HEALING HUMILIATION and THE NEED FOR REVENGE

Nora Femenia, Ph.D.

Email: femenia@attglobal.net

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Abstract

What mechanisms contribute to the potency of humiliation? What keeps the wound of humiliation unhealed across generations? How does humiliation connect with self image and self-esteem? How does the enduring nature of humiliation generate and justify aggressive responses to redress it? This paper explores definitions of humiliation, humiliation's impact on the subsequent aggressive actions taken to avenge the degradation, examines one case of group public humiliation and subsequent recourse to armed revenge, that of the Montoneros guerrillas' decision to move into full armed violence against the Peronist government in 1974-76 Argentina; and considers the question of which kinds of interventions might transform groups' humiliated identities and behavior into more wholesome, non-violent identities and behavior. The case study describes an event in which mutually agreed bonds of relation clearly are breached and the post-exploration of that event, provides insight into the dynamic between the perpetrator of humiliation and the subsequent perpetrators of violence. This analysis offers new points of entry for transformation of humiliations by individuals, groups or third-party intervenors seeking to develop healthier constructions of post-humiliation identity. The proposed model is based on Boudreau's use of identity affirmation to change self-

selective, isolated internal group discourses into a common understanding of the past humiliation history shared between groups.

I. Introduction of the Problem

For some 25 years I have remembered the narrative told by a local tourism guide in Cuzco, Peru, about the odyssey of the last days of the sovereign Inca, at the time prisoner of the Spaniard invader. It was surprising the richness of details he could recover about the thousands of gold objects collected in a room to pay the ransom for the ruling Inca king. What was more extraordinary was the hurt revealed by my guide's words, who was telling this humiliating end of the Inca empire with so much anguish as if it had happened to him, in his own life time….I had to force myself to remember the various centuries in the past way back from the moment the Inca empire was destroyed, to the moment of the present telling!

Linda Hartling [1] is focusing on the same phenomenon…"I found that those with high scores on the research scale described their experiences of humiliation as if it had happened yesterday, even though the experience may have occurred many, many years in the past. Their experiences remained painfully fresh and vivid in their minds." She refers to humiliation moments suffered by the same individual in two moments of his life; what I'm telling is a shared episode of social humiliation that happened to a whole culture. Other very painful cases are the Holocaust narratives and the Armenian genocide narratives, preserved from generation to generation.

Since then, I have wondered what mechanisms contribute to the potency of humiliation. What keeps the wound of humiliation unhealed forever in our lives? What makes the sense of degradation persist along the centuries and throughout generations? How

does humiliation connect with self image and self-esteem? And how does the enduring nature of humiliation generate and justify aggressive responses to redress it?

I will explore different definitions of humiliation, the impact of humiliation on the subsequent aggressive actions taken to avenge such humiliation, and examine a documented case of public group humiliation and recourse to armed revenge (Montonero guerrillas' decision to move into full armed violence against the Peronist government in 1974-76 Argentina following humiliation); and finally consider the question on which kind of interventions might transform groups' humiliated identity into more wholesome, non-violent identities.

This paper is grounded in several theoretical traditions.

The first of these theoretical traditions is the need to link the feeling of humiliation to interpersonal perceptions, because the witness validates and confirms the debasement of self suffered. Laing[2] et al, 1966, proposed that interpersonal and self-perceptions are shaped by a multitude of factors: characteristics of the target of a perception (such as the target's personality, as well as shorter-lived factors like expressed emotions), characteristics of the perceiver (such as cognitive biases, expectations about the target, and emotions that the perceiver experiences during the interaction), aspects of the broader social situation (such as individuals' positions in a status hierarchy, or the role as caretaker, or a war context with its designated "official enemies" or relevant goals and tasks they may be working on together.

The second theoretical tradition is reciprocal perceptions include recognition of the other as a fellow human, with needs similar to ours. We have to identify the other's needs as basically valid and legitimate because they are human, shared and identical to our own needs. It means that the adult has to identify with the baby's needs and be willing to solve them. If the adult sees the baby as a worthy target of care and attention, survival is assured. In Gerhardt's work, (2004) [3] baby can begin to experience the necessary sense of security and stability provided by the active presence of the caring other, the adult. If the other does not see us as just-born infants, as "needy humans," but as objects of derision, is impossible to integrate this feedback, because it impacts self-perception in a destructive way. Basic expectations of reciprocal perception as valuable fellow humans are violated; identity is not confirmed and trust in others never develops. This vulnerability gap is at the root of the hurt produced by humiliation.

The third theoretical tradition addresses interpersonal perceptions and self-esteem. Research on how others' perceptions affect self-perceptions (Srivastava & Beer, 2005)[4], and how optimism affects satisfaction in close relationships (Srivastava, McGonigal, Richards, Butler, & Gross, 2006)[5] demonstrate the deep dependency on other's perceptions in our own self-esteem. Ames[6] (2005) connects a sense of humiliation and desperation prompting sudden criminal attacks with frustrated needs for positive self-perceptions, capable of anchoring feelings of belonging and recognition. He offers the observation that the common myth of an "isolated case of madness" is not explanation enough for the workplace and school violence examples he focus on. Underneath the extreme violence cases there is a long story of frustration of connection

needs, when violent aggressors are being/becoming isolated, lonely individuals whom the system rejects by withdrawing recognition.

