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**A Review Essay of Lindner, E. (2017). *Honor, Humiliation, and Terror: An Explosive Mix – And How We Can Defuse It With Dignity*. Lake Oswego, OR: World Dignity Press, 786 pp., USD \$36.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-937570-97-2**

**Janet Gerson, Ed.D.**

Education Director, International Institute on Peace Education  
[gerson@i-i-p-e.org](mailto:gerson@i-i-p-e.org)

To understand Dr. Evelin Lindner (MD, PhD Psychology) and her new book *Honor, Humiliation and Terror: An Explosive Mix and How We Can Defuse It with Dignity* (2017a) is to seek out an innovative transdisciplinary approach to key crises of our times. Her purpose is “intellectual activism” (p. xv) laid out through a “painter’s way of seeing, a journey in search of new levels of meaning” (p. xxi).

Lindner’s conceptual key is humiliation and its counter-concept, dignity (2006). This crystallized in her doctoral research *The Feeling of Being Humiliated: A Central Theme in Armed Conflict* (2000; 1996), which focused on the cases of genocides in Somalia, Rwanda/Burundi, and Nazi Germany, her country of origin. In a recent presentation on this book, she described growing up in a displaced family during the Cold War, at the German edge of the Soviet Bloc border, right where atomic weapons were aimed. Perhaps this accounts for her distinct insights into how humiliation and terror intertwine intra-personally, socially and at the level of states.

Here and elsewhere, Lindner identifies herself and lives in all her work as a post-national global citizen. Her deep meditations on what causes war, what is needed to back away from it, how terror has deep roots in human history, and how it should be understood as a manifestation of humiliation are profoundly relevant to our current violent, environment-killing stalemate. Her approach to dignity as the core of global community action-taking offers a window for hope and resilience, for fresh approaches to peace action.

Lindner's argument engages the objective and the subjective. She uses her science and social science backgrounds in conjunction with a historical perspective, a "psycho-geo-historical lens" (p. 4). The book under review contains vast "References" list and "Notes" section. These demonstrate Lindner's capacity to digest literature from science, social science, history, and other scholarly disciplines. For this alone, it is a fascinating read. At the same time, she works from a personal wisdom drawn from having lived in many diverse cultures – Germany, Egypt, Japan, and Kenya, to name a few—and having lived an experiment of being a global citizen, who lives nowhere and everywhere, living on very little, moving gifts of learning and understanding from one setting across to others. She acknowledges the "vast network of friends" contributing many "gifts of insight" that make this volume a co-creating adventure (p. xxix).

This co-creating adventure is the result of harvesting insights and examples through intensive network-building generated by twice-yearly conferences of the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies (HDHS) network. These conferences are global community gatherings, convergences for interacting, learning from and with others. They are powerful, enlightening, uplifting. Kindness and warmth prevail. The education dimension of the network is led by HDHS Director Linda Hartling, with contributions from Don Klein (now deceased), Phil Brown, and Michael Britton.

To my mind, these events exemplify network-building peace education, the form in which my colleagues Betty Reardon, Tony Jenkins, Dale Snauwaert, and I practice as the Secretariat of the International Institute on Peace Education (IIPE). Lindner was a regular visitor to our Peace Education Center at Teachers College, Columbia University. I attended her first conference in 2001 and stayed involved. That first meeting took place during Lindner's residency at the International Center for

Cooperation and Conflict Resolution in the Program of Social Psychology under the auspices of Morton Deutsch and Peter Coleman, with whom we have worked closely on issues of peace and conflict studies.

*Honor, Humiliation, and Terror*, the first volume of a projected three-volume study “describes the normality of terror in the past and how terror was an accepted path to honor, definitorial for most societies, how it permeated every detail of psychological and social life, and how this is still relevant today” (p. xv). As in previous books, Lindner’s conceptual key is *humiliation*. In three sections, she links humiliation to 1) domination and the security dilemma, 2) honor and the duty to retaliate, and 3) defining peace as a balance of terror. Due to the book’s range, I will limit my focus to three areas: honor humiliation, dignity and its correlation to what Lindner has coined *egalization*, and the implications of Lindner’s methodology for peace studies researchers and peace educators.

