

**GENDER-NEUTRALITY AND GENDER EQUALITY:
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING POLICY
RESPONSES TO 'DOMESTIC VIOLENCE' IN
FINLAND AND SCOTLAND**

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INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is a serious social problem and human rights concern. What is usually referred to as 'domestic violence' is predominately perpetrated by men known to women through intimate or familial relationships. While there are some patterns and probabilities amongst men who are violent to known women (Walby and Myhill 2001), there is no typical abuser, and domestic violence appears in all social groups, races and religions, classes and age groups. Many argue that violence against women is central to the subordination of women and domestic violence particularly pernicious as it challenges the presumed self-identification with, and safety and security of, home and intimate relationships (Edwards 1989; Elman 1996; Kelly 1999; Nousiainen 2001).

International organisations, the autonomous women's movement, and many agencies argue that until governments, the judiciary and society in general

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challenge men's collective power, and the role of violence in the (re)creation of patriarchy, then the achievement of full human rights for women will remain elusive (United Nations 1995; Elman 1996; Ronkainen 2001; Hearn 2002; WHO 2002). Despite decades of legislative and policy initiatives that seek to promote equality between men and women in public spheres, up to the last decade there was a relative silence on issues of violence in intimate and familial relationships in both Finland and Scotland. In a study of government reactions to violence against women Weldon (2002: 3) asserts that '... the cross-national patterns of government response to violence, which often involves considerable expenditures and substantial legislative change, are quite unlike the patterns scholars discern in relation to women and employment or in the area of family policy'.

In this paper we have several linked aims. First, we seek to compare and contrast debates and developments on 'domestic violence' in these two countries. We approach this as researchers living and working in these countries (respectively Scotland and Finland), rather than our countries of origin (respectively Ireland and England). This has caused us to reflect on the interweaving of history, policy and gender, as relative 'outsiders'. In both countries men's violence against known women came to the fore in policy and service provision in the mid-to-late 1990s. Given that governments, agencies and voluntary sector groups have grappled with issues of equality for over 30 years, albeit with different understandings and approaches, it is worth reflecting on why the phenomenon of violence against women has taken some time to come centre stage. On the basis of this analysis we consider the potential to promote existing and further legislative and policy measures to tackle continued levels of violence against women. Second, we explore this comparison by way of an examination of the very different notions of gender-neutrality and gender equality in the two countries.

Third, and more specifically, we seek to question and problematise some of the commonly held presumptions that are often maintained in Scotland that policy and services on violence against women are necessarily superior in Finland. While Finland can be broadly characterised as a Nordic welfare state with significantly greater welfare provision (such as universal pre-school daycare provision) than the UK, this does not mean that such a state system has been able to intervene effectively to tackle violence against women (Eriksson et al 2002). Indeed it is important to recognise that there are considerable variations between and within the five Nordic countries, and

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that in one sense none of them presents a picture that fits the stereotype that is sometimes perceived from the outside. More specifically, Finnish state responses to such violence cannot necessarily be seen as based upon a strong ethos of moving towards gender equality, or better developed across government and related agencies and services. To posit this is not to argue that Scottish interventions can be seen as especially positive, bearing in mind that it is only since devolution that a concerted, centrally-led approach has been developed with all departments and services expected to address this vital issue.

Finland and Scotland have a number of geographical, population and political parallels. These include a similar size of population (over 5 million); the concentration of around 40% of the population in the south of the country (especially Helsinki, Vantaa and Espoo; and Edinburgh and Glasgow); the provision of services in remote and rural hinterlands to sparsely populated areas; and managing social and economic changes at a point when the population is ageing, with solo living and family re-formation on the increase. In both countries women are visible and active in political and public life, although in Scotland this has been greatly enhanced by recent changes brought about by devolution (Breitenbach and McKay 2001).