It is clear that self-perceptions are constructed using a woven composite of others' perceptions of us, mixed with self-perceptions, and all constantly balanced and rebalanced to keep a functioning self. If the others' perceptions are mostly negative, then the self needs to do more balancing to obtain a working level of self-esteem, using violence as a resource to self-affirm. In this way, it is evident we have a huge gap in our understanding of phenomena such as sudden violent attacks and criminal rage episodes, usually perceived as de-linked from their deep psychological roots, as isolated episodes. Mass shootings in schools are often perceived as perpetrated by a deranged, psychotic individual, a view which ignores the role of humiliation and the previous debasing interactions between the humiliator and the humiliated prior to the committing of an abhorrent crime.

 It is from this theoretical point stressing the constructed nature of self-perceptions, born and constantly re-created as a result of sustained positive interactions in the development of a healthy personality that makes new research on humiliation and its avoidance so important. It provides the basic concept on which to anchor self-esteem development and maintenance as a permanent social construction process.

The fourth theoretical tradition is humiliation theory, as in Lindner[7], who proposes that there are fundamental psychological mechanisms at play in armed conflicts, of which humiliation is a very important one. In her view, the connection between feelings of humiliation and violence is linked along the following lines. Her basic finding is that

humiliation is a relational violation that profoundly damages one's sense of connection and triggers social pain.[8] Social pain -- including social pain inflicted by humiliation -- overlaps with the physical pain processing systems of the brain. Unlike separation distress, social pain -- including social pain inflicted by humiliation -- can endure throughout one's life span. The social pain of humiliation, as illustrated in the research on social exclusion, decreases self-awareness. Loss of self-awareness as a result of social pain, triggered by humiliation, may be associated with diminished self-regulation. Diminished self-regulation increases the risk of self-defeating behavior, including violence.

At this point, violence as an answer can be perceived as the necessary, self-affirming response, regardless of the cost on self and others.

The fifth theoretical tradition is inter-group conflict reduction through identity affirmation, as in Thomas Boudreau's[9] model. This model is one of the possible responses to the question: What can be done to heal humiliation? Because it supports recognition and acceptance, we can assume that it can provide the valuable emotional response termed "respect," which includes validation, recognition and acceptance. Affirmation of an out-group identity is the summation or result of the following three interrelated though separate elements: recognition, initiatives by in-group leaders, and acceptance. This model can be described as an Affirmation ARIA, consisting of the following formula: (A) affirmation in inter-group conflict requires; (R) recognition and reciprocity; (I) initiatives by in-group leadership or citizens, or both; and (A) acceptance of the hitherto out-group which consists of (1) validation of the out-group's past pain and

traumas, when appropriate and (2) concrete efforts to insure the transparency of future time between groups. In essence, this model proposes that appropriate validation is taking responsibility, when applicable, for the past pain, trauma, discrimination and stereotypical distortions or omissions by the in-group of the out-group that resulted in humiliation perceptions.

Furthermore, this model is recognizing that the most powerful way to resolve the conflict is through an emotional and often symbolic response, enabling the redress of the wounded, emotional impacts of social humiliation on the humiliated groups.

What is Humiliation?

Researchers have traditionally paid little attention to the role that emotions in general play in conflict. Perhaps the prevalence of the "rational actor" model of behavior imported from international relations helped prevent research on the causal role of emotions in conflict.

Nora Femenia [10], (2000) proposed the evaluation of hidden emotional aspects on foreign policy decision making on the Falklands War escalation process, including the powerful and obvious influence of shame and humiliation. In Femenia [11] (1996), she evaluates how such emotional aspects of reciprocal images constructs appear in war narratives. Retzinger and Scheff provided a good map of the role of emotions in intractable conflict.[12]

Going further, Lindner[13] distinguished between research on emotions such as shame and embarrassment and concluded that research on the emotion of humiliation has been conducted much less frequently.

Perhaps because they have been bundled together as "negative emotions," the constructs of shame, embarrassment and humiliation often have been used interchangeably (Lindner, 2002,[14] Hartling & Luchetta, 1999 [15]), making it difficult to identify the defining qualities of humiliation as opposed to other related emotions.

Today, most of us would agree that an understanding of humiliation needs a larger lens. A review of the main authors can begin to delineate what is the power of humiliation feelings, but first we need to map the concept.

We could begin asking some questions dealing with the individual subjective experience of humiliation, such as: how is this experience construed; what kind of internal processes happen when the perception of humiliation appears? What is the emotional component of the humiliation experience? What are the connections with parallel experiences of justice, honor, respect or dignity? What is the role of self-respect and self-esteem?

