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Humiliation, Resistance and State Violence: Using the Sociology of Emotions to Understand Institutional Violence Against Women and Girls and Their Acts of Resistance

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Abstract

This article examines the relationship between state violence in the form of practices aimed to humiliate and acts of resistance to these practices. Focusing on the experiences of women and girls in the Parramatta Female Factory (1804–1848), Parramatta Girls’ Training School and Hay Institution for Girls (1950–1974), we suggest that the practices used to govern women and girls can be read as attempts at humiliation—to degrade and denounce an individual’s entire subjectivity as being unworthy. We argue that while shame can be the basis for reintegration, humiliation leads to other responses, including at an individual level, reclaiming one’s status as being of worth, and at the level of social action through movements that reclaim group status and invert the direction of who has morally transgressed.

Keywords

Humiliation; Parramatta Female Factory; Parramatta Girls Training School; social movements; sociology of emotions.

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Introduction

This article examines how practices intended to humiliate have been used as instruments of state violence to govern women and girls in Australia. It highlights some of the acts of protest that occurred at the time and as a social movement more recently. The impetus for this article was a key finding of the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (RCIRCSA 2014d: 294)¹ (herein referred to as ‘the Commission’) that the most common barrier to the disclosure of sexual abuse by children in institutions was ‘shame and embarrassment’. Evidence presented to the Commission documented the ways in which the abuse experienced by children in state and non-state institutions produced feelings of shame and disempowerment, and how these feelings resulted in the silencing of girls, especially in their ability to disclose sexual abuse. It is possible to conclude from the work of Golding (2018), as well as reports of alleged sexual abuse by a superintendent of Mount Penang Training School for Boys (see Vince and Lapham 2020), that sexual abuse of boys also occurred in state institutions. However, possible parallels and differences are not the focus of this article.

While the testimonies presented to the Commission refer to experiences of shame, we explore how the concept of humiliation may also be useful for understanding the practices of degradation in which these institutions systematically engaged. Shame is predicated on an individual making a negative assessment of self, because they have transgressed some shared social norm. Shame, because it is based on an internalisation that one has transgressed a social norm, has the potential to be reintegrative, with the person feeling shame seeking conciliation with the group (Braithwaite 1989).

However, we suggest that the practices used to govern women and girls can be read as attempts to humiliate, an effect beyond shaming aimed to degrade and denounce an individual’s entire subjectivity as being unworthy—that is, to degrade one’s total being. While shame, under specific circumstances, can be the basis for reintegration, we argue that humiliation triggers other responses, including rejection of attempts to define one’s status as being unworthy. Therefore, the implications are different. Humiliating practices can result in annihilating an individual’s subjectivity, but they can also lead to acts of resistance at an individual level that reclaim one’s status as being of worth. Humiliating practices can also result in organised social action that aims to reclaim group status and invert the direction of who has morally transgressed back onto those who engaged in humiliating practices, as well as the institutional environments that sanctioned these practices.

The article proceeds in three parts. The first section distinguishes between shame and humiliation by drawing on theoretical material from the sociology of emotions. We apply this distinction to look at practices of humiliation experienced by women and girls in some state institutions in New South Wales, focusing on two specific historical periods—the early colonial period and the mid to late twentieth century. Building on this distinction, the second section focuses on an issue little examined until now, that of acts of resistance to these practices by the women and girls. We demonstrate that, despite the aim to control and degrade the women and girls, acts of individual and group resistance to practices of humiliation occurred. The third section looks at more organised social movements that have emerged to document attempts at humiliation, not only as protest but also as a form of memory so that such acts may never occur again. We suggest that these organised responses are different from reintegrative shaming measures (Braithwaite 1989), which are about accepting moral standards against which an individual has transgressed. In contrast, responses to humiliation aim to reclaim one’s status as a moral actor by documenting the immorality of the acts of humiliation that occurred historically.

The focus of our analysis—of institutional violence and resistance to it—is on the experiences of women in the Parramatta Female Factory (1804–1848) and girls who spent time in the Parramatta Girls’ Training School and/or the Hay Institution for Girls² in New South Wales during the period from 1950 to 1974. In drawing on these examples, we identify continuity in the policing of women’s and girls’ bodies from the early colonial period to the late twentieth century. This article does not provide a definitive history of shame or humiliation, but explores some of the conceptual links between experiences of humiliation and resistance, using the treatment of girls at the Parramatta and Hay institutions as examples.

We use some of the tools of historical analysis to examine the practices of humiliation perpetrated by some institutions on women and girls, and demonstrate that these practices not only were used to govern female morality, but also served in the process of constructing nationhood in Australia. We have accessed public submissions and testimonies provided to the public hearing of the Royal Commission, as reported in *Case Study No. 7*, on the Parramatta Girls' Training School and the Hay Institution for Girls. We analysed these transcripts using qualitative analytic induction techniques (Bazeley 2009) seeking to understand the practices of humiliation and how these were a routine part of implementing policies for reform of children in state child welfare institutions during those historical periods. This analysis was supplemented by analysis of archival documents from the National Archives of Australia and existing analyses of the early colonial period relating to the punitive treatment of girls in institutions established for their moral education (e.g., see Craig 2013; Ramsland 1986; Salt 1984).

