‘Working in Between’: Women’s Aid and networks of anti-domestic abuse activism in the UK, 1971-1996.

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Abstract

This thesis will explore how Women's Aid and other forms of anti-domestic abuse activism have been established, expanded and maintained by feminist activists working in between a variety of networks from 1971 to 1996. In so doing, it will contribute to our understanding of the history of post-war feminist activism in the UK by providing an in-depth case study of one of the most enduring activist projects to emerge from the WLM. Furthermore, it will contest some of the existing historiographical and popular narratives about the WLM. The idea that the WLM was London-centric will be challenged by examining the ways in which feminist activism was organised in the cities of Edinburgh, Leeds and Bristol. Moreover, focusing on the issue of domestic abuse and violence against women more broadly reveals the means by which feminist activist projects were maintained into the 1990s, complicating the idea that the WLM was in decline by 1978. Furthermore, this thesis will further our knowledge of the different levels on which the WLM operated by interrogating anti-domestic abuse networks from a local to an international scale. This is a significant contribution to this field of study, as previous scholarship about the WLM has often focused on specific localities or a more limited time period. By following the development of anti-domestic abuse activism, then, the present study is able to broaden our understanding of the scope and influence of feminist activism and how this was maintained in the long term. Beyond this, the WLM and Women's Aid is positioned within a wider story of postwar activism in the UK whereby an overlapping milieux of social movements began to address issues of equality including those relating to gender, sexuality, race, social class, the environment and pacificism.

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Words of comfort she gives me
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The hugs she gives me
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are like the sun shining
for a new day to dawn

Other women do it in different ways
Lindsay with her chocolate cake

Ali gives me hugs
that I think I have
become an angel and gone to heaven
and come back again.

Carolyn with her slow smile
upon her face
can always make it better

All these women and many more
I could go on writing
about women and how they
can be an alternative medicine.

They all make it worth living
for a new day to begin.*

*From *Edinburgh Women's Liberation Newsletter*, 70, (1990), p.9.

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Charlotte James Robertson

Abbreviations

BSA	British Sociological Association
CWASU	Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Security
FAN	Feminist Archive North
FAS	Feminist Archive South
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
NCADV	National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
NCG	National Coordinating Group
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NWAF	National Women's Aid Federation
RC	Rape Crisis
SBS	Southall Black Sisters
SWA	Scottish Women's Aid
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States of America
VAGRRU	Violence Abuse and Gender Relations Research Unit
WAFE	Women's Aid Federation of England
WAFNI	Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland
WAVAW	Women Against Violence Against Women
WAVE	Women's Against Violence Europe
WFH	Wages for Housework
WLM	Women's Liberation Movement
WWA	Welsh Women's Aid

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Setting the Scene

Women's Aid's services for victim/survivors of domestic abuse have been a lifeline for thousands of women and children across the United Kingdom (UK) from the opening of the first women's refuge in 1971 to the present day. When people have asked me about my PhD thesis and heard I am researching Women's Aid they have often shared with me the way in which their lives have been touched by this network of organisations; whether they have stayed in refuge themselves, known friends or relatives who have received support, or worked in a women's refuge, or on a helpline for victim/survivors. Recent laws criminalising coercive and controlling behaviour in relationships in the UK are a testament to Women's Aid's continued significance and would not have been possible without the feminist anti-domestic abuse activism of the last fifty years.[1] The history of Women's Aid is rooted in the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) and refuges were often founded on the feminist principles of self-determination and independence for the women staying in refuge, collective working, and the analysis that domestic abuse is a result of women's oppression in society. Indeed, women's refuges are often seen as one of the most tangible achievements of the WLM. Yet, the influence of anti-domestic abuse activism goes far beyond this crucial refuge provision. Feminist anti-domestic abuse activists have had a considerable impact on society; from helping individual women and children, to transforming public understandings of the causes of domestic abuse, to campaigning for new legislation and influencing policy on a local and national level.

Women's Aid has arguably been one of the most successful projects to grow from the WLM, in that it has endured until the present day, gained recognition and influence within state institutions, established an extensive network of services, and been instrumental in gaining legal protection for victim/survivors. As historian Margaretta Jolly has observed: 'It is certainly striking to see that Women's Aid survives when so much else has not.'[2] Of course, Women's Aid has not achieved its goal of eradicating domestic abuse; according to the latest femicide census fifty-seven women were killed by current or former partners in

[1] See for England and Wales: Serious Crime Act 2015; for Scotland: Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018); for Northern Ireland: Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021.

[2] Margaretta Jolly, *Sisterhood and After: An Oral History of the UK Women's Liberation Movement, 1968-present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p.117.

the UK in 2020.[3] Nonetheless, Women's Aid's work has undoubtedly altered perceptions of domestic abuse. Whereas it was once considered a matter to be addressed within the privacy of the family, it is now less likely to be tolerated. What is more, thanks to women's refuge provision there is at least somewhere for victim/survivors to go for refuge, support and advice where once there was virtually nothing. On the other hand, Women's Aid organisations have faced criticism for their willingness to cooperate with the state and their perceived professionalisation, which some see as a dilution of their feminist principles. Nonetheless, Women's Aid organisations are still overwhelmingly run with feminist values, in spite of considerable pressure to conform to more traditional ways of organising.

The way in which Women's Aid and other forms of anti-domestic abuse activism have been established, expanded and maintained by feminist activists working in between a variety of networks from 1971 to 1996 will be explored throughout this thesis. In so doing, it will contribute to our understanding of the history of post-war feminist activism in the UK by providing an in-depth case study of one of the most enduring activist projects to emerge from the WLM. Furthermore, it will contest some of the existing historiographical and popular narratives about the WLM. The idea that the WLM was London-centric will be challenged by examining the ways in which feminist activism was organised in the cities of Edinburgh, Leeds and Bristol. Moreover, focusing on the issue of domestic abuse and violence against women more broadly reveals the means by which feminist activist projects were maintained into the 1990s, complicating the idea that the WLM was in decline by 1978.[4]

Furthermore, this thesis will advance our knowledge of the different levels on which the WLM operated by interrogating anti-domestic abuse networks on a local, national and international scale. This is a significant contribution to this field of study as previous scholarship has often focused on specific localities or a more limited time period.[5] By following the development of anti-domestic abuse activism, then, the present study is able

[3] 'Femicide Census Report 2020', *Femicide Census Website*, February 2022, https://www.femicidecensus.org/reports/, [Accessed 19/06/23].

[4] George Stevenson, *The Women's Liberation Movement and the Politics of Class in Britain* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019). David Bouchier, *The Feminist Challenge: The Movement for Women's Liberation in Britain and the USA* (London: Macmillan, 1983). Anna Coote and Beatrix Campbell, *Sweet Freedom: The Struggle for Women's Liberation* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

[5] Sue Bruley, 'Women's Liberation at the Grass Roots: a view from some English towns, c.1968–1990', *Women's History Review*, 25:5, (2016), pp.723-740. Emily Flaherty, 'The Women's Liberation Movement in Britain, 1968-1984: Locality and Organisation in Feminist Politics' (unpublished thesis University of Glasgow, 2017).

to broaden our understanding of the scope and influence of feminist activism and how this was maintained in the long term. Beyond this, the WLM and Women's Aid is positioned within a wider story of postwar activism in the UK, whereby an overlapping milieux of social movements began to address issues of equality including those relating to gender, sexuality, race, social class, the environment and pacificism. These themes will be explored by examining oral history interviews, archival material from Women's Aid groups and feminist periodicals.

1.2 Research Process and Questions

This thesis began with a desire to answer three key research questions: Firstly, how did women's refuges grow from a mere idea in the early 1970s to an integral part of the UK's social provision by the 1990s? Secondly, how was Women's Aid's ideological and practical approach to tackling domestic abuse disseminated across the UK and transnationally? Finally, in what ways was race addressed within Women's Aid organisations both in terms of the experiences of victim/survivors and activists? In conducting a review of the existing research into Women's Aid, I found that these often focused on the origin story of women's refuges as part of the WLM. This led me to refine my research questions to understand not just the way in which Women's Aid refuges were established but how they evolved and were maintained over time. I further discovered that, while Women's Aid groups had been discussed as an example of WLM activism in the UK, there was less available to explain the ways in which connections were maintained between local Women's Aid groups within Scotland and England, as well as between the four nations. Moreover, there was virtually no research into transnational exchanges between anti-domestic abuse activists of the 1970s and 1980s. Finally, after conducting oral history interviews and delving into archival material I began to appreciate the importance of research and the development of a feminist theory of domestic abuse to the story. Therefore, I refined my focus to include a discussion of academic and research networks and to ask how these intersected with activist ones. Thus, understanding the ways in which anti-domestic abuse activist networks were forged and feminist praxis was disseminated at a number of levels became the key objective of this thesis.

1.3 A Brief History of Women's Aid

In spring 1971, a WLM march in Chiswick, London led to the founding of a women's centre in the area in November of that year.[6] This centre was to become the first women's refuge specifically for victim/survivors of domestic abuse in the UK and the first of its kind in the world. The plight of so-called 'battered wives' who came to Chiswick to escape violent, abusive husbands caught the attention of national and international mainstream media. Erin Pizzey, who became the lead organiser of the refuge and a well-known public figure, played a crucial role in bringing attention to the issue. Partly due to this media attention and an existing network of WLM groups across the UK, many other women's refuges began to be established. This was an issue that truly captured the attention of WLM groups who were keen to take on a practical, political project. Media reports expressed shock and outrage, describing the 'discovery' of the issue. Of course, many people were aware of domestic abuse through personal experience, supporting family members or working for agencies like the police and social services. Nevertheless, before 1971 women and their children escaping domestic abuse had few options, they could stay with friends or family or go to a homeless shelter, both of which were often unsuitable, unsustainable and unsafe. These options also offered little support for women to understand the abuse they had suffered or make informed decisions about their futures. Thus, women's refuges run on feminist principles were particularly powerful because they allowed for women to come together, share similar experiences and feel less alone. This was especially important for women who had been made to feel isolated and to blame themselves as a result of the abuse they had been subjected to.

The growth of women's refuges was remarkably rapid and by 1977 there were ten Women's Aid groups in Scotland and ninety-eight in England and Wales.[7] In March 1975, the National Women's Aid Federation (NWAF) was established to coordinate local groups and to focus on campaigns for legislation and public awareness raising. Around this time there was a split in the movement; the majority of groups wanted a feminist, non-hierarchical national organisation and joined the NWAF, whilst Pizzey and her supporters declined to join this group and established the organisation now known as Refuge. NWAF received some funding from the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS), as well

[6] Russell Dobash and Rebecca Dobash, *Violence Against Wives: A Case Against the Patriarchy* (New York: The Free Press, 1979).

[7] *25 Years of Listening to Women* (Edinburgh: SWA, 1999), pp.27-28. NWAF, 'Refuge Provision in England and Wales,' (Autumn 1977), p.1. Ellen Malos Archive, (DM2/23/8/) Archive Box 114, Feminist Archive South at Bristol University Special Collections.

as donations. Tensions between Pizzey and Women's Aid activists continued, particularly when it came to the ideological understanding of domestic abuse. This split has been recorded in several accounts and so this thesis does not thoroughly examine the nature of these conflicts, although they are addressed where relevant to broader discussions.[8] As historian Sarah Browne has noted, Pizzey was influential to the growth of Women's Aid as a 'practical example' but often not for any 'theoretical underpinnings.'[9]

It was felt that a national federation was needed for Scotland and, therefore, Scottish Women's Aid (SWA) was established in 1976 with funding from the Scottish Office. Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland (WAFNI) was founded in 1977 and Welsh Women's Aid (WWA) in 1978. In 1980 NWAF became Women's Aid Federation of England (WAFE). In 1984 WAFE closed due to a lack of funding and organisational issues but a small group of women continued a temporary coordinating group and it was re-established in 1987. Beginning in the late 1970s, women's refuges for Black and Asian women began to be established in the UK. Some of these were designed to cater for women and children of South Asian heritage who it was felt had specific cultural needs such as dietary requirements (Halal, vegetarian etc.) and interpreters if English was not their first language. Others were designed by and for Black women, in the sense of 'political Blackness', and organised with an understanding of the way in which race and gender intersected to compound women's experiences of domestic abuse and help-seeking. Today, Women's Aid groups continue to provide a vital service around the UK with WAFE and SWA supporting a total of 204 local services.

1.4 Approaches to Historicising the WLM

The history of the WLM continues to be an exciting and growing area of research. Scholars such as Sheila Rowbotham, David Bouchier, Anna Coote and Beatrix Campbell began writing about the WLM in the 1980s whilst it was still unfolding.[10] These early accounts offer great insight into the origins of the movement and the developments of the early to mid 1970s. However, they are unable to offer an understanding of the longer term

[8] Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom,* pp.36-37. Jalna Hanmer and Jo Sutton, 'Writing Our Own History,' *Trouble & Strife*, 4, (1984). Sarah Browne, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Scotland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), p.90.

[9] Browne, *Women's Liberation*, p.90.

[10] Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom*. Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge.* Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments : feminism and the making of socialism* (London: Merlin, 1979).

development and influence of postwar feminist activism. Up until the present day, much scholarship has continued to focus on the period before 1979.[11] This is partly due to the narrative that the last National WLM Conference in Birmingham in 1978 marked an end point due to the disputes that occurred there. For instance, George Stevenson has recently written that: 'Internal divisions and external economic pressures had caused such fundamental fissures that it [the WLM] could no longer be understood as a single movement by 1979.'[12] However, this idea has been challenged by several historians. [13] For example, Natalie Thomlinson has argued that:

> Equating a lack of national conferences with the end of feminist activism is rather simplistic… the 'second-wave' women's movement did not simply extend into the early 1980s… by focusing on Black women's activism, we can see that the early 1980s was, in fact, as equally a vibrant period of feminism as the early 1970s.[14]

The present study supports this contention, arguing that the 1980s were a lively and active time for Women's Aid activists in which they were expanding their work into new areas of influence. In particular, activism to establish Black and Asian women's refuges and other specialist services gathered real momentum through the mid to late 1980s. The period under examination for this thesis extends into the 1990s, allowing for a greater understanding of how feminist activist projects can be maintained and developed over time. The work of historians Caitríona Beaumont, Mary Clancy and Louise Ryan on the life cycle of the suffrage movement is helpful here as it draws on new social movement theory to explain how social movements may go through periods of 'latency' but should not be seen as inactive during these times.[15] On the contrary, suffrage campaign networks were sustained, ensuring that knowledge and experience was passed on and used in 'new cycles of activity'.[16] Similarly, while the 1990s has sometimes been seen as a quieter time for feminist activism, the same women who had been active within anti-domestic abuse

[11] Stevenson, *Women's Liberation*. Browne, *Women's Liberation*. Eve Setch, 'The Women's Liberation Movement in Britain, 1969-79 : organisation, creativity and debate', (unpublished thesis, University of London, 2000).

[12] Stevenson, *Women's Liberation*, p.8.

[13] Bruley, *Women's Liberation*, p.736. Kristin Hay, '"More than a defence against bills": feminism and national identity in the Scottish abortion campaign, c. 1975–1990', *Women's History Review*, 30:4 (2021), pp.605, 608. Browne, *Women's Liberation*, p.73.

[14] Natalie Thomlinson, *Race, Ethnicity and the Women's Movement in England, 1968-1993* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p.10.

[15] Caitríona Beaumont, Mary Clancy and Louise Ryan, 'Networks as 'laboratories of experience': exploring the life cycle of the suffrage movement and its aftermath in Ireland 1870–1937', *Women's History Review*, 29:6 (2020), p.1057.

[16] Ibid. p.1065.

activism in the 1970s were often involved in new projects in the 1990s, as we shall see throughout this thesis. In this way, this thesis challenges the conception of 'decline' in social movement theory by arguing that Women's Aid developed and diversified its activities in new and exciting ways in this later period.

Moreover, as has been argued by Setch, the WLM 'was never united; it was from the outset characterised by divisions and diversity.'[17] The WLM was always a movement that featured many different types of activism and ideologies, this did not simply occur in 1978. For instance, Stevenson has recently argued that there were more working-class women involved in the WLM from the beginning than has previously been acknowledged.[18] Jill Radford has written of this when reflecting on her time with the Winchester Women's Liberation Group in the 1970s:

> Issues of race, class and sexuality were frequently addressed in our c-r (consciousness raising) meetings... We did not assume that all women were oppressed in the same ways. We recognized differences in our relations to power structures, of race, class, relationship to heterosexuality, and differences in terms of age, states of health and disability… We did not deal with these latter questions well or adequately, but they were not unaddressed.[19]

Setch has further opined that dividing factions within the WLM into socialist feminists versus radical or revolutionary feminists is too simplistic and that these categories are difficult to define.[20] Those who focused on violence against women have often been placed in the radical feminist camp. Radical feminism tended to centre patriarchy as the key cause of oppression of women and advocated for women only spaces, whilst socialist feminism incorporated an analysis of class and the impact of capitalism. Revolutionary feminism grew from radical feminism and theorised a 'sex class system' as the primary form of oppression in society and sometimes advocated for lesbian separatism.[21] However, none of the Women's Aid activists interviewed for this thesis mentioned a strong identification with a specific type of feminism, suggesting these divisions may have been exaggerated. Gill Hague, a Women's Aid activist and feminist scholar, has explained that she felt most

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[17] Setch, *Women's Liberation*, p.8.

[18] Stevenson, *Women's Liberation*.

[19] Jill Radford, 'History of Women's Liberation Movements in Britain: A Reflective Personal History' in *Stirring it: Challenges for Feminism*, ed. Gabriele Griffin, Marianne Hester, Shirin Rai and Sasha Roseneil (London: Taylor & Francis, 1994), pp.44-45.

[20] Setch, *Women's Liberation*, pp.10-12.

[21] For useful definitions of the strands of feminism see Gill Hague, *History and Memories of the Domestic Violence Movement* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2021), pp.40-45.

WLM activists held a nuanced combination of these positions and that during the practical every day struggles of supporting victim/survivors of violence against women 'the arguments felt distracting and scarcely relevant.'[22] Drawing from the work of Setch and Stevenson, as well as Leila Rupp and Jocelyn Olcott in the transnational context, this thesis will argue for a more nuanced understanding of tensions and disagreements within the WLM, not as irreconcilable divisions but often as 'constructive conflicts.'[23]

Some studies of the WLM, such as the work of Sue Bruley and Emily Flaherty, have taken an approach centred on local case studies.[24] This is a valuable method as it allows for the appreciation of local contexts and has helped to remedy the idea that London was the centre of the WLM. There remains a limited amount of research on the WLM in the Scottish context, with Browne's work as the most notable exception. Recent histories which have purported to be accounts of the WLM in Britain, such as the work of Stevenson, have been overwhelmingly English in focus.[25] Moreover, Jolly has admitted that the interviews on which her history of the UK WLM are based unintentionally 'sways towards a London-based intelligentsia.'[26] This is also the case when it comes to an examination of race within the WLM. Scholarship on race and racism within women's activism such as that by Natalie Thomlinson and Jessica White have, so far, focused mostly on English cities.[27] This thesis will seek to expand our view of the ways in which WLM groups organised by examining national and transnational connections, while continuing to appreciate local contexts and examples. Additionally, this study will highlight the significance of anti-domestic abuse activism in Scotland and the work of Black feminist activists based in Edinburgh. It will highlight the importance of the networks within and between cities like Edinburgh, Leeds and Bristol, which refutes the idea of London as the central node of the WLM. Moreover, most previous historiographical studies have examined several strands of WLM activism at once, while

[22] Ibid. p.45.

[23] Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997). Jocelyn Olcott, *International Women's Year: the greatest consciousness-raising event in history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[24] Bruley, *Women's Liberation at the Grass Roots*, pp.723-740. Flaherty, *Women's Liberation Movement*.

[25] Stevenson, *Women's Liberation.*

[26] Jolly, *Sisterhood*, p.47.

[27] Thomlinson, *Race*. Jessica White, 'Black Women's Groups, Life Narratives, and the Construction of the Self in Late Twentieth-Century Britain', *The Historical Journal*, 65:3, pp.797-817.

the present study's focus on anti-domestic abuse activism allows for a deeper and more nuanced analysis.

Histories of Women's Aid have also been recorded by the activists themselves who experienced these events first hand. For instance, an article by Jalna Hanmer and Jo Sutton, two of the founders of NWAF, entitled 'Writing Our Own History' was published in 1984 and details the beginnings of Women's Aid.[28] Additionally, feminist criminologists and sociologists Russell and Rebecca Dobash, who published *Violence Against Wives* in 1979, a foundational text for the study of domestic abuse, have written about the history of women's refuges in both the UK and the United States (US) to stress the importance of women's refuge provision.[29] Moreover, Women's Aid activists such as Gill Hague, Ellen Malos and Jalna Hanmer have published research into domestic abuse and support services in the field of social policy, sociology and women's studies which have often included a brief history of the origins of Women's Aid.[30] These studies have helped to situate Women's Aid groups within the broader development of the WLM and to convey their significance in putting violence against women on the feminist agenda at various levels in the UK. However, they have tended to focus largely on the origins of Women's Aid, whereas this thesis will follow its development. This thesis, then, will contribute to the fields of feminist criminology, sociology, women's studies and social policy in addition to history.

Most recently, Hague has published a history of what she terms the 'domestic violence movement' which surveys the various groups, services and research projects that have made up anti-domestic abuse activism in the last fifty years. [31] Hague's work differs from the current study in that it takes a broadbrush approach and does not attempt a detailed analysis of the movement or of Women's Aid's activities and influence. Furthermore, it is not based on archival research, although does include quotations from interviews with key figures. Hague acknowledges some transnational connections present within the

[28] Hanmer and Sutton, *Writing Our Own*.

[29] Russell Dobash and Rebecca Dobash, *Women, Violence and Social Change* (London: Routledge, 1992).

[30] Gill Hague and Ellen Malos, *Domestic Violence: Action for Change* (Cheltenham: New Clarion, 1993). Ellen Malos, 'Bristol Women's Aid: He Always Says He's Sorry Afterwards' in *The Unsung Sixties: memoirs of social innovation*, ed. Helene Curtis and Mimi Sanderson (London: Whiting and Birch, 2004). Gill Hague and Ellen Malos, *Tackling domestic violence: a guide to developing multi-agency initiatives* (Bristol: Policy Press, 1996). Jalna Hanmer and Catherine Itzen, *Home truths about domestic violence : feminist influences on policy and practice : a reader* (London: Routledge, 2000).

[31] Hague, *History and Memories.*

movement, however, interestingly she only traces these back to the 1990s while the present study argues there were transnational activities from the 1970s onwards.

Over the years, Women's Aid groups themselves have reflected on their own history on anniversaries or within annual reports. For example, Scottish Women's Aid have produced a history of their organisation, called *25 Years of Listening to Women*, which includes a brief history of how the first refuges in Edinburgh and Glasgow were founded and the decision to establish SWA itself as a national organisation.[32] The Southall Black Sisters (SBS), an organisation coordinating efforts to campaign against violence against ethnic minority women and children, have published their own history including an article by Muneeza Inam about Asian women's refuges.[33] There have been several archival and oral history projects such as 'Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project', 'Speaking Out: Recalling Women's Aid in Scotland', 'You Can't Beat a Woman: Founding Women's Refuges' and 'Forty Voices, Forty Years' which will be discussed in the next chapter. The material published as part of these projects is acknowledged here as it provided an important starting point for informing my understanding of some of the key issues and events in the history of women's refuges in the UK. However, the material published with these projects generally provides a broad overview of the achievements and challenges of Women's Aid groups, rather than a detailed analysis. Moreover, they were conducted in collaboration with women's refuge organisations, in some cases to celebrate forty years of Women's Aid, and in this way they are celebratory in nature. This thesis hopes to offer a more critical examination of Women's Aid and to place its history in a wider historical context within the WLM and changes in UK society at the end of the twentieth century more generally.

It is important not to view Women's Aid, and the WLM more broadly, in a vacuum but as part of a collection of overlapping movements that developed in the post-war era. These included the students' movements, gay rights, the peace movement, anti-apartheid, the Black Power movement, the Civil Rights Movement and the environmental movement. As Stevenson has observed: 'Many women who came to be involved with the WLM had arrived there from the broader politics of the Left.'[34] Indeed, several of the Women's Aid activists interviewed for this thesis mentioned involvement with other political groups. It is

[32] Scottish Women's Aid, *25 Years of Listening to Women*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Women's Aid, 1999).

[33] *From Homebreakers to Jailbreakers: Southall Black Sisters*, ed. Rahila Gupta (London: Zed Books, 2003).

[34] Stevenson, *Women's Liberation*, p.5.

important then to position the history of anti-domestic abuse activism within a broader historiography of 'the New Left' and 'New Social Movements.' The discussion of professionalisation in this thesis contributes to the work of Harold Perkin and, more recently, that of Matthew Hilton who has examined the ways in which a group of organisations that had political, activist roots professionalised over the 1980s and 1990s as they expanded.[35] Shelter and Greenpeace are two examples Hilton gives of this type of non-governmental organisation and Women's Aid can be considered a further case study. Additionally, Celia Hughes' study of young people's engagement with politics and activism in the post-war decades has been valuable in contextualising the WLM's connections with New Left politics.[36]

1.5 Focus and Scope

This thesis examines networks that were fostered in and around Women's Aid from 1971 to 1996. As such, this study is not organised chronologically or geographically but thematically, examining four different types of network. These networks spanned across the UK and beyond and so this thesis takes a broad geographical perspective. The time period under consideration for the present study is 1971 to 1996. 1971 was the year in which the first women's refuge in the UK was established and inspired the establishment of many other women's refuges which quickly began to form a national network. 1996 has been chosen as the end point for this thesis due to the significance of the International Conference on Violence, Abuse and Women's Citizenship which took place in Brighton in this year. This conference can be seen as a culmination of the feminist activism against violence against women of the preceding two decades and demonstrated the large network of people working on this issue that had been established by this point. This time frame also allows for a chronology of Women's Aid and anti-domestic abuse activism more generally to be traced from the beginning point in the 1970s when activists were focused on establishing women's refuges, to a development stage in which professionalisation of services took place and a theoretical understanding of domestic abuse through research was developing during the 1980s, to a period when Women's Aid had become a respected

[35] Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society : England since 1880* (London: Routledge, 1989). Matthew Hilton, *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). See also *A Historical Guide to NGOs in Britain*, ed. Matthew Hilton, Nick Crowson, Jean-Francois Mouhot and James McKay (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[36] Celia Hughes, *Young Lives on the Left: Sixties Activism and the Liberation of the Self* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).

voice by many, and activists were starting to reflect on their achievements of the preceding decades in the 1990s. This time frame also allows for an analysis of the period preceding Scottish devolution and the election of a Labour government in 1997, both of which brought significant changes to the UK's social and political landscape which are beyond the scope of this thesis to examine. A timeline of events pertaining to anti-domestic abuse activism from 1971 to 1996 can be found in Appendix 2.

This thesis focuses on England and Scotland and is based on an examination of organisational documents from NWAF, WAFE and SWA. The activities of Women's Aid groups in Wales and Northern Ireland will be mentioned where relevant to national and transnational networks. However, a detailed examination of Women's Aid in Wales and Northern Ireland is beyond the scope of this study. Additionally, Edinburgh, Leeds and Bristol act as case study cities at various points in this thesis in order to provide examples of activity at local level and to understand how activists from these cities engaged with a variety of local, regional and national networks. Shakti Women's Aid in Edinburgh and Sahara women's refuge in Leeds are also highlighted in order to explore the way in which women's refuges designed for Black women engaged in these networks and more generally to inform our understanding of discussions about race and racism in women's refuges and in Women's Aid. There was a refuge for Black women in Bristol, however, unfortunately very little information about this was available in the archive.

1.6 Key Terms and Concepts

A number of terms and concepts will be referred to throughout this work which require further definition. In what follows, the usage of these terms will be explained to ensure clarity.

Victim/survivors

I have chosen to use the term 'victim/survivors' to refer to people, usually women, who were subjected to domestic abuse by an intimate partner, usually a man. I also use this term to refer to children who have experienced domestic abuse to acknowledge that children are not just witnesses to their mother's abuse but are victim/survivors themselves. The use of these terms has prompted considerable debate amongst feminist scholars as the word 'victim' can at times clash with a person's self-perception because they associate the word

with passivity or weakness.[37] Including the word survivor, then, points to the agency women can have within an abusive relationship, despite being subjected to coercive behaviour. However, not all women and children do survive domestic abuse and what is more these are not fixed statuses. As feminist media studies scholar Karen Boyle has argued: 'Victimisation and survival are moving points on a continuum rather than binary and all-consuming identities... An individual's movement across the continuum is not uni-directional or strictly chronological, such that, for instance, victim *becomes* survivor.'[38] I have also drawn from historian Joanna Bourke's contention that terms like victim and survivor should be used as 'neither a moral judgment or an identity' but as a means to draw attention to the reality of the hurt that abuse has caused, while also acknowledging that women should not be defined by this. [39]

Thus, the term victim/survivors points to a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of victimisation and survival. This is very much linked to the legacy of organisations like Women's Aid who have fought the othering and dehumanisation of victim/survivors from the early days of their activism. The SWA slogan of the 1980s, 'Women Helping Women Helping Women,' was intended to highlight the commonality of women's experiences. One day the activists at Women's Aid might have been supporting a woman who needed help to escape an abusive partner but on another day those roles might have been reversed. Indeed, women who were helped by Women's Aid did go on to work or volunteer at Women's Aid groups. In other words, all women could be, and often were, victim/survivors of violence and abuse.

I will at times use the term 'battered wives' or 'battered women', as these were the most commonly used terms to describe victim/survivors of domestic abuse in the 1970s. This will usually be in a quotation but is also occasionally appropriate when discussing the discourse of the time period under examination.

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[37] Catherine Donovan and Marianne Hester, *Domestic violence and sexuality: What's love got to do with it?* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2014), p.8. Liz Kelly, Sheila Burton & Linda Regan, 'Beyond Victim or Survivor: Sexual Violence, Identity and Feminist Theory and Practice' in *Sexualizing the Social Power and the Organization of Sexuality*, ed. Lisa Adkins and Vicki Merchant (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996).

[38] Karen Boyle, *#MeToo, Weinstein and Feminism*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p.15.

[39] Joanna Bourke, 'A Global History of Sexual Violence' in *The Cambridge World History of Violence: Volume Four,* ed. Louise Edwards, Nigel Penn and Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

Women's Aid activist

I have chosen to use the term 'Women's Aid activist' when discussing those who were involved in Women's Aid. The term Women's Aid worker is not appropriate as it could be interpreted as referring only to those in paid employment, whereas many women undertook voluntary work for Women's Aid. Moreover, the term Women's Aid activist conveys that the majority of those interviewed for this thesis framed their involvement as a political activity, particularly those who were involved in the 1970s and 1980s. This term also points to the idea that some women were Women's Aid activists even after they had moved on to a career in academia or the law, for instance, because they continued to have strong links with either a local or national Women's Aid group and/or continued to see their work as contributing to the aims of Women's Aid. At times, people who were involved in activism but were not necessarily part of a Women's Aid group will be discussed, here I will use the term anti-domestic abuse or anti-violence against women activist.

Non-traditional structures

The terms 'non- traditional' or 'non- hierarchical' organising or structures will be used in this thesis to refer to the way in which Women's Aid groups attempted to find new ways of organising based on feminist principles. Traditional patriarchal hierarchies where decisions were made from the top down were criticised by Women's Aid activists in favour of a grassroots led approach. In Women' Aid groups at national and local level collective working was practised, whereby everyone who worked or volunteered within Women's Aid groups had equal authority to decide how refuges were run and equal responsibility to ensure tasks were completed. Decisions were reached by consensus at meetings and conferences. House meetings within refuges were also important as they gave women staying in refuge the opportunity to be involved in decisions about how the refuge should be run; there were sometimes also house meetings for children. As will be explored in Chapter Three, collective working continued in many Women's Aid groups up until the 2000s. Women's Aid was not unique in their approach and other WLM activists and

radical groups on the Left in the UK in the postwar decades experimented with non-hierarchical forms of organising.[40]

Political Blackness

In this thesis, the term 'Black' is used to refer to people belonging to several different ethnic minority groups in order to reflect the way in which this word was used in activist spaces during the 1980s and 1990s in the UK. As historian Thomlinson has argued in her study of race and ethnicity in the WLM in England, both the terms Black and white, when used to describe ethnicity, can have the effect of imposing homogeneity on the varied experiences of women's lives. However, Thomlinson found that: 'They were undoubtedly the categories through which feminists in the era under consideration understood their ethnic identities.'[41] The present study has similarly found that many of the ethnic minority women who were involved with Women's Aid and other forms of anti-domestic abuse activism identified with the term Black in a political sense. During interview Uma Kothari, a founding member of Shakti Women's Aid in Edinburgh, explained this:

> For some of us using the term Black, for myself, for many other people, using the term Black was incredibly important and incredibly political and felt incredibly, you know, 'natural' in inverted commas, you know, that was the right thing to do. It just seemed that there was so much division and diversity that we wanted to all come together and use the term Black with a capital 'B', that brought together all, everyone, despite our differences in class and location and geography and education, despite all of that, that this one thing brought us together and that was that we experienced racism.[42]

Anita Shelton's research into Black women's agency and networking in Scotland in the 1990s found that the term Black was often used as an indication of political consciousness to the divisive tactics of colonialism and as a reflection of the fact that: 'In membership organisations and networks, Asian and Black women of Afro-Caribbean descent have usually worked jointly, in Scotland as in other parts of the UK, as an expression of

[40] Jeska Rees, 'A Look Back at Anger: the Women's Liberation Movement in 1978', *Women's History Review*, 19:3, (2010), p.340. Hughes, *Young Lives on the Left,* p.154. Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism* (London: Merlin Press, 2013), p.12.