If humiliation is an experience that reaches far beyond the subjective domain of the individual self to the collective soul, we need to observe and include the behaviors of the other components: the humiliating party, and then, also the contextual reactions of the bystanders or witnesses.

Lindner[16] found experiences of humiliation to be central to the perpetuation of conflict in these settings, constituting an unending spiral of victimization. She describes how

humiliation begot new experiences of humiliation when parties who were once underlings rose up and rebelled against their previous humiliators, only to commit the very same humiliating atrocities on them.

 In this way, negative emotions fuel intractable conflict, perpetuating cycles of violence that cause continuing, and often constantly increasing, levels of distress. [17]

Humiliation is generally thought to occur in relationships of unequal power in which the humiliator has control over the victim. This power imbalance is reflected in the English word "humiliation," which is rooted in the Latin word "humus" meaning ground or earth.

In keeping with the idea that humiliation inherently involves an imbalanced relationship between at least two people, Lindner[18] (2002:126) defines humiliation as:

Enforced lowering of a person or group, a process of subjugation that damages or strips away their pride, honor or dignity…To be humiliated is to be placed, against your will and often in a deeply hurtful way, in a situation that is greatly inferior to what you feel you should expect.   Humiliation entails demeaning treatment that transgresses established expectations; the victim is forced into passivity, acted upon, and/or made helpless.

This definition highlights several important aspects of humiliation. First, humiliation is degrading. This root "humus" connotes being made lower than, being pushed down to the ground, or literally having one's face "being put into the mud." Second, humiliation breaks expected norms of reciprocal human behavior. As previously noted, humiliation involves a figurative lowering to the ground, or a sense of being made to feel inferior.

The definition also connotes that humiliation constitutes a break-up of an existing shared norm or expectation about how one should be treated on a basic human rights level. There is also a connotation that "demeaning" treatment results in a deep negative feeling that produces a limiting change in behavior, an inability to respond brought on by a feeling of inability that would be similar to the limits brought on by physical pain.

Taking this further, Hartling and Luchetta (1999:264) define the internal experience of humiliation as "the deep dysphoric feeling associated with being, or perceiving oneself as being, unjustly degraded, ridiculed, or put down—in particular, one's identity has been demeaned or devalued" . Hartling (2005) [19] further proposes to explore the neurobiology of humiliation. Recent research on *social pain*—"the distressing experience arising from the perception of psychological distance from close others or from the social group may help to explain both the acuteness and the enduring nature of humiliating experiences. Most of us would agree that humiliation provokes social pain."

Humiliation affects self-image in a permanent way. Margalit[20] (2002) writes that humiliation is a formative experience that has the power to shape how individuals view themselves. These understandings of humiliation highlight how the experience of humiliation can have a significant impact on an individual's identity. It also seems reasonable to suggest that humiliating events that occur in the collective realm can significantly impact group members' sense of collective identity.

Humiliation is more powerful when it is public, involving the whole collective. Klein[21] (1991:94) defines humiliation as experiencing "some form of ridicule, scorn, contempt, or other degrading treatment at the hands of others." Humiliation is essentially an interaction-oriented emotion, involving three roles: the humiliator, the victim, and the witness. Cobb[22] would call these "positions in the narrative of humiliation." This suggests that humiliation is a public emotion in the sense that the humiliating experience takes place in connection with the perpetrator, and is known by him. Probably, there are also witnesses.

In summary, humiliation is powerful because it is degrading, breaks the behavioral norms of reciprocity, engenders passivity, affects self-image, and is publicly shared.

In the following case, a very public humiliation defined the identity of a group of politically motivated young guerrillas in Argentina. What happens when the humiliator is at the same time the leader, a highly revered father figure, when the humiliation takes place in public, giving thousands of witnesses the opportunity to observe the experience of isolation, rejection and social pain being inflicted, and when the humiliated group has weapons, training and the will to resort to armed combat?

How Emotions Influence Behavior: A Case of Humiliation and Aggression

In their integrated definition of humiliation, Goldman, J. and Coleman, P. (2005) [23] propose:

Humiliation is 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.

The experience of humiliation has the potential to serve as a formative, guiding force in a person's life and can significantly impact one's individual and/or collective identity.

Finally, the experience of humiliation can motivate behavioral responses that may serve to extend or re-define previously existing moral boundaries, leading individuals to perceive otherwise socially impermissible behavior to be permissible.

Lear (2003:22) [24] writes, "Indeed, because humiliation is supposed to be so awful, some kind of retaliation is thought to be justified [from the retaliator's perspective]."

According to Frijda [25] (1986), emotions can be defined as action tendencies. In other words, emotions denote an inner state which will tend to be acted out as a specific behavior. For example, internal fear will be reflected in avoidance of some situations, and

anger will provoke confrontations. This is not automatic, though, only trends. It takes a lot of restraint for an angry person to overcome the tendency to lash out when provoked., but it is possible.