On the other hand, there are a number of obvious contrasts between the two countries. There are clear contemporary differences in the basis of, and approaches to, measures to achieve greater equality and tackle violence against women. Notably, the continued adherence to gender-neutrality in Finnish legislation, policies and activities makes it difficult to accept and deal with differences between the sexes such as the level of men's physical and psychological abuses of women. Adherence to gender-neutrality as a mechanism for working towards equality of the sexes makes debates on terminology difficult to conduct. In Finland the term 'family violence' (Peltoniemi 1984) has been much used to include both psychological and physical factors, though it is subject to increasing criticism, for its lack of gendered analysis (Ronkainen 1998). The equivalent term to 'domestic violence' is not usually used in the Finnish language, although in speaking English those working in this field would often use that term. The equivalent term to 'violence against women' is increasingly in use in both research and policy contexts.

An appreciation of the gender-based nature of domestic violence has formed the basis to recent Scottish initiatives. A prime example is in the adoption of

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the term domestic abuse, as opposed to domestic violence, by government, organisations, the women's movement and service agencies in Scotland. It is argued that domestic abuse allows for a stronger association between the gender-specific nature of men's violence in intimate relationships and a myriad of ways in which this can be manifest. This debate draws upon, for example, the recent statement by the UK Department of Health (2000, p.13) that:

The idea that women are at least as abusive as men is both wrong and dangerous and can lead to the belief that there is no need to provide dedicated services to protect women and their children against domestic violence.

Further, the term domestic abuse has been adopted because it is felt to better represent the combination of psychological and physical dimensions of violence and to shift the emphasis from physical symptoms to the on-going manipulation of power in intimate relationships (Scottish Executive 2002). Yet for some commentators and professionals the word abuse seems too soft, failing to achieve the same impact as that of 'violence'.

The recently published World Health Organisation world report on violence and health adopted the terminology 'violence by intimate partners' with the aim of capturing violences that often continue after relationships break down (WHO 2002). Our analysis is concerned with policy responses to all dimensions of psychological and physical abuses, and in this paper we have used the term 'domestic violence' as this continues to be used and understood in most countries and Anglophone contexts, even though there are major shortcomings in it as a (degendered) analytical concept.

DOCUMENTING 'DOMESTIC VIOLENCE'

Research demonstrates that over the lifecourse women are more likely to experience psychological and physical abuse within family and kinship networks than from strangers in public spaces (Hatty 2000; Renzetti et al 2001). However, this overall pattern of violence masks the gendered nature of much reported physical and psychological violence, as well as the frequent lack of attention to violence in and around organisations (Hearn and Parkin 2001). Although strangers and acquaintances are responsible for the majority of crimes and assaults against men, especially men aged under 30, women

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and children are much more likely to be beaten, stalked, raped or killed by intimate relatives or partners than any other type of assailant (Piispa and Heiskanen 2001; WHO 2002).

Domestic violence has been a concern for a number of decades but it was in the 1990s that national surveys in both Finland and Scotland provided details on prevalence and incidence that proved to be crucial in provoking governmental action. Evidence demonstrates that domestic violence is widespread, under reported, and gendered and that the level of repeat incidence is high.

In Scotland and the UK a number of trends have been documented (Henderson 1998; Scottish Executive 2000; Scottish executive 2003):

- it is estimated that between a quarter and a third of all women in Scotland experience abuse at some point in their lives (Scottish Executive 2003, p.2);
- of the non-sexual crimes of domestic abuse recorded in 2000 by police in Scotland, 599 of the 660 cases involved a woman experiencing violence from a male perpetrator (Scottish Executive 2003, p.3);
- every week in the UK 2 women are murdered by current or former partners (Department of Health 2000);
- the Confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths in the UK (2001) estimates that over a third of domestic abuse incidents start during pregnancy; women who have experienced abuse are twice as likely to experience miscarriage or stillbirth (Department of Health 2001).

According to the report **Faith, Hope, Battering** (Piispa and Heiskanen 1998) 40% of Finnish women reported having experienced male violence (sexual or physical) or threats at some point in their lives. Violence was concentrated in couple relationships that were on-going or recently dissolved. Where violence was experienced outside the couple relationship the assailant was a person known to the women in 2 out of 3 cases. Women rarely sought formal help with only 1 in 4 seeking support and advice from a shelter, the police, legal services, family centres or crisis lines and women's groups. When help was sought the most common agencies approached were health care services in the community, followed by the police and family counselling services. Most support was gained from friends and other family members (Piispa and Heiskanen 1998). Research in Scotland found similar trends in accessing

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support (Henderson 1998, McKie, Fennell and Mildorf 2002). So while legal, health and social services are viewed as potential sources of help they were not actually used by many.

