

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

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Abstract

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

Keywords

domestic violence, Finland, gender, policy, problem representation, Scotland

Introduction

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

In recent decades there have been many interventions in legal, social, and public policies and services on violence against women (Hanmer et al., 2006). This is violence predominately perpetrated by men against women known to them in current or previous relationships. It includes physical, sexual, and psychological abuses and is a form of gendered violence (Skinner, Hester, & Malos, 2005). In identifying and critiquing policy developments on gender and violence, we heed Carol Bacchi's (1999) call to consider "policies as constituting competing interpretations or representations of political issues" (p. 2). Our analysis starts by considering how a "problem" or issue is represented: "What presuppositions are implied or taken for granted in the problem representation which is offered; and what effects are connected to this representation of the 'problem'?" (Bacchi, 1999, p. 2).

The recognition and description of a problem draws on discourses and debates. Within these, some individuals or groups are heard, others silenced, and ideas and data may be partially considered, manipulated, even ignored (Code, 1995). These processes are imbued with interpretations, judgments, and choices that reflect inequities in power and resources. Given this backdrop to problem representation and policy, Bacchi (1999) argues for analysis that incorporates "practices with material consequences" as well as ideas and ways of talking about a "problem." The what's-the-problem approach proposes analysis of discourses as practices, to include not just what is said or practiced but who is silenced and what is not considered. Discourses have material effects and, combined with dimensions of problem representation and resultant artifacts (policies), provide data for analysis (Hearn & McKie, 2008). Our prime focus is on discourses and statutory activities that have sought to address issues for women who have experienced violence. In particular, we reflect on agendered policies, with their focus on women as service users and providers, and ungendered discourses in which problem representation and policies generally fail to note that most perpetrators are men (Hearn & McKie, 2008). We seek to unravel this averted gaze to the gendered nature of violence, which leads to a focus on the effects of violence, specifically for women and sometimes children as victims and survivors, and yet avoids critical engagement with gender, patriarchy, and men's practices.

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

Definitions

The question of definitions and terms used to describe men's violence to women known to them are often a starting point for the representation of the problem. Definitions and terms provide parameters in discourses as to what may, or may not, be considered or highlighted in policy work. Violence may be defined from several, sometimes overlapping, stand- points: the violated, the violator, those

dealing with violence, those who observe violence (Hearn, 1998b). The prominence given to any one perspective (or definition) reflects the shifting nature of power. For present purposes, we have used the term domestic violence, as it continues to be understood in most countries and Anglophone contexts, and despite its shortcomings analytically. Not all domestic violence occurs in the home or between those sharing a home. The word *domestic*, and its association with home and privacy, together with an apparent ungenderedness, inadequately reflects, even diminishes, the extent and nature of the problem. Similarly, at the supranational level, the World Health Organization (WHO; 2002) uses the term *interpersonal violence*, one that captures aspects of the intimate relationships that form the context to this violence but also genders it.

Definitions of violence operate rather differently in the two countries under review. In Finland, the term *family violence* [*perheväkivalta*] (Peltoniemi, 1984), including both psychological and physical factors, has been much used. Though it has been subject to criticism for its lack of gendered analysis (Ronkainen, 1998, 2001), it is still in general use. The equivalent term to domestic violence [*kotiväkivalta*] is not usually used in the Finnish language, although when speaking English those working in the field would often use that term. Finnish policies and services have generally worked within a conceptual tradition of *gender neutrality*, and in the arena of domestic violence emphasis has been on family breakdown and alcohol consumption, and their reduction. Problem representation has been degendered, offering limited scope for action. However, the equivalent term to *violence against women* [*naisiin kohdistuva väkivalta*] is increasingly in use in both research and policy contexts.¹

In contrast, the then Scottish Executive had adopted the term *domestic abuse*.² Many nonstatutory agencies, especially women's groups and Scottish Women's Aid, argued that the word *abuse* better represents the psychological and physical dimensions of violence and helps to shift the emphasis from physical manifestations to the ongoing manipulation of power in intimate relationships:

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

This definition accepts the gendered basis of domestic abuse and is the one governmental definition in the United Kingdom to do so. The Scottish Executive, responding to active lobbying from a number of women's and related groups, works with a definition that offers possibilities for engagement with gender in ways that include both men and women. However, some commentators in Scotland argue that *abuse* is too vague a term and fails to achieve the same impact as that of the word *violence*.