This insight, along with those of Lindner (2002) and others (Crocker, Hampson & Aall, 2004, 2005) suggests that humiliation often motivates aggressive behavior. The following examples provide further empirical evidence for a relationship between humiliation and aggression.   .

In the area of international crises, Femenia (1999)[26] explains the delusion process of the Argentine military junta in 1982 when deciding to invade the Falkland Islands because they "represented for the military actor a non accomplished objective, meaning a high level of frustration and humiliation, so imposing a painful reorganization of perceptions, values and capabilities. That is the reason behind their refusal to acknowledge that odds were against the military recovery of the islands."

How is this perception of the decline of Argentina's power and standing in the world perceived by the domestic public? For Staub,[27] (1989:55) the problem is composed, further into the 70s, by a feeling of deprivation, combined with the belief that one's country or group deserves more and has been unjustly postponed by external or internal

enemies, or deprived of material possessions, territory, prestige or honor. There is an overwhelming sense of loss and public humiliation. The self-image of the group has to accept this debased, painful aspect.

Azar[28] (1986:29) suggests that when international conflicts are 'protracted' it is because they have at their source a group who suffers some particular loss of recognition of identity and lacks effective participation in the process that determine conditions of security and identity. When these debased aspects are not acknowledged and are not consciously incorporated into the cultural self-concept by some shared working through, there is risk of violence when the discrepancies between self-image and behavior appear.

A good predictor of behavior is the analysis of how and which group defense mechanisms are in place to deal with this discrepancy between idealized self-image and damaged or humiliated self-image. If in that culture, aggression is an acceptable and necessary part of the culture, then when combined with some enemy whose image can accept negative attributions about being the cause of the damage or humiliation to self-image, there is potential for violence.

Steinberg[29] (1991) demonstrates how the experience and fear of being humiliated motivated aggressive behavior by both Khrushchev and President Kennedy in the Cuban missile crisis. She proposes that feelings of humiliation and shame are often followed by

narcissistic rage that is expressed in acts of aggression in an attempt to alleviate the painful emotions and to increase feelings of self-worth.

Steinberg's analysis of the Cuban missile crisis suggests that publicly humiliating international leaders may invite their desire for revenge, retaliatory behavior, and in some cases, can set the stage for mass destruction and war. President Kennedy expressed a very strong emotional reaction towards the possibility of losing face vis-a-vis Khrushchev, reasserting his own power challenged by the confrontation with the old Soviet Union leader.

In the case of the British reaction to the unexpected Falkland Islands invasion by Argentine troops on April 2, 1982, it is clearly expressed by the Members of Parliament the sense of vulnerability brought by the sudden international humiliation:

The Government last night rounded off a day of spectacular military and diplomatic humiliation [my italics here and following] with the public admission by the Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, and the Defense Secretary, Mr. John Nott, that Argentina had indeed captured Port Stanley, while the British Navy lay too far away to prevent it... The irony of a government elected to strengthen Britain's defense posture of finding itself in this position, will not be lost on MPs and some were saying that the debacle in the

Falkland Islands was the Government's most dramatic single humiliation. The British Lion is caught with his trousers down.[30]

This reaction can be framed under Steinberg's previous description of the anxiety evoked by the imminent danger of more rejection and humiliation. Scheff and Retzinger[31] see in this anxiety the emotional trigger for vengeful behavior. What they call "war fever" is no more than the aggressive reaction that attempts to redress what is perceived as a public embarrassment caused by humiliation. As shame and humiliation are public signals of a threatened social bond, Members of Parliament's reaction had to be immediate and swift, making the only possible decision the one to launch an armed attack against Argentina.

The British Parliamentary debate cited above indeed reflects that conclusion. One Parliamentarian proposes: "My gut reaction is to use force. Our country has been humiliated. Every MP must have a gut reaction to use force, but we must also be sure that we shall not kill thousands of people in the use of that force."

Similarly, Scheff (2003) [32] suggests that the humiliation that befell Germany after World War I led Hitler and the German public to become trapped in an on-going cycle of humiliation, rage and vengeful aggression, which ultimately resulted in the perpetration of the atrocities of the Holocaust.

As a poignant indication of this everlasting feeling, Hitler connected his war-making

decisions upon challenging the Treaty of Versailles where the rendition in WWI was

signed. The culpability of Germany was used as a basis to impose reparations on

Germany (the amount was repeatedly revised under the Dawes Plan, the Young Plan, and

the Hoover Moratorium). The German people in turn perceived the treaty and especially

the paragraph on the German guilt as a national humiliation.

II. The Montoneros' Public Humiliation – A Case Study of Group Degradation

The case to be analyzed here is the public act of rupture in the relationship between a

charismatic leader like Juan Perón and his followers from the leftist Montoneros group

(Movimiento Peronista Montonero). This group was described by Guillespie, (1982) [33]

as "the soldiers of Peron." The rupture is enacted by Perón himself, who chooses a public

humiliation ceremony for this group of armed guerrillas who are including themselves

into the "Peronists' collective." The aftermath of the public humiliation of the

Montoneros took a path of no return with the escalation of their violent guerrilla activity

that forced their almost complete elimination.

