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Gendered and Social Hierarchies in Problem Representation and Policy Processes: 'Domestic Violence' in Finland and Scotland

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ABSTRACT

This article identifies and critiques presumptions about gender and violence that continue to frame and inform the processes of policy formation and implementation on ‘domestic violence’. It also deconstructs the agendered nature of ‘policy’ as gendered multi-level individual and collective action. Drawing upon comparative illustrative material from Finland and Scotland, we discuss how national policies and discourses emphasize physical forms of violence, place the onus upon the agency of women, and encourage a narrow conceptualization of violence in relationships. The two countries do this in somewhat comparable, though different ways, operating within distinct national gender contexts. The complex interweaving of masculinities, violence and cultures, while recognized in many debates, is seemingly marginalized from dominant discourses, policy and legal processes. Despite growth in critical studies on men there is little attempt made to problematize the gendered nature of violence. Rather, policy and service outcomes reflect processes through which individualized and masculine discourses frame ideas, discourses, and policy work. Women experiencing violence are constructed as victims and potential survivors of violence, while the social and gendered hierarchies evident in policies and services result in longer-term inequities and suffering for women and their dependents.

INTRODUCTION

This article has two main interrelated aims: first, to identify and critique presumptions about gender and violence that continue to frame and inform the processes of policy formation and implementation on 'domestic violence'; and, second, to deconstruct the agendered nature of 'policy' as gendered multi-level individual and collective action. Accordingly, policy often appears ungendered but rather is agendered in so far as the focus is mostly on women. In developing these arguments, we draw upon comparative data on debates and developments in Finland and Scotland. This provides illustrative material for the two general aims, shows the importance of local and national context, and is of substantive interest in itself. The countries have similar population size, some comparable social characteristics, yet different physical size and gender systems (McKie and Hearn, 2004; also see Hearn, 2002; Hearn et al., 2004).

In recent decades there have been many interventions in legal, social and public policies and services on violence against women (Hanmer et al., 2006). This is violence predominately perpetrated by men to women known to them in current or previous relationships. It includes physical, sexual and psychological abuses and is a form of gendered violence (Skinner et al., 2005). In identifying and critiquing policy developments on gender and violence, we heed Carol Bacchi's call to consider 'policies as constituting competing interpretations or representations of political issues'. Our analysis starts by considering how a 'problem' or issue is represented:

> What presuppositions are implied or taken for granted in the problem representation which is offered; and what effects are connected to this representation of the 'problem'? (Bacchi, 1999: 2)

The recognition and description of a 'problem' draws upon discourses and debates. Within these some individuals or groups are heard, others silenced, and ideas and data may be partially considered, manipulated, even ignored (Code, 1995). These processes are imbued with

interpretations, judgements and choices that reflect inequities in power and resources. Given this backdrop to problem representation and policy, Bacchi (1999) argues for analysis that incorporates 'practices with material consequences', as well as ideas and ways of talking about a 'problem'. The 'what's the problem' approach proposes analysis of discourses as practices, to include not just what is said or practiced but who is silenced, and what is not considered. Discourses have material effects and combined with dimensions of problem representation and resultant artefacts (policies) provide data for analysis (Hearn and McKie, 2008). Our prime focus is upon discourses and statutory activities that have sought to address issues for women who have experienced violence. In particular, we reflect upon agendered policies, with their focus upon women as service users and providers, and ungendered discourses in which problem representation and policies generally fail to note that most perpetrators are men (Hearn and McKie, 2008). We seek to unravel this averted gaze to the gendered nature of violence, that leads to a focus upon the *effects* of violence, specifically for women and sometimes children as victims and survivors, and yet avoids critical engagement with gender, patriarchy and men's practices.

The article opens with a discussion of *definitions* of 'domestic violence'. Following this, we reflect upon the *interconnections* of violence and gender. Subsequently, we introduce the *context* to our data and consider a number of geopolitical and socio-economic issues that help to frame our cases of Finland and Scotland. We then consider contemporary *documentation* on 'domestic violence' in international and national contexts. The more specific *content* of policies in Finland and Scotland are explored. In the discussion we consider how the potential to gender issues of violence in intimate relationships is often denied, or rendered problematic by current representations of the problem.

DEFINITIONS

The question of definitions and terms used to describe men's violence to women known are often a starting point for the representation of the problem. Definitions and terms provide parameters

in discourses as to what may, or may not, be considered or highlighted in policy work. Violence may be defined from several, sometimes overlapping, standpoints: the violated, the violator, those dealing with violence, those who observe violence (Hearn, 1998b). The prominence given to any one perspective (or definition) reflects the shifting nature of power. For present purposes we have used the term ‘domestic violence’, as it continues to be understood in most countries and Anglophone contexts, and despite its shortcomings analytically. Not all ‘domestic violence’ occurs in the home or between those sharing a home. The word ‘domestic’, and its association with home and privacy, together with an apparent ungenderedness, inadequately reflects, even diminishes, the extent and nature of the problem. Similarly, at the supranational level, the World Health Organization (2002) uses the term ‘interpersonal violence’, one that captures aspects of the intimate relationships that form the context to this violence but also degenders it.