Subsequently these results were re-analysed and subjected to cost analysis in the study **The Price of Violence** (Piispa and Heiskanen 2001). Through this further analysis the researchers broke down figures on who seeks help by age group. Not surprisingly this varied, with women over 65 (the oldest category in the data set) most likely to never tell anyone of violence. Women in the age bracket 45-54 were twice as likely to resort to official channels when seeking help than women aged 65 and over. A further variable should be noted: women with a degree qualification were more likely to seek support through official channels than women with less education. However, the study did not find an urban/rural difference in the profiles of seeking help. More recent calculations suggest national costs of around 91m Euros. This figure does not include indirect costs such as individual emotional distress and related implications for employment, health and well-being.

Work in the London Borough of Hackney by Stanko et al (1998) estimated the annual costs of domestic abuse in that borough alone as approximately £5 million. In Scotland work is ongoing on the costs of violence. A relevant study estimated that between 87,000 and 136,000 general practice consultations per year are related to domestic abuse and its consequences (Young 1995). More recently the role of the NHS has been cited as unique in so far as 'virtually every woman in Britain will use the health care system at some point in her life Health services may often be a woman's only contact with professionals who might recognise domestic abuse and intervene' (Scottish Executive 2003, p.6). Given this, specific attention has been paid to developing resources and training for health care workers to support the process of disclosure in ways that emphasises safety for women and their dependents.

Concern about levels of men's violence against women in Finland must be located within more general debates on violence, for example, homicide and suicide, which are relatively high in the European context. Recent political changes east of Finland and the trafficking of women and girls have reinforced geo-political concerns. In particular a national programme of policy work against prostitution and the sex industry has achieved a major profile and resulted in a range of initiatives, for example on the position of minors in the sex trade (Jyrkinen and Karjalainen 2001). Recently, media

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debates on prostitution have also focused concerns on payment for sex (outlawed in neighbouring Sweden) and the advertising of sexual services, so that a number of national newspapers no longer accept such advertisements, with a recent study providing a focus for debate (Laukkanen 2000).

While indicators on women's health, illness and mortality are similar to those of women in many EU countries, those for men mirror those of the Baltic States, as do levels of men's violence against women and violence in general (Nousiainen et al 2001; Hearn 2002; WHO 2002). Trends in Scotland are similar to those in other countries of the UK, with health and socio-economic inequalities on the basis of social class of particular concern. Scotland has high rates of relative poverty with around 1 in 3 children born into what may be defined as economically poor households. However, figures suggest that overall rates of homicide and suicide are lower than in Finland.

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. However, allowing for these variations, the prevalence and incidence of domestic violence found in these studies surprised many and provided evidence with which groups and governments could argue for policies and resources.

FRAMING THE ISSUES: GENDER-NEUTRALITY, GENDER EQUALITY AND POLICY

To address our second and third aims, the differential operation of gender-neutrality and gender equality arises from the fundamentally different histories and geographical positions of the two countries. Finnish nationalism and statehood developed against its previous incorporation within first the Swedish then the Russian empires. Late-nineteenth century nationalism, which eventually achieved statehood in 1917, was based on a broad notion of citizenship for both sexes and political economy set in a harsh environment. Citizenship involved strong participation of both women and men in both the rural workforce and emerging wage labour. In addition, there is a relatively long history of high participation of women in suffrage, politics, education and full-time employment, in contrast to, say, Norway. It was from this complex basis that the strong notion of Finnish gender-neutrality was founded, and upon which the more recent notion of gender equality was placed, first in extra-parliamentary politics in the 1970s, and then in law in

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the 1980s. The Council for Equality between Women and Men was created in 1972, and a government plan promoting gender equality in 1980, the first in the Nordic countries (The Council for Equality 1997, p.60). Gender-neutrality has been coupled with a relatively wide acceptance of the principle, if not the practice, of gender equality across the political spectrum. This operates at least at the rhetorical level, and to some extent through policies on work, education and welfare (Ronkainen 2001).