In the tug of war for the control of the Peronist movement and defining areas of influence

over the old Argentine leader, both tendencies, in different incarnations, had been doing

battle. Left and right ideologies were being included or excluded according to Peron's political vision of the moment. In this process, the point of extreme tension in the process of rejection of the leftist group Montoneros happened on the popular gathering to celebrate Labor Day, May 1st, 1974, in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

A. Background History

Between the '60s and '70s, following the historical trends of the Latin American continent after the Cuban Revolution, several different guerrilla clandestine groups in Argentina, such as *Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo*, (socialist, non-Peronist) *Montoneros*, and *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias*, (supporting a special brand of Marxist-Leninist ideology) emerged, trying to recruit youth for their ideologies.

Even when Perón himself publicly rejected the armed option and leftist ideologies, he was at the same time motivating the guerrillas to challenge the military junta produced by the "*Revolución Argentina,*" then in power, from his exile home in Madrid. He gave his strategic blessings to the "special fighters" and appreciated their monolithic loyalty. When framing his acceptance of the armed militant activity as transitional resistance to the military junta, he called them "this wonderful youth" and even wrote a letter of support for the guerrillas who kidnapped and executed General Aramburu in a dashing

show of audacity that mesmerized the whole nation. Montoneros got to see themselves as the revolutionary vanguard that would open the doors of the future socialist fatherland.

This pendulum policy applied by Perón, even still in Madrid in April 1973, also envisioned a gradual insertion of guerrilla fighters in future political legal activity, and he himself suggested to Montoneros that they could begin accepting progressively more political responsibility. It was clear that Perón was both using the guerrillas for his own purposes and trying to include them in a future all-encompassing political project.

In 1973, the junta decided to open again the normal election process to select a civil government, with the exclusion of the Peronist Party. Of course Hector Cámpora, a Peronist and stand-in candidate ran with the promise of opening the doors for Peron's return, and as soon as Cámpora acceded to power (May 25, 1973), he renounced the presidency and called new elections for September 1973, which gave the victory to Perón. Now the exile was finished and the old leader was coming home in a triumphal return process.

B.   Peron's Historic Return Ceremony - Bloodied by the Guerrilla Group's Internal Power Struggle.

Prior to May Day 1974, the Montoneros had long been anticipating a show of support for Perón's return to Argentina after 18 years of exile. Montoneros leaders had held frequent meetings with Perón in Spain in 1972 and 1973. During these meetings, their identity as "the future of the Peronist movement" was granted, along with agreements that would consolidate their share of power in the forthcoming Peronist political arena.

The common working class citizens were deeply moved by sympathy towards Perón and hopeful that political change would happen once the old leader returned to power. Almost three million people, swayed by this mystique of the old leader's return, went to receive Perón at his arrival at the Ezeiza Airport.[34] on June 20, 1973. But hostility between different Peronist factions and the guerrillas broke into open battle in what became known as the Ezeiza Massacre. There were constant street battles throughout the day, with unaccountable numbers of victims. It was a terrible shock for Perón to see his end of exile transformed into a bloodbath. This was the beginning of Peron's critical perception of the armed guerrillas' intentions and of their ruthless power battle inside his movement. Once Perón was back in power in Argentina, he began moving the pendulum towards distancing himself from the Montoneros, as well as from the Peronist Youth, a loose agglomeration of youth groups of Revolutionary Peronism, a part of his own Peronist movement with leftist ideology.

C. The Montoneros Evaluate the Armed Path to Power

At the same time, around 1973, the Montoneros' leadership began to suffer an internal ideological crisis marked by contradictions between their Peronist allegiance and their choices of methods for social change. Regardless of endless internal discussion as to whether they should pursue change by violent methods, the Montoneros continued officially supporting peacefully Peron's government. At the same time, a small group of the Montoneros organized and executed the assassination of the powerful General Secretary of the union's organization, CGT, Jose Ignacio Rucci, to "send a message to Perón." The organization never acknowledged its responsibility in this murder, making it more of an execution than a revolutionary justice statement.

This caused two strong trends to appear in the way of framing and interpreting the reality they were creating: one that supported the normal process of power-building and one that favored military action as a sole option. Even when they were in the surface offering their political strength to Peron's political movement, the more militaristic faction planned and executed the Rucci murder, on September 25, 1973.

The successful planning and execution of Rucci's murder gave the militaristic group inside Montoneros the amount of power they wanted to rule the new consolidated

Montonero movement. It had eight members, of which Firmenich, Roberto, Perdía and Yager were the heads of the more militaristic faction, still defining themselves as the Peronist military wing. The choice for violent action was accompanied by a rigid internal militaristic structure, abandoning any other consensual effort to participate in politics.   It could be said that this show of force from the militaristic faction of Montoneros was received unequivocally by Perón as a point of no return, a confrontation with the violent power of this youth that he had before qualified as "wonderful youth," when he needed its support to end his exile and get back his power as president. Perón cried for the first time in public and expressed that Rucci's murder had left him "without legs…."