[41] Thomlinson, *Race,* p15.

[42] Uma Kothari, Interview with the author, (10th May 2023).

solidarity against the shared experience of anti-Black racism.'[43] Thus, it is historically accurate to use the term Black in the way it was meant in the time and place under examination here, whilst being mindful of the plethora of experiences this identity represents.

Professionalisation and Interstitial Politics

This thesis draws from the concept of 'interstitial politics' in order to understand the way in which Women's Aid occupied a position as both insider and outsider 'working in between' activist, academic and statutory networks at local, regional and national level. The majority of Women's Aid refuges began as feminist, activist groups with their roots firmly in the WLM. Due to these origins they were originally organised non-hierarchically and were often sceptical of the establishment, in that they were critical of institutions such as local authorities, the government, the media and universities. However, as the organisation grew they began to work with these same institutions in order to influence policies and legislation around domestic abuse within them and to gain funding. Women's Aid groups have also become 'professionalised' meaning that they are now generally run as hierarchies, workers are paid and, while there are victim/survivors working within Women's Aid and lived experiences are valued, formal qualifications are often desirable. Women's Aid have faced criticism for this professionalisation because it is perceived as a de-politicization or de-radicalisation. However, as Jolly has argued, Women's Aid's willingness to cooperate with the state is one reason why it has endured where other feminist groups have not.[44]

As has been argued by Gail Steward, and later Jean Cuthbert and Lesley Irving, Women's Aid in Scotland can be seen as a 'thresholder' group, not quite insider and not quite outsider to the government and the state.[45] Women's Aid activists are insiders through work like police training and multi-agency coordinated initiatives but they also use outsider tactics like petitions and criticising statutory approaches in the media. Hague has

[43] Anita Shelton, 'Black Women's Agency in Scotland: A View on Networking Patterns' in *Women and Contemporary Scottish Politics,* ed. Fiona Mackay and Esther Breitenbach (Edinburgh: Polygon Press, 2001), p.48.

[44] Jolly, *Sisterhood*, p.118.

[45] Gail Steward, 'Entry to the system: A case study of Women's Aid in Scotland' in *Government and Pressure Groups* in Britain, ed. A.G. Jordan and J. J. Richardson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). Jean Cuthbert and Lesley Irving, 'Women's Aid in Scotland: Purity vs Pragmatism?' in *Women and Cotemporary Scottish Politics: An Anthology*, ed. Esther Breitenbach and Fiona Mackay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), p.56.

also noted that: 'much feminist research on violence against women… sits between the women's services, the academic world and other stakeholders like government, not being fully integrate into any of them… Liz Kelly has called this 'working in between.''[46]

Furthermore, Jonathan Dean has argued that Women's Aid need not be framed as either a feminist success story, having won the respect of mainstream institutions, or deradicalized but 'that the more institutional and professionalised elements of Women's Aid's work are articulated together with more autonomous feminist practices 'through a continual (re)investment in the challenging, threatening and radical character of their feminist analysis of domestic violence, which enables a certain critical vibrancy to permeate their political work.'[47] This thesis expands on these ideas to analyse the process by which this continual re-investment occurred within Women's Aid from the 1970s to the 1990s. Furthermore, it identifies the forging of a variety of networks as a key feature that allowed Women's Aid activists to conduct their politics in between a variety of mainstream and activist spaces. Women's Aid activists have had to strike a careful balance whilst continually reaching into new areas of influence.

In order to understand the liminal space which Women's Aid occupies, I have drawn from the work of Kimberly Springer on Black feminist organisations and the concept of interstitial politics or doing 'politics in the cracks'.[48] Springer has explained how Black feminist activists conducted their politics both in between the commitments of every day life, and in the cracks between the Civil Rights and Women's Liberation Movements in the US, meaning their activities are sometimes overlooked by historians of the two movements.[49] In a similar way, those who founded Women's Aid groups often did so in between work, studies and caring responsibilities. Moreover, Women's Aid has occupied a somewhat ambivalent position in the historiography of the WLM. Recently, historian Stevenson even mistakenly described Women's Aid as 'not an explicitly 'feminist' group.'[50] Women's Aid were an unusual group in that they were quickly funded by the government, unlike the majority of WLM groups. This may have been one reason why

[46] Hague, *History and Memories*, p.205.

[47] Jonathan Dean, *Rethinking Contemporary Feminist Politics*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.101

[48] Kimberly Springer, 'The Interstitial Politics of Black Feminist Organizations,' *Meridians,* 1:2, (2001), pp. 155-191.

[49] Ibid. p.156.

[50] Stevenson, *Women's Liberation Movement*, p.154.

they have not yet received detailed or lengthy attention from historians of the WLM. Finally, the work of Women's Aid has often taken place in the interstices between various networks. This is a significant observation as holding this position has allowed Women's Aid to gain influence and respect from statutory agencies, influencing changes to legislation and policies on the one hand, whilst holding onto its feminist values and role as a critical voice on the other.

Transnational History

Transnational feminist networks are explored in this work to examine the process by which praxes around confronting and understanding domestic abuse flowed both into and out of the UK. Akira Ireye defines transnational history as 'the study of movements and forces that have cut across national boundaries.'[51] There is not one clearly agreed definition of transnational history and the way in which it differs from international or comparative history amongst scholars. The idea that transnational history is about interactions between non-state actors and NGOs across borders has been one perspective.[52] Indeed, the present study contributes to existing scholarship of the way in which NGOs have engaged in civil society through transnational exchanges. However, Francesca Miller has pointed out this is a difficult line to draw, given that many NGOs receive state funding.[53] Women's Aid occupies something of a liminal space in this way, as it is at once an NGO, political group and recipient of state funding. It has been suggested that comparative and transnational approaches can be effectively used alongside one another. Oliver Janz and Daniel Schonpflug have explained that:

> Transnational history analyses the mutual perceptions of individuals and social groups, and examines the complex processes of exchange taking place, generating effects of appropriation, refusal, reinterpretation and translation… as opposed to traditional comparative historiography, which examines above all fixed structures and regularities, transnational history is concerned with movement, change, and dynamic processes.[54]

[51] Akira Iriye, 'Transnational History' [review article], *Contemporary European History*, 13:2 (2004), p. 216.

[52] Ibid. pp.216-217. *Gender History in a Transnational Perspective: Networks, Biographies Gender Orders*, ed. Oliver Janz and Daniel Schonpflug, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.2.

[53] Francesca Miller, 'Feminisms and Transnationalism', *Gender and History*, 10:3, (1998), p.575.

[54] Janz and Schonpflug, *Gender History*, p.4.

Comparative approaches can be effectively used alongside a transnational perspective, and the present study does include some elements of comparison between the UK and other countries. However, this thesis is most concerned with these 'dynamic processes' through which ideas about domestic abuse and practices like the establishment of women's refuges passed from the UK to other countries and back again. The idea of reinterpretation has been especially influential to the present study in shaping an understanding of transnational interactions, not as a simple transference but as a dialogue. In particular, the work of Kathy Davis who has taken the classic feminist text *Our Bodies Ourselves* as an example of the way in which feminism can act as a travelling theory and is 'translated' as it moves from place to place, has been enlightening.[55] Moreover, Maud Bracke, Julia C. Bullock, Penelope Morris and Kristina Schulz have explained how feminists have adopted ideas circulating transnationally and 're-signified' them depending on the needs of the local context.[56]

Histories of international women's organisations and global feminisms have also been useful for this study.[57] In particular, Lucy Delap and Kathryn Gleadle have cautioned against the idea of regarding the West as the origin of feminist thought.[58] Gleadle has suggested a 'rhizomatic approach' to women's history which recognises the complex process by which feminist thought has grown and spread in non-linear, complex and unexpected directions, with no clear beginning or end point.[59] This has been useful for the present study for conceptualising the way in which international feminist thought about domestic abuse has developed over time and understanding tensions between women that occur in transnational spaces.

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[55] Kathy Davis, *The Making of Our Bodies, Ourselves: How Feminism Travels Across Borders* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007), p.10.

[56] *Translating Feminism: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Text, Place and Agency*, ed. Maud Bracke, Julia C. Bullock, Penelope Morris and Kristina Schulz (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), p.4.

[57] Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997). Ian Tyrrell, *Woman's World/Woman's Empire: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880-1930* (North Carolina: North Carolina Press, 2014). Bonnie G. Smith, *Women in World History: 1450 to the Present* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019). *The Routledge Global History of Feminism*, ed. Bonnie G. Smith and Nova Robinson (London: Routledge, 2022). Bonnie G. Smith, *Global Feminisms Since 1945* (London: Routledge, 2000). Lucy Delap, *Feminisms: A Global History* (London: Pelican, 2020). Kathryn Gleadle, 'The Imagined Communities of Women's History: current debates and emerging themes, a rhizomatic approach', *Women's History Review*, 22: 4, pp. 524-540.

[58] Delap, *Feminisms*, p.17. Gleadle*, Imagined Communities*, p.528.

[59] Gleadle*, Imagined Communities*.

The transnational approach in this study reveals the ways in which Women's Aid activists attempted to forge and maintain networks outside of the countries in which they lived. Women's Aid was not explicitly international like the organisations explored by historians Leila Rupp and Ian Tyrrell.[60] However, Women's Aid activists often regarded themselves as internationalists in a political sense and felt themselves to be part of a movement that spanned beyond the UK's borders. Transnational connections and encounters are given a broad definition here to include such interactions as travelling abroad and meeting with local women's groups, personal relationships maintained through letter writing, and attendance at international conferences and seminars. The way in which ideas and practice around domestic abuse spread transnationally through texts is also explored. These processes were transnational in that they were the means by which praxes were transferred to a new locality to be re-signified, appropriated or rejected. Transnational connections also allowed for a sense of belonging to an international movement to be fostered amongst Women's Aid activists, which was significant for its rejuvenating and galvanising effect.

1.7 Key places

The three cities chosen as illustrative examples for the present study, Edinburgh, Leeds and Bristol, were chosen because they all had strong local Women's Aid groups and were established early in my period. Additionally, archival materials from these cities are available from the Glasgow Women's Library, the Feminist Archive North and the Feminist Archive South. Edinburgh and Leeds were also chosen due to the presence of Black women's refuges in these cities which allowed for the examination of race and cultural differences as an issue within Women's Aid and as a factor for the provision of support for victim/survivors of domestic abuse in the UK more generally. All three of these Women's Aid groups also had strong links to the WLM allowing an examination of the relationship between Women's Aid and the wider movement. Bristol, Leeds and Edinburgh are also all university cities and Women's Aid activists in these cities often had connections with local universities. This allowed for an examination of the ways in which academic and feminist networks overlapped. These links have led to the establishment of research centres such as the Centre for Gender and Violence Research in Bristol, the Violence, Abuse and Gender Relations Research Unit in Bradford and the Centre for

[60] Rupp, *Worlds of Women*. Tyrell, *Woman's World*.

Research on Families and Relationships in Edinburgh, all of which were established by former Women's Aid activists.

However, not all Women's Aid groups were started by WLM activists, some were founded by social workers, some by lawyers and some by women who were simply concerned citizens, often these women did develop a feminist analysis to their work or were politically engaged elsewhere. However, it is a limitation of this study that it does not offer an examination of Women's Aid groups that were not closely linked to the WLM. Nonetheless, the specific local contexts of these groups mean that there are important differences between the Women's Aid groups in these three cities, although they do have many comparable features. Moreover, all three of these groups were members of national Women's Aid federations, allowing an exploration of how local groups engaged with national networks.

Edinburgh

Edinburgh is the second most populous city in Scotland and is located in the southeast of the country. Edinburgh's status as the capital city of Scotland and the networks surrounding the University of Edinburgh made it an important central point for political organisation. In the 1991 census 97.64% of Edinburgh's population was white and the largest ethnic minority group was of South Asian people. WLM activity began in Edinburgh in the early 1970s; the sixth National WLM conference took place in the city in 1974 and by 1976 there was a regular *Edinburgh Women's Liberation Newsletter* and at least four consciousness-raising groups.[61]

The first Women's Aid refuge for victim/survivors of domestic abuse in Scotland was opened in Edinburgh in December 1973. Edinburgh Women's Aid had its roots in the WLM, having begun from a political action group at the Edinburgh WLM workshop. The group had taken inspiration from the Chiswick women's refuge run by Pizzey and in 1972 two women from this Edinburgh group travelled down to Chiswick to discover how the refuge was run and whether it could be replicated in Scotland. Marion Blythman who became a founding member of Edinburgh Women's Aid was deeply moved by the experience, 40 years later she recalled:

[61] Browne, *Women's Liberation*, p.46.

> We drove home to Glasgow, I remember. Actually, we were both weeping from the sort of things she told us and this realisation that we had, that there really was a big problem here and that nobody was doing anything about it.[62]

Upon their return, they applied for funding from Edinburgh District Council which they used to open the first Edinburgh Women's Aid refuge. Edinburgh was also home to the SWA office from 1976 onwards, making it a centre for anti-domestic abuse activism, although meetings and conferences were held around Scotland. Edinburgh has further significance as the home of Shakti Women's Aid for Black women and children experiencing domestic abuse. The process to establish Shakti began in February 1984 when SWA held a 'Working with Asian women' day and it was agreed that a refuge for Asian women should be opened near Edinburgh.[63] Joan Robertson, a white Edinburgh Women's Aid worker did unpaid outreach work to put a group of Asian women together to work on Shakti.[64] At a similar time, the Scottish Black Women's Group began to meet and several of its members became involved with Shakti, developing it into a refuge for all Black women. Shakti Women's Aid received funding for an office and a refuge from Edinburgh District Council in August 1986.[65] In June 1987 a refuge was opened in a four bedroom semi-detached house.[66] Shakti Women's Aid continues to provide support today.

Bristol

Bristol is the most populous city in southwest England and was historically a significant port. The 1991 census shows that 94.87% of Bristol's population were white at this time with Black Caribbean and Black African heritage people making up the largest ethnic minority group. The first Bristol WLM group had its origins in a meeting of the city's women's organisations which took place in a Quaker meeting house in 1969. The meeting was organised by Ellen Malos and Lee Cataldi, two Australian women with connections to

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[62] Marion Blythman, quoted in *Speaking Out: Recalling Women's Aid in Scotland*, (Published on Glasgow Women's Library Website, 2017), p.15 <https://womenslibrary.org.uk/discover-our-projects/speaking-out/> [Accessed 28/11/23].

[63] *Working with Asian Women: Report of a Training Day* (Edinburgh: Scottish Women's Aid, 1984), p.13.

[64] Joan Robertson, 'What I Remember of Shakti's Origins: The Long Jigsaw of Work Leading to the Setting up of Shakti, 1984–1987'(unpublished essay cited with permission of author). Kothari, interview.

[65] 'Grant is Key to Refuge', *Edinburgh Evening News*, (1 August 1986).

[66] Mukami McCrum, 'Herstory of Shakti,' Shakti Women's Aid Annual Report 1991-1992, p.3, Records of local Women's Aid groups, Box 9 (SWA/2/SA), Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

the University of Bristol.[67] The fifth National WLM Conference was held in Bristol University Student Union in 1973.

In 1973, a women's refuge was established in Bristol, it was originally located in Malos' basement. The Malos home also hosted the city's women's centre for the Bristol Women's Liberation Group and other activities such as pregnancy testing took place there.[68] The women's centre began to be used as a women's refuge almost by accident and was initially run on an ad hoc basis. At first, the spare bed in the basement was used for any emergency but it evolved into a refuge space for domestic abuse victim/survivors. This was partly due to the influence of Pizzey and her Chiswick women's refuge, which served as an example of what could be achieved. Malos recalled seeing Pizzey 'doing her thing on television', at the time and realised the urgent need for refuges.[69] Police and social services began to refer women to the refuge and Malos has written that the abusive partners of the women who stayed at the refuge also called her home: 'You could have this guy on the line sobbing his heart out and all of that for a very, very long time.'[70]

Understandably, the Bristol WLM group decided that this situation was not sustainable. They set up a group called the Women's House Project (later Bristol Women's Aid) to campaign for a new, dedicated women's refuge in Bristol, initially moving into a house that had previously been a squat. The Women's House Project group struggled to get support from local authorities and it took over two years before they were offered the use of two houses from Social Services in July 1976.[71] Bristol Women's Aid ran women's refuges in the city for the next twenty years and opened a charity shop in the early 1980s. However, since 1999 domestic abuse support services including refuges in Bristol have been provided by the organisation Next Link after Bristol Women's Aid closed. From 1987 to the present day Bristol has been home to the WAFE national office, which had previously been located in London.

[67] Ellen Malos, interview with Margaretta Jolly (2010), Sisterhood and After Oral History Project at British Library (C1420/06).

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

[71] 'Getting Going', *Women's House Project Report*, January 1977, p.1, Ellen Malos Archive, DM2/23/8/Archive boxes 113, Feminist Archive South at Bristol University Special Collections.

Leeds

Leeds is a city in West Yorkshire which experienced a period of rapid growth during the Industrial Revolution and some decline in the twentieth century but by the 1970s had developed a range of service industries. According to the 1991 census 94.16% of the Leeds population was white but there was a significant South Asian population in the city by this time. WLM groups began to be set up in Leeds around 1970 and in 1975 a Leeds-based group began producing the national WLM newsletter entitled the *Women's Information and Referral Enquiry Service* (*WIRES*). In 1972, a group of women who were part of the Leeds WLM group began working together to establish a women's refuge in Leeds. They had been inspired by the media coverage of the Chiswick refuge. In 1973, the group convinced Leeds City Council to provide two terraced houses to be used as a women's refuge.[72] Founding member of Leeds Women's Aid Lou Lavender recalled that the group were: 'Absolutely overwhelmed with donations... It was amazing how generous people were. I think everybody was just sharing the outrage that... that it should be going on in this day and age.'[73]

Leeds became a centre of anti-violence against women activism partly due to the local context of the murders of thirteen women in Yorkshire and Manchester by Peter Sutcliffe, the so-called 'Yorkshire Ripper', as well as the sexist police response to this from 1975 to 1980. These abhorrent murders ignited activism in the area in the form of Reclaim the Night marches and the Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) group. These events have led to pioneering collaborations between feminist activists and statutory agencies in Leeds. For example, the Leeds Interagency Project, which began in 1991. Leeds Women's Aid continues to provide support services for victim/survivors of domestic abuse today. Around 1982, Sahara, an Asian women's refuge, was established in Leeds by women from Harehills Housing Aid and in 1985 it became a refuge for all Black women.[74] Sahara was decommissioned by the local authority in 2011.[75]

[72] Leeds Women's Aid, *Leeds Women's Aid Timeline of Achievements,* published on <leedswomensaid.co.uk>, p.2, [Accessed 28/11/23].

[73] Lou Lavender, interview with the author, (6th December 2021).

[74] Michelle De Souza, interview with author, (19th April 2023).

[75] Leeds Women's Aid, *Leeds Women's Aid 50th Anniversary Timeline* (2022), published on <leedswomensaid.co.uk> [Accessed 28/11/23].

1.8 Thesis Outline

The next chapter explains the sources and methodology used for this thesis. In particular, there will be a reflection on the use of oral history, the selection of interviewees and the archival materials used. There will be a discussion of how those I have interviewed constructed a narrative around their involvement with Women's Aid or anti-domestic abuse activism more broadly. The thesis will then move outwards in focus; starting with internal Women's Aid networks and ending with an examination of transnational networks.

Chapter Three will explore the ways in which the internal structure of Women's Aid groups at national, regional and local level contributed to the formation and maintenance of a network of Women's Aid activists and a shared ideology between them. It will also argue that a distinct yet connected network of Black and Asian women's refuges was formed in the 1980s. Chapter Four will examine Women's Aid activists' place within broader WLM networks to argue that a connection to feminist politics and principles was consciously fostered by those working on the issue of domestic abuse through cooperation with other groups and engagement with activist-run periodicals. This was despite consistent concerns that Women's Aid could be losing its roots within the WLM through a process of professionalisation.

Chapter Five turns to research and academic networks to understand the contribution of Women's Aid activists to the development of a feminist theory of domestic abuse. The ways in which those with academic careers have maintained their identity as feminist activists through networking and collaborations will be considered. Subsequently, Chapter Six will turn to transnational networks to examine how Women's Aid activists experienced interactions and exchanges with women campaigning against domestic abuse in other countries. It will argue that informal, activist-led forms of transnational networking could be hugely valuable for developing new ways of understanding and responding to domestic abuse. Finally, Chapter Seven will summarise the key findings of the thesis and reflect on the usefulness of historical research to the challenges facing feminists today.

1.9 Conclusion

In what follows, I will argue that Women's Aid groups and other forms of anti-domestic abuse activism in the UK were organised on a number of levels from 1971 to 1996 through four types of overlapping networks: internal, WLM, research and transnational. These

networks were significant for their ability to connect Women's Aid activists around the UK and beyond, leading to the dissemination of feminist theories and praxes for tackling domestic abuse. On a more personal level, these links could be sources of strength and solidarity for Women's Aid activists who were often burned out from the challenges of grassroots activism. Additionally, tensions within these networks and barriers to forming connections across political, cultural and geographical borders, as well as with limited resources, will be considered at several points throughout this thesis. Overall, this thesis will provide a new narrative of the ways in which the WLM operated in the UK, and how feminist activism and thought was developed at regional, national and international levels at the end of the twentieth century.

Chapter 2 Sources and Methods

2.1 Introduction

A combination of oral history interviews and written primary sources have been examined for this thesis in order to understand the processes by which Women's Aid activists were entangled in a variety of networks. As oral historians, Franca Iacovetta, Katrina Srigley, and Stacey Zembrzycki have opined:

> Feminists who work with oral history methods want to tell stories that matter. They know, too, that the telling of those stories—the processes by which they are generated and recorded, and the contexts in which they are shared and interpreted—also matters—a lot.[1]

This chapter is concerned with these 'processes'; the ways in which the research method that has been used has shaped the findings and my own subjective position in the interpretation of those findings. As Margaretta Jolly has observed, oral history and feminism have been something of a 'heavenly match' in the sense that it is a way in which to uncover the histories of marginalised groups, including women.[2] Moreover, feminist historians have long seen oral history as a crucial method with which to understand the experiences of women prior to the development of the WLM in the late 1960s.[3] This thesis follows in the footsteps of this feminist tradition, as it approaches oral history as a method through which to privilege women's voices, memories and experiences and to ensure these are not lost. It is important to record the experience of feminist activists so that future generations can learn from their achievements, experiences and mistakes.

This thesis takes a feminist approach in that it recognises the importance of acknowledging the contributions of the women who came before us in order to appreciate how far we have come. The danger of forgetting this history is that we may take a provision like women's refuges for granted and not recognise the continued need to fight for their funding. This is not to say we should glorify past feminist projects but by better understanding the ways in which they developed we are able to more meaningfully critique and improve ways of thinking about and doing feminist activism in the present. The feminist approach also

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[1] Franca Iacovetta, Katrina Srigley and Stacey Zembrzycki, *Beyond Women's Words: Feminisms and the Practices of Oral History in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2018), p.1.

[2] Jolly, *Sisterhood*, p.40.

[3] For example Jean McCrindle and Sheila Rowbotham, *Dutiful Daughters: Women Talk About Their Lives* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979).

appreciates the intrinsic value of paying close attention to women's experiences through both an examination of archival material and the analysis of oral history interviews. This thesis draws from feminist theory that came from the movement under consideration. Concepts like intersectionality, an understanding of subjectivity, a continuum of violence and the centring of the voices of women, which were developed by feminist thinkers at the end of the twentieth century, have been foundational for building my own interpretation of the development of anti-domestic abuse activism and research.

An intersectional feminist lens was used for the present study in order to examine the ways in which women are subject to multiple intersecting forms of oppression which shape their life experiences and identities. The term intersectionality was first used by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s to discuss African American women's experiences of discrimination, although the practice of analysing multiple overlapping forms of oppression has a longer history within Black Feminist epistemology.[4] The concept of intersectionality has offered a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which organisations like Women's Aid's understanding of race and class developed from the 1970s to the 1990s, as well as how individuals experienced their engagement with anti-domestic abuse activism and research. The importance of considering multiple forms of oppression in women's lives was well understood by Black British feminists working to establish specialist women's refuges and researching women's experiences of violence and abuse by the mid-1980s and was further developed in the 1990s.

In terms of written sources, this thesis has benefited from what Kate Eichorn has termed the 'archival turn in feminism.'[5] Eichorn has argued that since the 1990s there has been a rise in the use of archiving as political action and an increased awareness of the importance of collecting the material culture of feminist activist groups for future generations. Moreover, Jane Freeland and Christina von Hodenberg have argued that 'the (in)visibility of women and sexuality in the archive drove scholars to challenge the archive as a site of the reproduction of violent patriarchal and colonial orders.'[6] This attention to the political

[4] Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: a black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 140 (1989), pp. 139–67. Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016).

[5] Kate Eichorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013).

[6] Jane Freeland and Christina von Hodenberg, 'Archiving, exhibiting, and curating the history of feminisms in the global twentieth century: an introduction', *Women's History Review*, published online (2023), p.1.

aspects of archiving has led to the establishment of alternative activist archives, leading to a wider examination of what constitutes historical evidence and should be preserved.[7] Archival projects such as the Glasgow Women's Library's (GWL) archival collections, the Feminist Archive North (FAN) and the Feminist Archive South (FAS) have been invaluable resources for this thesis. There is a sense in which these are living archives intended to be utilised for activism in the present. As the FAN mission statement asserts: 'Our aim is to spread information and develop current and further activism.'[8] Without the sources collected in these archives through the generosity and hard work of activists and archivists, a thesis such as this one would not have been possible. In this sense, I am privileged to have had such a rich range of archival material to consult.

In particular, this thesis has utilised recent oral history and archival projects recording the history of Women's Aid. These include the 'Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project', 'Speaking Out: Recalling Women's Aid in Scotland', 'You Can't Beat a Woman: The Story of the Founding of Women's Refuges' and 'Forty Voices, Forty Years.' The 'Sisterhood and After' project was funded by the Leverhulme Trust and ran from 2010 to 2013.[9] The project conducted oral history interviews with sixty women and one man involved with the WLM. It also compiled teaching resources and articles on various topics, including some discussion of campaigns against violence against women, which are available on the British Library website, while the oral history interview transcripts can be viewed onsite.[10] It included interviews with women who had been involved with Women's Aid, such as Jalna Hanmer, Jane Hutt, Mukami McCrum, Rowena Arshad and Karen McMinn, which have been drawn upon for the current study.

The 'Speaking Out' project was conducted from 2015 to 2017 and was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.[11] This project gathered oral history interviews and archived unpublished material from SWA and local Scottish Women's Aid groups. As well as this, the project produced resources such as a report of the project's key findings and a short

[7] Ibid.

[8] 'About Feminist Archive North', Feminist Archive North Website, < http://feministarchivenorth.org.uk/about-fan/> (Accessed 7th August 2023).

[9] 'About the Sisterhood and After Project', British Library Website, <https://www.bl.uk/projects/sisterhood-and-after> [Accessed 7th August 2023].

[10] 'Campaigns and protests of the Women's Liberation Movement', British Library Wesbite, https://www.bl.uk/sisterhood/articles/campaigns-and-protests-of-the-womens-liberation-movement [Accessed 7th August 2023].

[11] 'Speaking Out', Glasgow Women's Library Website, <https://womenslibrary.org.uk/discover-our-projects/speaking-out/#SpeakingOutIntro> [Accessed 7th August 2023].

film. The Scottish Women's Aid Archive is available from the GWL and both the interviews and archival material have been invaluable sources for this thesis.

Additionally, 'You Can't Beat a Woman' was an oral history project which conducted interviews with thirty-five activists from the South East of England from 2015 to 2017.[12] A report of key findings, as well as data and a timeline compiled from the interviews are available on the project's website. The report has been particularly valuable for its discussion of Black feminist activism for women's refuges. The material is archived at the Essex Record Office. Finally, the 'Forty Voices, Forty Years' project was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and ran from 2018 to 2019.[13] It collected twenty-eight oral history interviews with women involved in Women's Aid in Wales and built a comprehensive archive. Some of this material has been digitised on the People's Collection Wales website, and the Welsh Women's Aid archive will be held at the National Library of Wales. This thesis has drawn from the Speaking Out and Sisterhood and After projects in particular, but the other three projects proved valuable for providing wider context and filling gaps in my understanding of anti-domestic abuse activism in the UK.

In the following sections, there will be a discussion of the research process, methodological approach and sources utilised for this thesis. Firstly, there will be a consideration of the written primary sources that have been examined, including archival material, periodicals and published books. The benefits and challenges to using these sources will be examined. Secondly, there will be a reflection on the oral history methodology used for this thesis, which utilised both original and exiting interviews. The selection process, interview style, as well as the way in which 'feminist scripts' were drawn on by interviewees to construct their narratives, will be examined. Further to this, there will be an analysis of remote oral history interviewing and the positives and negatives of this method. In the final section, the ways in which the archives informed the analysis of the interviews and vice versa will be explored.

[12] 'You Can't Beat a Woman', You Can't Beat a Woman Website, <https://www.youcantbeatawoman.co.uk/the-project/> [Accessed 7th August 2023].

[13] 'Forty Voices, Forty Years, University of South Wales Website, <https://storytelling.research.southwales.ac.uk/research/fortyvoices/> [Accessed 7th Augus 2023].

2.2 Written Sources

This thesis draws from a variety of written sources including unpublished and published organisational documents from Women's Aid groups, as well as feminist and mainstream periodicals. In the first instance, materials from the Scottish Women's Aid Collection at GWL were consulted, including the 'Records of Scottish Women's Aid', 'Records of Local Groups' and the 'Rebecca and Russell Dobash Files.' Materials from FAN at the University of Leeds library were examined, including the 'Women's Aid Federation England Collection', 'Jalna Hanmer Collection', 'Lou Lavender Collection', 'Violence Abuse and Gender Relations Research Unit/Centre Collection', 'Women's Aid Leeds Collection' and 'Diana Leonard Collection.' At FAS at the University of Bristol library I viewed the 'Ellen Malos Archive' and the 'Bristol Women's Aid Collection.' Additionally, I received copies of written material from the 'Betsy Warrior Collection' and the 'Papers of Susan Schechter' from the Schlesinger Library at Harvard University. Finally, the online 'Archives of Sexuality and Gender' database was consulted, particularly for its collection of Del Martin's papers. Warrior, Schechter and Martin were all influential anti-domestic abuse activists in the US and examining their papers allowed me to find evidence of transatlantic influences. A few of the people interviewed for this thesis were also kind enough to allow me to look at material from their personal archive such as diaries, letters, news clippings and their collection of periodicals and pamphlets.

The organisational documents from Women's Aid such as meeting minutes and annual reports were especially useful for understanding the issues that were important at the time and the way in which they were being discussed. Personal papers were useful for exploring the sort of networks with which individuals were engaged by examining sources like correspondence and conference papers. Letters, for instance, offered glimpses into the types of interactions that took place between activists and gave an insight into emotions and relationship building, as well as the exchange of ideas. On the other hand, meeting minutes were more useful for understanding how Women's Aid groups prioritised the issues they campaigned on, as well as the process through which decisions were made, often by reaching a collective consensus.

Jeska Rees and others have pointed out some of the distinctive difficulties of using written documents to research the WLM.[14] For instance, often articles, reports and pamphlets were

[14] Jeska Rees, 'Are you a Lesbian?' Challenges in Recording and Analysing the Women's Liberation Movement in England', *History Workshop Journal*, 69:1, (2010), p.178.

written collectively and it was a principle of the WLM that there be no leaders or stars. This may have been a commendable political position, however, it has caused some challenges for historians. While conducting the archival research for this thesis it was at times difficult to identify who had written a certain document as it was often not signed. This made it challenging to place a source in context, to understand the motivations of the author and to give due credit to a particular individual. Perhaps even more frustrating were the absence of dates on some of the archival material, although in most cases it was possible to estimate the date by the events being discussed or by comparing with the documents archived with it.

