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THE INVISIBILITY OF MEN'S PRACTICES

A discourse analysis of gender in domestic violence policy

University of Tampere
School of Social Sciences and Humanities

Master's Programme in Comparative Social Policy and Welfare
Supervisor: Liisa Häikiö

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Domestic violence is a phenomenon which is both gendered and social, in that it is perpetrated overwhelmingly by men against women, and is pervasive throughout all areas of society. Yet the history of the response to domestic violence by the state has often been one of inaction and failure. This master's thesis explores how the governments of Finland and the United Kingdom approach the issue today, by examining how policy around domestic violence is discursively gendered, constructed, and problematised. This is carried out through an analysis of two national policy documents from each country, published between 2008 and 2011, which focus on domestic violence or violence against women more broadly. These texts are studied by a combination of discourse analysis methods and a problematisation approach to policy analysis. The UK and Finland were chosen for comparison because of the different ways in which feminists have traditionally interacted with the state in the two countries. In Britain, feminists have theorised the state as being inherently patriarchal and their struggle has therefore often been oriented 'outside' of the state. In Finland meanwhile, the more consensus-oriented nature of welfare state development has meant that feminists have viewed the state more benignly, and have been more willing to work 'inside' its apparatus. This research investigates whether this traditional contrast between the two countries is apparent in their contemporary policy discourses.

It was found that, in all four of the policy documents, men's practices are almost entirely invisible and unproblematised, and that the discourse is instead centred around the victimhood of women. The violence of men, and its underlying causes, is not engaged with, and is routinely concealed through the use of agentless language. Where men's practices are referred to, they are often degendered, through a gender-neutral discourse which obfuscates the patriarchal dynamics of domestic violence. In this representation of the problem, a deafening silence surrounds men's responsibility for domestic violence. With the focus limited only to the victims, the phenomenon is instead represented as being a problem of women, and women are thus denoted with the onus of responsibility for stopping and preventing men's violence. A fundamental transformation away from this representation of domestic violence is therefore advocated, based on the problematisation of men's practices and the gendered power relations which underpin them, as a vital part of efforts to prevent men from ever choosing to use violence in the first place. This demonstrates that there is an urgent need for further research into primary prevention work and how the norms, assumptions, and ideas which fuel men's violence can be tackled. Furthermore, confronting the practices of men means fundamentally challenging the structures of the patriarchal system, which is itself an essential step in tackling domestic violence.

KEYWORDS: domestic violence, male violence against women, men's practices, gender, discourse analysis, problem representation, policy, Finland, United Kingdom

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1. INTRODUCTION

The magnitude of the harm caused by domestic violence - men's violence against known women - is such that it is an issue which demands the attention of policymakers and social scientists alike. Throughout Europe and across the globe, and in both Finland and the United Kingdom, domestic violence is a colossal violation of human rights which takes place on a massive scale (World Health Organization 2013). In the UK, recent research suggests that almost one in three women have experienced domestic violence since the age of 16, and an estimated 1.2 million women experienced domestic violence in the year to March 2012 (Office for National Statistics 2013). 51 percent of female homicide victims were killed by a partner or ex-partner in the same period (Office for National Statistics 2013), and on average two women a week are murdered by their partners or ex-partners in the UK (Osborne 2012). In Finland meanwhile, a 2005 victimisation survey found that 17 percent of women have experienced physical violence at the hands of their current male partners, whilst in their lifetimes, over 44 percent of women have experienced domestic violence from former male partners (Piispa et al. 2006). Official statistics show that in 2004, 16,000 of the 70,000 police house calls made in Finland were related to domestic violence, and that from 1993 to 2003, between 29 and 53 Finnish women have been killed each year by a male partner or ex-partner (Ahlstedt 2005).

Statistics on domestic violence are limited because of numerous methodological difficulties in collecting accurate data, and in particular because, for several different reasons, women are often reluctant to report their victimisation by men (Harne and Radford 2008). These figures can therefore only give us an indication of the sheer scale of domestic violence in both the UK and Finland, with the true extent of the phenomenon likely to be even greater. What the data also cannot do is reflect the enormity of the trauma that men's violence causes, and the devastating impact that it has upon the lives of women and children. What's more, the extent of domestic violence means that it is not perpetrated by a few pathological and criminal men; it is normalised and routine, and carried out by men from all backgrounds and social groups. It is underpinned by norms, assumptions, and ideas which are reproduced throughout society, and exists on a continuum of commonplace, normalised practices of male violence, abuse, misogyny, and sexism towards women (Kelly 1988). With this in mind, to understand domestic violence and work towards preventing it, it is essential to look not just at individuals but at society; domestic violence is truly a *social* problem.

This demonstrates the importance of men's violence against known women being addressed by policymakers. This work interacts with several different areas of policy, and includes intervening to stop men's violence, providing services and support for women who are victimised by their male partners, and bringing the men responsible to justice. It also shows how important the ways in which we as a society understand, construct, and discuss domestic violence are. Largely through the struggles of feminists, there have been considerable steps forward in this regard in recent decades, as women have brought the phenomenon into the public consciousness and onto government agendas. Yet the persistent prevalence of domestic violence demonstrates that a huge amount of work remains necessary. What's more, the stability of what has been achieved and put in place cannot be taken for granted, particularly in the current period of economic downturn and austerity programmes where many women's services are under threat.

In this context, the contemporary strategies of governments towards domestic violence are highly relevant for social scientists. This is why I want to investigate how the issue is being approached by policymakers, and how they problematise domestic violence and construct their response to it. The concept of gender will be at the crux of this study, because gender is fundamental to domestic violence itself. In both Britain and Finland, and across the world, domestic violence is perpetrated overwhelmingly by men against women (Harne and Radford 2008, World Health Organisation 2013). When the nature and the extent of the violence is taken into account, this gender asymmetry becomes even clearer. For instance, in the UK women make up 89 percent of those who have experienced four or more incidents of domestic violence (Walby and Allen 2004). Meanwhile, Hester (2013) carried out a comparison of 96 domestic violence cases in the criminal justice system over six years, where the perpetrators were male or female. She found that the perpetrators of a much greater proportion of incidents were men, that men's acts of violence were considerably more severe than those of women, that men's violence was more commonly defined by fear and control, that weapons were used more often by women and often as a way of protecting themselves, and that it was more likely for the female perpetrators to be suffering from alcoholism or mental illness (Hester 2013). Yet in spite of these different factors, it was three times more common for women to be arrested for each violent incident, reflecting how society treats violence by women and men differently (Hester 2013). Domestic violence is therefore a starkly gendered phenomenon.

Furthermore, domestic violence is rooted in gender norms, gendered power relations and gendered structural inequalities, and is both a cause and a consequence of the subordination and subjugation of women within a male-dominated, patriarchal society. Men's violence is defined by power, control, and coercion, and it is made up of a wide spectrum of coercive acts which extend far

beyond physical violence (Stark 2007, Williamson, 2010). Where female violence does take place within a relationship, it is typically defensive or retaliatory (Hester 2013, Johnson 2006, Walby and Allen 2004). In spite of this, recognition of domestic violence's gendered asymmetries is often still lacking, including at the policy level. Indeed, society regularly places its focus on the female victims rather than the male perpetrators of domestic violence (Berns 2001, Thapar-Björkert and Morgan 2010, Westmarland and Kelly 2012). We as a society ask 'why does she stay?' rather than 'why is he being violent?' (Nettleton 2011). The blame for the violence itself is thus also often placed on the female victim, as if some failure on her part as a woman, girlfriend, wife or mother led her partner to be violent towards her. The male perpetrators of domestic violence meanwhile remain largely invisible (Westmarland and Kelly 2012).

I will argue in this thesis that if the prevention of domestic violence is our goal, then we cannot continue to ignore men, and render them invisible. Feminists have long argued that men's responsibility for domestic violence must be explicitly identified and acted upon. For this reason, many prefer the term 'men's violence against known women', and this is what shall be used in this thesis, in addition to the gender-neutral but more widely familiar 'domestic violence'. The focus of preventing domestic violence must be on the men who perpetrate it. Indeed the focus must shift to men more broadly, and how they perceive women, relationships, and themselves. A transformation is desperately needed in men's practices and the assumptions which underpin them. This applies not only to men who use violence, but also to all of the men who stay silent about and complicit in male violence. Men therefore have a vital role to play in the struggle against domestic violence, in challenging both their own assumptions and practices and those of other men. Contributing to this struggle is the primary motivation underlying this research.

As two post-industrial, northern European countries, Britain and Finland share both similarities and differences from a social policy perspective. The two countries represent different welfare regimes according to the typology of Esping-Andersen (1990), with the UK classified as a liberal welfare regime and Finland an example of the social democratic welfare model. A similar distinction is made by welfare state typologies which focus on gender and family policies. For instance, Siaroff (1994) categorised welfare regimes based on family welfare orientation, female work desirability and the extent of family benefits which are paid to women. According to this typology, Britain is a Protestant liberal welfare state, where there are relatively high levels of gender equality in labour market participation and family benefits are paid to the mother, but these benefits, and family welfare provisions more generally, are somewhat meagre (Siaroff 1994). Finland meanwhile is a Protestant social democratic welfare state, where Protestantism continues to play a relatively

important role in shaping social policy, a genuine work-welfare choice exists for women, and family benefits, which are also paid to the mother, are high (Siaroff 1994).

Finland is therefore notable for its relatively egalitarian approach to family policy and to social policy more generally. The country is also recognised as a world leader with regards to gender equality in other ways, with the World Economic Forum ranking Finland second in its 2013 Global Gender Gap report for example (in the same report, Britain was ranked 18th) (Bekhouche et al. 2013). In spite of this, domestic violence and other forms of male violence against women remain shockingly high in Finland, as they do in the UK. In reference to the Nordic countries more generally, Eriksson and Pringle write that *"It is clear that a context with strong ideologies of gender equality and child-centredness does not wipe out men's violence against women and children"* (Eriksson and Pringle, 2005, p. 1). The prevalence of male violence against women therefore contradicts the notion of Finland as a 'women-friendly' welfare state where gender equality is already in place.

The differences in the way that the state has operated towards women have both shaped and been shaped by how the feminist movements in the respective countries have theorised and approached it (Kantola 2006). Kantola (2006) points to the traditional 'inside the state' approach of feminists in Finland as representing a significant contrast to the UK, where feminists have historically adopted more of an 'outside of the state' strategy. This dichotomy makes comparative research between the two countries particularly interesting, and it is the primary reason why I have chosen Britain and Finland as the cases for my own project. Indeed, the differences in the ways in which the feminist movements in the two countries have waged their struggle against male violence towards known women demonstrates this distinction particularly markedly. Furthermore, several scholars have noted how the feminist movement in Finland has been relatively small compared to other countries such as Britain, and Hearn and McKie (2010) suggest that this is directly related to the different ways in which feminists have been incorporated within the Finnish state. However, to what extent is this contrast visible in contemporary policies towards domestic violence? By conducting a cross-cultural comparison of Finland and the UK, two countries with distinctive welfare regimes and approaches to family policy and gender equality, I aim to add to our understanding of how men's violence against known is understood and approached at the national policy level in two different post-industrial settings. I want to develop insights into the extent to which the discourses used in the construction and problematisation of domestic violence by policymakers differ in these two cultural contexts.

This research project is therefore comprised of a multiple-case study involving two countries, Britain and Finland, based on four national policy documents published between 2008 and 2011. These documents have been studied with a methodology combining Foucauldian post-structuralist discourse analysis and Bacchi's (2009) 'what's the problem represented to be?' approach. These methods were chosen because the construction and representation of domestic violence as a policy problem at the level of discourse is fundamental to understanding both how the issue is being approached by policymakers, and how it is perceived by society. The question which has guided this research project therefore asks how men's violence against known women is discursively gendered, constructed, and problematised in British and Finnish policy documents. My attempts to provide answers to it are rooted in a pro-feminist theoretical framework, and the ideas and politics of feminism have had a significant influence upon this project. The feminist notion of personal and political reflexivity has also had particularly important role in shaping how the research has been carried out (McCarry 2007). Now I will provide an overview of the academic literature in the field by examining the concept and phenomenon of domestic violence more closely, and consider what is known about the phenomenon through studies around discourses (Chapter 2). Then I will explore domestic violence as a policy field, and explore the ways in which it has been approached in the contextual settings of Britain and Finland (Chapter 3).

2. THEORISING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

This chapter provides a background to domestic violence as a concept and a phenomenon, and discusses theories and research which help us to understand how this phenomenon has been normatively constructed by feminists, policymakers, and wider society. It lays out the theoretical foundations upon which this research project is based, and considers what is known about the phenomenon from research which has focused on discourses. I discuss how domestic violence is a form of male violence against women, situated within a patriarchal social system, and how it is maintained as a structure of patriarchy through discourses which degender men's responsibility for the violence and gender the blame by placing that responsibility upon women, the victims. First however, I begin by discussing how domestic violence can be conceptualised and how it is situated.

2.1 Conceptualising domestic violence

Domestic violence is a broad concept, which incorporates numerous forms of material practices, including physical violence, sexual violence, and an array of coercive, intimidating, and controlling behaviours (Harne and Radford 2008). It can take place within any relationship which is intimate or familial, and it is thus 'domestic' not necessarily in setting, but in its relational nature. Domestic violence is a gendered phenomenon, in that it is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men towards women. It is also a social phenomenon, in that it is commonplace throughout society and across all social groups. It is therefore a problem of both gender - and in particular, men's practices - and of society, and largely as a consequence of pressure from the feminist movement, policymakers have increasingly come to recognise domestic violence in this light. However, the ways in which domestic violence is conceptualised, constructed, and problematised is situational, and varies significantly. The problematisations of the phenomenon by policymakers often conflict with those put forward by feminists, in particular by failing to recognise and address its gendered and social foundations. Indeed, many of the ways in which men's violence against known women is represented as a problem by governments lead to ineffective, counterproductive, or anti-feminist policies and practices (Bacchi 1999).

The consequences of these policies should be considered not only at the government level, or on their direct material effects, but also in terms of how they impact upon public perceptions and understandings of domestic violence and of gender, intimate relationships, and women and men more broadly. Policies are normative in the sense that they shape, and are shaped by, common meanings, assumptions, ideas and values. They impact upon how we see each other, on the relations between women and men, and on what is seen as normal. This is of considerable importance,

because we act according to what we perceive to be normal. The ways in which policies construct and respond to domestic violence are therefore likely to not only reflect, but also to influence, the ways in which wider society understands the issue.

Recognising the connection of domestic violence to wider society is crucial, because it also means recognising that it is not inevitable, and that it is something which can be stopped. Examining the gendered and social conditions which underlie men's violence against women helps us to understand how this might be achieved. Approaches which focus only on the individual level of male violence suggest that it is an 'isolated' phenomenon perpetrated by a small number of criminal, pathological men, in turn separating and othering them and their practices from men more generally. However women's lived experiences tell us that domestic violence is not episodic or isolated behaviour perpetrated by a few deviant individuals. Men's violence in intimate relationships is instead a normalised phenomenon, which forms part of a continuum of acts of sexism, misogyny, abuse and violence that are routine and everyday experiences for women and children of all social groups (Kelly 1988). In this way, 'normal' and 'abnormal' male practices blur into one another (Bacchi 1999, Kelly 1988). The extent and the normalised nature of domestic violence and other forms of male violence against women, and the way that they permeate throughout society, illustrate that it is not the behaviour of a small number of 'pathological' men which needs to change, it is the practices of men more broadly, the gendered power relations which are reflected and reproduced in men's violence, and thus, society as a whole. The need for social change is underlined by the historic and continued failure of the state to prevent men's violence, to provide adequate support for its female victims, or to bring about justice and safety for women.

Domestic violence is situated within a patriarchal system which is defined by the subordination and oppression of women and the dominance of men. Men's violence against women both contributes to, and is a product of, this systemic inequality and oppression. For Walby (1990), male violence itself forms a social structure which constitutes patriarchy, together with patriarchal relations in paid employment, in the state, in sexuality, and in cultural institutions, as well as the patriarchal mode of production. This means that when analysing domestic violence, we must look not just at why it is that some men use violence, but why it is that the state fails to tackle the phenomenon or provide adequate protection or support to women, because these are interconnecting operations of the structures of patriarchy itself (Walby 1990). In addition to a rejection of biological determinism, conceptualising patriarchy as a system of social structures enables us to move beyond the notion that each individual man is always in a position of dominance and all women are always in a position of subordination (Walby 1990). It is therefore important to recognise the complex ways in

which other systems of oppression, such as capitalism and racism, interact and intersect with patriarchy on different terrains. This also applies to domestic violence itself, where factors such as class and ethnicity can have important impacts on the lived experiences of women, and the ways in which they are coerced and controlled by men. However, it is a defining feature of patriarchy that men as a class have access to powers and privilege which women as a class do not have, simply for belonging to the category of men. This includes a monopoly on the use of violence.

The monopoly on the use of violence which patriarchy affords to men applies not just within relationships and the family, but in society more broadly. Men are responsible for perpetrating the vast majority of violence in society, both against women and other men. Moreover, in both Britain and Finland, male violence is culturally embedded throughout society. Whilst it can lead to repercussions from the state (though often, and particularly in cases of male violence against women, it does not) social norms and relations mean that men nevertheless feel entitled to use violence in some situations, and that doing so is legitimate (Walby 1986). Indeed, the state itself explicitly permits and uses violence in certain circumstances, and it is primarily men who are given the legitimacy to carry this violence out, through institutions such as the police and military (Walby 1986). Moreover, society broadly accepts that the state has the right to use violence in this way when it is deemed to be necessary.

Male violence is also normalised, legitimised and glorified throughout society, particularly the media and in cultural artefacts such as books and films (Walby 1986). The use of violence by men to exert power and control, and maintain social orders, hierarchies, and power relations, is thus a common feature of patriarchal society. Indeed, male violence often contributes to upholding the relations of patriarchy itself (Walby 1990). Nowhere is this more apparent than within relationships and families, where men's use of violence against known women and children maintains male power and control both within the relationship, the family, and in wider society. Like with other forms of violence, society tells men that in certain circumstances, using violence against known women is tolerable and legitimate. This is reflected in the overwhelming failure of the state and wider society to hold men to account for their use of violence against known women. Male violence against women is a form of violence which is decentralised but nevertheless sanctioned and condoned by the state through its inaction (Walby 1990).

2.2 Degendering the problem

Many feminists have long argued that language is not simply a neutral means of reflecting or describing the world, and have critically probed the connection between language and oppression,

and how language is deeply involved in the maintenance of patriarchal power relations (Gill, 1995). Feminist research has demonstrated how, in a multitude of ways, domination is sustained through language, and how language does not just reflect inequalities, but helps to construct them. Institutions, policymakers, professionals and wider society both construct and understand men's violence against known women, and our knowledge of it, through discourses. The ways in which the phenomenon is discursively constructed shapes what is visible and what is not, what is known and what is not, whose agency is recognised and whose is not, and what is and is not done about it through policy and practice. How men's violence against known women is constructed at the policy level in turn influences institutional and social practices and how the issue is understood by wider society. In this regard, policy has the potential to bring about changes in the way an issue such as men's violence against known women is perceived within society; it has the potential to create new meanings, and to advocate an alternative set of values. Policies may thus adhere to and reinforce existing values and meanings, but they can also effect social change by challenging current assumptions and establishing new understandings in the public domain. There can be therefore be substantial differences at one moment in time between policy statements around men's violence against known women, and practices 'on the ground' (Murray and Powell 2009).

One of the major focuses of feminist research around the maintenance of patriarchal power relations through language, has been the ways in which men's violence against women is talked about. A recurring finding among this research has been that language often functions to hide and distort both men's violence, and the gendered nature of domestic violence. Berns (2001) analysed political and men's magazines and how the political discourse around domestic violence was constructed within them, and she found that these constructions commonly obscured men's violence and at the same time centred the burden of responsibility on women. This recurring discourse, which disputes feminist constructions of men's violence, is described by Berns (2001) as 'patriarchal resistance', because of its basis in resisting attempts to situate men's violence and other social problems within a framework of patriarchy. Indeed, rather than representing a serious concern for male victims (whose needs were in fact rarely discussed within the magazines), patriarchal resistance resembles a political backlash and countermovement to feminism and feminist constructions of men's violence against known women (Berns 2001). Berns (2001) makes the point that whilst male victimhood should be taken seriously, it should not be used as part of a strategy to obscure the violence of men towards women, as is so often the case.

The patriarchal resistance discourse contributes to the normalisation of men's violence against known women, the diversion of attention from men's responsibility for violence and its cultural and

structural roots, and the distortion of women's use of violence (Berns 2001). Furthermore, it is made up of two main discursive strategies. First is 'degendering the problem', where men's violence is reframed as 'human violence', and the role of gender and power in the phenomenon is concealed (Berns 2001). Second is 'gendering the blame', where the emphasis is on the culpability of women for both ending and preventing the violence (Berns 2001). The prevalence of strategies which serve these functions is a common theme in the academic literature around the construction of domestic violence in discourse. Based on Berns's (2001) theory, I shall therefore examine first how the problem of domestic violence is degendered in discourse in various ways, before further considering how the blame for the phenomenon is gendered and placed upon women.

A crucial way in which the problem is degendered is through the systematic avoidance of acknowledging and addressing men's responsibility for domestic violence through language. In an analysis of academic journal articles from different disciplines discussing domestic violence, Lamb (1991) found that men's violence was typically constructed as 'acts without agents', with the linguistic choices of authors consistently discursively absolving men of responsibility for their violent acts. This is carried out in five main ways (Lamb 1991). First, through the diffusion of responsibility for the violence, with the use of terminology which mutualises and equates the experiences of the perpetrator and the victim such as 'violent relationships' and 'family violence'. Second, by omitting the agent of the acts of domestic violence through the use of the passive voice to describe men's use of violence as if it was something which just 'happens' to women. Third, by nominalisation, where acts of abuse and violence turn from verbs describing action into nouns describing a concept, so that it is 'domestic violence' which harms women, rather than men. Fourth, by constructing victims without agents, through the discussion of women's victimisation without reference to the men responsible. Finally, through gender obfuscation, where the genders of the violent man and the victimised woman are obscured, in particular through the use of gender-neutral language (Lamb 1991).