Under those confused circumstances, still the Montoneros decided to be present in the popular concentration to celebrate Labor Day, May 1st, 1974, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. It was their affiliation, their public identity that was at stake: The Montonero movement couldn't be absent because this May Day event was the annual ritual with their very strong leader; where followers express their love and support of Perón in a very stylized ritual. The ritual day was always a deep dialogue between leader and followers, where the communion with Peronist symbols and ideals were sealed. It fulfilled the symbolic end of a ceremony of reciprocal confirmation for each side.[35]

D. The Montoneros' Day of Public Humiliation

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The taped dialogue of this popular May Day gathering reveals that Perón began his discourse by giving support to union leaders (like the murdered CGT leader, Rucci) and criticizing the Montoneros all in the same swoop by saying:

"This group of beardless, stupid youth pretends to be worthier than my loyal people that fought for 20 years. I want that this first meeting celebrating Workers' Day be dedicated to giving homage to those leaders and organizations (like the CGT) which have seen their own leaders succumb to assassinations, without the murderers having been punished yet. "

And the Montoneros guerrillas were chanting: "What is wrong, General, that the government is full of people to the right! Rucci was a traitor! Montoneros, Montoneros!"

Peron continued:

"Compañeros, we have met in this same plaza for nine years, all together in the fight to support the claims and demands of the Argentine people. Now, it happens that after twenty years, we have people unhappy with what we have done…some stupid youth are not happy with our work…They have infiltrated the movement, and so they are more dangerous than the traitors from outside of it."

Voices in the public square began chanting: "If this is not the people, where are the people? We are not happy and we are going to fight!!!"   Loud chanting continued: "*Aserrín, aserrán*, we the people are leaving!" The Montoneros' columns abandoned Plaza de Mayo, leaving it almost half full when taking with them their banners and supporters. Some street battles ensued.[36]

E. A Negotiation Truncated by Death

After this humiliating retreat from the Plaza, Montoneros' leadership spent up to July '74 negotiating a meeting with Perón to reestablish the lost connection and their own identity inside the Peronist Movement, all in vain. In a draft being internally negotiated to be proposed to Perón along May/June of 1974, it was agreed that if the Montoneros would be considered again a part of the Peronist movement, they would accept as unchallenged Peron's leadership and his political centrist-rightist orientation. It was a difficult pill to swallow, but it was better than being exiled from the group they always felt was their main identity.

Peron's death interrupted the negotiations, and the situation never improved. Having lost any hope of being recognized as part of the Peronist legacy, the Montoneros announced their decision to return to clandestine military activity in September of 1974.

They would then claim the "social revolutionary vision of authentic Peronism" and start guerrilla operations against Isabel Perón's government, who, supported by the armed

forces represented the Peronist right-wing. A main aim of the Montoneros was to push authorities into repression, even severe repression, to prove the point that this same Peronist government was against its own people. This strategic choice was one of the reasons this guerrilla group was almost exterminated, in the end of the dirty war in 1977.

In their humiliated situation and growing isolation, the Montoneros began to establish a relationship with another guerrilla movement, clearly declared as Marxist-Leninist, the ERP, or *Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo*, who had rejected any alliance with Peronism because it was considered by them as being against the workers' interests and defending capitalism. But both organizations and their common future were running out of time: the Peronist movement, under Isabel Perón as president of Argentina, was rejecting actively any extreme leftist tendency after Peron's death.

F. The Emotional Impact of the Public Humiliation, "*El Día Del Dolor*" (the Day of Pain)

On March 1976 Isabel Perón was ousted and a military junta was installed, led by General Jorge Rafael Videla, that implemented the "Dirty War." This was a vast counter-revolutionary operation against guerrillas, their families and friends. In 1976 the Montoneros suffered especially heavy losses. An estimated 1600 out of around 7000 active supporters were killed, with the rest forced to scatter. The Montoneros were effectively finished by 1977, although some did fight on until 1981.

Following is an interview, conducted in Spanish, transcribed and translated by the author, with a militant Montoneros' leader Roberto Perdía on August 10th, 2007, in Buenos Aires. Even though some of the elite leaders survived the "Dirty War" and even avoided conviction in the "Trial of the Juntas," such as was the case with Mario Firmenich, Fernando Vaca Narvaja, Rodolfo Galimberti, Roberto Perdía, and Enrique Gorriarán Merlo, the author was able to interview only Mr. Perdia. There are two aspects that are important in this choice: one is the heavy losses suffered by Montoneros, which reduced the number of   probable interviewees, and the other is the highly collectivist nature of the Montonero's leadership group. In Perdia's narrative, [37]   his own personal opinions were always a reflection of the group's decisions, never confrontational and this "extended self" identification pervaded the way they took decisions, framed strategy and defined the conflict they were a part of. Having experienced extreme violence and risking their lives in the process, Montoneros developed a shared identity through repeated interactions with danger, which allowed them a sense of trust in life-endangering elite's decisions.

