Social History

Volume 46 Number 2
May 2021
Routledge

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Social History

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rshi20

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To cite this article: Kirsi Laurén & Antti Malinen (2021) Shame and silences: children's emotional experiences of insecurity and violence in postwar Finnish families, Social History, 46:2, 193-220, DOI: 10.1080/03071022.2021.1892314

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/03071022.2021.1892314

Published online: 30 Apr 2021.

SOCIAL HISTORY
2021, VOL. 46, NO. 2, 193–220
https://doi.org/10.1080/03071022.2021.1892314

Routledge
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Shame and silences: children's emotional experiences of insecurity and violence in postwar Finnish families

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ABSTRACT

The Second World War had long-lasting impacts on families in all of the belligerent countries involved, including Finland. Parents' preoccupations with their own worries and war-related mental health problems increased the risk of inadequate parenting and domestic violence. In Finland, this subject was relegated to the margins of history writing and public remembrance for decades. However, since the 1990s the experience of troubled family life has gained more recognition in research and memory culture. This article examines how children experienced war-related psychosocial problems in post-Second World War Finnish families, and how contemporary emotional regimes and more local emotional formations affected children's emotional experiences. We propose that shame, and the fear of it, was a key social mechanism that produced silences in families and posed barriers to disclosure. The source material for this research consists of personal written narratives about family life in post-Second World War Finland. The narratives were written in 2015–2016 by people who were children or adolescents at that time. The interpretation of these narratives is based on historical contextualization and sensitive reading, and we apply concepts and insights from the history of emotions framework and shame studies.

KEYWORDS

Shame; silence; domestic violence; post-Second World War era; childhood

> I was my parents' only son and always tried to fulfil their smallest wishes with obedience. But I don't remember getting any praise or encouragement for my work, maybe because I wasn't manly enough to my father's way of thinking. At least I thought it was so and I felt a huge inferiority complex. However, my father who insisted on perfection in all things, praised me just once for a good sauna heating, and it still feels good. I cannot estimate from how far back it originated, but especially my father had a pedagogical method of 'spare the rod and spoil the child'. So, in my home the rod was not spared when a boy was made to be a man using all Prussian means.[1]

In the above text example, a man named Pertti (pseudonym) who lived in the Finnish countryside in the 1950s recalls his childhood and adolescence, which was overshadowed by a difficult relationship with his father Aarre, a Second World War veteran. Pertti tried to gain his father's acceptance by

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[1]In this article, the narrative authors' anonymity is protected by pseudonyms. An archival signum is assigned after each research material citation. On this first citation: Pertti, born 1945–50, PJS SKS KRA.

eagerly taking part in everyday household chores, but was rarely thanked or given any positive attention. Overall, during the 1940s and 1950s typical Finnish families were not very well-equipped to express their feelings, and as in Pertti's case, parents sometimes imposed high and often unreasonable expectations on their children. When Pertti was not able to meet those expectations, he often felt ashamed for being weak and not 'manly enough' in the eyes of his war veteran father. Furthermore, Pertti was often the target of corporal punishment, and even mental and physical violence at home. At that time, the father's behaviour seemed inexplicable, and family members were terrified by his sudden outbursts of rage. His wife and children knew that something was wrong with Aarre, but as an adult, Pertti remembers that 'nobody even dared speak about sending him to a mental hospital' as it was deemed a 'terrible shame'. Only later in life did Pertti realize that his father's problems were probably related to his war experiences and trauma.[2] Like many others, Pertti has used reminiscing as a way to understand how postwar conditions affected his childhood and later life.

The above story is a typical traumatic childhood memory of life in postwar Finnish families. The Second World War had long-lasting and painful impacts on families in all of the belligerent countries involved, including Finland. Much of the impact of returning soldiers' experiences and the wounds inflicted on intimate relations was mediated through relationships within the family, causing a trans-generational experience of stress, trauma and shame. Simultaneously, the story highlights how the prevailing parenting style emphasized parental authority, and children were not supposed to challenge their parents' decisions or behaviour. This led to a strengthening of the boundary in power relations between adults and children. Different veteran families dealt with their problems in their own ways, but certain social and cultural structures, including prevailing parental styles, generated a common base of experience.

Svenja Goltermann has noted that in Germany, during the immediate postwar years, family members did not usually identify wartime experience as a crucial factor in explaining the allegedly strange behaviour they perceived in men who returned from the war.[3] This is partly because veterans themselves had difficulties in coming to terms with their violent past. It was difficult and sometimes impossible to verbalize and share intimate, disturbing and contradictory memories.[4] As Goltermann points out, these memories were often

[2]Pertti, *op. cit.*

[3]S. Goltermann, 'On silence, madness, and lassitude: negotiating the past in post-war West Germany' in E. Ben-Ze'ev, R. Ginio and J. Winter (eds), *Shadows of War: A social history of silence in the twentieth century* (New York, 2010), 91–112.

[4]Goltermann is focusing especially on the experiences of West German prisoners of war. S. Goltermann, 'Languages of memory: German prisoners of war and their violent pasts in postwar West Germany, 1945–56' in B. Moore and B. Hately-Broad (eds), *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace: Captivity, homecoming and memory in World War II* (Oxford, 2005), 91–112, here.

expressed in body language, in dream talk and in stammering confessions. Significant others noticed and witnessed the change in men's behaviour, but often struggled to pinpoint the reasons behind it. Therefore, each family member (including the men themselves) had to rationalize and give meanings to events and behaviour as they occurred. This was also the case in Pertti's family.

Historian Frank Biess has argued that postwar silences were also produced culturally, through emotional regimes that defined parameters for acceptable and unacceptable emotions. For example, in Finland silences were imposed by encouraging citizens to put aside their personal and past burdens, and focus on reconstruction and a better future. There is a common stereotype which claims that traumatic war experiences were to a large extent silenced in postwar Finnish society, and recent studies on postwar childhood have supported this claim.[5]

In this article we ask how children experienced war-related psychosocial problems in post-Second World War Finnish families, and how contemporary 'emotional regimes' and more local 'emotional formations' affected children's emotional experiences. This study takes the view that individuals (children and adults) operate within structured contexts that constrain or facilitate their actions, including their emotional lives. We pay special attention to the representations of shame associated with the narratives of difficult experiences and memories of domestic violence. In the context of this study, domestic violence refers to the physical and mental violence that occurs against children and between intimate partners (same or other sex; married or unmarried).[6]

Essentially, our research is about identifying, highlighting and understanding those social mechanisms related to feelings of shame, and, moreover, those issues that have not only been kept silent for a long time, but which have had far-reaching effects on the people who lived their childhood and youth in postwar Finland. The research contributes to the scientific debate about the cultural memory of the Second World War, traumatic narratives of war, and the voices of women, children and other groups of people that have been left on the margins in discussions of the consequences of war and war-related remembrance culture.[7] Highlighting the stories of

[5]F. Biess, 'Feelings in the aftermath: towards a history of postwar emotions, in F. Biess and R. Moeller (eds), *Histories of the Aftermath: The legacies of the Second World War in Europe* (New York, 2010), 30–48; K.-M. Hytönen and A. Malinen, '"Cos I'm a survivor": narratives of coping and resilience in recollections of difficult childhood in postwar Finland', *Etnologia Fennica*, 45 (Dec. 2018), 4–27; A. Malinen and T. Vahtikari, 'Feeling the nation through exploring the city: urban pedagogy and children's lived experiences in postwar Helsinki' in V. Kivimäki, S. Suodenjoki and T. Vahtikari (eds), *Lived Nation as History of Experiences and Emotions in Finland, 1800–2000* (London, forthcoming 2021).

[6]D.G. Dutton, *Rethinking Domestic Violence* (Vancouver, 2006), 3.

[7]H. Schmitz and A. Seidel-Arpaci, *Narratives of Trauma: Discourses of German wartime suffering in national and international perspective* (Amsterdam, 2011); U. Savolainen, *Muisteltu ja kirjoitettu evakkomatka: tutkimus evakkolapsuuden muistelukerronnan poetiikasta* (Joensuu, 2015); U. Savolainen, 'Tellability, frame and silence: the emergence of internment memory', *Narrative Inquiry*, 27, 1 (2017) 24–46; M. Denov and B. Akesson (eds), *Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Theory, method, and practice* (New York, 2017); S. Webb, *Postwar Childhood: Growing up in the not-so-friendly 'baby boomer' years* (Barnsley, 2017).

marginalized groups serves to embed a more diverse or even contradictory view of the past within the national narrative, counteracting the previous marginalization of such groups.[8]

The research material consists of written memories collected from 2015–2016 during a writing collection campaign entitled 'Did the war continue in the home?'[9] The events and experiences that are the subject of the reminiscences in these personal writings date back decades, to when the Finns were recovering from their losses sustained during the Second World War. The texts could be understood as performances and transmissions of post-traumatic memory that deal with a period when the traces of war were still visible in everyday life. The narrators recount their childhood and adolescent memories which reveal that, although they were not directly traumatized by the war, they suffered it indirectly through their traumatized parents or close relatives. Therefore, the texts illuminate the transmission of trauma from personal to public domains, and from one generation to another.[10] One of the central themes in the texts is the mental and physical domestic violence that was often targeted towards children and adolescents. However, it is important to acknowledge that among the writings that form this research material, there are also several texts that tell tales not of domestic violence, but rather of safe homes and loving parents. It is also important to point out that despite the fact that many of the narratives recount difficult and traumatic childhood memories, they can also be seen as manifestations of coping and resilience.[11]

In this article we subject the claim of a 'culture of silence' to empirical historical scrutiny, and propose that shame and the fear of it was a key social mechanism that produced silences in families and posed barriers to disclosure.[12] Often, many of the troubles could be kept as a family secret, but shame remained as a central component of the emotional dynamic of the family. Shame passed through the family, and children also had to deal with it. We argue that when adults in the family tried to protect their honour and reputation by keeping troubles private and avoiding the judgement of neighbours, these social mechanisms put children especially at risk, as they had to manage their emotions privately, by themselves, even when they had

[8]E. Login, 'Contemporary war memorials and the urban landscape: the memorialization of marginalized groups in Washington, DC' in D. Mihaăilescu, R. Oltean and M. Precup (eds), *Mapping Generations of Traumatic Memory in American Narratives* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2014), 212–44.