Definitions of violence operate rather differently in the two countries under review. In Finland the term ‘family violence’ [‘perheväkivalta’] (Peltoniemi, 1984), including both psychological and physical factors, has been much used. Though it has been subject to criticism for its lack of gendered analysis (Ronkainen, 1998, 2001), it is still in general use. The equivalent term to ‘domestic violence’ [‘kotiväkivalta’] is not usually used in the Finnish language, although when speaking English those working in the field would often use that term. Finnish policies and services have generally worked within a conceptual tradition of gender-neutrality and in the arena of domestic violence emphasis has been upon family breakdown and alcohol consumption, and their reduction. Problem representation has been degendered, offering limited scope for action. However, the equivalent term to ‘violence against women’ [‘naisiin kohdistuua väkivalta’] is increasingly in use in both research and policy contexts.<2>

In contrast, the Scottish Executive adopted the term ‘domestic abuse’. Many non-statutory agencies, especially women’s groups and Scottish Women’s Aid, argued that the word ‘abuse’ better

represents the psychological and physical dimensions of violence and helps to shift the emphasis from physical manifestations to the ongoing manipulation of power in intimate relationships:

> Domestic abuse (as gender-based abuse) can be perpetrated by partners or ex-partners and can include physical abuse (assault & physical attack involving a range of behaviour), sexual abuse (acts which degrade and humiliate women and are perpetrated against their will, including rape) and mental and emotional abuse (such as threats, verbal abuse, racial abuse, withholding money and other types of controlling behaviour such as isolation from family and friends). (Scottish Executive, 2000: 5)

This definition accepts the gendered basis to domestic abuse and is the one governmental definition in the UK to so do. The Scottish Executive, responding to active lobbying from a number of women's and related groups, works with a definition that offers possibilities for engagement with gender in ways that include both men and women. However, some commentators in Scotland argue that 'abuse' is too vague a term and fails to achieve the same impact as that of the word 'violence'. It is important to recognize the work of Women's Aid across the UK and the impact national and local groups have in promoting recognition of violence against women. Scottish Women's Aid has campaigned tirelessly, along with others, for including gender in the definition of domestic abuse. Achieving this marked a shift in problem representation and enhanced policy development. Nevertheless, with limited resources and the imperative to secure safety of those experiencing violence, women's groups have concentrated on provision of services for women and their dependents. While positive consequences have followed, this work has emphasized women in domestic violence and less men's practices and men's violences (Skinner et al., 2005).

BROADENING THE INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN GENDER AND VIOLENCE

A wide range of research demonstrates that over the life course women are more likely to experience psychological and physical abuse within family and kinship networks than from strangers in public spaces (Hatty, 2000; Renzetti et al., 2001). Although strangers and acquaintances are responsible for most crimes and assaults against men, especially men under 30, women and children are more likely to be beaten, stalked, raped or killed by intimate relatives or partners than another type of assailant (Piispa and Heiskanen, 2001; World Health Organization, 2002).

Violence against women is the most pervasive human rights violation in the world. Leaving aside war and civil unrest, the overall pattern continues to be one of men's violence perpetrated against women and children known to them (Renzetti et al., 2001). This violence includes physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse. Given the prevalence and incidence of this violence, the attention paid to men's violent behaviours might be considered somewhat limited. Aggressive acts and violent abuses are very widely considered part of the potential repertoire of behaviours by men, and clearly so for the state and armed forces. It applies even though the societal context of the military is very different in Finland (postcolonial nation, active in peacekeeping, conscription for men) and Scotland (part of post-imperial UK, active in several recent wars, no conscription). Images of violent behaviours are evident in many cultural representations of men/masculinities.

Men are supposed to know when and where, and to whom they may be violent, and this knowledge is framed by what may be socially sanctioned or required by the state (or group). Stepping over socially and legally sanctioned boundaries on violence can lead to contact with police and other regulatory services. Many such services and staff therein anticipate and manage violence, especially physical acts of violent behaviour among men. Certain services concentrate on the consequences of men's violence to women known to them, for example, refuges, police domestic violence units and multi-agency initiatives to enhance access to welfare services (Taylor-Browne, 2001). While men perpetrate most domestic violence, especially heavy, physically damaging and

non-defensive forms of violence, these various services work predominately with women and their dependents.<3> If charged, men come into contact with legal and police services and may be required to participate in a perpetrator programme. Nevertheless, much focus is upon women and their children or other dependents, certainly so on health and social services agendas. Practitioners tend to concentrate on the extremely important task of securing the safety of women and their dependents; yet too often this becomes the dominant, even sole, focus of policies and services. Safety for women is often based upon leaving the relationship and the home. This notion of a woman 'leaving' channels the organization of much work of practitioners and agencies. Thus overarching pervasive patterns of gendered violence and service organization are rarely questioned (Kelly, 1999).<4>

What is commonly known as domestic violence is predominantly violence perpetrated by men against known women (Hague et al., 2003). Not only is this violence associated with intimate relationships but also with the locations around which those relationships revolve, namely the home and its immediate environs (Young, 1997). While domestic violence may take place outside the home, it is, nevertheless, violence that comes to dominate relationships in and around 'home and hearth'. In short, the combined gendered and spatial trends mean that "[t]he safest place for men is the home, the home is, by contrast the least safe place for women." (Edwards, 1989: 214).

The location and nature of domestic violence illuminates an apparent demarcation of the private and the public in perspectives and policies. The notions of the public and the private are both material social arenas and ideological constructions that can have quite different forms, meanings and significances for different social categories and for women and men (Bose, 1987; Hearn, 1992). Moreover, this dynamic and fluid interaction is rendered more complex by the activities of governments and agencies (Taylor-Browne, 2001). With growth in concerns about risk (environmental, health, personal, property), contemporary policy has crept into a range of arenas, not least of which are aspects of the private and personal conduct. Governments are increasingly

encouraging individuals and families to take responsibility themselves for myriad aspects of socio-economic and health matters. Some social arenas have unevenly opened up to social practices of supposed ‘choice’, prudence and experimentation, albeit while inequities in gender, income and power ensure exclusion of many.