The relation of nation and state to gender-neutrality and gender equality is also quite different in the Scottish case. Scotland is part of the long established nation-state of the UK, but is also a separate country, which has both participated in British imperialism and been oppressed by that historical project. Either way, Scotland and England, along with Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are now all part of the European Union. More recently, devolution and demands for independence have re-energised the Scottish national project. All these political movements have been dominantly constructed as gender-neutral, regardless of their gender formations, though in different ways to those in Finnish policies and legislation.

To place gender relations in context a brief reflection on social and economic changes is offered. Finland achieved independence relatively recently and remained a largely agrarian society until the 1950s. By comparison with Scotland, industrialisation was late and yet this limited industrial base allowed for flexibility in addressing recent economic shifts. Not so in Scotland, where the successes of early industrialisation have left a post-industrial wasteland in many localities. The public sector as employer and provider of economic incentives is critical to economic re-configuration in the face of global trends. In both countries there are large rural populations many of whom are struggling to ensure the survival of sparsely populated communities in remote areas. The recent agrarian past and the high levels of participation of women in education and the labour market after the second world war have left a heritage of strong, capable Finnish women who fulfil a range of obligations inside and outside the home. At the same time, Finnish men have been stereotyped as less capable, unhealthy, and more likely to be socially isolated and engaged in alcohol abuse (see Hearn and Lattu 2002).

While women in Scotland are perceived as generally willing to combine caring and working, there is not a similar image, and notion, of the strong female. There are however, images of the strong drinking, vocal male and

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these are often linked to notions of masculinities associated with sport, and in particular, football. Despite evidence to the contrary, women who experience domestic abuse are often stereotyped as associated with hard drinking working class males. These ideas led to misconceived but common conceptions of women as victims, and as unable or unwilling to leave the relationship (McKie, Fennell and Mildorf 2002). There are parallels here, as in both Scotland and Finland the agency of women who survive violence is called into question. This may be through the posing of such questions or comments as 'Why do they stay?', 'Why can't they leave?' 'If it's so bad no one would stay!'. Meanwhile there may be relatively little discussion of the imbalances of power in intimate relationships and the violent practices of men, many of which are reinforced by the myriad images of violence in culture and the media (Connell 2002).

In both countries the notion of obligations of the individual citizen to engage in work is keenly promoted, as are policies that propose a balance between caring and employment. Women's labour continues to be under valued and largely segregated. Unpaid and paid caring work is still perceived as the domain of women (certainly in terms of the organisation and monitoring of care) with the unpaid caring work of women imperative to the continued engagement of adult workers in the labour market and the economy in general (Pylkkanen 2001; McKie, Gregory and Bowlby 2002). Liberal notions of equality have promoted the concept of 'same but different', emphasising homogeneity and making it difficult to challenge men's practices (Nousiainen 2001; Hearn 2002). The notion of the individual citizen exercising her rights to be free from violence must, however, be framed within concerns about divorce, family breakdown and levels of violence in society (Carling et al 2002). These latter two factors are of particular concern for both countries. They have resulted in specific approaches: for example, in the case of Finland they have been framed around the concept of, and services in, mediation (Piispa and Heiskanen 2001), rather than focusing on gender and other conflicts.

Nordic countries are often presumed to have 'woman-friendly' social policies and welfare services. Certainly, women have gained much from the strong role of the state and public provision of services (Nousiainen et al 2001). These are countries where centralised, sometimes corporatist decision-making structures exist that can co-ordinate a comprehensive policy and service provision on violence against women. Certainly on many indicators

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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 lifecycle than women in, for example, Scotland. Welfare and preventive approaches, for example, through relatively high levels of daycare provision, may go alongside a relative neglect of questions of violence and abuse (Pringle 1998; Hearn et al 2004). For example, rape in marriage was only made a crime in Finland in 1994, one of the last countries in Europe.

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

In Scotland, with the advent of its first Parliament in 300 years, there has been a coalition of Labour and Liberal Democrats from 1999. The coalition has forged a left-of-centre route to tackling social problems. The role of an active autonomous women's movement and voluntary sector, combined with the election of sympathetic members of Parliament, coalesced to form a national partnership approach firmly based on gendered notions of violence (Breitenbach and McKay 2001). It would appear that this approach has achieved a greater profile and multi-agency action than recent activities in Finland. However, these are relatively recent, and, some would add, fragile developments. Thus while both countries are explicit in their search for equality of the sexes in the public sphere, when it comes to equality in intimate and familial relationships, policies and services on violence against women do not seem to follow the patterns expected (Weldon 2002). We now provide some more detail on policy development in the two countries, first in Finland, then in Scotland.