[9]See also A. Malinen and T. Tamminen, *Jälleenrakentajien lapset: Sotienjälkeinen Suomi lapsen silmin* (Helsinki, 2017); Hytönen and Malinen, *op. cit*.; A. Malinen, 'Järkkyvä arki: aikuisten psyykkinen oireilu lapsuuden tunnemuistoissa toisen maailmansodan jälkeen' in S. Jäntti, K. Heimonen, S. Kuuva and A. Mäkilä (eds), *Hulluus ja kulttuurinen mielenterveystutkimus* (Jyväskylä, 2019), 183–200.

[10]D. Mihaăilescu, R. Oltean and M. Precup, 'Introduction' in D. Mihaăilescu, R. Oltean and M. Precup (eds), *Mapping Generations of Traumatic Memory in American Narratives* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2014), 1–6.

[11]See also Hytönen and Malinen, *op. cit.*

[12]See also P. Siim, 'Family stories untold: doing family through practices of silence', *Ethnologia Europaea*, 46, 2 (Jan. 2016), 74–88.

only limited capabilities to do so due to their young age and related developmental level.

The analysis of this research concentrates especially on the way people remember their experiences and memories of domestic violence during their childhood and adolescence. We take a closer look in particular at the dynamics between domestic violence and children's opportunities for managing their emotions and articulating their feelings and experiences. We have chosen post-Second World War Finland as an empirical case as it provides excellent opportunities and research materials through which to study the social and emotional consequences of distress related to war, and also postwar adjustment challenges.

The historical background of postwar Finnish society

In Finland, the period of the Second World War lasted nearly five years and included three wars. The first two wars were fought against the Soviet Union: The Winter War (November 1939 until March 1940) and what is known as the Continuation War (June 1941 until September 1944) where Finland fought side by side with Germany. In September 1944, the Moscow Armistice was signed and ended hostilities with the Soviet Union. The terms of the armistice compelled Finland to drive German troops from its territories, and this campaign led to a third war called the Lapland War, which lasted until April 1945. However, the active hostilities between Finland and Germany were already over by the end of November 1944.[13]

Finland managed to remain a sovereign state after these wars, but as in other combatant states, the transition from war to peace was a difficult process. The Finnish war experience had some unique features when compared internationally. The number of civilian casualties (2500) remained relatively low as the theatres of war were clearly separated from the front line. However, although civilians did not suffer occupation, the bombing raids, Soviet partisan attacks, and mine fields in Lapland caused indirect suffering among populations due to related evacuations and fears and anxieties. Overall, however, the number of human casualties was considerable, with over 94,000 soldiers killed, and in total 2.5% of a population of 3.8 million lost.[14] Finland also had to cede territory to the Soviet Union in accordance with the Moscow Armistice and the 1947 Paris peace treaty, and more than 430,000 evacuees were forced to leave their home regions.

The end of the war brought new challenges to Finnish society. People were expected to be grateful to be alive, and it was considered dishonourable to complain about private affairs. Past losses and suffering had to be acknowledged and respected, but at the same time it was important and more urgent to

[13]O. Vehviläinen, *Finland in the Second World War: Between Germany and Russia* (Basingstoke, 2002).
[14]V. Kivimäki, 'Between defeat and victory: Finnish memory culture of the Second World War', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 37, 4 (Sept. 2012), 482–504.

reconstruct society and to work hard.[15] For many of the veterans, the transition from soldier to civilian proved to be difficult, as they struggled with war-related psychosocial problems and disabilities. A considerable number of postwar reunions were overshadowed not only by veterans' reintegration problems, but also by the impact of long-term war-enforced separations. Infidelity (real or suspected) especially placed a great strain on postwar marital relations. The Finnish divorce rate peaked one year after the end of the war, but soon began to decrease. By the end of the 1940s, the frequency of divorce stabilized and it remained relatively steady during the 1950s.[16]

Family life and marriages were also affected by an increasing use of alcohol. During the years 1944–1946, the number of arrests for being drunk in a public place rose by almost 100%, from 75,000 to 140,000. In the contemporary discussion, this was deemed harmful, as drunkenness and violent behaviour were seen to be interconnected. The end of the war and the demobilization of soldiers brought dramatic increases in violent crime. For example, in 1944 there were 3868 crimes against individuals, but in the following year the number rose to 7541 and remained steadily at that level in the subsequent years. Overall, most postwar crimes were property offences, and these began to decrease in a similar way to divorce.[17]

It seems that the three wars gave rise to increased social unrest in Finnish society, but only momentarily, if we use data on divorce, consumption of spirits per capita, and criminality known to police as social indicators (Figure 1). However, there were also a considerable number of Finnish

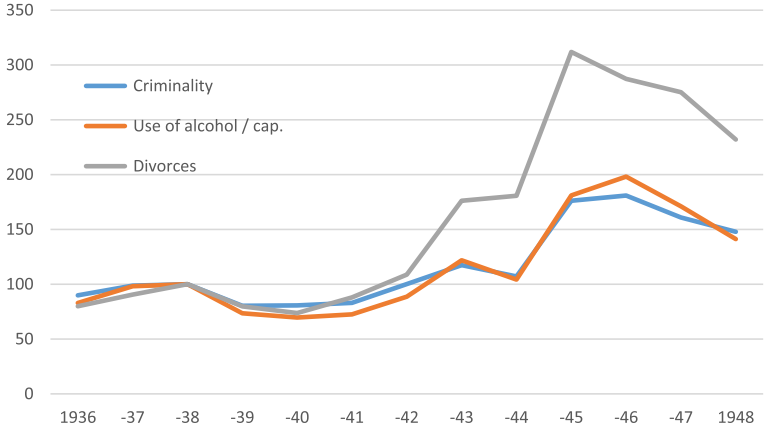

Figure 1. Finland in 1936–1948, in the light of social indicators (1938 = 100): by criminality known to police, consumption of spirits per capita, and divorce. Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Finland 1936–1948.*

[15] J. Kirves, 'Sota ei ollut elämisen eikä muistamisen arvoista aikaa'- kirjailijat ja traumaattinen sota' in S. Näre and H. Kirves (eds), *Ruma sota: Talvi- ja jatkosodan vaiettu historia* (Helsinki, 2008), 381–425.
[16] A. Malinen, 'Marriage guidance, women and the problem(s) of returning soldiers in Finland, 1944–1946', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 43, 1 (Sept. 2017), 112–40.
[17] See Table 1.

families who had to live with the social consequences of war for longer periods. After the war, Finland remained in a state of scarcity until the 1950s, which meant that a significant number of families lived in material poverty, and there was a shortage of food and other supplies such as shoes and clothes. Especially in urban areas, a housing shortage coupled with economic scarcity caused disputes between parents. Roughly one-tenth of the urban population were constantly in need of adequate and permanent dwellings, and many of the displaced families continued to live in conditions similar to those experienced in wartime evacuations.[18]

Families living in Northern and North-East Finland were particularly exposed to a variety of chronic stressors. The postwar settlement programme opened up opportunities for veterans to become independent farmers, but the majority of the small rural holdings were formed in northern Finland as so-called 'cold farms'. Veterans often had limited opportunities to hire external help, and demanding tasks such as clearing fields and constructing buildings took a heavy toll on the physical and psychological well-being of veterans and their significant others, including children.[19]

In addition to socio-economic factors, some of the veteran groups displayed a diminished capacity to cope with stress in parenting tasks. In Finland during the years 1939–1945, a total of some 700,000 Finnish men out of a population of 3.7 million served in the armed forces. Finnish studies on the effects of war-related trauma,[20] brain injury,[21] tuberculosis[22] and alcoholism[23] suggest that each of these conditions had potential long-term implications for veterans' social and family relations, and also for their working life, employment and housing. Table 1 presents the sizes of veteran groups and risk groups with associated stigma and related reintegration problems. Tuberculosis, war-related psychological disorders and brain injuries were all potentially stigmatizing conditions that raised worries in those suffering from them that people would hold negative views against them. As Jaakko Rantala-Knuuttila has pointed out, the neurocognitive consequences of traumatic brain injury such as attention, memory and executive function deficit often had a major impact on the social relations of injured Finnish veterans.[24] Roughly 10,000 Finnish soldiers sustained brain injuries during 1939–1945, and almost one-third (3000 veterans) with moderate or severe brain injury also suffered from