Gender-neutral code words, including 'domestic violence' itself, which blur responsibility and thus also implicate women, are commonly used to describe violence that is perpetrated solely by men (Phillips and Henderson 1999). Meanwhile, language which mutualises male violence and constructs it as a shared, degendered phenomenon is particularly problematic, in hiding the unilateral nature of men's violence against women and the sole responsibility of the perpetrator for it, and implying that some blame should be placed on the victim as well as the perpetrator (Coates and Wade 2004). The use of the passive voice to describe acts of domestic violence and in the process degender these acts and hide the perpetrators is a particularly prevalent and obfuscating

language choice, which is specifically used to conceal men's responsibility for violence against known women. Frazer and Miller (2009) compared reports in the mass media about cases of domestic violence where the perpetrator was male and cases where the perpetrator was female. They found that the passive voice was used much more regularly in the texts which described men's violence against known women (Frazer and Miller 2009). This illustrates that discursive operations which conceal the perpetrator's agency, such as the use of the passive voice, are not equally common across all descriptions of violence, but that their use is specifically preferred when discussing men's violence against known women (Frazer and Miller 2009). This also indicates that there is more of a willingness to emphasise the responsibility of the perpetrator for acts of domestic violence when the perpetrator is a woman, than when the perpetrator is a man (Frazer and Miller 2009).

Men's violence against women is also obscured through discourse in other ways. Coates and Wade (2004) found in their analysis of sexual assault trial judgments that judges commonly drew from psychological concepts and constructs in order to explain men's use of violence, which systematically reformulated deliberate acts of violence into acts which were neither deliberate nor violent. The deliberate nature of the sexual assaults was also obscured through the use of externalising attributions by trial judges, which portrayed an external force such as alcohol as being the cause of the violence (Coates and Wade 2004). These 'psychologising' causal attributions therefore served to both conceal the violence itself, and diminish the responsibility of the perpetrator (Coates and Wade 2004). Coates and Wade (2004) identify how psychologising attributions are combined with other linguistic devices, including the use of the passive voice, to accomplish discursive operations which function to conceal the violence, mitigate the perpetrator's responsibility, conceal the resistance of the victim, and blame or pathologise the victims.

Another study by Coates and Wade (2007), which examined different accounts of 'personalised' violence, by a male perpetrator of domestic violence, a psychiatrist, a judge, a government minister, and a therapist, illustrates the magnitude and the pervasiveness with which the four aforementioned discursive operations are put into practice locally in a diverse range of accounts. The ways in which these discursive practices misrepresent men's violence and women's experiences of it, and obstruct effective interventions, demonstrate that *"the problem of violence is inextricably linked to the problem of representation"* (Coates and Wade 2007, p. 511). Indeed, both within the context of the violence itself and the ways in which it is perceived by wider society, misrepresentation is a crucial part of men's violence against women: *"Perpetrators often misrepresent their own actions to*

garnish support, avoid responsibility, blame the victim, and conceal their activities" (Coates and Wade 2004, p. 503).

2.3 Gendering the blame

The other main feature of patriarchal resistance which Berns (2001) describes is the gendering of the blame, and the allocation and (mis)representation of responsibility and blame is a core theme of the wider academic literature around domestic violence discourses. For instance, in an earlier study of women's magazines, Berns (1999) found that men's violence against known women was typically constructed as both a private problem, and as the victim's problem. Responsibility was commonly focused at the individual level rather than connected to wider society, and was commonly placed on the victims of men's violence rather than the perpetrators, with women seen as being responsible for solving the problem and stopping the violence (Berns 1999). Meanwhile, Coates and Wade (2004, 2007) note that the resistance of victims is often ignored and dismissed. This invisibility means that women's supposed lack of resistance becomes the focus of attention and intervention, rather than the ways in which the perpetrator suppressed that resistance (Coates and Wade 2004). When the blame is gendered, it is thus not the male perpetrators of domestic violence with whom responsibility is denoted, but the female victims.

In this way, domestic violence is represented as being a problem of women. In a discourse analysis of both professional and popular literature discussing male violence against women, Phillips and Henderson (1999) found that amongst the 165 abstracts and 11 full-length articles that they examined, 'male violence' was used as a phrase only eight times. In the identification of victims, women were commonly gendered, but the perpetrators were rarely gendered as being men. The degendering of the perpetrator in this way, and the inclusion and gendering only of the victim in the discourse, further demonstrates how men's violence against women is conceived as a problem of women (Phillips and Henderson 1999). Simply by focusing attention overwhelmingly on women on relation to domestic violence, blame is gendered and it is attributed to the victims. When men's role in violence against women is not identified, women are instead summoned as being the problem, and from academic work, to professional practice, to popular culture, the historic failure of society to arrest, prosecute and justly sentence men who use violence is reproduced (Phillips and Henderson 1999).

In an analysis of ten major women's magazines and men's magazines published between 1998 and 2008, Nettleton (2011) also found that instead of men being held responsible for their use of violence, women were typically blamed, for example because they had 'chosen the wrong partner'.

In the women's magazines, women were expected to bear responsibility for the behaviour of both themselves and men, whilst in the men's magazines, a tolerance for and celebration of domestic violence was found (Nettleton 2011). Nowhere was a connection made between men's violence against known women with wider issues of structural gender inequality and patriarchal power relations (Nettleton 2011). Constructions of women's agency, or of women being competent and resourceful in the face of domestic violence, were as rare as examples of men taking responsibility for their violence, or simply making the choice not to use violence altogether (Nettleton 2011). Nettleton (2011) argues that *"Well-meaning media narratives that attempt to directly address domestic violence may contribute to concealing its causes and ultimate preventions"* (Nettleton 2011, p. 155). Such discourses limit the possibilities for identifying the problem, situating it within its cultural and social contexts, and preventing domestic violence.

Making sense of the social contexts and social worlds in which violence and victimisation are understood and conceptualised is crucial, and within the social contexts of institutions and institutional discourses, a dichotomous culture of blame and responsibility is often nurtured (Thapar-Björkert and Morgan 2010). Based on the findings of their study of the discourses deployed by those who work with victims of men's violence against known women through the Victim Support organisation in the UK, Thapar-Björkert and Morgan (2010) contend that there are three main elements which underlie the dichotomy of blame and responsibility. First, the burden of responsibility being placed upon women for their own victimisation, which absolves men from accepting responsibility for their violence. Second, the surveillance of victims, who are expected to conform to certain regulations of their behaviour by perpetrators, by institutions and the professionals who work with them, and by wider society. Third, the prevalence of ideas and assumptions within institutions which do not challenge dominant discourses around victims of men's violence (Thapar-Björkert and Morgan 2010). This culture is one of resignation, which normalises men's violence against women, because within the dichotomy of blame and responsibility, women are understood as deserving their fate (Thapar-Björkert and Morgan 2010).

2.4 Conclusion

Domestic violence is a gendered and a social phenomenon, a social problem which has become increasingly recognised as such by policymakers. It is a phenomenon which is situated and rooted in patriarchy, and constitutes one of the core structures of systematic male domination. The ways in which the problem is conceptualised, constructed, and discussed - particularly in spheres which have the strongest influence of public perceptions such as government policy and the media - are of vital importance in shaping how the phenomenon is understood and perceived by wider society. For

this reason, language has long been a site of interest and contestation for feminists, who have been keen to examine how language helps to maintain patriarchal power relations and patriarchal practices such as male violence. Day-to-day, taken-for-granted discursive practices are key to upholding patriarchal structures, and crucial for sustaining the invisibility of the violence of men against women, and the shifting of responsibility for this violence onto the women who are victimised. This can be seen in the academic literature, which demonstrates how throughout society, including at the policy level and in institutional practices, men's violence against known women is discursively concealed, obscured, and misrepresented. A wide range of linguistic devices and discursive strategies, from the routine use of the passive voice, to the mutualisation of women and men's experiences, contribute to the invisibility of men's practices, by degendering the problem, and gendering the blame.

3. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICY IN FINLAND AND THE UK

This chapter broadens the overview of the academic literature to policy around domestic violence in Britain and Finland. Domestic violence as a field of policy, which interconnects with a multitude of different areas of governance and the state, is investigated. How domestic violence has been approached by policymakers as well as by wider society in both Britain and Finland is examined, in order to give some insight into how contemporary policy responses to the phenomenon have been arrived at. Similarities and differences in the ways in which the issue has been approached in the two countries are considered, as well as some of the reasons why these two national cases make for a useful comparison. This is in order to provide a contextual background for my own comparative analysis of contemporary domestic violence policy in Britain and Finland.

3.1 Domestic violence as a policy field

Crime, and violent crime in particular, are high on policy agendas nationally and internationally, with community policing and public surveillance in particular receiving the attention of policymakers in recent years for example (Hearn and McKie 2010). However, in this context safety is constructed as being safety in public spaces, and women's safety - and men's violence - in private spaces is largely ignored. Likewise, human rights and equality are constructed as being public, genderless concepts, whilst the home and intimate relationships remain in the 'private' domain of patriarchal practices, which governments are reluctant to address (Hearn and McKie 2010). The emphasis of policy upon community and public safety is one example of how policy is perceived to be gender-neutral, and the gendered dynamics which lie beneath so much policymaking are ignored, to the detriment of women.

For whilst policy is often conceived as being gender-neutral, in reality it is constantly interacting with gender and gendered power relations. Policies so often affect women and men differently, based upon their varying positions and privileges within society. Furthermore, assumptions about gender significantly influence the development of policies, yet often these assumptions are not recognised or explicitly expressed (Hearn and McKie 2008). Men in particular are commonly degendered in policy, and the gendering of men's practices and the naming of men is especially rare when men's violence against known women is being discussed (Hearn and McKie 2008). There is a persistent lack of analysis or problematisation of men who use violence, of the men who stay silent about male violence, or of masculinity and men's practices more broadly. Instead, the focus of policy with regards to domestic violence is predominantly on women and their children, with the emphasis on their leaving the relationship and the home (Hearn and McKie 2008). In this context,

the overarching and pervasive gendered patterns of domestic violence, and the ways in which services are organised to deal with them, go unquestioned. Even when policy does make gender explicit, the focus is largely centred on what Hearn and McKie (2008) call the 'policy users' rather than the 'problem creators'. Whilst the safety of women and children should be paramount, policy discourses and services usually fail to move beyond this starting point in their attempts to tackle domestic violence (Hearn and McKie 2008).

For example, in a comparison of government approaches towards domestic violence in Scotland and Finland, Hearn and McKie (2010) argue that in the policies and discourses at the national level in both countries, there is an emphasis on physical forms of violence, responsibility is placed on the agency of women to stop the violence, and a narrow understanding of violence in relationships is encouraged. Problematisation of the gendered nature of men's violence against known women is largely absent, with individualised and masculine-oriented discourses dominating policy work (Hearn and McKie 2010). Where male perpetrators are discussed, they are constructed as 'atypical men', whilst the agentic focus is placed almost entirely on women, and stopping domestic violence is seen as dependent on their leaving the home, rather than excluding men (Hearn and McKie 2010).

Whilst attention must not be taken away from crucially important services for women, a shift is necessary in policies and services, away from a focus restricted only to female victims, to directly addressing the violence of men, and broadening the analysis and approach to gender and to wider society (Hearn and McKie 2008). Hearn and McKie (2008) argue that the processes of gendering of domestic violence in policy representations and practices also need to be transformed from representations of the phenomenon as being atypical, and only an issue for identified 'perpetrators', to looking at men and men's practices more widely. This means connecting violence to the *"practices, values and assumptions that are widely accepted as normal, i.e. challenging the construction of men in ways that include power over and violence towards women"* (Hearn and McKie 2008, p. 79). In addition, the dynamics and structures underlying gendered power relations which are concealed within and reproduced by policies must be opened up, and efforts must be refocused from the 'policy users' to the 'problem creators' (Hearn and McKie 2008).

In Britain, many feminists have understood the state as being patriarchal in nature. This can be seen in Walby's (1990) theorisation of the state as representing one of the core structures of patriarchy, for example. She writes that *"The state is patriarchal as well as being capitalist and racist. While being a site of struggle and not a monolithic entity, the state has a systematic bias towards patriarchal interests in its policies and actions"* (Walby 1990, p. 21). The position of feminists in

Britain has therefore often been one 'outside' of the state (Kantola 2006). This is connected to fears about the compromises to their agenda that would be enforced as part of being co-opted into state institutions, or of their struggles being defined by the state's patriarchal structures (Kantola 2006). Meanwhile, in Finland the state has traditionally been conceived by feminists as more of a benign instrument for social change (Kantola 2006). This perspective has been shaped by the nature of the social democratic, 'women-friendly' Finnish welfare state. In Finland, unlike the UK, the welfare state has been built more through consensus than conflict, and women and the labour movement have played important roles in shaping its development, leading to positive impacts on many women's lives (Hearn 2001). Finnish feminists have therefore more commonly adopted an 'inside' approach to the state (Kantola 2006). This is based on a wariness of being ignored and on the margins, without vital resources, and with limited opportunities to change the structures of power (Kantola 2006). The classical dichotomous feminist debate about how to interact with the state therefore reflects and represents an important distinction in how the feminist movements have traditionally operated in Britain and Finland, which also connects to wider contrasts with regards to social policy, such as differing welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen 1990, Kantola 2006, Siaroff 1994). It has particular relevance in the context of men's violence against women, where the varying approaches of feminists in their struggle against domestic violence in relation to the state in Britain and Finland have had a significant impact upon policies and services in the two countries.

Recent years have seen an increasing policy emphasis by the European Union (EU) and many of its member states on gender equality. As part of this process, the concept of mainstreaming has become dominant practice at the government level (Hearn and McKie 2008). However, the focus of this approach to tackling gender inequality has been on equality of opportunity, on 'means' equality, which is based on treating women and men equally, rather than on equality of outcomes, or 'results' equality, where means are applied unequally in order to achieve equal outcomes (Hearn and McKie 2008). Whilst discrimination on the basis of sex has been legislated against, engagement with the ways in which social relations reflect and are shaped by gender has remained absent. For instance, differential treatment in order for women to be 'equally safe' based on the gendered asymmetries of domestic violence is unacceptable according to the mainstreaming approach (Hearn and McKie 2008).

As one example of mainstreaming initiatives, Hearn and McKie (2008) point to how a gender-neutrality approach lies at the conceptual foundation of policies and services in Finland. Meanwhile, in Britain the government has introduced the Gender Equality Duty, which promotes equality of opportunity between women and men and requires all public authorities to eliminate

harassment and discrimination on the basis of sex (Hearn and McKie 2008). However, this duty only concerns itself with monitoring policies and services, it does not analyse or confront their gendered basis (Hearn and McKie 2008). In Europe, the mainstreaming approach has shifted the focus to categories and targets based upon gender-neutral, neo-liberal systems of administration, and it has minimised the importance of equal outcomes (Hearn and McKie 2008). EU bodies focusing on women and gender were deemed to be unnecessary and subsequently disbanded after mainstreaming was introduced, and it has in fact side-lined or even removed gender from policy agendas (Hearn and McKie 2008). The potential impacts of this in terms of attempts to tackle domestic violence, a phenomenon clearly gendered and rooted in unequal gendered power relations, are highly deleterious.

One instance of the effects of neo-liberal models of administration can be observed in the managerial emphasis on performance targets within the criminal justice system in the UK. These targets, Harne and Radford (2008) argue, fail to fulfil the government commitment of putting victims at the heart of the criminal justice system. This can be seen for example in the target to increase the number of 'sanction detections' - the quantity of cases which lead to a caution or criminal prosecution - which fails to take into account the perspectives of survivors and their children, and whether or not these outcomes serve to protect the victims of men's violence (Harne and Radford 2008). Another example of this kind of problematic policing target is that of the reduction of repeated victimisation, which has increased the likelihood of police being less responsive to repeat call-outs from victims (Harne and Radford 2008).

The influence of the EU and other supranational bodies, and the globalised hegemony of neo-liberal governance as well as 'mainstreaming' and 'equal opportunity' approaches to tackling gender inequality, point to greater convergence in domestic violence policy across national boundaries. For instance, Hearn and McKie's (2010) comparison of domestic violence policies and their outcomes in Scotland and Finland suggests that the ways in which domestic violence is represented as a problem increasingly share similarities across cultures, and seem to be converging to some extent in their 'degenderedness'. The gendered nature of domestic violence is taken for granted in this converging approach, but is not explicitly examined, and an 'averted gaze' to gender is adopted in the policies and services that manage the phenomenon (Hearn and McKie 2010).

3.2 Domestic violence and Finland's 'women-friendly' welfare state

Finland is renowned for its 'women-friendly' welfare state, based on the universalistic, redistributive basis of its welfare regime, and the relatively extensive services and support it provides to women

and children. Clarke (2011) describes how the protections that have been gained for Finnish women who are mothers and caregivers have enabled them to have a greater degree of economic freedom than in many other countries (although the shift away from a communitarian welfare state and towards a rights-based society is diminishing this freedom through policies such as privatisation). Yet the rights women in Finland have won in many areas paradoxically coexist with statistics which suggest even higher levels of domestic violence than in other Nordic and Western European countries (Clarke 2011).

In Finland as with the other Nordic countries, an emphasis on human rights is instilled in much of government policy, which has played a significant role in instigating the prioritisation of gender equality in many areas (Hearn and McKie 2010). However, this conception of human rights and gender equality is based on the notion of a 'genderless citizen', to which gender-neutrality is central (Hearn and McKie 2010). A gender-neutral approach focused on agency at the level of individuals has therefore dominated policies and services around men's violence against known women (McKie and Hearn 2004). Finnish governments have commonly viewed inequalities in terms of poverty and health rather than gender, and there is limited acceptance of the gendered roots of domestic violence in most services (McKie and Hearn 2004). This has led Hearn and McKie to conclude that *"Strong welfare state development and gender equality policy and ideology in Finland coexist with gender inequalities and relative gender invisibility"* (2010, p. 149). The Nordic-themed emphasis upon gender equality therefore coincides with gender inequalities in practice, especially in the context of male violence against women (Clarke 2011). This is without question related to how *"Many of these policies and practices are based on a gender-neutral ideal that does not take into account how gender and hetero-normative hierarchies actually function in the public and private sphere"* (Clarke 2011, p. 12).

The feminist movement in Finland has historically been comparatively weak, and it was not until the 1990's that male violence against women became a major focus (Clarke 2011). Clarke (2011) describes how there has been a 'fierce popular rejection' of feminism in Finland, and that the *"focus on 'woman friendliness' coexisted with a general popular resistance to feminism that often silenced any discussion of gender violence"* (Clarke 2011, p. 16). In this environment, men's violence against known women has been and to a significant extent continues to be a hidden issue. Explanations have emphasised the role of alcohol abuse, poverty, or the dynamics of dysfunctional families, with the solution seen to be at the individual rather than the social level (Clarke 2011, Kantola 2006).

The comparatively smaller impact the feminist movement has been able to have in Finland has meant that other groups have been able to shape public discourses and policies around men's violence against known women. Gender-neutral, family-centred, and anti-feminist constructions of domestic violence as 'family violence' have thus dominated the public debate, though there has been a discursive shift towards a gendered understanding of domestic violence at the policy level more recently (Kantola 2006, Keskinen 2005). Yet whilst the importance of gender and power has increasingly been recognised, they are often viewed in terms of traits which constitute domestic violence, but not in relation to the wider gendered power relations which the phenomenon is rooted within (Keskinen 2006). Keskinen (2006) argues that this is a result of the role played by the social and healthcare bureaucracy, which continues to be oriented towards individualised, family-centred, and 'expert'-dominated practices, in influencing the contemporary 'violence against women' discourse. In this way, a negotiation and struggle between different discourses, including those of feminists and family violence-oriented professional approaches, have shaped the debate around men's violence against known women and children in Finland.

In the family-centred understandings of men's violence against known women which have been so hegemonic, it is the family or the relationship which is problematised, rather than the men responsible for the violence. Domestic violence is constructed as being one among many relationship, marital or family problems, and responsibility is therefore attributed to all actors, including the victims (Hautanen 2005). These family and relationship-centred approaches have played a major role in shaping refuge work in Finland. This work developed out of former child welfare institutions, and the Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters was the first organisation to set shelters up in the country in 1979 (Hautanen 2005, Kantola 2006). The organisation was founded in 1945 with the social welfare aim of helping women whose children had been born out of wedlock (with many of these women being victims of men's violence) (Clarke 2011).

When shelters started to be developed, they were therefore oriented towards child protection, and were operated by salaried social work professionals rather than volunteers (Clarke 2011, Hautanen 2005, Kantola 2006). They would work in cooperation with the social services sector, and were funded by the state, in connection with the Finnish 'state responsibility' discourse (Hearn and McKie 2010, Kantola, 2006). Kantola (2006) notes that as a result of their 'family violence' orientation, places were typically reserved only for women with children, and shelters would sometimes be underused. When women would come to the shelter, both partners would be invited to take part in a dialogue about the child's welfare (Clarke 2011, Hautanen 2005, Keskinen 2005). This emphasis on

mediation, the connection with the state, and the orientation towards social services and child protection in the approach of Finnish shelters has contrasted with many other Western countries (McKie and Hearn 2004). This includes the UK, where feminists and the women's movement have been the driving force behind developing autonomous refuges, and refuge work has been shaped by an understanding of domestic violence in connection with wider gendered power relations (Hearn and McKie 2010). In recent years however, Finnish shelters have finally also become more oriented towards female victims (Clarke 2011), and separating women from violent men rather than bringing them together for mediation (Keskinen 2005).

It was in the 1990's that the concept of 'violence against women' gained increasing prominence in Finland. This coincided with feminists starting to campaign more widely against domestic violence in the country, as well as increased international pressure for action to be taken around the issue, and the shift in the debate can be evidenced by the outlawing of rape within marriage in 1994 (Hautanen 2005, Kantola 2006). However, Hautanen (2005) argues that despite this change, a commonly-held fear about being perceived to be accusing all men of being violent when discussing 'violence against women' has remained. This means that whilst it is acceptable to gender the victims and discuss violence against women, it is felt that this discussion must be carried out in vague terms in order to avoid making generalisations about men. This can require the use of language which constructs men and women alike as being perpetrators or potential perpetrators of domestic violence (Hautanen 2005).