Our methods involved teasing out the discourses on childhood in child welfare, as enabled and constrained by broad discourses of the mid-twentieth century. In using historical analysis as a tool for examining practices in women's and girls' institutions in New South Wales, we build on important work on this topic by, for example, Sabine Willis (1980) and Kerry Carrington, in her original empirical study in 1993, and the work of Shurlee Swain (2014), particularly her documentation of Australian inquiries into out-of-home care for children since 1852. This examination is the foundation for our attempt to document (using these resources) that despite the attempts at humiliation of women and girls, what has emerged are acts of courage, resistance and social action, which have spoken against these attempts to degrade and humiliate, and which have provided a platform for a dialogue about the state's responsibility to its citizens.

Shame and Humiliation: The Treatment of Women and Girls in the Parramatta Female Factory, the Parramatta Girls' Training School and the Hay Institution for Girls

In psychological and sociological theories of shame we see the construction of shame as an internalised emotional state. Shame can be distinguished from guilt in terms of the way shame is focused on the self. Whereas guilt entails feeling bad about specific incidents of behaviour (see Lewis 1971; Tangney, Stuewig and Mashek 2007), shame is a more bodily and less cognitive experience. Since it is internalised early in life, shame can become part of a person's 'total being' (Scheff 2000). Therefore, shame, according to Smith (2001: 544), is:

the fear of being exposed as inadequate in terms of the standards of the group to which one belongs ... [T]he person who commits the shameful deed acts as their own accuser since they are also a member of the group.

Andrew Sayer (2005) further emphasises the social character of shame, arguing that it is evoked by failure of an individual or group to live according to their values or commitments. According to Lewis (1971) and Scheff (1987), a person experiencing shame must see themselves both as unworthy within and not being of worth from the perspective of others; thus, shame is an emotion that involves being concerned with how others evaluate one's self. Since shame has this quality, feelings of shame can be used as the basis for reforming a person and reintegrating them within the larger community whose standards the person experiencing shame has contravened (Braithwaite 1989).

Shame has received significant attention in the literature and its restorative potentials have been fiercely contested (see English 1994; Every 2013; Riek, Root Luna and Schnabelrauch 2014; Shepherd, Spear and Manstead 2013; Stearns 2017). In particular, some authors have pointed out the weaponisation of stigma used against marginalised groups in the service of capital (Scambler 2018). Further, shame can have socially destructive rather than reintegrative tendencies, having a recursive quality that can lead to silence or violence (Scheff 2014). Partly for these reasons, this article focuses on the potentials for resistance that might arise in response to experiences of humiliation. Humiliation has different qualities to shame, in that it is based on the forced rejection of an individual's entire status as being unworthy. Smith (2001: 542) defines humiliation as involving:

the forced ejection and/or exclusion of individuals from social roles and/or social categories with which they subjectively identify in a way that conveys the message that they are fundamentally inadequate to fill those roles or belong to those categories.

In the sociology of emotions literature,³ humiliation is allied with contempt, which not only involves a negative evaluation of others, but also places oneself in a position of moral superiority to others for which one feels contempt. According to Turner and Stets (2006: 554), contempt and the humiliating practices that it seeks to justify 'is linked to the violation of the moral code of community', but only where 'this moral code involves respecting the social hierarchy, including deference to those in authority'. This particular aspect of humiliation is also taken up in some of the experiential criminological literature, especially the highly influential work of Katz (1988). Emphasising the moral motivations for individuals to commit crime, Katz argues that emotions such as humiliation provide compelling motivators for crime and provide emotional frames through which individuals who commit a crime may assign meaning and interpret their acts.

In the case of the treatment of women and girls detained in the Parramatta Female Factory and later in the Parramatta Girls' Training School and the Hay Institution for Girls, we would argue that this definition has pertinence. The women transported as convicts to the colony from its establishment in 1780 were, as Babette Smith (2008) notes, assessed by 'middle-class eyes' so that their 'words, deeds and appearances were judged and condemned'. They were considered, in the words of the 1837 English Select Committee on Transportation, to be 'drunken and abandoned prostitutes' (4–5). Their incarceration can be seen as attempts to forcibly reject women and then girls according to their gender, in the context of their class, from the status of being respectable members of society, and, in particular, that associated with respectable femininity.