Feminist periodicals have been seen as important spaces of debate and discussion during the WLM.[15] Publishing, editing or writing for a feminist periodical was a form of activism in itself, rather than just a record of this activism. They also played a vital role in forging and maintaining networks of communication between feminist activists campaigning in different localities. Reading feminist newsletters was an important way in which women could feel part of the WLM or specific anti-domestic abuse networks, even if they did not have the time or resources to travel to meetings or conferences. A variety of newsletters and magazines from the 1970s to the 1990s were examined for this thesis. For instance, several Women's Aid groups published their own newsletters and contributed to local WLM newsletters such as the *Edinburgh Women's Liberation Newsletter, the Bristol Women's Liberation Newsletter* and *the Leeds Women's Liberation Newsletter.* Feminist magazines such as *Spare Rib, MSPrint* and *Trouble & Strife* were also consulted. These proved particularly valuable for examining transnational influences and connections, as activists often wrote reports of trips to conferences or featured interviews or articles by women from other countries. Feminist periodicals which featured discussions of domestic abuse or Women's Aid were helpful to gauge how connected Women's Aid was to the broader WLM and the extent to which their ideas and activities were influential or well-known to other feminists.

Consulting the feminist magazine *Aegis,* which was published in the US, allowed for an examination of how UK activism influenced discussions there. At times, mainstream newspapers were also consulted, as there was considerable media attention around the

[15] Lucy Delap and Zoe Strimpel, 'Spare Rib and the Print Culture of Women's Liberation' in *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1940s-2000s: The Postwar and Contemporary Period*, ed. Laurel Forster and Joanne Hollows, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), p.46. Natalie Thomlinson, ''Second-Wave' Black Feminist Periodicals in Britain,' *Women: A Cultural Review*, 27:4, (2016), pp.432-445.

opening of women's refuges and subsequent activities. This provided an insight into the way in which Women's Aid was perceived by mainstream society and the influence they had outside of explicitly feminist spaces.

Another form of written sources used were pamphlets and reports published by Women's Aid groups, in particular by SWA or WAFE. These were valuable for examining the types of outreach Women's Aid activists undertook. For instance, some pamphlets were aimed at victim/survivors who needed information or support, whilst others were designed to inform statutory agencies like the police or social services. A further category of written sources was books published on the topic of domestic abuse or violence against women in the genre of sociology or in a self-help style. These can be seen as primary sources as they were written during the time period under consideration here, although they do occupy something of a middle ground as they also informed my own understanding of the dynamics of violence against women. These were often written by people who thought of themselves as activist/researchers and were aimed at victim/survivors, other activists, academics or policy makers. Books such as these include *Violence Against Wives* by Russell and Rebecca Dobash, *Surviving Sexual Violence* by Liz Kelly, *Well-founded Fear* by Jalna Hanmer and Sheila Saunders, and *The Hidden Struggle* by Amina Mama.[16] The books *Battered Wives* by Del Martin, *Women and Male Violence* by Susan Schechter and *Getting Free* by Ginny NiCarthy, all written by US activists, demonstrated transatlantic connections with UK activists or groups.[17] These books were all useful for finding evidence of national and transnational networks; as the acknowledgements often included reference to seminar groups or personal connections which had influenced the work of the author. They also allowed for an interrogation of the ways in which feminist thought about violence against women developed over time.

One weakness of the present study is that I was only able to consult written sources in English. This may have resulted in a privileging of transatlantic connections, although most of the transnational exchanges mentioned by interviewees did take place in English as

[16] Russell Dobash and Rebecca Dobash, *Violence Against Wives: A Case Against the Patriarchy,* (New York: The Free Press, 1979). Liz Kelly, *Surviving Sexual Violence,* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988). Jalna Hanmer and Sheila Saunders, *Well-founded Fear: A Community Study of Violence Against Women*, (London: Hutchinson, 1984). Amina Mama, *The Hidden Struggle*, (London: London Race and Housing Research Unit, 1989).

[17] Del Martin, *Battered Wives*, (San Franciso: Volcano Press, 1976). Susan Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*, (Boston: South End Press, 1983). Ginny NiCarthy, *Getting Free: You Can End Abuse and Take Back Your Life*, (New York: Seal Press, 1982).

often they did not speak another language fluently. However, I was not able to read books that were published in other European languages. This is despite the fact I identified connections between the UK and countries such as France and Sweden. This could be an area for future comparative research into transnational anti-domestic abuse activism.

2.3 Oral History

I have conducted new interviews with twenty-six women and one man who were involved with anti-domestic abuse activism and/or research between 1971 and 1996 for this thesis. I have also drawn from four existing oral history collections, as has already been noted. This mixture of original and existing interviews was complementary, as at times I would identify an individual for a further interview after reading an existing transcript. For instance, Morna Burdon, one of the National Coordinators of SWA in the 1980s, mentioned in her interview for the Speaking Out project that she felt that the international context in which anti-domestic abuse activism had developed was significant. This was not a line of enquiry that was pursued by the original interviewer, however, when I interviewed Burdon myself I asked her about SWA's transnational connections which elicited some interesting findings. On other occasions, I was unable to contact key Women's Aid activists for interview and in these cases it was invaluable to be able to consult a previous interview. It could at times be frustrating using existing interviews, as naturally the interviewer's interests were different to my own and I wished I could have posed additional questions. However, due perhaps to the feminist positioning of the other projects I consulted, I was pleased to find that many of the themes I was interested in were also pursued in the previous projects.

Before conducting the new interviews I applied for and was granted ethical approval from the University of Glasgow. This process included submitting a list of sample questions, an information sheet and a consent form for participants. The consent form and information sheet explained that interviewees would be anonymised upon request. However, none of the interviewees chose to be anonymised, perhaps as many of them were experienced in speaking out publicly on these issues through their activism. At the beginning of the interview, before I began the recording, I asked interviewees if they had any questions about the project or the consent form I had sent to them. The interviewees were also given the option to review the transcript and recording after the interview, as is mentioned below. After the interview, I sent an email to each interviewee to thank them for their time and energy and to ask how they had found the experience.

In terms of the selection of participants for the new interviews, I was initially given contacts by my supervisor, Professor Karen Boyle, who had some involvement with Women's Aid in the 1990s. Having a mutual contact probably helped me to build trust with my first interviewee, Jalna Hanmer, a key figure in the establishment of the NWAF. From there, a snowball effect occurred whereby one interview would lead to others as I was given the contact details of other women. As well as the snowball technique I also identified participants by looking at the names recorded in archived meeting minutes and reports of local and national Women's Aid groups. I interviewed three groups of people for this thesis: Key figures who had been involved with NWAF or SWA; people connected to Edinburgh, Leeds or Bristol Women's Aid; and prominent feminist researchers of domestic abuse. Feminist researchers were identified through suggestions from other interviewees and searching for publications on domestic abuse from the 1970s to the 1990s.

Biographical details for all interviewees can be found in Appendix 1. However, in what follows, I will briefly summarise some key points about the interviewees. One third of those I interviewed were 'Black': three were of South Asian heritage, four were of African heritage and two were of dual heritage (Indian/Chinese and Indian/white English). Two of the African heritage women had grown up in Africa (Kenya and Nigeria) then moved to the UK as young adults, one was born in Grenada but moved to London as a child, and the final woman was born in Bristol and her parents were originally from Jamaica. Two of the women had spent time living in India as children and one had grown up in Malaysia before moving to the UK for her education. Of the eighteen white women and one white man, two were originally from the US, three were from Scotland and the rest were from England. However, five women had emigrated to Scotland in the 1970s or 1980s and so thought of themselves as, at the least, honorary Scots and could provide a perspective from the Scottish context. Sexuality was not discussed in detail in the interviews but four interviewees mentioned they were lesbians and this clearly shaped their experiences in important ways. I did not explicitly ask interviewees about class background, although those who mentioned it said they were working-class or lower-middle-class, some mentioned they had moved to a more middle-class lifestyle than their parents after having better educational opportunities available to them.

Several women mentioned having formative experiences of violence and abuse against women as young people, usually through becoming aware of violence perpetrated by men in their families, friendship groups or communities. This was often framed as a reason for their involvement with Women's Aid or motivation to conduct research. A minority of

women disclosed personal experiences of various forms of violence, abuse or harassment from men. Only two women spoke of their experiences of being survivors of domestic abuse perpetrated by their ex-partners. I did not ask interviewees if they were victim/survivors as this did not seem ethical, so it is likely other women may have had experiences of abuse they did not discuss with me. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that, although these are not binary identities, I chose to interview activists for this thesis, rather than victim/survivors, and in this way the voices of women who stayed in women's refuges but did not go on to be involved in Women's Aid are not represented here. Interviews with victim/survivors can be found in the Speaking Out project interviews and their voices are often represented in publications by Women's Aid organisations themselves.

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach. I had a list of questions in mind but was often guided by the interviewee as to what areas to focus or expand on. These were not life history interviews, as such, as most of the interview was focused on time spent working on the issue of domestic abuse. Nonetheless, a question at the beginning of the interview asked about the interviewees' background, where they were born and grew up and at the end of the interview I asked what they had done since their involvement with Women's Aid and how their involvement with anti-domestic abuse activism had impacted their lives. For some women, it was difficult to separate Women's Aid from the rest of their lives, as Nicola Harwin commented in an email: 'It might be a long interview as it will pretty much cover my life!'[18] The personal lives of women who were involved with the WLM were often tightly intertwined with their political activities. Even after moving on to other things, interviewees often described a life-long relationship with Women's Aid through friendship networks, regular donations or attendance at conferences and anniversary celebrations.

The importance of intersubjectivity and power dynamics within an oral history interview have been well established by historians.[19] Lynn Abrams has described subjectivity as the 'emotional baggage' we each bring with us into any social interaction and intersubjectivity as 'the interpersonal dynamics of the interview situation.'[20] Furthermore, the final oral

[18] Nicola Harwin, correspondence with the author, (2nd August 2021).

[19] For example, Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010). *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 2015). Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: discourses and subjectivity in oral histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

[20] Abrams, *Oral History*, p.54.

history transcript or recording 'is the result of a three-way dialogue: the respondent with him or herself, between the interviewer and the respondent and between the respondent and cultural discourses of the present and the past.'[21] Elements of my own positionality as a white, female, Scottish historian in my twenties, as well as my life experiences, have all shaped the questions I am interested in asking and my interpretations of the answers given. Those who I interviewed also naturally felt more or less comfortable sharing their experiences with me based on their individual subjectivities, along with my personality and behaviour before and during the interview.

On occasion, there were uncomfortable moments when discussing sensitive issues, such as race within anti-domestic abuse activism or research, with both Black and white interviewees. As Thomlinson has observed, not feeling uncomfortable could indicate that 'the researcher would appear to be lacking appropriate levels of self-reflexivity' as a white researcher interviewing Black women, especially considering the responsibility of interpreting their words despite having no lived experience of racism.[22] Nonetheless, it is worth sitting in that discomfort if it helps to shed light on a more diverse range of experiences through one's research. In general, the Black women I interviewed were equally as willing to talk to me, and pleased that an historian was taking an interest in their activism, as white women were. On two occasions, my interest in Black feminist activism was questioned by interviewees who reasonably wished to better understand my motivations in interviewing them; once I explained I was committed to highlighting the histories of marginalised groups and understanding the diverse range of women's experiences they appeared to be happy to speak with me. Of course, another interviewer may well have elicited a different kind of narrative during interview, however, using existing oral history interviews as well may have helped to create a more well-rounded set of interviews.

Previous scholarship has observed that the traditional power dynamics of an oral history interview can be inverted and this was true of my experience to a certain extent.[23] All of my interviewees were older than me and many were respected academics or had considerable professional standing in the violence against women sector and this could be

[21] Ibid. p.59.

[22] Natalie Thomlinson, 'Race and Discomposure in Oral Histories with White Feminist Activists', *Oral History,* 42:1, (2014), p.88.

[23] Rees, *Are you a Lesbian?*, p.184. Stephen Burrell, 'Engaging men and boys in the prevention of men's violence against women in England', (unpublished thesis, University of Durham, 2019), p.89.

intimidating at times. Nevertheless, I was mindful that there is a certain vulnerability in agreeing to contribute to an oral history project, as ultimately the interviewer is in control of which questions are asked and the written analysis. In order to lessen this power imbalance, I offered flexibility in the interview process to give interviewees a feeling of agency and to foster a sense of collaboration within the interaction. For example, if interviewees asked to see the interview questions in advance, I complied with this and I found that at times interviewees were able to offer fuller answers having reflected on the questions before the interview. I also offered interviewees the opportunity to see the interview transcript before I quoted from it, and I indicated the passages I would be most likely to quote from.

The majority of interviewees did not want to view the transcript, or requested a copy for posterity but did not wish to edit or redact information. There were a small number of interviewees, however, who did wish to clarify certain parts of the transcript or redact information, such as the names of third persons as they were not confident the person would want to be named. In cases where I have used quotes which have been edited, I have indicated this in the citation. There were also times when interviewees would send reflections to me via email after the interview and I have occasionally quoted from this correspondence within the thesis. Despite these attempts to alleviate power imbalances, the final interpretation of the interviews was up to me. Therefore, I have been mindful to do so fairly and ethically, while not compromising my own sense of the truth or meaning of the matters discussed.

The Feminist Script

The majority of the narratives elicited during the oral history interviews for this thesis took feminism as a central framework with which interviewees' understood events and their life experiences in the past and subsequently. This is partly due to the framing of this thesis in the information sheet, and to a certain extent through the interview questions, as being about feminist activism and thought. Many of the women I interviewed also belonged to the same friendship networks that had been established through feminist activism undertaken in the 1970s, 1980s and/or 1990s. This is not unusual, as Jolly has observed:

> Movements emerge from the pleasure of belonging, socializing, and rites of passage, especially for those leaving home or remaking themselves after some identity challenge. They reflect the friendship networks from which they arose.[24]

This was in some ways an advantage, as it made it easier to identify Women's Aid activists to interview. However, it also meant that the narratives they told during interview were shaped significantly by shared memories and cultural scripts. Abrams has written of the way in which: 'Those who self-identified as feminists had a common language and set of cultural reference points (an epistemology) not available to those without intimate relationship with the women's movement.'[25] Some of the interviews conducted for this thesis exhibited features of this shared common language or what we might term a 'feminist script' whereby feminism was used as a framework with which to make sense of their lives.[26] For instance, several women described discovering feminism, or at times specifically Women's Aid, as a crucial turning point or 'feminist awakening' which impacted everything that came afterwards. Kate Kay for instance remembered becoming involved with the Bristol women's centre as; 'like having, kind of, curtains pulled from your eyes,' while Fiona Buchanan, the first National Children's Worker for SWA, mentioned that; 'absolutely Women's Aid introduced me to feminism.'[27] Furthermore, interviewees often emphasised similar themes such as the importance of collective working and the self-help ethos of Women's Aid, and cited the same key feminist texts. Lily Greenan, who was involved with Edinburgh Rape Crisis in the 1980s and served as the Chief Executive of SWA from 2006 to 2015, paused when recollecting when she first encountered feminism to remark: 'I've said this so many times and I sometimes think: "Is that actually how it happened?" But I think it is.'[28] It is possible that relying on this shared narrative, which interviewees assumed I would relate to as a feminist researcher myself, may have led to a simplification or even mythologizing of these experiences when recalled retrospectively. As Celia Hughes has argued, the reliance on shared cultural scripts such as a moment of enlightenment expressed by WLM activists sometimes 'masks more subtly felt emotions.'[29] I do not attempt here to question the veracity of these feminist scripts, but

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[24] Jolly, *Sisterhood,* p.23.

[25] Lynn Abrams, 'Talking About Feminism: Reconciling fragmented narratives with the feminist research frame' in *Beyond Women's Words,* p.83.

[26] Abrams, *Talking About Feminism*, p.84.

[27] Kate Kay, interview with the author, (21st January 2022). Fiona Buchanan, interview with the author, (17th December 2020).

[28] Lily Greenan, Interview with the author, (12th February 2021).

[29] Hughes, *Young Lives*, p.170.

it is important to look critically at a shared narrative that may have become too composed or simplified when recalled retrospectively.

This is partly a methodological issue, relying too heavily on the snowball technique can result in a narrow focus on a particular friendship network and, thereby, exclude the perspectives of women who may not share this feminist script. As I have mentioned above, I attempted to combat this by examining archival material and identifying names of those listed in meeting minutes or reports and then finding them online. Jendayi Serwah was one woman I contacted in this way. Serwah became the coordinator of the Bristol Women's Aid office in 1987 before moving to work at WAFE. For Serwah, Women's Aid was her first introduction to what she described as 'Euro-centric notions of feminism' as she had not previously been involved in the WLM.[30] During interview she explained that: 'Even now, how I see the world and how I experience the world is according to my race rather than my gender. That's very much still on top for me. So, it was a real eye opener to be part of Women's Aid.'[31] During interview, Serwah was very apologetic that she could not remember very much about her time with Women's Aid. Interestingly, she reflected this may be because she was only involved for a few years and had not kept in regular contact with the people she met there:

> I think if someone like Nicola [Harwin] was with me... she would jog my memory, she would remember more... unlike those other women who have gone on to totally immerse their lives in, in the same way as I have in, in African Liberation, reparatory justice, those women will have totally immersed themselves in women's issues. I've had friends who have tried to womanise me for years and they have been unsuccessful![32]

Serwah's framing of her introduction to feminism was notable as it contrasted with those who recalled this as a transformative moment that influenced the rest of their lives. What is more, Serwah was clearly aware that her narrative may be different to the one I had heard from other Women's Aid activists. In this way, Serwah's interview raised for me the idea that the perspectives of those who took part in WLM or feminist activism for a short period but did not remain involved are often neglected. A reliance on existing friendship networks

[30] Jendayi Serwah, interview with the author, (16th September 2021).

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

to locate interviewees will usually result in finding those who stayed in touch with feminist networks. These are the women who are most likely to hear about and volunteer for oral history interview projects about the WLM. As Serwah's example illustrates, they are also those who are most likely to remember, or at least think they remember, more from their involvement due to being part of this shared narrative culture. In this way, it can be seen how my archival research was important for identifying a range of women who were involved in Women's Aid. This process influenced the perspectives that were captured as part of this research, resulting in more well-rounded findings.

Another methodological consideration is that the types of questions asked during interview can illicit a certain type of narrative. Historian Maud Bracke has observed this in her study of feminism in Italy, stating that she 'explored the possibility of alternative memories by asking questions that address silences and tensions in the narrative.'[33] In the earliest interviews I conducted, I asked a question about when the interviewee first became interested in feminism. However, after becoming more aware that not everyone identified themselves as a feminist, partly due to my interview with Serwah, I began to ask what the individual's relationship was to the word feminism and how this may have changed over time. I found this approach more successful because it allowed interviewees the space to define in their own words how they felt about feminism and encouraged a more critical and non-linear narrative.

Similarly, to Serwah, when I asked Michelle De Souza, who was involved with Sahara, a Black women's refuge in Leeds in the 1980s and the Leeds Interagency Project in the 1990s, whether she identified with the word feminism she responded:

> Um, no, I've always been resistant to it, actually, um, because I've never felt any more strongly about women's inequality than I do around class and race. So I just find it, um, the reference point feels very limiting to me... so, I've never called myself a feminist, but I do completely concur with feminist values. Just don't label myself in that way.[34]

Serwah and De Souza are both ethnically minoritized women and so share the experience of racial as well as gender discrimination and due to this found a more intersectional analysis more appropriate to their lives. Although, it is not the case that all Black women

[33] Maud Bracke, *Women and the Reinvention of the Political Feminism in Italy, 1968-1983* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2014), p.25.

[34] De Souza, interview.

interviewed took this view of feminism; when I asked British Nigerian scholar Amina Mama to reflect on her relationship to feminism she responded emphatically that:

> I've been exploring it all my life, I've never had any hesitation. Is it Rebecca West?: 'Every time I do something that distinguishes me from a doormat I get called a feminist.' Right on! I embrace it fully. And I'm one of the Black feminists who said: 'No, *we* invented this, you can't just say it's white.'[35]

Similarly, Ravi Thiara described herself as a 'Black feminist' saying: 'I haven't had an easy relationship either with the, um, central tenets of feminism, or even the term feminism. I've always kind of needed to qualify.'[36] A couple of women also took issue with using the term feminist to describe their political activism of the time, saying: 'It wasn't called feminism, it was called the Women's Liberation Movement.'[37] Jeff Hearn, the one man that I interviewed, was hesitant and careful when asked whether he identified with feminism saying: 'In Britain… when I live there I actually probably wouldn't use the word feminist or at least I'd be very, very cautious, not in public anyway, maybe amongst friends… I have in the past used pro-feminist to describe myself.'[38] There was a feeling that 'feminist' was not necessarily a word men should identify with or that this would be heavily scrutinised. The way in which this question about feminism was worded, therefore, considerably influenced the types of responses given and led to interesting findings about the complexities of individual's relationship to feminism as an identity or ideology.

When narrated retrospectively, the interviewees' memories were also given new meanings that they may not have held at the time. Developments in feminist thought and activism of the last twenty years, such as the proliferation of an intersectional analysis and the further attention given to the oppression of non-binary and transgender people, had caused some interviewees to reflect on the perspectives they had held in the past. Some interviewees were commendably honest about what they felt had been failures on the part of Women's Aid activists. Judith Hodgkin, who was a National Coordinator of NWAF in the 1970s, reflected on this during interview:

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[35] Amina Mama, interview with the author, (13th February 2023).

[36] Ravi Thiara, interview with the author, (19th May 2023).

[37] Lou Lavender, interview with the author, (6th December 2021).

[38] Jeff Hearn, interview with the author, (26th January 2021).

> I have to say, our awareness on a lot of issues, I mean, things like racism, was very, I'm ashamed to admit it, but it was very low down on our agendas. It was not something that was a regular, um, topic of discussion or activity or anything, I mean, it was just, you know, no awareness of the particular problems that women of different ethnic backgrounds faced, um, or you know, that the model that we had for our part of the world was necessarily going to be an appropriate model for people in other parts of the world. I mean, that just did not, it's awful to think, I mean, you know, we were struggling with our own issues, I mean, that's an excuse, that's not an excuse but I think we've moved on quite a lot from where we were in the late 70s on a lot of issues.[39]

Other women reflected that the conditions within refuges themselves in the 1970s would not pass health and safety standards today. Several interviewees worried that I would find it difficult to appreciate the context within which Women's Aid activists of the 1970s and 1980s were working due to my age. Elizabeth Woodcraft, another former NWAF National Coordinator, told me: 'You really have to look at it in the context of where we were coming from. You know? We'd only just left the 50s and 60s.'[40] In this way, there was a three way dialogue between the interviewee, the discourse of the present day and myself as a feminist of a younger generation. Thus, while interviewees were undoubtedly immensely proud of what their activism had achieved, they were also actively engaged in a reassessment of certain approaches within the present context, producing a narrative which reflected upon this.

Remote Oral History Interviewing

All but one of the oral history interviews for this thesis were conducted remotely using video conferencing software due to the Covid-19 pandemic. There has been relatively little scholarship on remote oral history interviewing thus far and so this thesis can make a contribution by sharing some observations on this method. The first thing to acknowledge is that some of the interviews for this thesis were conducted during national lockdowns. This was a deeply stressful and worrying time for everyone, myself and my interviewees included. As historians Tracey Loughran, Kate Mahoney and Daisy Payling have observed, the lockdowns, particularly during winter 'intensified the interviews' emotional aspects' due to the 'darkness and isolation.'[41] On this point I concur, there were times in which upsetting topics, such as the experiences of victim/survivors of domestic abuse and

[39] Judith Hodgkin, interview with the author, (13th October 2021).

[40] Elizabeth Woodcraft, interview with the author, (25th October 2021).

[41] Tracey Loughran, Kate Mahoney and Daisy Payling, 'Reflections on remote interviewing in a pandemic: negotiating participant and researcher emotions', *Oral History*, 50:1, (2022), p.43.

Women's Aid activists' attempts to support them, were emotionally challenging to listen to and having limited social interaction after the interview made this all the weightier. However, I enjoyed the process of remote interviewing and believe there were also considerable benefits to this methodology.

As for my interviewees, the majority commented they had enjoyed the experience of reflecting on their past, and it was in some ways a good time to do this as long periods spent at home encouraged a sense of taking stock. Some mentioned they had used the time to organise their personal archive and their memories had been jogged by some of the things they discovered there. As I have written previously, in the beginning of the lockdown there was also a 'feeling of solidarity and an idea that we are all navigating new territory together' which helped to build rapport.[42] There were often jokes about our shared inexperience with video conferencing software for instance. Remote interviewing also eliminated the stress of travelling and with it any anxiety about running late or delayed buses; due to this I felt I could be more composed than would have been possible in a face to face interview. Myself and my interviewees were also usually at home in spaces in which we felt safe, although it must be noted that home is not necessarily a safe place for everyone. Generally, these factors resulted in a relaxed atmosphere during the remote interviews which helped interviewees feel comfortable enough to open up about their experiences.

Nonetheless, it is undoubtedly more difficult to perceive subtle shifts in mood via video call and I tried to be hyper sensitive to changes in facial expressions or tone of voice. I also made a point of verbally checking in with interviewees more often than I may have done in person and suggested taking breaks. However, I found my interviewees rarely wanted to take a break once they were in the flow of the interview. I usually emailed interviewees after the interview to thank them for their time and many commented on how much they had enjoyed the interview, which helped to set my mind at ease as to any negative impacts of the process. For me personally, the interviews conducted during lock down became a welcome respite from the harrowing news cycle and a rare chance for social interaction with someone new.

[42] Charlotte James Robertson, ''It was just a time when one was hopeful': Oral History interviewing in the time of COVID-19', *Women's History Scotland Blog*, < http://womenshistoryscotland.org/2020/06/29/charlotte-james-robertson-it-was-just-a-time-when-one-was-hopeful-oral-history-interviewing-in-the-time-of-covid-19/> (Accessed 6th August 2023).

Another benefit of the remote interviewing method was that I was not limited to a finite number of field trips to gather my interviews. Conducting my interviews remotely meant that I did not have to complete them in intense bursts when I was in a particular location, which would have been more tiring. I was also able to interview people living in a number of different locations which I would not have had the time or finances to travel to. All in all, I interviewed one individual living in Canada, one in California, one in Australia and one in Finland, as well as those from several locations in the UK from Cornwall to the Isle of Skye. Finally, it takes less time and effort to organise a remote interview and, therefore, I was able to be flexible and interview people as they came up in my research or when they responded to my invitation. This was especially the case given that many of my interviewees had busy career lives and as a result were not always available when I first contacted them, there were times it took several months to find an appropriate time to interview them. All this has resulted in a collection of interviews that demonstrate the rich and varied perspectives and experiences of those who engaged with anti-domestic abuse activism and research.

2.4 How the Interview Speaks to the Archive (and vice versa)

The oral history interviews and archival sources drawn upon for this thesis informed one another in important ways. As has been noted, I sometimes identified interviewees through my archival research and when I saw certain individuals had attended a particularly important event, such as a national or international conference, I tried to contact them. At times, asking them about these events prompted meaningful memories for the interviewees and gave me a better insight into the atmosphere or lived experience of attending a conference than the written record could provide. However, there were also times when the interviewee remembered very little of a certain event, which was interesting in itself as it demonstrated that what I had assumed was a significant occasion was not always remembered as such by the activists themselves. I found that showing people materials like conference programmes during interviews could at times help to jog their memory and interviewees often brought out items from their personal archives to act as memory aids. There were times when interviewees sent me copies of some of the physical items which had informed our discussion after our meeting and, in this way, the interviews shaped the type of materials I was able to consult.

On a few occasions, my interpretation of archival material was altered by the perspectives I learned of during interviews. For instance, when reading the official report of the Select Committee on Violence in Marriage, which took place from 1974 to 1975, I imagined that such a formal occasion may have been daunting for Women's Aid activists giving evidence, most of whom did not have experience in this type of situation. However, Hodgkin, told me this was not her experience, stating: 'No, I don't remember it as intimidating at all and they were all very chatty and friendly… they obviously listened to what we had to say.'[43] It was difficult to determine the tone of speech from the minutes of the Committee, thus, Hodgkin's interview gave me a more well-rounded understanding of the events recorded in the report.

At times, interviews would also prompt me to look for certain items in the archive. A few women, for instance, recalled being featured in newspapers for their work with Women's Aid or pointed me towards articles that they had written for feminist magazines. Uma Kothari, who was a founding member of Shakti Women's Aid, recalled being photographed for the *Edinburgh Evening News* when she went with others to collect funding in the form of a cheque for the Shakti refuge from Edinburgh City Council.[44] Kothari framed her memory of this as part of an exciting period of her life, when she was involved with various different types of activism; she explained that she literally ran to an anti-apartheid protest after collecting the cheque.[45] In this way, Kothari's memory significantly enriched my understanding of the event described briefly in the newspaper, as I was able to know something of how she felt on that day and what it meant to her when recalled retrospectively. On the other hand, the newspaper was useful in its own way for providing the exact date the cheque was presented and clarifying who had done the presenting. Kothari had recalled it being the Lord Provost of Edinburgh but the newspaper shows that it was Labour Councillor Marjorie Bain.[46] In this way, consulting the written and oral record in combination built a clearer and fuller picture of events like this one.

[43] Hodgkin, interview

[44] Kothari, interview.

[45] Ibid.

[46] 'Grant is Key to Refuge', *Edinburgh Evening News*, (1 August 1986), p.9.

2.5 Conclusion

As with any piece of research that deals with recent events, living people and emotive issues like domestic abuse there are methodological and ethical considerations to be teased out and examined. Drawing from a combination of published and unpublished material, alongside oral history interviews both new and existing, has resulted in the construction of a well-rounded picture of anti-domestic abuse activist and research networks. An intersectional feminist approach has been used to centre the voices of women and to examine the differences in experiences between women. Examining organisational documents from Women's Aid national and local groups has allowed for an in-depth analysis of the discussions and debates within these organisations and the ways they were organised. Published materials including reports, books and periodicals demonstrated the development of feminist theoretical understandings of domestic abuse and the reach of these ideas. Sources like letters help to build up a picture of the importance of more intimate connections between activists and researchers.

Oral history interviews, on the other hand, enriched my understanding of the archival material and revealed what certain events had meant to the activists who experienced them. The types of narratives that were constructed during oral history interviews were often shaped by a feminist script that was shared by a network of women, many of whom remained friends to the present day. By looking beyond such networks to find interviewees, and by asking questions that allowed space for potential tensions to be reflected upon, a more nuanced discussion of the meaning of feminism in individual's lives was elicited. The method of remote oral history interviewing was surprisingly beneficial to the project as it allowed for an increased flexibility within the research process. The retrospective nature of the interviews meant that interviewees often used the space of the interview to reflect on how things might be done differently in the present. This process of reassessment over time is perhaps inevitable and should not take away from the remarkable past achievements of these activists.

Chapter 3 Internal Women's Aid Networks

3.1 Introduction

In 2023, WAFE coordinates an impressive federation of 170 domestic abuse services, while SWA coordinates a federation of thirty-four services.[1] This chapter will argue that the rapid growth of Women's Aid groups from the 1970s to the 1980s was made possible by the existing WLM networks in place across the UK. It will further contend that formal organisational structures and conferences were vital for maintaining connections between local Women's Aid groups and creating a shared strategy and ideology. This will be achieved by examining the structure of Women's Aid's national organisations with a particular focus on SWA and NWAF (re-named WAFE in 1980) from 1974 to 1996, although, WAFNI and WWA will be mentioned where relevant. These organisations were important because they gave Women's Aid a voice with government and the media, leading to key changes to legislation. They also created the opportunity for local Women's Aid activists from across the four nations of the UK to come together in sub-groups to campaign on specific issues. Additionally, NWAF/WAFE and SWA national conferences were key to maintaining a cohesive movement by providing a space in which aims were agreed upon and ideological issues debated. The four national Women's Aid organisations held separate conferences after 1980, however, often activists from the other three nations would attend these. Furthermore, oral history interviewees highlighted the personal impact of the Women's Aid national conferences and their role in creating a sense of belonging to a shared political movement.

In many ways, these structures have been remarkably enduring, with all four UK national Women's Aid organisations still operating today. However, as the number of local groups grew it became increasingly challenging to coordinate them, leading to the brief closure of WAFE from 1984 to 1987 and a move away from collective decision-making in both SWA and WAFE by the early 2000s. There were also times at which the adherence to a particular set of feminist principles and aims led to local groups disaffiliating from the national federations. In terms of organisation across the four nations, coordination between SWA and WAFE appears to have been most intensive in the 1970s. Nonetheless,

[1] 'Supporting Our Members', Women's Aid Federation England Website, <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-our-members/> [Accessed 02/05/23]. 'About Us', Scottish Women's Aid Website < https://womensaid.scot/about/about-us/> [Accessed 02/05/23].

the four national Women's Aid organisations continued to meet regularly up until 1996 and beyond.