It is important to recognize the work of Women's Aid across the United Kingdom and the impact national and local groups have in promoting recognition of

violence against women. Scottish Women's Aid has campaigned tirelessly, along with others, for including gender in the definition of domestic abuse. Achieving this marked a shift in problem representation and enhanced policy development. Nevertheless, with limited resources and the imperative to secure the safety of those experiencing violence, women's groups have concentrated on the provision of services for women and their dependents. Although positive consequences have followed, this work has emphasized women in domestic violence and less men's practices and men's violence (Skinner et al., 2005).

Broadening the Interconnections Between Gender and Violence

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

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

Men are supposed to know when and where and to whom they may be violent, and this knowledge is framed by what may be socially sanctioned or required by the state (or group). Stepping over socially and legally sanctioned boundaries on violence can lead to contact with police and other regulatory services. Many such services and staff therein anticipate and manage violence, especially physical acts of violent behavior among men. Certain services concentrate on the consequences of men's violence to women known to them, for example, refuges, police domestic violence units, and multiagency initiatives to enhance access to welfare services (Taylor-Browne, 2001). Although men perpetrate most domestic violence, especially heavy, physically damaging and nondefensive forms of violence, these various services work predominantly with women and their dependents.³ If charged, men come into contact with legal and police services and may be required to participate in a perpetrator program. Nevertheless, much focus is on women and their children or other dependents, certainly so on health and social services agendas. Practitioners tend to concentrate on the extremely important task of securing the safety of women and their dependents; yet, too

often this becomes the dominant, even sole, focus of policies and services. Safety for women is often based on leaving the relationship and the home. This notion of a woman leaving channels the organization of much work of practitioners and agencies. Thus, overarching pervasive patterns of gendered violence and service organization are rarely questioned (Kelly, 1999).⁴

Not only is this violence associated with intimate relationships but also with the locations around which those relationships revolve, namely the home and its immediate environs (Young, 1997). Although domestic violence may take place outside the home, it is nevertheless violence that comes to dominate relationships in and around home and hearth. In short, the combined gendered and spatial trends mean that “the safest place for men is the home, the home is, by contrast the least safe place for women” (Edwards, 1989, p. 214). The location and nature of domestic violence illuminate an apparent demarcation of the private and the public in perspectives and policies. The notions of the public and the private are both material social arenas and ideological constructions that can have quite different forms, meanings, and significances for different social categories and for women and men (Bose, 1987; Hearn, 1992). Moreover, this dynamic and fluid interaction is rendered more complex by the activities of governments and agencies (Taylor-Browne, 2001). With growth in concerns about risk (environmental, health, personal, property), contemporary policy has crept into a range of arenas, not least of which are aspects of the private and personal conduct. Governments are increasingly encouraging individuals and families to take responsibility themselves for myriad aspects of socioeconomic and health matters. Some social arenas have unevenly opened up to social practices of supposed choice, prudence, and experimentation, albeit inequities in gender, income, and power ensure the exclusion of many.

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

The experience of domestic violence, especially if it results in leaving the family home, a job, as well as care and socioeconomic support networks compounds these inequities further. In addition, emotional and psychological traumas often have long-term implications for health and well-being. Gendered workings of formal and informal care and access to resources, combined with threats and

experiences of violence, create a double, sometimes triple, jeopardy for women. Women traverse uneasy and sometimes contradictory path- ways in which they run the risks of blame or stigma if they experience abuse.