The Parramatta Female Factory, built under the authority of Governor King, is Australia's earliest purpose-built female convict site that attempted, through a range of practices, to stigmatise, isolate and punish 'shameful' women. In this institution, work and accommodation were provided for single women whose industry was in large part to support male workers through making, for example, clothing. For those whose behaviour was considered 'disorderly, dirty or disrespectful' there was confinement to a special section, the 'Crime Class', where the disciplinary approach included the marking of the women's special status through the use of a stigma, 'a "Mark of Degradation" [to be] attached to them' (Macquarie 1821), as well as the administration of punishments designed to humiliate and degrade them in sexualised ways. This included the public shaving of women's heads for infractions, described as a way of publicly de-sexing them (Craig 2013; Salt 1984).

The close connection between these attempts to degrade with colony-building, evident from the early stages of colonial settlement, were reinforced through the strategies of Reverend Samuel Marsden. Marsden, who had come to Sydney Cove in 1794 and became the senior chaplain of the colony, advocated, in accord with practices adopted in eighteenth-century England (see Ritter 1999), for the removal of children, particularly girls, from 'shameful' mothers. Marsden argued this was necessary to avoid the contamination of children by their mothers and to inculcate moral behaviour in the upcoming generation. Marsden was successful in establishing a system for children deemed delinquent or destitute—the degenerate children of 'immoral' parents (Ramsland 1986). The Female Orphan School established in 1801 in George Street, and relocated to Parramatta in 1818, continued practices in which children were the targets of colonial policies to construct and monitor female sexuality through their moral education.

The testimonies provided by women to the Commission for *Case Study No. 7* mark some degree of continuity with these early colonial practices, the Female Factory being the predecessor of the Parramatta Girls' Training School. In the emphasis in 1950s Australia—as in other English-speaking countries, such as the United States (see Odem 1995) and Ireland (see Ring 2016)—on the socialisation of adolescent girls as a way of enforcing a particular morality, policies of this period have continuity with the period from the late nineteenth century to the 1950s, when the increasing opportunities for social and sexual autonomy

were seen to threaten the ideals of the normative female role. The Girls' Training School was established in Parramatta in a location that incorporated the old Female Factory, highlighting historical continuities between the two institutions. Nonetheless, this period is marked by important differences, with theories regarding the importance of adolescence as a critical stage of development, providing a 'scientific' rationale for authorities to intervene, control and police the behaviour of women and girls. This refers in particular to psychological theories that suggested that interventions during adolescence could be effective in moulding sexual behaviour, and were used to justify the detaining of girls in Parramatta and Hay. Thus, institutional practices also more directly focused on intra-psychic processes during this later period (Iliopoulos 2012). Additionally, in many instances, racist attitudes were highly significant in the incarceration of Indigenous girls in these institutions (e.g., see Sullivan 2017).

Women's testimonies provided to the Commission include reports of having experienced sexual abuse in the institutions for 'delinquents' at Parramatta and Hay between 1950 and 1974. Further, as Sabine Willis (1980: 179) comments, girls 'were sent to Parramatta to be morally reconstructed, in much the same way as had been attempted with their foremothers in the days of the Female Factory'. The *Child Welfare Act 1939*, in force in New South Wales until 1987, defined the girls committed to the Parramatta Girls' Training School for reasons of moral delinquency as being 'exposed to moral danger', the main component of moral delinquency often being a determination by the authorities of the girls being sexually promiscuous, which was associated with 'general waywardness and irresponsibility' (Child Welfare Department of New South Wales 1972: 25). On arrival at Parramatta, girls were forced to submit to an invasive medical examination conducted while they were 'strapped to a table'. One of the witnesses described her experience of this practice as 'vile', 'scary' and 'humiliating and degrading' (RCIRCSA 2014e: 15). Use of forced medical examination and the *non virgo intacta* label served to reinforce to the girls and confirm to the authorities the girls' deviant moral status. Repeated references to the girls as 'sluts' and 'liars' (RCIRCSA 2014a: 4982), as described in testimonies to the Commission, served to impress on both staff and girls that they were inferior and dangerous, enabling others 'to impute a wide range of imperfections on the basis of the original one' (Hibberd and Djuric 2013: 70). For these girls, the 'original imperfection' was their femaleness. As described by Bonney Djuric, committed to Parramatta in the 1970s, 'in the Home it was always driven home to us that our "female-ness" was the source of our rottenness' (Hibberd and Djuric 2013: 70). According to this categorisation, the girls were at the bottom of a hierarchy where men had the power to humiliate as well as abuse them physically and emotionally,⁴ as part of policies for governing their sexuality.