The ongoing influence of the family-centred, gender-neutral conception of domestic violence can therefore be seen in this trepidation around focusing on men's responsibility for violence, and these factors have also played a significant role in hiding from the discussion fathers who use violence in families (Hautanen 2005). In a study of how domestic violence and parenthood are handled by Finnish family counselling agencies, Keskinen (2005) points out that when discursive resources around power and gender are absent, scrutiny instead often turns to women and mothers. Whilst on one occasion professionals may therefore take women's accounts of the violence they have experienced seriously and offer them support, on another occasion they may put pressure on mothers to arrange contact between the children and their violent father, for example (Keskinen 2005). An important factor in this context is what Keskinen (2005) refers to as the lack of a discursive link being made between fatherhood and violence. Unlike their much more concretised perceptions of mothers, professionals construct the fatherhood of violent men on an idealised level, as a positive future vision, aided by the significantly less contact they have with men (Keskinen 2005). Keskinen (2005) therefore argues that it is *"time to pay attention to the concrete fatherhood*

of men who have used violence and to regard violence as something they are accountable for" (Keskinen 2005, pp. 47-48). Including fatherhood in an analysis of domestic violence means naming men as perpetrators and probing the relationship between men's practices, masculinity, and violence, elements which have commonly been missing from the debate around domestic violence in Finland (Hautanen 2005).

In addition, the way that parenthood is gendered means that motherhood and fatherhood are constructed as two very distinct social categories, with the responsibilities of each parent defined differently (Hautanen 2005). In other words, the focus of society's construction of parenting remains on motherhood, and for this reason, a man who uses violence in the family is not typically defined in terms of his commitments as a father. At the same time, the concept of fatherhood is rhetorically powerful in contemporary Finland and it is a concept in which much hope for the future is invested (Hautanen 2005). McKie and Hearn (2004) note that fatherhood is also represented as a solution to the perceived 'breakdown' of families in society by policymakers in Finland. Confronting the violence of men and fathers in this situation is therefore made even more difficult. This is reflected in child custody and contact arrangements in cases of domestic violence, where Finnish policy has dictated that parents should try to be reconciled, and a close relationship should be maintained between the child and both parents through joint custody after separation (Hautanen 2005). In instances of male violence against known women, this approach can compound the risk of physical and psychological harm to both the mother and the child. Yet the public debate is often centred on men's unhappiness following divorce, with little consideration of the possibility of fathers using violence towards their partners and ex-partners and their children (Hautanen 2005).

Meanwhile, as immigration to Finland has risen, a moral panic has developed as part of wider anti-immigrant, xenophobic discourses, around men who are Muslim or not white and the notion that they represent repressive, patriarchal values. Cultural difference is understood as the cause of immigrant men's use of violence, and immigrant men are portrayed as being innately violent (Clarke 2011). For example, Hiitola and Heinonen (2009, in Clarke 2011) found that domestic violence perpetrated by Finnish men is perceived by many social workers to be an isolated problem, whilst immigrant men's violence is viewed as a problem of their culture. These ideas have coincided with the rise in popularity of the True Finns party, which constructs immigrants as being responsible for many of the social problems in Finland, and in particular male violence against women (Clarke 2011). A consequence of this scapegoating of immigrant men and immigrant communities has been to reduce attention further from the pervasiveness of male violence against known women and wider gendered power inequalities throughout Finnish society (Clarke 2011).

Clarke (2011) argues that the narrow focus and stigmatisation of these communities has prevented a much needed self-examination of the continuing prevalence of male violence against women in Finland as a whole. Instead, anxieties about the high levels of violence in Finnish society are projected onto immigrant men, and domestic violence is represented as a cultural problem rather than a gendered one (Clarke 2011).

The historical and continued inadequacy of the state's response to men's violence against known women in Finland contradicts the notion of the 'women-friendly' welfare state. Indeed, Kantola (2006) argues that the cultural attachment to this conception of the state has acted as an obstacle to recognising and taking action against domestic violence as a gendered phenomenon, because to do so conflicts with the widely-held belief that gender equality has already been achieved in Finland, and that the status of women there is better than anywhere else in the world. Eriksson and Pringle (2005) contend that the emphasis of mainstream social policy analyses on class and poverty, and the neglect of gender as well as other dimensions such as ethnicity and disability, have created a view of the Nordic countries through a rose-tinted lens. They point out that when a broader analysis is adopted which takes into account gender and gendered issues such as male violence against women, a less flattering picture starts to develop (Eriksson and Pringle 2005).

3.3 Tackling domestic violence in Britain

The situation in the UK is complicated by the fact that there are devolved parliaments and governments in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, and to a significant extent, family policy is specific to each of these governments. However, whilst some of the research discussed in this chapter may have been carried out in a particular constituent country of the UK, many of the insights gained from them have significant relevance for Britain as a whole. Attempts to tackle and deal with the consequences of men's violence against known women began earlier in the UK than in the Nordic countries (Hester 2005). For instance, from the beginning of the 1970's a nationwide network of women-only refuges started to be developed by the feminist movement, to provide housing and support to women escaping their violent partners (Hester 2005). At the same time, limited civil protection for victims of domestic violence was introduced into legislation, though the state and other agencies did not start to take on a more prominent role until the 1990's, and at this time the mainstreaming approach also became more visible (Hester 2005). A significant shift in the development of policies relating to men's violence against known women occurred after the election of the Labour government in 1997, and this focused in particular on the criminalisation of domestic violence (Hester 2005). A wide range of new guidelines and legislation relating to men's violence against known women have subsequently been enacted.

Despite these developments, attempts to tackle men's violence against known women in policy have been piecemeal rather than representative of a coherent approach (Hester 2005). Hester (2005) therefore argues that continuing to apply pressure on the state is vital if a concerted strategy to tackle men's violence against women is ever to be developed and put into practice, and she notes that women's refuges should be at the centre of such a strategy. The contrast with domestic violence shelters in Finland is therefore clear. In the UK, what was initiated in order to provide support to women who were being abused by their partners where little other aid existed, became a fundamental part of the feminist movement itself and now contributes to the dynamic, autonomous women's voluntary sector (Harne and Radford 2008). Whilst it now provides services on a scale which means it is reliant on funding from the state, the women's refuge movement has always been 'outside' of the state, and a vital part of the wider struggles of feminists against male violence and patriarchal oppression.

Pressure from the feminist movement has also led to significant achievements and steps forward in policy and state practices in the UK. For example, McKie and Hearn (2004) note that the Scottish government have taken higher profile gendered and multiagency policy actions in relation to domestic violence compared to Finland, and even in comparison to the rest of Britain. For example, the Scottish government has implemented a gender-based definition of domestic violence, initiated public awareness-raising domestic violence prevention programmes such as the Zero Tolerance campaign, and has increased funding for refuges (McKie and Hearn 2004). However, there has been little in the way of a concerted effort or plan to confront gender inequality more broadly in the UK, such as in the persisting pay disparities between women and men (McKie and Hearn 2004). In many ways, Britain's neo-liberal welfare regime has therefore not had the same impacts on gender inequality that have been achieved in Finland.

Furthermore, many of the problematic aspects of the responses of professionals and policymakers towards men's violence against known women in Finland are equally apparent in the UK. Some of these shared features in the approaches of the governments in both Britain and the Nordic countries include the perception of men's violence towards women and towards children as being two distinct issues; the concealment of the use of violence by fathers through the construction of a discursive chasm between men's use of violence and fatherhood; mothers being blamed for 'sabotaging' contact between children and fathers; and the voices and perspectives of children and their experiences of violence being ignored (Hester 2005). This can be observed in the continuing failure to systematically take into account the safety of children in relation to contact with their violent

fathers, for instance (Hester 2005). In another study, Eriksson and Hester (2001) argue that in the context of separation and divorce, fatherhood has typically been interpreted as being inherently non-violent. Public debates about fatherhood, such as those around parental discipline as a response to 'family breakdown', have failed to take account of the violence of fathers in the family, and the fact that many men who are violent towards their partners are also fathers is ignored (McKie and Hearn 2004).

In addition, work around the safety of women and children who have been subjected to male violence in the family is often separated and fragmented into different areas. Hester (2011) describes three main 'planets' of work, which all have their own cultures, histories, laws, and sets of professionals: work with the victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, the protection and safeguarding of children, and child contact (Hester 2011). The fragmentation of institutional responses in this way, and the contradictions between these three 'planets', creates serious difficulties for tackling men's violence and protecting women and children (Hester 2005, 2011). Furthermore, they all feature processes of gendering which apply culpability to women for the violence of their partners and ex-partners (Hester 2011).

In 2010, the newly elected British coalition government announced the first of its major reductions in public spending, deemed necessary by its neo-liberal 'austerity' agenda. Substantial cuts have been made to local authority budgets in Britain, which provide funding for services which work to prevent and protect against domestic violence. 31 percent of funding for the domestic violence and sexual abuse sector was cut between 2010/11 and 2011/2012 (Towers and Walby 2012). One of the consequences of this has been the dismantlement of a significant proportion of the infrastructure used in work around the prevention of men's violence against known women outside of the criminal justice system (Gadd 2012). Organisations such as Women's Aid which have been championed as part of the coalition's 'big society' discourse, based around elevating the role of the voluntary sector, have at the same time suffered substantially from the government's austerity policies (Gadd 2012). The economic restructuring being undertaken by the British government risks increasing the number of women and children who are vulnerable to men's violence, not least due to the cuts to services which work to support and protect women and prevent of men's violence (Towers and Walby 2012). Furthermore, economic inequalities between women and men are being deepened by the retrenchment of the welfare state, and women in poverty are at a much greater risk of repeated victimisation by their male partners and ex-partners (Gadd 2012). The scaling back of funding in this way is a stark warning of how vulnerable services for prevention and protection against domestic violence are, and is indicative of the lack of priority with which these services are treated.

The instigation of the British government's public spending cuts came in the wake of the high profile domestic violence case of Raoul Moat, though Moat's perpetration of domestic violence was hardly recognised in the public debate or in the media portrayal of him (Gadd 2012). Gadd (2012) contends that the aftermath of this case was a missed opportunity to reflect on the connections between masculinity, men's violence, and personal crises. He argues that issues of gender, and in particular masculinity, must be at the centre of the political framing of prevention work around domestic violence (Gadd 2012). This focus should extend beyond 'macho values' and the attitudes which tolerate and legitimate violence, to the relationships between violence, emotional dependency, heterosexual notions of propriety, and life crises (Gadd, 2012). Yet the coalition government's emphasis in relation to male violence against women has been on 'payback' in criminal justice, 'discipline' in schools, and the 'sexualisation of children', and has the potential to do more harm than good (Gadd 2012).

The government has made small-scale commitments to primary prevention work, with promises of inexpensive initiatives such as a helpline and awareness-raising campaigns, but there has been little consideration of more substantive action or provisions (Gadd 2012). Gadd (2012) argues that there is a lack of willpower at the government level in the UK to try to understand aggression among boys, with confrontation and discipline instead perceived to be the solution, even though discipline is not always absent from the lives of violent men, including that of Raoul Moat. Ultimately, the government's approach to the issue *"is ostensibly committed to protecting 'the most vulnerable women and girls in our society' (Home Office 2011, p. 6) but silent on the men and boys, invulnerable or otherwise, who present the greatest danger to them"* (Gadd 2012, p. 496).

There are three levels at which work to prevent of men's violence against known women is undertaken. Primary prevention means stopping violence before it takes place, whilst secondary prevention means stopping the continuation of men's use of violence, and tertiary prevention refers to working with men who have used violence to change their behaviour (Harne and Radford 2008, McKie and Hearn 2004). The focus of government action has usually been on tertiary prevention, in the form of programmes for men who have used violence, as a way of rehabilitating perpetrators within the criminal justice system. These programmes have historically taken different forms with some, such as those based on anger management or mediation approaches, actually being counterproductive and damaging in entrenching the assumptions and perceptions which underpin men's violence (Harne and Radford 2008). However, Harne and Radford (2008) note that there has been a shift towards approaches influenced by feminist theories in tertiary prevention in recent

years, with an emphasis on a gendered analysis of men's violence. For example, the Duluth model, which originated in the US, and is based around holding men wholly responsible for their violence, is increasingly used in the UK (Harne and Radford 2008). Yet it is still not clear how effective perpetrator programmes are in stopping men from using violence in relationships (Harne and Radford 2008).

Primary prevention meanwhile represents the idea that men's violence against women is not inevitable, and that it can be explained and eradicated by addressing social and gendered power relations. It means not only stopping men who use violence against their partners and ex-partners from doing so again, but stopping men from ever using or considering violence in the first place. For Harne and Radford (2008), primary prevention involves challenging both the tolerance of male violence within institutions, and the prevailing social attitudes around men's violence against known women. This work has ranged from public awareness campaigns to school-based prevention programmes, with the aim of transforming the values, assumptions and ideas that uphold gendered inequalities and domestic violence. These campaigns can also have a secondary prevention function in letting victims know that what they are experiencing is wrong and what they can do to seek help, and in the case of perpetrators, that their behaviour is unacceptable (Harne and Radford 2008).

The impact that public awareness campaigns and work in schools can have on their own is limited, with the assumptions that underlie men's violence being so deeply entrenched and pervasive (Harne and Radford 2008). However, if anything this fact points to the need for a significant widening of primary prevention work, to areas such as the media and how it portrays women, men, relationships and violence, for example. Primary prevention represents a crucial part of the work policymakers must focus on in order to shift the onus of stopping domestic violence onto the men who perpetrate it, rather than on the women that they victimise. The lack of attention which this work currently receives from policymakers is revealing about the government's approach to tackling domestic violence, and the lack of priority that is given to preventing the violence of men against women. With this in mind, it is important to underline that prevention work must not be funded at the expense of the services which exist to support women who are victims of men's violence, as has sometimes been the case with perpetrator programmes for example (Harne and Radford 2008).

3.4 Conclusion

In both Britain and Finland the struggles of feminists at both the national and international levels have forced policymakers and the public to recognise the existence of men's violence against known women, and to take action deal with some of its consequences. However, significant gaps and flaws

remain in government approaches and provisions, with policy and practice often continuing to ignore or reproduce the gender inequalities which maintain and are maintained by men's violence against known women. One of the biggest criticisms feminists have made in this regard is the continued failure to identify and name men as the perpetrators of violence, or to problematise and tackle men's violent practices, masculinity, and the silence of men towards male violence more broadly. This can be seen, for example, in the continued disconnect between the concepts of fatherhood and men's violence in families in policy and practice in both Britain and Finland. The invisibility of men's practices, and indeed often of gender more generally, is a major feature of the degendering discourses that dominate to some extent in the two countries, and which are shaped by diverse forces such as human rights narratives, family-centred approaches, and neo-liberal governance, as well as patriarchal assumptions and ideology. The hegemony of gender-neutralising discourses has contributed to the continued absence of a gendered analysis of domestic violence at the policy level even whilst the phenomenon is increasingly recognised as a form of violence against women.

The feminist movements in the UK and Finland have different histories and have oriented themselves in different ways, particularly in relation to their conception of the state. This has led to both gains and losses in different areas. The struggles of women have played an important part in the development of the 'women-friendly' Finnish welfare state, whilst in Britain feminists have been able to build an independent women's refuge movement which has played a vital role in influencing domestic violence policy. However, in recent years there have been signs of increasing convergence in the approaches of governments towards domestic violence, as supranational institutions and globalised political forces have a growing impact upon national policy in this area. This also demonstrates how the development of policy and services around men's violence against known women is not always in a progressive direction for women, with neo-liberal austerity measures also representing a significant threat to the provisions that feminist movements have been able to secure, for instance. This is the contemporary context in which I have sought to investigate the discourses of policy around domestic violence, and now I will move on to discussing how this investigation has been carried out.

4. ANALYSING POLICY DISCOURSES

The previous two chapters have discussed some of the most relevant and important theories and research around the gendering, construction, and problematisation of domestic violence, and how the phenomenon has been approached as a policy issue in Britain and Finland. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss how the theoretical approach developed in the review of the literature has been used and put into practice in this research project. I begin by examining the two cases which are compared in this case study, the reasons for their selection, and how they have been compared. I then describe the four policy documents which have been analysed, some of their characteristics, and the context in which they were published. The methodology with which these documents were analysed is then outlined, both theoretically and practically. This includes a discussion about post-structuralist discourse analysis and the 'what's the problem represented to be?' (from here on referred to as 'WPR') approach to analysing policy, and how they were put into practice in my own research. The importance of the feminist conception of reflexivity is also raised, together with potential ethical considerations.

4.1 Research question

This study, which is anchored in pro-feminist theories and commitments, compares contemporary British and Finnish government policy around domestic violence. The ways in which the issue of domestic violence is constructed are not fixed, they vary. They are based not on the experiences of women and men themselves, but on our interpretations of them, and policymakers and wider society understand, conceptualise, and situate the phenomenon in different ways. This research project has sought to investigate how the phenomenon is constructed within government policy, and the methods of discourse analysis and the 'what's the problem represented to be?' approach have been utilised for this purpose. The analysis is focused on gender, and the ways in which the phenomenon is gendered or degendered, different actors and genders are related, and who is identified as doing what, through the discourse. It asks the following question:

How is men's violence against known women discursively gendered, constructed, and problematised in contemporary British and Finnish policy?

This research question is therefore asking how gender is constituted in the discourses of domestic violence policy. This means scrutinising who is being made known and whose agency is denoted in the discourses, and how this agency is constructed. It also means searching for silences in the discourses, and examining whose identities and agencies are not included or hidden. In the process,

it probes where responsibility, accountability, and blame are implicitly allocated in the discourse. These issues then reflect upon the approaches of the British and Finnish governments to domestic violence, as well as wider social perceptions and understandings of the phenomenon, and point to where there are similarities and differences between the policy approaches in the countries.

4.2 Comparative design

By comparing the national policies of two different countries, this research project follows a comparative research design based around a qualitative multiple-case study. Comparative studies are particularly useful because our understanding of social phenomena can be enhanced when they are compared in relation to different meaningfully contrasting situations (Bryman 2004). Domestic violence is a globally pervasive phenomenon, and a comparative analysis can provide a deeper understanding of how this phenomenon constructed within and across patriarchal societies, as well as lessons about the different ways in which the issue can be approached as a field of policy in different cultural contexts. Comparative methods have played an important part in feminist research, and Kantola (2006) points out that significant contributions have been made by comparative feminist researchers in challenging Anglo-American dominance within academia, and in questioning the meanings of key concepts and how they travel across national and cultural boundaries. However, the field of comparative research remains unreceptive towards qualitative and discourse analysis methodologies (Kantola 2006). It imposes limitations on itself by favouring a restrictive understanding of comparative methodology based on quantitative and positivist approaches over potentially equally valid alternatives (Kantola 2006). Yet a common issue with quantitative comparative studies is that concepts which have different meanings in different times and spaces are used for making comparisons.

Rather than treating these different meanings as being a problem, comparative discourse analysts use them as an important entry point (Kantola 2006). Variations in concepts and language demonstrate how comparative research can be useful, with comparisons enabling new and potentially unexpected questions to be raised which would not be opened up by single-case studies (Kantola 2006). Comparisons can reveal discursive silences, and challenge what is taken for granted within specific contexts. Not only is knowledge partial and constructed, but thinking and theory are always embedded in national contexts and configurations, which shape norms, frames of reference, and interpretations (Kantola 2006). Seemingly similar concepts can have different meanings in different contexts, and particular concepts appear and become significant in different spaces at different times. Discourses are thus intertwined with specific historical and cultural contexts (Kantola 2006). Furthermore, knowledge's situatedness can be witnessed not just in differences in

the uses of concepts, but also in how research questions vary. A research question which is significant in one context may have little relevance in another. This is of considerable importance for comparative researchers, whose work is based around asking the same question in different contexts (Kantola 2006).

The distinctions between Britain and Finland in how feminists have traditionally theorised and engaged with the state, which relates to the wider hegemonic social policy approaches and welfare regimes in the two countries, is the primary reason why these two national cases were chosen for comparison in my study. The 'women-friendly', social democratic Finnish welfare regime has in many ways delivered greater gains for women than Britain's increasingly neo-liberal welfare state. This has led many Finnish feminists to perceive the state as a relatively benign apparatus for social change, whilst the feminist movement in Britain has more commonly viewed the state as a patriarchal institution and a core component of the maintenance of the subjugation of women (Kantola 2006). Feminists in Britain have often been more wary about operating 'inside' of the state than feminists in Finland, and this has been reflected in the ways in which women in the two countries have struggled against domestic violence (Kantola 2006). To what extent are these differences reflected in contemporary policy discourses in the two countries, however? That is what this research project has sought to find out.