[18]A. Malinen, *Perheet ahtaalla: Asuntopula ja siihen sopeutuminen toisen maailmansodan jälkeisessä Helsingissä 1944–1948* (Helsinki, 2014).
[19]M. Häkkilä, 'Farms of Northern Finland', *Fennia*, 180, 1 (2002), 199–211.
[20]M. Ponteva, *Psykiatriset sairaudet Suomen puolustusvoimissa vv. 1941–1944: Jatkosodan aikana sota- ja kenttäsairaaloissa hoidettujen sotilaspotilaiden epidemiologinen ja seurantatutkimus* (Helsinki, 1977); V. Kivimäki, *Battled Nerves: Finnish soldiers' war experience, trauma, and military psychiatry 1941–44* (Åbo Akademi, 2013).
[21]K. Achté, E. Hillbom and V. Aalberg, *Post-traumatic Psychosis Following War Brain Injuries* (Helsinki, 1967); J. Ranta-Knuuttila, *Sodan aivovammaiset* (Helsinki, 1992); T. Laine-Frigren, 'Sotainvalidien aivovammat ja niiden kuntoutus 1940-luvun Suomessa', *Historiallinen aikakauskirja*, 116, 4, 408–21.
[22]M. Honkasalo, *Suomalainen sotainvalidi* (Keuruu, 1992).
[23]I. Taipale, *Asunnottomuus ja alkoholi* (Helsinki, 1992).
[24]Ranta-Knuuttila, *op. cit.*

Table 1. Sizes of veteran groups and risk groups associated with potential stigma. Sources: Ponteva 1977; Kivimäki 2013; Achté, Hillbom & Aalberg 1967; Ranta-Knuuttila 1992; Taipale 1992.

Group	Total (number of men)
Ex-servicemen, 1939–1945	700,000
Demobilized ex-servicemen, 19 September 1944–2 December 1945	450,000
Total number of war invalids with permanent injuries	94,000
Risk group 1: brain injured	10,000
Risk group 2: tuberculosis patients	15,000
Risk group 3: soldiers who received care for war-related psychological disorders	18,000

psychiatric disturbances. When external demands overtaxed their coping capabilities, this led to a variety of physical and mental symptoms including anxiety, depression, hostile reactions and substance abuse. In particular, those who behaved strangely in social situations were sometimes viewed and classified as antisocial individuals, which further increased the stigma attached to brain injury and mental health problems. Later in our analysis we will highlight other socio-cultural factors that inhibited access to mental health services and decreased opportunities for receiving social support.

Research materials and methods

The research material for this article consists of written narratives concerning memories of family life in postwar Finland. The narratives were gathered during a writing campaign called 'Did the war continue in the home?' (2015–2016), organized by the Archive of the Finnish Literature Society.[25] The campaign was targeted at the general public, and people were asked to talk about their postwar memories and experiences, especially in the family context. The campaign provided different themes that writers could use when writing: the arrival of peace and the reunion of families; a child's place in a postwar family; adapting to peacetime; experiences and memories of the war. Several questions posed in the campaign certainly encouraged people to write about difficult memories, including: 'How do you remember the emotional atmosphere of your home?', 'What do you remember about the behaviour and mood of men and women returning from war, and about possible problems with adaptation, for example irritability?', 'How did alcohol and its use appear in your family?' and 'Recently, there has been much talk about the psychological trauma of people who have experienced war. Do you recognize this issue in your family or in families you know?'

Respondents were free to write their responses in their own style, and the length of response was not limited. The campaign received nearly 180 responses, with over 1409 written pages and 60 photographs. The length

[25]Archive of the Finnish Literature Society, Helsinki. Writing campaign collection 'Did the war continue in the home?' [Perheissä jatkunut sota?] Archive signum: PJS SKS KRA.

of individual responses varies from one to ten pages of typed text. The respondents come from different parts of Finland and represent various social backgrounds. Most were born in the 1930s to the 1950s, with the oldest writer born in 1921 and the youngest in 1966. The median age of informants was 75 years. Accordingly, most of the writers were children or teenagers when the war ended. In terms of gender balance, 118 of the respondents were women and 48 were men, which reflects the usual gender division in Finnish writing campaigns.[26] The text material is mainly centred on recollections of the authors' personal experiences, in which they return to the postwar period (mainly from 1945 to the 1960s) of their childhood and youth.

Thematic writing collection campaigns are widely used by Finnish researchers from different fields because they can attract high response rates, depending on the theme of the campaign. Texts obtained in this way are referred to as the 'writing to the archive' genre or 'oral history texts'.[27] In Finland and Sweden, collecting material by asking people to write about their experiences dates back to the 1970s and 1980s, when researchers especially in sociology and social history fields became interested in looking at history from below. At that time, periods of crisis, the Second World War, and themes related to work and gender issues aroused particular interest in Finland. Today, along with many other different themes, war and its aftermath are still being explored using this approach, as well as the memories of families and children. It is typical that oral histories and written materials are used side by side.[28] The written materials offer views on different themes, and include life-historical narratives, biographies, ethnographic descriptions, as well as experiences, opinions, and individual and social memories. By using this approach to collect research material, it is possible to encourage everyday people (instead of professional writers) to write about their experiences and lives. The method also enables researchers to gain information from unofficial and marginalized perspectives, for example the memories of women and children and other people on the margins of historiography.[29]

When writing their responses, writers have a significant amount of time (typically several months) to think about what they want to tell and how. Additionally, this form of writing enables them to remain relatively anonymous,

[26]Some respondents sent their texts under a pseudonym, so the gender may not be found in every text. Some authors sent two or more texts, and some did not give any information with regard to their age.

[27]P. Latvala, 'The use of narrative genres within oral history texts: past representations of the Finnish Civil War (1918)' in K. Koski and Frog with U. Savolainen (eds), *Genre – Text – Interpretation: Multidisciplinary perspectives on folklore and beyond* (Helsinki, 2016), 403–25.

[28]A. Heimo, 'Nordic-Baltic oral history on the move', *Oral History*, 44, 2 (Autumn 2016), 37–46; A.-K. Kuusisto-Arponen and U. Savolainen, 'The interplay of memory and matter: narratives of former Finnish Karelian child evacuees', *Oral History*, 44, 2 (Autumn 2016), 59–68.

[29]M. Gullestad, *Everyday Life Philosophers: Modernity, morality and autobiography in Norway* (Oslo, 1996), 33; P. Latvala and K. Laurén, 'The sensitive interpretation of emotions: methodological perspectives on studying meanings in oral history texts' in Frog and P. Latvala with H.F. Leslie (eds), *Approaching Methodology*. Second revised edition with an introduction by U. Wolf-Knuts (Helsinki, 2013), 249–66.

and express thoughts, experiences, interpretations and emotions that might not be mentioned in face-to-face interviews.[30] This is also reflected in the 'Did the war continue in the home?' collection, in that many of the authors wanted to share very intimate and sensitive emotions in their texts, and some had not even shared their difficult memories and feelings of shame with anyone else before. By participating in the writing collection, these authors found an opportunity to break the long silence that has hindered our understanding of the reality of difficult postwar experiences at home.[31] For example, the mental and physical violence in homes is a theme that is repeated in our research material, and about a third of the authors report violence in their families or violence in the homes of childhood friends and neighbours. Violence is most often targeted at women and children, and the perpetrator is most often the father of the family. However, violent women are also reported, although less frequently than men.[32]

In our study we apply concepts and insights from the history of emotions framework. William Reddy has used the concept of an 'emotional regime' to describe the modes of emotional expression and thought that are dominant in particular time periods and cultural contexts, and that often align with political regimes.[33] For example, after the Second World War, state actors in Finland promoted a culture of resilience and self-restraint, and wives especially were expected to provide nurture and caregiving in their families.[34] However, while families and especially wives were represented as repositories of care, on the ground this was not always the case. Earlier research on Finnish war invalids' family care has pointed out that wives had varying resources and skills to cope with the problems related to the male invalids. Support and care within families was not always a natural part of family relationships. Furthermore, wartime separations placed a major strain on family ties and marital relationships,[35] yet wives' failures to match their emotional prescriptions were not punished, mostly because these failures often remained hidden inside the family and shielded from view.

In institutional environments such as schools, it is easier to control whether or not children conform to rules and emotional prescriptions. For example, in the 1940s and 1950s, most Finnish elementary school teachers required that

[30]Latvala and Laurén, *op. cit.*

[31]See J. Kilby, *Violence and the Cultural Politics of Trauma* (Edinburgh, 2007), vii.

[32]See also S. Husa, 'Physical punishment and education in early childhood' in E. Hujala (ed.), *Childhood Education: International perspectives* (Oulu, 1996), 185–95.

[33]W.M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A framework for the history of emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[34]V. Kivimäki and K.-M. Hytönen (eds), *Rauhaton rauha: Suomalaiset ja sodan päättyminen 1944–1950* (Tampere, 2016).