The girl's femaleness was governed in many ways, including having their hair involuntarily 'hacked off' (RCIRCSA 2014: 13). At both Parramatta and Hay, this signified a continuation of the practice instituted in the Female Factory during the colonial period (Smith 2008: 85). Another strategy for governing the girls' femaleness was to carry out embarrassing body checks every day. The women told of being examined as they were showering, that there were no doors on the toilets or showers, and that the staff (male or female) would watch them in the bathrooms. The girls' experiences of humiliation through practices of enforced nakedness left them no opportunity to 'cover' or 'hide' their femaleness. These practices can, therefore, be seen to have been powerful contributors in boosting the girls' sense of inferior status, aimed at constructing their entire subjectivity as being lesser. These practices also aimed to enforce compliance and accept oppression, including of the alleged sexual abuses by the institutions' staff. Considered 'sluts' (RCIRCSA 2014a: 4881), no-one would believe their complaints of sexual assault.

The women's testimonies about practices at Hay illustrate an intensification of the disciplinary practices used at Parramatta. They included control over basic biological functions through rationing and controlling distribution of toilet paper and sanitary napkins, described by the women as degrading, humiliating and objectifying (RCIRCSA 2014b: 31–32). Other practices induced humiliation in ways that accord with Wettlaufer's (2015: 36) description of the physical aspects of shame portrayed when 'people lower their faces, drop their shoulders and give the impression that they want to vanish into the ground'. This is the picture the women gave in describing being forced to literally embody shame through having 'to walk with our [two] eyes to the ground' through a 'silence system' (RCIRCSA 2014f 4859), prohibiting

them from talking except for ten minutes each day (RCIRCSA 2014b: 5079–5080), and through a prohibition on physical closeness (in which girls had to keep a distance of six feet between them) (RCIRCSA 2014g: 4864).

At Parramatta and Hay these practices controlled and regulated the girls' behaviour, bodies and thoughts, through restrictions on their liberty and through attempts at getting the girls to internalise and accept the rules by which they were dominated. The humiliating practices, during both periods, attempted to force the women and girls into a status and social role of unworthy and bad women, as evident in the practices of organising their lives through enforced routine and in those acts intended at punishing the girls. We can conceptualise these practices as attempting to invoke an internalised state of feeling one has transgressed, associated with shame, and as acts of humiliation intended to degrade the entire person at whom the acts are directed. Thus, the acts both denied a status and attempted to force the girls into another socially inferior status.

Therefore, these acts are directed not only at degrading the entire subjectivity of a person, but are also intended to mark an individual as belonging to an inferior group. They are characteristic of cultural violence, as described by Bourdieu, as being 'built into the institution itself' (Bourdieu, 2004: 324). Thus, these acts of humiliation not only worked to shame individuals—shame being a social but intra-psychic emotion—but also to establish and reinforce status hierarchies between those who are worthy and those deemed as having little worth. Smith (2001: 540) describes this as the 'humiliated habitus' connected to 'hierarchies that impose a sense of absolute difference between superiors and inferiors'. The division between the girls and staff was strictly enforced through practices of humiliation. This included acts that transgressed personal boundaries, including sexual abuse of the girls by staff.

During the colonial period these acts of humiliation acted in the service of attempts to build a shared colonial identity, and further served to reinforce a moral hegemony, in the sense that the women and girls, as marked out groups, were deemed as inadequate by the standards of the society to which they belonged (Smith 2001: 545). Therefore, the institutional practices used to discipline them can be interpreted as serving a broader social function to reproduce moral practices for the broader society at the expense of the women and girls, marked as lacking these moral attributes. This is also consistent with Foucault's (1979) analysis that these practices also served a larger disciplinary function of signalling and reproducing dominant cognitive structures and behaviours.

Smith raises another important distinction between Elias's notion of shame and forms of humiliation. For Elias (1994 [1939]), the progressive acquisition of the civilising process throughout societies, evidenced in practices aimed at avoiding shame, is premised on the distinction between the insider and outsider, this distinction ultimately becoming equalised by the general acquisition of the 'civilising habitus' across social groups. However, humiliation is premised on a relationship of domination–subordination, which makes it more difficult to achieve equivalence—as envisaged by Elias in terms of shame. Further, it is far more difficult to come back from relationships of domination–subordination through conciliation and dialogue. Whereas shame may be used as a basis for reintegration, acts of humiliation involve a total denial of the subjectivity of the person who is the subject of humiliation. The aim of humiliation is to weaken the subject and exclude them from the social group. Given this, reintegration back into the dominating group may be neither possible from the vantage of the dominant, nor necessarily desirable from the vantage of the subordinated, as to side with the dominant group is to identify with the oppressor. The next section discusses how these dynamics were evidenced in the acts of resistance by the women and girls across the two historical periods.

Acts of Resistance

Elias suggests that the civilising process, as a generalised social form, destabilises social hierarchies. Smith (2001), in exploring the implications of Elias's work for organisational practices, suggests that this destabilising of social hierarchies means that feelings of humiliation actually intensify, rather than lessen,

where social hierarchies are destabilised through the civilising processes Elias outlines. Smith argues this is because, under such social conditions, people see their mistreatment as an injustice, because this injustice can no longer be normalised as part of taken-for-granted expectations reproduced through social institutions. This is further argued by Turner and Stets (2006: 544) who demonstrate that emotions like shame set in place cognitive processes that transform the initial emotional state (of shame) into other emotions including anger, fear and hatred. They argue that in an effort for self-protection, individuals who experience negative emotions may, under certain circumstances, see social structures as 'violating expectations and justice norms' (550).