Recount your experience of that May Day 1973 event…

*…a*nd I felt a deep pain, like a stabbing in my stomach when people began chanting against Perón…..When the Montoneros formations began leaving the Plaza, I tried to

shout the order to stay and scream something neutral, like 'Perón, Perón,' but the group under my command left anyway….

*People with y*ears of militancy got very hurt when they realized the insult. They were shocked, indignant, and, turning their backs to Perón, began walking away. They had been with us so many times! But this time, against our wishes they left, and we followed them, trying to withdraw from the Plaza de Mayo at least in some order. [38]

Why do you call it "The Day of Pain"?[39]

Because something very dear to us was destroyed that day, the future got destroyed….and it could not be healed. We had had a common history in our Montoneros group, a path forged at a very high price, with our own lives on the line, and the lives of our group and families compromised, and suddenly we were out. Our whole life project was challenged, and we were severely judged by history….everything had to do with everything before, our families; our place in society, the future, and all got suddenly plunged into crisis.

One problem was that we thought we knew Perón, that we understood him and that he owed us something because of all the support we gave to his movement when he was in exile. And now this…..it was a deep failure in the trust we had in him.

What was your immediate reaction? Not individual, but your group's reaction?

We were kind of shell shocked…asking: Now what? We were a group without identity, without future….We had not an answer to the question: who am I? Who are we? We tried some answers, but having a process of operating by the consensus of our whole group, we didn't find an answer that we all could accept.

And after the initial shock?

We tried several immediate responses to manage this deep pain…

First, we had this wave of anguish, full of remorse…we shouldn't have done this, or that…it was like our main relationship with a father figure was destroyed. Fathers and sons have their own stories, full of ups and downs: we were in the down side, no

father….for us the death of Perón prevented us from reconnecting and asking him to recognize us and heal the pain of our public humiliation. In the meantime some of us [guarded] privileged loyalty to the father; and tried to understand and justify what he had done to us, explaining that Perón really needed us, but needed first to keep union loyalty for a number of reasons; other members tried to deny the rupture, even accepting that we were now thinking in a way that was not part of the official ideology. Our armed response to capitalism was not accepted any longer, but even then, we assumed that we still had other areas in common with the Peronist movement….this illusion did not last long.

Tell me about some of your groups' individual reactions...

We did whatever we could to think in alternatives, while fighting to deny the hurt, pain and confusion we were suffering. It was a pain so acute; some of us got sick, some took refuge in isolating themselves from the militant group, no phone calls, nothing. Go home, lick your wounds and cry. And then, the remaining group, who had taken responsibility for Rucci's assassination, decided that our pro-violence position was more justified than ever. Perhaps jumping ahead, we and other *compañeros* escalated the violence, as a way to tell the world: **"We are here, we are not going anywhere, and deal with us"**

At the same time we –those in our small leadership group-- were desperate for reconnecting with Perón, and the *Chango Funes*' group was negotiating with him, all through June '73. We were hopeful that he would legitimate us again, make us part of his movement again….we were talking about the conditions, us accepting his undivided leadership, no more challenges to him, etc. We had our hopes up again, but in a couple of weeks more, he was dead. Now, we were really orphaned; I don't remember a depression feeling like that ever!

7. Some Immediate Consequences of the Montoneros' Humiliation

After the shock of being publicly rejected from the movement in which name they were doing guerrilla attacks, the leftist violent trend took over. Without a clear anchor in their shared identity with the rest of the Peronist movement, the Montoneros were left to deal with their isolation by their own means, and they choose violence over the humiliation pain.

The Montoneros proceeded by claiming to defend the "social revolutionary vision of authentic Perónism" and started guerrilla operations against the Peronist government itself. In this government the more radical right-wing factions quickly took control. Isabel Perón, President since Juan Perón's death, was essentially a figurehead under the influence of former police officer José López Rega.

On July 15, 1974, Montoneros assassinated Arturo Mor Roig, a former foreign minister. In September, in order to finance their operations, Firmenich and others (the oldest of this group being 22 years old) kidnapped two members of the Bunge and Born business family. They demanded and received as ransom $60 million in cash and $1.2 million worth of food and clothing to be given to the poor. This ransom is the highest ever paid according to *Guinness Book of Records.*

The right wing "Triple A" organization formed under López Rega's auspices began hunting down, killing, and arresting the Montoneros and members of *Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo* (ERP) as well as other leftist militant groups. The Montoneros and ERP in turn went on to attack business and political figures throughout Argentina as well as raid military bases for weapons and explosives. The Montoneros killed executives from "imperialist companies," like General Motors, Ford and Chrysler. The group also sank an Argentine destroyer, the ARA *Santisima Trinidad* in 1975. On July 2, 1976, they detonated a powerful bomb in the Argentine Federal Police in Buenos Aires, killing 18 and injuring 66 people.