Government policies and services impact on the private sphere, more often than not drawing on presumptions about gendered ‘roles’ and responsibilities. Many health and education policies presume the unpaid work and care of relatives, generally mothers and women. Ongoing, sometimes heated, debates on interventions in private relationships and related locales have led to a neo-liberal approach to gender relations, in which inequities in the private sphere are rarely challenged. Governments, state, agencies, families and individuals presume and draw upon these very inequities in the development and organization of policies and services (Sevenhuijsen, 1998). This apparent separation between the public and the private can mask how governments and organizations shape gender relations, restricting the potential to tackle interweavings of public and private, and reinforcing gender hierarchies. Such inequities are clear in gender segregation in the labour market and work patterns, with resultant impacts on income and resources. In short, women continue to experience lower incomes and earning potential across the lifecourse and yet undertake much of the informal and unpaid domestic and care work (Cabinet Office, 2000).

The experience of domestic violence, especially if it results in leaving the family home, a job, as well as care, social and economic support networks, compounds these inequities further. Additionally, emotional and psychological traumas often have long-term implications for health and well-being. Gendered workings of formal and informal care and access to resources, combined with threats and experiences of violence, create a double, sometimes triple, jeopardy for women. Women traverse uneasy and sometimes contradictory pathways in which they run risks of blame or stigma if they experience abuse.

Broadening the interconnections of gender and violence means gendering men as an explicit part of policy analysis. Having said that, the study of men is not new; men have studied men for centuries, often as an 'absent presence' (Hearn, 1998a). Studying gender has, and is, gaining ground, as is critical studies on men (Kimmel et al., 2005). It is clear that gender is about men and women, not only women. Gendering men is evident in contemporary analyses of men in society and reflects changing experiences of men that may be counter to those anticipated (Hearn, 2004).

Despite the growth in and recognition of critical studies on men, men who use violence, or who remain silent about the gendered nature of much violence, generally continue to be 'underanalysed and underproblematized' in most policy processes and debates (Bacchi, 1999: 168). So while legislation and service provision has achieved increased prominence, especially in support of women who are experiencing violence, critical studies of men has not had the impact on policy work that might be anticipated. For example, the Council of Europe (2004) document *Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society* differentiates between a victim-orientated approach and offender-orientated prevention. These terms are employed in an ungendered manner with gendered nature of most violence largely ignored. A focus on the offender lends itself to policies premised upon a narrow base, namely the identification of perpetrators recognized within the criminal justice system, rather than critical engagement with violence and men's practices more generally.

CONTEXT

Finland and Scotland have some similar geographical, population and other features: population over 5 million; concentration of around 40% of that in the south of the country (especially Helsinki, Vantaa and Espoo; Edinburgh and Glasgow); provision of services in remote and rural hinterlands to sparsely populated areas; and managing socio-economic changes whilst the population is ageing, with solo living and family re-formation on the increase. In both countries women are visible and active in political and public life. This is a relatively strongly established feature in Finland, while in

Scotland this has been greatly enhanced by recent changes brought about by devolution (Breitenbach and McKay, 2001).

There are also obvious contrasts between the countries. For a start, Finland is over four times the physical size of Scotland. More to the point, women in Finland have achieved more in comparison with Finnish men than women in Scotland compared with men in Scotland. For example, statistics on the pay differentials and range and levels of employment indicate greater achievements on the part of Finnish women, particularly in the public sector. They have also a longer history of suffrage, higher education and full-time employment, along much more developed welfare provision, including significantly the universal availability of childcare.

There are very significant international and supranational impacts to be considered. Both countries, as part of the European Union (EU), have responded to the resolution on the need to establish an EU-wide campaign for zero tolerance of violence against women, premised upon the United Nations (UN) Convention of 1979 on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the UN Declaration of 1993 on the Elimination of Violence against Women. While the EU has no mandate to interfere in most criminal matters, it can use human rights and economic instruments to influence national policy development, for example, through the STOP programme (also see Hanmer et al., 2006, especially s. 5). Both countries are also part of the Council of Europe, which made violence and violence against women a policy priority. In addition, Finland is part of the Nordic Council of Ministers, contributing to such events as the Nordic-Baltic Regional Meeting of Parliaments United in Combating Domestic Violence, October 2007. However, Finland has been criticized by CEDAW for lack of effective policy development on violence against women, suggesting in July 2008 creation of a Prime Minister-led working group, with NGOs involved in its preparatory work.

Nevertheless, there are clear differences in the basis of, and approaches to, measures to address violence against women. Notably, continued adherence to gender-neutrality in Finnish legislation,

policies and activities makes it difficult to accept and deal with such gendered differences as the level of men's physical and psychological abuses of women. By contrast, as noted earlier, an appreciation of the gender-based nature of domestic violence has, to some extent, formed the basis to recent Scottish initiatives. It might be presumed that this would lead to enhanced awareness of the gender based nature of violence in intimate relationships but, as noted below, in the Scottish context gender and violence has become synonymous with women as victims and survivors and women as campaigners; in every sense this has become a (only) women's issue!

