

Humiliation in Asymmetric Conflict

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Asymmetric conflict includes every kind of conflict in which one side is much stronger than the other. The asymmetry can be at the interpersonal level between two individuals in conflict or at the intergroup level between two groups in conflict. Here I focus on the intergroup level without any commitment about whether the same dynamics operate at the interpersonal level (see Goldman, 2007).

A new journal, *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict: Pathways toward Terrorism and Genocide* (www.informaworld.com/dac), focuses particularly on conflicts between state and non-state groups. Extremes of violence are associated with such conflicts, as represented in the journal's subtitle. These extremes cannot be understood only in terms of realist appraisals, tit-for-tat models and security dilemmas. Emotion is an important contributor to asymmetric conflict, and **humiliation is the prototypic emotional experience of asymmetric conflict** because humiliation begins with asymmetric power. Disrespect and harm from the stronger group elicits anger in those who identify with the weaker group. Fear of the stronger suppresses expression of anger by the weaker. At the same time, the weaker experience shame for having let fear suppress anger. It is the concatenation of suppressed anger, fear, and shame that defines humiliation.