However, this also makes status hierarchies based on humiliation incredibly unstable. Shame involves internalisation as one who is a wrongdoer and, thus, ultimately needs to make up for one's wrongdoings. Smith (2001: 544) argues that, in contrast, humiliation can breed resentment, as the subject of humiliation is being forced into an inferior position not of their making. Therefore, to maintain systems based on humiliation—as is evident in the Female Factory, the Hay Institution for Girls and the Parramatta Girls' Training School—the system must routinise practices that continue to humiliate and demean those placed in the inferior position. There is ample evidence of the instability of the effectiveness of these humiliating practices in the acts of riot and resistance at the Female Factory and at Parramatta Girls' Training School. Riots by inmates were common at the various institutions, with the first officially investigated riot occurring in 1889. Archival work undertaken through the Parramatta Girls Memory Project records riots occurring frequently, with incidents noted in 1887, 1890, 1898, 1899, 1941, 1942, 1943, 1945, 1947, 1953, 1954, 1958 and 1961, and at least another dozen being suppressed from official record.⁵

For example, in 1827, women of the Female Factory staged a riot demanding better food and conditions. The women assigned to the factory were outraged at having their rations removed, threatening that if the usual rations were 'not immediately forthcoming, they would tear down all before them' ('Riot at the Female Factory' 1827). The authorities maintained their hard line and consequently the women staged a breakout from the Factory, running through the streets of Parramatta. While the riot was quelled by the colonial authorities, the point had been made by the women 'shouting as they went along, and carrying with them their aprons loaded with bread and meat, for which, after the manner of a conquering army, they had laid the inhabitants of Parramatta and its vicinity under contribution' ('Riot at the Female Factory' 1827).

The documented riots by Parramatta girls in the 1960s were attempts, like the riots there in the 1940s, to resist and draw public attention to their oppression. Peter Quinn (2004: 271–272), in his study of the administration of the juvenile correction system in New South Wales between 1905 and 1998, provides an account of one of the riots, worth reproducing here:

In February, 1961, the first of a new spate of very serious riots took place at Parramatta, when twenty girls climbed on the roof of the hospital block, screaming obscenities and hurling roof tiles at police. They were removed after midnight by the use of fire hoses. The next day an even bigger riot took place, with a hundred girls climbing on the roof, and hundreds of people gathering in the street outside to watch. The girls stripped naked and tore tiles from the roof, smashing windows, destroying furniture and causing thousands of pounds worth of damage. A particularly wild riot occurred ten days later, during which nineteen girls escaped over the wall, using building materials being used to repair the earlier damage. A whole series of riots then took place over the next few months. The response of the Department was coercive. Initially, a special squad of male officers was sent there to keep order. Girls who were inmates at the time later alleged they had been beaten with rubber hoses during the riots.

It is telling, in view of the routine nature of their enforced nakedness, that in this riot the girls stripped naked on the roof of the institution, using their femaleness to flout authority. According to the Commission's *Report of Case Study No. 7*, most of the riots at the Parramatta Girls' Training School were

attributed to the poor treatment the girls were receiving. The degree of mistreatment is outlined by one resident, as part of her submission to the 2004 *Forgotten Australians* Commonwealth Parliamentary inquiry into abuse in out-of-home care:

I was involved in the Parramatta riots ... Myself and other girls were the first to get on the roof at Parramatta which was to escape the brutal bashing we knew we would get for leaving the laundry. Mr Johnson was then in charge, he was a brutal man and within that week I had seen him bash and kick a girl that he had been molesting to try and induce a miscarriage ... We tried to escape and because we couldn't make it to the gate the other alternative was to go to the schoolhouse roof. Johnson was called and we had our audience ... I knew that I would be flogged but because I was on the roof I decided to out him and verbally screamed that I knew what he was doing to Barbara ... It was a secret that everyone knew about but no one spoke about because of fear of this man. (Community Affairs References Committee 2004: sec. 2.162)

The response by authorities to this resistance was brutal. Girls deemed to have committed this 'secondary' (institutional) offence of infringing 'conduct to the prejudice of good order and discipline' (Quinn 2004: 272) were sent to the adult Long Bay prison for three months. After 1961 the authorities responded to the rioting by establishing the institution at Hay as a maximum-security annex of Parramatta Girls' Training School, for the more forceful 'moral reconstruction' of ringleaders and other incorrigibles (Quinn 2004: 272).