[35]Malinen, 'Marriage guidance', *op. cit.*; P. Markkola, 'Marriage counselling, family values and the Lutheran Church in Finland in the 1950s' in D. Owetschkin (ed.), *Tradierungsprozesse im Wandel der Moderne: Religion und Familie im Spannungsfeld von Konfessionalität und Pluralisierung* (Bochum, 2012); C. Jarvis, '"If he comes home nervous": US World War II neuropsychiatric casualties and postwar masculinities', *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 17, 2 (Mar. 2010), 97–115; R. J. Plant, 'The veteran, his wife, and their mothers: prescriptions for psychological rehabilitation after World War II' in D. Oostdijk and M. Valenta (eds), *Tales of the Great American Victory: World War II in politics and poetics* (Amsterdam, 2010).

students remain compliant in the classroom, stay in their seats, and conform to certain norms such as punctuality and obedience to instructions. Teachers had considerable autonomy to set rules, but they also had to follow school rules and procedures themselves.[36]

In families, emotional prescriptions were much more varied compared to institutional environments, and reflected differences among parents, their parenting styles, and the overall broader social context influencing parenting. However, we suggest that most families shared a collective understanding of the appropriate level of privacy of the home and its boundaries, allowing a considerable variation in the emotional climates and practices within families.

As we will later explore, children living in veteran families often encountered a need to adapt to rapidly changing demands governing their appropriate behaviour and expression of emotions. As the structures of feelings were not fixed, children had to continuously try to learn what and how they should be feeling, and how to react appropriately.[37] Historians concerned with the history of childhood and emotion have sought to develop concepts to describe the specificity of children's experiences, and especially their relationship to adult norms and power. Vallgårda, Alexander and Olsen coined the concept of 'emotional formation' as a way to describe children's daily realities and emotional lives. The concept refers simultaneously 'to a pattern and a process', and suggests that emotional experience is continuously shaped through a variety of factors, such as cultural and social understandings of what is appropriate children's behaviour in certain situations.[38]

The concept of emotional formation pays attention to the situatedness and power dynamics of emotional learning. It is mostly adults, such as parents and teachers, but sometimes also peers in their groups, who conceive and construct norms and ideals that govern suitable emotional behaviour and expression.[39] From an early age, children learn to interpret and understand their experiences, including their emotional experiences. In different stages of their life, children undergo emotional socialization, which Peggy Thoits has defined as the acquisition of the emotional knowledge, values and skills that are appropriate to the children's age and gender, among other qualities.[40]

In our analysis we concentrate on the biographical texts. In these texts, the past is seen from today's perspective and the texts end with the narrator's present

[36]M. Ojakangas, *Lapsuus ja auktoriteetti: Tutkimus pedagogisen vallan historiasta ja kasvatuksen mahdollisuudesta auktoriteetin lopun jälkeen* (Helsinki, 1997).
[37]K. Vallgårda, K. Alexander and S. Olsen, 'Emotions and the global politics of childhood' in S. Olsen (ed.), *Childhood, Youth and Emotions in Modern History: National, colonial and global perspectives* (Basingstoke, 2015), 20; S. Olsen, 'The history of childhood and the emotional turn', *History Compass*, 15, 11 (Aug. 2017), 1–10.
[38]Vallgårda, Alexander and Olsen, *op. cit*., 21.
[39]H. Barron and C. Langhamer, 'Feeling through practice: subjectivity and emotion in children's writing', *Journal of Social History*, 51, 1 (2017), 101–23.
[40]P. Thoits, 'Emotion norms, emotion work, and social order' in A. Manstead, N. Frijda and A. Fischer (eds), *Feelings and Emotions: The Amsterdam symposium* (Cambridge, 2004), 359–78, here 365.

life situation and thoughts about how the past has affected their life. The texts bring out what life was like in homes during the postwar period in Finland, and how people individually experienced it. At the same time, the texts reveal the forms of culturally defined gender division and power relations in families that have defined the status of women, men and children in families and societies. Accordingly, the recollected biographical narratives should not be seen as direct reflections of past events, but rather as reconstructions of the events of the narrator's life that are viewed from their present perspective. In the analysis, it is particularly important to draw attention to the social and cultural contextualization of the remembered experiences, and how cultural meanings and conventions affect what and how the narrator speaks and writes. Experiences related to crises such as war and violence are often difficult, and even traumatic. Accordingly, it can be hard to talk about them during and shortly after the event. Therefore, traumatic experiences are typically remembered, recorded and studied long after the end of the crisis concerned.[41]

When ordinary citizens were dealing with problems of reintegration and adjustment to society, they had to use concepts that were understandable and familiar to others. In the 1940s and 1950s, the scientific study of stress and psychological trauma was only in its infancy, and the term 'trauma', for example, referred mainly to sudden and severe physical injuries. Medical terms such as 'psychopathic' or 'depressed' were in general use to try to make sense of the behaviour of significant others,[42] yet the concepts of psychological trauma and especially post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are fairly new, and the latter only emerged in public discussion as late as the 1980s and 1990s.

Our method of analysing the written narratives of difficult, traumatic and shameful memories concentrates on the emotional level of the texts, and requires a careful and sensitive reading of unofficial and individual accounts of past emotions as narrative templates of the writers.[43] We particularly focus on those parts of the text where difficult or traumatic experiences and subsequent shame occurs. Sometimes the authors directly express their feelings of shame, but often the shame is expressed indirectly or metaphorically.

Shame of violence at home

Experiencing fear plays a major part in children's lives. Depending on their age, children may be afraid of strangers, of being separated from their caregivers, of darkness or of being left alone in peer groups.[44] The reasons

[41]M. Cave, 'Introduction: what remains. Reflections on crisis oral history' in M. Cave and M.S. Sloan (eds), *Listening on the Edge: Oral history in the aftermath of crisis* (New York, 2014), 1–14.
[42]Malinen, 'Marriage guidance', *op. cit*.
[43]J. Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge, 2002), 93.
[44]A. Carr, *The Handbook of Child and Adolescent Clinical Psychology* (New York, 2016), Chapter 12; Y.-F. Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear* (New York, 1979).

for the fear may vary, but when coping with their fears, small children especially tend to rely on adults and the home as safe places. However, in post-Second World War Finland, homes often became unsafe places, and parents and caregivers became sources of fear and sometimes even pain. Jenny Edkins has noted that when people who are expected to provide security instead become tormentors, it can be devastating to one's very existence. Edkins argues that what we think about ourselves depends closely on the social context that gives our existence meaning and dignity: namely family, friends, political community and beliefs. If this betrays us, then the meaning of our existence changes. Witnessing violence done to others can be as traumatic as being subjected to violence oneself, and the sense of shame is paramount.[45] In the context of the texts considered in this article, domestic abuse means extraordinary conditions at home that are different from the way in which life at home is generally understood.[46]

The research material for this study shows that after the Second World War, people tried to return to normal everyday life. Mentally broken soldiers also tried to continue with their lives, but without getting professional help to address their traumas. Unlike war invalids, soldiers suffering from mental and social problems were not offered any specific rehabilitation services. Instead, their problems were treated within existing social and healthcare services. Finnish psychiatry did not recognize that wartime psychological damage could have long-term effects, and this affected the ways in which soldiers were both treated and viewed.[47] Yet even those veterans who were willing to seek help had only limited access to mental health services, including psychiatric inpatient care. The lack of available beds was dire, and it is telling that patients who had developed psychoses had to wait months, perhaps even a year, before they could be treated in hospital.[48]

Because public services were not efficient in recognizing veterans' psychosocial needs for support and rehabilitation, or capable of providing timely and low-threshold services, veterans and their significant others often had to deal with problems by themselves.[49] The stabilization and bolstering of shattered societies and a return to normal life was also a political aim in Finland and many other postwar European countries. The ideas of stabilization and return were based on a conservative view of the family.[50] This meant, for example, a nuclear family,

[45] J. Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge, 2013), 4.
[46] J.H. Jenkins, *Extraordinary Conditions: Culture and experience in mental illness*, first edition (Oakland, CA, 2015), 1.
[47] Kivimäki, *op. cit.*
[48] A. Malinen, 'Järkkyvä arki: Aikuisten psyykkinen oireilu lapsuuden tunnemuistoissa toisen maailmansodan jälkeen' in S. Jäntti, K. Heimonen, S. Kuuva and A. Mäkilä (eds), *Hulluus ja kulttuurinen mielenterveystutkimus* (Jyväskylä, 2019).
[49] Kivimäki, *op. cit.*; A. Malinen, 'Boundless care: religious farm women and their emotional practices in post-World War II Finland' in T. Juvonen and M. Kolehmainen, *Affective Inequalities in Intimate Relationships* (Abingdon, 2018), 34–48.
[50] V. Kivimäki, *Murtuneet mielet: Taistelu suomalaissotilaiden hermoista 1939–1945* (Helsinki, 2013a); P. Karonen and V. Kivimäki, 'Suffering, surviving and coping: experiences of violence and defeat in post-war Europe' in V. Kivimäki and P. Karonen (eds), *Continued Violence and Troublesome Pasts: Postwar Europe between the victors after the Second World War* (Helsinki, 2017), 7–26.

and one where men were supposed to be primarily responsible for the family's financial livelihood. However, in many cases, family life did not return to what it was before the war, and the traditional gender orders and dynamics between family members changed. During the war, women were responsible for the livelihood of the whole family and they became used to acting independently. Finland was an agricultural country until the 1970s, but especially in cities, many women took up paid employment and the younger generation applied for higher education.[51] As in all belligerent countries, the war also changed the lives of children in Finland. When the men returned home from the war the youngest children did not even identify with their father and/or brothers who had been absent on the battlefields for years. Some of the children were orphaned and were passed to an orphanage, some had to leave their former home and settle in a new one, children evacuated to Sweden during the war returned to Finland to their former families, and some were wounded mentally and/or physically on the home front.[52] Although most of the families managed to regain something close to a normal life quite quickly, others suffered from the unexpected and sudden behaviours of the mentally wounded father and sons of the family.