### **What is Honor Humiliation and the Duty to Retaliate?**

For Lindner, humiliation is key, with cycles of humiliation setting in motion the explosive mix that leads to terrorism. She explains as follows:

If we say that humiliation is the ‘nuclear bomb of emotions’ and perhaps the most toxic social dynamic there is, then this bomb can indeed be triggered by inflicting a steady stream of micro-humiliations. By applying terrorism, even micro-terrorism, adversaries can be driven to retaliate. This then opens the opportunity to target them as the true aggressors, as deserving ‘defensive’ attack (p. 127).

Humiliation, then, is understood as a mechanism of domination in which a *script of honor* is supported by behavioral patterns that separate and elevate honored equals from subordinates. “In the context of the dominator model of society...victory over one’s opponents in competition for domination is the most important [task]...the one that provides honor and meaning” (p. 128).

This script of honor and its connection to valorous, blood-shedding action was made vivid to me through a recent viewing of the 1823 opera, *Semiramide*, composed by Rossini with a scenario by Rossi based on a Voltaire play staged in New York by the Metropolitan Opera.

*Semiramide* is an epic opera set in ancient Babylon based on legend of the powerful Queen Semiramide. The operatic drama revolves around the questions of restoring honor to the monarchial rule that was tarnished by the murder of her husband, the king, whose ghost still haunts the monarchy. When Queen Semiramide invites neighboring warrior-kings to vie for the throne by way of marriage with her, the warrior-kings arrival provokes the ghost of the murdered King. His ghostly appearance terrorizes everyone. The apparition demands revenge with retribution that is to be paid with someone's death. Thus, the restoration of rightful power demands punishment. The question of whose death it is to be constitutes the subsequent dramatic tension, answered only in the last moments of the opera when the guilty party is stabbed. The body lays lifeless *downstage* as the new ruler, the executioner, is elevated to the crown in glory *upstage*. The "rightful" hierarchy is again uplifted literally and metaphorically; honor and order are thus restored.

The opera's scenario succinctly exemplifies what Evelin Lindner calls *honor humiliation – the duty to retaliate*. Its archetypal story illuminates the model of honor, of an eye-for-an-eye, blood for blood, to bind society around dominant power. Thus, in a world founded on honor, humiliation must lead to violence, even war.

According to Lindner, the second task of humiliation is the responsibility to maintain honor and domination through subordination. This is the form commonly encountered in everyday practices.

To fulfill the second task, that of keeping underlings in due humility, openly displayed brutality always had its place, and still has. Many rulers throughout history have used brute force to hold inferiors down – from violence and terror, to torture, to killing...over time, dominate groups tried to replace brute force with more sophisticated approaches...keeping people in fear of humiliation is perhaps the most effective tool" (2018a, pp. 128-9).

Lindner aims to help the reader challenge legitimizing myths, traumas, and susceptibility to "voluntary self- humiliation", that is, accepting the dominator myths that rationalize the subordination, and thus the manipulation of the many (pp. lxvi-lxvii).

Finally, with this foundational explanation, Lindner invites the reader into a paradigm-shifting project of “radical global reconciliation”, a project of courage, and recognition of interconnectedness,

...radical in dedication to building a common critical consciousness to enable political transformation...this means acknowledging humiliation, it means embracing feelings of humiliation to turn their energy into constructive action (p. lxvii).

Lindner uses the idea of *Blue Planet*, the vision of Earth that we can now all access through the scientific projects and incursions into space, which allows humans to see the Earth as a whole, a shared entity which we share within the vastness of other universes and solar systems (p. 375). With this image, she encourages us to recognize the need and intention of her subtitle, “How We Can Defuse [this explosive mix] with Dignity”, in what she claims as a hopeful window of opportunity.