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

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

Context

Finland and Scotland have some similar geographical, population, and other features: population of more than 5 million, concentration of about 40% of the population in the south of the country (especially Helsinki, Vantaa, and Espoo; Edinburgh and Glasgow), provision of services in remote and rural hinterlands to sparsely populated areas, and managing socioeconomic changes while the population is aging, with solo living and family re-formation on the increase. In both countries, women are visible and active in political and public life. This is a relatively strongly established feature in Finland, whereas in Scotland this has been greatly enhanced by recent changes brought about by devolution (Breitenbach & McKay, 2001).

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

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

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

The differential basis of problem representation and resultant policies originates from the workings of the concept of gender neutrality in Finland and gender equality in Scotland. Although the conceptual basis in Finland is gender neutrality, there is greater gender equality on most socioeconomic and health measures in Finland than in Scotland. These different traditions emerge from fundamentally different histories, welfare structures, and geographical positions. Finnish nationalism and statehood developed against previous incorporation within first the Swedish, then the Russian empires. Late-19th-century nationalism, which eventually achieved statehood in 1917, was based on a broad notion of citizenship for both sexes and political economy set in a harsh environment. Citizenship involved strong participation of both women and men in the rural workforce as well as emerging wage labor. It was from this complex base that the strong notion of Finnish gender neutrality was founded and on which the more recent notion of gender equality was developed in extraparliamentary politics in the 1970s and in law in the 1980s. The Council for Equality Between Women and Men was created in 1972, with a government plan promoting gender equality in 1980, the first in the Nordic countries (Council for Equality, 1997). Gender neutrality has been coupled with a relatively wide acceptance of the principle, if not practice, of gender equality across the political spectrum. This operates at least

at the rhetorical level and to an extent through policies on work, education, and welfare (Ronkainen, 2001).

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

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

Documentation

As part of the supranational context, the WHO's (2002) *World Report on Violence and Health* has the stated aim to challenge the "secrecy, taboos and feelings of inevitability that surround violent behaviour" (p. 1). Noting the crucial role of health services as often the first contact point with statutory services for those experiencing violence, it calls for partnership working across criminal justice and agencies concerned with human rights and familial relations. In adopting the term interpersonal violence to include a broad sweep of family and intimate partner violence as well as community/public violence between those not necessarily known to each other, the report fails to address gender in ways that might connect with some men's violent practices and violent masculinities. Yet, data presented demonstrate that "the overwhelming burden of partner violence is borne by women at the hands of men," with surveys from around the world reporting 10% to 69% of women being physically assaulted by an intimate male partner at some point in their lives. Low income is cited as a notable risk factor, with an implication that money and resource issues may be a cause for a relationship dispute, with experience of poverty potentially leading to hopelessness. Indeed, services such as social work that frequently meet with those living with, or in fear of, violence have evolved a focus on low-income households with predominately female clients (Bacchi, 1999). Meanwhile, those

with greater incomes are often able to shield themselves and others from statutory, regulatory, and support services. A more contextualized analysis of the link between low income and violence needs to consider societal variations in violence, impacts of inequality, dependence within relationships and agencies' self-fulfilling prophecies.

The WHO report recommendations are presented in gender-neutral terms, such as *people*, *parents*, and *partners*. In proposing treatment programs, the need to discuss gender issues is noted, as is the potential for counseling services for men who abuse partners. Regardless, the overall approach is highly individualized, one in which "people" are encouraged to "take responsibility for their actions." Noting that "violence is often predictable and preventable," that "complacency is a barrier to tackling violence," and self-interest may reinforce violence as in "the socially sanctioned right of men to 'correct' their wives" (WHO, 2002, p. 35), there is no critical engagement with critical studies on men, gender, and violence (Connell, 1995, 2002; Hearn, 1998a, 1998b; Hearn & Parkin, 2001; Kimmel et al., 2004).