FINLAND

As noted earlier, the premise upon which Finnish legislation and many initiatives are based continues to be one of gender-neutrality. The meaning and operation of the concept of genderless gender (Ronkainen 2001, p.45) is 'characterised by a gender-neutral rhetoric on the one hand and the importance of sexualisation of embodied individuals on the other hand'. Thus while policies and services stress gender-neutrality these are premised upon rarely spoken-about assumptions concerning the role of mothers and gender in families and relationships. While gender-neutrality might be an aim of many concerned with human rights, academics in Finland argue that a rhetoric of normative individualism – that is gender neutrality – results in a failure to theorise and act upon the gendered nature of violence and power in relationships and families (Nousiainen et al 2001; Ronkainen 2001). This theorisation of gender and equality leaves women and women's groups in a severely restricted space from within which to explore and act upon the gendered nature of violence.

Specific governmental activity against gendered violence can be traced at least back to the setting up in 1990 of the Subcommittee against Violence within the Council for Equality between Women and Men. This has been supported by a named senior adviser. According to the Council's own publication, '[T]he Subcommittee ... has lifted the veil from violence in Finland. It has started established relations with international partners, informed and educated the public, and started pilot projects' (The Council for Equality 1997, p.72). It has promoted emergency services for crime victims, a rape crisis centre, and other projects. The Committee has been involved in promoting a number of legal reforms, including the criminalisation of rape in marriage, and making of domestic violence an offence for public rather than private prosecution (1995). However, in the latter case, the Council has noted in 1997 that: '[T]he objective of the reform was not realised. In most cases the [public] prosecutor decides to drop charges and no therapy is arranged for the perpetrator of violence' (The Council for Equality 1997, p.74).

Following the publication of **From Beijing to Finland: The Plan of Action for the Promotion of Gender Equality of the Government of Finland** (Ministry of Social Affairs 1997) two major studies promoted recent debates, funded by Statistics Finland and the Council for Equality:

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- **Faith, Hope, Battering. A Survey of Men's Violence Against Women** (Heiskanen and Minna 1998);
- **The Price of Violence. The Costs of Men's Violence Against Women in Finland** (Piispa and Heiskanen 2001).

In summary, these studies provided clear evidence of the prevalence and costs of violence, and identified the needs for a systematic approach by policies and services. Many politicians, agencies and groups were shocked by the findings of these studies, especially in a society that prides itself on being at the forefront of promoting women's rights. Yet that promotion of women's rights must be located in a strong adherence to notions of the heterosexual family. Particular emphasis has been placed upon the role of fathers and fathering by the government as part of wider considerations to address a rising divorce rate (around 50%) (Hearn 2002). There is no tradition of autonomous women's refuges as in Scotland. Women can go to family crisis centres that are open to both sexes and where priority is given to women and children. In centres and services there are evident pressures for those who have experienced violence to participate in family mediation, a mechanism that has been criticised for failing to consider power differentials between men and women. There is less evidence of an independent women's movement, and no strong development of feminist or women-only refuges or services for women leaving violent relationships. Most refuges for women have continued to be organised by municipalities and the third sector, rather than by a women-only women's movement organisation like Women's Aid (Scotland).

As part of the plan published in 1997 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 (commonly known as STAKES, an organisation with a role similar to NHS Health Scotland) implemented the programmes, and work was completed in late 2002 (see Jyrkinen and 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 impacts on individuals and society. The programme was keen to promote evidence that 'when it comes to "family violence" it is pertinent to speak of men's violence against women' (STAKES 1998). While framing work in a gender specific manner other materials and information use language that is gender neutral. This probably reflects the ongoing adherence to, and

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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.

The overall project included work on:

- locally co-ordinated services;
- service provision that is sensitive to the needs of victims;
- development of programmes and treatment for violent men;
- developing and implementing multi-professional co-operation.