The differential basis to problem representation and resultant policies originates from the workings of the concept of gender-neutrality in Finland and gender equality in Scotland. While the conceptual basis in Finland is gender–neutrality, there is greater gender equality on most socio-economic and health measures in Finland than Scotland. These different traditions emerge from fundamentally different histories, welfare structures and geographical positions. Finnish nationalism and statehood developed against previous incorporation within, first, the Swedish, then, the Russian empires. Late nineteenth century nationalism, which eventually achieved statehood in 1917, was based on a broad notion of citizenship for both sexes and political economy set in a harsh environment. Citizenship involved strong participation of both women and men in both the rural workforce and emerging wage labour. There is a relatively long history of high participation of women in suffrage, politics, education and full-time employment. It was from this complex base that the strong notion of Finnish gender-neutrality was founded, and upon which the more recent notion of gender equality was developed in extra-parliamentary politics in the 1970s and in law in the 1980s. The Council for Equality between Women and Men was created in 1972, with a government plan promoting gender equality in 1980, the first in the Nordic countries (The Council for Equality, 1997: 60). Gender-neutrality has been coupled with a relatively wide acceptance of the principle, if not practice, of gender equality across the political spectrum. This operates at least at the rhetorical level, and to an extent through policies on work, education and welfare (Ronkainen, 2001).

The relation of nation and state to gender-neutrality and gender equality is somewhat different in the case of the UK and Scotland. A neo-liberal approach has framed much legislative and policy development on gender equality in the UK (Lister, 1997). Scotland is part of the long established nation-state of the UK, but is also a separate country, which has both participated in British imperialism and been oppressed by that project. Either way, Scotland and England, along with Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are now all part of the European Union. Devolution and demands for independence have re-energized the Scottish national political project. All these political moves have been dominantly constructed as gender-neutral, regardless of their gender formations, though in different ways than in Finland.

The notion of the individual citizen exercising rights to be free from violence must, however, be framed within debates on divorce, family breakup and levels of violence. These latter two factors are of particular concern in both countries. They have resulted in specific approaches. In Finland they have been framed around notions of and services for post-separation and divorce 'shared parenting' and mediation among family members (Piispa and Heiskanen, 2001). Mediation is available and used for domestic violence, though subject to critique, including in 2008 from CEDAW. In contrast to the UK, there is no network of women-only refuges; rather most refuges are run as part of mainstream welfare services, with all the pros and cons that brings. The autonomous women's movement in Finland, while active, remains relatively small, perhaps not least through various processes of incorporation within the state. Discourses, policies and services emphasize 'roles' and responsibilities of the individual, within the context of a welfare state subject to neo-liberal pressures, rather than focusing on gender and power differentials in intimate and other relationships.

DOCUMENTATION

As part of the supranational context, the World Health Organization (2002) *World report on violence and health*'s stated aim was to challenge the 'secrecy, taboos and feelings of inevitability that surround violent behaviour.' Noting the crucial role of health services as often the first contact

point with statutory services for those experiencing violence, it calls for partnership working across criminal justice and agencies concerned with human rights and familial relations. In adopting the term interpersonal violence to include a broad sweep of family and intimate partner violence and community/public violence between those not necessarily known to each other, the report fails to address gender in ways that might connect with some men's violent practices and violent masculinities. Yet data presented demonstrates that 'the overwhelming burden of partner violence is borne by women at the hands of men' with surveys from around the world reporting 10-69% of women being physically assaulted by an intimate male partner at some point in their lives. Low income is cited as a notable risk factor, with an implication that money and resource issues may be a cause for marital dispute, with experience of poverty potentially leading to hopelessness. Indeed, services such as social work that frequently meet with those living with, or in fear of, violence have evolved a focus upon low-income households with predominately female clients (Bacchi, 1999: 167). Meanwhile, those on greater incomes are often able to shield themselves and others from statutory regulatory and support services. A more contextualized analysis of the link between low income and violence needs to consider societal variations in violence, impacts of inequality, dependence within relationships, as well as agencies self-fulfilling prophecies.

The WHO report recommendations are presented in gender-neutral terms, such as 'people', 'parents', 'partners'. In proposing treatment programmes the need to discuss gender issues is noted, as is the potential for counselling services for men who abuse partners. Regardless, the overall approach is highly individualized, one in which 'people' are encouraged to 'take responsibility for their actions'. Noting that 'violence is often predictable and preventable', that 'complacency is a barrier to tackling violence' and self-interest may reinforce violence as in 'the socially sanctioned right of men to "correct" their wives' (World Health Organization, 2002: 35), there is no critical engagement with critical studies on men, gender and violence (Connell, 1995, 2002; Hearn, 1998a, 1998b, Hearn and Parkin, 2001; Kimmel et al., 2005).

In Scotland (and the UK) a number of trends have been well documented (Henderson, 1998; Scottish Executive, 2000; Scottish Executive, 2003). It is estimated that between a quarter and a third of all women in Scotland experience abuse at some point in their lives and of the non-sexual crimes of domestic abuse recorded in 2000 by police in Scotland, 599 of the 660 cases involved a woman experiencing violence from a male perpetrator (Scottish Executive, 2003: 3). Finland was one of the first countries to conduct a focused national representative survey of women's experiences of violence from men (Martinez and Schröttle, 2006). According to the report on the first such national survey of 5,000 women *Faith, Hope, Battering* (Heiskanen and Piispa, 1998), 40% of Finnish women reported having experienced male violence (sexual or physical) or threats at some point in their lives. A second national representative survey of over 7,000 women was carried out in 2005 (Piispa et al., 2006). The results of the two surveys showed some changes, but the overall results were similar.<5> Violence was concentrated in couple relationships that were ongoing or recently dissolved. Where violence was experienced outside the couple relationship the assailant was a person known to the women in 2 out of 3 cases. Women rarely sought formal help with only 1 in 4 seeking support and advice from a shelter, the police, legal services, family centres, crisis lines or women's groups. When help was sought the most common agencies approached were health care services in the community, followed by police and family counselling services. Most support was gained from friends and other family members (Heiskanen and Piispa, 1998). Research in Scotland found similar trends in accessing support (Henderson, 1998; McKie et al., 2002). So while legal, health and social services are viewed as potential sources of help, they were not actually used by a large proportion of people.