In Finland, marriage guidance clinics were established in 1944 and some of the counselling pastors working in them were shocked by the violent nature of postwar family life.[53] The narratives in our research material mainly focus on experiences of violence and shame from the perspective of the victim, who is most often the author of the narrative. Children have often been victims of the described situations, yet still felt shame over what happened.[54] For example, the violent behaviour of a drunken father at home was perceived as being so shameful for the family that it ought to be concealed from outsiders. As Kaarlo recounted:

> We tried to keep the scene on track so that the whole village did not get to know what really happened. The matter was not discussed with me at home. My grandmother, mom and our maids talked to each other about it.[55]

From Kaarlo's story, it can be seen that there was concern within the family about the behaviour of a drunk and raging father, but the issue was only discussed among the adults in the family, and the children were left out.

[51]See L. Abrams, 'Liberating the female self: epiphanies, conflict and coherence in the life stories of post-war British women', *Social History*, 39, 1 (Mar. 2014), 14–35; T. Kinnunen, 'Fallen angels, fallen nation? Representations of patriotic women and images of a nation in Finland's postwar memory' in Kivimäki and Karonen, *op. cit*., 109–31.

[52]See, for example, J. Marten, 'Children and war' in P.S. Fass (ed.), *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World* (London; New York, 2012), 142–15; C. Heilala and N. Santavirta, 'Unveiling the war child syndrome: Finnish war children's experiences of the evacuation to Sweden during WWII from a lifetime perspective', *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 21, 6 (Dec. 2015), 575–88.

[53]Malinen, 'Marriage Guidance', *op. cit*., 127.

[54]See M. Silfver, 'Coping with guilt and shame: a narrative approach', *Journal of Moral Education*, 36, 2 (June, 2007), 169–83.

[55]Kaarlo, born 1935–40, PJS SKS KRA.

Children nonetheless heard what the adults had been talking about, and consequently, being left out of dealing with a difficult situation at home often confused them and led them to feel guilt and shame, without knowing the reasons why. There are only a few mentions in our research material of siblings discussing the violent behaviour of their family members with each other. One reason for this lack of discussion may have in some cases been the age differences between the siblings; another could be that the experiences were so difficult or traumatic that it was difficult for the children – and adults – to think and talk about them.[56] Silence, distancing and isolating oneself from a traumatic event is a coping mechanism, which also creates an emotional numbness.[57] Only as adults, and perhaps not even then, have those living in the postwar period been able to understand their difficult childhood experiences. As Berit writes: 'My siblings were so small [after the war] that they didn't recognize their own traumas, and they have lived with the symptoms in some way during their whole lives.'[58] As seen in Berit's text excerpt, many of those contributing to the 'Did the war continue in the home?' collection are already familiar with psychological trauma, and have used the trauma concept as a tool to reframe their painful childhood experiences to give some meaning to their parents' behaviour, particularly that of their veteran fathers.[59]

Hytönen and Malinen have previously pointed out how some informants of the 'Did the war continue in the home?' collection clearly want to bring into discussion more dark aspects of postwar childhood, and especially deconstruct the nostalgic picture of the 1950s, which is sometimes seen as a happy era of family life and improved welfare. On the other hand, some informants were worried that recent historical research has become too trauma-centred, which emerges for example in Helena's text: 'Nowadays there is a notion that everybody was traumatized after the war and family life was terrible, overshadowed by booze and nightmares . . .. This feels almost insulting to us who were living in ordinary, safe families'.[60]

It can also be interpreted from this text example that reminiscing about difficult and traumatic experiences marks the postwar period as shameful. However, despite the great variation in the nature of remembered childhoods, most informants are dealing with negative experiences that were often kept private for long periods of time. Not everyone had traumatic experiences after the war, and those who had often kept them secret. Therefore, they were seldom identified, and for some, talking about them today may seem strange and even

[56]A. Kaivola-Bregenhøj, 'Experience and interpretation: emotion as revealed in narration', *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics*, 2, 2 (2008), 3–11; Siim, *op. cit.*

[57]L. Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (New York, 2010), 94; G. Ben-Ezer, 'Trauma signals in life stories' in K.L. Rogers, S. Leydesdorff and G. Dawson (eds), *Trauma and Life-Stories: International perspectives* (London and New York, 1999), 29–44.

[58]Berit, born 1947, PJS SKS KRA.

[59]For example in texts: Elise, born 1940–1944, 184; Seela, born 1935–1939; Senni, born 1950–1954, 428; Pertti, *op cit*.

[60]Helena, born 1940–1945, PJS SKS KRA.

a distortion of the past. The traumatic nature of the memories emerges in some stories, where the author explains that some of the difficult stages of their life have disappeared completely or partly from their mind. Memories can also cause anxiety for the authors, and it can be seen from the writings that the shameful memories have long been silenced because either they have been too difficult to talk about, or the memories have become fragmented or are so traumatic that it has been easier for the author to remain silent.[61]

When a family member behaved in a shameful manner or was otherwise dishonourable, they stigmatized the whole family. One major theme emerging from the reminiscences is that problems within families were not discussed outside the home, or at least only with relatives and friends. This unwritten rule was part of a larger emotional regime, in which families shared a collective understanding of the appropriate level of privacy of the home and its boundaries.

Silence was intended to protect the honour of the family. Even if outsiders did not know about the family's problems, the mere thought that they might know was intimidating. It is telling that rural farm women who experienced crisis in their marriages were often afraid to disclose their feelings and thoughts even to their closest friends. However, some of the women sought solace and help from pastoral care, often in the form of letter exchange, as this offered total privacy and confidentiality. Thus, while shame requires a social dimension, to experience the emotions of shame (and guilt) does not need an audience to be present. An imagined audience and its disapproval are enough to awaken these emotions.[62] If it was revealed outside the home that the father or son of the family was behaving violently or suffering from mental health problems, the other family members would have felt themselves to be shamed and having failed in some way. For example, Salme writes that her brother who was involved in the war suffered serious mental health problems and went into sudden rages when he returned home. One day, the neighbours and school friends happened to find out about her brother's problems and that he had been taken to a psychiatric hospital. Salme explains how difficult her brother's illness was for the whole family, and how her schoolmates bullied her about her brother's situation:

> It was a terrible thing. A very close brother of mine had a mental illness and was taken to a madhouse. At school, everyone mocked me and said I was from a crazy bunch of people. If I had not been such a good and eager pupil, I would have left school. My desire to learn displaced the terror. It was horrible, and the breaktimes at school, even the school trips, were painful. They contained daily sadness and fear for me, almost physical pain, without understanding why.[63]

[61]See also K. Maanmieli, 'Häpeä suomalaisten mielisairaalamuistoissa', *Elore*, 26, 1 (June 2019), 29–41.
[62]K.M. Grout and E.J. Teng, 'Shame and guilt: the silent struggle of veterans' in M. Townsend (ed.), *Veterans: Political, social and health issues* (Hauppauge, NY, 2016), 1–26.
[63]Salme, born 1934, PJS SKS KRA.

The text example above shows how strongly her brother's condition and related stigma affected Salme's life. Mentally ill people and their families have often been 'otherized' and seen as non-human or less than fully human, and Salme and her family were also forced to face this kind of societal reaction.[64] Paavali Alivirta was a chief physician at the Kellokoski Psychiatric Hospital, and noted in 1940 that the fear of stigma made it difficult to compose reliable statistics on the incidence of psychiatric disorders, mainly because families tried to keep them private.[65] Salme's story is full of the emotional expressions of the painful and contradictory feelings of that time, but she still loved her brother even though his illness was not accepted by the rest of the community.