By the time Videla's military Junta took power in March of '76, approximately ten thousand political prisoners from the guerrilla groups were being held in various secret torture centers around Argentina. The political prisoners that were not among the "disappeared" (an additional 25.000 to 30.000 civilians) were held throughout the years of the dictatorship, many of them never receiving trials, in prisons such as La Plata, Devoto, Rawson, and Caseros. At the end of 1979, the remaining Montoneros had either been "disappeared," were in prison or escaped in exile.

III. Healing Humiliation...Non-Violent Alternative Responses

A. The Decent Society

Reactive responses to humiliation are very important. Those who have been humiliated feel anger, and may desire revenge. The sense that no treatment is too horrible for some criminals runs deep in the minds of many crime victims.

The desire for revenge is often the desire that the perpetrator of the humiliation himself be humiliated. The desire for revenge, however understandable, is not one that a decent society can satisfy. Families of victims (but not only victims) are understandably pleased when they read that a serial killer has been beaten or killed in prison. For Ripstein (1997),[40] insofar as such treatment is humiliating, though, a decent society cannot allow it.

Retaliatory responses to crime that serve to humiliate the criminal may well serve to restore the victim's honor in some societies, and such revenge may allow the victim to

assert superiority over the original aggressor. This response only goes so far, because the cycle of humiliation-revenge and more humiliation continues.

Creative responses, such as forgiveness might be considered a more befitting attitude for a decent society than punishment and revenge. The problem with this response is its limitation: it will remain in the decision of the victim to forgive, so it is an individual response; and doesn't address the inner impulse of the humiliator to continue humiliating others, which has not been explored here.

How can we treat humiliation at its core, in the center of the humiliated heart in such a way that self-respect and dignity are brought back?

B. Boudreau's Model of Intergroup Conflict Reduction

Boudreau's (2003) [41] model of intergroup conflict reduction proposes an intervention that really answers our question. Here only the first part of his proposal is applied, identity affirmation:

Conflict between groups can be potentially lessened by the explicit affirmation by one group of the other group's identity, including its past pain, defeats and losses. If pursued in good faith, such affirmations may help reduce inter-group or international conflict.

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The process of identity affirmation is based upon the premise that the psycho-cultural self-images and historical discourses that help define in-group identity are open to internal challenge and change prompted, if necessary, by an out-group's "affirmative" efforts and can thus be transformed, even if marginally, as a precursor to establishing better inter-group relations.

The potential use of identity affirmation to change self-selective internal discourses into a shared common discourse between groups would also challenge the "fixed humiliation positions in the narrative," described by Cobb, (2005) because they would be expressed not by only the victim of humiliation, but by the offending group, thus shaping a very different attribution of guilt, and responsibility.

The process of identity affirmation by one group may help create "value added" possibilities, especially for future negotiations between the groups, but more research is needed in this area in the future.

Even heeding Boudreau's disclaimer that "Conflict reduction through identity affirmation should be viewed simply as one more tool, one more potential approach, in a spectrum of conflict reduction or resolution techniques, to be used when decision makers think it

appropriate," we are making progress in the right direction. The healing of humiliation requires the acknowledgement of the hurt done, expressed precisely by the group that did the humiliation, to produce the effect of restoring respect.

In Boudreau's words: "Understanding the collective mythos of another group is most important when trying to reduce conflict through identity affirmation. This is because *a critical aspect of Identity Affirmation* is recognition and validation of the out-group's past experiences of traumas, pain and defeats, especially if inflicted by the in-group that now seeks to affirm its former opponents."

C. Some Questions

In the case example presented here, the humiliation healing question is, using some understanding of the Montoneros' own mythology about their unique identity as "soldiers of Peron," could Peron have isolated (and controlled) the unwanted aspects of the left wing armed group, while at the same time acknowledging their own group affiliation identity by including them into "some legitimate part of the collective Peronist youth"?

Additionally, could Peron have provided some public recognition of the Montoneros' loyalty, (albeit in their own terms) to the Peronist movement, so as to restore their only identity? What were the costs and benefits of this public recognition peace offer? And what were the risks of not offering this recognition?

Would this recognition have been enough to stop the growing narcissistic fury, isolation, and youthful impulse to take action that eventually was funneled into public guerrilla attacks to show off the Montoneros' prowess? To be effective, how and when should identity recognition have been provided? This are questions that point to future theoretical research.

IV. Conclusion

Humiliation wounds remain unhealed forever without some purposeful intervention aimed at restoring self-esteem, dignity and respect. The trauma gets transmitted from generation to generation, if the social wound is large enough so as to shape the group's identity into a narrative of humiliation. We have just begun exploring what kind of wound a humiliation wound is, what are the predictable processes by which the humiliator and the humiliated act, and what kinds of interventions humiliation needs to promote healthier recovery. A thick layer of political rationalizations (all the extreme leftist ideology embraced by the Montoneros as a reaction) prevented us until now from observing the humiliation wound. At the same time, we can see now the long-term effects

of unhealed humiliation that are all around us, waiting for us to connect the violent acting

out against innocent bystanders with hidden humiliated rage.

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