At this point a note of caution should be sounded. It may appear that the prevalence of domestic violence is greater in Finland. Definitions and questions used vary and result in different findings. In both countries a range of groups contested these data. Counter-assertions in the media in both countries have emphasized the potential for women to be violent. In such discourses, often based

upon individualistic psycho-social frames, violence was offered as an agendered problem. Arguments included the changing role of women, implying that consequently women are becoming increasingly violent, and societal trends to more violence with domestic violence considered a subset thereof (Fiebert, 1997). The emphasis was placed upon violence in low income households, the premise being that low income adds to pressures 'triggering' violence. In these discourses sympathy and protection may be more readily offered to those who display physical effects of violence and show passivity in engaging with services. This leads to a gendered notion of the client, or worthy victim – usually a woman – and stands alongside the stereotypical notion of the brutish perpetrator, an atypical man with a substance abuse or chronic behavioural problems.<6>

CONTENT

Over the last 20 years the EU and its member states have stated policies of moving towards equality of opportunity, if not equality of outcomes. Legislation has banned sex discrimination but avoided engagement with how gender shapes and reflects social relations. These shifts in legislation and the workings of some states reflect the short agenda on equality. Such changes do not aim to challenge the shaping of social relations and, for that matter, social and public policies. The focus is largely upon regulation of social needs and issues as manifest in public and economic spheres.

Nordic countries are presumed to have 'woman-friendly' social policies and welfare services. Women have gained much from the strong role of the state and public provision of services (Nousiainen et al., 2001). These are countries where centralized, sometimes corporatist decision-making structures exist that in theory offer the infrastructure to co-ordinate comprehensive service provision on violence against women. Indeed health and welfare services in Finland are integrated within the same agency. On many indicators of equality between the sexes these countries are at the top of most 'league tables'; on the whole, women appear to do better across the lifecourse than women in, for example, Scotland. However, welfare and preventive approaches, such as, high levels of daycare provision, may go alongside relative neglect of questions of violence and abuse (Pringle,

1998; Hearn et al., 2004). Rape in marriage was criminalized in 1994 in Finland, one of the last countries in Europe.

The Finnish form of relatively strong welfare state development and gender equality policy and ideology co-exist with gender inequalities and relative gender invisibility. This is for several reasons: conduct of debate in terms of the 'genderless citizen' (Parvikko 1990; Rantalaiho and Heiskanen 1997; Ronkainen 2001), persistence of gender inequality in employment, and non-problematizing of men, men's practices and masculinities. Promotion of human rights imbues the work of many Nordic governments and agencies. However, closer examination shows ongoing levels of violence against women in Finland and complex and diverse ways in which departments and agencies there address these issues (Heiskanen and Piispa, 1998). More generally, this paradoxical situation appears to arise partly from a continuing emphasis upon individuals' rights operating at the community level rather than at the individual embodied level (Nousiainen et al., 2001).

In Scotland, with the advent of its first Parliament in 300 years, the coalition of Labour and Liberal Democrats from 1999 has forged a left of centre route to tackling social problems. The role of an active autonomous women's movement and voluntary sector, combined with the election of sympathetic Members of Parliament, coalesced to form a national partnership approach firmly based on gendered notions of violence (Breitenbach and McKay, 2001). It would appear that this approach has achieved a higher profile and stress on multi-agency action than recent activities in Finland, where integrated health and welfare service have been in operation for some time.<7> However, these are relatively recent, and some would add, fragile developments. Thus while both countries are explicit in their search for gender equality in the public sphere, when it comes to equality in intimate or familial relationships, policies and services on violence against women do not seem to follow the patterns expected (Weldon, 2002). Post-devolution in Scotland domestic violence moved towards centre stage in policy work, while gender equality remains peripheral, though debated. Such

contrasts were a source for agitation among those tackling the broader issues of social inclusion and social justice. Many noted that households headed by women were over-represented in various policy measures on gender equality.

A consultative plan on violence against women, published by the Scottish Office (1998) called for action plans across government departments. Again, partly based on the need to meet international obligations, the plan was revised and published in 2001. The preceding year a National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2000) was launched describing an overall strategic approach and action plan to include provision across sectors and organizations as well as government departments for a three-year period. By the end of 2003 a range of policy documents or strategies, concerning legal, health, housing, educational and social care services, were in place, demonstrating the government's commitment to address the needs of women experiencing violence. In these documents the premise was that violence against women is gender-based and fear of violence undermines the position and confidence of women, even if when not personally experienced. Despite noting older women have specific fears and needs, a strong focus in action plans is on protecting and meeting needs of women with dependent children and those children.

The Partnership Strategy (Scottish Executive, 2000) required local authorities to establish multi-agency partnerships and develop local strategies and action plans. In June 2001 a national group was established to take a strategic overview of developments and hold an annual review bringing local and national players together, determining next priorities. The group included the Minister for Social Justice, and representatives from the police, health services, education, local government, equalities agency and department, law and third sector. There has been a tremendous amount of work across local multi-agency domestic abuse fora, government departments and agencies. But given a limited resource base, emphasis remains firmly upon supporting women to disclose abuse and secure safety for themselves and dependents. Despite attempts to seek more radical initiatives on violence against

women (for example, the gendered definition of domestic abuse adopted in Scotland), limited resources and concerns to gain legitimacy have led to a policy lens focused upon women: an averted gaze in discourses and practices to men and violence.

