

# Understanding Humiliation As Suppressed Anger

© Clark McCauley, Director  
Solomon Asch Center for Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict  
University of Pennsylvania  
Philadelphia, PA 19104 USA

## Abstract

There are four ways to approach a definition of an emotion word (see Royzman, McCauley and Rozin, 2004, "Four ways of thinking about hate"). We can examine what philosophers and linguists have said about the emotion, we can take as data the use of the emotion word in everyday speech, we can stipulate a definition and do research to test the usefulness of this definition, or we can define a class of behavior (e.g. genocide) as the effect of the emotion and work backward to try to learn what the relevant emotion is. In this paper I take the psychological approach of stipulating a definition of humiliation that will permit integration with the larger enterprise of humiliation research. Beginning from Aristotle's insult-anger theory, I argue that humiliation is usefully understood as the emotional response to demeaning treatment by an individual or group too powerful to aggress against.