### **Dignity-based Security for Our Blue Planet**

For Lindner, the image of Blue Planet, the vision of Earth from space, captures the dual aims of global perspective-taking and the capacity to see the inclusiveness of global community on a shared planet. She challenges us to take advantages of the historical transitions faced by humankind at this crucial moment.

[In regard to] climate change, inaction is fed both by denying the threat, as much as by its opposite, exaggeration to the point of defeatism – ‘there is nothing we can do; we’re already doomed.’ The image of the Blue Planet from the astronaut’s perspective summarizes, publicizes, and symbolizes an immense window of opportunity for us to create a dignified world, including a terror-free world, at last free of systemic terror. What befits humankind now is a sense of emergency so as to truly see and use this historically unmatched window of opportunity that may not remain open for long (2017a, p. 4)

The window of opportunity is available because of this new expanded consciousness. It empowers humankind with a chance to challenge and rethink the deeply embedded security paradigm, the heart of international relations, and its co-related war system. The security paradigm, she

emphasizes, is based on domination and terror, on physical and psychological humiliation.

Wherever and whenever the security dilemma is strong, it is an all-definitorial frame for all people in its reach. It forces the terminology of honor, enemy, revenge, war, and victory to the fore (2017a, p. 373).

She invites us to engage in reformulating the domination-based security paradigm with an alternative conceptual scaffolding.

*Interpretive frames or normative paradigms* are a form of *conceptual scaffolding* that we rely on to construct our understanding of the world. Our attention must go to the *legitimizing myths* (Pratto) that underpin the dominant discourses that produce and reproduce the power dynamics that underpin *governmentality* (Foucault).... Intentionally guided globalization can bring change....We, as humankind, you, we together, can intentionally make use of globalization to attenuate the security dilemma. We can create global trust. We can create frames that make us play a global community game (2017a, p. 373).

Dignity is the core principle for transforming global relations to a peace-based system that embraces equality and inclusion – *egalization* as Lindner has named these correlates. As she states, “I have coined the term *egalization* to signify the true realization of human rights ideals of equal dignity for all” (2017a, p. xxvii). By globalization she means “the coming together of all humankind...coupled with...human rights, which deems relative deprivation to be illegitimate, all former justifications for inequality are removed” (2017a, p. 366). In conjunction with conceptualizing a global community based on trust, communication, and deep listening, she suggests that we can transform our world from a competitive domination model of global relations to one based on unity in diversity “operationalized through constrained pluralism” (2017a, p. 374).

Now is the time to create superordinate goals that can bring humanity together, goals that manifest *dignism*. It is time to humanize globalism by merging *egalization* and form *globegalization*...Globalization can aid us. However, only if equal dignity is nurtured so as to prevent feelings of humiliation from

turning benign opportunities malign...each community has the moral responsibility...this is also the moral responsibility of the whole moral [global] community (2017a, p. 375).

As a 'creative source of collective agency' (2017a, p. 379), Lindner urges participation in this normative paradigmatic shift toward security based on interconnected, diverse communicative plurality, within a oneness of an interdependent equal and dignity-based global community.

### **Peace Education and Methodological Obstacles**

The new security paradigm discussed above strikes me as aligned with peace education. Lindner, however, states that peace education is not enough. Of course, in the new paradigm of the Blue Planet, she is quite right. No one approach, practical or theoretical, can address the complexity of challenges. Her whole approach itself models the drawing upon many sources and disciplines. However, as a peace educator who also embraces many dimensions, I would like to take issue with her here. Peace education is often viewed narrowly and thereby dismissed. Unfortunately, Lindner supports her statement with one source, one social psychology study using Israeli and Palestinian youth. It seems to me that she chooses this because of the vulnerability of youth to be recruited for terrorist acts as suggested by what follows her statement about the limits of peace education.