Over the last 5 years the Scottish Government has invested £44 million to a range of measures to identify and address domestic abuse. In summer 2008 the Scottish Government launched a new Delivery Plan to aid implementation of existing strategy on domestic abuse. The plan is based on four themes of the strategy: protection, provision, prevention, participation. Among the plan's 13 priorities is emphasis upon supporting disclosure, and helping children and teenagers living in families where domestic abuse has an impact. The plan was developed with intensive consultation, including children and young people, and input of local government and a wide range of NGOs. The Delivery Plan was launched after figures for 2007-2008 recorded a 2% increase in 'incidents', at 49,655. Eighty-five per cent were with a female victim and male perpetrator; 54% were repeat victimisations. Forty-four per cent of cases were among co-habitees, 38% among ex-partners. The overwhelming majority took place in the home. Clearly, promotion of community safety planning through CCTV will not aid detection or reporting. This spatial element, illuminating the private location of much violence by men known to women, continues to be taken-for-granted.

In Finland the plan published in 1997 by the Minister of Social Affairs and Health launched the Programmes for Prevention of Prostitution and Violence Against Women. The National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES, an organization with a role similar to NHS Health Scotland) implemented the programmes and work was completed in late 2002 (Jyrkinen and Ruusuvuori, 2002). The overall aim of work undertaken in the Programme for the Prevention of Violence Against Women was to raise awareness of violence and of its extent and impacts on individuals and society, including the promotion of community initiatives at the local municipality level. The programme was keen to promote evidence that 'when it comes to 'family violence' it is pertinent to speak of men's violence against women' (STAKES, 1998). While framing

work in a gender-specific manner other materials and information use gender-neutral language. This probably reflects ongoing adherence to and contradictions surrounding the concept of gender-neutrality. The conceptual frame can mean that taking gender into account can be problematic even when something is so clearly gendered as is domestic violence. At the final conference for the programme ("MY BODY, MY LIFE") held in Helsinki in October 2002 it was concluded that while much had been achieved in raising the issues and developing legislation and services, an acceptance of the need for a gendered perspective on human rights and violence remained elusive. The continued promotion of family mediation was called into question, as was the need to dispel the mythology of the 'strong Finnish woman' and the 'weak miserable man'. Data demonstrated continuing levels of domestic violence and inequalities between men and women.

However, the policy approach to violence against women is "in transition" in Finland (Niemi-Kiesiläinen, 2003). There are clear moves to criminalization, with the bringing of successive acts into criminal law. Prosecution of domestic violence came to the parliamentary agenda in 1993 with proposals to reform the Criminal Code on Assaults and Batteries, and was enacted in 1995. These included provision that charges may be dropped if the victim firmly wishes, and for legal aid for victims in sexual and domestic crimes (Niemi-Kiesiläainen, 2003; see Rosti et al., 2008). Criminalization of marital rape dates from 1994, and introduction of Restraining Orders (injunctions) for married partners from 1999 and for cohabitants from 2005. Victims of domestic violence were specifically recognized in criminal procedure in 2002 (Rec (2002)5), with violence towards women seen to result from imbalance of power between women and men, and impairing human rights and fundamental freedoms. Legal reforms have also addressed sexual crimes specifically. The current government includes further priority action against violence against women in its Goverenment Action Plan for Gender Equality 2008-2011. Thus there is a degree of convergence with the UK system through greater legalism in Finland.

Interestingly, an evaluation of The Protection From Abuse (Scotland) Act 2001, introduced partially as a result of work around the Scottish Partnership Strategy, concluded that the reforming spirit was not matched by the workings of criminal law (Cavanagh et al., 2003). The study found an undue burden on victims of abuse, predominately women, to pursue actions. However, attempts to shift emphasis and responsibility to men perpetrators are far from unproblematic, as seen in the uneven results of international evaluation research on the effectiveness of men's (perpetrator) programmes. These have attracted interest in recent years in both Finland and Scotland (for example, "Implementing CHANGE in Scotland", 1998), yet the extent of their impact should be treated with caution. While some small-scale local evaluations have reported positive results, Shelly Jackson, lead author of the US National Institute of Justice meta-review of international evaluation research, wrote:

> Early evaluations … consistently found small [men's] program effects; when more methodologically rigorous evaluations were undertaken, the results were inconsistent and disappointing. Most of the later studies found that treatment effects were limited to a small reduction in reoffending, although evidence indicates that for most participants (perhaps those already motivated to change), BIPs [batterer intervention programmes] may end the most violent and threatening behaviors. (Jackson, 2003: 3).

With the wide variation in approaches, international evidence on their effectiveness is such that programmes cannot be evaluated or recommended in general. Recent Finnish research has looked in detail at narrative processes within these groups, offering insights into their contradictions and possible pitfalls (Partanen and Holma, 2002; Partanen, 2008). Evidence on recidivism levels suggests programmes cannot hope to address men's violent practices *in general*, though they may offer potential for change for some participants.<8> Interestingly, the number of men involved in

programmes is much smaller than the number in contact with Criminal Justice agencies, and smaller still compared with the number of men in contact with the range of health, welfare and other agencies. Beyond these larger numbers, there is a greater number not in contact with any agency in relation to their violence. Public forms of equality, for example, participation in employment or politics, place Finnish women high up EU league tables, but, as with Scotland, such indicators do not appear to directly link with wider social constructions of gender and relations of gender and violence. In such a situation, 'policy', even policy positively addressing 'domestic violence', can easily act as a wholly or partially degendered gloss on the some very gendered, indeed gendered violent, social realities.

