

## **Interview Guidelines**

© Evelin Lindner, 25.8.1998

### **Summary of questions (see Dagfinn Føllesdal's formulation of questions 1997):**

What is experienced as humiliation? What happens when people feel humiliated? When is humiliation established as a feeling? What does humiliation lead to? Which experiences of justice, honour, dignity, respect and self-respect are connected with the feeling of being humiliated? How is humiliation perceived and responded to in different cultures? What role does humiliation play for aggression? What can be done to overcome violent effects of humiliation?

### **Start of the interview:**

The interviewer writes down:

date of the interview,

time of the day,

place where the interview takes place,

weather conditions,

with whom he/she was talking in order to get in contact with the interviewee.

**The interviewer asks the interviewee for consent**, and lets the interviewee sign, if he or she wishes that. Oral consent is sufficient as well (we would want to avoid being mistaken for a government official or tax collector).

**The interviewer collects biographical data** from the interviewee, but only as far as the interviewee agrees to give them. Like: "Tell me a bit about your family, how many brothers and sisters do you have, ..." (gender, ethnic background, religion, highest level of education, family background, marital status, occupation, economic status, whether or not s/he owns own land or is an agricultural or urban worker, political preference)

**The interviewer asks the following questions:**

**Definition of humiliation:**

“If you should define and describe the term humiliation, what would you say?”

**Prototypes of humiliation:**

“What is the worst instance of humiliation you can think of?”

“What is the most common instance of humiliation you can think of?”

“What is the prototypic, archetypal instance?”

**Personal experiences with humiliation:**

“Did you yourself live through situations where humiliation played an important role?”

“How exactly did it happen?”

“What did you do, what did the others do?”

“What did you feel, what did the others feel?”

“Do you think that your reactions are universal, i.e. that all people in the world would react like that?”

“Or do you think that people of other cultures would react differently?”

Humiliation in history and society:

“Do you know about events in your near environment where you think that humiliation was important?”

“How exactly did it happen?”

“What did the people who were involved do?”

“What did the people who were involved feel?”

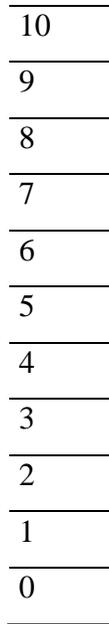
“What made the situation humiliating?”

“When you think of the examples you told me, how do you explain what the people in situations of humiliation did?”

“What would you have done?”

**Cantril’s “Self-Anchoring Scale” (1965) concerning respect (Cantril’s original version adapted to “respect”):**

Here is a picture of a ladder:



Suppose we say that the top of the ladder (POINTING) represents the highest amount of respect for you and the bottom (POINTING) represents the worst possible humiliation for you. Where on the ladder (MOVING FINGER RAPIDLY UP AND DOWN LADDER) do you feel you personally stand at the present time? Step number. Where on the ladder would you say you stood five years ago? Step number. And where do you think you will be on the ladder five years from now? Step number. Where would you put (name of group) on the ladder (MOVING FINGER RAPIDLY UP AND DOWN LADDER) *at the present time*? Step number. Where did (name of group) stand *five years ago*? Step number. Just as your best guess, where do you think (name of group) will be on the ladder *five years from now*? Step number.

**Universality of the humiliation, and its culture-relative triggers:**

(see hypotheses in the project description)

“Do you think that peoples’ reactions to humiliation are universal, i.e. that all people would react in the same way?”

“Was it right, or proper, inevitable for those people you described to behave like that?”

“Which choice did they have?”

“Could it be that all people know about humiliation, but that they react differently to different triggers?”

“Could it be that all people feel humiliation, but that the reasons for feeling humiliated vary? What are the ‘triggers’ which can make Americans feel humiliated, Europeans, other Africans, your fellow countrymen, the members of your group, your family, you? Please give examples if possible.”

**Retaliation for humiliation:**

“At what point is a humiliation so big, that you think it is right to risk ones life in the course of retaliation?”

“What would you die for?” “Is any insult worth dying for?”

“At what point is a humiliation so big, that you think you would sacrifice your life in the course of retaliation?”

“If you think of a prototypical situation of humiliation, what could heal this situation?”

**Humiliation and respect:**

“What would make a man/woman lose respect for himself/herself?”

“What would make you lose respect for yourself?”

**Humiliation, justice and fairness:**

“Has life been fair to you?”

“Is life fair to anybody?”

“Is it ever just or fair to humiliate somebody else or some other group?”

**Humiliation and power structures:**

“Is it all right for people with power to hurt other people?”

“When is it all right?”

“When is it not all right?”

“What about husbands and wives?”

“What about chiefs and fellow tribe members?”

**Other views on the subject humiliation:**

“What other thoughts do you have when you think of the notion of humiliation?”

**Humiliation as cause of violent and armed conflict:**

“Do you think that humiliation can escalate conflict to violent conflict?”

“Which other factors except humiliation do you think play a role in escalating conflicts to armed conflict?”

**Genocide (Rwanda) or civil war (Somalia) in general:**

**Genocide/war, who talks about it and who participated:**

“Is it okay to talk about the genocide/war?”

“Who does talk openly to whom about that?”