Other acts of organisational resistance were practised by the girls in Hay and Parramatta, some of which were self-directed and harming. These included acts of self-mutilation such as sticking pins in their bodies—the prevalent practice where a girl would scratch, with a pin, on her arm the initials 'ILWA', followed by the initials of another resident ('I love and worship always ... A.B.')—and smaller acts of opposition (e.g., a girl 'tossing' her head was constructed as 'insolence'). Staff punished these practices, including girls being given isolated detention (Quinn 2004: 281). Quinn suggests these practices were associated with what the staff described as the 'lover system' (282) of relationships among the girls, which involved physical and emotional intimacies and more broadly a set of relationships involving alliances and hierarchies among the girls. Some of these practices are similar to relationships that might arise among any group of adolescent friends. However, the salient point is that this system of relationships existed beyond the control of the institution as an autonomous system of relationships between the girls, largely independent from the control of adults in authority. Indeed, Quinn points out that some of the riots and disturbances that occurred at Parramatta may have been precipitated because of interference by the adults in authority with this system of relationships in ways perceived by the girls as unfair, such as the punishment of a girl who had a special status among the others (282).

In the case of the girls, we see in their acts of resistance a visceral attempt to reject an identity that has been forced upon them by external forces. While these attempts to force a degraded status may also be rejected at a psychological level, the riots were a clear expression of the rejection of not only the practices of the staff, but also of the group status and identity that the institutions attempted to force upon the women and girls. Therefore, the acts of resistance can be interpreted as calling out the inhumane practices of the institutions; as rejecting the humiliated status that is being enforced upon them; and of reversing the dynamic of humiliation, and stating that it is the institution and those who enforce the rules who should be humiliated and held responsible for the suffering inflicted upon the girls. It is this latter aspect that we turn to next.

Humiliation, Social Movements and the Nation

The humiliating practices of the early colonial period and of the mid-twentieth century, as part of attempts to police female sexuality, served broad purposes of nation-building by elaborating moral virtues that characterised the upstanding citizen and the normative family. In the late twentieth century we have seen

attempts to invert feelings of shame through the work of various Commissions of Inquiry and other formal investigations, which have sought to provide an opportunity for survivors to voice their experiences and provide avenues for redress.

A discourse on the nation's shame was evident in the Commission reports. Golding (2018: 191) suggests that the Commission demonstrated a marked shift in our understanding of sexual abuse, which 'could no longer be regarded as a sin to be handled in-house by institutions but a crime for which the state carried superordinate responsibility. The government had to intervene to address society's "ultimate collective shame"'. The Commission's processes provided opportunities to hear the voices of women who had been girls in the Parramatta and Hay institutions, and documented the systematic sexual abuse of children in institutions, along with the cover-up and silencing of such ill-treatment. It also enabled them to express how they felt shamed and humiliated. According to Ahmed (2014), when emotions such as shame and humiliation—experienced in the past and persisting in the present—are expressed in public forums, the process can be enabling if those who were oppressed, through their expression of this emotion, can move into a 'different relation' to the world 'as a form of labour or work ... in part through the recognition of this work as work' (201). For those who spoke at the Commission, the 'work' required to break their silence was facilitated by the advocacy and solidarity provided by organisations such as Care Leavers of Australasia Network (CLAN), an advocacy and support organisation for people who have grown up in orphanages, children's homes, missions and foster care in Australia and New Zealand.

In the media coverage of the Commission, an opportunity was created for the collective taking on of shame about the historical abuses documented by the Commission. Every (2013: 671) describes this thus: 'Their [our collective] identity as an Australian has been damaged by the actions of others and they wish to demonstrate their cognisance and sorrow about this.' The Commission, in identifying past wrongdoings through its truth-seeking function, facilitated the nation's acknowledgement of the realities of historical injustices, providing an authoritative narrative. The then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, in responding to this narrative, referred to institutional child sexual abuse as a 'national shame' (see Golding 2018).

This inversion of shame demonstrates how the enforcement of status hierarchies that characterised the practices in the institutions is difficult to justify in societies that value individuals equally (Smith 2001: 542). According to Smith, humiliation strategies can only be successful where those who are humiliated normalise their own inferiority status. Under conditions in which existential hierarchies can no longer be justified (specifically where all individuals are seen as and see themselves as equal rights bearers), then differences based on humiliation can no longer be maintained or, if they are maintained, are deemed illegal and/or immoral. Smith suggests that under such circumstances those subject to humiliation may in fact feel shame that they have not resisted earlier, meaning that they have unfinished business in seeking some kind of redress for the humiliation they experienced. Indeed, 'this shame may be quickly converted into anger, especially if the ideology of human rights becomes available and teaches the message of universal equality' (Smith 2001: 545).

