Abstract
Physical violence committed by women in Finland: Feminist perspective

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Violence is generally seen as strongly unfeminine and unacceptable behaviour for women, and violent women are often labelled as hysterical and mad. Women’s violence and violence conducted by teenage girls have recently received growing interest, especially in the Finnish media. However, in Finland women’s studies researchers have rarely studied female offenders. As it can be stated that men’s violence to women is a major social problem in many countries, studying women’s violence from critical and feminist point of view gives a broader picture of violence and its gendered nature.

My doctoral study is based on qualitative approach and main data collection is being carried out through in-depth semi-structured interviews in two different settings. I am going to interview female clients of family counselling centres who have used violence either against their partner or their children, and female prisoners who are convicted of a violent crime. My aims are to study how do Finnish women themselves experience their violent acts and what kind of meanings they give to them, and how does gender mould their understandings of violence.

My framework will be largely based on feminist criminology and gendered violence research. Mainstream criminological research has analysed crimes and violence mainly through men and this has often also been done without gendered analysis on men and masculinities. Feminist criminology aims to analyse women’s different position in relation to crimes, violence and criminal justice.