The project involved 12 regional multi-professional teams, which disseminated information, ran training courses and devised and shared models for practice. Six sub-committees devised and ran work on specialist areas of work:

- service network development;
- provision of study material and guidebooks;
- development of research;
- development of legislation;
- media and information planning;
- violence against women having immigrated to Finland.

At the final conference for the programme of work held in Helsinki in October 2002 (**My Body, My Life: The Closing Seminar of the Finnish National Programme to Prevent Violence against Women**) it was concluded that while much had been achieved in raising the issues and developing legislation and services, an acceptance of the need for a gendered perspective on human rights and violence remained elusive. However, the role of family mediation was called into question, as was the need to dispel the mythology of the strong Finnish woman and the weak miserable male. Data demonstrated continuing levels of domestic violence and inequalities between men and women. It was emphasised that formal equality placed Finnish women high up the league tables of gender equality but as with Scotland these indicators fail to link the cultural and social constructions of gender and the relationship between gender and violence.

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A current programme of research on power and violence funded by the Academy of Finland, the main national academic research funding body, is seeking to explore in greater depth the social and psychological factors in levels of gendered violence in Finland. The projects range widely and include studies of the global linkages and policies on the sex trade; agency intervention practices; meanings and emotions around violence; representations of violence; narrative and discourse analysis of men's explanations of their violence to women; violence in schools and education; legal aspects and constructions of violence; experiences of incest victims; prostitution and their customers; political violence and globalisation. The nine projects will be concluded in 2004, and an end research and policy conference is planned with the cooperation of the Academy of Finland.

In April 2003 a new coalition government of the Centre Party, the Social Democratic Party and the Swedish People's Party was formed following the general election, replacing the previous Social Democratic-led 'rainbow' coalition, which also included the Conservative Party, the Swedish People's Party and the Left League (and previously also the Green Party). This government was led briefly by the first Finnish woman prime minister, until her replacement by a man, following a legal scandal. It also, for the first time, included equal numbers of women and men in the cabinet. The first woman president was elected in 2000.

The initial policy commitments of the 2003 government included a statement on gender equality, of which part is its plans to combat couple violence, violence to women, prostitution and trafficking in women, to strengthen punishments, and to provide for the victims thereof. Two further specific commitments are noteworthy: to evaluate the criminalising of the buying of sexual services on the basis of current investigations in the Ministry of Justice; and promoting convictions for assaults in couple relationships by removing the legal paragraph that cases are not prosecuted if the victim does not wish the prosecution to proceed (<http://www.valtionuuvosto.fi/tiedostot/pdf/fi/36117.pdf>). The extent to which these commitments on paper translate into action and resources, and indeed challenge the concept of gender-neutrality, remains to be seen.

SCOTLAND

In Scotland, while the autonomous women's movement had campaigned for several decades for concerted, multi-agency approaches to tackling violence against women, it was not until 1998 that the government published a consultative plan (Henderson 1998). Following the inauguration of the new Scottish Parliament the newly formed left-of-centre coalition government made domestic violence a key item for the policy agenda, giving it great prominence and notable resource investment. Many in the autonomous women's movement, the churches, and political parties supported this initiative, agreeing major policy and service work was required. Here was a topic that the majority agreed necessitated action, and, in the context of a new Parliament and government, domestic violence provided a hub for collaboration and coalition building in the broad arenas of social and health policies. Work on domestic violence also linked to evolving agendas on inequalities in health and poverty. However, gender equality issues were less evident in these and other areas of work. Women in Scottish politics have achieved great symbolic representation (for example, the highest participation rates for members of parliament in the UK with women forming half of the members of the cabinet) but progress on broader substantive issues has been slower (Breitenbach and McKay 2001). So while domestic violence moved towards centre stage in policy work, gender equality remains peripheral, although debated. Such contrasts were the source for agitation among those tackling the broader issues of social inclusion and social justice. Many noted that households headed by women were over-represented in a range of measures of inequalities, necessitating action on gender equality. Nevertheless, the work on domestic violence received strong cross sector and party support with notable progress over the last five years.