This chapter will further argue that there was a connected yet distinct informal network linking Black and Asian women's refuge groups across the UK by the 1980s. Some of these groups, such as Shakti Women's Aid in Edinburgh, were affiliated to SWA or WAFE, while others, such as Sahara women's refuge in Leeds, were not. There was not an official national coordinating body for these groups, however, there were informal and interpersonal connections which meant that support, advice and ideas flowed between them. Moreover, by the 1990s, Black and Asian women's refuge groups connected through conferences and specific campaigns. There was also a WAFE national Black Women's Group, however, this appears to have been based largely in London. Therefore, networking was more clearly visible by examining activity between Black-led women's refuge groups outside of the official Women's Aid network. The example of women's refuges will add a new perspective to our knowledge of Black British women's groups' networking building activities at the end of the twentieth century, scholarship on which has largely been focused on the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD) up until now.[2]

Dominant narratives of the WLM in the UK tend to argue that it was structureless and lacked unity, characterised by conflict between socialist and radical or revolutionary feminists, which led to division and ultimately the decline of the movement by the late 1970s.[3] This chapter will challenge that interpretation by offering an example of a feminist activist project which created structured, enduring networks within and across each of the four nations, and by exploring the processes by which this was achieved. David Bouchier has described the organisation of the British WLM thus:

> British women's liberation was separated by choice from mainstream politics... the typical pattern of action in Britain; local groups and local campaigns were preferred... A remarkable feature of the women's movement in these early

[2] Thomlinson, *Race,* pp.64-103. *Inside Babylon: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain,* ed. Clive Harris and Winston James (London: Verso, 1993), pp. 159-161. Beverley Bryan, Stella Dadzie and Suzanne Scafe, *Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* (London: Virago, 1985), pp.164-177.

[3] Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge,* p.94-95, 208-209. Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom*. Rowbotham, Segal and Wainwright*, Fragments,* p.13. Rees, *A Look Back at Anger*. Barbara Caine, *English Feminism, 1780-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.267.

> years was the way it grew and expanded without formal structures, and with hardly any effective communications outside London.[4]

Sheila Rowbotham has similarly argued that the achievements of the WLM 'had been done through a decentralised movement, consisting of small groups without formal leadership structures,' while, as recently as 2019, George Stevenson has described the WLM as 'an amorphous, structureless movement.'[5] However, focusing on Women's Aid as a case study within the WLM reveals a different story. As we shall see, Women's Aid groups were highly organised with a formal national structure in the form of NWAF put into place within a few years of the opening of the first women's refuge. Additionally, Women's Aid did engage in mainstream politics by campaigning for changes to legislation and can be seen to be working in between local grassroots networks, regional groupings and national structures.

By challenging the idea of the WLM as structureless, this chapter contributes to recent historiography, such as that of Emily Flaherty, who has argued that, while traditional hierarchical ways of organising were often rejected in local WLM groups, alternative structures were developed and that 'structural methods were key to allowing a local group to connect, diversify and facilitate action from across the spectrum of feminist ideologies, issues and campaigns.'[6] In Women's Aid too, non-traditional structures were used to facilitate campaigning and the flow of ideas. Moreover, clear aims and guidelines were agreed at conferences and local groups who affiliated to both NWAF/WAFE and SWA agreed to these. The autonomy of local groups was a closely held value, however, with the national organisations being viewed as largely a supportive, rather than directive presence. Admittedly, there was considerable debate within Women's Aid and the organisation's policies changed over time. Nonetheless, the basic strategy of providing refuge and support to victim/survivors of domestic abuse, encouraging women to make decisions about their lives independently and educating the public about these issues within a feminist framework, has remained consistent from the early 1970s up to the present day.

By focusing on a single strand of the WLM, Women's Aid, this study is also able to take a broader geographical view than has been possible in previous scholarship. Some recent studies of the WLM have taken a local approach in order to emphasise the diversity of the

[4] Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge*, pp.94-95.

[5] Rowbotham, *Fragments*, p.9. Stevenson, *Women's Liberation*, p.1.

[6] Flaherty, *Women's Liberation Movement*, p.28.

movement and the importance of local factors.[7] While acknowledging the importance of local contexts, this chapter will contribute to our understanding of the process by which local groups were linked through national networks and through campaigns for change at the level of national and local government. Moreover, the case of Women's Aid offers a significant example of the ways in which networking stretched across the borders of the four nations of the UK. Previous studies have largely concentrated on one country within the UK or used case studies from around the UK but do not often explore the connections between them.[8]

In what follows, there will first be a discussion of the process by which the NWAF was initially established and why a national organisation was desirable. Secondly, the process by which local groups affiliated to the national organisations will be examined to understand the role this played in maintaining shared aims across local Women's Aid groups. Next, the formal national and regional structures of SWA and then NWAF/WAFE will be explained and the way in which these structures supported networking between local groups and across the four nations will be explored, as well as how these changed from the 1970s to the 1990s. The role of specialist subgroups will be analysed, in particular their contribution to successful campaigns for legal change in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Subsequently, national conferences will be considered as key spaces for debating the ideology of Women's Aid, creating a feeling of belonging to a shared movement and the limitations of this. Finally, the extent to which a network of Black and Asian women's refuge groups was fostered will be explored.

3.2 Getting Started: Setting Up a National Network

To understand how local Women's Aid groups came together to forge national networks, we must consider their origins within the WLM and the Chiswick refuge. Jo Sutton was a social work student when she began a placement at the Chiswick refuge in 1973. From 1974, Erin Pizzey employed Sutton to make contact with women's refuge groups around the UK.[9] Sutton used feminist publications and word of mouth to connect with local WLM groups in different cities.[10] During interview, she recalled this time fondly: 'I just travelled from place to place and people put me up in their homes, and we talked about what to do,

[7] Ibid. Stevenson, *Women's Liberation.* Bruley, *Women's Liberation at the Grass Roots*.

[8] Browne, *Women's Liberation*. Thomlinson, *Race.* Jolly, *Sisterhood*.

[9] Sutton and Hanmer, *Writing Our Own*, pp.55-56.

[10] Jo Sutton, interview with the author, (31st March 2020).

and I moved on. So, I really travelled the country, and, I mean, that was utterly fascinating!'[11] Sutton got a sense of the growing movement for women's refuges across England and Scotland during this time and made important contacts. An early list of those contacts from 1974 shows fourteen women's refuges including: Acton, Chiswick, Hackney, Haringey, Lewisham, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth, Birmingham, Hull, Liverpool, Manchester, Norwich, Edinburgh and Glasgow.[12] Judith Hodgkin, who later became a National Coordinator of NWAF, remembered hearing Sutton speak at the National Women's Liberation Conference in Edinburgh in 1974, and that this was the inspiration for setting up Dundee Women's Aid.[13] Sutton's role, then, was key to establishing connectivity between women's refuge groups in this early period and she was able to do this partly by tapping into existing WLM networks.

The first national meeting of women's refuge groups occurred in 1974 and was organised by Sutton and Jalna Hanmer, at Pizzey's request. Hanmer, who was a lecturer in sociology at the London School of Economics at the time, had asked Pizzey if a student of hers could do a placement at the Chiswick refuge.[14] Due to this connection, Pizzey asked Hanmer to support Sutton in her work organising the first national Women's Aid conferences and establishing the NWAF.[15] The contacts Sutton had made with local groups were significant when her relationship with Pizzey became acrimonious. According to Sutton, one reason for the conflict between the women was that Pizzey refused to share out the money that was coming into the Chiswick refuge. Sutton felt some people were making donations to Chiswick without realising there was a group in their local area in need.[16] Pizzey had not fostered the relationships with local women's refuge groups that Sutton had, which became a disadvantage as Pizzey did not have the contacts needed to form a national organisation. Therefore, when Pizzey publicly fired Sutton during the second national Women's Aid conference in February 1975, and proposed that she lead a national organisation, there was a split in the movement.[17] The majority of groups sided with Sutton and wanted to form an

[11] Sutton interview.

[12] NWAF, 'Existing Centres', WAFE Box 03, 1974, 75 and 76, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[13] Hodgkin, interview.

[14] Jalna Hanmer, interview with the author, (21st January 2020).

[15] Sutton and Hanmer, *Writing Our Own*, p.56.

[16] Sutton and Hanmer, *Writing Our Own*, pp.56-57. Increasingly, Women's Aid activists were also concerned about Pizzey's work with Dr. Jasper Gayford whose research took a psychological and individualistic approach to understanding domestic abuse, rather than a societal, feminist one. These ideological differences will be explored in Chapter 5.

[17] Ibid.

organisation based on the feminist principles of collectivism, self-determination and local autonomy. Pizzey, on the other hand, wanted a more hierarchical organisation.[18] Later that year, at the National Women's Liberation Conference in Manchester in March 1975, the NWAF was established with thirty-five women's refuge groups from Scotland, England and Wales, and Sutton as the first National Coordinator.[19] Thus, WLM networks and values played an important role in the formation of a national network of Women's Aid activists and its subsequent political direction.

There were several important reasons why a national federation was considered desirable. Firstly, a National Coordinator was required to focus on issues like educating and informing the public, statutory agencies and the media about domestic abuse, allowing refuge workers to focus on grassroots issues and frontline provision.[20] Additionally, an information centre was needed to collect and distribute details of all the refuges in the UK and the activities they were undertaking.[21] This was integral, as spaces often needed to be found for women and children elsewhere if a refuge was full or if it was safer for them to move away from their local area. In January 1975, Leeds Women's Aid put forward their hopes for NWAF, identifying a need for a strong, collective voice to represent the views of local groups to government and the media.[22] They also mentioned a need for moral support amongst groups and the hope that a national organisation would foster this. As the campaign to open women's refuges spread, Leeds activists worried that: 'If we do not capitalise on our growing strength, we risk becoming yet another ineffective group of do-gooding charitable concerns, fragmented, weak, easily discouraged and even closed down.'[23] There was a sense, then, that there was strength in a united front, which led to a desire for a national organisation.

Furthermore, the convening of the Select Committee on Violence in Marriage in 1975 acted as a catalyst for organising on a national level, as Women's Aid activists seized the opportunity to influence government. This was a factor in the split between Pizzey and those who formed the NWAF, as Pizzey supposedly wished to present evidence to the

[18] Ibid. p.57. Also see Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom*, pp.36-37.

[19] Sutton and Hanmer, *Writing Our Own*, p.59.

[20] Ibid. p.2.

[21] 'Why do we need a national organisation? What form should it take?: Thoughts from the Leeds Women's Aid group,' (24th January 1975), WAFE Box 03, 1974, 75 and 76, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

Select Committee on behalf of local groups, whilst many wished to speak independently.[24] The Select Committee was indeed significant, as it led to the decision of the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) to award funding to the NWAF. The DHSS had previously awarded a grant to the Chiswick refuge, however, in 1976 they decided that the NWAF should receive £25,000 per year instead, as the group coordinating the majority of refuges.[25] This was also a consideration in the decision to forge a national organisation, as Women's Aid activists were aware that the DHSS would only fund a national group. Furthermore, this was about the NWAF's feminist ideology and the desire to influence the British public to begin viewing domestic abuse as a result of the oppression of women in a patriarchal society. This was discussed as a key aim for the NWAF Press and Publicity sub-group which was formed shortly after the Select Committee.[26] It was felt that to effect radical change on a societal level, as well as helping individual women and children, Women's Aid had to influence attitudes and policies on a national scale and that a national structure was needed to achieve this.

[24] Sutton and Hanmer, *Writing Our Own*, pp.56-57.

[25] Department of Health and Social Security, 'DHSS to phase out grant to Chiswick Women's Aid', (3rd August 1976), p.1, WAFE Box 03, 1974, 75 and 76, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[26] 'Press and Publicity Sub-group Meeting,' (15th January 1976), WAFE Box 03, 1974, 75 and 76, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

3.3 National Organisational Structures

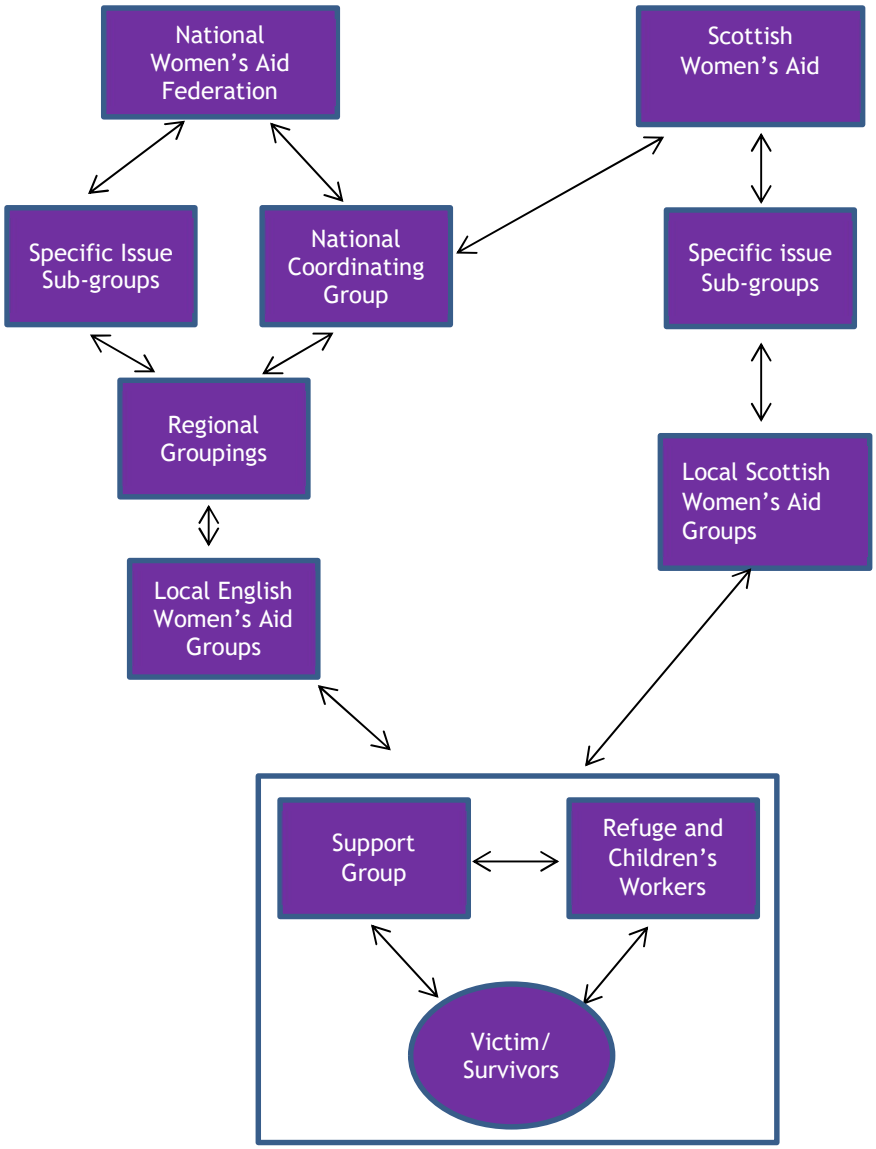

Figure 3.1: Organisational Structure of National Women's Aid Federation (later Women's Aid Federation England) and Scottish Women's Aid c.1975 to 1984.

Scottish Women's Aid

In 1976, SWA was established as a national organisation independent of NWAF. The first SWA conference took place before this, in 1975. At the third SWA conference in September 1976 Fran Wasoff, a founding member of Edinburgh Women's Aid, was formally confirmed as National Coordinator of SWA.[27] At this time, ten local Women's Aid groups were part of the SWA network, including: Aberdeen, Alness, Central,

[27] Scottish Women's Aid, 'Report on the Third National Conference', (September 1976), p.2, WAFE Box 03, 1974, 75 and 76, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

Clackmannan, Dundee, Dunfermline, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Kirkaldy and Perth.[28] A separate Scottish federation was needed due to differences in Scots law and the desire of Scottish activists to be self-determined. Moreover, the Scottish Office offered to fund a national organisation for Scotland should it be formed. Nonetheless, a close relationship was maintained between NWAF and SWA, with Scottish Women's Aid groups initially becoming associate members of NWAF, meaning they could attend NWAF meetings and conferences but did not have voting rights. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, National Coordinators from both sides of the border regularly attended the meetings and conferences of both national organisations and kept one another updated. This allowed them to collaborate on UK-wide campaigns and strategies. For instance, SWA and NWAF activists worked on the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act and supported a campaign led by Edinburgh Women's Aid in 1979 to release June Greig, a woman who killed her husband after years of abuse, see Figure 3.2.[29] In this way, a network connecting Scottish and English Women's Aid groups was maintained.

Figure 3.2: 'Free June Greig' protest, Edinburgh, (1979)

The SWA office was located in Edinburgh from 1976 onwards and in the 1980s a designated National Training Office and National Children's Office were opened,

[28] Ibid. p.7.

[29] Raymond Fraser, 'Mercy and a helping hand,' *The Herald*, (5th June 1996), <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/12120622.mercy-and-a-helping-hand/> [Accessed 30/05/23].

reflecting an increased focus on these areas.[30] Unlike NWAF, SWA chose to legally register as a charity with the Charity Commission which made it easier to negotiate funding from the Scottish Office, although this did come with some restrictions. For instance, they had to consult the Charity Commission on changes to organisational documents such as their constitution.

In the 1970s and 1980s, representatives from local groups attended SWA Executive Meetings, which took place every three months. At these meetings, decisions were made by consensus, local groups presented reports of their activities, the affiliation of new groups was approved or denied and other business such as finances and campaigning were discussed. These events were also an important opportunity for groups to share information and support one another with challenges. To some extent, having fewer local groups than NWAF made it easier for SWA to coordinate their activities. However, as the organisation grew it became harder to make decisions collectively and in November 1990, SWA became a private limited company and from then collective working was phased out, although equality amongst staff remained an important value.[31] The regular Executive Meetings had also become less frequent throughout the 1980s and were replaced with an annual conference in the late 1990s. Some Scottish local Women's Aid activists have expressed that they felt 'less of a sense that they were all part of a political movement' after these changes.[32]

There was also regional variation in the extent to which local Women's Aid groups in Scotland felt a sense of connectivity. For example, those in the Highland and Islands of Scotland could be isolated at times and in 1989 two women from SWA travelled to Lerwick to support Shetland Women's Aid with internal problems and found they felt alienated from other Women's Aid groups and from feminist principles more generally.[33] In the early 1990s, it was decided to divide Scottish Women's Aid groups into 'localised groupings' see Figure 3.3. These groups would meet to discuss issues to bring to the

[30] Kate Arnot, 'Leaving the Pain Behind,' in *Grit and Diamonds: Women in Scotland Making History, 1980-1990*, ed. Shirley Henderson and Alison Mackay, (Edinburgh: Stramullion, 1990), p.80. The National Children's Office was located in Dundee.

[31] 'Certification of Incorporation of a Private Limited Company: Scottish Women's Aid,' Companies House UK Government website, <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/SC128433> [Accessed 9/5/23].

[32] Anonymous, interview with Emilie Kristensen, Oral History Interviews, (SWA/4/04), Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

[33] 'Shetland Women's Aid Work Weekend,' (8th-11th December 1989), Records of Local Women's Aid Groups, Box 9: (SWA/2/SE), Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

Executive Meetings.[34] For some, this was an important source of support and networking on a regional level, while others reported they struggled to find the time to meet.[35] Nonetheless, SWA workers continued to make an effort to travel to local groups and maintained a sense of cohesiveness in Scotland through annual conferences.

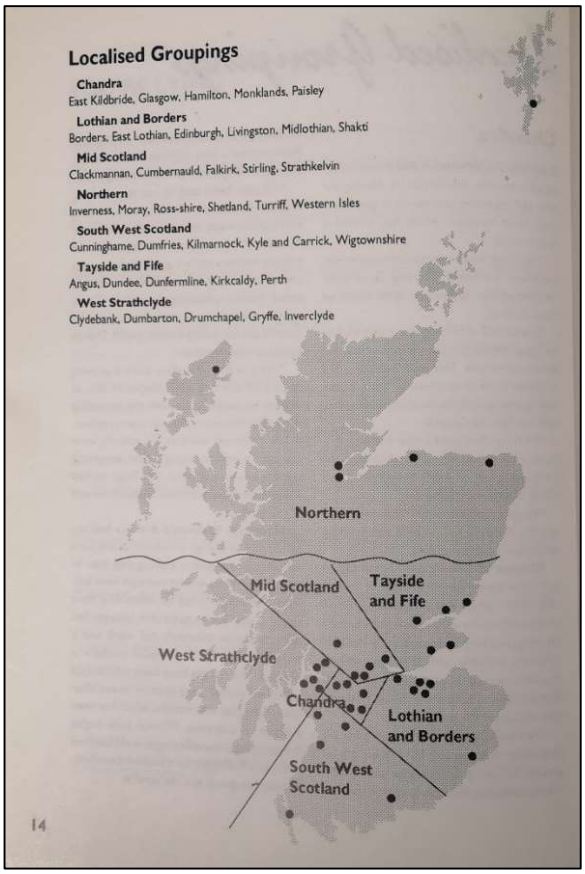

Figure 3.3: SWA localised groupings, Scottish Women's Aid Annual Report 1991, Scottish Women's Aid Collection, Glasgow Women's Library.

SWA national sub-groups and special interest groups were an important way in which local Women's Aid groups could be part of national campaigns. In 1985, for instance, there were subgroups on Training, The Matrimonial Homes Act, Pay and Conditions, Asian Women, Finance, Children's Group, Support Group and Police Training.[36] In an interview for the Speaking Out project, Lydia Okroj, who has had various roles in SWA and Edinburgh Women's Aid since the 1970s, recalled that Edinburgh Women's Aid activists were 'heavily involved in national work' through the sub-groups in the 1970s and 1980s, and that this was a good system because it connected grassroots knowledge to

[34] 'From Dundee Women's Aid to SWA,' (13th November 1993), Records of Scottish Women's Aid, (SWA/1/4), Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

[35] Ibid.

[36] 'Scottish Women's Aid Executive Meeting', (2nd February 1985), p.1, Records of Scottish Women's Aid, (SWA/1/4), Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

national strategizing.[37] Okroj felt Edinburgh had particularly strong links with SWA due to their proximity but meetings did take place in various locations around Scotland and anyone could join the national sub-groups.[38] In this way, SWA helped to connect local Women's Aid groups with one another and coordinated campaigning around particular issues.

National Women's Aid Federation England/ Women's Aid Federation England

The NWAF/WAFE national office was located in London up until 1984. After Sutton there were either two or three National Coordinators in post at one time; in the late 1970s these included Jude Stoddart, Elizabeth Woodcraft, Judith Hodgkin and Kate Kay. When NWAF was established in 1975, England was divided into nine regions: London, South-West, South-East, Homecounties, Midlands, North West, North East, Yorkshire and East Anglia.[39] A volunteer representative from each region and the National Coordinators attended a National Coordinating Group (NCG) meeting every three months at different locations around England.[40] To take the South West region as an example, it spanned the counties of Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Avon, Somerset, Devon, Dorset and Cornwall, and representatives from Women's Aid groups in these areas met six times a year.[41] The idea behind this structure was that the regional representatives kept local groups informed of issues on the national level and sought their opinions to bring to the NCG. In theory, this structure allowed for the views of victim/survivors to be fed through local and regional level to the national organisations and vice versa. The aim was for the structure to be as non-hierarchical as possible and for local groups to be able to have their say on national issues.

As with SWA, NWAF/WAFE subgroups played an important role in bringing local Women's Aid activists together. Involvement in these groups was voluntary but travel expenses were usually paid from the NWAF/WAFE budget. These sub-groups changed

[37] Lydia Okroj, interview with Claire Thomson, 5th July 2016, Oral History Interviews, SWA/4/36, Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

[38] Ibid.

[39] 'National Women's Aid Federation', (c.1977), WAFE Box 04, 1978 and 77, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections, p.2.

[40] Ibid.

[41] 'BWA Relationship with Women's Aid Federation (England)', *Bristol Women's Aid Induction Pack*, Bristol Women's Aid Collection, (DM2123/FA/Arch/51) Feminist Archive South at Bristol University Special Collections.

over time but included the Legal group, the Finance group, the Housing group and the Press and Publicity group. There were also special interest groups such as the Black Workers Group, National Lesbian Group and National Children's Workers Group. Meetings of these subgroups and the reports that were disseminated to local groups afterwards were one way in which the national network was maintained. In theory, any Women's Aid activist could take part in these sub-groups. However, it was common for the same people to be involved with several of them and at one stage it was proposed that there should be a limit to how many groups an individual should be involved in. At the time it was thought that there may not be 'enough energetic people to go around.'[42] It did take considerable energy to engage with national meetings, the National Coordinators in particular did a lot of travelling to visit local groups so that they could understand the grassroots issues and bring those to the attention of the media and government ministers as well as the NCG.

In many ways, these regional structures and subgroups were enduring, lasting until the dissolution of WAFE in 1984 and were largely reinstated when WAFE reformed in 1987. However, there were underlying issues with the structure of NWAF/WAFE in that initial decade. Firstly, NWAF/WAFE did not have legal charitable status, partly because their organisational aims stated that domestic abuse was 'a result of women's position in society' which was deemed a political statement by the Charity Commission, rather than a charitable one. The DHSS funded NWAF/WAFE for nearly ten years without a legal structure, in terms of reporting to the Charity Commission, for example, which was an unusual situation and eventually resulted in the funding being withdrawn.[43] Secondly, National Coordinators did not tend to stay more than a couple of years. Sutton explained this was related to the feminist principles of ensuring power was shared out equally, however it did lead to a lack of continuity.[44] Furthermore, there were concerns that the financing of the regional groups was not well organised or recorded and the National Coordinators lacked proper management in terms of both support and accountability.[45] Elizabeth Woodcraft, who was one of the National Coordinators of NWAF in the 1970s,

[42] 'Minutes of National Coordinating Group Meeting', (20th/21st March 1976), p.1, WAFE Box 03, 1974, 75 and 76, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[43] Nicola Harwin, interview with the author, (10th August 2021).

[44] Sutton, interview.

[45] Bristol Women's Aid, 'Explanation of what is going on in WAFE,' p.2, Ellen Malos Archive, (DM2/23/8/) Archive Box 114, Feminist Archive South at Bristol University Special Collections. Nicola Harwin, Interview.

recalled the sense of responsibility on herself and her fellow Coordinator, Jude Stoddart, and on one occasion after returning from a holiday found herself:

> Sobbing because it was, you know, the weight of everything that was going to have to be done was just so heavy and I know Jude felt the same. We were young, you know, it was a national organisation and there were so many expectations of us, we were doing what we could and sometimes we didn't know what we were doing, you were just sort of trying.[46]

Finally, NWAF/WAFE was a victim of its own success, as described by Kate Kay, one of the National Coordinators, in September 1978:

> Nobody could have foreseen the enormous expansion and development of the Federation – our involvement in two pieces of legislation, the increase in the number of affiliated groups and the consequent increase in servicing these groups… Many of the regions are now nearly as large as that original group which set up the Federation… There has been almost a tidal wave of enquiries, requests for information, demands for support… Those who have done regular mailing of 150 and more do not easily forget the experience![47]

By 1977, there were ninety-eight Women's Aid groups across England and Wales affiliated to NWAF, this was up from thirty-two groups in 1975.[48] This remarkably rapid growth was challenging to keep up with, especially as much of the work was undertaken voluntarily and the organisation was run on the feminist principles of collective decision making and the wide sharing of information. Unfortunately, these organisational issues along with a lack of finances persisted into the 1980s and eventually led to WAFE's official dissolution in 1984.

After this, a few dedicated Women's Aid activists, including Beryl Foster from Hammersmith and Fulham Women's Aid, persevered in a temporary, voluntary coordinating group and eventually re-established WAFE as an Industrial and Provident Society in 1987.[49] During the three years in which WAFE was closed local English Women's Aid groups did not have a national coordinating body. The way in which this period impacted local groups is something of a gap in the history of Women's Aid as there is little mention of it in written record, any documentation from this time does not appear

[46] Woodcraft, interview.

[47] Kate Kay, 'Whatever Happened to the Regions?,' (10th September 1978), p.2, Ellen Malos Archive, (DM2/23/8/) Archive Box 114, Feminist Archive South at Bristol University Special Collections.

[48] NWAF, 'Refuge Provision in England and Wales,' (Autumn 1977), p.1., Ellen Malos Archive, (DM2/23/8/) Archive Box 114, Feminist Archive South at Bristol University Special Collections.

[49] Harwin, Interview. Hague, *History and Memories,* p.75.

in the organisation's archival material and it was only mentioned in one oral history interview conducted for this thesis.[50] During this time, Women's Aid groups were beginning to work more closely with local authorities and statutory agencies, offering training to police and social services, for example, suggesting that their focus may have been on local issues.

In 1987, WAFE was re-established in Bristol with Nicola Harwin serving as the Chief Executive until 2012. Harwin had previously been involved in Bristol Women's Aid and served as the Southwest regional representative from 1978 to 1984.[51] During interview Harwin recalled with pride re-establishing WAFE with two other national workers in an office in Jamaica Street in Bristol:

> We're on the top floor and inherited two rooms, which we had to paint, decorate, put carpets in, put a telephone line in. And, they were completely full of packing cases, with the entire contents of Women's Aid Federation England in those packing cases… We had to set it all right up from scratch. We started on March 3rd 1987 and by July, early July, we had organised a conference for all existing members; all the former members of Women's Aid were all at a national conference in Norfolk. So, we brought the Federation back together again… So, in Norfolk, that year, we're in Norwich, we had the conference. The first inaugural 'back again' Women's Aid Federation England Conference.. there was 6 or 700 women at that conference.[52]

The fact that WAFE was able to organise a large and well attended conference in such a short space of time demonstrates that the relationships forged from 1974 to 1984 had endured through the closure of the WAFE national office and that there was still continued enthusiasm to meet and coordinate.

In the late 1980s, there was also an attempt to set up a Northern office in Leeds. Andrea Tara-Chand, who was involved with women's refuges in Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds, and later became the manager of the Leeds Inter-agency Project, was tasked with setting it up with Rosie Meehan.[53] Tara-Chand recalled that: 'There was a feeling that there was a divide between the North and the South and that everything was happening in the South and Women's Aid Federation England was Southern in focus. So as an antidote to that

[50] Harwin, Interview.

[51] Harwin, interview.

[52] Harwin, Interview.

[53] Andrea Tara-Chand, interview with the author, (10th June 2022).

there was this attempt to set up a Northern office.'[54] This appears to have been a short-lived experiment, however, it does demonstrate a concern about centralisation amongst some Women's Aid activists within England who wanted to ensure the interests of the Northern part of England were represented.

There were changes to WAFE's structure during Harwin's time as Chief Executive; WAFE became a private limited company in 1996 and was run as a collective up until 2000.[55] Harwin recalled that a survey was carried out amongst WAFE staff and it was found the majority of people felt more comfortable working in a hierarchy.[56] The annual conferences became more professionalised, being held at residential conference venues, rather than women sleeping in a church hall or staying at other Women's Aid activists' houses.[57] Nonetheless, they remained an important way in which a national network was maintained.

Networking Across the Four Nations

With the formation of WAFNI in 1977 and WWA in 1978, all four UK nations had separate national Women's Aid federations, though they continued to have a close relationship. In 1978, WAFNI activists wrote that: 'We strongly believe in the aims of the NWAF… [but] we feel it is a good time to look for structures which accommodate the differing needs throughout the four regions.'[58] Jane Hutt, who was the first National Coordinator of WWA, has reflected that:

> We were very clear that we needed to have our own federation in Wales, we needed to develop our own network…have an equal relationship with English Women's Aid and Scottish Women's Aid… And there was never any resistance from the women in England… one of the great, kind of bonuses of feminism is that… it's not centralist and its not controlling… [but] many of the policies and legislation that affected women and domestic violence were Westminster based… [So] we had to link and liaise very closely.[59]

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[54] Ibid.

[55] 'Certification of Incorporation of a Private Limited Company: Women's Aid Federation of England,' Companies House UK Government website, <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/03171880> [Accessed 9/5/23]. Harwin, Interview.

[56] Harwin, Interview.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation, 'An explanation of our proposal to dissolve our links with the NWAF', WAFE Box 04, 1978 and 77, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[59] Jane Hutt, interview with Margaretta Jolly, (2012) Sisterhood and After Oral History Project at British Library (C1420/41).