I have also had a personal motivation for selecting these two cases for study, with Britain being my home country and Finland my current country of residence, and the setting in which I have carried out this research project. I therefore have a particular experience and knowledge of these two contexts, and with Britain and Finland offering such an interesting basis for comparison, it was clear that they should be the cases for my research. Once this had been decided, I went about selecting the national policy documents which I would use in my analysis. Whilst local responses to domestic violence are also of considerable importance, in terms of structuring the discourse and the debate it is policy at the national level which is particularly significant, and it is for this reason that I have focused on policy documents produced by the national governments in the two countries. In addition, in the Finnish case I was constrained by only being able to use documents which had been translated into English, which applied only to policy papers published at the national level. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the four texts which were selected. The 'short names' are what the documents are referred to as in this thesis:

Table 1. The four policy documents

Country	UK	UK	Finland	Finland
Document	<i>Call to end violence against women and girls</i>	<i>Call to end violence against women and girls: Action plan</i>	<i>Recommendations for the prevention of interpersonal and domestic violence: Recognise, protect and act - How to guide and lead local and regional activities in social and health care services</i>	<i>Action plan to reduce violence against women</i>
Year	2010	2011	2008	2011
Publisher	Home Office	Home Office	Ministry for Social Affairs and Health, Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities	Ministry for Social Affairs and Health
Government	Centre-right coalition: Conservative Party, Liberal Democrat Party	Centre-right coalition: Conservative Party, Liberal Democrat Party	Centre-right/green coalition: Centre Party, National Coalition Party, Green League, Swedish People's Party	Centre-right/green coalition: Centre Party, National Coalition Party, Green League, Swedish People's Party
Cabinet minister	Theresa May (Conservative Party)	Theresa May (Conservative Party)	Liisa Hyssälä (Centre Party)	Juha Rehula (Centre Party)
Scope	'Violence against women'	'Violence against women'	'Interpersonal and domestic violence'	'Violence against women'
Function	Strategic vision, consultation paper	Action plan	Recommendations for municipal social and health services	Action plan
Pages	27	38	39	73
Short name	<i>Strategic vision</i>	<i>Action plan</i>	<i>Recognise, protect and act</i>	<i>Action plan</i>

The documents were chosen because they were the most recent major national government publications relating to men's violence against known women at the time of selection (spring 2013). Three of the four documents address men's violence against women more broadly, but all have a significant focus upon domestic violence. All four papers were also published under coalition governments leaning to the right (though the Finnish government also included the Green Party).

However, in Britain this is the first full coalition government since 1945, whilst in Finland coalitions are very much the norm, and unlike in the UK, politics is more consensus than conflict oriented. Furthermore, the British documents were produced by the British government and therefore apply to all the constituent countries of the UK.

In the case of the British documents, the *Action plan* was a follow-up to the *Strategic vision* paper, and discussed how the proposals that were outlined in the *Strategic vision* would be implemented. The primary function of the two documents was to set out how the new coalition government, elected in 2010, planned to tackle 'violence against women'. They quickly swept aside the policy document published by the preceding Labour government one year earlier: *Together we can end violence against women and girls* (HM Government 2009). In terms of the Finnish documents meanwhile, prior to the publishing of the *Action plan* there had not been a national programme towards tackling violence against women since 2002. This situation had incurred criticism from the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The earlier document meanwhile, *Recognise, protect and act*, is more oriented towards addressing institutional practices in local and regional work around men's violence against known women.

The two British documents are written in English, whilst the Finnish documents have been written in Finnish and then translated into English. This is because it is the norm in Finland for policy documents to be published in both English and Swedish in addition to Finnish. The use of translated texts means that some of the discursive features of the original documents may be lost, and that particular linguistic characteristics which uniquely reflect elements of Finnish culture may be missing from translated versions. For example, unlike in English, Finnish personal pronouns have no gender, and characteristics of the original language such as this - which may also connect to wider cultural practices - may be impossible to replicate in other languages. Nevertheless, these documents are official translations and important texts in their own right, and they remain highly valuable resources for analysing how men's violence is gendered, constructed, and problematised by the Finnish government.

Whilst these documents provide a valuable window into the governments' approaches to domestic violence, there are also some limitations to their use as data. Bacchi (2009) recommends that a WPR analysis should ideally not only focus on major official policy documents but also related texts such as "*parliamentary debates, ministerial pronouncements, related government reports and media statements*" (p. 20) in order to develop a fuller portrait of the problem representation. This was unfortunately beyond the resources and scale of this research project, however. It is also

important to remember that this data does not cover the entire policy field, only the discourses which structure it. Policy documents tell us about the social and cultural understanding of the phenomenon, but they do not elucidate how professionals and others working with victims and perpetrators of men's violence against known women interpret and understand the documents. In other words, what the government expresses in policy documents, and what takes place in practice, may be considerably different. Now this chapter will move to discussing the methods which were used to study these texts, and the theoretical issues which underpin them.

4.3 Discourse analysis

The concept of discourse is of considerable importance in the context of men's violence against known women, and the approaches of policymakers towards it. Moreover, as can be seen in Chapter 3, research around discourses can and has contributed significantly to our understanding of the phenomenon and how society responds to it. Discourse plays a core role in constructing the social world. In this thesis, I use Bacchi's (2009) definition of discourse as a set of "*related statements, signs and practices that creates the object(s) and domain(s) it purports to describe, giving those objects and domains status as 'truth' or 'knowledge'*" (Bacchi 2009, p. 275). Discourse can be seen as acts which construct social reality, and as a social practice of its own (Gill 1995). This means that discourses do things, and are used to achieve things. A great deal of discourse is thus involved in instituting one version of the world over other, competing versions, and different discourses impose limits on what it is possible to say or think in relation to the objects that they create (Gill 1995). Indeed, pre-existing language resources provide the building blocks of discourse, and a selection must be made from several different possibilities when assembling an account (Gill 1995). We interact with the world through constructions, and our world is constructed from discourses and texts. Discourse is thus the social activity which uses language and other symbolic systems in order to make meanings in particular institutions or settings, and each time these meanings are made, a specific text is produced (Gill 1995).

If discourses do something with language, then one of the purposes of discourse analysis is investigating what the functions of discourses are. Discourse analysis involves systematically examining the different structures and strategies of texts, and how the discourse is constructed and organised within them (Wodak 2008). It raises three main questions (Bryman 2004): What is the discourse doing? How has the discourse been constructed to make this happen? And what resources are being used to perform this activity? In this research project, a Foucauldian, post-structuralist-oriented approach to discourse analysis has been adopted. This is because I am particularly interested in the gendered politics and power relations which underpin the assigning of meanings

and the discursive practices around men's violence against known women. A post-structuralist discourse analysis involves probing how phenomena are categorised in the contingent and unstable structures of policy discourse, and the consequences of these categorisations. Furthermore, it questions how subjects are produced, and how agency is cultivated in discourse. In this study, I have investigated with whom agency is denoted in the domestic violence policy discourse, which aspects of their agency are emphasised, and whose agency is hidden, concealed, and silenced. Discourse analysis can be defined as the interpretation of texts, based upon detailed argument and attention to the material that has been examined (Gill 2000). It is a *"careful, close reading that moves between text and context to examine the content, organization and functions of discourse"* (Gill 2000, p. 188).

Texts are fundamental for discourse analysts. Bacchi (2009) discusses how Foucault's concept of 'prescriptive texts' and 'practical texts' offer the means for identifying how problems are represented in policy. She contends that policies offer rules, opinions and advice about how one should behave, and are therefore prescriptive texts (Bacchi 2009). In a 'what's the problem represented to be?' approach, policies *"and their accompanying methods of implementation provide points of entry to the problematisations and problem representations that require scrutiny"* (Bacchi 2009, p. 34). In the context of this research project, official policy documents are the 'practical texts', the 'methods of implementation' which act as my point of entry to the construction and problematisation of men's violence against known women by the British and Finnish governments. They therefore provide the data for my discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis demands a change in the way that one perceives language, so that rather than looking for some reality beyond or beneath what is said, the text itself becomes the focus, and the construction, organisation, and functions of the discourses that constitute it (Gill 2000). Discourse analysts do not read texts to understand the gist of what is being said, as has traditionally been the focus of academic training (Gill 2000). Instead, their preoccupation is with the detail of passages of discourse, no matter how fragmented and contradictory they may be, and not with some general idea that appears to be intended, but with what is actually written (Gill 2000). Gill (2000) has put forward a framework for carrying out discourse analysis, which has been particularly influential on this research project and how it has been carried out. Crucial to conducting discourse analysis is a spirit of scepticism, and I began the analytical process by familiarising myself with the four policy documents through repeated sceptical readings, with a particular focus on gender (Gill 2000).

I then started to develop a coding system, based upon organising the categories of interest within the text (Gill 2000). When considering the categories within the texts, it quickly became clear that there were too many interesting and important discourses being used to be able to analyse and discuss all of them within the space of this research project. I therefore decided to limit my attention to the discourse which related specifically to the gendering of men's violence against known women. The coding system I established was thus based on four main categories: constructions of domestic violence which were gender-neutral, which only discussed women, which only discussed men, and which discussed both women and men. These categories were made as inclusive as possible in order to also be able to factor in less direct references to gender and men's violence. I then began the process of analysing itself, based around interpreting these categories, and Gill (2000) describes how this process can be seen as being made up of two phases.

First comes searching for patterns in the data, both in terms of variability and consistency in accounts. Having selected and categorised hundreds of sentences for closer examination based on my coding system, I carefully scrutinised them, searching for patterns in how they gendered and constructed men's violence against known women. This meant interpreting the meanings of the sentences and how they contributed to wider gendered discourses in the texts. At this stage I also counted the number of times in which gendered and degendered references to the victims and perpetrators of men's violence against known women were made in the texts, to be able to clearly demonstrate with quantitative data patterns in the gendering and identification of actors. While such data is limited in helping us to understand the intricacies of the discursive operations, it nevertheless provides additional evidence and clarity to assist in the identification and illustration of patterns in the gendering of domestic violence. The categories used for the quantitative counting of gendered and degendered actors are based on the terms which were most commonly used to describe the victims and perpetrators of men's violence against known women in each document, and were as follows:

- Female actor: woman/women/female/her/wife/girlfriend/VAWG/mother
- Male actor: man/men/male/him/his/husband/boyfriend/father
- Neutral victim: victim/survivor
- Neutral perpetrator: perpetrator/offender
- Neutral actor: customer/client/patient/spouse/partner/parent

The second phase of the analysis involved forming tentative hypotheses based on my interpretations of the texts, and the functions of the specific patterns and features of the discourse which had been

identified. These hypotheses were then checked against the texts, whilst being particularly wary of any silences in the discourse, and sensitive to what was not said as well as what was (Gill, 2000). This demands a strong awareness of the social, political and cultural contexts in which the texts operate and to which they refer, because without such an awareness, many of the meanings and functions of the discourse can be missed (Gill, 2000). Yet being familiar with the context does not mean that it is possible for the researcher to describe it in a manner which is neutral or detached. The talk and texts of discourse analysts are just as constructed, situated, and rhetorically organised as those of anyone else (Gill, 2000). Once the analysis has been completed, it is important to assess the reliability and validity of the findings. For this reason, any deviant cases in the text which did not appear to fit with these patterns and hypotheses were carefully scrutinised and their implications reflected upon, and the coherence of the research findings were considered in relation to previous studies. I then carefully read through each of the documents again, to try to ensure that my analysis was sound and that no misunderstandings or misinterpretations had been made. The findings of this discourse analysis are laid out in the next two chapters, with the two British documents discussed in Chapter 5, and the two Finnish documents discussed in Chapter 6.

4.4 What's the problem represented to be?

Carol Bacchi's (1999, 2009) 'what's the problem represented to be?' (WPR) approach was also incorporated into the methodology of this research project, and once the discourse analysis had been finalised, I carried out a WPR analysis of the four texts. This was so that the implications of the discourse analysis could be considered in relation to wider questions about the representation of men's violence against known women as a policy problem. The WPR approach offers a particularly useful method for analysing the discourses of policies. Bacchi (2009) argues that making explicit the 'problems' which are implicit in policies, and carefully scrutinising them, is vital work for social scientists. 'Problems' do not simply exist in the world, we decide what is and what is not defined as one, and they are constituted and given shape by policies (Bacchi 2009). This does not mean that there are not numerous troubling social conditions and injustices which should be tackled. Yet describing these conditions as 'problems' anchors them in ways that demand interrogation (Bacchi 2009). Governments do not react to 'problems', instead they actively create and produce them, as an obligatory part of policymaking. Because policies are based around making proposals for change, they implicitly represent 'problems' - things which need to be changed - by their very nature (Bacchi 2009).

The ways in which 'problems' are represented play a significant role in how we are governed. We can be understood as being governed through problematisations, rather than through policies,

because policies are problematising activities (Bacchi 2009). Bacchi (2009) therefore argues that when analysing policies we should shift our attention from taken-for-granted 'problems', to how these 'problems' are constructed and problematised, and to examining the shape and character of what she calls 'problem representations'. We should ask what limits there are in these problem representations, question which aspects of a phenomenon are problematised and which are not, and ask which issues and perspectives are silenced in problem representations (Bacchi 2009).

The goal of a WPR analysis is not to declare a certain policy a success or failure, but to investigate the premises behind particular problem representations, and the assumptions and presuppositions that underpin and shape policies (Bacchi 2009). WPR can be considered a critical approach, because in the words of Foucault: *“A critique does not consist in saying that things aren't good the way they are. It consists in seeing on what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established, unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based”* (Foucault 1994, in Bacchi 2009, p. xv). Furthermore, it is vital to think about the implications of these presuppositions, many of which are taken-for-granted, and to consider how certain forms of rule have come to be (Bacchi 2009). How an issue is understood, and how those involved are treated and encouraged to think about themselves, are some of the implications of the ways in which a 'problem' is represented. Bacchi (2009) argues that the dominant contemporary approach to policy which focuses on 'problem-solving' is ultimately conservative in nature. This is because it suggests that there are only a limited number of 'problems' which require addressing, and thus that society is ultimately functioning successfully, with only some aspects requiring change (Bacchi 2009).

Adopting a WPR approach does not mean adopting an understanding of language as absorbing all other phenomena. Instead, discourse constitutes a practice which is articulated upon other practices (Bacchi 2009). There is a tendency among discourse analysts to ignore the ways in which non-discursive factors interact with discourses, and the impacts that discourses have on people's everyday lives (Bacchi 2009). Non-discursive factors, for instance the inequalities in the positions of women and men within society, or indeed the violent practices of men, play an equally important role in shaping people's embodied experiences. The WPR approach thus places an emphasis on the 'lived effects' of discourses, and focuses on the 'lived materiality' of subjectivity (Bacchi 2009).

This research project has therefore sought to probe how men's violence against known women is problematised, and how it is represented as a problem in British and Finnish policy discourses. Furthermore, it is vital to consider the repercussions of the ways in which domestic violence is problematised for the men who perpetrate domestic violence, and for the women and children they

victimise, as well for wider society and public perceptions. There has been a keen awareness among feminists of the impacts that problem representations can have in the context of men's violence against known women (Bacchi, 1999). They have long campaigned for men's violence against known women to be problematised and recognised as a social problem, and have made significant progress in this regard. Yet the dominant problematisations and problem representations of domestic violence often contrast with the ways in which feminists themselves problematise the phenomenon, leading to potentially ineffective, counterproductive and damaging effects.

A WPR approach asks six questions of the policy being scrutinised. First, it probes what the problem is represented to be (Bacchi 2009). This means identifying from what is being proposed, the change that a government hopes to bring about, and the problem representations that are implied (Bacchi 2009). Second, the presuppositions or assumptions that underlie the ways in which the 'problem' has been represented must be considered (Bacchi 2009). This phase is based around identifying and analysing the conceptual logics - the meanings which make a problem representation cohere and make sense - that underpin particular problem representations (Bacchi 2009). In this context, discourse represents meaning systems (Bacchi 2009). How meaning is created through the uses of language in particular ways thus needs to be analysed. This requires identifying within a policy the binaries, key concepts and categories which are operating (Bacchi 2009). Binaries and dichotomies underpin a significant amount of public debate, and serve to simplify complex relationships (Bacchi 2009). It is vital to consider where they appear in policies and how they function to influence how the issue is understood. Concepts meanwhile are often open-ended, and the meanings assigned to them are frequently contested (Bacchi 2009). It is therefore important to identify key concepts, and to analyse the meanings that are given to them, in problem representations (Bacchi 2009). Finally, categories, and especially people categories such as 'victims' and 'perpetrators', are a core feature of governance. As is the case with binaries, these categories cannot be accepted as given, and how they function to give certain meanings to problem representations requires inspection (Bacchi 2009).

Third, the WPR approach asks how this particular representation of the problem has come to be (Bacchi 2009). It focuses on the conditions which enable a certain problem representation to take shape and to become dominant. This means taking into account the non-discursive practices, the developments and decisions that have contributed to the formation of the identified problem representations (Bacchi 2009). It also means recognising that across both time and space competing representations of the same 'problem' exist and that things could thus have developed somewhat differently (Bacchi 2009). This question is influenced by Foucault's theory of genealogy. It is based

on tracing the 'history' of a current problem representation, and examining the power relations that have allowed certain problem representations to take shape and not others (Bacchi 2009). Fourth, the a WPR analysis considers what the limits of the problem representation are, because the ways in which policies represent 'problems' also constrain them and how they can be understood (Bacchi 2009). It questions where there are silences, what is left unproblematised, and whether it is possible to think about the 'problem' in different ways (Bacchi 2009).

The fifth question asks what effects this representation of the problem produces. Problem representations can create difficulties for some social groups more than others, and it is therefore vital to interrogate where and how problem representations function to benefit some and harm others (Bacchi 2009). There are three interconnected and overlapping kinds of effects which should be taken into account: discursive effects, which arise from the limits that are placed on what can be thought and expressed; subjectification effects, in terms of how discourse constitutes subjects and subjectivities; and lived effects, the material impacts of problem representations on people's lives (Bacchi 2009). This question means contemplating what is likely to change or stay the same, who is likely to benefit or be harmed, and how the attribution of responsibility for the 'problem' affects both those who are targeted in this way, and the wider public's perception of them (Bacchi 2009).

Sixth, and finally, the WPR approach questions how and where the representation of the 'problem' is produced, disseminated, and defended (Bacchi 2009). In other words, it considers the ways in which certain problem representations reach their target audience and achieve legitimacy, and through what means through the problem representation has become dominant (Bacchi 2009). In addition, the possibility of challenging harmful problem representations must be considered, and the WPR approach asks how the problem representation can be questioned, disrupted, and replaced (Bacchi 2009). The plural, complex, and sometimes inconsistent nature of discourses means that they can also be resources for re-problematisation and resistance (Bacchi 2009) Each of these six analytical questions were asked of the four policy documents, based on the discourse analysis which had already been carried out. This provided a way of deepening the analysis and broadening it to the policy level, as well as to bring together and compare what had been found from each of the texts. The findings of the WPR analysis are discussed in Chapter 7.

4.5 Reflexivity and ethical issues

Once the six questions of the WPR approach have been answered, the researcher must also apply them to their own problem representations (Bacchi 2009). This is based on recognising that no one stands outside of the premises which operate within problem representations. Furthermore, in their

critique of problem representations and development of alternative policy approaches, researchers cannot avoid adopting certain problem representations of their own, and it is vital to reflect on the origins, purposes, and effects of these (Bacchi 2009). The importance of reflexivity to discourse analysis is also emphasised by Gill (1995). She advocates a feminist conception of reflexivity, based on the idea that researchers are accountable for their interpretations, and that their values should be acknowledged, revealed, and labelled (Gill 1995). The relativist epistemology which is the theoretical foundation of some forms of discourse analysis can be problematic for feminists, principally because of the refusal among some relativists to engage with questions of value (Gill 1995). Such a position *"leads to political paralysis - an inability for relativists to intervene, to choose one version rather than another, to argue for anything"* (Gill 1995, p. 182). Yet Gill (1995) also points out that epistemological scepticism can be of considerable use in feminist research, especially in its questioning of every supposedly self-evident claim, and its critique of Enlightenment knowledge as being partial and contingent, and based on the assumption of a subject who is white, male, and Western.

A relativism which is unapologetically political is therefore needed. Gill (1995) proposes carrying out discourse analysis with a principled theoretical basis, and with explicitly expressed values brought to the fore. Furthermore, values should be elevated to a domain where they can be debated and argued over (Gill 1995). It is therefore crucial for discourse analysts to acknowledge their commitments and reflect critically upon them (Gill 1995). In this regard, many discourse analysts could learn a great deal from much feminist research. This can also be said of the way in which discourse analysts can become accountable for the interpretations that they make and their social and political consequences, through striving to explain and justify the basis of their reading and analysis of the texts (Gill 1995). With this in mind, a feminist conception of reflexivity is fundamental to my own research project.

There are therefore several factors which must be made clear about my own position. First of all, my motivation for conducting this research project is shaped by pro-feminist values and commitments, and the desire to contribute to the objectives of critiquing, improving, and transforming the ways in which society and the state respond to men's violence against known women. The simple fact that this violence continues to be so pervasive explains why policy towards it warrants scrutiny and critique. Feminist theories, research, and politics are the primary influence upon this project, and I would argue that a feminist theoretical basis must be an essential part of any attempt to research and understand men's violence against known women. However, I am also writing from the standpoint of a young, white, heterosexual, able-bodied male, born in Britain and

writing in Finland. I am therefore writing from a position of considerable privilege in relation to different systems of oppression. This position will also have had an impact on my assumptions and presuppositions during the research process, from the questions I asked to the conclusions I have drawn. Simply asserting that I am adopting a pro-feminist approach does not mean that all that comes with a position of male privilege withers away. Because of this, committing to questioning and challenging the practices and assumptions of men must also mean looking at oneself, throughout the research process.

With this in mind, a reflexive approach becomes all the more important. McCarry (2007) argues that it is vital for men carrying out research on masculinity and male violence to reflexively recognise and consider their own personal and political commitments. Fundamental here is recognising the benefits which are accrued simply by virtue of being a man within patriarchy (McCarry 2007). Yet despite a claimed alignment with feminism, many men carrying out research in on men, male violence, and masculinity fail to be reflexive about their work in this way (McCarry 2007). In addition, masculinity theories have the tendency to construct men as being the real victims of masculinity, and disembodiment masculinity from men, so that rather than men's practices, it is an abstract notion of masculinity which is problematised (McCarry 2007). These are important arguments, and I have tried to factor them into my own research practices, by constantly questioning my own assumptions and interpretations and considering how they related to my personal and political commitments as well as my position within society.

The question of reflexivity is closely interconnected with that of ethical considerations, which every researcher must take into account. By analysing government policy documents which are publicly available, and not engaging with human research participants, I do not have to contemplate some of the most common ethical issues which social scientists encounter, such as safety, privacy, and consent. However, this does not mean that this research project comes without ethical responsibilities. Indeed, an issue as sensitive as domestic violence demands a particularly sensitive approach from researchers. Men's violence against known women is not just an abstract concept, it is a material phenomenon which destroys countless women's and children's lives. In order to do justice to these women and children, a personal and political commitment to taking full responsibility for my research and its implications is essential. In addition, it is crucial to strive not to misrepresent the phenomenon or belittle the experiences of victims, or place any semblance of blame or responsibility upon them. An ethical research approach to domestic violence therefore emphasises the need for empathy, accountability, and reflexivity at every stage.