DISCUSSION

The problem representation of 'domestic violence' and related policies draws on a partial conceptualization of gender, framing the problem as one of atypical men. The first Finnish national survey on violence against women reported 50% of separated and divorced women had suffered physical violence or threats thereof from their ex-partner (Heiskanen and Piispa, 1998). In many contexts policies and services focus on agency of women who have experienced violence, often encouraging them to leave the relationship and home, rather than exclusion of men. Responses to gender-based violence continue to be largely about women, as victims, survivors and activists, rather than 'naming men as men' (Hanmer, 1990; Collinson and Hearn, 1994).

Promotion of human rights imbues the work of many Nordic governments and agencies. Much of this is premised on notions of the genderless citizen, in the Finnish case reinforced by the concept of gender-neutrality. Evidence demonstrates relatively high levels of violence against women, along with diverse ways in which various departments and agencies address these issues. Strong welfare state development and gender equality policy and ideology in Finland co-exist with gender inequalities and relative gender invisibility. Coalition government in the Scottish Parliament has sought a somewhat consensual, neo-liberal approach to gender and domestic violence and may have

achieved rather higher profile multi-agency action than in Finland, even though coalition politics is more established there. Despite differing contexts, representation of the problem, policies and outcomes are not dissimilar in the two countries in their degenderedness and may be converging somewhat. Policies and services reflect representations of the problem that are women-focused rather than considering gender and problematizing men's practices

A number of men do work with women on these matters. In Scotland some men's programmes and anti-violence activists have been relatively high profile. In Finland the picture is more mixed, with men's programmes operating within a welfare model and contradictory men's movements (Hearn and Niemi, 2006a, 2006b). Feminist and profeminist groups seek to secure broader and realistic representations of the gendered nature of violence against women. However, this work remains marginalized from many discourses on gender and violence, lost as other forms of conflict such as war, terrorism and civil unrest ensure that the state will sanction, or turn a blind eye to, violence by some men in certain situations (Hynes, 2002). Adherence to neo-liberal notions of gender-neutrality, and even gender equality, renders certain possibilities problematic, not least critical engagement with men's violence: 'what the subject is able to say, and what the subject is permitted to say' (Bacchi, 1999: 41). A key task in policy analysis and development is not to even out policy effects on men and women but to probe processes sustaining gendered inequities and hierarchical relations among diverse women and men.

While there might appear to be differing bases to policy and services on domestic violence in Finland and Scotland, albeit working in the same framework of the EU, overarching gendered and social hierarchies remain relatively unchallenged in both countries. Current processes of policy development and implementation may even be said to reinforce these hierarchies. The failure to actively gender the representation of the problem, policy discourses and processes and to tackle the apparent demarcation between the public and the private facilitates an individuated and agendered response to the gendered nature of violence.

These processes and outcomes emerge as policies evolve from discourses that remain gendered, despite the work of supranational and non-governmental organizations and critiques from feminist and profeminist researchers (Hearn, 2002, Weldon, 2002). Market economies and governmental systems leave limited room for group justice, marginalizing the experiences of women who suffer domestic violence. Legal and economic systems promote a neo-liberal notion of equality of opportunity as a basis to public policies but at the same time these policies are characteristically based upon gendered and social assumptions such that equality of outcomes is virtually impossible to achieve. As Bacchi (2004a: 183) comments, the public, political subject remains constituted as masculine: as 'rational, individuated, and abstracted from body'.

Debates hotly contest the relationship between state and home, the public and the private. As Iris Marion Young (1997) points out, in a 'masculinity perspective' on privacy the home and intimate relationships become the domain of patriarchal practices that governments are reluctant to address. Rather, human rights and equality remain framed as public concepts that are usually ungendered in legislation if not in practice. Privacy is about having control and autonomy over who has access, not just to spaces and places, but also to personal information, ideas, and history. To argue for a democratization of privacy would make apparent the very lack of privacy afforded to many women and children in their day-to-day experiences. This could form the basis to reshaping what is meant by the term 'social', so that 'a person [can] have control over access to her living space, her meaningful things and information about herself' (Young, 1997: 163). Accordingly, engaging in theoretical pluralism and empirical work can assist the renewal of the concept of gender in policy work. This requires more critical engagement with notions of the public and the private through the interrogation of the very concept of 'the social' and reworking the boundaries between the public and private. This could offer potential to develop social theory and research, policies and services to form the basis tackling the gendered nature of violence in families. As Bacchi (2004a: 183) asserts:

> … gender cannot be bracketed off; rather, its implications need to be confronted…. we need policy analyses which bring together the study of concepts *and* their uses. …

CONCLUSIONS

The construction of policy discourses on 'domestic violence' represents the problem of violence against women as one for women through an implicit emphasis upon their agency. Major dimensions of policies and services focus on attainment of safety of women, often presumed best secured through leaving the home and relationship. The importance of achieving safety for anyone experiencing violence and abuse is undeniable. However, policy discourses and services in both countries generally fail to move beyond that very necessary but initial point of activity. Generally the gendered nature of violence is seemingly taken-for-granted and managed through services and policies that have an averted gaze to gender, preferring to concentrate upon, or unable to afford to go beyond, experiences of women as victims, survivors and potential agents of change. Likewise, the gendered nature of policy itself is generally taken-for-granted, and this is especially damaging with policies on violence (Hearn and McKie, 2008).