It is perhaps not surprising then that in response to the humiliating acts we do not see attempts at conciliation, but rather responses that renounce and memorialise past practices so they should never occur again. Through collective identification among those who have been humiliated, experiences of degradation can potentially be the source of organised action against past wrongdoings. Every (2013) discusses the way in which shamefulness is debated and contested through social movements. She argues that humiliation can have mobilising effects when those who have been humiliated reject their status of being oppressed, converting humiliation into pride forged through shared experience, which, in turn, can catalyse into political action (670). Therefore, being the object of humiliation can catalyse forms of solidarity through the shared experience.

The contributions of CLAN, in their tireless advocacy for care leavers and for forms of just redress, and the Parramatta Female Factory Precinct Memory Project can be interpreted in this tradition. The Memory Project is part of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience movement, a global network of historic

sites, museums and memory initiatives that promotes and protects global human rights. Led by Bonney Djuric and Lily Hibberd, the Memory Project, located at the site of the former Parramatta Girls' Training School (which is part of a larger precinct, including the Parramatta Female Factory), 'moves beyond the limitations of traditional heritage practice in centring focus on the human experience and human rights issues associated with institutionalisation'.⁶ Through the Memory Project, survivors of the Parramatta school provide counternarratives to those that have portrayed them in humiliating ways. They prioritise—through art practices, public debates, site-based education and the publications of social histories—the voices of survivors and how official histories have silenced their experiences. As Steele et al. (2020: 521) point out, the Memory Project aims to direct those who engage with their work 'towards practices of collective ethical accountability in order to shaping more just future legal frameworks of institutional confinement'.

In discussing the importance of giving recognition to the Parramatta girls' experiences through the Sites of Conscience movement, Djuric (2016: 166–167) points out the ways in which 'individuals who have a direct connection with a site can engage in the memorialisation of that site and determine how they want to be remembered'. Specifically, their work has provided an alternative narrative of the site and its uses, by outlining how the site was the initial location of interventionist child welfare practice in Australia, prior to which it was, and remains, an important site for the Burramattagal-Darug people and, thus, a site of colonial dispossession. Importantly, the project provides a platform through which former residents have been able to 'tell their own stories, to interpret the site and to contribute to the historic narrative' (Djuric 2016: 167). This work is an important example of what Ashton and Kean (2008) outline as a mode of public history, in which those people who have experiences of historical events, through acts of memory and testimony, are active agents in providing new and alternative historical narratives and create histories for the present. The Memory Project, as part of the Sites of Conscience movement, therefore, attempts to memorialise the site as a location in which past injustices occurred and further link these memories of injustice and struggle with contemporary social action and struggles for human rights and justice.

While national declarations of shame can bring "the nation" into existence as a felt community, feelings of shame or humiliation constructed from a position of superior authority (e.g., that of prime ministers) differ from the feelings of those whose shame is embodied. In part, this is because the forms of humiliation engendered upon the women and girls were used to valorise and reproduce cultural ideals in the service of the state—the humiliation, as we have shown in previous sections, was used for political ends, including oppressing and silencing (Every 2013). Enright and Ring (2020: 3) provide an example of this by documenting how the Irish state's legal responses to the treatment of children in industrial schools served to 'legitimate narrow legalist strategies such as limited inquiries, adversarial interrogation, adherence to fixed evidentiary standards, and a focus on monetary redress to the exclusion of other aspects of reparation'. They show how the Irish state's legal response to historical institutional abuses 'perpetuates epistemic injustices against people who suffered abuse in state institutions' (2). This was also documented by Gallen and Gleeson (2018) in their analysis of responses to the Irish Magdalene laundries (see also Gleeson 2020 in this volume), and is evident in the ways in which the Catholic Church has responded to allegations of abuse.

In this context it is important that Ahmed (2014) notes that expressions of shame, as political actions, are not finished until implemented in some practical way. For example, disillusionment was expressed by care leavers in response to the terms of reference of the Commission (Golding 2018). CLAN argued that the terms of reference were both too broad, including a range of institutions never before the subject of official inquiries (e.g., yoga ashrams), and too narrow, in focusing on sexual abuse and, thus, excluding care leavers who suffered other forms of abuse. They argued that criminal activity needed to be exposed, and this included criminal activity beyond sexual abuse (Golding 2018). The National Redress Scheme (established in response to the recommendations of the Commission) also came under heavy criticism from care leavers, who argued that the proposed redress process was confusing and had the potential to re-traumatise survivors who were required to disclose highly personal and sensitive information in their

victim impact statements to the very institutions in which they had been abused. Leonie Sheedy, CEO of CLAN, expressed her disappointment thus:

When I found out that they were going to give my most personal and sensitive information back to the Sisters of Mercy in Victoria and to the Victorian Government I was so distressed I was crying for days, and I've made a decision that I won't apply for redress ... It's also a privacy issue. I think they've lost the right to know the impact on my life. (Kontominas and McDonald 2018: para. 4–5)