5. GENDER IN BRITISH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICY

5.1 The victimhood of women and the invisibility of men

The central discourse running through both of the British policy documents is that of domestic violence as a form of 'violence against women'. By demarcating the victims of domestic violence in this way, the discourse is clearly gendered, and gender is explicitly emphasised regularly throughout both documents. Indeed, domestic violence is constructed from the outset as a 'gender-based crime', and it is identified that women make up the majority of domestic violence victims:

In 2009/10, women were the victim of over seven out of ten (73%) incidents of domestic violence. (Home Office 2010, p. 5)

'The victimhood of women' is thus one of the major discourses within both the British documents. At the same time however, there is no equivalent discourse about those responsible for women's victimhood; there is no discourse of 'the violence of men'. This is despite the fact that it is recognised at the beginning of both documents that:

The vast majority of these violent acts are perpetrated by men on women. (Home Office 2010, p. 5, Home Office 2011, p. 5)

After this sentence, there are very few occasions within either document where the specific positions of both women and men in the context of domestic violence are alluded to. Indeed in the entirety of the *Action plan*, men are only named 6 more times, compared to the 106 times in which women are referred to. This can be seen in Table 2, which catalogues the number of times gendered and gender-neutral actors appear in each text. In the *Strategic vision* document, men are only identified 9 times, whilst women are named 219 times. The gendered lens of both documents is therefore clearly on women.

Table 2. Gendered and degendered actors in the two British policy documents

	Strategic vision	Action plan
Female actor	223	211
Male actor	9	7
Neutral victim	100	72
Neutral perpetrator	23	25
Neutral actor	2	6

It is noteworthy that at the beginning of both policy documents, domestic violence is described as being perpetrated primarily by men, yet men and men's violent practices are not explored and are

barely discussed or even explicitly referred to again over the course of either of the two texts. This is despite the fact that the 'prevention' of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women is elevated to be key tenet of the government's approach. Whilst a desire to prevent the phenomenon is repeatedly expressed in these documents, there is no examination of the actual practices of male violence, or who is responsible for them. The two papers emphasise the importance of both primary and secondary prevention for domestic violence policy:

We are committed to leading by example in challenging the attitudes, behaviours and practices which cause women and girls to live in fear. (Home Office 2010, p. 9)

Yet those responsible for causing women to live in fear are almost never named or identified. The following sentence does not discuss domestic violence but 'sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations', but it provides another example of how the male perpetrators of violence against women can be concealed in language:

Moreover, the institutions which are supposed to protect citizens, such as police and armed forces, are often key perpetrators of abuse. (Home Office 2010, p. 22)

In this sentence it is the institutions which are described as being responsible for the acts of violence, rather than the men within those institutions. Meanwhile in the *Action plan*, one of the government's goals for prevention is to:

[I]ncrease public understanding of VAWG by putting in place focussed awareness-raising initiatives which include looking at its root causes, hidden nature and economic cost to society; (Home Office 2011, p. 8)

However the root causes referred to here - in other words, the roots of men's use of violence - are never actually explored in the documents. Another goal is to:

[S]trengthen understanding of the unacceptability of VAWG by ensuring our frontline partners can intervene early to challenge acceptability; (Home Office 2011, p. 3)

Again, whose behaviour it is that requires intervention, and who it is that perceives domestic violence to be acceptable, is not identified or explained. In the six pages of the '*Prevention*' chapter in the *Strategic vision* paper, men are only specifically referred to twice, and on one of these occasions it is as victims. Meanwhile in the eleven pages of the '*Preventing violence*' chapter in the *Action plan*, men are also only specifically referred to twice. By emphatically focusing on the victims of domestic violence and ignoring the perpetrators, attention is diverted from men's role in violence against known women, their practices are concealed, and their responsibility for the

violence is mitigated (Coates and Wade 2004). This epitomises how, whilst stressing prevention, there is little discussion in the documents of what it is specifically that needs to be prevented or how this should be done. There is no engagement with or critique of men's masculinity or men's identities, assumptions, and practices. Commitments to prevention are vague, non-specific statements, without any reference to gender:

The campaign will encourage teenagers to re-think their views of acceptable violence, abuse or controlling behaviour in relationships and direct them to places for help and advice. (Home Office 2011, p. 4)

The 'attitudes, behaviours and practices' which underlie domestic violence are referred to several times in both texts, but are never connected with men or the male perpetrators of domestic violence. They are discussed abstractly, without any further elaboration on what they consist of, why they exist, or how they should be changed. The individuals who these attitudes, behaviours and practices belong to are never identified or gendered. The assumptions and practices that need to change, the men who they belong to, and their responsibility for domestic violence, are therefore hidden. For instance:

Guiding principle: Prevent violence against women and girls from happening in the first place by challenging the attitudes and behaviours which foster it and intervening early where possible to prevent it. (Home Office 2011, p. 3)

It is also notable that even within the chapters on prevention, the emphasis is still on the victimhood of women, rather than on the violence of men:

We recognise that not all women and girls want to take action through the criminal justice system; but if they have been affected by this type of abuse it is important that they are able to seek the support which is most appropriate to them. (Home Office 2010, p. 9)

Professionals are encouraged to identify signs of abuse in the women they encounter, whilst the possibility of identifying signs of abusive behaviour in the men that they encounter is never mentioned:

[We will:] explore how health visitors may have a greater role in identifying the signs of domestic violence in women they visit; (Home Office 2010, p. 12)

In addition, on the occasions that men are specifically referred to in the policy documents, it is just as often as potential victims of domestic violence than as perpetrators. In the *Strategic vision* text, four out of the nine occasions in which men are referred to it is as victims, whilst in the *Action plan*,

only on two occasions are men directly referred to as perpetrators, the same number of times that they are named as potential victims:

Whilst the focus of this document is on supporting women and girls, there is still a need to address the needs of men and boys who may be affected by domestic and sexual violence. (Home Office 2011, p. 2)

In this sentence as with other references to male victimhood, the issue is raised without explanation or gendered analysis, nor is it situated within the context of wider gendered patterns of domestic violence in which men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators and women are overwhelmingly the victims. Constructing domestic violence in this way and focusing on men as victims as much as on men's use of violence can minimise the gendered asymmetries of the phenomenon and diffuse responsibility for it (Lamb 1991). It also risks distorting the violence of women (Berns 2001) and equating it with men's use of violence. With this in mind, it is notable that the victimhood of men is discussed to a similar degree as the violence of men in these documents. Whilst these documents describe domestic violence as a 'hidden crime', they also contribute to hiding the men responsible for domestic violence.

Another important discursive feature of the chapters on prevention in the two British policy documents is the connection of domestic violence with wider forms of deviancy. These include substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, and 'problem families':

Alcohol use is associated with a four fold risk of violence from a partner and is more common when sexual violence is involved. (Home Office 2010, p. 10)

There is also a connection between violence and teenage pregnancy. (Home Office 2010, p. 11)

In Britain, there are around 142,000 families (an estimated 117,000 families in England) with five or more problems, including domestic violence, (Home Office 2010, p. 11)

This 'troubled families' discourse constructs domestic violence within a wider nexus of 'deviant' behaviour and in the process severs discursive connections to gender structures. The problem is defined as alcohol use, teenage pregnancy, or the family, rather than men's practices. Violence is identified as 'alcohol-related' but not 'male-perpetrated'. This externalises domestic violence to factors such as alcohol consumption and other 'deviant' behaviours rather than internalising the causes of violence directly to male perpetrators and their agency (Coates and Wade 2004). What's more, it others domestic violence and associates it with a minority of 'troubled', 'deviant' families

from 'vulnerable backgrounds', despite the fact that men's violence against known women pervades across all social groups.

5.2 Degendering men's violence

When men's perpetration of domestic violence is discussed, the discourse typically becomes one of gender-neutrality. Despite the identities of the victims regularly being gendered as female, the same almost never occurs for the identities of the perpetrators. Whilst the 'victimhood of women' discourse is strong throughout both documents, its opposite is not 'the violence of men', but 'the anonymous perpetrator'. In the *Action plan* for example, the guiding principle of the '*Justice outcomes and risk reduction*' chapter is to:

Take action to reduce the risk to women and girls who are victims of these crimes and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice. (Home Office 2011, p. 29)

Phillips and Henderson's (1999) argument that concentrating so heavily on the victims of domestic violence constructs it as a 'problem of women' is therefore of significant relevance here. Identifying and gendering the victims but not the perpetrators, and focusing so extensively on women, represents women as the problem, and suggesting that domestic violence is women's problem, it is implied that it is their responsibility to stop, and their responsibility to stop from happening in the first place. The following statement meanwhile provides another example of how practices which relate to violent behaviour are discussed, without men (in this case young men and boys) being explicitly identified or implicated in them, yet this time gender is absent altogether:

Children who access pornographic websites can find it disturbing and viewing this material has been associated with the reinforcement of sexist or violent attitudes and behaviours. (Home Office, 2011, p. 9)

This example is just one of the many sentences across the two documents where both the victims and the perpetrators are unnamed and domestic violence is constructed entirely without gender. In the *Strategic vision* paper, gender-neutral terms for victims are used 100 times, and gender-neutral terms for perpetrators are used 23 times, whilst in the *Action plan*, they are used 72 times and 25 times respectively. There are also many gender-neutral constructions of the phenomenon which do not refer to victims or perpetrators at all. Using gender-neutral language to describe domestic violence again minimises its gendered asymmetries, and can portray it as a phenomenon which affects women and men equally:

The aim of the campaign will be to prevent teenagers from becoming victims and perpetrators of abusive relationships. (Home Office 2011, p. 4)

A particular problem with this sentence is that, by describing domestic violence in terms of 'victims and perpetrators of abusive relationships', we imagine a relationship where both parties are mutually violent, rather than one where a man is unilaterally exerting power, control and coercion over his partner. Lamb (1991) describes this as the diffusion of responsibility for men's violence. The same effect can be created by sentences such as the following, where rather than being described as victims of male violence, teenage mothers are in 'violent relationships':

According to Women's Aid, 70% of teenage mothers are in a violent relationship. (Home Office 2010, p. 11)

These terms suggest that it is the relationship which is violent, rather than the male perpetrator. In addition, a notable difference between the two texts is that in the *Action plan* (but not in the *Strategic vision* paper), the acronym for violence against women and girls, 'VAWG', is frequently used. This may be in order to conserve space because of the less prose-based and more concise format of this document. However, it could be argued that this acronym also serves to remove gender from the discourse and degender the phenomenon. The term was included in the 'female actor' category of my quantitative data because it stands for a gendered construction of violence, but 'VAWG' is used so extensively that it arguably becomes a term in its own right, and the victims, the 'women and girls', become hidden behind the acronym. 'VAWG' could therefore also be construed as a gender-neutral term. For instance, the following sentence could be read as one without gender:

If survivors are more confident in coming forward to deal with the abuse they have suffered, then this will indicate the strategy has been successful in sending a clear message both to the public and victims that VAWG is unacceptable. (Home Office 2011, p. 2)

The use of acronyms rather than words like 'violence', which are, stronger, more vivid, and more accurate, can also soften one's understanding of the phenomenon (Lamb 1991). Meanwhile, one phrase which is used particularly frequently is 'tackle/tackling violence against women and girls', which appears 27 times in the *Strategic vision* document and 19 times in the *Action plan* document. This phrase offers a particularly clear example of how the practices of men are discursively concealed in the two documents. In the context of violence against women and girls, it is men's violence which must be tackled. Yet the need to 'tackle men's violence' or a phrasal equivalent is not once expressed in either of the two papers. By naming only the victims of violence as this phrase does, the focus is placed on women, and violence against women and girls is again represented as a problem of women.

Despite the emphasis on the 'victimhood of women' discourse and the naming of women as the victims of domestic violence, there is a clear absence of a gendered analysis of violence against women and girls in both of the documents. The use of the term 'violence against women and girls' does not on its own construct a gendered analysis of the problem; this is a gendered discourse in name only. The invisibility of men's practices in the document, both in terms of the failure to name men as the perpetrators of violence, and the failure to discuss men's perpetration of violence or the nature of men's practices, is a major reason for this. However there is also an absence of engagement with how gendered power relations and structural inequalities are at the root of domestic violence and all forms of violence against women and girls, or suggestions as to how these can and should be tackled. It is noteworthy that there is greater focus on problematising the sustainability of funding for domestic violence services in both texts for instance, than there is on problematising gender. Interestingly, it is recognised in the texts themselves that the language which is used when domestic violence is of considerable importance. For example in the *Action plan*:

Work with the National Union of Journalists to produce guidance for journalists reporting on issues relating to VAWG. This will encourage responsible reporting of VAWG which does not perpetuate the myths or beliefs which fuel it; for example, referring to a 'crime of passion' when someone is murdered by their partner or ex-partner. (Home Office 2011, p. 6)

Yet the discourses constructed in these documents also serve to 'perpetuate the myths or beliefs which fuel' violence against women, by hiding the violence of men and problematising the women that they victimise.

6. DEGENDERING AND GENDERING IN FINNISH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICY

6.1 Degendering: 'Recognise, protect & act'

The Finnish policy documents were found to share many commonalities with those produced by the British government. However, there are also interesting contrasts between the two Finnish papers. Whilst the more recent document, *Action plan to reduce violence against women*, is similar to the two British texts in constructing domestic violence as a form of 'violence against women', the earlier document, *Recognise, protect and act*, is almost entirely dominated by gender-neutral discourses. It is only in the annexes of the document that the gendered nature of domestic violence is explicitly elucidated:

According to Finnish victim studies, 90 per cent of all acts of interpersonal violence affect women. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2008, p. 36).

Prior to the annexes, specific reference to women, men, or to gender altogether in this document are almost non-existent. The only sentence in the text where men alone are mentioned concerns male victims of sexual violence:

Due consideration must also be given to young and adult male victims of sexual violence in the support and treatment system. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2008, p. 24).

There are only five other sentences which feature the naming of men in the entirety of the document, and the following example is one of these. It offers a pertinent case of the gender-neutral construction of domestic violence which runs throughout this paper:

The perpetrator may be a male, female or both and the victim a spouse or a child. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2008, p. 17)

This statement, which involves no subsequent qualification, portrays domestic violence as a phenomenon which affects men and women equally, and contains no suggestion that there are any gendered processes or asymmetries within it. This is not the only instance in which the positions and genders of the victims and the perpetrators are equated and blurred in this document. Such language suggests that domestic violence is a shared, mutualised phenomenon, as if both partners share responsibility for it (Coates and Wade 2004). For example:

Interpersonal and domestic violence is easily overlooked as both the victim and the perpetrator find it difficult to report it and seek help because of feelings of shame, guilt and fear. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2008, p. 14).

Unlike in the British documents, the dominance of gender-neutral language means that the 'victimhood of women' discourse is missing in the *Recognise, protect and act* paper. One of the only times women are mentioned in the main body of the document is in the 'Introduction' section:

Pursuant to the UN Convention on Human Rights, national governments are responsible for preventing violence against women and children and other interpersonal and domestic violence, and for addressing the problems created by it. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2008, p. 14)

After that, women's experiences of domestic violence and the victimhood of women are not explicitly examined again until the annexes. Even when women are mentioned, there is no further explanation as to why they are being focused upon. There is no explicit definition or analysis of domestic violence in this text as a gendered phenomenon and a form of male violence against women. However, the emphasis in this document still remains on victims rather than on perpetrators, with gender-neutral terms for victims appearing 37 times in addition to 20 references to female actors, whilst gender-neutral terms for perpetrators are used 25 times.

Table 3. Gendered and degendered actors in *Recognise, protect and act* document

	Fin 2008
Female actor	20
Male actor	6
Neutral victim	37
Neutral perpetrator	25
Neutral actor	48

Anonymous and degendered victims are therefore the central focus of the *Recognise, protect and act* paper. As with the British documents, this focus risks constructing domestic violence as a 'problem of women', or in this case, of anonymous victims. The following segment provides one example of how responsibility is placed upon victims to 'seek help', whilst the responsibility of the perpetrator to stop using violence is not discussed:

The objective is for NGOs, parishes and other organisations to increase awareness and promote an atmosphere opposed to violence in their respective communities. If any interpersonal and domestic violence occurs among their members, information is given on the services and forms of support available, and victims are urged to seek help. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2008, p. 14)

The dominant construction of domestic violence within the *Recognise, protect and act* document is as a gender-neutral phenomenon. The following sentence exemplifies how the discussion of

domestic violence is typically carried out abstractly and impersonally, without any connection to specific agents, or to gender:

Interpersonal and domestic violence infringes upon human rights and jeopardizes equality, health, wellbeing and the security and safety of the public. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2008, p. 14)

It is also often the case in the text that the term 'domestic violence' becomes shortened to 'violence', as the following sentence illustrates:

When a violent person stops using violence, violence is reduced. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2008, p. 27)

This even extends to headings, such as the title for section 2.3: '*Services for victims of violence*' (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2008, p. 23). Linguistically, these constructions take the reader further and further from the reality of domestic violence as a uniquely pervasive, devastating, and gendered phenomenon. Meanwhile, where domestic violence is linked to actual actors, it is almost always in gender-neutral terms such as 'victim' and 'perpetrator':

However, there are cracks in the system for the provision of services for the victims of violence, children and young people exposed to violence in families as well as the perpetrators. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2008, p. 12)

On a number of occasions, not only is the gender of the actor absent, but the connection of the actor to domestic violence is also neutralised. The gender-neutral terms 'customer', 'client', 'patient', 'spouse', 'partner', and 'parent', which are all disconnected from the violence, were used 43 times in this document, both in the context of perpetration and victimhood. 'Customer' alone appears 30 times, in sentences such as the following:

A special entry will be made in treatment and service plans to record any incidents or observations related to the customer's or patient's experiences of interpersonal and domestic violence. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2008, p. 29)

The use of this kind of gender-neutral discourse is sometimes defended with the claim that it is more balanced, detached, and impartial. However, in practice it serves to blur and hide the reality of domestic violence, a phenomenon which is defined by its gendered imbalances of power and roots in gendered structural inequalities. In this context, 'gender-neutral' constructions of domestic violence actually serve to misrepresent the phenomenon, and are therefore unbalanced and partial distortions which serve to absolve men of responsibility for their use of violence.

As with in the British documents, the gender-neutral discourse extends to discussions about the prevention of domestic violence, where an examination of the perpetrators and their gendered identities might most be expected. The following sentence is one example of how the prevention discourse is carried out, without gender:

The prevention of interpersonal and domestic violence means all the three levels of prevention: preventing violence before it occurs; actions addressing the hazards related to violent behaviour; and measures designed to improve the position and treatment of those already subjected to violence. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2008, p. 18).

The prevention of domestic violence is highlighted as being of central importance to the government's approach, but men and men's practices are never discussed within this context. In fact, discussion of prevention in terms of stopping the perpetration of domestic violence even within a gender-neutral framing rarely occurs, with abstract, disconnected sentences such as the following being much more common:

The social and health care administrative sectors will disseminate information in order to prevent interpersonal and domestic violence and alleviate the problems caused by it. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2008, p. 29).

This demonstrates again how even the prevention discourse is constructed in a vague, abstract and impersonal way, and does not engage with how the prevention of men's violent practices and behaviours should actually be carried out. An example of this is the emphasis on 'promoting an atmosphere opposed to violence' and the usage of vague terms like 'non-violence' and 'anti-violence' in the context of prevention, for instance:

At the same time, the campaigns should help discourage pro-violence attitudes and behaviour patterns. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2008, p. 30)

This kind of terminology risks simplifying domestic violence as if it was limited to physical abuse which could be countered with an approach rooted in 'anti-violence'. It ignores the fact that at the heart of domestic violence is not violence itself but gender, power, and control. What the 'principle of 'non-violence' or 'discouraging pro-violence attitudes and behaviour patterns' actually means in the context of domestic violence is not explored. Meanwhile, where perpetrators are discussed in the document, it is often in terms of how they should be 'helped':

Individuals resorting to violence in their personal relations and families will be assisted and helped to give up violent behaviour and assume responsibility for their actions. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2008, p. 27)

This points to a discourse where support for perpetrators rather than criminalisation is advocated as key to preventing violent practices. This can also be observed in the government departments producing these policy documents and with overall responsibility for tackling domestic violence: in Finland it is the Ministry for Social Affairs and Health, whilst in Britain it is the crime-oriented Home Office. How perpetrators need to be 'helped' to stop being violent is not actually explored in the text however. Kantola (2006) argues that the popular notion of men who use violence needing help in Finland is a product of the 'family violence' discourse, so this discourse potentially evidences its continued influence on domestic violence policy. There are serious issues which arise from discussing interventions with violent men in this way. First of all, it pathologises men who use violence, medicalising them as in need of 'help' rather than normal men who choose to use violence against their partners. Second, it mitigates men's accountability and responsibility for their violence, by suggesting that they are 'people prone to violence' (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2008, p. 28), and that the actions which they need 'help' to stop are somehow out of their control.

It is therefore interesting that in the example sentence provided above, the importance of men 'assuming responsibility' for their actions is also raised. At the same time as emphasising how perpetrators need to 'accept responsibility' for their actions (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2008, p. 28), the text discursively absolves men of responsibility for their use of violence. Moreover, this discourse raises the question of whether victims and perpetrators would be equated as both being in need of 'support' in the same way in the context of other crimes. Would an individual who commits a murder or a burglary be described as needing help? The assertion that perpetrators require 'help' is equated with the support needed by victims several times throughout the document, as can be seen in this quote:

When the service is provided, it is important to assess the safety of the victim and perpetrator and the need for assistance and support and to coordinate the necessary services in a way that makes it easy to receive help and ensure the functionality of the service chain. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2008, p. 24).