Lindner writes:

Whoever believes that peace education would be good enough as a remedy, will be disappointed. Peace education is useful and important, yet, not enough. Research in social psychology shows that particularly youths of thirteen to fifteen years of age, those in need to listen most, are the most difficult to reach.

Especially adolescent males are the most vulnerable to be recruited by terror entrepreneurs. Most people do not reach their full brain capacity until the age of twenty-five. Many youths may therefore not be able to contain themselves, and their environment must shoulder this responsibility. Their communities have to hold and contain those young people in their vulnerability. "It takes a village to raise a child," is one African saying, "All kids are our kids" is another. For a world

free of terrorism, it is the global village who is responsible for all of the world's children and youth (2017a, p. 3-4).

Lindner substantiates this claim with reference to Baruch Nevo and Iris Breum's evaluative chapter "Peace Education Programs and The Evaluation of their Effectiveness." This work examines social psychology programs based on contact theory and is oriented toward co-existence in post-conflict contexts. The chapter in *Peace Education: The Concept, Principles, and Practices Around the World* (Salomon and Nevo, Eds., 2002), a book which I have previously reviewed (2004). Despite the book's title and its inclusion of research in diverse conflict contexts, all the studies are based on contact theory experiences and social psychology research. This book is important and useful book in its case studies and the research used. At the same time, the scope of the book eludes the broadness of the field of peace education, with work from many disciplines, methodologies, problems addressed, and the many more contexts in which it has been developed.

Why does Lindner embrace this small research model of peace education as the model for a full and diverse field of research and practice? Or, we might ask, how does Lindner's methodology allow her to hold this position?

Let us consider Lindner's methodology. She builds upon the key concepts of humiliation, honor, terror and dignity. Using this *conceptual framework*, she delves into knowledge across disciplines, methodologies, and scopes of inquiry. This synthesizing, cross-cutting methodology provides an amazing reach of materials, theories, cases, metaphors. Like a painting, it has an intuitive drive. This kind of work is problematic for those doing doctoral and other scholarship within the silos of the academy. Practitioners in the academic field of peace education need to continue building the credibility of our field with the methodologies that are more widely understood and accepted: epistemological, quantitative, and/or qualitative research. At the same time, it is important for peace educators to understand and recognize the significance of Lindner's project.

As peace educators and peace researchers in a global community, we need to tackle meta-problematics that our current research methods and policy-making institutions *in all fields* are failing to grapple with effectively. We need to be able to distinguish when research and frameworks benefit



from narrowly defined scopes and stay within silos to attain deep analysis. We must also learn to talk across disciplines and to collaborate – regarding climate crisis, it is essential to be able to engage with climate scientists, political scientists, psychologists, law scholars and practitioners, health professionals, teachers, activists, farmers, and community members.

In fact, as the reader moves through this powerful work, it becomes obvious to the peace educator that much of Lindner’s expanded understanding of global citizenship fits comfortably within the context of peace learning and peace educating. This too is what we are about. Our conception of peace educating is a liberated conception, not a truncated version restricted to children, schools, single disciplines, methodologies, paradigms or prescriptives.

Herein lies a challenge to readers of Lindner’s work: Her research and writing combine personal genius and rare global experience with a brilliant capacity to read scientific, social scientific, historical, and other types of literature. None of these predominate, thus her work eludes standardized categories of academic disciplines and publications. Developing scholars need to understand this distinction. On the other hand, the resulting idiosyncratic synthesis based on humiliation as the central driving concept, creates a freedom of associative investigation. Given the complexity of global crises of war, climate dangers, and global human society, this kind of innovative approach is significant. The unique capacities Lindner has brought together in her research and her global networking *create conditions* for many of us to learn from this emerging epistemological frontier.

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Semiramide (G. Rossini) (March 10, 2018) New York Metropolitan Opera Production March 10, 2018  
<https://www.metopera.org/discover/synopses/synopses1/semiramide/>