As a result of CLAN's advocacy, the redress process was significantly revised so that survivors are now given a choice about whether their victim impact statements are shared with institutions.⁷

Conclusion

This article argued that state violence, perpetrated through acts of humiliation, is different from shaming practices, in that they do not provide a basis for reintegration. While shame involves an experience of internalising that one has transgressed the standards of the society to which they belong, humiliation aims to degrade the entire subjectivity of a person and cast them out as unworthy of being a member of that world. In that way, humiliation, like shame, can serve to reinforce standards valorised within a social order. However, unlike shame, the use of humiliation for this purpose is potentially unstable and, under certain conditions, can instead crystallise into forms of individual and social resistance. Through examining the experiences of women and girls over two historical periods—women incarcerated in the Female Factory in the early period of colonial settlement, and girls incarcerated in the Parramatta Girls' Training School and the Hay Institution for Girls in the latter half of the twentieth century—we have documented some responses to attempts to degrade and humiliate. One response is that those who have been humiliated mobilise against these practices to reclaim their status as worthy subjects. This act of reclamation works at the therapeutic level of individual subjectivity and personal self-worth. It also acts at a discursive level, in that women, by speaking out against practices that subordinated them as girls, also destabilise the ways in which other discourses (such as the medical or psychiatric) position experts and those in authority as superior to others; this is particularly the case for the experiential or lived experiences of women and girls in the institutions (Swerdfager 2016). In so doing, their testimonies stand in stark contrast to the ways in which their voices were subjugated by the rules and practices of the institutions at the time of their residence.

Another way in which we can see how forms of past humiliation can mobilise political response is through more abstract forms of solidarity shown by fellow citizens, where, by virtue of being a citizen of a nation-state, citizens feel shame about past injustices enacted by the nation. Examples of this include large popular protests, such as mass turnouts for reconciliation with Indigenous Australians, such as the Harbour Bridge Walk for Reconciliation, or mass turnouts against climate inaction, directed against the state not acting properly. More formally, this occurs through state instrumentalities acting on behalf of the nation to express collective shame and contrition for past wrongdoings. While not the subject of this article, we could hypothesise that this kind of expression of the nation's shame only occurs if social movements comprised by those who have been wronged (in this case survivor movements) frame past events as requiring a symbolic and practical response from those who committed the past wrongdoings. This sentiment for a call for action becomes generalised among citizens, in that the past wrongdoings are considered to be a cause for larger reflection and change beyond those affected (Every 2013: 670). In this way, it marks an expression of a different normative order than that under which past injustices were committed, and, thus, provides potential for the re-establishment of the sanctity of the social, in the Durkheimian sense. One of the most powerful expressions of this process was the National Apology to Australia's Stolen Generations of Indigenous peoples.

We can see forms of attribution that involve the potential for transforming negative emotions, such as anger and humiliation, as something constructive. Nonetheless, the universal acquisition of human rights

abolishes neither humiliation nor transgression of one's rights. Likewise, insufficient attention has been given to the way in which symbolic violence continues to be inflicted on children, as evident in the continued abuse of children in institutional care, even following the release of the Commission's findings. Such practices are evidenced in reports of routine strip searches, sexual harassment and solitary confinement of Aboriginal girls currently in 'children's prisons' (juvenile justice institutions), and in the recently recorded violent treatment of children being stripped naked and 'tortured' in the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre in the Northern Territory and other juvenile justice institutions in Australia (Feng 2019). Yet, being able to call out these practices is an example of how acts aimed at systematic humiliation are now more difficult to normalise, whether that is by state instrumentalities or others in positions of power. Just as the progressive acquisition of a civilising habitus made experiences of shame more sharply felt, the progressive identification of seeing one's self as a rights bearer has perhaps had a similar effect in intensifying and, therefore, calling out, attempts at humiliation. This may be one reason why we have seen the development of contemporary movements that have sought redress for past injustices.

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¹ See www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/

² The Hay Institution for Girls was established as an annex to the Parramatta Girls Home in 1961. Girls who were considered 'incorrigible' and requiring 'extra training' were sent to Hay. The treatment of girls at Hay has been documented as especially brutal and cruel (see Quinn 2004).

³ For an excellent and extensive overview of the field of the sociology of emotions, see Stets and Turner (2014).

⁴ There have been a number of reports—most notably that of Cashmore, Dolby and Brennan (1994)—that makes clear that abuse in these institutions was comprehensive, including physical and emotional abuse as well as neglect.

⁵ See <http://www.parragirls.org.au/parramatta-girls-home.php> for further detail on these riots. For a report of the 1947 riot, see 'Parramatta Girls in Wild Revolt' (1947), *Sydney Morning Herald*.

⁶ See <http://www.pffpmemory.org.au/about>

⁷ For an extensive outline of how the National Redress Scheme developed, see Daly and Davis (2019).

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