Although such experiences and memories are personal, they tell us how hugely shameful such conditions have been perceived as in local communities, and more widely in Finnish society. Examining shame in children's literature, Ute Frevert stated incisively that 'shaming, in general, is practised by those who hold or assume authority over others'.[66] This is also reflected in Salme's narrative and more broadly in our research material. The narratives bring out that communities exercise power over families and individuals, and that parents in turn exercise power over their children. However, the local emotional formation was such that those living nearby (and especially in cities) were often aware of the problems of their neighbours because they heard the quarrels and the sounds of violence. Neighbours could intervene, for example by calling the police, which brought at least a momentary relief to a difficult situation. However, the fact that neighbours were aware of the inappropriate behaviour of other residents had its downsides, and other children could bully the children of raging parents, which further increased the immense shame of the bullied child. As Helka relates:

> Coming back from the bar, dad staggered on the home street and shouted loudly that all the Russians must be killed. At home, of course, he argued with my mom. When mom closed the bedroom door, dad broke the glass at the top of the door and raged that doors would not be closed in his own home. When mom wasn't home and dad came home raging, the owner of the house usually called the cops who took dad to jail. Father's rampage was, of course, a great topic for the boys in the block who mimicked him, and one can guess I was ashamed of such a father, I was ashamed and hated him.[67]

Especially in rural families, feelings of shame were more often induced in settings related to daily routines. Until the mid-twentieth century, in the West, children were involved in everyday work.[68] Our research material

[64]See Jenkins, *op. cit*., 8.
[65]P. Alivirta, *SVT XXXII:18, Sosiaalisia erikoistutkimuksia* (Helsinki, 1940), 22–24.
[66]U. Frevert, 'Piggy's shame' in U. Frevert, A. Laukötter, M. Beljan, J. Brauer, D. Brückenhaus, P. Eitler, B. Gammerl, B. Hitzer, J.C. Häberlen and Uffa Jensen (eds), *Learning How to Feel: Children's literature and emotional socialization, 1870–1970* (New York, 2014), 135.
[67]Helka, year of birth not mentioned, PJS SKS KRA.
[68]C. Heywood, 'Children's work in countryside and city' in P.S. Fass (ed.), *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World* (London, New York, 2012), 125–41.

shows that in postwar Finland, working hard and diligently was highly valued, and by taking part in the daily chores of farm life, children could gain status and earn parental approval. Unfortunately, some parents imposed high and unreasonable expectations on their children, and work-related tasks became arenas for shaming. If the adult thought the child was performing their task poorly or too slowly, it could result in an outburst of rage or spanking. It is a repeated theme in the texts that children were rarely praised for their work, which caused feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. Thus, negative feedback was a central educational method used in postwar Finnish homes, and the rod was not spared, which is illustrated in the following text by Reino:

> To whip boys was not considered a bad habit at the time, and it was also customary to play down and forget any poor treatment of the spouse, [a situation into] which men shocked by war and oppressed by narcotic drugs can fall. But at times, my father took me in his arms after a spanking, spoke in a conciliatory manner, and rubbed his bearded cheek.[69]

Reino's story is a typical example of how the moods of parents varied, and of how during corporal punishment they were overwhelmed by aggressive emotional turmoil but soon after repented their actions, which also reflected changing conceptions of childhood and proper education. Finnish psychologists argued against corporal punishment in the 1940s and 1950s, believing that it eroded trust between child and parent, especially with small children. Yet children were believed to hold different attitudes towards it, and psychologists Lehtovaara and Koskenniemi claimed that some children even preferred corporal punishment because it was over with quickly. At the same time, they acknowledged spanking to be a humiliating experience that often left long-term memories.[70] As adults, most of the narrative writers seek to explain the behaviour of their parents by explaining that it was part of the spirit of that time. Parents had to be respected and obeyed. In such an emotional regime, children's rights were limited and they were not seen as independent actors, and their views and competence were not respected. In the narratives, what authors felt especially ashamed of was the unpredictability of their parents' behaviour, and its impact on their well-being and thoughts.

After the war, many women were exhausted after taking sole care of the family and the farm, and could also behave in unpredictable and violent ways towards their children. This violence could be physical or mental. When a mother's nerves failed, she might threaten to leave her husband and children, or even to commit suicide. The children found this behaviour frightening, and may have wondered if they were in some way to blame for

[69]Reino, born 1946, PJS SKS KRA.
[70]A. Lehtovaara and M. Koskenniemi, *Kasvatuspsykologia* (Helsinki, 1954).

their mother's sadness. They also feared losing their mother, yet these secret, painful and shameful experiences were not spoken of to anyone, inside or outside the home. Yet children still worried about these things in their own minds, which is reflected in the following text by Maija:

> I remember my mother being very scary at times. At least us kids, my little younger sister and I, heard many times how she threatened to leave us and do something terrible to herself. These things were also kept inside the home. I do not think they were talked about anywhere or with anyone.[71]

When reading the writers' violent childhood memories, one cannot help thinking that in many cases the mothers are also likely to have suffered from serious mental health problems. For example, mothers may have suddenly channelled their own fatigue and anger into their children in violent ways. Mostly the father was responsible for the discipline of the children, but some of the writing points out that it was the mother who was really responsible for discipline:

> Yes, mother was responsible for the corporal punishment, we were beaten in an insane way with a belt, many times I was spanked even though I had done nothing, and at first I cried, then there was no permission to cry … I don't remember dad punishing me and my sister, he only beat our brother and we were of course crying in chorus beside them …. Once in the winter, I was late for dinner because I had built a snow castle with the children next door. I arrived home, took some food on my plate, sat down at the table, and then my mother took a stick of firewood and shouted that she would kill me. Sitting crouched I waited for her to strike me, but she did not, and there were no repeats of this experience …. At the time, it was not permitted to talk outwardly about home affairs, so you pretended that everything was fine.[72]

However, in most cases it was the father who punished the children, and the mother tried to soften the situation by calming their raging husband. Yet, while protecting her children, a woman could also be subjected to male violence. One author, Pirjo, writes that the whole family was often subjected to the rage of her violent father: 'My mother was small, gentle and kind, and my father abused her physically throughout their marriage under our very eyes. I was 18 when my father hit me last time … (in 1959).'[73] There have been different attitudes towards the physical punishment of children in different families. Physical violence and discipline are difficult to distinguish, as in Finland legislation prohibiting the physical and domineering punishment of children did not enter into force until 1984. Irrespective of the legality or not, however, spanking and other forms of corporal punishment were experienced as frightening, humiliating and shameful. Childhood and adolescent memories also highlight the shame of showing emotion. In some of the studied families, it was seen as

[71]Maija, born 1941, PJS SKS KRA.
[72]Sirkka, born 1953, PJS SKS KRA.
[73]Pirjo, born 1941, PJS SKS KRA.

indecent to show any kind of emotion, and showing emotions was thought to be a sign of weakness and therefore to be shameful.

From these narratives, it is possible to conclude that in postwar Finland, homes often became places where children had to deal with rapidly changing emotional environments and cross 'emotional frontiers' in order to cope with their daily reality. Parents suffering from war-related trauma, mental health problems and substance abuse not only inflicted violence but often imposed arbitrary rules governing the appropriate behaviour of children, for example, how they should eat or do household chores, or whether they could cry while being punished. This incoherent type of behaviour put children in a difficult position, as they tried to obey rules and meet expectations that were constantly changing. According to the cultural context, it was also important to protect the honour of families from shame. Thus, shameful family secrets were not acknowledged or allowed by parents to be shared with anyone outside the home.[74] In families, silence has thus served as a protective mechanism against shame.

Living and coping with shameful experiences

In the text example given at the beginning of this article, the writer's father's war-related psychological problems came out in a way that the father spoke about war for the rest of his life. He suffered anxiety, experienced recurring nightmares and was prone to sudden outbursts of rage. These symptoms were and are typical of veterans suffering from PTSD, and these trauma-related symptoms affect not only the veterans concerned but everyone around them, especially close family members.[75] The unstable and violent behaviour of the parents aroused often confusing feelings of guilt and shame in children. These experiences also affected how children behaved and perceived themselves. Shame is often defined as a painful feeling that has a negative impact on interpersonal relationships, because shame-prone individuals are relatively more inclined to blame others or themselves for negative events, and more prone to exhibit a bitter and resentful kind of anger and hostility. Shame-prone individuals are also less able to empathize with others in general.[76] Michael L. Morgan has stated that shame may begin with a specific failure and cause a 'feeling of unworthiness

[74]Cohen, *op. cit.*

[75]T. Porpiglia, 'Using emotional freedom technique to treat veterans with PTSD' in M. Townsend (ed.), *Veterans: Political, social and health issues* (New York, 2016); T. Galovski and J.A. Lyons, 'Psychological sequelae of combat violence: a review of the impact of PTSD on the veteran's family and possible interventions', *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 9, 5 (Aug. 2004), 477–501; R. Dekel, H. Goldblatt, M. Keidar, Z. Solomon and M. Polliack, 'Being a wife of a veteran with posttraumatic stress disorder', *Family Relations*, 54 (Jan. 2005), 24–36; Z. Solomon, M. Waysman, G. Levy, B. Fried, M. Mikulincer, R. Benbenishty, V. Florian and A. Bleich, 'From front line to home front: a study of secondary traumatization', *Family Process*, 31, 3 (Sept. 1992), 289–302; C.M. Monson, C.T. Taft and S.J. Fredman, 'Military-related PTSD and intimate relationships: from description to theory-driven research and intervention development', *Clinical Psychology Review*, 29, 8 (Dec. 2009), 707–14; Malinen and Tamminen, *op. cit.*; Kivimäki, *op. cit.*