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

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

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

Content

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

Nordic countries are presumed to have woman-friendly social policies and welfare services. Women have gained much from the strong role of the state and public provision of services (Nousiainen, Gunnarsson, Lundstrom, & Niemi-Kiesilainen, 2001). These are countries where centralized, sometimes corporatist, decision-making structures exist that in theory offer the infrastructure to coordinate comprehensive service provision on violence against women. Indeed, health and welfare services in Finland are integrated within the same agency. On many indicators of equality between the sexes, these countries are at the top of most league tables; on the whole, women appear to do better across the life course than women in, for example, Scotland. However, welfare and preventive approaches, such as high levels of day care provision, may go alongside relative neglect of questions of violence and abuse (Hearn et al., 2004; Pringle, 1998). Rape in marriage was criminalized in 1994 in Finland, one of the last countries in Europe to do so.

The Finnish form of relatively strong welfare state development and gender equality policy and ideology coexist with gender inequalities and relative gender invisibility. This is for several reasons: conduct of the debate in terms of the genderless citizen (Parvikko, 1990; Rantalaiho & Heiskanen, 1997; Ronkainen, 2001), persistence of gender inequality in employment, and nonproblematizing of men, men's practices, and masculinities. Promotion of human rights imbues the work of many Nordic governments and agencies. However, closer examination shows ongoing levels of violence against women in Finland and complex and diverse ways in which departments and agencies there address these issues (Heiskanen & Piispa, 1998). More generally, this paradoxical situation appears to arise partly from a continuing emphasis on individuals' rights operating at the community level rather than at the individual embodied level (Nousiainen et al., 2001; Nousiainen, 2002).

In Scotland, with the advent of its first parliament in 300 years, the coalition governments have forged a left-of-center route to tackling social problems. The role of an active autonomous women's movement and voluntary sector, combined with the election of sympathetic members of parliament, coalesced to form a national partnership approach firmly based on gendered notions of violence (Breitenbach & McKay, 2001). It would appear that this approach has achieved a higher profile and stress on multiagency action than recent activities in Finland, where integrated health and welfare service have been in operation for some time.⁷ However, these are relatively recent, and some would add, fragile developments. Thus, although both countries are explicit in their search for gender equality in the public sphere, when it comes to equality in intimate or familial relationships, policies and services on violence against women do not seem to follow the patterns expected (Weldon, 2002). Postdevolution in Scotland, domestic violence moved toward center stage in policy work, whereas gender equality remains peripheral, though debated. Such contrasts were a source for agitation among those tackling the broader issues of social inclusion and social justice. Many noted that households headed by women were overrepresented in various policy measures on gender equality.

A consultative plan on violence against women published by the Scottish Office (1998) called for action plans across government departments. Again, partly based on the need to meet international obligations, the plan was revised and published in 2001. The preceding year a National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2000) was launched describing an overall strategic approach and action plan to include provision across sectors and organizations as well as government departments for a 3-year period. By the end of 2003, a range of policy documents or strategies concerning legal, health, housing, education, and social care services were in place, demonstrating the government's commitment to address the needs of women experiencing violence. In these documents, the premise was that violence against women is gender based and fear of violence undermines the position and confidence of women, even if when not personally experienced. Despite noting older women have specific fears and needs, a strong focus in action plans is on protecting and meeting the needs of women with dependent children and those children.

The Partnership Strategy (Scottish Executive, 2000) required local authorities to set up multiagency partnerships and develop local strategies and action plans. In June 2001, a national group was established to take a strategic overview of developments and hold an annual review bringing local and national players together, determining next priorities. The group included the minister for social justice and representatives from the police, health services, education, local government, equalities agency and department, law, and third sector. There continues to be a tremendous amount of work across local multiagency domestic abuse fora, government departments, and agencies. However, given a limited resource base, emphasis remains firmly on supporting women in disclosing abuse and securing safety for themselves and dependents. Despite attempts to seek more radical initiatives on violence against women, limited resources and concerns to gain legitimacy have led to a policy lens focused on women: an averted gaze in discourses and practices to men and violence.