Overall NWAF were understanding of the other three nations' need for autonomy. Yet, Sutton recalled concerns around how to 'make sure everybody keeps to these [feminist] principles' when SWA was formed.[60] Furthermore, there were some tensions between the four national organisations. For instance, in 1980 it was decided that NWAF should change its name to WAFE because: 'We are now a Federation of English groups, not a National Federation of the whole of the British Isles. And we have been asked to change our name in line with the changed situation.'[61] Sue Robertson, who was a founding member of Falkirk Women's Aid and became the National Coordinator of SWA in the early 1980s, recalled this time and her relationship with WWA:

> There was a bit of struggle with that because it was originally the National Women's Aid Federation and that was the kind of, you know, the old thing of London thinking it's the centre of the universe and naming itself accordingly and Scotland and Wales trying to say: 'No', you know, 'we're Welsh Women's Aid and Scottish Women's Aid. You're actually Women's Aid Federation England.' And so, there was that little battle… There was quite a strong relationship when I was the National Coordinator with Welsh Women's Aid … we saw ourselves as quite similar situations, similar population size and we had a lot of, kind of, working dialogue because Jane Hutt was the… main National worker in Welsh Women's Aid originally and she and I had a good working relationship.[62]

Despite these tensions, on the whole, the four federations worked well together and this was possible partly due to the organisational structures, whereby representatives from NWAF/WAFE, SWA, WWA and WAFNI could attend the NCG, specialist sub-group meetings and one another's meetings and conferences. Furthermore, the networks between England and the other three national organisations were revived in 1987 when WAFE was re-established. Harwin recalled 'all nations' meetings took place once or twice a year after 1987, with the location rotating around the UK.[63] Often, when the meeting was held in Northern Ireland representatives from Women's Aid Ireland would come as well.[64] From 1987 onwards, networks across the UK were maintained through attending one another's national conferences, working on joint campaigns to influence the UK government and

[60] Sutton, interview.

[61] 'Changing Our Name', WAFE Box 02, Folder 2, 1980, FAN/JH/WA/02, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[62] Sue Robertson, Interview with the author, (12th October 2020).

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

sharing knowledge. By necessity, local groups across the UK stayed in touch when refuge spaces needed to be found for victim/survivors.

However, at least in the case of the relationship between SWA and WAFE, they appear to have collaborated most intensely in the mid to late 1970s, with a representative from each country attending regular meetings such as the NCG every few months rather than the biannual meetings described by Harwin. This may have been necessary in the early years when things were progressing rapidly, but it perhaps was not sustainable in the long run given the time and energy this type of coordination took. Moreover, there was much to be done at local and regional level, as in the 1980s and 1990s Women's Aid federations began to conduct more training with local authorities, police and social services, increase their provision for children and support to an increasing number of local Women's Aid groups. All four national Women's Aid organisations continued to be run on feminist values and work towards similar aims, which is likely a result of the original NWAF which brought the groups together for a shared purpose, as well as their roots in WLM politics.

3.4 Aims and Affiliation Requirements

In order to affiliate to NWAF/WAFE or SWA, local Women's Aid groups had to adhere to certain aims and guidelines. This is significant because the affiliation process and requirements were one way in which NWAF/WAFE and SWA maintained a shared ideology and strategy with the various Women's Aid groups across Scotland and England. This is not to say that the aims and guidelines were imposed on local Women's Aid groups; they were decided through a collective decision-making process and were renegotiated throughout the 1970s to the 1990s, although the core principles remained largely unchanged. At the conference in Manchester in 1975, when NWAF was first established, the following aims were agreed by the Women's Aid groups who signed up:

1. To provide temporary refuge, on request, for women and their children who have suffered mental or physical harassment.

2. To encourage the women to determine their own futures and to help them achieve them, whether this involves returning home or starting a new life elsewhere.

3. To recognise and care for the emotional and educational needs of the children involved.

4. To offer support and advice and help to any woman who asks for it, whether or not she is a resident, and also offer support and aftercare to any woman and child who has left the refuge.

5. To educate and inform the public, the media, the police, the courts, social services, and other authorities with respect to the battering of women, mindful that this is a result of the general position of women in our society.[65]

They also agreed to support the aims of the wider WLM movement in their work. As it was felt the aims were too general to serve as affiliation requirements, there were additional 'guidelines for affiliation' agreed upon.[66] These included refuges should have an open-door policy (never turn a woman away), not set time limits on the length of stay, attempt to provide some form of second stage housing, encourage the relating of individual women's experiences to the general position of women in society and combat sexist stereotyping with children staying in refuge.[67] In order to be affiliated to NWAF/WAFE, a local Women's Aid group had to fill out a form explaining how they were putting these aims and guidelines into practice and what problems they had faced doing this.[68] From 1977 until 1996, and possibly beyond this, local Women's Aid groups had to first report to their regional representative, attend two regional meetings and one national conference in order to be eligible for affiliation. Regional representatives had the power to provisionally affiliate a group, they would then present the group at the next national conference and their affiliation would be ratified. Therefore, the process by which local groups became part of NWAF/WAFE was highly structured and was designed to ensure that the aims and practice of local Women's Aid groups matched the values of the national organisation.

The similarity of the aims of the two organisations demonstrates a significant degree of cohesion in the Women's Aid groups across Scotland and England, pointing clearly to a shared ideological approach which remained consistent across the period under examination here. When SWA was established in 1976, an organisational constitution was written and aims were established. These included all five of the above NWAF aims

[65] 'National Women's Aid Federation Aims, (1976), Ellen Malos Archive, (DM2/23/8/) Archive Box 114, Feminist Archive South, Bristol University Special Collections.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

[68] 'National Women's Aid Federation Affiliation Form,' WAFE 1980 Box 02, (FAN/JH/WA/02), Feminist Archive North, Leeds University Special Collections.

almost verbatim.[69] However, the SWA aims did not include the phrase 'mindful that this is a result of the general position of women in our society.' This is significant because SWA decided to register with the Charity Commission, whereas NWAF/WAFE did not do so due to their refusal to remove this phrase, which was considered too political to be charitable, as has been noted above. SWA also included an aim to 'research into the causes, the prevention and the relief of such harassment.'[70] This may demonstrate a general increase in the awareness of research as an important tool that had occurred in the two years between the writing of the two aims. It may also reflect the influence of Rebecca and Russell Dobash, two researchers at the University of Stirling who conducted early research into domestic abuse in Scotland and became a significant part of the Women's Aid network. Furthermore, in the SWA aims there was specific mention of local authorities being made to 'recognise their obligation to provide adequate and proper housing for battered women and their children,' perhaps reflecting the increased recognition of this issue since the founding of NWAF.[71] Interestingly, around 1989 the position of women in society phrase was added to the SWA aims stating: 'mindful of the fact that abuse – mental, physical, sexual – is the result of the position of women in society, to promote education and to inform the community and their representatives with respect to the abuse of women and it's prevention,' possibly reflecting an increased acceptance of this analysis in wider society.[72]

In order to affiliate with SWA, local groups had to agree to support the aims, and by the late 1980s the affiliation process had become more formalised; new groups had to complete a pre-affiliation training course. In 1990, this training course lasted seven weeks and its main aims were 'creating a shared understanding of the nature of abuse and establishing a committed core group of women.'[73] The topics covered included: Aims, Philosophy, History and Work of Women's Aid; Getting to Know Each Other; Understanding Abused Women and their Children; Working as a Group (collective working) and Women's Rights.[74] This training was designed to ensure that new Women's

[69] 'Scottish Women's Aid Federation Constitution,' (SWA/1/3/1), Organisational Records, Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

[72] 'Scottish Women's Aid Annual Report 1989', (SWA/1/1/1989), Annual Reports, Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

[73] 'Scottish Women's Aid Annual Report 1990', p.6, (SWA/1/1/1989), Annual Reports, Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

[74] Ibid.

Aid groups would have a clear understanding of what it meant to be part of SWA and at times groups decided not to continue after the training.[75] It was important because it established core values in local Women's Aid groups which in theory, they could all share, creating more of a sense of a connected network. As is clear from the topics covered, a feminist perspective was key to this ideology.

It is important to note that some groups did choose to disaffiliate from SWA. For instance, in 1988 Grampian Women's Aid disaffiliated from SWA followed by Borders Women's Aid, Cumbernauld Women's Aid and Kilsyth Women's Aid in 1992.[76] Unfortunately, very little information about their reasons for disaffiliating were discussed in the archival material. However, the SWA 1993 annual report does record their departure and suggests this was due to a lack of shared values:

> We were naturally disappointed that these groups chose to leave the network… Although we often encompass quite varying views within Women's Aid in Scotland, there are certain bedrock principles informing our work which should be shared by all affiliated groups. In this way, we can be sure that women will receive similar information, support etc. from different groups around the country. Once a group has disaffiliated we can no longer ensure that this is the case.

On another occasion in 1991, there was a discussion at the SWA Executive Meeting that Hemat Gryffe Women's Aid, the Asian women's refuge near Glasgow, could be disaffiliated due to complaints made by former refuge workers to the SWA office. These complaints included that Gryffe was operating hierarchically, that a curfew was imposed on women in refuge, that workers who had been there longer had more power, and that younger 'Westernised' workers and women in refuge were being criticised for their lifestyle choices and clothing.[77] SWA asked that the regional West Strathclyde Women's Aid group work with Gryffe to write a new constitution 'that is acceptable to the organisation' and Gryffe workers went to other women's refuges to observe collective working in practice.[78] Although Gryffe was not disaffiliated, this example shows that if

[75] Ibid.

[76] 'Scottish Women's Aid Annual Report 1988', p.1, (SWA/1/1/1989), Annual Reports, Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library. 'Scottish Women's Aid Annual Report 1993', p.4, (SWA/1/1/1989), Annual Reports, Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

[77] 'Paper Summarising Complaints Made By Ex-Workers Against Gryffe Women's Aid', (SWA/1/3/1), Organisational Records, Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

[78] 'To the February Executive: Item from the West Strathclyde Regional Group', (SWA/1/3/1), Organisational Records, Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

local Women's Aid groups were working in a way that did not align with the values of SWA they could be asked to change this.

Of course, SWA's aim was to expand the Women's Aid network, not to lose members, and so a group disaffiliating was a rare occasion. However, when it did occur, it appears to have been due to a lack of shared aims. Cases of disaffiliation bring up the issue that there were occasions when maintaining a particular shared feminist ideology had consequences. As we have seen, the affiliation process for both SWA and NWAF/WAFE was an important way in which feminist principles were sustained across local Women's Aid groups and a sense of a shared mission was garnered through adherence to certain guidelines, but these requirements also had the potential to deter certain groups from affiliating. Unfortunately, there are not similar annual reports showing cases of disaffiliation archived for WAFE, perhaps partially due to the loss of documents with the organisation's closure in 1984.

3.5 Legal Change and the Role of NWAF Sub-groups

Figure 3.4: Scottish Women's Aid activists protest to change housing legislation at the Edinburgh City Chambers, c.1976.

National sub-groups organised through SWA and NWAF/WAFE were important to allow Women's Aid activists from within and across the four nations to work together on particular issues and campaigns. For instance, the NWAF Legal national sub-group was key to some of the early successes in passing legislation on the issue of domestic abuse and housing. The attention garnered by the Select Committee in 1975 led NWAF and SWA to engage further with media and gain traction in their campaigns for legislative change. As

Wasoff, the first SWA National Coordinator, described during interview: 'One outcome of the Select Committee was to put domestic violence on the policy map.'[79]

Three significant pieces of legislation were passed from 1976 to 1978; The Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act (1976), The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act (1977) and the Domestic Proceedings and Magistrates' Courts Act (1978).[80] Elizabeth Woodcraft, Judith Hodgkin and Kate Kay, who served as National Coordinators of WAFE in the late 1970s, all recalled working on the Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act 1976, which was a private member's bill introduced by Labour MP Jo Richardson.[81] The Act was designed to make it easier for victim/survivors to take out injunctions, 'provide the police with powers of arrest for the breach of injunction in cases of domestic violence' and strengthen women's occupational rights to the homes they had shared with their abusive partners.[82] The National Coordinators gathered statistics and the stories of victim/survivors from local Women's Aid groups to strengthen the evidence Richardson used for the bill. [83] The 1976 Act pertained to England and Wales only, however, campaigns by SWA activists, including Wasoff and Marion Foy, who was a volunteer with Edinburgh Women's Aid and a trained solicitor, resulted in the passing of the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981, which granted women the right to take out exclusion orders and matrimonial interdicts against their abusers so that they could stay in their homes and powers of arrest could also be attached to the interdicts. The Legal sub-groups in SWA and NWAF/WAFE supported the National Coordinators in this work and women with a legal background like Foy could offer important advice.

The NWAF Housing sub-group were involved with the campaign for The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, which applied to England and Wales, as well as Scotland (with some caveats). In December 1977, the NWAF Housing sub-group included women from London, Bristol, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Manchester, Cambridge, York, Sheffield and

[79] Wasoff, Interview.

[80] For an early examination of the effectiveness of this legislation see Susan Maidment, 'Domestic Violence and the Law: The 1976 Act and its Aftermath', *The Sociological Review*, 31:1, (1983).

[81] Woodcraft, interview. Hodgkin, Interview. Kay, interview.

[82] *Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act 1976*, (c.50).

[83] Woodcraft, interview. Jude Stoddart and Liz Woodcraft, 'Report of National Coordinators', (April 1976), WAFE Box 03, 1974, 75 and 76, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

Nottingham.[84] Jane Hutt (WWA), Ellen Malos (Bristol Women's Aid), Kate Kay (NWAF) and Fran Wasoff (SWA) were all part of this group, demonstrating collaboration across England, Wales and Scotland.[85] The Act was the result of a national campaign involving not just Women's Aid activists but a Joint Charities Group which included Shelter, a charity campaigning to end homelessness in Britain and Gingerbread, which supported single parent families.[86] Women's Aid made an important contribution, ensuring that the Act defined victim/survivors of domestic abuse as homeless:

> A person is also homeless for the purposes of this Act if he has accommodation but it is probable that occupation of it will lead to violence from some other person residing in it or to threats of violence from some other person residing in it and likely to carry out the threats.[87]

Another important responsibility of the NWAF Housing sub-group was to monitor the success of the Act after it had been passed and to ensure that the local housing authorities were complying. For example, at a meeting in January 1978 the Housing Group discussed the worrying trend that local housing authorities were viewing women's refuges as adequate accommodation, rather than the short term, emergency solution they were intended as, and not rehousing women on these grounds.[88] The meeting resolved to ask all local Women's Aid groups to meet with their local housing authorities and keep statistics and case studies of how they were or were not meeting the terms of the Act.[89] Bristol Women's Aid were particularly involved with this work; Harwin recalled accompanying women staying in refuge to the local housing department and putting pressure on the authorities to fulfil their responsibilities as laid out by the Act.[90] The discussions of the Housing Group were disseminated via written updates, as well as by word of mouth when members of the group returned to their local areas. Things of particular interest could be sent on to local groups. For example, at a 1978 Housing Group meeting a paper written by SWA activists about working with housing associations generated considerable discussion

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[84] 'National Women's Federation Housing Group', (December 1977), Ellen Malos Archive, (DM2/23/8/) Archive Box 114, Feminist Archive South at Bristol University Special Collections.

[85] Ibid.

[86] NWAF and WWA, *Half the Sky and Still No Roof*, (London: NWAF, 1978), p.3.

[87] *Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977*, (c. 48).

[88] 'Minutes of NWAF housing group meeting,' (14th/15th January 1978), Ellen Malos Archive, (DM2/23/8/) Archive Box 114, Feminist Archive South at Bristol University Special Collections.

[89] Ibid. *Half the Sky* notes this is particularly the case in Bristol.

[90] Harwin Interview.

and the group decided to send the paper out to all local groups.[91] Therefore, these national sub-groups played an important role in the passing of legislation against domestic abuse in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They were an important way in which networks were maintained, information distributed and local Women's Aid groups involved in national campaigns, data gathering and strategy formation.

3.6 Conferences

NWAF/WAFE and SWA national conferences and Executive Meetings were invaluable in fostering and maintaining connections between Women's Aid groups. They were particularly important for garnering a sense of a shared strategy and ideology across local Women's Aid groups. Moreover, it was a way for women to come together and feel a sense of belonging to a shared movement, as in the 1970s and 1980s women staying in refuges, local and national Women's Aid activists would all attend. Important decisions such as the affiliation of members, and amendments to the aims of the national organisations were made collectively at these gatherings. Ideological principles were also discussed at these conferences including issues around men in Women's Aid, Women's Aid's relationship to the WLM, racism and class.

For instance, at the 1980 WAFE annual conference in Birmingham there was a discussion of classism in Women's Aid. One conference paper by two working-class women from North Kensington Women's Aid stated that: 'Middle-class women in Women's Aid continually refuse to give working-class women space to talk about our experiences of oppression… we want this conference to listen to our demands.'[92] These included middle-class women admitting to their privileged position and opening up places on support groups for working-class women. Furthermore, a woman from Hartlepool Women's Aid criticised Women's Aid activists' writing in feminist publications and the conferences themselves for their inaccessibility, which she argued would put working-class women off, particularly those living in refuges: 'These writings are aimed at the chosen few, those already in the middle class, and those working-class women lucky enough to have had an education… we make the meetings so long-winded, full of abbreviations, so as to frighten

[91] 'Meeting of NWAF Housing Group', (1978), WAFE Box 04, 1978 and 77, Feminist Archive South, Leeds University Special Collections.

[92] 'Jean and Rae,' 'Working Class Women Speak Out', p.1-2, Ellen Malos Archive, (DM2/23/8/) Archive Box 114, Feminist Archive South at Bristol University Library.

away all but the stoutest of hearts.'[93] Similar criticisms were made of the SWA Executive Meetings by Dunfermline Women's Aid activists in 1987 who wrote in a paper that: 'The car transporting five-thirteenth of Dunfermline Women's Aid home from the Executive Meeting in Glasgow was a seething mass of anger and frustration. We had spent (endured) over three hours of discussion on the single issue of deferred sentences, and felt it had been time wasted.'[94] The duration of national conferences due to the number of groups in attendance was one reason that both SWA and WAFE moved away from collective decision making. SWA Executive Meetings and conferences could also be sites of lively debates, as is illustrated in Figure 3.5.

Figure 3.5: Cartoon of a SWA Executive Meeting, *Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter*, (Spring 1992).

Nonetheless, for some, national conferences could be an opportunity to develop skills and confidence in public speaking. For example, Fiona Buchanan stayed in an Edinburgh Women's Aid refuge to escape her abusive ex-husband and went on to become the first National Children's Worker for SWA. During interview, Buchanan recalled developing resources about child sexual abuse and: 'Speaking about the, the information pack at a Women's Aid conference and - which was a huge step I might add, from being a woman in

[93] Hartlepool Women's Aid, 'Classism in women's aid or just downright snobbery?', WAFE 1980 Box 02, FAN/JH/WA/02, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[94] 'Item 8 Executive Agenda: Dunfermline Women's Aid', p.1, Records of Scottish Women's Aid, (SWA/1/4), Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

a refuge to be actually on my hind legs speaking at a conference was quite something!'[95] Thus, while some found the conferences overly intellectual and inaccessible, they could at times be opportunities for personal development, including for women who had stayed in refuges.

When the annual WAFE conference in 1980 proposed to discuss issues of racism within Women's Aid, a group of Black women based in refuges in London wrote a paper explaining they had not been consulted on this. They felt it should be up to Black women to decide how race was addressed in Women's Aid, as they had not yet discussed the issues sufficiently amongst themselves.[96] Their paper raised questions such as: 'why do white women find it easier to discuss classism than racism?' and 'why are there so few black women on support groups when a large number of black women go through refuge?'[97] During the conference, the idea of Black Women's Aid activists organising autonomously was discussed but several Black women walked out when the conference resolved to simply support the 'independent organisation of all sisters' which some felt was a cop-out.[98] After this, a group of Black women in London began meeting regularly and at the WAFE annual conference in Leeds in 1981 the Black Women's Group was officially ratified and asked 'the conference to recognise WAFE were racist and that racism wasn't challenged in the refuges.'[99] They also called for more Black women to be involved on the support groups of local Women's Aid groups.[100] Moreover, these discussions seemed to have some impact on the culture of Women's Aid as by 1988 four of a total of nine written WAFE principles referred to race. They were:

1. Women's Aid groups will not discriminate against any woman on the grounds of race, class, disability or sexuality. A full equal opportunities policy should be developed.

2. WAFE is committed to recognising and combating racism in refuges. It is therefore essential that workers and management receive training

[95] Buchanan, interview.

[96] Jenny Hackett and Anthea Smith, 'Black Women in Women's Aid,' Ellen Malos Archive, (DM2/23/8/) Archive Box 114, Feminist Archive South at Bristol University Library.

[97] Ibid.

[98] 'Black Women in Refuges', Women's Aid Annual Conference Leeds 1981, Conference Box 13: 1981, (FAN/CONF/13), Feminist Archive North Leeds University Special Collections.

[99] Anne Marshall, 'Report on Women's Aid Federation, England - Conference: Leeds, 30th - 31st June, 1981', *Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter*, (Summer 1981), p.4.

[100] Ibid.

internally or externally. Anti-racism must be shown to be part of working practice.

3. WAFE recognises the need and supports the idea of establishing refuges for specific groups, where it will be particularly beneficial (ie where there are language or religious barriers).

4. WAFE supports positive action in individual refuges in the recruitment of workers, and management, in respect of race, to ensure a fair representation.[101]

Annual conferences, then, could be one way in which the core values of Women's Aid groups were openly debated. This could lead to conflict but it was often of a constructive nature and resulted in some change, including the positioning of anti-racism as a key principle of WAFE.

During interviews, Women's Aid activists most vividly recalled the social aspects of the Women's Aid national conferences; the sense of being part of a community and bonding with other women. Liz Kelly, a founding member of Leeway Norwich Women's Aid, keenly remembered travelling to the NWAF/WAFE conferences in large groups:

> We used to take loads of women from the refuge and kids to the Women's Aid conferences every year… You'd go in a mini bus and you'd spend the whole journey there trying to explain how the conference would happen… So, I'd often be, I don't drive, so I'd be the one kind of working through all the papers and talking with everybody who, who was in the van but primarily the women who were in the refuge so that they would have a grasp of what it was we were going to debate… It was a different kind of politics, it was a different time.[102]

Kelly captured the spirit of the conferences in this description, the participation of the women from the refuges gave them a sense of togetherness and community, along with Women's Aid groups from all around the country. This was the time at which Women's Aid activists could feel most connected to a national movement, which was important given the many challenges they faced in the day to day running of refuges and negotiations with local authorities. Kelly further reflected on the specialness of this time; the idea that Women's Aid conferences have become more professionalised in recent years and regret that women living in refuges no longer regularly attend.

[101] Mama, *Hidden Struggle*, p.279.

[102] Liz Kelly, interview with the author, (23rd December 2020).

The importance of national conferences also came through strongly in interviews with Scottish Women's Aid activists.[103] For example, one woman recalled a SWA national conference held in Dunfermline in the 1970s and that 'it was very exciting. I felt I was part of a movement.'[104] Similarly Marilyn Ross, who was involved with Ross-shire Women's Aid from the 1980s to the 2010s, recalled:

> The conference every year… Every time I came back from Edinburgh, it usually was in Edinburgh, and every time I came back I felt that fire in my belly again where I was like, 'Right, we know why we're doing this. We know why', because you do get, kind of, flat if you're working where people are against it. But you would go there and, oh, the conferences were fabulous, and meet other workers and other women who had experienced domestic abuse.[105]

Additionally, Sutton reflected on the power of music in building community during the women-only discos which were held at both NWAF/WAFE and SWA national conferences:

> I made a note to tell you how important music was at the time, because, we had dances and things and because this was meant to be about people being equal, I mean, it wasn't just a service provider for a client but it was also that if you happened to be in a shelter, you know, it was bad luck and it was a bad run of things for you, you know, but, all in this together in some sense. So, the dances were both people working in the shelter and living in the shelters.[106]

Several women remembered the Northern Women's Liberation Rock Band from the Manchester WLM group playing at Women's Aid conferences in the 1970s. Gloria Gaynor's 1978 hit *I Will Survive* was also played at the conferences and became an unofficial anthem of the movement, along with *Sisters Are Doin' It for Themselves* from 1985.[107] Harwin recalled the importance of continuing the discos when WAFE reopened in 1984 and the fun of line dancing together in the 1990s.[108] Some of the Women's Aid activists' most vivid memories of the NWAF/WAFE conferences came from these discos,

[103] Oral History Interviews, (SWA/4), Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

[104] Anonymous 7, interview with Gill Glass, Oral History Interviews, 25th July 2017, (SWA/4/07), Scottish Women's Aid Collection in Glasgow Women's Library.

[105] Marilyn Ross, interview with Margaret Moore, Oral History Interviews, (SWA/4/39), Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

[106] Sutton, interview.

[107] Ibid. Harwin, interview.

[108] Harwin, interview.

perhaps due to the emotional and embodied nature of the experience. Kay described the conferences as:

> Total joy really, you know, we were dealing with really difficult stuff but there was an amazing sisterhood, it was, um, and we, you know, we had, we danced! I mean, we talked and shared, but we danced and we debated.[109]

While Kelly recalled that:

> For many women, that was the first time they had ever, ever been in a big gathering of only women and it was certainly the first time they'd been to a disco that was only women and there was something, you know - we weren't called the Women's Liberation Movement for nothing -there was something incredibly liberating about watching, um, almost like a transformation that just that context gave more confidence, gave a freedom that hadn't been experienced elsewhere… I remember the first women only disco I went to; it did something to my being in my body.[110]

The conferences held by both NWAF/WAFE and SWA, then, were extremely important in creating a personal sense of belonging to a national movement. The grassroots work of running a refuge was stressful and psychologically challenging, thus, the liberating feeling of dancing with other women was a powerful one. Undoubtedly, uniting with the national workers, local workers and victim/survivors gave women a sense of purpose and solidarity. Additionally, they were opportunities to establish a shared sense of a strategy and values, with ideological issues like race and class being debated on this platform. However, the conference debates also highlighted the divisions and tensions that existed within Women's Aid, and not all women experienced the same sense of sisterhood. Some Black women chose to find this solidarity elsewhere, as we shall see.

3.7 Networking Amongst Black and Asian Women's Refuges

There was an informal network of Black and Asian women's refuges in the late 1980s and 1990s and this was separate from but connected to Women's Aid networks. The establishment of Black and Asian women's refuge groups was widespread in Britain, particularly in England, gathering momentum throughout the 1980s. Some of these groups included: Roshni in Birmingham (established 1979), Ashiana in Sheffield (1981), Hemat Gryffe in Glasgow (1982), Sahara in Leeds (c.1982), Sahara in Reading (c.1985), Hadhari

[109] Kay, interview.

[110] Kelly, interview.

Nari in Derby (1986), Newham Asian Women's Project in London (1987), Shakti Women's Aid in Edinburgh (1987), Roshni in Nottingham (1987), Ashiana in London (1989), Kiran in London (1990), Amadudu in Liverpool (1992) and Bawso in Cardiff (1995).[111] Some of these refuges were set up to cater to women of South Asian heritage who had different dietary, religious and language requirements from white British women. These were known as 'Asian' women's refuges. Others, such as Shakti Women's Aid in Edinburgh, were established: 'for all Black women. The use of the term **black** is one of political choice. It indicates refusal to adopt divisive tactics of the state in separating out different minority groups with competing interests' [emphasis in original], as Mukami McCrum explained in 1992.[112] McCrum was a founding member of Shakti and its Coordinator until 1991. Sahara women's refuge in Leeds began as an Asian women's refuge but changed to a Black women's refuge in 1985 to reflect this desire for unity between all people subjected to racist oppression and as the population of people of African descent grew in Leeds.[113]

Michelle De Souza, who was on the management committee for Sahara in the mid 1980s and later worked on the Leeds Interagency Project, recalled during interview the importance of networking with other Black women's refuges:

> There were lots of women that needed to go out of area, so there needed to be strong links to get emergency, um, if a woman was found at a refuge, they might need to get her into a Manchester refuge very quickly. Or a woman might approach the service and say: 'I need to flee, but I can't stay in Leeds.' So I think there were definitely strong links around the country.[114]

Similarly, Ravi Thiara, who was one of the first refuge workers at Roshni Asian Women's Aid in Nottingham, recalled that Black and Asian women's refuges would draw support from one another and were active within the WAFE network as well:

> There was a network because very often you were referring women to each other. So you kind of got to know each other, uh, particularly in particular localities and so on, because you had to build up those relationships. But also, uh, Women's Aid conferences in those early days, you kind of all got your

[111] Some of these organisations are usefully listed in Hague*, History and Memories.*

[112] Mukami McCrum, 'Herstory of Shakti,' *Shakti Women's Aid Annual Report 1991-1992*, p.3, Records of local Women's Aid groups, Box 9 (SWA/2/SA), Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

[113] De Souza, interview.

[114] Ibid.

> heads together. If the issues needed to be raised, you kind of did them collectively.[115]

In the early days of establishing specialist refuges, such as Shakti and Sahara, there was a need for advice and support from existing Black and Asian women's refuges. Sahara was not part of the Women's Aid network but drew inspiration from Leeds Women's Aid and other Asian women's refuges that were becoming established. Shakti Women's Aid, on the other hand, was part of the SWA network and received support from Edinburgh and Lothians Women's Aid. However, they were keen to seek out support from refuges that were aligned to their particular anti-racist, anti-colonial and feminist political values. One of the founding members, Pramila Sashidharan, has explained how she: 'sought out other Black and Asian women refuges/organisations across the UK' during the process of Shakti's establishment.[116] Sashidharan found particular allies in the Southall Black Sisters and the Black/Asian women's refuge groups in Manchester and Leeds who: 'were particularly influential as they recognised the multiple factors affecting Black women, including racism and also quite narrow definitions of feminism' and 'were invaluable in their support and sisterhood, personal and political.'[117] When Shakti was setting up, they also received support from Amrit Wilson who had been involved in establishing one of the earliest Asian women's refuges, Asha, in the London borough of Lambeth.[118]

Shakti and Sahara held similar feminist values to mainstream Women's Aid groups, such as the principles of collective working, self-determination and autonomy for victim/survivors, and positioning domestic abuse as a result of a patriarchal society. They also often attended national Women's Aid conferences. The founding members of Shakti were also involved with anti-racist activism and used an analysis that understood that institutional and interpersonal racism compounded Black women and children's experience of domestic abuse and help seeking. Uma Kothari, who was a founding member of Shakti, recalled the late 1980s in Edinburgh as a lively time in which she was involved with a number of campaigns alongside her fellow Shakti activists. Kothari had a particularly vivid memory of attending the presentation of a cheque for Shakti (see Figure 3.6) before

[115] Thiara, interview.

[116] Pramila Sashidharan, correspondence with the author, April 3rd, 2023.

[117] Sashidharan, correspondence. For more on the Southall Black Sister see *From Homebreakers to Jailbreakers,* ed. Rahila Gupta.

[118] Rowena Arshad, 'The Scottish Black Women's Group,' *Grit and Diamonds: Women in Scotland Making History, 1980-1990*, (Edinburgh: Stramullion, 1990), p.119.

rushing to attend an anti-apartheid protest at the 1986 Commonwealth Games which were being opened by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher:

> We were just absolutely rubbing shoulders with each other in silence and in voice and in protest and, you know, just the fact I remember that day, running down the High Street with a cheque, you know, and, after receiving the cheque for Shakti and running down to make sure we got there before Thatcher arrived so that we could join the protest is very, it's very visceral.[119]

Figure 3.6: From left Pramila Sashidharan, Mukami McCrum and Uma Kothari with Labour Councillor Marjorie Bain presenting a cheque for £39,190 for Shakti Women's Aid. 'Grant is Key to Refuge', *Edinburgh Evening News*, (1 August 1986).

Several women were involved in more than one Black or Asian women's refuge, which facilitated the spreading of skills, knowledge and ideas around services for Black women. For instance, Tara-Chand who was the Chair of Sahara in the 1990s had previously been involved with Ashiana Asian women's refuge in Sheffield, while founding member of Shakti, Rowena Arshad, was involved with an Asian women's refuge in Reading before she moved to Edinburgh.[120] Arshad recalled that while volunteering in Reading she learned the importance of not having a reconciliation policy, as the women running that refuge strongly believed women should not be pressured to reconcile with abusive partners or family members. Arshad took this experience into her role on the management committee of Shakti, which never promoted reconciliation as a policy.[121] Conversely, Gryffe

[119] Kothari, interview.

[120] Arshad, interview.

[121] Ibid.

Women's Aid did engage in reconciliation work.[122] Moreover, according to Arshad they did not accept referrals for Black women who were not of South Asian origin.[123] These differences in approach between the two Scottish specialist women's refuges made it especially important for Shakti to forge links with English groups.