[76]J.P. Tangney and R.L. Dearing, *Shame and Guilt* (New York, 2002), 2–3.

that focuses on the self or one's character or identity as a whole', and so 'we feel ashamed about who we are'. Thus, when we are ashamed, we evaluate ourselves according to our failures.[77]

Previous research suggests that during the post-Second World War period, children had only limited capabilities to share and communicate their experiences of distress and shame with adults, inside or outside of their immediate home environment. In the families, there was often a tacit agreement to leave difficult experiences unspoken, and to keep them separate from everyday life.[78] Martti Hela, who worked as a head teacher at the Teachers' Academy in Helsinki, examined the characteristics of Finnish communicative culture in the following way in 1948:

> When speaking to educators about character development, one must first emphasize the meaning of openness. Nowadays, children are left alone with their problems both at home and at school, and this is a great tragedy. Children have to deal with even the most sensitive and dangerous problems by themselves, without any support or empathy. Homes are filled with all kinds of chattering, but the questions concerning children's emotional development are surrounded by silence. People do not want to handle, or they do not know how to handle, those kinds of questions; it might feel uncomfortable to them. 'Surely, the child will be all right' – this is the typical train of thought.[79]

In his speech, Hela hinted that topics such as sexuality were often non-discussable, but as we have already pointed out, children were often given little or no explanations, even when witnessing the frightening conduct of their parents. This 'culture of silence' probably stemmed not only from the parents' need to forget and to adjust to new social contexts, or from their attempts to protect family honour, but also from the fact that the adults themselves were struggling to find explanations and meanings for their everyday troubles and behaviours.[80] Contradictions and silence between parents were difficult for children to understand. A silent and a tense atmosphere at home could also lead to avoiding gentle physical contact between parents and children, which meant that children were rarely embraced or hugged. However, when tense parents were unable to show affection for their children, intimacy and security might be gained and learned from close relatives. As Tellervo writes:

> Mom started the silent treatment when dad returned from the war, it lasted for several years . . .. We tried to monitor the situation with my brother. We were not allowed to ask or talk. Dad's mental state was bad from time to time . . .. Our family lived nearby, and we got security especially from grandma and grandpapa. Grandpa's sister and my dad's sister took care of us and our cousins. My father's

[77]M.J. Morgan, *On Shame* (New York, 2008), 46.
[78]Hytönen and Malinen, *op. cit.*
[79]M. Hela, 'Kansakoulu luonteenkasvatuskouluna' in K. Saarialho (ed.), *Kansakoulun työtapoja I: Yleistä ja alkuopetus* (Helsinki, 1948), 36–44, here 39.
[80]Hytönen and Malinen, *op. cit.*

> sister came to grandma on her holidays and cared for us at the same time …. We also learned from them how to hug. … Our parents did not hug.[81]

Domestic violence was often an isolating experience for children, as their experiences made them feel ashamed. In our research material, the writers describe how it was not appropriate for young people to express their opinions if these differed from those of the adults. In postwar Finland, adult–child relations were based on unequal power relations between generations. War veterans in particular could raise themselves above others because of their harsh experiences, and also belittle those who had not fought in the war. This was due in part to the fact that many veterans felt bitter that their grassroots war experiences had been neglected in the postwar accounts of Finnish society – for example, those of the leading politicians and historians.[82] Pauliina Latvala has studied the oral history of Finnish families and found that in postwar Finland the cultural discourse about wartime focused on war heroism, which was in conflict with the veterans' personal – not so heroic – war experiences.[83] As society left veterans' hard experiences in the background, their disappointment could erupt on family members. The following example from Pekka illustrates how his father used to belittle his own son, merely because he had not been at war:

> In general, it was difficult to live with war veterans. If there were even slightly differing opinions, my dad told me I was nothing since I had not fought in the war, and I also had no right to express my opinion …. Condemnation, blaming, callousness and disinterest were part of everyday life. It has affected me in such a way that I have never had a long-lasting relationship.[84]

The difficult and shameful experiences recounted in this excerpt have left a deep wound that has made it difficult for Pekka to respect himself and caused him to suffer from low self-esteem. His narrative reveals that the humiliating behaviour of his father towards him and the resulting feelings of shame have had a negative impact on his interpersonal relationships in later life.[85] When recounting his personal experiences and his difficult relationship with his father, the narrator at the same time tries to understand his life and build a coherent story about it by projecting the past onto the present. Additionally, by recalling long-silenced and shameful personal memories, Pekka also provides insights into the social community of the time and its mental atmosphere.[86] In the emotional formation of this community, the

[81]Tellervo, born 1940, PJS SKS KRA.
[82]T. Kinnunen and M. Jokisipilä, 'Shifting images of "our wars": Finnish memory culture of World War II' in T. Kinnunen and V. Kivimäki (eds), *Finland in World War II: History, memory, interpretations* (Leiden and Boston, 2012), 435–82.
[83]P. Latvala, *Katse menneisyyteen: Folkloristinen tutkimus suvun muistitiedosta* (Helsinki, 2005), 278.
[84]Pekka, born 1950, PJS SKS KRA.
[85]See Tangney and Dearing, *op. cit.*
[86]V.G. Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self* (Amsterdam, 2008), 48–49.

humiliation of children and adolescents was tacitly accepted. Especially in families with many children, the value of a child was determined by their ability to participate in work. Blaming young children for laziness as they played left a lasting sense of guilt for a child, as can be seen in the following text example:

> Dad demanded work, he was a demanding and closed man. To us pre-school children who were playing with our pinecone cows and pieces of broken dishes, he shouted that 'Here you just laze, even though you can live for free!' I remember how our game ended with that. I became dumb and stiff, and dad's words remained in my mind and I remembered them as an adult. – We were allowed to live at home for free, we were just lazy. We delicate and skinny girls. – From then on, I was plagued by guilt every time I played, even in the 1950s when we drew paper dolls with my sister.[87]

Children living in unsafe environments either at home or in child welfare institutions could rarely change the reality of their situation. Researchers looking into stress have suggested that in such situations, individuals may attempt to manage distressing emotions.[88] The work done by children to make their everyday lives manageable includes features that can be labelled 'emotion work'.[89] In the research material, children developed practices that helped them to create safe spaces for themselves either in their homes or outdoors near the home. For example, the forest and its various elements and hiding places often provided children with safety when living at home became too distressing, as illustrated by the following narrative of Liisa: 'I often needed that big stone on the edge of the forest. It was a place where I could vent my emotions. It did not reject me, it had time for me.'[90] Parents' unpredictable behaviour can lead children to wonder if there is something wrong with them, and they may have difficulty knowing whether their actions will be accepted by their parents.[91] Sometimes children could escape from home when they were treated unfairly or violently, as can be interpreted from Veikko's writing: 'The atmosphere at home was oppressive for me as a child, I didn't know how I should be. I walked alone a lot in the woods and talked to ants, small birds and special trees.'[92] Sometimes the parents did not pay any attention to the child's sudden disappearance from home; at other times the escape trip was followed by a spanking. However, in the stories about various practices of self-protection described above, the children could be seen as active agents and their acts as a means of silent resistance to their unfair parents. When no one else defended them, they had to create their own survival strategies.[93]

[87]Marjatta, born 1940, PJS SKS KRA.
[88]R.S. Lazarus, *Stress and Emotion: A new synthesis* (New York, 2006).
[89]A. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of feeling* (Berkeley, CA and Los Angeles, 2003).
[90]Liisa, born in 1941, PJS SKS KRA.
[91]See also B. Malinen, *The Nature, Origins, and Consequences of Finnish Shame-Proneness: A grounded theory study* (Helsinki, 2010), 100.
[92]Veikko, born 1939, PJS SKS KRA.
[93]See K. Ericsson, 'Children's agency: the struggles of the powerless' in J. Sköld and S. Swain (eds), *Apologies and the Legacy of Abuse of Children in 'Care'* (New York, 2015), 42–54.

Children often became carefully attuned to their parents' emotional states, and able to anticipate situations when they might be punished, or physically or mentally abused. Children tried to develop the ability to detect the warning signs of mood swings, including subtle changes in facial expression, the smell of alcohol, or listening to the parent's tone of voice for possible signals of anger and intoxication.[94] When continuously faced with incoherent parental behaviour, some of the children developed practices such as maintaining constant vigilance or pretending to be as invisible as possible, which helped them to monitor the emotional horizons of the family and look out for warning signs of potential mood swings. Sometimes children tried to get into disputes in order to defend their mothers, but this led to being subjected to violence themselves. As Kaarina writes: 'In these [violent] situations, it was wisest to be quiet and as invisible as possible. Once I remember trying to defend my mother and I got hit myself.'[95] The narratives bring out how children and often their mothers tried to be as kind and obedient as possible,[96] and the following example from Kerttu shows that when her father was present, the rest of the family tried to behave in just the way he wanted:

> We felt great respect for our father, although actually it was fearful awe of him. When dad wasn't there, we felt free, relaxed. The presence of dad caused anxiety, a kind of fear and timidity of what could possibly happen if things did not go the way he wanted. We were afraid of dad's anger. We avoided and were careful with disagreements. Our mother was especially good at it. I was also a good girl and tried to please dad …. Dad gave me a spanking when I was already 14 years old, because I didn't immediately get a tool from behind the barn when he asked. I felt that that moment was really shameful because I was already a big girl.[97]

As Kerttu continues her story and recalls her shameful experiences, she states that in those days, visiting other people and also religion brought relief to the difficult postwar life and the ever-present threat of violence, but that, in fact, she felt everybody would have benefitted from therapy.[98] In her story Kerttu recalls the past analytically, from today's perspective, and shows that shame had prevented both seeking and receiving help for the families involved.