Crime, especially violent crime, is high on national and international policy agendas. Recent policy developments, often linked to economic regeneration, focus on community policing and surveillance of public spaces. In such initiatives 'safety' is predominantly defined as safety in public spaces. Women's Aid and related organizations work to promote women's safety in both private and public spheres. Such campaigning and service work is vital to sustain and develop women-only services. Yet, all too often the problem is framed in an agendered manner. Emphasis continues upon violence in public spaces, mainly among young men, so possibilities of exploring other problem representations are lost.

Critical studies of men's practices exist, as does evidence from women and women's groups on the persuasive impact of violence on their lives (Nousiainen et al., 2001; Hague et al., 2003).

Ongoing underfunding of refuges for women and children who have experienced violence, combined with policy shifts to community or public safety, are part of the reproduction of wider social practices that silence, even sanction, violence against women, especially that in and around intimate relationships, homes and families.

Conventional notions of policy process have often presumed an evidence-informed response to what becomes recognized as ‘problems’ potentially requiring policy responses (Bacchi, 2004a). This ‘rational and detached’, generally masculinist, approach has been critiqued in several ways, not least presumptions of a value-free basis to evidence, policy and implementation (Bacchi, 1999). The very idea of ‘policy’ is easily reified and above all degendered (Hearn and McKie, 2008). In many ways interrelations between state policies and families provide a ‘broader social canvas’ (Bacchi, 2004a: 181) than a focus upon the formal economy. This latter arena is often compartmentalized in what have become termed ‘work-life’ or ‘family-friendly’ policies. While seemingly ungendered, such policies are predicated on ideas about gender embedded in discourses and practices (Bacchi, 2004b), and are hence considered as agendered. The terms ‘private’ and ‘privacy’ are employed to establish barriers, and silences, not critical engagement with gender and domestic life. Yet this demarcation between public and private is a dynamic and ‘fuzzy’ boundary, as, for example, in the privatization of care.

A key challenge is to critically consider policy as ideas and discourses, and how problem representation is evident in policies. How governmental and non-governmental services and organizations establish and review norms and programmes of work reflects policy regimes that need identifying and challenging. Through gendering discourses and ‘problem’ representations, ‘certain possibilities for thought’ can be constructed (Ball, 1990: 18): in this context, more fully gendered research, policy analysis, and development work, on the gendered societal problem of violence.

NOTES

1. The authors are in alphabetical order and with equal contributions.

2. An indication of the extent of use of Finnish terms can be gained from the number of Google search 'hits' using terms within inverted commas. The results of this conducted on 26 June 2008 were as follows: 'perheväkivalta' (97400), 'naisiin kohdistuva väkivalta' (9690), 'lähisuhdeväkivalta' ['intimate/partner violence'] (9500), 'parisuhdeväkivalta' ['couple violence'] (9120), 'kotiväkivalta' ['domestic/home violence'] (2938).

3. Claims of gender symmetry in domestic violence have been made, largely drawing on quantification of acts of assault (Fiebert, 1997). Kimmel (2002) notes these claims are based upon misinterpretations of data or narrowly defined studies. Women can be violent but much of this is in self-defence, and over 90% of intimate violence that is instrumental in the maintenance of control – the more systematic, persistent, and injurious type of violence – perpetuated by men. Given men's physical strength, women are likely to experience greater physical harm and psychological fear (Nazroo, 1995).

4. Violence can and does occur in gay and lesbian relationships. Given the current focus in legislation, policies and services on heterosexual relationships, 'domestic violence' in gay and lesbian relationships is probably under-reported (Mason, 2002). Gendering policies would enhance potential for a broader debate on and responses to gender, sexuality and violence. As the Respect (2000) (The [UK] National Association for Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes and Associated Support Services) statement of principles and philosophy puts it 'Violence within same sex relationships or from women to men is neither the same as - nor symmetrically opposite to - men's violence to women.'

5. In the 2005 survey 43.5% of the women had at least once experienced a man's physical or sexual violence or threat thereof since 15 years of age. The percentages of experiencing violence in a current partnership decreased from 22.2% to 19.6%, outside of a partnership rose from 24.4% to

29.1%; the percentage who had experienced such violence in a previous partnership was the same at 49.0%.

6. Gendered stereotyping can infuse some practitioner attitudes and be implicit in service organizations. Developments in psychological profiling are relevant here (Kropp, 2004; see also Munroe and Meehan, 2004).

7. Interestingly, this is even though coalition politics and policy development is more established in Finland, with the current national government comprising the Conservative [Kansallinen Kokoomus: National Coalition Party], Centre, Swedish People's and Green Parties. A recent previous government actually comprised Social Democrats, Conservatives, the Swedish People's Party, the Left League (former Communists) and the Green Party. It should be noted that these party titles can be misleading, particularly in relation to UK political labels. For example, while the Finnish Conservative (or National Coalition) Party is part of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats [EPP-ED) in the European Parliament, it is probably not very different to the current UK (ex-New) Labour government on some policies.

8. Priority measures that need to be addressed in developing programmes include:

- Ensuring, as highest priority, the safety of women and children victims, through contact between the programme staff and the women and staff working with them; such professional contact with the women is especially important where the man is living with or in contact with the women;
- Not avoiding or diluting the legal consequences of criminal behaviour, so needing to link programmes to court-mandating and legal sanctions;
- Working in co-operation and co-ordination with programmes dealing with the protection of women, including the central involvement of women's projects and women victims' assessments in evaluations of men's programmes;

- Need for clear principles, including recognition in programmes that men's violence to women is about power and control, in contexts of men's dominance;
- Recognition of dangers in overstating effectiveness claims, especially in offering false hopes to partners, ex-partners and other affected parties who may make plans on that basis (Mullender and Burton, 2001; Edwards and Hearn, 2005).

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