In the 1990s, there were attempts to establish a more formal network between Black women's groups, and conferences were part of this. Some links were maintained between Reading and Edinburgh, and on 29th June 1991 delegates from Shakti attended a conference there organised by Sahara Asian Women's Project entitled: 'The Strength of Black Women's Organisations.'[124] Over sixty people attended the conference which held workshops on experiences of running Black women's organisations, rape and sexual assault, children in refuges and campaigning.[125] Shakti also held their own 'What's all the shouting about? Black Women's National/International Conference?' in September the same year.[126] Conferences like these helped activists make contacts and create a network of Black and Asian refuges, as well as fostering a sense of solidarity which came from working on similar issues and objectives.

However, Thiara has cautioned that there were tensions within these networks:

> Black feminists, and particularly those who were um, um, organizing against domestic abuse weren't a uniform voice… that in foregrounding the issues and needs of South Asian women sometimes, um, the issues and experiences of other groups of women such as black Caribbean women or black African women, often kind of got overshadowed. Um, and that was an issue that wasn't anyone's fault. Um, but sometimes that did create tension between different groups of women.[127]

Amina Mama highlighted some of these issues in her pioneering study of Black women's experiences of domestic abuse and receiving support, *The Hidden Struggle*, where she argued that it was more difficult to convince local authorities to fund refuges that

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[122] Scottish Women's Aid*, Working with Asian Women*, p.12.

[123] Ibid.

[124] 'The Strength of Black Women's Organisations,' *Shakti Women's Aid Annual Report 1991-1992*, p.3, Records of local Women's Aid groups, Box 9 (SWA/2/SA), Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

[125] Ibid.

[126] 'What's All the Shouting About', *Shakti Women's Aid Annual Report 1991-1992*, p.28, Records of local Women's Aid groups, Box 9 (SWA/2/SA), Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

[127] Thiara, interview.

supported women of African heritage because they were perceived to be more assimilated to British culture.[128] However, African heritage women still faced interpersonal racism in refuges as well as structural racism when they tried to seek help from statutory agencies and could benefit from specialist refuges because of this. Mama argued that 'while many black women may speak English and wear jeans they are not exempted from discrimination in housing.'[129]

Furthermore, women working on these issues have been brought together through specific campaigns. For example, the campaigns to stop the deportation of Nasira Begum and Jaswinder Kaur, who had both experienced domestic abuse, in the early 1980s were supported by Black and Asian women's refuge groups, as well as WAFE.[130] The campaign led by the Southall Black Sisters to free Kiranjit Ahluwalia, who killed her husband in 1989 after years of abuse, was supported by a variety of women's refuge groups around the UK. In addition, in April 1991 Vandana Patel was stabbed to death by her husband who police allowed into a domestic violence unit in Stoke Newington Police station in London.[131] Following this, ten Asian women's refuges signed a statement condemning police responses to domestic abuse in South Asian communities.[132] They cited multicultural policies as one reason why police were reluctant to intervene, believing the situation to be due to 'cultural and religious factors.'[133] In this way, campaigns against domestic abuse and femicides, and the way in which the state have failed to effectively address these issues, could bring Black and Asian women's refuge groups together.

As has been seen, there was a Black Women in Refuges group established in May 1981 as part of the WAFE network, which aimed to: 'support the struggle of black people against racism and against imperialism in our countries of origin, support the independent organisation of black women, discuss racism inside the refuges and to challenge it

[128] Mama, *Hidden Struggle*, p.292. The author has previously explored these issues in Charlotte James Robertson, 'The Women's Refuge as 'homeplace': Black and Asian Women's Refuges in Britain as spaces of community and resistance (1980-2000)', *Women's History Review*, published online, (2023).

[129] Ibid.

[130] 'Agenda for WAFE conference', (31st May 1981), (FAN/CONF/13), Conference Box 13: 1981, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[131] 'Why Did Vandana Have to Die?,' *CARF magazine* (Campaign Against Racism and Fascism), 3, (1991), p.12.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid.

whenever it comes up.'[134] However, it proved challenging to coordinate a strong group because some Black women working in refuges felt isolated and the group does not appear to have been active outside of London before 1987.[135] In 1988, at the WAFE annual conference, the Black Women's Group held a workshop on anti-racism and their recommendation that an Anti-Racist sub-group be set up to take responsibility for improving anti-racist policies was ratified.[136] Nonetheless, overall evidence of an active network of Black women's refuge is more visible by looking beyond the official Women's Aid networks in and between England and Scotland. Therefore, while there was not an official federation of Black and Asian refuges in the 1980s and 1990s there were informal communications and influences passing between these groups as well as more structured exchanges like conferences.[137]

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that a formal network organised through NWAF/WAFE and SWA made it possible to create a shared strategy and ideology across local Women's Aid groups in England and Scotland from 1974 to 1996. Furthermore, this was possible due to the organisation of NWAF/WAFE and SWA which, although originally run collectively, had a highly formalised structure by 1975, belying the traditional narrative that WLM groups were 'structureless'. Maintaining a shared feminist ideology and strategy was achieved by agreeing upon a set of aims and guidelines which all Women's Aid groups who affiliated to one of the national organisations had to support. This did not come without some sacrifices, as there were occasions when local Women's Aid groups were disaffiliated. Moreover, the structural features of the national organisations, namely, the NCG and national conferences (NWAF/WAFE), Executive Meetings (SWA), and national sub-groups or special interest groups allowed local Women's Aid groups to contribute to campaigns of national significance. These national sub-groups were key to some of Women's Aid's early successes, such as the passing of several pieces of legislation on

[134] 'Agenda for Plenary', Women's Aid Annual Conference Leeds 1981, Conference Box 13: 1981, (FAN/CONF/13), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[135] 'Explanation of what is going on in WAFE', p.2, Ellen Malos Archive, (DM2/23/8/) Archive Box 114, Feminist Archive South at Bristol University Special Collections. Jenny Hackett and Anthea Smith, 'Black Women in Women's Aid', Ellen Malos Archive, Archive Box 114, (DM2/23/8/), Feminist Archive South at Bristol University Special Collections.

[136] Mama, *Hidden Struggle*, p.280.

[137] Since 2004 Imkaan have acted as an umbrella organisation for Black women's groups campaigning against violence against women and girls in Britain. The Southall Black Sisters also continue to be a central campaigning body for these issues.

domestic abuse and housing in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Additionally, these structures allowed for networking between the four nations, with Women's Aid activists and National Coordinators attending meetings and conferences beyond their own borders and collaborating on certain campaigns. SWA and WAFE originally had very similar aims due to these close connections, and continue to share comparable feminist values up until the present day.

Nevertheless, whilst some features of these national networks have been enduring, there were also important changes from the 1970s to the 1990s. One of these changes has been the phasing out of collective decision making processes in both SWA and WAFE, which became private limited companies in the 1990s and operated as hierarchies by 2003. In both SWA and WAFE it became challenging to run a national organisation collectively. As the organisation grew larger and more unwieldy, many felt clearer structures should be in place. These factors along with the fact that they did not have Charity Commission status led to the closure of WAFE in 1984. This chapter has highlighted the significance of connection and networking between Women's Aid groups, however, moments of rupture such as the dissolution of WAFE, could be an important theme for future research. Furthermore, there were important changes in WAFE when it re-opened in 1987. For example, the practice of National Coordinators only serving for a short period stopped and Harwin remained as the coordinator, and then Chief Executive, until 2012. Oral history interviews note that national conferences became less activist spaces and more formal, professional affairs from the 1980s to the 1990s. On the other hand, other features of WAFE continued such as the sub-groups, interest groups and a continuing relationship with SWA, WAFNI and WWA. In SWA, it was decided that localised groupings were needed to make Executive Meetings more manageable, there had always been regional groups in NWAF/WAFE but this only became necessary in Scotland from the early 1990s, and the Executive Meetings, which were once quarterly, were replaced with an annual conference.

This chapter has further contended that national conferences and Executive Meetings were particularly important for garnering a sense of belonging to a political movement amongst Women's Aid activists. During oral history interviews, conferences are remembered as the times at which women felt most connected to the national Women's Aid network. In particular, the social aspects of the conferences such as the discos were vividly recalled. However, the conferences and meetings were also more complicated than this; archival evidence demonstrates some of the tensions and divisions which arose through papers

presented by local Women's Aid groups and national sub-groups. Racism and classism were two contentious issues which were discussed during conferences. Not everybody found a sense of belonging at the conferences, for some they could be alienating or inaccessible due to the language used, or simply boring and overly lengthy. The latter factors were one argument for the move from collective decision making to hierarchies at national level, there simply being too many groups to properly debate issues. Nevertheless, the conferences were important because they were a space in which these types of issues could be debated and some of these discussions helped to re-negotiate the values of the national organisations by changing the policies and aims. Conferences, then, were an important part of the national network as they helped to make local Women's Aid groups feel part of the decision-making process and national strategizing.

Finally, this chapter has demonstrated that there was an informal network of Black and Asian women's refuge groups from the mid 1980s onwards. This network intersected with the national Women's Aid networks as some Black and Asian refuges were part of WAFE and SWA. However, not all were and thus it was important for these groups to have spaces in which to support one another and share knowledge. In the early years of Shakti and Sahara, this appears to have largely taken the form of interpersonal connections, such as asking for advice when first setting up a refuge or individuals taking knowledge with them when moving to work at one refuge from another. By the early 1990s, a more formal network was beginning to emerge with Black and Asian women's refuge activists coming together for national conferences and collaborating on certain campaigns. The informal networks highlighted in this chapter would lead to the more formalised organising of Black women's groups working on violence against women in the 2000s.

We will now move outwards from Women's Aid's internal organisation to explore its involvement within broader WLM networks.

Chapter 4 Women's Aid & Women's Liberation Movement Networks

4.1 Introduction

Campaigns for women's refuges largely grew from the activism of WLM groups, as we have seen. Maintaining these links to the WLM was an important way in which feminism remained central to Women's Aid from the 1970s to the 1990s. However, several former activists expressed concerns during interview that Women's Aid groups had become de-politicised, professionalised and had lost their WLM roots by the 1990s. Kate Kay was one woman who expressed this kind of opinion:

> The way that feminism got drained out, almost, of Women's Aid. And that's partly to do with the fact that the moment you start to, we did actually have quite a long debate in Women's Aid in Bristol and in Women's Aid nationally about the merits or not of accepting funding from the national state because the moment you start accepting money you lose control of your future to a certain extent and you have to become compliant with conditions and expectations, um, and you end up in the expectation of hierarchical structures… I'm not sure if it's the same movement that I experienced because now there's the professionalisation of it and it's much more like a state service than, for me, it was always a political movement, we were providing refuge for women fleeing violence but it was always in the context of understanding the nature of the patriarchy and understanding the politics of it and it's been de-politicised, I think.[1]

This chapter will argue that, although concerns about de-politicisation have been present within Women's Aid from the mid-1970s, in fact, throughout the period under study a tangible connection was maintained to the WLM through engagement with other local feminist groups and the wider movement. As we have seen, Women's Aid's national structures helped to ensure that feminist values were maintained. This chapter will explore in detail the processes by which Women's Aid activists fostered connections with other groups as a way to maintain a closeness to the WLM and broader feminist politics. For instance, Women's Aid activists attended national WLM conferences, contributed to feminist newsletters and collaborated with local groups such as Rape Crisis (RC) and Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW), although these attempts were limited by time and resources. Additionally, points of tension between Women's Aid and

[1] Kay, interview.

other WLM groups will be examined, indicating that, despite the unpleasantness of conflict, these were important moments for constructive debate and progress.

Furthermore, the nature and causes of the anxieties about de-politicisation, as expressed by Women's Aid activists during oral history interviews, will be explored. These concerns have tended to revolve around two key issues; professionalisation and collaboration with the state. Cuthbert and Irving have argued that for Women's Aid in Scotland 'this has meant a constant struggle between ideological purity and pragmatism within the organisation.'[2] It is undeniable that Women's Aid groups have professionalised since the 1970s: for instance, moving towards paid workers rather than volunteers, hierarchies rather than collective working and more formal policies for both workers and victim/survivors. However, this chapter will demonstrate that, in many ways, Women's Aid groups were successful in holding onto their feminist principles and continually reaffirmed their commitment to the WLM in the 1980s and up to the 1990s.

The organisation of Women's Aid always involved different considerations when compared with many other WLM groups. From the opening of the first refuges there were safeguarding issues to providing residential care to women and children who could be vulnerable and traumatised. For this reason, some Women's Aid activists felt that a level of professionalisation was necessary to improve the support they were providing and keep people safe. In terms of collaboration with the state, as Kay highlighted, there were concerns that accepting funding would mean Women's Aid would have to compromise on their feminist principles. Ellen Malos has noted that some saw multi-agency initiatives, for instance, as 'supping with the devil.'[3] Despite this, Women's Aid groups have worked with the police and social services to improve their policies and practice as these were usually the first places that victim/survivors would go when seeking support. Due to the nature of the work Women's Aid were undertaking, it was not possible to function entirely autonomously from state structures and this was also Women's Aid's best chance at securing stable funding that would allow them to expand their services. These issues will be explored in more detail below.

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[2] Jean Cuthbert and Lesley Irving, 'Women's Aid in Scotland: Purity vs Pragmatism?' in *Women and Cotemporary Scottish Politics: An Anthology*, ed. Esther Breitenbach and Fiona Mackay, (Edinburgh, 2001), p.56.

[3] Ellen Malos, 'Supping with the Devil? Multi-agency Initiatives on Domestic Violence', *Women, Violence and Strategies for Action: Feminist Research, Policy and Practice*, (ed.) Jill Radford, Melissa Friedberg, and Lynne Harne, (Buckingham, 2000), pp.120-136.

Women's Aid was not unique in its experience of beginning as a grassroots, activist group and growing into a large, professional organisation. As Matthew Hilton et al have observed, there were a cluster of politically left-leaning NGOs which came from humble beginnings in post-war Britain and began to professionalise in the 1980s.[4] These included groups like Christian Aid established in 1945, which campaigns to end global poverty, Shelter, the charity to end homelessness which was established in 1966 and Greenpeace, the environmentalist charity established in 1977. Hilton et al argue that this is part of a larger change to civic society, whereby people began to engage in politics differently at the end of the twentieth century.[5] Instead of political activity being expressed through the support of a political party, many people chose to lend support to specific causes by either donating to, volunteering for or otherwise engaging with an NGO. As these groups expanded and employed more staff members, they gained more responsibilities and increasingly positioned themselves as 'experts… embedded in the detailed work of government.'[6] Hilton et al's assessment is that: 'The NGO is at one and the same time a wing of the state, and an agent acting against.'[7] Women's Aid often occupied this position 'working in between' various networks, including across activist and statutory spaces. Maintaining this position in between was not always easy and could lead to tensions with other WLM groups; this will be explored below using the example of Women's Aid's relationship with Wages for Housework (WFH).

The relationships between Women's Aid organisations and other WLM groups differed considerably depending on the local context. Sue Bruley and others have advocated for the 'importance of local studies to appreciate the diversity of the English women's liberation movement… according to local contexts.'[8] This chapter supports Bruley's argument by looking at Women's Aid and its position within a broader WLM in Edinburgh, Leeds and Bristol. As we have seen in Chapter Three, national Women's Aid organisations provided some guidelines but local groups still had autonomy and, therefore, show peculiarities in the way they engaged with broader feminist issues. In particular, the extent to which anti-domestic abuse and anti-rape activists collaborated shows regional variation. This issue

[4] Matthew Hilton, James McKay, Nicholas Crowson, and Jean-François Mouhot, *The Politics of Expertise : How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain*, (Oxford, 2013).

[5] Ibid. p.2.

[6] Ibid. p.16.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Sue Bruley, 'Women's Liberation at the Grass Roots: a view from some English towns, c.1968–1990', *Women's History Review*, 25:5, (2016), p.723.

became pertinent around 1975, as anti-rape groups became more prominent in the UK. Historian Lucy Delap, has found that reports on rape in feminist periodical *Spare Rib* became more frequent in the late 1970s, while the first Rape Crisis Centres and Women Against Rape (WAR) groups were established in 1976.[9] These developments along with the establishment of WAVAW in 1980 led to a more explicit understanding of domestic abuse within Women's Aid, and more generally, as part of a broader umbrella category of violence against women. These discussions were not just happening at regional level but local concerns fed into national WLM conferences, and eventually the formation of agreed aims. In this way, this chapter will add to Jeska Rees and Finn Mackay's scholarship on the contribution of radical and revolutionary feminists, who viewed the patriarchal organisation of society as the main cause of violence against women, to the national WLM.[10] In addition to these other WLM groups, older, more traditional women's groups such as the Women's Institute, the Townswomen's Guild and the Women's Co-operative Guild were also involved in campaigns against violence against women in the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, the examination of collaborations between various WLM activist projects is significant for what it can tell us about the development of feminist thought and current understandings of societal issues like violence against women.

4.2 Women's Aid Activists' Perspectives on De-politicisation and Professionalisation

The 'Acceptable Face of Feminism'?

Many Women's Aid activists expressed how important identification with the WLM was to their identities as feminist anti-domestic abuse campaigners. In Edinburgh, Leeds and Bristol, Women's Aid groups developed from WLM political action groups and efforts were made to maintain these links. On the national level, NWAF, and later SWA and WAFE, reaffirmed these connections. For instance, on the affiliation form signed by all new women's refuge groups joining the NWAF c.1978, the following statement was printed:

> NWAF sees its campaigns and organisation of the rights of battered women and their children as an integral part of the struggle for women's liberation. We

[9] Lucy Delap, 'Rethinking rapes: men's sex lives and feminist critiques', *Contemporary British History*, (2022), p.257.

[10] Rees, *A Look Back at Anger*. Finn Mackay, *Radical Feminism: Feminist Activism in Movement*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). For definitions of radical, socialist and revolutionary feminism please refer to p.8.

> therefore identify ourselves with the women's liberation movement and are committed to giving public support to the seven demands.[11]

Nonetheless, as Women's Aid expanded, some activists were concerned that they were becoming peripheral to WLM networks, while some worried that women who were not feminists becoming involved may dilute the explicitly political principles which many groups had been founded upon.

During an interview for the Sisterhood and After project, Hanmer recalled a sense that Women's Aid was tangential to the WLM:

> In a sense, Women's Aid wasn't part of the Movement because we had this [Women's Liberation] national conference… in Newcastle… I'd put in a resolution about support for Women's Aid, because most of the women in Women's Aid were obviously feminists and they were part of the Movement. So I'd put that in and it passed without any difficulty, but I thought if you have to put in a resolution it means you aren't quite in the Women's Liberation Movement, not quite.[12]

The National Women's Liberation conference in Newcastle was in 1976, shortly after the NWAF was established. This incident demonstrates an ambiguity about Women's Aid's place within the WLM but it also shows that conferences could be an important space in which Women's Aid activists affirmed their commitment and connection to the wider movement.

Some Women's Aid activists, on the other hand, were unequivocal about their involvement with the WLM. When I asked Fran Wasoff whether Scottish Women's Aid activists felt part of the WLM, she replied: 'We definitely did. Yes.' [13] This raises the question of what it meant to be part of the WLM. Ellen Malos reflected on this during her Sisterhood and After interview: 'Do I belong because I think I belong, or do I belong because other people see me as belonging?… It's very difficult to actually expel someone from the Women's Liberation Movement.'[14] There is no way to prove who was or was not part of the WLM. There was no criteria for membership, other than perhaps supporting the demands of the

[11] 'National Women's Aid Federation – Affiliation Form' (1978-1979), Women's Aid Federation England Collection, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections (FAN/JH/WA/WAFE/05).

[12] Jalna Hanmer, interview with Margaretta Jolly (2010), Sisterhood and After Oral History Project at British Library, (C1420/04).

[13] Fran Wasoff, interview with the author, (14th July 2020).

[14] Malos, interview with Jolly.

WLM, which Women's Aid groups often did by printing them in their affiliation forms and annual reports. Indeed, the mere identification with the WLM felt by Wasoff and other Women's Aid activists is perhaps enough to confirm their belonging.

However, Hanmer's reflection on the matter highlights that there was a sense that Women's Aid was 'not quite' central to the WLM. Jo Sutton reflected shortly after a recent interview that:

> I gave the impression that the link between Women's Liberation to Women's Aid was smooth. It was really a bit contentious. There were objections to feminists putting so much time, energy and resources into Women's Aid when there were so many other issues to address. Well, maybe I would call it a 'tension', since, in those early days, it was ongoing and an issue for many groups, discussed at the local level.[15]

It is telling that in her original interview Sutton framed Women's Aid as a seamless part of the WLM. This is perhaps because this is largely how Women's Aid has been remembered and fits in more easily with her identification as a feminist. Elizabeth Woodcraft recalled similar tensions in the 1970s, commenting that: 'There were some people who were arguing that our feminism wasn't good enough and there were people who were thinking we were far too feminist, and that's within the organisation!'[16] As Woodcraft and Sutton both observed, much of this debate was happening within Women's Aid groups themselves on both a national and local level. Criticisms from outside groups will be explored below, but in many cases the debates were a result of Women's Aid activists holding themselves to account.

Feminist sociologist Jan Pahl found evidence of these debates in her study of an unnamed women's refuge in the late 1970s. Pahl argued that those working in women's refuges could be divided into 'radicals and reformers.'[17] The former group 'were anxious that the problem [domestic abuse] should be seen not in individual terms, but in terms of the processes and structures.'[18] Without this political feminist analysis, it was thought they would be acting as a social service and, therefore, doing a job that the state ought to be doing themselves. According to Pahl, the 'reformers' were more likely to think that

[15] Jo Sutton, correspondence with the author, 1st April 2020.

[16] Woodcraft, interview.

[17] Jan Pahl, 'Refuges for Battered Women: Social Provision or Social Movement', *Journal of Voluntary Action Research*, (1979), pp. 31-32.

[18] Ibid.

victim/survivors needed help in the form of therapy and that the feminist aspect of their work was not a priority.

Pahl's conclusions are reflected in the memories of several Women's Aid activists who explained that Women's Aid groups attracted a diverse group of women who did not necessarily identify as feminists. Elizabeth Woodcraft recalled that at Leicester Women's Aid:

> I came to Women's Aid via the women's movement but in fact, it wasn't all feminists in the group, there were, you know, social workers … the blue rinse brigade, just very nice middle class women who wanted to do good in the environment, in the community.[19]

Sue Robertson recalled that the geographical location of the Women's Aid groups made a difference to the sort of political understanding that they had:

> We had quite a diverse mix of groups, we had some quite radical feminist groups in places like Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee and we had some literally twin-set and pearls groups in places like Perth and Turriff and, you know, much more sort of rural areas and traditional areas.[20]

Women's Aid was an issue that could attract a more diverse range of women than more controversial issues such as reproductive rights. Woodcraft described Women's Aid as 'the acceptable face of feminism' whilst Wasoff commented 'Who is in favour of men beating up women really? I mean it's an easy issue to get behind.'[21] Lou Lavender recalled being pleasantly surprised to receive donations from the Women's Institute and 'a good housekeeping group' for the first women's refuge in Leeds.[22] This should not be surprising, as historian Caitríona Beaumont has argued that the activities of traditional women's voluntary groups like the Women's Institute have been 'underestimated by historians.'[23] In fact, these groups engaged with 'a vast array of campaigns' in the 1950s and 1960s, despite rejecting the label of feminism.[24] Moreover, in the 1970s domestic abuse became 'a pressing concern' for groups such as the National Federation of Women's

[19] Woodcraft, interview.

[20] Robertson, interview.

[21] Woodcraft, interview.

[22] Lavender, interview.

[23] Caitríona Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens: Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England, 1928-64*, (Manchester 2013), p.200.

[24] Ibid.

Institutes and the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds' as they urged the government to fund women's refuges.[25] Lynn Abrams has written of the way in which those who were involved with the WLM have been dismissive of the activities of an older generation of women active in the 1950s and 1960s who they deemed 'just not feminist enough.'[26] This type of attitude can be seen in the somewhat condescending description of the women with their 'blue rinse' or 'twin-set and pearls.' Woodcraft and Robertson seem to use these descriptors to convey that these other women lacked their political motivations or feminist credentials. This may explain why some activists saw the involvement of these women as potentially diluting the radical potential of Women's Aid groups.

Nonetheless, some women became politicised through their involvement with Women's Aid. Lydia Okroj who became involved with Edinburgh Women's Aid in 1981 and later worked for Scottish Women's Aid, recalled this experience:

> There was a lot of women who worked in Women's Aid at that point that were university graduates that had done consciousness-raising or who came in through political parties... And I didn't see myself as political at all. I honestly didn't think I was political because I wasn't party political… So suddenly my politics found an avenue. I probably wouldn't have said initially that I was a feminist. It took me a while to be able to articulate that.[27]

The majority of the women interviewed for this project self-identified as feminists, although, as was noted in Chapter Two, oral history interviews can be biased towards women who were involved in WLM networks which survive to the present day. Women's Aid activists were generally proud to report that they were a more diverse group and sometimes women became feminists through their involvement. However, this may also be one reason why they were seen as slightly separate from the rest of the WLM.

[25] Caitríona Beaumont, 'The "housewife as expert": re-thinking the experiential expertise and welfare activism of housewives' associations in England, 1960 -1980', forthcoming chapter in *Everyday Welfare in Modern British History: experience, expertise and activism* (to be published Autumn 2024).

[26] Lynn Abrams, *Feminist Lives: Women, Feelings, and the Self in Post-War Britain*, (Oxford 2023), p.1.

[27] Lydia Okroj interviewed by Claire Thomson for Speaking Out: recalling Women's Aid in Scotland Project at the Glasgow Women's Library (GB 1534 SWA/4/36), 5th July 2016.

The Professionalisation of Women's Aid

Professionalisation is a word that comes up frequently in interviews reflecting on the ways in which Women's Aid has developed from the 1970s to the present day. Nicola Harwin reflected in interview that:

> The whole thing really is that, from the 70s to the 90s, what was, what really happened was a professionalisation of Women's Aid… I think the whole history of the Women's Aid movement, one thread of it, has been the change from collectives to what you might call hierarchies to structures.[28]

Initially, all local Women's Aid groups were run by dedicated volunteers, indeed, it took some groups several years of campaigning before they obtained funding from local authorities. However, there were a small number of paid workers within Women's Aid quite early on in the movement. For example, the DHSS funded a National Coordinator for the newly established NWAF in 1974, while the Scottish Office did the same for SWA when it formed in 1976.[29] By the late 1970s most local Women's Aid groups had funding for some paid workers, as there was too much work to be carried out by volunteers alone.[30] It should be noted that some Women's Aid activists objected to the use of the term 'volunteer' in the 1970s as they were concerned this connoted philanthropic rather than political activity.[31] The term 'unpaid worker' was also sometimes preferred because it acknowledged that the contribution being made should be equally valued with paid work.[32] The proportion of unpaid workers within Women's Aid groups decreased across the 1980s and 1990s, although volunteers do continue to contribute to the work of Women's Aid up until the present day.

The move from collective working to hierarchies was a lot slower than the move to paid workers and was also the subject of more dispute amongst Women's Aid activists. As we have seen in Chapter Three, both SWA and WAFE moved from collective to hierarchical structures by the 2000s. Collective working in local groups persevered a bit longer and in

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[28] Harwin, interview.

[29] Jean Cuthbert and Lesley Irving, 'Women's Aid in Scotland: Purity vs Pragmatism?' in *Women and Contemporary Scottish Politics: An Anthology,* ed. Fiona Mackay and Esther Breitenbach (Edinburgh: Polygon Press, 2001), p.55. Hague, *History and Memories,* p.72.

[30] Hague, *History and Memories*, p.73.

[31] Pahl, *Refuges for Battered Women*, p. 29.

[32] See for example Lydia Okroj interviewed by Claire Thomson for Speaking Out: recalling Women's Aid in Scotland Project at the Glasgow Women's Library (GB 1534 SWA/4/36), 5th July 2016.

2001 was still described as 'a deeply held and fiercely defended position' in Scotland due to 'a wish not to reproduce what are seen as traditional male hierarchies of power.'[33] The requirement of qualifications for certain jobs within Women's Aid has been another change in the organisation. In the 1970s and 1980s experiential expertise in the WLM or lived experience of domestic abuse would be more highly valued than a university degree for instance.[34]

The professionalisation of Women's Aid is spoken of negatively by many former Women's Aid activists as they see it as linked to de-politicisation. Judith Hodgkin, for instance, described her fear that Women's Aid would 'become another social service.'[35] Robertson was particularly concerned that experiences of domestic abuse were no longer valued as much as qualifications:

> One of the early things in Women's Aid was, you know, women who had experience of abuse coming through and working for Women's Aid… and I think as Women's Aid has developed so much there's been quite a professionalisation of Women's Aid provision and I'm not sure to what extent that, that kind of grassroots involvement in being the ones actually providing the services has been continued.[36]

Nonetheless, some women welcomed aspects of professionalisation. Harwin was optimistic that feminist values could be retained while the rights of those who worked for, and were supported by Women's Aid were safeguarded. She explained that before WAFE reopened in 1984:

> There was no employment structure that included proper frameworks for coffee and lunch, I mean, we weren't unusual in the sense that this was a whole period of social change when lots of organisations sprang up in the 70s and there was really no model for how to run if you wanted to run with collective principles… The challenge really has been to try and hold the values and principles while having structures that enable you… I mean, if you're trying to

[33] Ibid. p.56.

[34] The concept of 'experiential expertise' has recently been explored by historians such as Jennifer Crane, *Child Protection in England, 1960–2000: Expertise, Experience, and Emotion* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Charlotte Clements, 'Lady Albermarle's youth workers: contested professional identities in English youth work 1958-1985', *History of Education,* 48:6, (2019), pp.819-836; Catriona Beaumont, Eve Colpus and Ruth Davidson (Ed.)*, Everyday Welfare in Modern British History: experience, expertise and activism* (to be published Autumn 2024).

[35] Hodgkin, interview.

[36] Robertson, interview.

> do something that has lasted, as it has, nearly fifty years, then, you have to have structures and I mean in the end you're there to deliver a service.[37]

In the oral history project 'Speaking Out' professionalisation and the move to hierarchal structures was a prominent theme; some former Women's Aid activists interviewed felt that the professionalisation of Women's Aid meant that victim/survivors were being provided with a higher quality service.[38] One interviewee mentioned that children's workers, often seen as play workers in the 1970s, were regarded as highly skilled professionals by the 2000s with a sophisticated understanding of child psychology. This was seen as an improvement to the support provided to children in refuges.[39]

Mukami McCrum recalled that professionalisation caused friction between Shakti Women's Aid and SWA:

> I said we deserved a professional wage, I applied for funding... the other women said that they felt that we were professionalising the organisation… I would say, 'Why don't you think women deserve this money?'[40]

McCrum explained that some women working at Shakti Women's Aid felt it was unfair that those who had worked there a long time and had more responsibility would receive the same pay as newcomers to the organisation.[41] McCrum also applied for funding to set up a pension scheme while she was the Coordinator of Shakti Women's Aid. These issues were complex and divided opinion amongst Women's Aid workers. Amongst those who worked for Women's Aid into the 1990s like Harwin and Mukami, there was a feeling that implementing clearer structures had been necessary and often beneficial. On the other hand, some of the women who had helped to found Women's Aid on the principles of collectivism and self-help in the 1970s were suspicious of the move towards professionalisation.

In many ways, it is remarkable that collective structures endured for so long considering that significant pressure was often put on Women's Aid groups by local authorities and

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[37] Harwin, interview.

[38] Hazel Bingham, interview with Elsa Rodeck, 20th January 2017, Oral History Interviews, (SWA/4/11), Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

[39] Anonymous, interview with Emilie Kristensen, 9th September 2016, Oral History Interviews, (SWA/4/4), Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

[40] Mukami McCrum, interview with Freya Johnson Ross (2011), Sisterhood and After Oral History Project at British Library (C1420/39).

[41] Ibid.

others to conform to their expectations and assign a leader. Workers from statutory agencies like the council or social services would often try to insist on speaking to 'someone in charge.'[42] The media were also keen to identify a particular figure or expert to whom they could go to for quotes. Hanmer, recalled how Women's Aid groups resisted outside attempts to impose a traditional structure:

> You see for years the local authorities were never able to deal with Women's Aid because they didn't have a Chair, didn't have a Secretary, there wasn't anybody in charge, so they didn't know how to deal with these groups. I mean when I came north we set up Airedale Women's Aid… we had a fictitious person with a northern sounding name who was the person who dealt with any external enquiries from the media or anybody… That worked very well, because that also kept down the idea that somebody is more important than somebody else because they do all the media, or they do all the negotiations with the local state.[43]

Pioneering researchers of domestic abuse, Rebecca and Russell Dobash, have observed that women's refuge organisations in Britain have been more likely to hold onto their original principles compared with groups in the US, commenting that:

> The fact that the British movement was more firmly established in their principles and practices, and more firmly identified with the issue before even this limited funding became available, reduced some of the external pressure pulling away from their original ideas and practices and helped them resist some of the more traditional responses and forms of organization. In some ways, Women's Aid has become a part of the established landscape without becoming a part of traditional modes of practice.[44]

This book was written in 1992, before the move toward hierarchal structures in Britain, but it still demonstrates the strength and endurance of Women's Aid's praxis. There was a desire to hold onto WLM values in the US as well, with Susan Schechter, an anti-domestic abuse activist, writing in 1980 of her concern that the women who stayed in refuges were becoming 'clients' rather than 'participants in a joint struggle.'[45]

Furthermore, these debates were not confined to Women's Aid groups, Finn Mackay has found in their oral history interviews with WLM activists that there were consistent

[42] 'Jo' of Lewisham Women's Aid, 'Women's Aid and the fight against male violence' in *Women Against Violence Against Women*, ed. Dusty Rhodes and Sandra McNeill (London: Onlywomen Press, 1985), p.245.