This language equates the two groups and mutualises their experiences, as well as the institutional response to them, as if both victims and perpetrators equally need support in order to stop the violence. It can create the impression that violence is a 'shared' phenomenon within a relationship which the woman has equal responsibility to stop, rather than one based around the unilateral

exertion of power, control and coercion by men. It is the 'relationship' or the 'family' that is portrayed as being violent and requiring intervention in this context, rather than men's practices:

This publication uses the concept interpersonal and domestic violence that includes both the violence occurring within families and in other close relationships of dependency. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2008, p. 18).

6.2 Gendering: 'Action plan to reduce violence against women'

In the second Finnish policy document, domestic violence is in many ways constructed differently. In this paper the gender-neutral discourse is less dominant, having to some extent been replaced by a discourse around the victimhood of women. As in the British documents, the construction of domestic violence is gendered as a form of 'violence against women', and this term is used numerous times throughout the text. There is therefore a significant contrast with the gender-neutral focus of the *Recognise, protect and act* document. The victimhood of women discourse runs throughout the *Action plan*, and the following sentence is one example of how it is constructed:

The Action Plan takes a broad and comprehensive approach to the challenge of reducing violence against women, following the three P's principle. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2010, p. 3)

Women are named 322 times in this document, compared to 206 uses of gender-neutral terms for victims. In the '*Background to action plan measures*' section, the reasons why the victims are gendered in the text are explored, and it is established that women make up the vast majority of victims of domestic violence. Despite this however, a gendered analysis of why this gendered asymmetry exists is lacking, and is also missing from the document's definition of 'violence against women', for example. As with the British documents, whilst the problem is named as 'violence against women', the gendered analysis remains at a superficial level.

Men are intermittently named as being responsible for the victimhood of women in this text, and the need to tackle men's violent practices in order to prevent domestic violence is implicitly raised on occasion:

To effectively prevent the recurrence of violence it is necessary to develop rehabilitation programmes specifically intended for men. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2010, p. 22)

Yet these gendered constructions which identify and name male perpetrators represent exceptions rather than commonalities, and as with the other three documents, men remain largely invisible. As can be seen in Table 4, compared to the 322 times women are mentioned, men are referred 66 times

in this text, and on only 36 of these occasions is it actually in relation to the perpetration of violence, with 12 of the 66 references being made in the context of victimhood (though not necessarily of domestic violence but also of other forms of violence).

Table 3. Gendered and degendered actors in *Action plan* document

	Fin 2010
Female actor	322
Male actor	66
Neutral victim	206
Neutral perpetrator	68
Neutral actor	125

This means that whilst women's victimhood is underlined, the actors responsible for it are generally concealed, and that there is a significant gendered discourse about victimisation, but not about perpetration. Furthermore, as with the *Recognise, protect and act* paper, there is still a recurring gender-neutral discourse in the construction of domestic violence. Gender-neutral terms for 'victims' and 'perpetrators' are used 206 and 68 times respectively, and the neutralising terms for agents such as 'customer', 'client', 'patient', 'spouse', 'partner', and 'parent' appear on 125 occasions. This discourse is exemplified by the following paragraph based on the prevention of violence, taken from the '*Summary*' section, where there is no reference to gender at all:

The aims of the Action Plan are to tackle violence proactively by seeking to influence attitudes and behaviours; to prevent repeated violence; to improve the position of victims of sexual violence and the crisis assistance and support provided for them; develop methods for identifying and intervening in the violence experienced by vulnerable groups; to enhance the knowledge and skills of the authorities and professional service providers in preventing violence against women and in helping victims. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2010, p. 3)

A number of issues are touched upon in this paragraph. From attitudes and behaviours; to supporting victims; to the violence experienced by 'vulnerable groups'; to preventing violence; with the exception of the use of the term 'violence against women', this is all discussed using gender-neutral language. In addition to the summary at the beginning of the document, the gender-neutral discourse is especially apparent in the '*Proposed measures*' at the end of each section, which is notable given that these parts of the document are perhaps the most important and most likely to be read. However, constructions of violence without gender regularly appear throughout the rest of the document, too. This includes within statements about both victims, and perpetrators:

The report concludes that the availability of special services for victims of violence, violent offenders and children witnessing violence must be ensured nationally, (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2010, p. 18)

As is this case in the *Recognise, protect and act* document, the gender-neutral discourse on occasion goes as far as equating and mutualising the experiences of men and women, perpetrators and victims in relation to domestic violence. The following passage of text from the '*Aims and scope of the action plan*' section offers a significant example of this:

The gender-based perception of violence makes visible the fact that the mechanisms underlying violence may be exactly the same regardless of the gender of the victim or perpetrator when the violence is motivated by a violation of gender conceptions that the perpetrator regards as acceptable and the meting out of a punishment for that violation. This means that the measures included in the Action Plan can also be used to help male victims in cases where they are subjected to the same forms of violence (e.g. sexual violence) because of their gender.

The objective set for this Action Plan in the Government Action Plan for Gender Equality is to reduce violence specifically against women. This does not negate the fact that violence occurs in other areas of life, too, and that men and women may be equally exposed to violence, as indeed children and older people. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2010, pp. 11-12)

The discourse present in this segment of the text hides the gender asymmetries of domestic violence - and other forms of men's violence against women - which the term 'gender-based violence' is typically used to refer to. It creates the impression that gender-based violence is something which is based upon gender but which could, and does, affect men and women equally, rather than a phenomenon of violence overwhelmingly perpetrated by men towards women. Gender-neutral constructions equate and mutualise men and women's experiences of domestic violence elsewhere in the paper too, such as in the '*Trends in violence against women and approaches to violence in earlier action plans*' section, which the following statement is taken from:

One-fifth of people living in a partnership say they have sometimes experienced violence or threats of violence from their current spouse or partner. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health, 2010 pp. 14-15)

In this sentence the use of gender-neutral language obfuscates the gendered nature of the violence being described, and risks creating a mutualised impression of men and women's experiences of domestic violence. Whilst other sentences in the same section do state that women make up the majority of victims of domestic violence in different instances, a clear gendered analysis in the shape of a gendered definition and elucidation of the phenomenon is absent. This means that the use of more equivocal and obfuscating language as discussed here creates a confused representation of domestic violence where the reality of the phenomenon as a form of male violence against women is concealed.

The discourses of gender-neutrality and the victimhood of women to some extent therefore compete and conflict with one another in the *Action plan*, leaving behind a confused, half-heartedly-gendered construction of domestic violence. However, both discourses are significantly more dominant than any focus upon men; what is most apparent in the document is that men's practices are again invisible. Whilst, as mentioned before, men are on occasion named in the text, their responsibility for violence is never explicitly highlighted, and references to and critical discursive engagement with men's practices remain largely absent. Instead an 'anonymous perpetrator' discourse is typically adopted:

In Finland violent offenders seek admission to perpetrator programmes on the advice of the authorities (e.g. the police), service providers (e.g. shelters), spouse or partner or on their own initiative, (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2010, p. 56)

Or the perpetrators are simply not taken into account at all:

The proposed measures included in the Action Plan are designed to address violence against women proactively, i.e. to prevent violence from occurring in the first place by tackling its root causes and by influencing prevailing attitudes and behaviours through upbringing and education. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2010, p. 9)

As with in the other texts, this includes discussions about the prevention of domestic violence. Indeed, each of the 'three P's' which are described as underlining the government's approach directly relate to men and men's practices:

This means that the Action Plan proposes a comprehensive series of measures for the prevention of violence; for the provision of protection and support for victims of violence; and for the prosecution of perpetrators of violence. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2010, p. 3)

Yet this is never highlighted, and men are very rarely named in the context of prevention, protection, or prosecution, where the focus remains on the victims of men's violence. Concepts such as men's masculinity or men's assumptions and practices are never explored. Instead, and as with the other documents, vague references to the 'attitudes and behaviours' and 'root causes' of domestic violence accompany commitments to prevention, without any examination of what these attitudes, behaviours, and causes are, or how they should be tackled. There are sometimes implicit references to men, such as in discussions about preventative education work with conscripts (with national service still being compulsory for men in Finland), but this raises the question that if it is men who are implicitly being discussed, if it is taken for granted that men are the perpetrators of domestic violence, why are they not explicitly identified and named as such? Why are men and men's

practices so invisible in this document and in all four of the documents? In both this paper and the British *Action plan* document, the 'role of men' is vaguely referred to as being important in challenging and tackling domestic violence. Yet what this role should actually consist of is not mentioned or explored; it is brought up once, and not picked up on again.

An additional discourse of interest in the *Action plan* is that of the 'deviant immigrant'. A significant portion of the text is devoted to discussing what are represented as being unique problems of men's violence found within immigrant communities in Finland:

Results from a Finnish survey (Pohjanpää et al. 2003) suggest that immigrants fall victim to violence up to twice as often as the indigenous population. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2010, p. 27).

In explaining this, the cultural backgrounds of immigrants are problematised and constructed as being more prone to violence:

In the prevention of violence against immigrant women, it is particularly important to take account of the cultural background of women and men as well as the challenges associated with immigration and integration. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2010, p. 33)

In terms of preventing domestic violence and male violence against women among immigrant groups, the solution is presented as being greater integration into Finnish society:

As far as the immigrant population is concerned the most effective strategy of prevention is through comprehensive integration. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2010, p. 33)

Some of the immigrants moving to Finland come from countries with a hierarchic and patriarchal social structure, where women's right to equality is far from a matter of course, either in principle or in practice. (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2010, p. 33)

This discourse implies that, unlike in the immigrant groups' homelands, Finland does not have an unequal or patriarchal social structure. This is particularly interesting in the context of a paper aiming to tackle violence against women, a phenomenon which is clearly widespread across all social groups within Finland. The focus on integration implies that by becoming more Finnish, immigrants can leave behind domestic violence and other patriarchal practices. Yet Finland itself clearly has serious problems with male violence against women, phenomena rooted in patriarchal structures of gender inequality, so how can integration be the solution to these issues? In the 'deviant immigrant' discourse, domestic violence and male violence against women are associated with problems of ethnicity and culture, rather than of gender. By focusing on integration as the key

to reducing domestic violence in immigrant communities, the gender asymmetries and roots of the phenomenon are thus minimised. It is also interesting to note that 9 of the 36 specific references to male violence in the text speak of 'immigrant men'. This perhaps suggests that there is more readiness to accept the idea of dangerous and violent male immigrants than that of violent Finnish men. This finding fits with the analysis of Clarke (2011) who argues that, as part of xenophobic discourses in Finland, immigrant communities and immigrant men have been constructed as being innately patriarchal and violent. Domestic violence is portrayed as a problem of immigrant communities, and is associated with their cultural differences. Clarke (2011) argues that culturally essentialising domestic violence as belonging to non-Finnish and often non-white men in this way further marginalises the phenomenon within mainstream Finnish society. Domestic violence is othered, and associated with and blamed on groups such as immigrants, but not men in Finland more broadly.

6.3 Agentless violence in British and Finnish policy documents

Many of the quotations which have been taken from the texts and discussed in the last two chapters demonstrate how men's violence against known women is routinely discursively constructed as being agentless in all four of the texts. Domestic violence is typically constructed as something done to women, rather than something done by men, a phenomenon suffered by women, rather than suffering men inflict upon women. In this construction, the agency of women is denoted and recognised only in ways that conform to the notion of women as passive victims, or as being responsible for causing and stopping the violence. Meanwhile, the agency of men who use violence is unidentified and invisible. Furthermore, the problem sentence categories which Lamb (1991) described as obscuring the attribution of responsibility for domestic violence can all be applied to the four policy documents I have analysed, and I will now use the same categories to demonstrate how an agentless discourse manifests itself in these texts.

First, terms appear in all of the documents which diffuse responsibility for domestic violence by failing to elucidate how the phenomenon is defined by the unilateral exertion of power, control and coercion by men over known women. Such terms construct domestic violence as a mutualised and shared experience between partners. In the four texts analysed here, these include: 'violent relationships', 'violent families', 'partnership violence', 'violence among intimate partners', 'assault in intimate relationships', and 'violent behaviour between parents'. It could also be argued that the most common terms used to describe the phenomenon in these policy documents, such as 'domestic violence', 'interpersonal violence', 'intimate partner violence', and 'violence against women', also

serve to diffuse responsibility, since they almost never explicitly include or name the male agents of the violence and thus leave the identity of the actor responsible for the violence ambiguous.

Second, domestic violence is almost always discursively constructed in the passive voice in these policy documents. Rather than stating that 'men abuse women', it is written that 'women are abused by men'. Indeed, the passive voice is commonly used in an even more exaggerated way, with the agent of the abuse being left out of the sentence altogether, so that the statement becomes simply 'women are abused'. Women are described as 'experiencing domestic violence', 'falling victim to domestic violence', being 'exposed to domestic violence', being 'affected by domestic violence', and being 'at high risk of domestic violence', for example. The agents of this violence are usually missing, and when they are mentioned, they are very rarely named as being men, but instead as gender-neutral 'perpetrators'. Women are therefore 'victims without agents' (Lamb 1991). What's more, the use of the passive voice means that the linguistic emphasis is almost always on the female victims rather than on the unnamed male perpetrators.

The instances listed here also demonstrate how the concept of domestic violence discursively becomes a personified force (Coates and Wade 2004), an 'actor' and 'agent' in its own right. This is through the nominalisation of the term, which occurs throughout all four texts. It is thus 'domestic violence' which is described as harming women and children, 'domestic violence' which women 'fall victim to' and which causes their suffering, and 'domestic violence' that women are killed 'as a result of', rather than the men who actually perpetrate the violence. Nominalising domestic violence entirely removes the agent of the violence from the sentence, and it constructs the phenomenon in an impersonal and abstract way, disconnecting it from its reality and rendering the perpetrators and their practices invisible.

Finally, Lamb (1991) found that gender obfuscation was a regular feature of the articles she analysed, through the dominance of gender-neutral terms such as 'victim' and 'perpetrator', which serve to obscure the genders of the actors involved. As has already been argued in the previous two chapters, gender obfuscation through the use of gender-neutral language frequently occurs in all four of the policy documents which have been analysed in this thesis. The following segment of text demonstrates this and some of the problematic linguistic features Lamb refers to:

Other countries have developed approaches which we may learn from. The New York Police Department, for example, has a pro-active approach to dealing with domestic violence perpetrators. They maintain contact in a variety of ways with families in homes where recent domestic incidents have occurred or where there is a history of such incidents. (Home Office 2010, p. 13)

Gender is obfuscated here through the use of gender-neutral terminology to describe men who use violence. By referring to 'families in homes where domestic incidents have occurred', responsibility for the violence is also diffused, as if it was the family as a whole which was violent rather than the male perpetrator. This also illustrates how non-volitional terms such as 'incident' are used instead of more volitional terms such as 'action' to describe acts of violence, again taking agency away from the sentence (Coates and Wade 2004).

It would therefore appear that the four policy documents I have analysed all obscure the violence of men against known women as if it consisted of 'acts without agents' (Lamb 1991). This agentless discourse obscures the reality of domestic violence and conceals men's responsibility for it. What's more, by centring women's victimhood in the language used to discuss domestic violence, the construction of the phenomenon as a 'problem of women' is emphasised even further, and the attention, and by extension the responsibility and blame for the violence, is focused on them (Phillips and Henderson 1999). The scale of the focus on women and the invisibility of men, as well as the frequent use of gender-neutral language in all four documents, can be seen in Figure 1:

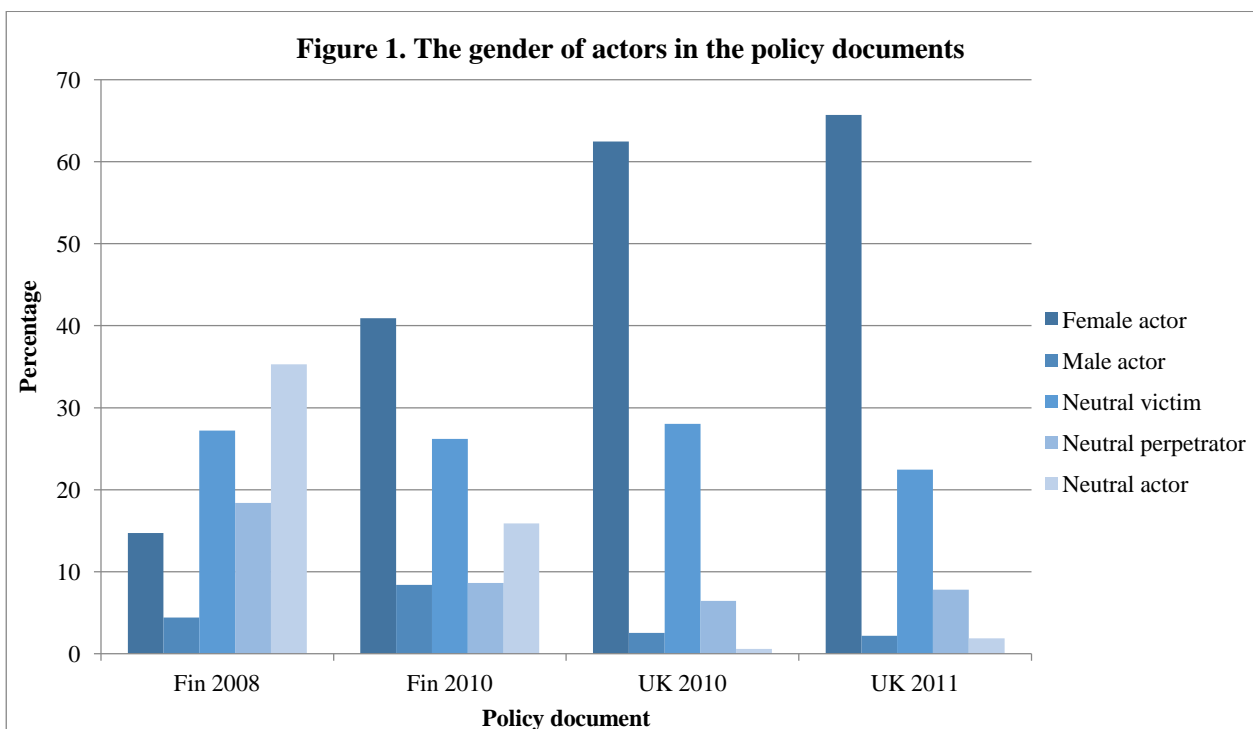


Figure 1 illustrates some of the differences between the four documents. The earlier Finnish paper, *Recognise, protect and act*, is clearly dominated by the use of gender-neutral terms. This and the latter Finnish document, the *Action plan*, both discuss the victims of men's violence against known

more than the perpetrators, but in the *Action plan*, the victims are often identified as women. Where the perpetrators are referred to, it continues to be largely through degendered terms. The gendering of the victims and degendering of the perpetrators also takes place in the British documents. However, the emphasis on women and the concealment of men is even more extensive. This is the clearest pattern between all four of the documents: whether it is through degendered or gendered terms, men's practices are invisible, and women are represented as being the problem.

Another feature of the agentless discourse is that the victims of men's violence against women are almost always constructed in a passive way. When they are discussed, the focus is typically on how they are 'recipients' of violence, rather than on how they can and do exhibit agency in their lives. This is demonstrated by the dominance of the word 'victim', and the absence of language denoting greater agency, such as the word 'survivor', in all four of the policy documents. 'Survivor', which describes women who have struggled against men's violence and rebuilt their lives, is a term often chosen in order to avoid constructing victims of violence only as passive (Harne and Radford 2008). Yet it does not appear on a single occasion in either of the two Finnish policy documents, and in the British papers, it appears only twice in the *Strategic vision*, and three times in the *Action plan*. Whilst it is not always appropriate to use the term 'survivor', its near-total absence from the texts points to a construction of victims as being only passive.

Women's agency, unlike that of men who use violence, is not completely absent from the texts. However, where it is referred to, it is in ways that conform to the conception of women as passive victims, for instance as users of different support services such as refuges and healthcare. Furthermore, by focusing on women's agency as key to stopping the violence through their leaving their partner and the home, responsibility is placed on the victims to stop their own victimisation, and by failing to do so, for their victimisation itself. There is a near-total lack of consideration or discussion in any of the texts of the more active ways in which women exhibit agency, such as in their resistance to the violence of men. Coates and Wade (2007) write that individuals resist whenever they are subjected to violence, and that for every history of violence, there is a history of resistance running parallel to it. Resistance is diverse, and is often not expressed in open defiance, because this is most likely to lead to further violence, but it is nonetheless ubiquitous (Coates and Wade 2007). Limiting and dismissing the agency and resistance of women who are victims of men's violence creates the risk of further pathologising and blaming them for the violence they are subjected to by their male partners and ex-partners (Coates and Wade 2004).

7. WHAT'S THE PROBLEM REPRESENTED TO BE?

The main finding of my discourse analysis has been that, in all four of the policy documents, men's practices are largely invisible. The violence of men towards known women is discursively concealed in a number of different ways:

- The dominance of 'victimhood of women' discourses and the overriding focus on women/victims rather than perpetrators, to the extent that domestic violence is constructed as a 'problem of women', with responsibility for men's violence shifted onto its victims.
- The absence of discussion about men's responsibility for violence against known women, why it is that men use violence, or how men's practices can be tackled.
- The lack of a gendered analysis of men's violence against known women, as a phenomenon situated within patriarchy, and a product of gendered power relations which serves to maintain male dominance and the oppression of women.
- The failure to name men as the perpetrators of domestic violence through a gender-neutral discourse where the perpetrators (and often also the victims) are degendered and represented anonymously, with men gendered as victims of domestic violence almost as much as they are identified as perpetrators.
- The dominance of an agentless discourse which constructs domestic violence as 'acts without agents' (Lamb 1991) through linguistic choices which diffuse responsibility, use the passive voice to render men's agency invisible, nominalise violent acts (so that it is 'domestic violence' as a personified force which victimises women), and obfuscate gender.
- Through a focus on 'deviant' groups, such as 'troubled families' or immigrants, and their essentialised propensity towards violence, rather than on men's practices or gendered power relations more broadly.

The findings from the four texts will now be brought together and the discourses explored further using Bacchi's (1999, 2009) 'what's the problem represented to be?' (WPR) approach. This chapter will thus be broken down into sections according to the six analytical questions this approach raises.