The consultative plan on violence against women called for action plans across government departments (Scottish Office 1998). Again, partly based on the need to meet international obligations, this was revised and published in 2001 (Scottish Executive 2001). The year preceding this a National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland (Scottish Executive 2000) was launched and this described an overall strategic approach and action plan to include provision across sectors and organisations as well as government departments for a three-year period. Between 2001-2004 the Scottish Executive has allocated a budget of £4.5m for the implementation of the action plan. By the end of 2003 there were a range of policy documents or

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strategies, concerning legal, health, housing, educational and social care services in which the government's commitment to addressing the needs of women experiencing violence was explicit. In all of these documents the premise was clear: violence against women is gender based, and fear of violence undermines the position and confidence of women, even if they have not experienced it personally. Despite noting that older women have specific fears and needs there is a strong focus in action plans on protecting and meeting the needs of women and their children.

The philosophy underpinning the strategic plans is (Scottish Executive 2001, p.4):

Prevention

- To prevent, remove or diminish the risk of violence by various means, ranging from promoting change in social attitudes, to creating physical and other barriers to the commission of violent acts.

Protection

- To protect victims and potential victims from repeat victimisation or harassment by perpetrators.

Provision

- To provide adequate services to deal with the consequences of violence against women and to help women rebuild their lives.

The Partnership Strategy (Scottish Executive 2000) required local authorities to establish multi agency partnerships and develop locality strategies and action plans. And this was followed in June 2001 by the establishment of a national group 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 the voluntary sector.

A national network of domestic abuse co-ordinators and domestic abuse forums underpins and strengthens links between the autonomous women's movement and statutory sectors. Through these mechanisms communication, campaigning and service provision is regularly reviewed and thus

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government-led strategies adopted and adapted to local needs. Further, these forums provide inputs to, and feedback on, policy and strategy on gender and violence.

Under the broad heading of provision the Scottish Executive cite a range of initiatives including:

- Domestic Abuse Service Development Fund 2000–2004 which has available £6m to allocate to projects with matched funding from local partners. By early 2003, 57 projects were funded under this scheme. An evaluation of the first round of this funding is currently underway.
- £12m over 4 years for the further development of the women-only refuge network. Funding provides for additional and improved spaces, for example self-contained accommodation for women and children with additional support needs. Research on the work of the refuge network is on-going.
- A national helpline set up June 2000.
- Children's workers funding to close an identified gap in support and subsequently to allow for a more strategic approach in longer term.
- Guidance for health care professionals has been published and this is supported by the provision of a short information resource offering advice on the process of disclosing domestic violence in the health care context (Scottish Executive 2003).
- A review of data collection and record keeping across sectors and services is ongoing.

Work on protection has concentrated on legislative review and changes. The Protection from Abuse (Scotland) Act came into force in 2001 and enhanced protection for women while clarifying and strengthening the work of the criminal justice system. Aspects of the Criminal Justice Bill reinforced this act, and subsequently so too did changes stipulated in the Sexual Offences (Procedures and Evidence) (Scotland) Act 2002. At the time of writing legislation remains under review.

Following earlier high-profile Zero Tolerance campaigns, begun in 1992 in Edinburgh (Gillan and Samson 2000), prevention work has concentrated on a national advertising campaign that has ranged from posters, adverts in

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cinemas and on TV, to beer mats, and the distribution of materials that encourages readers to challenge assumptions about violence against women (Respect 2000) to schools, colleges and other outlets. A prevention strategy which was published in 2003 heralded a programme of work that seeks to work at two, albeit overlapping, levels (Scottish Executive 2003):

- Primary prevention: this aims to stop abuse before it happens by changing attitudes, which excuse or condone it. This work targets the whole population but with an emphasis upon children and young people.
- Secondary prevention: work that seeks to reduce the incidence and effects of domestic abuse. The focus is upon women and children who have experienced violence and the men who use violence.

This definition of primary prevention offers the possibility of addressing the social practices that pose barriers to tackling and challenging domestic violence. Respect for human rights and the capacity to make ethical and moral decisions are cited as the ethos for action. In particular the strategy calls for multi-agency programmes to 'challenge myths, cultural beliefs and stereotypes which help to sustain a toleration of violence' and 'challenge abusing men to accept responsibility for their behaviour'. These are crucial dimensions for any strategy. Advice is offered on materials to adopt and adapt, and on the potential role of local authorities, education and other departments, and relevant organizations. Given the restricted focus and resources, this strategy is a useful and necessary, but limited, start to prevention work.