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

In Finland, the plan published in 1997 by the minister of social affairs and health launched the Programmes for Prevention of Prostitution and Violence Against Women. The National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES, an organization with a role similar to NHS Health Scotland) implemented the programs, and work was completed in late 2002 (Jyrkinen & Ruusuvoori, 2002). The overall aim of work undertaken in the Programme for the Prevention of Violence Against Women was to raise awareness of violence and of its extent and impact on individuals and society, including the promotion of community initiatives at the local municipality levels. The program was keen to promote evidence that "when it comes to 'family violence' it is pertinent to speak of men's violence against women" (STAKES, 1998, p. 2). While framing work in a gender-specific manner, other materials and information use gender-neutral language. This probably reflects ongoing adherence to and contradictions surrounding the concept of gender neutrality. The conceptual frame can mean that taking gender into account can be problematic even when something is so clearly gendered as is domestic violence. At the final conference for the program ("My Body, My Life"), held in Helsinki in October 2002, it was concluded that although much had been achieved in raising the issues and developing legislation and services, an acceptance of the need for a gendered perspective on human rights and violence remained elusive. The continued promotion of family mediation was called into question, as was the mythology of the strong Finnish woman and the weak miserable man. Data demonstrated continuing levels of domestic violence and inequalities between men and women.

However, the policy approach to violence against women is in transition in Finland (Niemi-Kiesiläinen, 2003). There are clear moves to criminalization, with the bringing of successive acts into criminal law. Prosecution of domestic violence came to the parliamentary agenda in 1993 with proposals to reform the Criminal Code on Assaults and Batteries and was enacted in 1995. These included provision that charges may be dropped if the victim firmly wishes and for legal aid for victims in sexual and domestic crimes (Niemi-Kiesiläinen, 2003; see also Rosti, Niemi, & Lasola, 2008). Criminalization of marital rape dates from

1994 and introduction of restraining orders (injunctions) for married partners from 1999 and for cohabitants from 2005. Victims of domestic violence were specifically recognized in criminal procedure in 2002—Rec. (2002)5—with violence toward women seen to result from the imbalance of power between women and men, and impairing human rights and fundamental freedoms. Legal reforms have also addressed sexual crimes specifically. The current government includes further priority action against violence against women in its Government Action Plan for Gender Equality 2008-2011. Thus, there is a degree of convergence with the U.K. system through greater legalism in Finland.

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

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

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

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

gendered violent, social realities.

Discussion

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

Promotion of human rights imbues the work of many Nordic governments and agencies. Much of this is premised on notions of the genderless citizen, in the Finnish case reinforced by the concept of gender neutrality. Evidence demonstrates relatively high levels of violence against women, along with diverse ways in which various departments and agencies address these issues. Strong welfare state development and gender equality policy and ideology in Finland coexist with gender inequalities and relative gender invisibility. Coalition government in the Scottish parliament has sought a somewhat consensual, neoliberal approach to gender and domestic violence and may have achieved rather higher profile multiagency action compared with Finland, even though coalition politics is more established there. Despite differing contexts, representation of the problem, policies, and outcomes is not dissimilar in the two countries in their degenderedness and may be converging somewhat.

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

Although there might appear to be differing bases to policy and services on domestic violence in Finland and Scotland, albeit working in the same framework of the EU, overarching gendered and social hierarchies remain relatively unchallenged in both countries. Current processes of policy development and

implementation may even be said to reinforce these hierarchies. The failure to actively gender the representation of the problem, policy discourses, and processes, and to tackle the apparent demarcation between the public and the private, facilitates an individuated and agendered response to the gendered nature of violence.

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

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

Conclusions

The construction of policy discourses on domestic violence represents the problem of violence against women as one for women through an implicit emphasis on their agency. Major dimensions of policies and services focus on attainment of safety of women, often presumed best secured through leaving the home and relationship. The importance of achieving safety for anyone experiencing violence and abuse is undeniable. However, policy discourses and services in both countries generally fail to move beyond that very necessary but initial point of activity. Generally, the gendered nature of violence is seemingly

taken for granted and managed through services and policies that have an averted gaze to gender, preferring to concentrate on, or unable to afford to go beyond, experiences of women as victims, survivors, and potential agents of change. Likewise, the gendered nature of policy itself is generally taken for granted, and this is especially damaging with policies on violence (Hearn & McKie, 2008).