“Will perpetrators talk with each other, will bystanders talk, will rescuers talk?”

“Do you know about people who did not participate in the genocide/war?”

“Why did they not participate?”

“Do you know people who actively rescued people from the ‘other side’ who were in danger?”

“What did they do, much or little?”

“Why did they do that?” (perpetrators, victims, rescuers, and bystanders: e.g. international community was bystander, people could have done something if only written letters to their governments).

**Helpers and perpetrators:**

“What would you do, if somebody from your adversary group stood in front of your door and asked you for help?”

**Level of analysis:**

“Who is important in such situations, the individual, the group, or the leaders?”

“How much influence do particular individuals have?”

“How much influence did you have, your family, your village, your tribal leaders?”

**Gender relevance:**

“Do you feel that your mother, your aunts, your sisters and female cousins think and act different from your father, your uncles, brothers, male cousins?”

“Do women and men think and act differently concerning topics of violence?”

**Aggression, violence, and control:**

“What makes you angry?”

“What could get you to become violent?”

“How do you express your anger?”

“Do you think anger should be controlled?”

“By whom (by yourself or others)?”

“Why?”

“Is it wrong if anger is uncontrolled?”

**Enemies and friends:**

“Who is your friend, who is your brother, and who would you call your enemy?”

“What is an enemy for you?”

“Who is it your job to look after?”

“Whose job is it to look after you?”

How does your map of the world look like?

“Which groups of people (e.g. clan, sub-clans) are friends and which are enemies of your group of people?”

“Which other countries are friends and which are enemies of your people?”

“Which geographical distances have you covered in your lifetime?”

“Which other means of communication do you use? Telephone, fax, email? How often?”

“Do you listen to radio? Do you watch TV? Which radio and TV? How often per month?”

“How many hours?”

**Prevention of genocide and war:**

“How do you think the bad things which you experienced could have been avoided and prevented?”

“How do you think genocide/war could be avoided and prevented?”

**Role of third parties:**

“Did you or your group feel humiliated by foreigners in your country, or foreign powers?”

“How do you feel about a foreigner trying to understand you, and posing you questions?”

**Cantril’s Self-Anchoring concerning the personal future:**

All of us want certain things out of life. When you think about what really matters in your own life, what are your wishes and hopes for the future? In other words, if you imagine your future in the best possible light, what would your life look like then, if you are to be happy? Take your time in answering; such things aren’t easy to put into words.

(PERMISSIBLE PROBES: What are your hopes for the future? What would your life have to be like for you to be completely happy? What is missing for you to be happy?

[Use also, if necessary, the words “dreams” and “desires.”] OBLIGATORY PROBE:

Anything else?). Now, taking the other side of the picture, what are your fears and worries about the future? In other words, if you imagine your future in the worst Possible light, what would your life look like then? Again, take your time in answering.

(PERMISSIBLE PROBE: What would make you unhappy? [Stress the words “fears” and

“worries.”] OBLIGATORY PROBE: Anything else?). Here is a picture of a ladder (see above). Suppose we say that the top of the ladder (POINTING) represents the best possible life for you and the bottom (POINTING) represents the worst possible life for you. Where on the ladder (MOVING FINGER RAPIDLY UP AND DOWN LADDER) do you feel you personally stand at the present time? Step number. Where on the ladder would you say you stood five years ago? Step number. And where do you think you will be on the ladder five years from now? Step number.

**Cantril’s Self-Anchoring concerning the country’s future:**

Now, what are your wishes and hopes for the future of our country? If you picture the future of (name of country) in the *best possible* light, how would things look, let us say, ten years from now? (OBLIGATORY PROBE: Anything else?) And what about your fears and worries for the future of our country? If you picture the future of (name of

country) in the worst possible light, how would things look about ten years from now? (OBLIGATORY PROBE: Anything else?) Now, looking at the ladder again, suppose your greatest hopes for (name of country) are at the top (POINTING); your worst fears at the bottom (POINTING). Where would you put (name of country) on the ladder (MOVING FINGER RAPIDLY UP AND DOWN LADDER) *at the present time*? Step number. Where did (name of country) stand *five years ago*? Step number. just as your best guess, where do you think (name of country) will be on the ladder *five years from now*? Step number.

**“Satisfaction with Life Scale,”**

(Ed Diener, <http://www.psych.uiuc.edu/~ediener/hottopic/hottopic.html>):

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 7 scale below indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding. (7 - Strongly agree, 6 – Agree, 5 - Slightly agree, 4 - Neither agree nor disagree, 3 - Slightly disagree, 2 – Disagree, 1 - Strongly disagree)

- \_\_\_ In most ways my life is close to my ideal.
- \_\_\_ The conditions of my life are excellent.
- \_\_\_ I am satisfied with my life.
- \_\_\_ So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
- \_\_\_ If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

**Planning a questionnaire:**

“A questionnaire shall be developed which examines humiliation.” “Which questions should be put in a questionnaire?”

**Interviewer’s observations.**

The interviewer describes the situation in which he/she finds the interviewee (refugee-status, living in a house/tent, living conditions, etc.) insofar as the interviewee has not yet given this information.

**End of the interview.**