[43] Jalna Hanmer, interview with Jolly.

[44] Dobash and Dobash, *Women, Violence and Social Change*, p.42.

[45] Susan Schechter, 'Building Bridges Between Activists, Professionals, and Researchers' in *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*, ed. Kersti Yllo and Michele Bogard (London: Sage, 1980), p. 300.

concerns about the professionalisation of the violence against women sector in general.[46] Rahila Gupta, a longstanding member of Southall Black Sisters, has commented that by the 1990s women joining the sector were increasingly expectant of higher wages and better working conditions.[47] The problem with this, according to Gupta, was that they also had less of a commitment to or understanding of the issues. Gupta linked this to a general decline in feminist activity from the 1990s to the early 2000s.

4.3 Maintaining Women's Aid's Connection to the Women's Liberation Movement

Women's Liberation Movement Periodicals

Now let us explore the means by which Women's Aid activists in Edinburgh, Leeds and Bristol attempted to maintain tangible links to WLM networks. Engagement with feminist periodicals was one way Women's Aid activists sought to maintain these connections. They did this for four main reasons: to publicise campaigns for new refuges in the hope of receiving more support; to inform those involved in the WLM of developments within Women's Aid; to advertise the need for volunteers, donations or, later, employees and to open up debates around the issue of domestic abuse and the provision of services to a broader audience. As historian Laurel Forster has noted, feminist periodicals were a crucial way in which the WLM movement spread its ideas and coordinated activities, and can be considered a form of activism in its own right.[48] Particularly in the 1970s when many people did not even have a house phone, WLM newsletters were vital to the organisation of local and national groups and to the formation of networks.

On the national level, Women's Aid activists and groups regularly contributed to *Spare Rib*, which ran from 1972 to 1993 and has been described as 'the most significant magazine of the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain.'[49] *Spare Rib* covered a range of feminist issues and publicised the campaigns of many WLM groups, including

[46] Finn Mackay, *Radical Feminism,* pp.142-153.

[47] Rahila Gupta, 'Some Recurring Themes' in *From Homebreakers to Jailbreakers*, p.5. Southall Black Sisters is an organisation which was established in 1979 to meet the needs of Black (Asian and African-Caribbean) women experiencing all forms of gender-based violence

[48] Laurel Forster, 'Spreading the Word: feminist print cultures and the Women's Liberation Movement', *Women's History Review*, 25:5 (2016), p.827.

[49] Louise Kimpton Nye, 'Introduction: Spare Rib - the first nine years', British Library Website, <https://www.bl.uk/spare-rib/articles/introduction-spare-rib-the-first-nine-years> (Accessed 18th July 2022).

Women's Aid. *Spare Rib* was stocked in newsagents across Britain and so had a wider readership than local WLM newsletters. In the early 1970s, these articles mostly took the form of drawing attention to the campaigns Women's Aid were engaged in and showing what refuges were like, as can be seen from Figure 4.1.

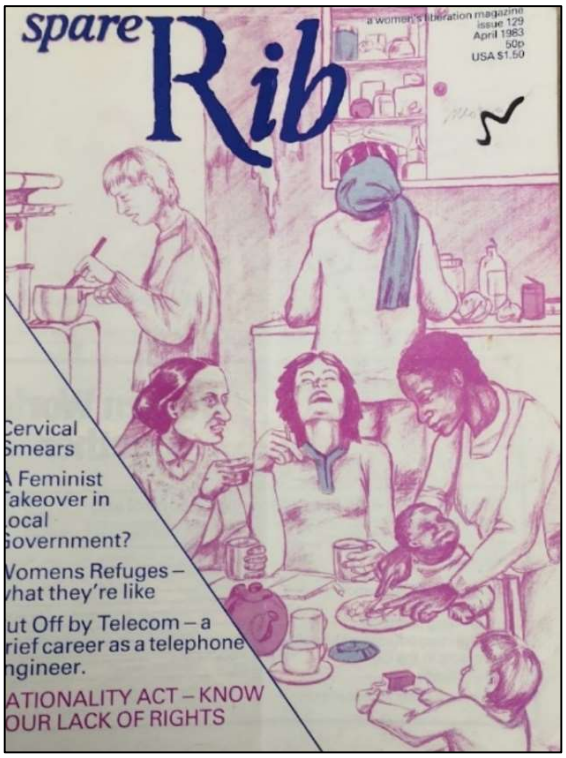

Figure 4.1: An illustration of a women's refuge kitchen, *Spare Rib*, issue 129, (April 1983).

Articles in *Spare Rib* also reaffirmed Women's Aid's connection to the broader WLM and called for support. For example, in 1974, an unnamed representative of Leeds Women's Aid contributed this article:

> Leeds Social Services Department officials and committee Members have found themselves in an embarrassing situation recently. The efforts of Leeds Women's Aid to secure an Urban Aid grant for the battered women's refuge they set up six months ago were received in an apparently off-hand manner by the Social Services Department, which had other priorities… We also want to underline our links with the Women's Movement. It would be so easy to go the way of other charities and just become do-gooders.[50]

By making the failure of the local authorities public, local Women's Aid groups could apply increased pressure. Similarly, in 1986 SWA publicised their campaign for a second

[50]'Leeds Women's Aid, 'Social Services has 'other priorities'', *Spare Rib*, 33, (March, 1974), p.23.

refuge to support Asian women in Edinburgh in an article for *Spare Rib.* They also put out an urgent call for bilingual women to work in the refuge.[51]

From the 1980s to the 1990s, Women's Aid activists used *Spare Rib* to intervene in debates, to clarify their ideological position or to discuss the politics of Women's Aid in more detail. For example, in the early 1990s Shakti Women's Aid wrote a letter to *Spare Rib* in response to an article that had been written on fundamentalism and women's refuges:

> Sahgal notes that Asian community 'leaders', who once denied the existence of domestic violence in their communities, currently are setting up separate refuges for purposes of reconciliation… We are writing to prevent possible misunderstanding about the needs of Black women for separate refuges… Black women's refuges provide full-time bilingual support workers, space for 'non-white' dietary rules and religious practices, and special advice and counselling that problems of racism, including immigration questions, require. Unlike most white women's refuges, we also explicitly support and house women who have been battered by their relatives, as well as women battered by their partners.[52]

This letter demonstrates that *Spare Rib* provided a space for Women's Aid groups to engage with debates about feminist issues of national significance into the late 1980s, by providing examples from the work they were doing in the local context. In the 1970s, when women's refuges were a new concept, articles were often explaining the basics of what they were and why they were needed. This became less of a priority as the issue of domestic abuse became better understood and many refuges were successful in their campaigns for funding. Therefore, the debates around domestic abuse became more complex in the 1980s and 1990s and the types of articles contributed to *Spare Rib* by Women's Aid groups reflected this.

On a local level, Women's Aid groups contributed to WLM newsletters in their city. In Bristol, for example, the Women's House Project (later Bristol Women's Aid) contributed regularly to the *Bristol Women's Liberation Group Newsletter,* which ran from 1971 to 1997. The Women's House Project sought to keep women involved with the local WLM informed of their activities and to ask for support if needed. They would also advertise their conferences, meetings and events such as a fundraisers like jumble sales, discos or sponsored walks. For example, in January 1977, Janet Brewer wrote: 'We are holding a

[51] Sandra Ryder, 'Asian Women's Aid', *Spare Rib*, 158, (September, 1985), p.10.

[52] Shakti Women's Aid, 'Letters: Religious Fundamentalism', *Spare Rib*, 204, (August 1989), pp.4-5.

Benefit at the Granary – with disco and band – on Tuesday 1 February and hope to see lots of supporters from the Women's Movement!! Please sell some tickets if you can or display a poster.' [53]At times, women who contributed are apologetic to the other women in the WLM that the commitment of being a Women's Aid activist meant they were not able to contribute to other campaigns. For example, in 1977, a Bristol Women's Aid activist wrote:

> Some of us are worried that our commitment to WHP [Women's House Project] prevents us getting as involved in other aspects of the Women's Movement as we'd like to. We're with you in spirit if not always in body! [54]

A similar entry appeared in a 1980 issue of the *Edinburgh Women's Liberation Newsletter*, which ran from 1975 to 1996, in which 'Pat' wrote:

> Although Women's Aid in Edinburgh does sometimes seem far away from other women around I'd just like to say that we haven't forgotten that we are aprt [sic] of the WLM and the WLM is part of Women's Aid.[55]

Edinburgh Women's Aid contributed to the local WLM newsletter less frequently than the Bristol group. This may have been because Edinburgh Women's Aid had their own newsletter entitled *Broken Rib*, as well as the *Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter* in which to publish their news. When Edinburgh Women's Aid did write in the *Edinburgh Women's Liberation Newsletter* it was for similar reasons to the Bristol example; to update interested women on the progress of refuge provision in their local area, to reaffirm their connection to Edinburgh based WLM networks, as well as to recruit more supporters.

In Leeds, a Women's Aid support group was advertised in the *Leeds Women's Liberation Newsletter* from 1981 to 1983, along with appeals for help such as 'Toys needed desperately by Leeds Women's Aid (refuge for battered women and their children).'[56] Although, Leeds Women's Aid were keen to employ women who were involved with or interested in the WLM and so they advertised jobs or volunteering opportunities in the newsletter. For example, in July 1982, after the opening of a new, refuge in Leeds they

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[53] Janet Brewer, 'Women's House Project', *Bristol Women's Liberation Group Newsletter*, (January 1977), p.5.

[54] Katherine Martin, 'Women's House Project', *Bristol Women's Liberation Group Newsletter*, (June 1977), p.5.

[55] 'Pat', 'Edinburgh and Lothian Women's Aid', *Edinburgh Women's Liberation Newsletter*, (Oct/Nov 1980).

[56] *Leeds Women's Liberation Newsletter,* (March 8th 1982), p.23.

were desperate for volunteers as they only had funding for three paid workers.[57] Therefore, the contributions from Women's Aid activists in the Leeds newsletter mostly asked for practical support, there were not many articles which were generally updating the WLM on Women's Aid's progress or think pieces about the philosophy of Women's Aid and its connections to the WLM. Contributions from Leeds Women's Aid were also relatively rare when compared with the Bristol newsletter. This could be reflective of the lack of a women's centre in Leeds as this site of exchange with the rest of the WLM was important to the Women's Aid activists in both Bristol and Edinburgh, as will be seen below.

In all three case study cities the contributions from Women's Aid groups in WLM publications became fewer as time went on. Articles and advertisements are seen most frequently from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s. This may be due to the increasing professionalisation of Women's Aid and a reflection of their growing responsibilities. Some of the issues had also been settled, in the sense that women's refuges had become more established. As the work that needed to be done to deliver services became more sophisticated it also became more time consuming and it perhaps became less of a priority to contribute to WLM newsletters. Indeed, there was not usually a dedicated communications role in a local Women's Aid group in this period. Although, there were information and communications officers in the national organisations of SWA and WAFE and indeed a media presence was considered one of the responsibilities of the national federations. The reduction of contributions from Women's Aid activists from the 1980s to the 1990s may simply reflect a wider decline in enthusiasm for WLM newsletters. Therefore, this does not necessarily reflect a fraying of the bonds between Women's Aid and other WLM activities, but perhaps that the mode of communication changed over time.

Women's Centres & Women's Aid Offices

Another important way in which Women's Aid groups stayed in touch with WLM networks in their local areas was through women's centres and the sharing of physical space. The women's centre in Edinburgh opened in 1977 in Fountainbridge, later moved to Broughton Street and was open until the 1990s.[58] Sarah Browne has found that the Edinburgh and Glasgow women's centres were 'sources of information, storing pamphlets and books' as well as places where women could attend workshops or learn more about the

[57] Leeds Women's Aid, *Leeds Women's Liberation Newsletter,* (July 1982), p.20.

[58] Browne, *Women's Liberation,* p.52

WLM.[59] This was also how Women's Aid activists used the women's centre. It was a place where resources such as the leaflets produced by SWA could be distributed. It was also somewhere Women's Aid could be visible to women who were not part of the WLM and who may not have heard of women's refuges. This was important as women needed to be able to access general information about domestic abuse services before they were ready to leave an abusive partner and seek refuge. Furthermore, Morna Burdon, who was the Information and Education Officer and later joint National Coordinator of SWA in the 1980s, recalled giving talks and training workshops at the women's centre in Edinburgh.[60] Other WLM groups also used the centre, and so this was a site at which personal connections could be forged with women from other feminist groups and discussions could be had either informally or within a workshop setting.

As has been explained in Chapter One, the women's centre that began in Malos' basement was vital to the development of Bristol Women's House Project (later Bristol Women's Aid). Although the Bristol Women's House Project and the centre itself moved out of the basement space, the centre remained an important connection between The Women's House Project, the local community and the Bristol WLM. The Bristol women's centre moved first to Lower Union Street in Broadmead and then to the Grove at Bristol's harbour. It had two other premises after this but closed in the late 1980s.[61] From the early days of the Bristol women's refuge there were strong connections with other local organisations and activist groups. Sometimes, these connections involved sharing physical space, for instance, there was a pregnancy testing service and a refuge space in the original women's centre. As Malos commented in an oral history interview for the Sisterhood and After Project: 'All kinds of things happened in our basement, you've just no idea!'[62]

This tradition continued as The Women's House Project had a dedicated desk in the new women's centre, where they provided an information point. Harwin recalled during interview that The Women's House Project moved into a separate office in 1978:

> We had our own special Women's Aid desk at the Women's Centre… at one point we realised that five workers crowding out the Women's Centre, which wasn't very big, was too much. So, we managed temporarily, for a year, we got a room in an office where Shelter were based… And so, that's where we

[59] Ibid.

[60] Morna Burdon, interview with the author, (2nd November 2020).

[61] Sue Bruley, *Women's Liberation at the Grass Roots*, p728.

[62] Malos, interview with Jolly.

> operated from, but we did kind of keep a toehold in the Women's Centre. People took messages there or referred on to our phone number, or sometimes we went in to meet women if they had literally come to the door. We were only about 10 minutes' walk away.[63]

It was not uncommon in the 1970s and 1980s for Women's Aid groups to share offices with other left leaning groups like Shelter in order to save money. Another example of this is that Shakti Women's Aid originally shared an office with the Edinburgh Trades Union Council in the late 1980s. Uma Kothari, who was a founding member of Shakti, recalled this as a welcome demonstration of solidarity, despite the differences between the two groups: 'The Trades Council, very male, they said: "Oh, you know, you can have a room in the back of our building… if anybody comes and bothers you or harasses you, don't worry, we're here"… There was just such a network around a certain kind of politics at the time.'[64]

As Harwin recalled, the Bristol Women's House Project were keen to maintain the connection with the centre, and by extension the local WLM, despite the necessity of moving to a larger space. At the time, some Bristol Women's Aid activists were anxious about this move, writing in the *Bristol Women's Liberation Group Newsletter* in December 1978 that:

> WE [sic] all feel unhappy at isolating ourselves physically from the Womens Centre and whilst one meeting a month in the Womens Centre may seem like a token gesture I think it is bound to make us feel closer to other things that are going on in Bristol Womens Movement. Physical contact <u>is</u> important.[65] [Emphasis in original].

Nonetheless, efforts were made to continue the connection through referrals from the centre, monthly meetings and weekly drop in services in the women's centre provided by the Women's House Project volunteers. They even offered other activists the use of their electric typewriter and duplicator.[66]

Another important space was the charity shop that Bristol Women's Aid established in the early 1980s. Harwin explained that the shop itself was run by volunteers and while it made a small amount of money for the organisation this was not it's primary purpose: 'In a sense

[63] Harwin, interview.

[64] Kothari, interview.

[65] 'Women's House Project', *Bristol Women's Liberation Group Newsletter,* (December 1978).

[66] Ibid.

it was a kind of decoy… it gave a facility for women to come in and, you know, ostensibly looking at the charity shop and, and ask for help or at least take information.'[67] For women who may have been nervous about their movements being watched by their abusive partner this was especially important. The charity shop was significant as it occupied a space between the everyday goings on in the streets of Bristol and Women's Aid.

The Bristol Women's Aid office was above this charity shop where they shared a space with Missing Link, a feminist charity which was established in 1982 'to provide a range of housing and support to women that either have acute or long term mental health needs.'[68] Missing Link went on to establish Next Link which provides the majority of domestic abuse services for women in Bristol today. Sharing office space was a way in which Women's Aid could forge connections with other feminist groups. However, this situation could also lead to tensions. For example, Andrea Tara-Chand recalled that the Northern Women's Aid Federation England office space was shared with Leeds Rape Crisis in the late 1980s:

> One of the women who was involved in Leeds Rape Crisis was fundamentally, um, she was a separatist feminist and really had no truck or no time for men and was very, very fundamentalist. [Name redacted] was heterosexual and I was lesbian. So, this woman was kind of continuously, kind, of, um, unhelpful and not nice to [name redacted] and [name redacted] and I were friends. But the politics were so strong and that's how strong the politics of difference within feminism was at the time.[69]

Chand's memory of the differences between feminists cautions against the assumption that the sharing of space always pointed to harmonious connections between women's groups. Putting WLM activists into close proximity could also lead to conflict and highlight the differences between more or less radical positions within the movement.

Like women's centres, Women's Aid offices could act as resource centres, and often had small libraries where books could be borrowed and their own publications and pamphlets could be purchased. The SWA office acted as a repository for key texts and offered to lend out monographs, newsletters and academic articles. This literature was for anyone interested but particularly Women's Aid workers and volunteers based in Edinburgh. A log of books that had been borrowed in 1983, demonstrates the range of material that was

[67] Harwin, interview.

[68] Missing Link Website Homepage, https://missinglinkhousing.co.uk/, [Accessed 26th July 2022].

[69] Andrea Tara Chand, interview with the author, (10th June 2022).

available at the time; a number of papers and books were authored by English activists and academics such as Liz Kelly, Elizabeth Wilson and Jalna Hanmer, there were also unpublished papers written by students from Dundee College of Education and Queen Margaret University, as well as older texts such as Frances Power Cobbe's *Wife Torture in England*.[70] SWA also had a subscription to several feminist periodicals.[71]

Burn Out and Limitations on Connection

One significant barrier to Women's Aid activists forming connections with other groups within the WLM was that they had limited time and energy. Running women's refuges was hard work and many simply did not have time for other activities. Activists could find themselves experiencing burn out. For instance, a woman named 'Janet' who had been part of the Women's House Project in Bristol wrote in her resignation letter in 1981: 'I just can't keep going any longer! Job, children and project are just too much at the moment... I am sorry I can't keep keeping on.'[72] Similarly, Lavender recalled 'eventually all my energies were swallowed up with setting up Women's Aid.'[73] Lavender, explained that she had to give up her involvement with Leeds Women's Aid after about two years because her teaching job during the day plus volunteering at the refuge on evenings and weekends became overwhelming and she developed glandular fever due to the stress. Amongst all these other responsibilities it is easy to see how there was not always time for maintaining links with the wider WLM. It is of great importance that historians appreciate the commitment and sacrifice that participation in activist groups like Women's Aid took. At times, historians can be overly critical of activists of the past without acknowledging that women were often juggling many other aspects of day to day life with their activism, viewed in this light their achievements seem all the more remarkable.

4.4 Links with other Anti-Violence Against Women Groups

Anti-Rape Campaigns

As additional groups campaigning against rape and other forms of violence against women and children became active in the late 1970s and 1980s activists began to discuss how

[70] 'Note of Books Borrowed from Office,' from the personal archive of Morna Burdon.

[71] 'Minutes of the Executive Group Meeting', Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter, (June 1977), (SWA/1/4/1977.06) Scottish Women's Aid Collection at the Glasgow Women's Library.

[72] 'Janet's letter of resignation to Ellen Malos', Ellen Malos Archive, (DM2/23/8/) Archive Box 112, Feminist Archive South at the University of Bristol Library.

[73] Lou Lavender, interview with the author, (7th January 2022).

Women's Aid should relate to them. This was not initially a concern, as Women's Aid groups were often the first anti-violence against women groups to be established in UK cities. However, the publication of Susan Brownmiller's influential book *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* in 1975 'really put rape on the agenda for the feminist movement in this country.'[74] Several former Women's Aid activists have mentioned that this was one of the first books they read about violence against women in general and rape in particular.[75] The first Rape Crisis Centre in the UK opened in London in 1976, five years after the first women's refuge. Rape Crisis Centres in Edinburgh and Leeds opened in 1978. In both cities, Women's Aid would at times refer women to Rape Crisis and vice versa depending upon the support they needed. Bristol did not have a Rape Crisis Centre until 2008 but it did have two anti-rape groups which were established in the late 1970s, as will be discussed below. Some Women's Aid activists felt that as an organisation with some funding and recognition by the late 1970s, they should be supporting other campaigns. In addition to this, Women's Aid activists felt that it was important to develop a better understanding of the links between domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women through the sharing of knowledge.

Clearly, the issues of rape and domestic abuse are deeply interrelated, considering that in England and Wales one in two rapes against women are committed by a partner or ex-partner and five in six by someone they know.[76] Marital rape was not recognised as a crime in Scotland until 1989 and 1991 in England and Wales.[77] From the establishment of the first women's refuge onwards, Women's Aid activists supported women who had been raped. Lavender helped to establish the first women's refuge in Leeds in 1973, she recalled that the women who came to refuge at this time sometimes described their husbands coming home from the pub and 'demanding their rights.'[78] Lavender explained that Women's Aid activists viewed rape as another example of the matrix of oppression of women by men.

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[74] Jalna Hanmer, interview with Jolly.

[75] Jalna Hanmer, interview with Jolly. Lou Lavender Interview with the Author. Lily Greenan, interview with Flora Pringle-Paterson, (2016), (SWA/4/22), Oral History Interviews, Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

[76] 'Statistics about sexual violence and abuse', Rape Crisis: England and Wales Website, <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/statistics-sexual-violence/> [Accessed 6/5/22].

[77] Aileen Christianson and Lily Greenan, 'Rape Crisis Movement in Scotland 1977-2000' in *Women and Cotemporary Scottish Politics*, p.72.

[78] Lavender, interview.

On the other hand, Lily Greenan felt that while individual Women's Aid activists made an effort to develop their understanding of rape, there could also be a tendency for these issues to be treated separately which endured into the 1990s. Greenan was a volunteer at Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre in the 1980s, a paid worker in the 1990s, and Chief Executive of SWA from 2006 to 2015. During interview, she described speaking with a Women's Aid activist from Lanarkshire in 1999 whilst managing the NHS-run Ending Violence and Abuse service:[79]

> So, I saw sexual violence as part of the picture with domestic violence always... and speaking to a Women's Aid worker from one of the local groups… I remember saying to her: 'So how many of the women that you're seeing have got a sexual assault history?' And she says, 'Oh I wouldn't know that…I don't think I've ever worked with a woman who was sexually assaulted by her partner' and I went…'If you're working with any woman who is being abused by a partner you… most of the women you've worked with will have experienced sexual assault. They're not going to tell you, if you don't ask them.' And it was that the, the approach was so nondirective that it relied on the women volunteering information and if she didn't know it was okay to tell you she'd been raped, she wasn't going to tell you![80]

The way in which domestic abuse was understood as one of several connected forms of violence against women and children was significant for the development of feminist theory, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, as well as the support victim/survivors received on the frontline.

Collaborations between Women's Aid and anti-rape groups were rather inconsistent in the 1970s and 1980s and were often based on local, personal connections, rather than a cohesive strategy. In Bristol, there was a particular connection between activists involved in the Bristol Anti-rape group and Bristol Women's Aid. Historian Jeska Rees has found that the issue of violence against women was contentious within the national WLM due to the differing analysis of the causes of violence offered by revolutionary and socialist feminists.[81] This conflict came to a head at the WLM's final National Conference in Birmingham in 1978 where the wording of the seventh demand, which was to focus on violence against women, was decided upon.[82] Finn Mackay's research has found that this

[79] EVA Service is a specialist NHS department for women in Lanarkshire who have experienced abuse, either as a child or as an adult.

[80] Greenan, interview with the author.

[81] Rees, *A Look Back at Anger*.

[82] The first four demands had been decided upon at the first WLM National conference in Oxford in 1970. The fifth and sixth demands were agreed at the conference in Edinburgh in 1974.

divide played out at the local level in a debate between the Bristol-based group WAR, which took a socialist feminist position and was established in 1976, and the Bristol Anti-Rape Group which took a radical feminist analysis and was established around the same time.[83] Mackay found that in 1977, the Bristol Anti-Rape Group refuted WAR's contention that rape was mainly a result of women's economic status, describing this as 'misleading and naïve.'[84]

According to Mackay, the Bristol Anti-Rape Group was aligned with the feminists who established the women's centre, including Women's Aid activists, while WAR was a splinter group of Wages for Housework. My research supports Mackay's understanding as in January 1977, Bristol Women's Aid and the Bristol Anti-Rape group ran a workshop jointly at a regional WLM conference for the Southwest.[85] The aim of the workshop was to 'put domestic violence to women, and rape, in a common perspective.'[86] This workshop led to more discussion between the groups and Ellen Malos and Frankie Rickford, a member of the Bristol anti-rape group, published an article in the socialist feminist magazine *Red Rag,* suggesting some ideas on the seventh demand of the WLM and how it should be worded.[87] They argued that the demand should not just make the case for legal changes but should also address wider societal assumptions. They further suggested that the demand acknowledge the detrimental effect of the threat of violence as well as violence itself.[88] The demand, quoted below, was accepted at the final WLM conference in Birmingham in 1978 in almost the same wording suggested by the two Bristol based groups:

> Freedom from intimidation by threat or use of violence or sexual coercion, regardless of marital status and an end to all laws, assumptions and institutions which perpetuate male dominance and men's aggression towards women.

Jeska Rees has found that there was fierce debate around the wording of this demand and that it originally began with the sentence 'Male violence against women is an expression of

[83] Mackay, *Radical Feminism,* p.83.

[84] 'Bristol Anti-Rape Group', *WIRES*, (1977) quoted in Mackay, *Radical Feminism,* p.88.

[85] Ellen Malos and Frankie Rickford, 'A Seventh Demand', *Red Rag*, 13, (1977), p.11. Ellen Malos was a founding member of Women's Aid in Bristol and Frankie Rickford part of the Bristol Anti-Rape Group.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

male supremacy and political control.'[89] This sentence was objected to by socialist feminists because it located the problem with men rather than a class-divided society.

Despite these divisions at local and national level, Women's Aid activists in Bristol had developed a positive working relationship with the Bristol Anti-rape Group in the late 1970s. Malos and Rickford felt that the issues were connected in that they were both 'extreme manifestations of an oppressive continuum in male/female relationships.'[90] This allowed them to come together to consider how rape and domestic abuse were interrelated issues and to work on theoretical understandings of violence. Furthermore, Malos' involvement in formulating the wording of the seventh demand demonstrates the continued participation of Women's Aid activists in the WLM.

In Edinburgh and Leeds there were connections between Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Centres beginning in the late 1970s. Occasionally, there were cross overs in the personnel of the groups, although Lavender remarked that most Leeds based activists would not have the energy to be involved in both groups.[91] Greenan recalled that there was some back and forth between the two groups in Edinburgh in the early 1980s, largely due to personal connections:

> Kathy [Kerr] was a founding member of Edinburgh Women's Aid... and she approached Rape Crisis and said she wanted to get involved because she was supporting women at Women's Aid who'd been raped by their partners and she felt like she didn't know enough to help them with that… That gave us, as a specific group of Rape Crisis workers, more of an intersection with Women's Aid in Edinburgh… Then my personal connection was through Lydia [Okroj]… her and I met through that gang in the pub… and we would contact each other for help, or advice or a steer. If I got a call from a woman whose assailant was her partner or ex-partner I would occasionally ring Lydia, or speak to her when I saw her… Or we just referred women direct to Women's Aid and vice versa. She would kind of collar me if there was stuff going on with women that she was supporting.

These connections between Women's Aid and Rape Crisis continued and in the late 1980s, Harwin recalled advising Rape Crisis members on the setting up of a national federation similar to WAFE in her role as Chief Executive. The fact that these conversations were more about structure may reflect an increasing formalisation of both organisations since the 1970s. In the earlier period, from 1975 to 1980, the connections made were often

[89] Rees, *A Look Back at Anger*, p.348.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Lavender, interview.

through individual women like Malos and Kerr reaching out to work with one of the women active in the anti-rape groups. These conversations helped to develop Women's Aid activists' understanding of rape, which had an effect on the support they provided to victim/survivors.

Violence Against Women

From around 1980, there was a shift in Women's Aid to talking about 'violence against women' as an umbrella term. This may have been partly due to the influence of the group WAVAW who argued that 'the whole range of men's violence to women – from the insistence on crippling 'fashions' through to incidents of rape and murder – operate as threats to our lives and wellbeing.'[92] WAVAW was formed during a conference in 1980 which had been initiated by Leeds Rape Crisis.[93] The conference addressed issues of sexual harassment, sex work, domestic abuse and sexual violence. There were several WAVAW groups in the UK and North America but they were especially influential in Leeds. As has already been noted, local context was extremely important to the way in which networks between WLM activists were formed and maintained. As historian Sue Bruley has noted, this is particularly significant in Leeds, where anti-violence against women campaigns had a 'special poignancy' due to the thirteen murders of women between 1975 and 1980 in Yorkshire and Manchester by Peter Sutcliffe, who was dubbed the 'Yorkshire Ripper' by the media.[94] WAVAW were angry not only at the murders themselves but at the police response. WAVAW released the following statement after the police suggested a curfew for women in the wake of the murder of Jaqueline Hill in November 1980:

> We are angry at being told to stay at home after dark. Why must we women restrict our lives when it's men who are to blame? Many women work at night: they can't stay at home. Anyway, home may not be safe for many of us. A quarter of all the crimes reported are wife battering... Everywhere women are murdered, raped and battered daily.[95]

Given that six women were murdered and four attacked in Leeds, local Women's Aid activists were all too aware of these horrific events. Dorothy Moss, who worked for Leeds

[92] Dusty Rhodes, Sandra McNeill and Sheila Jeffreys, 'Introduction', *Women Against Violence*, p.6.

[93] Bruley, *Women's Liberation*, p.731.

[94] Ibid.

[95] WAVAW, 'Women Angry at Male Violence, Say: Resist the Curfew', *Leeds Other Paper*, quoted in *Women Against Violence,* p.12.

Women's Aid in the early 1980s, recalled that it was difficult to ignore the issue of violence against women:

> It was really pretty bad around that time. It was Ripper time, it was Ripper time as well and there were deaths in Chapeltown as well. Um, it was pretty in your face stuff really… You couldn't not see it. Yeah? It wasn't subtle.[96]

WAVAW's activities in Leeds included organising a Reclaim the Night march in 1977, campaigning against rape, pornography, other sexist media and sex shops.[97] Additionally, some women were involved with the radical feminist group Angry Women. Tara-Chand for instance recalled that:

> WAVAW was the above the radar group that was very public but there was also an under the radar group that was called Angry Women… and I was involved in Angry Women when I was in Sheffield, we used to coordinate things nationally where all, women in different towns around the country would go out at midnight and put superglue in the locks of sex shop window, doors and we'd stick stickers on the window saying 'pornography is theory and rape is practice.'[98]

Moss similarly remembered that in Leeds: 'People had day jobs and they had night jobs… They would be taking direct action in the evening and be running a women's professional organisation during the day.'[99]

In the pages of the *Leeds Women's Liberation Movement Newsletter* of the early 1980s the activities of the WAVAW group were rather prominent. For example, in the September 1981 newsletter there was a full page encouraging women to become involved in the WAVAW campaign against sex shops in Leeds.[100] Interestingly, under this call to action the phone numbers for Leeds Women's Aid and Leeds Rape Crisis are listed.[101] This positioning of the issue of sex shops alongside organisations supporting victim/survivors of domestic abuse and rape suggested that they were connected problems and part of a shared movement.

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[96] Dorothy Moss, interview with the author, (3rd June 2022).

[97] Mackay, *Radical Feminism*, pp.74-76. The first Reclaim the Night march in the UK took place in Edinburgh in 1977.

[98] Tara-Chand, interview.

[99] Moss, interview.