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

Critical studies of men's practices exist, as does evidence from women and women's groups on the persuasive impact of violence on their lives (Hague, Mullender, & Aris, 2003; Nousiainen et al., 2001). Ongoing underfunding of refuges for women and children who have experienced violence, combined with policy shifts to community or public safety, are part of the reproduction of wider social practices that silence, even sanction, violence against women, especially that in and around intimate relationships, homes, and families.

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

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

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Notes

1. An indication of the extent of use of Finnish terms can be gained from the number of Google search hits using terms within quotation marks. The results of this search, conducted on 26 June 2008, were as follows: *perheväkivalta* (97,400), *naisiin kohdistuva väkivalta* (9,690), *lähisuhdeväkivalta* [intimate/partner violence] (9,500), *parisuhdeväkivalta* [couple violence] (9,120), *kotiväkivalta* [domestic/home violence] (2,938).
2. In 2007, the Scottish Executive was renamed Scottish Government. This change followed research which suggested the term executive and the role of the Scottish Executive were unclear to most Scots.
3. Claims of gender symmetry in domestic violence have been made, largely drawing on quantification of acts of assault (Fiebert, 1997). Kimmel (2002) notes these claims are based on misinterpretations of data or narrowly defined studies. Women can be violent, but much of this is in self-defense, and more than 90% of intimate violence that is instrumental in the maintenance of control—the more systematic, persistent, and injurious type of violence—is perpetrated by men. Given men's physical strength, women are likely to experience greater physical harm and psychological fear (Nazroo, 1995).
4. Violence can and does occur in gay and lesbian relationships. Given the current focus in legislation, policies, and services on heterosexual relationships, domestic violence in gay and lesbian relationships is probably underreported (Mason, 2002). Gendering policies would enhance potential for a broader debate on and responses to gender, sexuality, and violence. As the Respect ([U.K.; National Association for Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes and Associated Support Services] 2000, pp. 2-3) statement of principles and philosophy puts it, "Violence within same sex relationships or from women to men is neither the same as—nor symmetrically opposite to—men's violence to women."
5. In the 2005 survey, 43.5% of the women had at least once experienced a man's physical or sexual violence or threat thereof since 15 years of age. The percentages of those experiencing violence in a current partnership decreased from 22.2% to 19.6%, outside of a partnership rose from 24.4% to 29.1%; the percentage who had experienced such violence in a previous partnership was the same at 49.0%.
6. Gendered stereotyping can infuse some practitioner attitudes and be implicit in service organizations. Developments in psychological profiling are relevant here (Kropp, 2004; see also Munroe & Meehan, 2004).
7. Interestingly, this is even though coalition politics and policy development are more established in Finland, with the current national government comprising the Conservative [Kansallinen Kokoomus: National Coalition Party], Centre, Swedish People's, and Green Parties. A recent previous government actually comprised Social Democrats, Conservatives, the Swedish People's Party, the Left League (former Communists), and the Green Party. It should be noted that these party titles can be misleading, particularly in relation to U.K. political labels. For example, although the Finnish Conservative (or National Coalition) Party is part of the Group

of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats (EPP-ED) in the European Parliament, it is probably not very different from the current U.K. (ex-New) Labour government on some policies.

8. Priority measures that need to be addressed in developing programs include the following:

- ensuring, as highest priority, the safety of women and children victims, through contact between the program staff, and the women and staff working with them; such professional contact with the women is especially important when the man is living with or in contact with the women;
- not avoiding or diluting the legal consequences of criminal behavior, so needing to link programs to court-mandating and legal sanctions;
- working in cooperation and coordination with programs dealing with the protection of women, including the central involvement of women's projects and women victims' assessments in evaluations of men's programs;
- need for clear principles, including recognition in programs that men's violence to women is about power and control, in contexts of men's dominance; and
- recognition of dangers in overstating effectiveness claims, especially in offering false hopes to partners, ex-partners, and other affected parties who may make plans on that basis (Edwards & Hearn, 2005; Mullender & Burton, 2001).

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