7.1 The representation of domestic violence as a problem

Within three of the four British and Finnish policy documents, the problem of domestic violence is represented as a form of 'violence against women', and thus the victimhood of women, except for in the earlier Finnish text, *Recognise, protect and act*, where the problem is represented simply as degendered violence in intimate relationships. In none of the texts is the problem explicitly

represented as being the violence of men. Responsibility for the acts of domestic violence is largely side-stepped, with the focus instead on the victims. Where the men who use violence are discussed and problematised, it is typically as gender-neutral 'perpetrators'. Representing the problem as being the violence of anonymous perpetrators creates the impression that the violent actor could be anyone, equally a woman or a man. This obfuscates gender, and creates a distorted picture of women and men mutually using and experiencing violence (Coates and Wade 2004, Lamb 1991). Moreover, male victims are explicitly referred to almost to the same extent as men who use violence in the texts, so that 'violence against men' is also problematised. This disproportionate focus further contributes to the blurring of the gendered nature of domestic violence, and contradicts the notion that male victimhood is a hidden or ignored phenomenon; the actors who are really invisible in these texts are the men who use violence. Furthermore, the invisibility of men's practices means that by extension, the violence itself is unproblematised. Domestic violence is frequently represented and problematised in an abstract form, without any connection to the acts it involves or the agents responsible for it. It becomes a personified force of its own, so that the concept of 'domestic violence' is represented as the problem, rather than the actual violent acts of men (Coates and Wade 2004).

In all but the *Recognise, protect and act* paper the victims (unlike the perpetrators) are often gendered, and identified as being women. In representing the problem of domestic violence as being the victimhood of women, women are the primary focus in all of the texts. From preventing victimisation, to providing support to victims, to protecting victims, almost all of the aspects of policy discussed in these documents are geared towards women. Indeed, the emphasis on women is so great that the problem is represented as being one of women (Phillips and Henderson 1999). With the attention concentrated on the victims in this way, questions such as 'what could she have done to stop the violence?' and 'what did she do to cause the violence?' are implicitly raised. Whilst these questions are never explicitly asked, by centring the discourse so exclusively on women, it is women's agency and practices which are placed in the spotlight, and thus assigned with the responsibility for the violence. By emphasising women's agency and their departure from the relationship so dominantly as the solution in this regard, women are then implicitly held responsible for the continuation of the violence, and indeed for causing it in the first place (Hearn and McKie 2010). This reproduces the same kinds of discourses which feminists have consistently critiqued as being connected to assumptions which blame the victims, and shift the responsibility for men's violence onto women. In other words, these discourses degender the problem, and gender the blame (Berns 2001).

It is also notable that certain 'other', 'deviant' groups are represented as being part of the problem. In the case of the British documents these were 'troubled families', who are defined as being problematic in a multitude of ways, including as being prominent sites of domestic violence. In the Finnish texts meanwhile, immigrant communities and immigrant men are problematised as being violent and having an innate domestic violence problem. It is the culture of these communities which is represented as being problematic, with the suggestion they are uniquely and essentially patriarchal and violent (Clarke 2011). These discourses serve to other domestic violence, creating the impression that it is a problem of 'abnormal', 'deviant' groups and not a normalised problem of society as a whole, a cultural problem rather than a gendered one. They therefore minimise the gendered nature of domestic violence and the gendered power relations central to the phenomenon. In the case of the British texts, the discourse also diffuses responsibility for the violence, constructing the problem as being troubled, violent families, rather than men's violence within the family (Lamb 1991). If it is the family which is portrayed as being violent, the responsibility for the violence is mutualised to both the woman and the man.

In the four policy documents then, a number of factors are problematised in relation to domestic violence, including: the victimhood of women, women themselves and women's practices, anonymous perpetrators, the concept of domestic violence, the victimhood of men, and deviant 'other' groups including immigrants and 'troubled families'. This contributes to an overarching problematisation of domestic violence where the men who perpetrate the violence are invisible.

7.2 Policy presumptions and assumptions

The presumptions and assumptions which lie behind policies are shaped in particular by binaries, categories, and concepts (Bacchi 2009). Binaries are rooted in any understanding of men's violence against known women, because of the binary nature of the phenomenon itself, with one person unilaterally using violence against another (Coates and Wade 2007). This binary revolves around the people categories of victims and perpetrators. The socially constructed gender binary, which is based on the people categories of women and men, and which is so ubiquitous and forceful within patriarchal societies, is also fundamental to our understanding of the phenomenon. These two binaries are inextricably linked, because the perpetrators of domestic violence are overwhelmingly men, and the victims are overwhelmingly women. When we think and talk about domestic violence, our knowledge of the gendered nature of the phenomenon means that the image of men using violence against women is often assumed and implicitly evoked. Yet we seldom make this knowledge explicit, by expressing it in discourse. Indeed, discourses are used to conceal the gender asymmetry of domestic violence, through gender-neutral linguistic strategies for example. One

justification for this has been the notion that women can also be perpetrators of domestic violence, and men can also be victims. A gender-neutral discourse has therefore been used, especially at the policy level, in order to enable the discussion of domestic violence as something which both women and men can be subjected to. In this way, the gender binary is removed from the discourse and a degendered victim/perpetrator dichotomy becomes dominant.

Yet domestic violence is a gendered phenomenon, and this language therefore creates a discourse which blurs and obscures its gendered nature. Whilst women can be violent towards their partners, and men can be victims of violence (from both women and men), such occurrences are significantly less common and are qualitatively different in nature. Men's violence against known women is uniquely widespread, harmful, and recurring. It is uniquely based on fear and coercion, power and control. Finally, it is uniquely rooted in gendered power relations and patriarchal structural inequalities. Degendered language conceals these factors by constructing domestic violence as a phenomenon which affects women and men equally, and for which either women or men could equally be responsible, in turn suppressing the unexpressed knowledge we have of the phenomenon being violence typically perpetrated by men against women. It is for these reasons that, as part of their struggle for the acknowledgment of the existence and prevalence of domestic violence, and for effective action to be taken against it, feminists have long struggled for domestic violence to be recognised as being gendered. This pressure has led to an increased use of gendered language, such as the term 'violence against women and girls', by policymakers, as can be seen in all of the documents I have analysed with the exception of the Finnish *Recognise, protect and act* paper.

However, it is only the victims who are gendered in this discourse, whilst the perpetrators continue to be degendered, if not ignored altogether. The primary binary in this context is therefore one of women/perpetrators. Men may be presumed to be the perpetrators of violence in the texts, but they are very rarely explicitly identified as such. When men's use of violence is referred to, it is not in declarative statements designed for knowledge-building, but in casual asides, as if it was always being assumed that the violence of men was being discussed, even though this had never actually been made explicit. By discussing male victimhood almost to the same extent as male violence, some of the impact of the gendering of women as victims is also lost, by creating the impression that both the perpetrators and victims could equally be women or men. Meanwhile, within the phrase 'violence against women' also lies the implication that it is men's violence which is referred to, yet this is again left unsaid. If the assumption in these policies is that men are responsible for violence against women, then why do the discourses not explicitly express this? Why is it that domestic violence is not represented as a problem of men and men's practices?

Some of the most important concepts which are found throughout the four texts are based around the different pillars of the state's response of domestic violence. These include prevention, provisions of protection and support, partnership working, and justice. All of these concepts are constructed largely in relation only to the victim, however. Despite interventions involving perpetrators being equally necessary, if not more so, in each of these settings, it is the victim that is the primary focus. This is a major factor in shaping the representation of domestic violence as a problem of women: the conceptual logics of the texts are all oriented towards women, towards the victimisation of men's violence, but not the perpetration of it.

The categories, binaries, and concepts which have been considered here point to another dichotomy that is interconnected with that of the victim/perpetrator binary, and which is implicitly rather than explicitly expressed in the texts. It is that of being responsible/not responsible for domestic violence. In the four texts, responsibility is rarely clearly delineated as lying with the perpetrator rather than the victim of the violence. This does not mean that it is explicitly expressed at any point that women are the ones responsible for men's violence. However, it is also never clearly articulated that men are responsible for men's violence. When we consider how an agentless discourse is routinely used in the construction of men's violence against known women in these documents, we can see that the perpetrator is often erased from the discussion altogether. In this context, the victim/perpetrator binary is removed, and only the victim is discursively present. With the focus so extensively on women, on the victims of violence, and not on the male perpetrators, the suggestion is implicitly made that women are responsible for preventing men's violence, for protecting themselves from men's violence, for seeking support from men's violence, and for acquiring justice. If women are represented as being responsible in these ways, then does this not also suggest that women are in some way responsible for the violence itself? That they could have done something to stop it from happening, had they acted differently? The problem is therefore represented to be women's practices, rather than those of men.

7.3 How this problem representation came to be

When considering the genealogy of policy towards men's violence against known women, it is clear that significant steps forward have been made in recent decades, largely through the struggle of the feminist movement. Until relatively recently domestic violence was simply not represented as a problem at the policy level. Instead, it was, and to some extent continues to be seen as a private, family issue, taking place within a domain of patriarchal practices where state intervention is deemed to be inappropriate (Hearn and McKie 2010). The problematisation of domestic violence

itself is therefore a consequence of the efforts of feminists forcing it to be taken seriously and understood as a problem. The policy documents being analysed in this study demonstrate that governments are now devoting resources to tackling the issue, and this itself is a relatively new achievement which should not be taken for granted. From the response of the police and the criminal justice system to men's violence against known women, to the provision of services for women who have been victimised by their male partners, significant advances have been made in both countries. However, it is also the case that these responses and provisions remain considerably lacking.

This is because the feminist movement is not alone in having influenced the development of domestic violence policy in Britain and Finland. Other social forces, often with significantly greater influence, have also shaped the way in which the state responds to men's violence against known women. First and foremost, it is not just domestic violence itself, but the discourses which surround the phenomenon, that are situated within patriarchy. The deeply embedded patriarchal assumptions, ideas and practices which permeate through every level of state and policy structures and activity have thus prevented action from being taken against domestic violence historically, and they continue to do so. Furthermore, male violence and the state are two interconnected structures of patriarchy itself, and both function to reinforce and maintain rather than challenge the patriarchal social order (Walby 1990). One example of the role of ideological and discursive forces in shoring up and defending this order can be seen in the patriarchal resistance discourse, which has grown - for instance in the development of the men's rights movement and the notion of 'post-feminism' - as feminist movements have become more influential (Berns 2001). Harne and Radford (2008) point out that these anti-feminist voices have also had a significant impact on policy, for example in influencing the extent to which fathers who have used violence are able to maintain contact with their children in the UK.

The hegemony of the neo-liberal approach to governance, especially in supranational institutions, has also played a major role in establishing the rise of gender-neutral constructions of men's violence against known women, as well as managerialist institutional practices such as performance targets which devalue women's experiences of men's violence (Harne and Radford 2008, Hearn and McKie 2008). Furthermore, the neo-liberal emphasis on shrinking many aspects of the state has been a major factor in the reductions in funding for services connected to domestic violence as part of wider austerity measures in Britain in particular, where neo-liberalism defines the orientation of the British welfare regime (Gadd 2012, Hearn 2001). In Finland a family and child protection-centred approach which has been particularly strong in the social and healthcare bureaucracy, has

also played a major role in shaping the discourse (Hautanen 2005, Kantola 2006, Keskinen 2005). This approach has constructed domestic violence as 'family violence', suggesting that it is the relationship or the family which is violent rather than the man, and that both partners in a relationship are responsible for the violence. In addition, there has been a strong focus on gender equality in policy in the Nordic countries, which is constructed around a human rights discourse and connected to the social democratic welfare state (Clarke 2011, Hearn and McKie 2010, McKie and Hearn 2004). This approach has undoubtedly led to advancements in some areas for women, and it goes some way to explaining why the Nordic countries are oft considered world leaders in gender equality. However, the stress on equal opportunities as opposed to equal outcomes, and the construction of the Nordic citizen as being genderless, means that gender-neutrality is again at the heart of this approach, leaving men's practices and patriarchal power relations undisturbed (Hearn and McKie 2010). These different influences perhaps illuminate why the Finnish *Recognise, protect and act* document is dominated by a gender-neutral discourse. Yet gendered, feminist discourses both nationally and internationally have had more of an impact on domestic violence policy in Finland in recent years, which explains why the latter Finnish *Action plan* document features more of a gendered discourse (Clarke 2011, Hautanen 2005, Kantola 2006, Keskinen 2005).

These different influences illustrate that the path domestic violence policy follows over time is not a straightforward one, and that developments in this area do not always move in a forward direction. The history of the state's response to domestic violence in both Britain and Finland has broadly been one of inaction and failure, and in many ways, this continues to be the case. Not only does the state so often fail to stop men's violence, to protect and support women, and bring men to justice, it has on many occasions contributed to compounding women's experiences and situations in relation to domestic violence. Policy changes can bring about these kinds of effects as much as positive ones, and it cannot be assumed that domestic violence policy is always progressing in a forward direction and becoming increasingly effective as part of a 'natural evolution' (Bacchi 2009). Instead, the development of policy should be understood as being based around an ongoing struggle between different ideological forces, including the feminist movement, which attempt to shape the prevailing discourses. The different meanings of the problem are therefore political (Bacchi 1999). In this context, domestic violence policy can - and does - move backwards as well as forwards under the influence of different forces.

An appreciation of this context also helps us to understand how the current representation of domestic violence as a problem has been arrived at. It has been shaped by several different, competing discourses, and the ongoing struggle between these explain why confused and

conflicting discourses sometimes appear in the texts at the same time. So for example, we can see the influence of the feminist movement in the elements of emphasis upon gender in the policy documents. However, we can also see the influence of the 'men's rights' movement in the focus on male victims, for instance. Most significantly of all however, we can see the structures and hegemony of patriarchy in the invisibility of men's practices and the problematisation of women in all four of the policy documents. The WPR approach raises the question of how this representation of domestic violence has assumed dominance, and in this case the answer is fundamentally that patriarchal structures and ideology have always played a dominant role in both the state and society's understanding of, and response to, men's violence against known women, and continue to do so.

7.4 The silence around men's practices

The biggest silence in all four of the texts surrounds men. Despite being responsible for the vast majority of domestic violence, men and men's practices are largely degendered and unproblematised. The texts all discursively avoid attributing responsibility for domestic violence to its perpetrators, by hiding the agency of men who use violence. It is thus indicative that more than two decades after Lamb's (1991) study, men's violence against known women continues to be constructed as 'acts without agents', even at the policy level. Furthermore, the gendered nature of the phenomenon is diffused and obfuscated through gender-neutral discourse. On the occasions where either the agents or the acts of domestic violence are actually being discussed, it is typically in a degendered fashion. This is the case even in gendered discourses where women are named as the victims of violence; whilst women's victimhood is identified, men continue to be hidden through gender-neutral language. There is also a broader lack of engagement with the violent practices of men, even through agentless, degendered language. With the focus being almost entirely on the victims, little room is left to discuss who it is that perpetrates the violence, why they do so, what the consequences are, and how their violence can be stopped and their behaviour changed. The systematic concealment of men and their use of violence in this way is remarkable, akin to talking about murder without mentioning the murderer, or burglary without talking about the burglar. Yet men's violence against known women is routinely constructed, in these texts and beyond, without a discourse around men's practices.

The degendering of men and men's practices does not just take place in relation to domestic violence, however. Men's responsibility for the vast majority of violence perpetrated against both women and men is rarely acknowledged, and it is equally rare for men (as a class, not just as individuals or particular groups of men) to be gendered or problematised in the context of acts of

violence. If violence is recognised as being a phenomenon which men are overwhelmingly responsible for, and represented as a problem of men, we start to look at it quite differently. This does not mean blaming men, asserting that men are innately or essentially violent, or that all men use violence. Instead, it means asking questions about our society, such as: why do men use violence so much more than women? What are the functions of men's violence against known women? Why do men feel that using violence in certain circumstances is legitimate? And why do men feel entitled and permitted to use violence in certain circumstances? Asking these kinds of questions makes it impossible to ignore the role of violence within patriarchy, as a legitimated means of exerting power and control. This also explains why the violence of men is so often ignored, concealed, and unproblematised: because it is fundamental to the oppressive patriarchal power relations which structure society (Walby 1990).

A significant discursive contradiction found in all of the texts was the elevation of prevention as a central pillar of domestic violence policy in both Britain and Finland, whilst this concept remained disconnected to men's responsibility for domestic violence. Vague references are made to the need to tackle 'attitudes and behaviours' and 'gender inequality' but genuine engagement with these fundamental aspects of the phenomenon was absent. How can policymakers talk seriously about preventing domestic violence without discussing the men who perpetrate it; without examining masculinity and the wider practices and relations of men; without raising the broad silence of men towards male violence; and without considering patriarchal power relations? These elements of men's identities and positions in society produce certain assumptions and expectations which are understood as being entirely normal, even if they are in fact highly oppressive.

This includes an expectation of women's subordination, especially within relationships; of women's position in intimate relationships revolving around their male partners; and of women being responsible for the emotional wellbeing of men and the family or relationship as a whole. These assumptions also create a sense of entitlement among men, where they feel that in certain circumstances, the use of violence within intimate relationships is legitimate and justified, and also tolerated by wider society. At the heart of domestic violence is power; patriarchal gender norms provide men with the expectation of a monopoly of power within the family and intimate relationships, and this extends in certain circumstances to a sense of entitlement to the use of control, coercion and violence. However, none of these issues are probed or explored in any of the four texts, let alone problematised. This failure to represent men's responsibility for domestic violence as a problem is part of the broader absence of a gendered analysis of the phenomenon in policy. Whilst the victims of men's violence are frequently gendered as being women, and domestic

violence's relationship with gender inequality is mentioned, the location of domestic violence within asymmetrical gendered power relations is left largely unexamined.

Whilst the victims of domestic violence are the focus of these problematisations, a number of silences around them also remain. The subordination and subjugation of women in society, such as in the systemic economic inequalities that they experience, is not factored into the policy response to men's violence against known women. This is despite the subordination of women underpinning and exacerbating the phenomenon in numerous crucial ways, for example by making it harder for women to be financially independent of their violent partners. There is a lack of consideration of how to tackle and transform unequal and oppressive gender norms, which play a vital role in perpetuating the assumptions, expectations and ideas which underlie the societal culture of resignation around men's violence against known women (Thapar-Björkert and Morgan 2010). In connection with this, women's agency, and particularly their resistance to men's violence, is also silenced. Women are instead constructed only as passive victims, with their identities beyond their victimhood not taken into account. This suggests that policymakers and indeed wider society are more comfortable with accepting the notion of women as passive victims than with confronting men's overwhelming responsibility for violence. The idea of women as passive victims fits into patriarchal gender norms, whilst women as active agents, resisting their subordination, subjugation, and victimisation does not. This therefore helps us to understand not only the silence around women's agency, but also why there can often be severe social and criminal sanctions and retribution for women who do resist male violence (Harne and Radford 2008).

7.5 The effects of problematising victimhood instead of violence

Discourses shape and constrain how we understand and think about a problem. All four of the policy documents I have analysed reproduce an agentless and degendered representation of male violence which limits the inclusion of men's practices in the discourse. The discourses of gender-neutrality, the victimhood of women, the anonymous perpetrator, and deviant 'others' leave no space for examining and exploring men's responsibility for domestic violence. Within the confines of this representation, it seems normal that women are the focus of attention. After all, isn't helping the victims of domestic violence the goal? The fact that men are absent from the discourse thus goes unnoticed. By extension, men and men's practices are not thought about, and male violence is left unchallenged. This leads to social intervention in the practices of men being closed off through discourse (Bacchi 2009). Problematising domestic violence in this way also severely limits the possibilities for a gendered analysis of the phenomenon. If the role of men is silenced and, at most,

only one part of society's gender binary is included in the discourse, then a gendered analysis is impossible.

Furthermore, by failing to problematise men's use of violence, the texts discursively absolve men of responsibility, and by extension, they hold women responsible for their own victimisation. This discursive effect feeds into subjectification effects. Problem representations play a significant role in shaping how we feel and think about ourselves and others. This includes who is represented and understood as being responsible for a 'problem'. By discussing the different pillars of the state response to domestic violence only in relation to women and the need for them to leave the relationship, the onus is placed on the victims to prevent and stop men's violence and to seek safety and support, rather than on men to stop being violent. Women are by extension held responsible for the violence itself, by failing to prevent it from happening in the first place. Representing domestic violence in this way thus intertwines with longstanding patriarchal norms and ideas of women being gatekeepers for the emotional wellbeing of all members of intimate and familial relationships. Men's violence is understood as occurring as a consequence of a failure of the woman to fulfil these obligations, and the blame is therefore attributed to the victims.

These constructions have a substantial impact on how we perceive domestic violence, and why society asks questions such as 'why does she stay?' rather than 'why doesn't he leave?'. They also shape how the victims and perpetrators themselves understand the violence. It is common for women to blame themselves for men's violence, believing that it was caused by their own behaviour, that they in some way 'deserved' it, or could have done something to stop it. Men who use violence also justify and excuse their behaviour by placing responsibility and blame upon the victim, claiming that they are not 'wife beaters', but were left with no choice other than to use violence as a result of the woman's behaviour or 'failures'. We can see then that in the context of men's violence against known women, the way the problem is represented has major consequences for both the subjectivities of the actors involved, and for wider society's understanding of the phenomenon.

The way in which the problem is represented also has significant material effects upon people's lives. At the policy level, the invisibility of men in this problematisation of domestic violence means that their practices are unlikely to be tackled in any serious way. A culture of resignation pervades institutional practices, where it is accepted that men will be violent to their partners, and the best that society can do is to try to help women to leave the relationship (Thapar-Björkert and Morgan 2010). The man, meanwhile, is likely to face minimal consequences for his actions from

the state, and will eventually move on to another relationship, where he may use violence again, and create another victim. Perpetrator programmes based on feminist understandings of domestic violence are increasingly being used, but how effective these can be on their own in rehabilitating men and stopping them from using violence and coercive control in relationships is not clear (Harne and Radford 2008). Furthermore, only a fraction of the men who perpetrate domestic violence will be arrested, prosecuted, convicted, and entered into a perpetrator programme.

