its underlying roots in social grievance, resulting in righteous anger, without requiring a sense of degradation. Wars may be fought over resources, or justified by security considerations, with the emotional element playing only a minor part. I have argued in this thesis, however, that examining the emotions at work, especially those associated with extreme degradation and humiliation, can help understand conflicts that defy conventional analysis, such as the ongoing destructive cycle of violence which characterises the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In Chapter 1 I investigated the extent to which theories of collective violence take into account the role of humiliation. A theory that describes the relationship between humiliation and violence must consider both the humiliating situation and the emotional or psychological reaction to that situation. The review outlined the four main psychoanalytical theoretical strands that discuss the origins of violence. Firstly, the dispositional view emphasises the personality, upbringing and innate tendencies of the individual, and by extension, of group and mob psychology to help explain violent episodes. Secondly, the frustration-aggression hypothesis of Dollard that has been built on by others helps to explain group violence in the face of social grievances, unmet demands or perceived injustices. The third strand emphasises the role of the social dynamics within the group. This can manifest as a higher authority demanding abusive behaviour as in Milgram's experiment, or hiding behind the anonymity of a group while sadistic behaviour is implicitly sanctioned, as in the Zimbardo prison experiment. However, a discussion of the role of humiliation in violence must consider both the situation, as well as the emotional reaction to that situation, and so must combine the situational and dispositional view of violence. This fourth psychosocial view, as exemplified by Volkan, illustrates how a social trauma can become part of a group's identity, and how the need for resolution, often through revenge, can be passed down the generations. I have built on these ideas, and by including some cultural factors have developed a model for assessing the role that humiliation plays in instigating violence.

In the introduction I asked some questions about how humiliation and violence are linked. The answers to those questions provides the basis for the model I have developed.

What is the nature of humiliation?

Humiliation is one of many negative self-conscious emotions. In general usage it can have a range of meanings from embarrassment, exposure of inadequacy, or public shame. In order to clarify the discussion, I have defined humiliation in its collective sense as being the emotion associated with being treated in a degrading way. In its extreme form it is associated with complete loss of control, in that an oppressor can deny natural justice, enforce petty rules or even inflict atrocities. I have shown how humiliation can act as a type of emotional multiplier. Whenever a negative emotion is coupled with a sense of being devalued or degraded, the emotion is strengthened. I draw on Coleman's work that shows that the emotion of humiliation is not dissipated on recall (unlike fear or anger), so the emotional impact of a past event remains strong over time. Humiliation can turn indignation to fury, a sense of loss to obsession, injustice to vengeance, and insult to retribution.

When do a humiliated people resort to violence?

I have argued that if humiliation is expressed as a demeaning control over a group of people, then the basic human need for self-determination can become an overriding force leading to violence. This type of humiliated fury can have a strong expressive element in that it is mainly concerned with washing away the shame of helplessness. People need to display to their oppressors, and to themselves, that they are still a force to be reckoned with, and not being treated with respect will have consequences. These emotional forces can be strong enough to override practical concerns of effective targeting or timing, and in extreme situations can resemble a group running amok.

If humiliation is part of a group's social or historical trauma, then, as Volkan has shown, the trauma will echo throughout the group's psyche. Whenever the group is

threatened, or its sense of identity is in danger, the past trauma re-emerges as a strong social force, and takes centre stage. A leader, or the elite, can combine this sense of a past wrong that needs avenging with a sense of victimhood that entitles revenge. If this is associated with Mack's description of demonising the enemy as less than human, then violence is a likely result.

Also, Macnair points out a type of negative feedback loop in operation that is difficult to break. When an oppressor uses humiliation and harsh treatment to break the will of the resistance, the humiliation itself helps stoke further violence. This proves to the oppressor that the deterrent needs to be stronger to be effective, and there are retaliatory strikes. This deepens the pool of resentment among the resistance, and the cycle of violence continues.

Why do perpetrators of violence use humiliation as a weapon?

The use of humiliation as a form of violence against an enemy is complex. At one level, demonstrating complete control over the enemy through the use of arbitrary or unjustified punishment or hardship can be a weapon to break morale and displays the futility of resistance. Committing atrocities against an opponent shows that the perpetrators have complete control over the other's situation, and there is nothing the other can do about it. This humiliation is often justified by demonising the enemy, which, as Moses points out, makes us feel more pure and righteous.

At a deeper psychological level, as Volkan explains, externalising bad traits and characteristics onto an enemy promotes a greater sense of self-worth; *we are combating evil*, and also justifies denying the enemy any freedom of action, as compassion or even human decency is wasted on those driven by evil designs. The act of humiliating the enemy is in itself proof that good can overcome bad, and that we are safe from evil.

Once a people have been humiliated, the nature of their response is likely also to be in the form of humiliation, for two related reasons. Frijda shows that victims want

retributive justice expressed as *lex talionis*, a type of equality of suffering. Those who have been wronged feel most satisfied with the retribution when it matches the crime. It is a type of indirect acknowledgement from the other of knowing how it feels. So a humiliated people will tend to react by humiliating their oppressors so they can know what it feels like.

The second reason is related to the nature of humiliation itself. Being humiliated by an oppressor means that freedom of action has been taken away. One way of refuting this, and proving to yourself and the other that you have not lost control over your own situation, is to humiliate the oppressor in return. It may take some time, even decades or generations, between the initial humiliation and its response, as the group may need time to build the confidence and strength to retaliate.