While there is no programme of research in Scotland akin to the work funded by the Academy of Finland, many academics have been involved in research work to underpin policy developments (for example, Scott et al 2003). In addition, the UK Economic and Social Research Council has funded the Violence Research Programme (1997-2002), with 20 projects, of which two were specifically on domestic violence, and two others were led from Scottish universities (<http://www1.rhbnc.ac.uk/sociopoliticalscience/vrp/realhome.htm>).

CONCLUSIONS

International obligations as conferred by the UN and EU have brought violence against women to the attention of many governments, necessitating action. Global relations and shifting boundaries have also placed issues concerning immigration and asylum seekers on the national and international agendas concerned with violence against women. Thus the relative isolation and homogeneity of both Finland and Scotland is gradually being changed. Nevertheless, the inter-section of class, gender and race continues to be premised upon historical constructions of masculinities and femininities making change in attitudes, policies and service provision a longer-term process than many would wish (Hearn 2002).

In this article our over-arching aim has been to outline and assess recent policy developments on domestic violence. Parallels are evident as both governments, for example, emphasise the need for local planning and co-ordination, and appropriate guidance, education and training for service planners and providers, underpinned by campaigns that challenge attitudes to safety and security in intimate relationships. Differences can also be found. In Scotland the women-only refuge movement and related autonomous women's groups have been successful in securing the adoption of a gender-based definition and campaigns, coupled with additional resources for refuge provision and related developments. However, while domestic violence has received notable action and resources, broader issues of gender equality in both public and private spheres remain problematic, for example the continuing pay differentials between men and women, and limited, albeit increasing, access to affordable, quality childcare (Scott 1999). There is no over-arching gender plan to tackle broader social and economic practices that ensure women remain over-represented in low paid jobs and statistics on poverty. Current initiatives emphasise employment, regardless of parenting status, as the main route to attaining social inclusion, and thus moving out of poverty. Many struggle to combine caring and working with the government anticipating that programmes of work on social inclusion and social justice will, as a by-product, tackle gender inequities. This is likely to take many years to achieve.

Policy and service development on violence against women in Finland continues to be characterised, indeed dogged, by the gender-neutral approach and the focus upon the individual and their agency (Nousiainen et al 2001).

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All too often welfare responses focus upon inequalities in terms of poverty and health rather than gender. For example, recent debates on prostitution have concentrated on marginality, poverty and trafficking and failed to adequately engage with the reality that this constitutes violence against women (Piispa and Heiskanen 2001). Most services work with limited acceptance of the gender basis to domestic violence. This is increasingly coupled with a concern that a major solution to 'family violence' is through mediation and that reactions to the breakdown of families have linked with the promotion of fatherhood. However, as Hearn (2002, p.98) has pointed out, such positive policies on fatherhood and family support are established without due attendance to men's violence, and the fact that many men who use violence to women are also fathers. Debates on fatherhood in Scotland concentrate on the limited nature of paternity leave, the employment cultures that expect long hours in work, and parental discipline, in the face of family breakdown. Again there is limited consideration of men as fathers who may also use violence against women.

We would argue that an analysis of the variations and parallels in the treatment of violence against women in Finland and Scotland allows the policy analyst to discern patterns that differ from other areas of employment and family policy (Weldon 2002). Policies on domestic violence have developed in relatively recent terms with differing definitions and principles with regards to gender. There remains a need to accept and tackle gender conflict in Finland and challenge a culture that emphasises the individual Finnish woman's equality and strength, alongside concerns about family dissolution and reconstitution, and fatherhood. Having asserted this we do not, by contrast, assume that the gender-based work on domestic violence will remain centre stage in Scotland. Certainly there remains uneasiness among, for example, health care professionals, who may likely ask 'Aren't women violent too?', demonstrating that evidence needs to be widely distributed and the implications of this fully appreciated. Thus, we would suggest, recent developments in Scotland remain fragile and must be built upon through the gendered analysis and development of policy, services and research.

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