The invisibility of men in the discourse means that there is no concerted government effort, agenda, or commitment of resources for tackling male violence and its causes. Attempts to prevent domestic violence in the first place, for example by challenging men's assumptions and practices more broadly in society, have been meagre. The failure to situate men's violence against known women within wider structural gender inequalities means that there is also little in the way of policy interventions to tackle different aspects of gender inequality as part of an approach to preventing domestic violence, if not as an end in itself. The invisibility of men, and the historic and continued lack of government action, again illuminates the culture of resignation towards domestic violence, which has hugely deleterious effects for women in enabling and indeed condoning men to continue to use violence in relationships unchallenged and unproblematised. By not engaging with men's practices, it is also implied that men's use of violence is unavoidable and unpreventable, rather than behaviour which they can choose to stop.

Furthermore, the ways in which men's violence against known women is represented as a problem at the policy level is not only shaped by, but also contributes to how society conceptualises and understands the phenomenon. These understandings help to sustain the wider silence around men's practices and the blaming of women. They also play a major part in perpetuating men's motivations for violence, and the ways in which they justify and legitimate its use. The representation of domestic violence as a problem is therefore inseparably linked to the causes underlying the phenomenon itself. By failing to problematise, challenge or take action against men's violent practices, we send a message to men that using violence against women is not a problem, and that it is permissible and acceptable in some circumstances. Rather than confronting the male privilege which underlies their perceived monopoly on the use of violence, the inaction of the state and society maintains and reinforces it.

The ways in which domestic violence is represented as a problem is interwoven with the continued failure of governments to treat the phenomenon with the seriousness that it warrants. By placing responsibility for men's violence against known women on the women who are victimised, it is

implied that this is a problem for women to 'sort out', rather than the concern of society as a whole. Despite countless women's lives being destroyed by men's violence, it continues to receive meagre levels of attention, resources, or priority from policymakers. After all, if it is conceived as a problem of the woman, of the relationship, of the family, then why should the state and society intervene? In these different ways, we can therefore see that how domestic violence is represented as a problem contributes significantly to its ongoing, unchallenged pervasiveness as a fundamental structure of patriarchy (Walby 1990).

7.6 Dissemination and disruption

The representations of domestic violence as a problem by the British and Finnish governments are not only produced, disseminated, and defended in policy documents. Nor are they limited to formal arenas and texts for proposing and debating policy, such as speeches, press releases, and other government and party political publications. Indeed, the discourses which express this representation of the problem are found far beyond government policy and the formal arenas of politics. They permeate throughout society, from institutional practices to the media, and from public perceptions to cultural artefacts. In all of these spheres, the problematisation of men's violence against known women both influences and is influenced by the constructions used by policymakers. And in all of these spheres, the responsibility for the phenomenon is regularly concealed, and placed upon the victims (Berns 1999, 2001, Coates and Wade 2004, 2007, Lamb 1991, Nettleton 2011, Phillips and Henderson 1999).

This is because this problematisation of domestic violence dominates the debate, as a feature of the discourses which buttress the patriarchal power relations that dominate society itself. Rather than challenging and disrupting this hegemonic representation of the problem, it is often the case that policymakers contribute to it. The media is also a particularly powerful and important force in reproducing the presuppositions and assumptions that underpin its dominance. From news sources to cultural artefacts, it is in the media that men's practices are most consistently hidden, and women are routinely blamed, when domestic violence is being discussed (Berns 1999, 2001, Nettleton 2011). It is also especially in the media that this representation of men's violence against known women reaches public perceptions, and achieves legitimacy in society's understanding of it.

Taking up an ideological position is not necessary in order to carry out the production and reproduction of social injustices (Coates and Wade 2004). Simply taking part in discursive practices which may be everyday and taken-for-granted can reproduce social injustices both directly and indirectly, as well as serving to hamper effective intervention (Coates and Wade 2004). The

dominant problematisation of domestic violence which renders the violence of men invisible is therefore also produced and reproduced in the day-to-day discursive practices of individuals throughout society, perhaps unintentionally, but no less potently. Yet whilst this problematisation may be hegemonic, this does not mean that it cannot be questioned, disrupted, and replaced. Indeed, the influence that feminists have had in critiquing, destabilising, and shaping the discourse around domestic violence demonstrates this point. The fact that domestic violence is constructed as being gendered, as a form of 'violence against women', in three of the four documents is a clear illustration of how feminists have been able to influence the representation of the problem. The possibility therefore exists to both disrupt the dominant representation of domestic violence, and replace it with alternative problematisations, with language being a tool of resistance as well as dominance (Coates and Wade 2007). Indeed, in order to develop prevention and intervention work which is socially just, safe, and effective, significant changes in discursive practices is essential (Coates and Wade 2004). For Coates and Wade (2004), these practices should include exposing violence, making clear the responsibility of the perpetrators, illuminating and paying respect to the responses and resistance of victims, and challenging the blaming and pathologising of victims.

Meanwhile, Thapar-Björkert and Morgan (2011) also argue that an urgent change in the civic-political culture is needed away from the culture of resignation around domestic violence. This means conceiving violence not as the responsibility of women or the consequence of individual pathologies, but as a problem of society as a whole, and especially of the norms and assumptions which reproduce prejudices around women who are victims of men's violence (Thapar-Björkert and Morgan 2010). There must be a shift in institutional practices away from the disempowering culture of resignation and its overly-simplified dichotomy of blame and responsibility, and "*Our focus should move away from a produced victim to social attitudes that may generate a victim*" (Thapar-Björkert and Morgan 2010, p. 52). Similarly, Phillips and Henderson (1999) call for a transformation in how men's violence against women is written and spoken about, as a discursive intervention that has the potential to change how we understand and think about the phenomenon. They state that "*changing the way in which we talk and write about male violence may redirect our efforts to affect visibly the problem of male violence*" (Phillips and Henderson 1999, p. 121).

This means that the problem should be represented first and foremost as male violence against women, and men's practices within patriarchy. Furthermore, the problem is one of gender and society, and the patriarchal power relations at its core. This problematisation is based on the socially constructed gender binary of the female and male people categories, with an emphasis on the

unequal power relations between the two broad groups. It conceptualises domestic violence as being deeply interwoven with the concept of power, as the exertion of power and control by men over women, and it is rooted in the hierarchical power relations of the gender binary. What's more, domestic violence contributes to reproducing these power relations, and maintaining male dominance and the subordination of women. Representing domestic violence as a problem in this way has come about through generations of feminist struggle, and it is fundamentally based upon the lived experiences of women. It has been developed through the activism, research, and theorising of feminists both within and beyond academia. Within it, women's practices are not problematised, based on the principle that problematising the practices of victims is unacceptable and inappropriate, and that violence is the responsibility of its perpetrators and them alone.

It could be argued that in this representation of the problem, there is also a silence around the diversity of women's experiences of domestic violence, with other factors such as class, ethnicity, disability, and age all shaping the different ways in which men's violence against known women takes place. This is an important factor to take into account, and it is why many feminists have been keen to emphasise the importance of intersectionality in their work, recognising and considering how different systems of oppression and inequality interact with one another. Ultimately however, the most important pattern in the context of men's violence against known women is that of gender, and whilst domestic violence exists in diverse forms, it is perpetrated by men across all social groups, with the same gendered foundations. Meanwhile, it may also be perceived that the lived experiences of men are absent from this representation of the problem. Yet whilst men can be victimised by both men and women, men's victimisation occurs in a fundamentally different way to men's violence against known women, so must be problematised separately.

Furthermore, the lived experiences and perspectives of men are in fact those that are often adopted as the norm and the default position. At the same time as men's practices often being degendered, it is a masculine position which is typically assumed when taking on a supposedly balanced, detached and neutral perspective. Indeed, a 'gender-neutral' standpoint could frequently be seen as actually representing a male position, with the 'normal', 'default', 'neutral' policy subject often in fact being masculine (Hearn and McKie 2008). This then limits the possibilities for emphasising with the position and experiences of women. It is why the feminist approach puts the lived experiences of women at the forefront of their analysis; because women's experiences have been ignored, disbelieved, and subjugated throughout history. It also helps to explain why the ways in which women are held responsible for men's violence in social discourses, are often analogous to the ways in which men who use violence blame women for their acts.

Feminist representations of men's violence against known women as a problem have the potential to revolutionise how society talks and thinks about the phenomenon. A feminist discourse enables women to express the full reality of their experiences - in the knowledge that they are going to be listened to and believed - and recognises and honours their agency and resistance. It makes it possible to hold the men who actually perpetrate domestic violence responsible for their actions. It breaks down the discursive practices which are used to conceal, legitimate and uphold the violence of men, as well as men's wider structural and systematic power and privilege. It enables women to see that they are not responsible for the violence of men, and disrupts the idea among men that they are both entitled and permitted to use violence against women. It provides us with the discursive tools to transform the understandings of society and the practices of men, and forces onto the agenda the development of a policy programme where men's violence against known women is treated as an urgent priority. This should include, for example, the provision of meaningful resources for tackling men's violence and preventing it from happening in the first place, whilst at the same time ensuring that women receive the support which they need. Representing the problem in this way ultimately allow us to envisage, and work towards, a society without male violence against women, and one in which women and men would be positioned as genuine equals.

Feminists have long been fighting for a transformation in the ways in which domestic violence is problematised at all levels of society. In different countries they have built powerful, radical movements outside of the state, but have also engaged with the state from within, and have brought about significant developments in both arenas. Yet the persistent prevalence of men's violence against known women, and the continued failure of the state to tackle the problem, demonstrates that the ideas of feminism are as important and as urgent as ever. This means that if policymakers genuinely want to tackle domestic violence, then a radical shift is necessary in the way that they problematise men's violence against known women. This can only be achieved by listening to women, and to the ways in which the problem is understood and represented by feminists. Men too have a vital part to play in overhauling the dominant discourses about male violence. They - we - can no longer stay silent about the violence of other men, because to do so means being complicit in the perpetuation of male violence and male privilege. Men have to stand up and say that male violence against women is wrong. They have to challenge the assumptions, ideas and practices of their peers, and also question the way that they themselves see the world and act within it. This would mean the development of a genuine men's movement, dedicated to playing its part in stopping the violence of men towards women.

8. CONCLUSION

This research project has studied contemporary British and Finnish policies towards men's violence against known women, and examined how they gender, construct, and problematise this pervasive and hugely destructive phenomenon. This has been carried out using the methods of post-structuralist discourse analysis combined with a 'what's the problem represented to be?' approach (Bacchi 2009) to analyse two recent policy documents from each country. It has been found that, in several different ways, men's practices are made invisible in the discourses of these policies. There is thus an overwhelming silence surrounding the violence of men and its location within patriarchal power relations, in the ways in which the British and Finnish governments represent domestic violence as a problem. In failing to problematise the men responsible for domestic violence, these policies instead place their focus, and ultimately the onus of responsibility, upon women. In so doing, they degender the problem, and gender the blame (Berns 2001). Rather than challenging the perpetuation of men's violence as part of the wider structural domination of women by men within patriarchy, the discourses of these policies serve to maintain society's refusal to confront men's responsibility for violence against women.

It is clear that significant achievements have been made by feminists in improving how society and the state respond to domestic violence, which can be evidenced in the construction of the phenomenon as gendered in three of the four policy documents that were analysed, for example. However, it is also clear that the state in both Britain and Finland continues to fail to address the violence of men towards women, and its causes. This failure will persist whilst domestic violence continues to be constructed and problematised without consideration of the men responsible for it. The invisibility of men's practices is part of the wider absence of a gendered analysis in these policies. Despite the aforementioned use of gendered terms, and references to gender inequality, the texts do not situate domestic violence and other forms of male violence against women within gendered power relations, or recognise their roots in - and their maintenance of - male dominance and the oppression of women.

However, are there differences between Britain and Finland in these respects? Feminists in the two countries have traditionally adopted different approaches to the state based on how they conceive its relation to patriarchy, and its potential as an instrument and arena for social change (Kantola 2006). We have also seen that the contrasts in influence of the feminist movements - as well as other social forces - in the two countries, and the ways in which they have conducted their struggle against domestic violence, have had a significant impact on the ways in which policy towards the issue has

developed in the two countries. Yet in the policy documents analysed in this study, which were published between 2008 and 2011, the ways in which domestic violence is discursively constructed and problematised are more closely aligned. The earlier Finnish document, *Recognise, protect and act*, is very much anchored in gender-neutral discourses, and in this way reflects the influence of the family violence approach and the Nordic human rights discourse on Finnish domestic violence policy. However the discourses of the latter Finnish text, the *Action plan*, were much closer to the British documents in gendering and emphasising the victimhood of women. This recognition of the gendered nature of the phenomenon reflects the pressure that feminists have placed on the state. In addition, in the case of Finland in particular, growing pressure has also come from the international sphere in recent years, with supranational institutions such as the EU and the United Nations (UN) playing an increasingly significant role in shaping government policy around male violence against women.

It is notable for instance that in the three aforementioned documents, the UN's definition of 'violence against women' is used. I would therefore argue that the findings of this study lend support to the theory that policy around men's violence against known women is to some extent converging (Hearn and McKie 2010). However, this is towards a construction of domestic violence where the victims are gendered but the perpetrators are degendered, and a conceptualisation of the phenomenon as violence against women but not male violence. It is also a construction which is heavily influenced by neo-liberal conceptions of gender equality, which often rely on a gender-neutral discourse that distorts men's responsibility for domestic violence. These factors illustrate how the view of Finland as a 'women-friendly' welfare state ignores the complexities of broader gendered issues. By looking at men's violence against known women, and the failure of the Finnish state to tackle this problem, we can see that notions of a 'women-friendly' state may be misplaced.

It would therefore be beneficial to move away from idealised notions of the Finnish or Nordic approaches - or indeed any one approach - to social policy and gender equality. This should not prevent a recognition of the significant achievements which have been made in Finland and the Nordic countries, and the many advantages women have gained in these countries compared to others. Yet we must also recognise that in both Britain and Finland, and especially in the context of men's violence against known women, there are considerable problems with how the state responds to gender, and that it fundamentally remains a constitutive structure of patriarchy. It is therefore more useful to consider what we can learn from contrasting approaches and experiences in different countries, and the impacts of different constructions and representations of the problem. With this in mind, we can see that the feminist movement in Britain has had some success in its struggle largely

'outside' of the state, for example with the development of a network of autonomous, women-only refuges which are closely connected to the feminist movement. In Finland, the achievements of Feminists 'inside' the state in bringing about an egalitarian-oriented welfare regime are also significant. This demonstrates the advantages of different approaches and some of the achievements they have been able to make. However, the policy discourse in both countries continues to make the practices of men invisible, which limits the possibilities for intervening in and genuinely tackling men's violence against known women. The feminist struggle for the problematisation and challenging of the patriarchal basis of domestic violence, and for the onus of responsibility to no longer be placed on women to prevent and escape the violence of men, could therefore not be more important.

The increasing influence of supranational institutions in the field of domestic violence policy points to an important area for future studies, with more research needed around the ways in which men's violence against known women is being approached at the level of supranational policy and in supranational institutions. It would also be useful to take Bacchi's (2009) method into less formal, but no less important arenas in terms of problem representation, such as the media. This would not only enable an analysis of the ways in which domestic violence is represented as a problem in different media contexts, but also to compare similarities and differences between the spheres of policymaking and the media and their constructions of the phenomenon. Finally, it is vital that more research is carried out to investigate how tackling men's practices and the violence of men is being instigated at the policy level.

In this respect, primary prevention campaigns are of particular significance. Further research and analysis is urgently needed into different primary prevention campaigns and innovations which have been undertaken in different countries to date, such as Fox, Hale, and Gadd's (2014) study into young people's responses to primary prevention education programmes. This should include an examination of the impacts that these campaigns have on men and boys in particular, and their assumptions, perceptions, and practices. Research of this kind can help to illuminate the ways in which primary prevention work can be most effective and far-reaching, and that primary prevention interventions are both useful, and desperately needed. We have to believe that it is possible to stop the violence of men, and that we can prevent men from choosing to use or consider violence in the first place, and we have to act on these beliefs. We have to construct and promote discourses which close off the notion of violent, coercive, and controlling behaviour as being legitimate options within men's remit of practices within relationships and the family. Social research has a vital role to play in exploring how this can be achieved.

My interpretations of the texts and the conclusions I have drawn have been significantly influenced by feminist theories, research, and politics. I hope to have made convincing arguments as to why these interpretations have been made. There are many aspects of the texts which I have not commented on or included in my analysis, because whilst they may have been interesting, they were not relevant enough to my focus on gender. On several occasions during the analytical process I also identified discursive features which conflicted or contradicted with the patterns that I had established, and rather than pretending that these did not exist, I tried to incorporate them into my interpretations and to consider their implications within my analysis, as I have tried to reflect in the reporting and discussion of the findings.

A number of different factors will have shaped the interpretations I have made, including the pro-feminist approach I have adopted, as well as my own male gender, in ways that I myself may not be able to identify even through careful reflection. For instance, in this research project there is an extensive focus on the concealment of men's practices, and less of a discussion about how women's agency is limited and denoted with the responsibility for domestic violence in the discourse. I would argue however that in the context of domestic violence, centring our gaze on men's practices - or in this case, how they are made invisible - is a vital part of tackling the problem, and more research is needed around how men's practices are ignored and how their responsibility for domestic violence is concealed. What's more, it is vital that men in particular participate in making the violence of men visible, holding men accountable for their use of violence against women, and breaking the silence around the violence of men. Nevertheless, the construction of women only as passive victims through highly limited conceptions of their agency, the dismissal of women's resistance to male violence, and the blaming of women for men's violence, are just some of the equally important features of the policy discourses around women, and they too demand further research and investigation. Ultimately, I believe that I have effectively argued for the interpretations I have made in this research project, and that my analysis stands up to scrutiny when checked against the texts.

A discourse which is centred on women and hides men may appear to be somewhat separate from other discourses which are shaped by and situated within patriarchy, where women's perspectives and experiences are often dismissed and ignored. Yet the discourses in these texts in fact reproduce precisely the same kinds of male-oriented standpoints, subjectivities and silences which are so common beyond discussions about male violence. Men's role and responsibility may be concealed, but the supposedly gender-neutral or women-centred emphasis of the texts actually represent the standpoint of men. The focus may be on women, but women's lived experiences and agency

continue to be limited, minimised, and ignored. This is part of a pattern which is replicated throughout society, where it is the interests of men which are served in discourses, rather than the interests of women, or indeed humanity as a whole. It is the subjectivities, experiences, and perspectives of men which we assume to be the norm, and this is why they are so rarely actually gendered. Men are not gendered as men because the standpoint of men is understood as being universal, as being the default, rather than a standpoint of power, dominance, and privilege in relation to women. In order to develop policies which genuinely help and support women, policymakers therefore need to deconstruct and discard meanings, constructions, and understandings which have for so long seemed normal, neutral, and 'common sense'. They need to start listening to women, to start seeing the world from their perspectives, and to start gaining an understanding of their subjectivities and lived experiences.

In recent years there has been an increasing emphasis from governments at both the national and supranational level on gender equality. This is a consequence of the pressure put on them by feminist movements and discourses, and it marks an important step forward in the struggle against the oppression of women. However, we have seen that this conceptualisation of gender equality is based on the neo-liberal notion of equality of opportunity rather than equality of outcomes (Hearn and McKie 2010). This has resulted in a highly inadequate means for tackling men's violence against known women, because women and men cannot be treated equally with regards to preventing and dealing with a phenomenon for which men are overwhelmingly responsible, and which women overwhelmingly suffer the consequences of. Whilst patriarchy continues to structure society, achieving genuine equality of opportunity between women and men is out of reach. The male dominance and privilege which define this system, mean opportunities which are not available to women, are bestowed upon men simply for being men.

In order to begin to seriously tackle men's violence against known women, as well as the myriad other consequences of structural gendered inequalities, it is necessary to adopt an approach based upon bringing about equality of outcomes as well as equality of opportunity. In other words, this would be an approach which disrupts gendered power relations, which focuses on how women and men's experiences and social positions differ within patriarchy, and considers how women and men may therefore need to be treated differently in order to reach outcomes which are both equal and just. In order to achieve an outcome where no person has to live in fear of violence from their partner or ex-partner, we cannot treat the perpetrators of violence as anonymous entities, and we cannot act as if the perpetrator could equally be a woman or a man. The perpetrators of domestic violence are overwhelmingly men, and to start to stop the violence of men, we have to recognise

and address that fact. Tackling the practices of men in this way means contesting the gendered relations of power in society as a whole. It is because of this that the state and wider society alike have always been averse to taking genuine action against domestic violence; because to do so means fundamentally challenging the structures of patriarchy itself. Yet this is what is necessary if we are to eradicate men's violence against women.

The findings of this research project suggest that a radical shift is needed in the approaches of the governments of both Britain and Finland towards tackling men's violence against known women. This shift must be based around a transformation in the ways in which domestic violence is discursively constructed and problematised, in recognition of the impacts that problem representations have on how governments deal with the problem, and how the problem is in turn perceived by the public. This means that domestic violence has to start being constructed as a social and gendered phenomenon based on the exertion of power, control and coercion by men towards women, as part of wider gendered power relations. It must be represented as a problem of gender and of society as a whole, and in particular a problem of men and men's practices.

The responsibility for domestic violence must be attributed where it belongs, to the men who choose to use violence, not to the women who are so often blamed for their own victimisation. Only by recognising where responsibility for the phenomenon lies can we begin to tackle the causes and effects of men's violence against known women itself. And confronting both its causes and its effects is vital. This means ensuring that dedicated services are in place to provide help and support for all the women who need it - something which is by no means guaranteed currently. But it also means working towards stopping men's violence against known women from happening in the first place, through primary prevention campaigns, as well as by centring men's practices in the pillars of prevention, protection, provision, and prosecution work. This would represent a crucial step in shifting the onus of responsibility for domestic violence away from women, and onto the men who use violence, and it is a process which men can, and must, be involved in. However, none of this will be possible without radically changing the ways in which domestic violence is gendered, constructed, and problematised, in policy and beyond.

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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