How do cultural factors affect the link between humiliation and violence?

I have argued that different cultural attitudes to insult and perceived weakness have developed through the necessities of security and status.

In collective societies group loyalty plays an important role in social behaviour, and any insult to the individual is regarded as an insult to the group as a whole. In such societies the opinion of others is highly important, and one's status in society largely depends on how others regard your behaviour. The ability to defend one's honour is necessary to build a strong social network. Any insult or slight must be met with an aggressive response to show that you are not a person to be trifled with. In such a society, humiliations must be reversed, and defence of honour is regarded almost as an obligation.

Those cultures that traditionally have a weak central authority to impose law and order develop security and defence mechanisms built on fierceness of reputation and contacts with powerful friends. The credible threat of violence guarantees security and status. Those societies in which the awareness of threat is a dominant behaviour pattern I have labelled "security cultures" to differentiate them from the more

collective honour cultures. Societies that have developed from this tradition still have remnants of this way of thinking built into social behaviour. To insult someone invites an aggressive response, as an insult is a challenge to reputation and status.

Conflicts in which a people are oppressed and have little control over their destiny are especially humiliating for those cultures in which the ability to assert power, control and influence is an integral part of social acceptance and respect. The respect that is earned by the ability to defend property and family against threat by others is negated by the destruction of homes and villages, and especially by rape. Even though such actions may be part of a deliberate ploy to destroy the morale of the enemy, the resulting humiliation may well present a real future danger to the oppressor

In individualistic societies revenge tends not to be so socially sanctioned. The social experiments described in Chapter 3 show that members of honour-based societies become angry more readily in response to insult than do members of more individualistic societies.

The importance of mourning

While researching humiliation, I have unexpectedly come to understand that there are many parallels between unresolved mourning and group trauma. The mourning process is necessary to come to terms with the loss of self-esteem through humiliation. Unfortunately it is difficult to resolve the mourning process when humiliation adds emotional intensity and an immediacy to the loss. The symptoms of chronic mourning, such as obsession with the loss, unrealistically assigning blame, and the inability to move on, are also present in some group trauma.

If a group suffering humiliating within a conflict situation trauma experiences the social or political conditions to come to terms with their loss, in other words to mourn properly and then start building a future, then the need for revenge may dissipate over time. If, however, they are continually reminded of their loss and there is little acknowledgement of their plight, then the mourning is less likely to be resolved, and the need for revenge can become an obsessive and driving force in their lives.

My research suggests that we could apply some lessons from dealing with personal mourning to how groups cope with humiliating losses in order to avoid violent responses in future.

Modelling the role of humiliation in collective political violence.

Summarising the findings of my research leads to a model that helps predict the role humiliation plays in driving a people to react violently against its situation. The stronger the following factors, the more likely humiliation plays a significant role:

- Social and political control is imposed by others.
- This control is expressed in ways that feel degrading, such as the denial of natural justice, or a sense of powerlessness.
- Many individuals have direct experience of oppression (e.g. arbitrary arrest, beatings, or even a discriminatory bureaucracy).
- A significant and dramatic (or even traumatic) change to a less privileged social or political position is part of the social narrative, and the change is regarded as undeserved.
- The use of physical force is a culturally acceptable method of gaining self-esteem and/or the respect of others.

Not only does there need to be a situation that is degrading, but also that there are social mores that permit violence as a reaction against the humiliation. This may help to explain how it is that only some members of the population resort to violence. Young men may feel humiliation more keenly, and this, combined with the pride associated with defending the group's honour, can lead to a need for revenge.

The Gaza case study shows how a resistance organisation can harness this felt need for revenge by providing an environment of hope, action and self-respect rather than hopelessness and depression in response to ongoing humiliation. With few other means of building self-respect available, the resistance organisation provides the

dominant social narrative and a sense of cohesion and purpose for an otherwise despairing youth.

Those involved in military strategy need to be more aware of the emotional and psychological effect of their campaigns. When campaigns have a humiliating effect, even if unintentionally, there will usually be long-term complications. For example, on the 27th of October 2008, four American helicopters attacked a village on the Syrian side of the Iraqi / Syrian border, killing eight people. Two days later, the following poll question was put to visitors of the AlJazeera website. “Do you feel humiliated by the American attack on Syria?”. Of the 21,493 respondents, 83% confirmed that they did.²⁶⁹ As far as the AlJazeera readership is concerned, this is one more incident where they feel humiliated by their helplessness in the face of aggression. I doubt whether the American military considered the incremental effect this raid would have on the pool of resentment that their terrorist foes rely upon for recruitment.

Humiliation plays a significant but often hidden role in collective violence. It can eat away at self-respect before being expressed in either a coldly calculated revenge, or an uncontrolled fury. The corrosive nature of humiliation means that it can easily override the better and more pragmatic instincts of politicians, the military, and most importantly, young men in general. It is a dark worm that can remain hidden in the group psyche for decades, even passing down the generations, before being awakened to justify terrible revenge.

²⁶⁹ AlJazeera only shows the latest poll question on its website. These vote counts were retrieved from www.aljazeera.net/Portal/KServices/supportPages/vote/vote.aspx?voteID=2715&yourAnswer=0&actionType=0&dispType=1 on 3 September 2008

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