Children also felt the need to manage their emotions as caregivers in the home or in institutional settings could react even to a child's expressions of distress by punishing them. This point has already been confirmed in the *Historical Inquiry into Child Abuse and Neglect in Child Protection Institutions and Foster Homes in Finland 1937–83*.[99] In some cases, children faced severe

[94]Hytönen and Malinen, *op. cit*., 67.
[95]Kaarina, born 1949, PJS SKS KRA.
[96]See also Abrams, *op. cit*., 16.
[97]Kerttu, born in 1939, PJS SKS KRA.
[98]Kerttu, *op. cit.*
[99]K.-M. Hytönen, A. Malinen, P. Salenius, J. Haikari, P. Markkola, M. Kuronen & J. Koivisto, *Lastensuojelun sijaishuollon epäkohdat ja lasten kaltoinkohtelu 1937–1983. Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön raportteja ja muistioita 2016:22* (Helsinki, 2016).

restrictions on expressing their emotions, and reactions to children's plights could vary from empathy to anxiety, and from suspicion to punitive reaction in both home and institutional environments. Other research on the cultural history of postwar Finland has also pointed out that in the aftermath of the Second World War, it was regarded as inappropriate to complain about one's suffering.[100]

To conclude, although children could feel negative emotions such as shame or fear in the presence of a drunken or violent father, any feelings deemed to be inappropriate were often concealed, as giving vent to them might incur social sanctions. There is also ample anecdotal evidence of how children in the postwar period wanted to feel accepted, even by their abusive parents. However, working through such emotions could become very taxing, especially in environments where parents' or caregivers' behaviours were often unpredictable. The writers in the collection tell of how they managed to alleviate or cope with their emotions of anger and shame. In the narratives, it is typical that when feelings of anger and shame arose, they kept them inside and tried to hide them as best they could because showing negative feelings to others was seen as inappropriate and would have been interpreted as a sign of weakness. Silence also protected them from pain, and so it was easier for them to try not to care, or simply try to forget. However, staying silent has had its consequences, and this pent-up shame may have turned into depression or feelings of inferiority decades later in adulthood.[101] Only in recent decades has it become possible to speak more openly about the difficulties experienced in postwar families.

Conclusions

This article sheds new light on children's emotional experiences of parental trauma in postwar Finnish families. Children living in veteran families in particular often experienced feelings of being unsafe and even suffering domestic violence, both physical and psychological. Much of the impact of returning soldiers' experiences and subsequent wounds on intimate relationships was mediated through those same relationships (for example husband–wife, parent–child) within these families. In our analysis, we have shown how children's expression and management of emotions was shaped by culturally and historically specific social contexts. In veteran families, children had to adapt to constantly changing emotional formations, and find ways to manage their own well-being. As mental health and substance abuse problems were deemed

[100]Kivimäki and Hytönen, *op. cit.*; Malinen and Tamminen, *op. cit.*; K. Laurén, '"Siinä katottiin vähän aikaa konepistoolin suuaukkoa": Traumaattiset kertomukset neuvostopartisaanien iskuista Lapissa ja Kainuussa jatkosodan aikana', *Lähde: Historiatieteellinen aikakauskirja*, 14 (Dec. 2017), 43–62; K. Laurén, 'Unohtamista uhmaten: Partisaanisodan muistelukulttuuri hiljaisena vastarintana' in O. Autti and V.-P. Lehtola (eds), *Hiljainen vastarinta* (Tampere, 2019), 269–94.

[101]Silfver, *op. cit*. 173; K. Laurén, 'From silence to recovery: traumatic home front memories of the Soviet partisan war in Finland', *Etnologia Fennica*, 45 (Dec. 2018), 4–27.

to be shameful, parents often wanted to keep these things hidden from the community and even from relatives – it was about preserving the honour of the whole family. Children usually followed the example of their parents, and out of fear of shame, kept silent about their family secrets. At the same time, however, children needed to find ways to deal with their own exposure to insecurity, violence and the related shame. Thus, shame and the fear of shame have been engines of silence and silencing, and have furthermore made it possible for violence to continue within families. In this kind of emotional formation, shame may therefore be seen as a social mechanism that not only prevented the possibility for those involved to receive social support, but also constrained children's emotional lives, forcing them to deal with difficult emotions by themselves.

In some of the studied narratives, the informants were routinely shamed and punished, and these experiences had long-lasting consequences. As Jenny Edkins has pointed out, it can be devastating to our existence when people who are expected to provide security instead become our tormentors.[102] Some informants developed low self-esteem as they were constantly reminded of being nothing, and gradually internalized the hurtful words and behaviour of their parents. Children's failures to find appropriate ways of coping could also seriously affect their social position. For example, children expressing feelings of distress through aggression were at risk of being labelled as maladjusted and anti-social individuals in need of corrective measures. Such adverse childhood experiences may lead to, for example, depression, problems with alcohol, reservedness with other people, suspiciousness and feelings of guilt.[103] However, when postwar traumas and the resulting family difficulties began to be discussed in public (especially during the twenty-first century), then past events and people's behaviours came to be better understood, and silenced family secrets were no longer experienced as being so shameful.[104]

In the narratives we examined, people often wrote about how in today's society they are relieved to be allowed to talk about difficult childhood memories, experiences of violence, aggressive parents and feelings of shame. However, when family troubles were discussed immediately after the war, there was no trauma talk. Individuals had to use concepts that were understandable and familiar to their contemporaries, through a language that was not yet medicalized by the current knowledge of PTSD. Veterans and their family members had to interpret any changes in a family member's behaviour according to the prevailing state of lay and medical knowledge. Today, these memories might still be heart-breaking and traumatic for the narrators, but they no longer cause them to feel ashamed, and instead make

[102]Edkins, *op. cit*., 1–19.
[103]J. Sabini and M. Silver, 'In defense of shame: shame in the context of guilt and embarrassment', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 27, 1 (Mar. 1997), 1–15.
[104]Cohen, *op. cit*., 259–60.

them wonder at how they managed to cope as a child in such difficult conditions. Difficult and traumatic experiences are recounted to others using the concepts that are specific to each time, which is also reflected in our research material.

Today, people in Finland want to talk about and relate their postwar memories, as evidenced by the fact that so many participated in the 'Did the war continue in the home?' writing collection. Decades after the events of their childhood, people are able to set their personal past experiences aside in the wider context, and consider their past from an outside perspective. Remembering their childhood in the light of today's knowledge has also helped them to understand their parents, as well as the ways in which their own lives have unfolded. Thus, by undertaking the biographical writing, those who participated have built a more complete narrative of their past.

Domestic violence is still a topical issue in contemporary Finland. The EU-wide survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) on violence against women in European countries shows that Finland is the EU's second most violent country for women.[105] In present-day Finland, according to cases reported to the police, domestic violence and intimate partner violence are mainly targeted towards women. However, children are also often subjected to domestic violence, and in most cases the perpetrator is a man and usually the father of the family.[106] The Second World War ended more than 70 years ago, and the traces of violence left by the war are slowly disappearing and the emotional regime has changed. Of course, war is not the only reason for the culture of violence seen in Finland, but we believe that it is still an influential factor. In our research material, many of the writers who lived their childhood and adolescence in postwar Finland encountered violence in their everyday life, either at home or outside the home. These experiences were closely linked to a culture of silence, and had a long-lasting impact, especially on the culture of Finnish gender-based violence.[107]

This research gives a voice to the childhood memories associated with the Second World War that have long been left at the margins, despite being part of the Finnish post-Second World War memory culture. We have focused on the experiences of Finnish children in post-Second World War families, but the research also helps us to understand more broadly the impact of war on children all over the world. We believe that children's experiences as a part of social history deserve to be heard more widely in international memory culture and historiography.

[105]European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), *Violence against Women: an EU-wide survey. Main results* (Luxemburg, 2015), 28–29. Available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14_en.pdf (accessed 6 April 2020).
[106]Statistics Finland, 'Statistics on offences and coercive methods: domestic violence and intimate partner violence 2018'. Available at: https://www.stat.fi/til/rpk/2018/15/rpk_2018_15_2019-06-06_en.pdf (accessed 6 April 2020).
[107]See S. Lidman, *Gender, Violence and Attitudes: Lessons of early modern Europe* (New York and London, 2018).

Funding

This research has received support from the research projects *Traumatized Borders: Reviving Subversive Narratives of B/Order, and Other* [Academy of Finland, project number 297533]; *Small Bodies, Heavy Burdens: Children's Experiences and Management of Distress in Post-War Finland 1945–1960* [Academy of Finland, project number 3233947]; and the Academy of Finland Centre of Excellence in the History of Experiences (HEX).

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