[100] 'Close the Sex Shop', *Leeds Women's Liberation Newsletter*, (September 1981), p.3.

[101] Ibid.

In 1985, the newsletter reported that Airedale Women's Aid supported WAVAW during a hearing organised by Leeds City Council about the opening of a new sex shop.[102] WAVAW's position was that sex shops and the selling of pornography: 'Legitimates the idea – promotes the idea – that violence to women is sexy and women like rape anyway.'[103] Airedale Women's Aid was set up by Hanmer and others in the nearby city of Bradford. Women's Aid's activists spoke at the hearing arguing that they were against sex shops 'on the grounds that men often buy porn outside their own town but their wives suffer the results.'[104]

At the WAFE conference in Leeds in May 1981, Women's Aid activists expressed a desire to make more connections between different forms of violence against women. This was perhaps reflective of the wider concern of de-politicisation and the growing influence of WAVAW in the city. The conference attendees resolved that:

> Women's Aid groups should discuss and make themselves aware of other aspects of violence against women e.g. sexual harassment, rape, incest, as women coming into the refuges may also have experienced some of these as may women in the support group. Women may experience more than one form of violence and we have a responsibility to show if this is the case and the links that there are… That local groups try and meet with other groups in their area working around violence against women e.g. Rape Crisis, Rape Action groups and Women Against Violence Against Women groups. There is a lot of information and skills that we can share and be more effective if we are working together.[105]

Moreover, there was a feeling at the conference that Women's Aid groups had a responsibility to support other groups as it had already obtained some funding and was 'a force to be reckoned with, an accepted political presence.'[106] In this way, Women's Aid activists sought to use their so-called 'acceptability' not just for their own benefit but to assist other groups which were taking more radical political action. This was one way in which Women's Aid could continue to feel a part of the WLM and the burgeoning activism around violence against women. Although, there was some collaboration happening already on a limited basis, as we have seen, the above extract seems to suggest

[102] Sandra McNeil, 'You've never seen anything like it in your lives: A personal report of the first council hearing against sex shops', *Leeds Women's Liberation Newsletter*, (September 1985), p.5.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid.

[105] 'Papers for Women's Aid Conference (May 1981)', (FAN/CONF/13), Conference Box 13, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[106] Ibid.

this was not standard practice in 1981 but was something they were hoping to work towards.

Collaboration with WAVAW went both ways and there was a workshop dedicated to Women's Aid at the first national WAVAW conference, which took place in London in November 1981. A representative of Lewisham Women's Aid named 'Jo' contributed a paper for the workshop. This was seen as an opportunity to interest more women in Women's Aid's work and to reinforce its connection to other anti-violence against women campaigns:

> The aim of this paper is to explain what Women's Aid is and does, and how I see our activities as *a part of* the fight against male violence. It is also to highlight some criticisms which are made of the way Women's Aid operates, to give some response to the criticisms, but hopefully to open it all up to discussion.[107] [emphasis in original]

Jo's paper addressed the criticism that Women's Aid had received from other WLM activists that they were 'copping out' or 'reformist' due to their work with statutory agencies like the DHSS and social services.[108] However, due to practical matters, such as the council's 'virtual monopoly' on the type of large and secure housing suitable for a refuge, she argued they had little real choice in the matter.[109] Jo further pushed back against the characterisation of Women's Aid as reformist, pointing out that they organised collectively and resisted outside agencies pressure to change this.[110] While Women's Aid groups did have to have ongoing, working relationships with the state, this did not mean they watered down their politics when working with them. 'If we're reformist' Jo quipped 'someone had better tell the councils of this fact.'[111]

In September 1987, the Scottish Women's Liberation Conference: Working Against Violence Against Women was held in Glasgow. The idea for the conference was put forward by a meeting of Scottish Rape Crisis Centres.[112] After this meeting, a letter was circulated to the Rape Crisis Centres and Women's Aid groups across Scotland,

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[107] 'Jo', 'Women's Aid and the Fight Against Male Violence', in *Women Against Violence*, p.241.

[108] Ibid, p.244.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid.

[112] *Report of the Scottish Women's Liberation Conference – Working Against Violence Against Women*, from Lily Greenan's personal archive, pp.2-3.

demonstrating the continued relationship between the two groups.[113] 260 women attended the conference, including representatives from Women's Aid, Rape Crisis and Action Against Incest groups.[114] The conference hoped to fulfil 'the need for women working against violence against women to meet, exchange ideas, identify the connections between different kinds of violence and to link single issues unto a united movement.'[115] Greenan recalled this conference an important space in which the anti-violence against women movement in Scotland began to plan future strategies.[116]

A range of issues were discussed at this conference, however, it is also pertinent to note silences. For example, the issue of pornography is described in the conference report as 'conspicuous by its absence.'[117] This is interesting when contrasted with the work of WAVAW in Leeds which had a prominent focus on pornography as a form of violence against women. The Scottish Black Women's Group were consulted about the discussion of race within the conference, and it was suggested that race be discussed during every session, rather than in one specific workshop. However, this approach does not appear to have been entirely successful as one woman gave the feedback that, although the conference organisers planned for discussions around 'racism, classicism, heterosexism and oppression in disability, this didn't really happen.'[118] One woman also reported that at the conference social she had been subject to homophobic comments by another attendee.[119] Therefore, while there were clear attempts to foster connection between different feminist networks, there were some for whom the conference did not feel a wholly inclusive space.

Child Sexual Abuse

A detailed examination of Women's Aid's connections to activism to raise awareness of child sexual abuse perpetrated by family members or 'incest' as it was known in the 1970s and 1980s, is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, Women's Aid activists did support both male and female children who had experienced various forms of violence and abuse.

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[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Greenan, interview with the author.

[117] *Report of the Scottish Women's Liberation Conference*, p.3.

[118] Ibid. p. 29.

[119] Ibid. p.28.

Oral history interviews indicated that refuge workers did not always feel equipped to address this. In the 1980s, for instance, Fiona Buchanan, described the difficulty of situations where children staying in the Dundee Women's Aid refuge had been sexually abused:

> I can remember one woman in the refuge telling me that her five children had all been sexually abused by their dad… And just, that sort of powerless feeling of thinking: 'I don't know what to do here. I don't know how to approach this, I don't know how to work with these children around that at all'. And finding nothing. There was nothing out there. And yeah, so when I became National Children's Worker we actually produced an 'information kit about incest', it was called, which was one of the first publications in the UK about child sexual abuse.[120]

Thus, encountering issues in refuges could act as an impetus for activists to develop resources and feminist thought on different forms of abuse. Buchanan went on to become an academic, focusing on research into the impact of domestic abuse on mothers and children. Awareness of child sexual abuse was increasing in this period and in 1982 Sarah Nelson, who was a social worker turned journalist with an interest in sociology, published a book drawing attention to the issue.[121] Nelson cites Fran Wasoff who had argued that laws against child sexual abuse must protect children from any adult 'responsible for her care and nurturance' not just biological parents.[122] The book was reviewed in the *Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter* and Wasoff's work in this area demonstrates that activists involved in Women's Aid often became involved in later campaigns.[123] Discussions of child sexual abuse were also published in feminist periodicals such as *Trouble & Strife* in the 1980s and 1990s.[124]

The Development of New Feminist Projects in the late 1980s/ 1990s

Throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, many new feminist groups addressing a variety of issues connected to violence against women emerged in the UK. Women's Aid was now part of an identifiable violence against women sector and often had close connections with newer organisations. In fact, the same women were often involved in several different groups across their life times. In Edinburgh, in 1992, the feminist organisation Zero

[120] Buchanan, interview.

[121] Sarah Nelson, *Incest: Fact and Myth*, (Edinburgh: Stramullion, 1982).

[122] Ibid. p.14.

[123] 'The Worst Secret in the World', *Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter*, (1982), p.14.

[124] For example see Liz Kelly, 'Weasel Words', *Trouble & Strife*, 33, (1996).

Tolerance began with an innovative and influential poster campaign, which used striking images and slogans to confront people's assumptions about violence against women and highlight the ubiquity of the problem.[125] The campaign was originally conceived of by the Edinburgh District Council Women's Unit, demonstrating how the work of organisations like Women's Aid had helped to put anti-violence against women on the agenda of statutory agencies. Work with the state also occurred in Leeds in the 1990s; for instance, in 1994, the Help, Advice & the Law Team (HALT) was set up as a pilot project in Leeds to provide legal support and advocacy to victims of domestic abuse. HALT worked closely with Leeds Women's Aid.[126] In Bristol, there was also a diversification of types of support available, for example, the organisation Womankind was established in 1986 to offer free therapy to women and worked with victim/survivors.[127] Other related projects, such as work with male perpetrators of domestic abuse and developing multi-agency approaches to address cases of domestic abuse will be discussed later in the thesis. These are just a few examples which demonstrate the way in which violence against women expanded and diversified during this period.

4.5 Ties and Tensions with other WLM groups

Overall, Women's Aid activists fostered positive relationships with other WLM groups. Nevertheless, there were also points of tension due to differences in ideologies or approaches. One example of a less than harmonious relationship is the one that developed between Women's Aid and WFH in Bristol. Italian feminist Mariarosa Dalla Costa developed her theory of housework, including the need for a wage, after a trip to London in June 1971 where she discussed these ideas with Selma James, who shared her 'radical-Marxist interpretation of women's liberation.'[128] James was originally from the US but lived in London for some time and led the WFH campaign in England. The two women played a key role in setting up the International WFH Campaign in 1972, which is still active today.[129] There were also splinter organisations including WAR, which has already

[125] 'Our Original Campaign', Zero Tolerance Website, <https://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/about-our-prevention-campaign/> [Accessed 28/11/23]

[126] 'Leeds Women's Aid Timeline of Achievements', p.2.

[127] 'Who We Are', Women Kind Website, <https://www.womankindbristol.org.uk/who-we-are/> [Accessed 28/11/23]

[128] Maud Bracke, 'Between the Transnational and the Local: mapping the trajectories and contexts of the Wages for Housework campaign in 1970s Italian feminism', *Women's History Review*, 22:4, (2013), p.625.

[129] Hague, *History and Memories*, p.45.

been mentioned, and Black Women for Wages for Housework, of which there was a branch in Bristol.

Several women who were involved with Bristol Women's Aid have expressed misgivings about WFH's political analysis. Elizabeth Bird, who was involved in the WLM in Bristol and Glasgow, recalled Bristol women's centre being the site of some 'big rows, big arguments, particularly over Wages for Housework.'[130] Gill Hague, an active member of the Bristol Women's Aid support group, has written that 'the rest of the women's movement often viewed Wages for Housework as leading to an individualistic, narrow or impractical approach.'[131] Bird even recalled hearing from a friend in Glasgow that James had come to stay at their house only to be thrown out because she had so enraged them. Bird recounted this story humorously commenting that 'they did cause a lot of descension everywhere.'[132] Moreover, Jendayi Serwah, who was the coordinator of the Bristol Women's Aid office in the late 1980s, recalled being taken to a WFH meeting by fellow activist Jasbir Kaur and being bemused by and sceptical of the idea.[133]

Kaur was involved with both Bristol Women's Aid and the Black Women for Wages for Housework group, suggesting the groups were somewhat intertwined. However, solidarity between WFH and Bristol Women's Aid seems to have been of an uneasy nature in the late 1980s. For instance, on one occasion in January 1986, WFH attended a vigil organised by Bristol Women's Aid for a woman who had been killed by her husband at an Asian women's refuge in London.[134] On the surface this action seemed to be a positive example of one WLM group supporting another. However, Bristol Women's Aid wrote a letter to the WFH campaign office in Bristol shortly afterwards to express that they felt 'the presence of a Wages for Housework Campaign banner at the vigil raised a demand that was quite different from those the vigil was organised to raise and deflected from the impact of the vigil.'[135] This points to a wider question of what was considered the right sort of feminist solidarity. Of course, activist groups brought their own ideas to any

[130] Elizabeth Bird, interview, 'Personal Histories of the Second Wave of Feminism Oral History Project', *Feminist Archive South*, (2000-2001).

[131] Hague, *History and Memories*, p.45.

[132] Bird, interview.

[133] Serwah, interview.

[134] 'Letter to Wages for Housework from Bristol Women's Aid (10th January 1986)', Ellen Malos Archive, (DM2/23/8/), Archive Box 112 , Folder 5, Feminist Archive South at Bristol University Special Collections.

[135] Ibid.

collaboration, and this did not always create a harmonious relationship. In other words, WFH were welcome to offer solidarity but not on the terms that they wanted to offer it.

One specific flash point was the work that Women's Aid did with the police; for example, in April 1987, Kaur decided to boycott a Bristol Women's Aid conference for social workers which featured a policewoman on the panel. On the morning of the conference Kaur distributed a statement signed 'Black Women for Wages for Housework':

> Jasbir Kaur is boycotting to-day's Women's Aid conference on 'Domestic Violence – Prevention and Intervention' because it is giving a platform, credibility and therefore more power to the police, whose policies promote – not prevent – domestic violence, and whose intervention is against Black and other working class women who are up against violence in the home and outside.[136]

Kaur felt that Bristol Women's Aid's claims to be an anti-racist organisation were contradicted by their willingness to include a policewoman on a panel at the conference. Kaur's argument involved an intersectional analysis; arguing that due to racism Black women were oppressed by multiple forms of violence including police brutality and domestic abuse.[137] Kaur's statement also levelled criticism of the professionalisation of Women's Aid and the exclusion of women who were at the grassroots of activism and with lived experience of domestic abuse; writing that the conference 'puts Bristol Women's Aid in the State camp, where a lot of feminists have been sheltering, building careers at the movement's expense.'[138] Kaur's objections occurred in a decade that had seen increasing tension between Black communities and the police in Bristol. In April 1980, the event known as the 'St Paul's riot' occurred and made headlines nationally.[139] This incident can more accurately be described as an uprising, due to the fact it was an act of resistance to racism rather than random violence. Tensions were high due to police harassment and violence directed at Black people in the area. Kaur gave several examples of police brutality towards Black women in her statement.

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[136] 'Statement from Black Women for Wages for Housework', (10th April 1987), Ellen Malos Archive, (DM2/23/8/) Archive Box 112, Folder 5, Feminist Archive South at Bristol University Special Collections.

[137] Ibid.

[138] Ibid.

[139] 'The St. Pauls Riot', Black Bristol Website, <https://www.blackbristol.com/st-pauls-riots> [Accessed 11th August 2023].

In a heated meeting to discuss the boycott, other Bristol Women's Aid activists expressed hurt that Kaur did not come to them with this issue.[140] Kaur commented that she had brought it up before and her concerns had not been appreciated. The statement written by Kaur is strongly worded and, in the meeting, she explained it was the result of built-up frustration from the previous two years working for Bristol Women's Aid.[141] The minute taker for this meeting noted that it had been very hard to take accurate minutes for the meeting, presumably because those in attendance were speaking quickly and perhaps over each other due to the emotional nature of the conversation. One woman in attendance commented that 'there are things in there (the statement) which are hurtful to me and hurtful to Women's Aid.'[142] There was a sense from some other Women's Aid activists that Kaur had been disloyal to Bristol Women's Aid in her actions and that her criticisms had a personal impact. This highlights the difficult position that a Women's Aid activist like Kaur, who did not believe in working with the police, could be in. Kaur's intentions had not been to be disloyal but to criticise Bristol Women's Aid in the hope it could do more to acknowledge the positionality of Black victim/survivors vis-à-vis the police. Kaur's involvement with Black Wages for Housework may have made this easier, as she had the support of another group which may have helped with feelings of alienation this incident brought up.

In a letter to Black Women for Wages for Housework, Bristol Women's Aid responded to some of the criticisms laid out in the boycott letter. They stated that: 'However much we recognise the existence of such police violence, we believe that we have also to attempt, as an organisation, to influence those state agencies that women we work with come into contact with.'[143] Moreover, they argued that having someone from the police on the panel was an opportunity to publicly challenge them about their policies and practices.[144]

As Women's Aid groups professionalised, they increasingly worked with the police and other statutory agencies through the 1980s and 1990s, often delivering training on

[140] 'Confidential Minutes for Employment Group and paid workers only' (15th April 1987), Ellen Malos Archive: (DM2/23/8/), Archive Box 112, Folder 5, Feminist Archive South at Bristol University Special Collections.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Ibid.

[143] 'Letter to Black Women for Wages for Housework from Bristol Women's Aid' (8th June 1987), Ellen Malos Archive, (DM2/23/8/), Archive Box 112, Folder 5, Feminist Archive South at Bristol University Special Collections.

[144] Ibid.

domestic abuse. Julie Bindel has recently highlighted the work of Jalna Hanmer on police policy, as part of her obituary, writing:

> Her efforts resulted in changes to policing policy in Yorkshire and nationally, including a specialist unit of trained officers (the start of Domestic Violence Units), and the directive that guidelines be issued to all officers attending domestic violence callouts. Additionally, police officers were mandated to classify domestic violence as a crime rather than a family dispute or a civil matter, and to offer information on support available, such as women's aid refuges, to the victim.[145]

During an interview for the Sisterhood and After project Hanmer reflected on this work, saying:

> The women were really stuck if the police weren't prepared to do anything about this man, then he could continually assault her with impunity... So from my point of view it was totally practical, if we could just get them to shift a bit on what they did, women would really be helped greatly. I know that a lot of the Movement couldn't understand why one was doing work on policing, and that was because of their view of the state, but it's not one I ever thought was hopeless, you know. I mean they're just people like us really… it's just a question of finding a way into affecting how people understand what's going on and who the real victim is and the vulnerability on the part of anyone needs help and support. And sometimes only the police can really provide that help and support.[146]

Women's Aid activists reflected that working with the police was not easy in the 1980s. Burdon, for instance, recalled explaining the ways in which domestic abuse perpetrators controlled their partners during a training session: 'I can always remember this policeman, about eight or ten of them in the room, and he just leaned back and he looked at it all and he went: "But I do six out of eight of these to my wife."'[147] Similarly, Tara-Chand recalled: 'I'd set up a domestic violence training programme for South Yorkshire Police which was horrendous. Absolutely horrendous, oh god, it was so awful… They just laughed and they just said: "Oh I'll take this home for the wife." And quite literally I was unable to engage them in any thinking at all about, um, about the impact of domestic violence on women.'[148] Burdon and Tara-Chand emphasised that these were early experiences and that police have

[145] Julie Bindel, 'Jalna Hanmer Obituary', *The Guardian*, 22nd June 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jun/22/jalna-hanmer-obituary> [Accessed 11th August 2023]

[146] Hanmer, interview with Jolly.

[147] Morna Burdon, interview with Isabelle Introna, 3rd August 2016, (SWA/4/14), Oral History Interviews, Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

[148] Tara-Chand, interview.

come a long way since then. Nonetheless, it demonstrates how challenging it was to build these connections and it is understandable why some WLM activists felt it was not worthwhile. Black women in particular were all too aware of police brutality and some, like Kaur, were not convinced by the pragmatic approach. Some women simply could not envision the police as potential allies in the struggle against violence against women.

Similarly, Reclaim the Night marches have received criticism for their lack of sensitivity to issues of racist policing. These marches were designed to protest the idea that women should not expect to be safe when out at night and struck a particular cord in Leeds when the police suggested a curfew for women as a reaction to the Yorkshire Ripper murders.[149] Natalie Thomlinson, Finn Mackay and others have found that there was considerable criticism of the marches when they went through areas with a significant Black population, such as Chapeltown in Leeds.[150] Mackay has pointed out that this route was chosen as women had been found murdered in this area and many of the activists involved lived close by.[151] However, there were concerns that the marches would be interpreted as a call for an increased police presence, which could make the streets even less safe for Black women and that the march raised the racist 'spectre of the myth of the Black rapist whose primary victims were white women.'[152] Although the Leeds march was not intended to encourage an increased police presence, nor to harm or discriminate, there was, as Thomlinson has argued, an 'insensitivity, a failure to think through the ramifications of their actions.'[153]

Nonetheless, Black feminist organisations have also had to be pragmatic with their approach towards the police, albeit probably with a greater sense of cynicism. For example, as the Southall Black Sisters gained increasing respect beyond just feminist or activist spaces they had more opportunities to work with statutory agencies. Pragna Patel has explained that in the wake of the Stephen Lawrence case there was a sudden increase

[149] A thorough history of Reclaim the Night can be found in Finn Mackay, *Radical Feminism*.

[150] Thomlinson, *Race*, pp.169-170. Mackay, *Radical Feminism*, pp.82-98.

[151] Mackay, *Radical Feminism*, p.92.

[152] Thomlinson, *Race*, p.169.

[153] Ibid. p.70.

in requests for Southall Black Sisters to address police conferences on issues such as rape, domestic violence and forced marriage.[154] Patel wrote that:

> These requests have led to animated debates as to how far we can or should work with the police… our cases reveal a profound unwillingness amongst local rank-and-file officers to accept the charge that the police are institutionally racist and sexist… yet the problem for us is that without some kind of engagement, however ineffective, we close off even the remote possibility of influencing police policy… There are no easy answers.[155]

Debates about the interconnected issues of race, police brutality and the reliance on the criminal justice system to reduce violence against women remain unresolved up until the present day. The murder of Sarah Everard by a serving Metropolitan police officer, along with the heavy handed policing of a vigil organised to mourn her death in 2021, have reinvigorated debates about the fitness of the police to prevent violence against women.[156] The image of Patsy Stevenson being forced to the ground by a police officer during the vigil will be enduring for many who followed these events.[157] In addition to this, cases of racist police brutality in the US including the murder of George Floyd in 2020 have sparked increased debates around racist police brutality around the world, including in the UK.[158] In the US, Beth Richie has criticised feminists' overreliance on legal reform and the criminal justice system to tackle violence against women, otherwise known as 'carceral feminism', arguing that marginalised women are in just as much danger as ever.[159] Gina Dent, Erica R. Meiners, Beth Richie and Angela Davis' recent book details the arguments for 'abolition feminism', which advocates for defunding the criminal justice system.[160] In

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[154] Stephen Lawrence was a Black British teenager from London who was murdered in a racially motivated attack while waiting for a bus in April 1993. The case led to a public inquiry and altered attitudes towards racism and police practices in the UK.

[155] Pragna Patel, 'The tricky blue line: black women and policing' in *From Homebreakers to Jailbreakers,* p.162.

[156] Jamie Grierson, 'Met police breached rights of organisers of Sarah Everard vigil, court rules', *The Guardian*, (11th March 2022), <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/mar/11/met-police-breached-rights-of-organisers-of-sarah-everard-vigil-court-rules> [Accessed 11th August 2023].

[157] Kate Kellaway, 'Patsy Stevenson: "We were angry at being told we couldn't mourn the death of a woman"', *The Guardian*, (7th December 2021), < https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/dec/07/patsy-stevenson-interview-everard-vigil-arrest-faces-of-year> [Accessed 11th August 2021].

[158] Vikram Dodd and Aamna Mohdin, 'George Floyd case reignites calls to tackle racial injustice in UK policing', *The Guardian*, (21st April 2021), < https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/apr/21/george-floyd-case-reignites-calls-to-tackle-racial-injustice-in-uk-policing> [Accessed 11th August 2021].

[159] Beth Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation* (New York: NYU Press, 2012).

[160] Gina Dent, Erica R. Meiners, Beth Richie and Angela Davis, *Abolition. Feminism. Now*. (London: Penguin, 2022).

the UK, Lola Olufemi has written that: 'Carceral responses to sexual violence fail to address the root causes of the problem…Simply criminalising sexual offences will not bring about the wholesale transformation of society that feminism seeks.'[161] Moreover, Karen Boyle has argued that 'the emphasis on crime had some side-effects antithetical to feminist concerns, including a racialised emphasis on crime control' and that a criminal framework for understanding sexual violence does not always relate to the way in which women experience violence in their lifetimes.[162]

In the words of Patel 'there are no easy answers' to these questions and Women's Aid activists often did have reservations about engaging with the state back in the 1980s and continue to be key critics of public policy. However, when presented with the opportunity to make changes within the state most felt that they had to at least try and most would concede that there has been progress in the way in which the police respond to domestic abuse cases. That said, it is clear from recent scholarship that these debates will continue to be of upmost pertinence in the coming decades as we try to imagine and fight for different ways of being and doing.

4.6 Conclusion

> Women's groups have lost the sense of being *outside*. I think Women's Aid has always taken the money on its own terms and then tried to get away with it. But other organisations have been inhibited… Women's Aid, is, I think interesting because they are attempting to keep the balance between the grassroots organisation and paid workers, but it's a constant conflict.

In the above quotation feminist activist, Frances Carter, talks to Liz Kelly in the radical feminist journal *Trouble & Strife* about 'municipal feminism' in 1986.[163] Thus, Women's Aid has long been considered something of a special case in its ability to operate in between activist and statutory spaces, not quite inside and not quite outside. Considering what we have learned in this chapter, this may have been the result of Women's Aid's consistent reappraisal of their ideological position in relation to the WLM and feminist debates more generally. This was not always an easy line to tread and as we have seen Women's Aid activists were concerned about issues like professionalisation, cooperation

[161] Lola Olufemi, *Feminism Interrupted: Disrupting Power*, (London: Pluto Press, 2020), p.84. Also see Alison Phipps, *Me, Not You: The Trouble with Mainstream Feminism*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), p.127.

[162] Boyle, *#MeToo,* pp.56-57.

[163] Frances Carter talks to Liz Kelly, 'Spend, spend, spent?', *Trouble & Strife*, 8, (Spring 1986), pp.51-56.

with the state and de-politicisation from the mid-1970s onwards. They also faced criticism from other feminist groups; for instance, Black Women for Wages for Housework criticised Bristol Women's Aid's willingness to collaborate with the police who they saw as perpetrators of racism and violence. Many of these criticisms came from within Women's Aid itself, as a diverse range of women became involved with the fight against domestic abuse. Some wished to take a radical feminist approach, while others were just discovering feminism for the first time. As we have seen in Chapter Three, these debates often played out internally during Women's Aid national conferences in both England and Scotland. Women's Aid activists made pragmatic decisions about working with the state and professionalised their policies and procedures in order to ensure the wellbeing and rights of workers and victim/survivors were protected. Yet, throughout the 1980s and 1990s they continually reassessed whether these procedures aligned with Women's Aid's feminist aims through internal debate and efforts to maintain solidarity and knowledge exchange with a broader WLM network.

Women's Aid activists actively engaged with broader WLM networks by writing in feminist newsletters, attending WLM and violence against women conferences, and supporting other groups in their campaigns. The sharing of physical space in offices and women's centres proved an important way in which Women's Aid made connections, although on occasion this could lead to tensions. Personal connections played an important role in the building of these networks; for instance, information shared between friends from Rape Crisis and Women's Aid could help to develop their understanding of different forms of violence, thereby improving the support they could offer. These networks could have a national impact, as with the example of Bristol anti-rape and domestic abuse activists collaborating on the final WLM demand. Nonetheless, there were limits to the connections that Women's Aid made, not least due to the burn out experienced by activists who often gave inordinate amounts of their time and energy to Women's Aid.

As has been argued by previous historians of the WLM in the UK, paying attention to regional variance can make for a richer understanding of the way in which an organisation like Women's Aid operated. In Edinburgh, there was close cooperation between the Rape Crisis Centres and Women's Aid groups in the city as these were two of the most prominent centres of feminist activism during the 1980s. In Bristol, where there was perhaps a more crowded WLM landscape, there is more evidence of tensions with other groups, in particular WFH. In Leeds, the murders committed by Peter Sutcliffe created an environment where WAVAW could thrive and this led to important developments in the

thinking of Leeds Women's Aid activists. Analysing the connections between forms of violence against women was an important development in which Leeds-based activists played an central role. The importance of the development of a feminist theory of domestic abuse and the way in which this was strengthened through research networks will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 5 Research Networks: Developing a Feminist Theory of Domestic Abuse

5.1 Introduction

> If you came from a Women's Liberation background, a fundamental principle there was that principle of praxis - a word that you don't hear very much anymore - but that it was the interplay between theory and action. That was our raison d'être. So, the fact that there were so many women's liberationists who were founders of refuges, not everywhere and not all refuges, but the majority came out of that activism. You had, you know, groups of women where that was the way you did politics, to link theory and practice… Knowledge is a form of power but it's also a resource that can be used in the movement to end violence against women.
>
> (Liz Kelly, Interview with the author, 23rd December 2020).

Feminist principles were integral to the organisation of Women's Aid groups at local and national level. In this chapter, we will examine the ways in which the ideas which underpinned these principles were developed. Liz Kelly, a founding member of Leeway Women's Aid refuge in Norwich, and a leading feminist researcher, is someone whose work has long straddled the worlds of academia and activism. As the above statement illustrates, the women involved in establishing Women's Aid groups in the 1970s valued the development of a theoretical understanding of domestic abuse as well as direct action. Particularly from 1974, when the Select Committee on Violence in Marriage was convened by the British government, there was a growing understanding amongst Women's Aid activists that research had the power to win the hearts and minds of those in a position to provide support and create change. Self-described 'activist feminist academic', Jalna Hanmer, has reflected that: 'I always took the view that ideas matter and that the whole thing is about, this whole thing is about whose ideas are to prevail'.[1] This chapter, then, will argue that anti-domestic abuse activism in the UK at the end of the twentieth century, was about ideas as much as it was about political action or providing a service.

Women's Aid activists and national organisations were integral to the development of a feminist theory of domestic abuse due to their involvement with research networks and connections with feminist academics, and later statutory agencies, who were undertaking research into domestic abuse. This expands upon the scholarship of Eve Setch, who has argued that feminist thought around violence against women was developing in the 1980s

[1] Hanmer, interview with Jolly.

and that both Women's Aid and Rape Crisis activists contributed to this.[2] Importantly, Setch identified that feminists produced theory outside of traditional academic publishing, in spaces like feminist periodicals.[3] This chapter will expand our understanding of the process through which this occurred, with theory developed in activist spaces informing academic research and vice versa. It will further shed light on how those involved in Women's Aid understand their, at times, conflicting identities as academics, activists and feminists. During interviews, the prevailing principle amongst feminist researchers of violence against women was that knowledge should be used as a means to support activism to end violence against women, rather than an end in itself.

The history of women's participation in research and academic institutions will be examined in this chapter from the particular perspectives of feminist researchers of violence against women. Previous research has shown that there were considerable institutional changes in higher education in post-war Britain, such as the expansion of the female student population after 1970 and the move away from segregation by sex on university campuses by the end of the twentieth century. [4] As we shall see, these wider changes impacted the experience of those who researched domestic abuse from the 1970s to the 1990s. This chapter will expand upon the work of Mariam E. David and Elizabeth Bird into the development of Women's Studies and its origins within the WLM.[5] Academic networks and intellectual life were often important to the development of WLM groups and anti-domestic activism was no exception. By following one particular strand of feminist thought, violence against women, this chapter is able to chart in detail the ways in which theory was developed in grassroots activist spaces and then in academic institutions. It may be fruitful for future studies to focus on another strand of feminist thought, such as reproductive rights, to see if this followed a similar trajectory.

This chapter will further explore Black women's particular contributions to research into domestic abuse. It will add to a body of scholarship about Black women's experiences

[2] Setch, *Women's Liberation Movement*, p.193.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Carol Dyhouse, *Students: A Gendered History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

[5] Miriam E. David, *Feminism, Gender and Universities,* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014). Elizabeth Bird, 'Women's Studies and the women's movement in Britain: origins and evolution, 1970–2000', *Women's History Review*, 12:2, (2003).

studying, teaching and researching in the UK academy. [6] Deborah Gabriel and Shirley Tate for instance position 'academia as a space dominated by Whiteness and patriarchy, where women of colour must develop strategies to survive and thrive amid raced and gendered discrimination.'[7] As recently as 2019, there were only twenty-five UK-based Black female Professors and it was found that white academics are almost two and a half times more likely to be Professors than their Black counterparts.[8] Exploring Black women's experiences in higher education historically is an important way in which to understand barriers that still exist within academic institutions today.

Before the 1970s, there was very little research into domestic abuse. However, the significant media attention that the Chiswick women's refuge received in 1971 sparked interest from sociologists, criminologists and psychologists. When the government began to take an interest in the issue and the Select Committee on Violence in Marriage was convened there was concern amongst Women's Aid activists that research without a feminist analysis would be favoured for funding. Therefore, around this time, the NWAF organised a Research Group of Women's Aid activists from around Britain. In 1976, NWAF published a pamphlet by Elizabeth Wilson, a member of this group, entitled *The Existing Research into Battered Women*. Wilson was particularly critical of research that used an individualised, psychological explanation of domestic abuse. NWAF and SWA were adamant that this was a societal problem; a product of the general oppression of women by men. Wilson writes that 'the National Women's Aid Federation should discuss how we can counteract false ideas about battering and publicise our own work and ideas'.[9]

In the following two decades much work was done by feminist researchers in order to develop a clearer picture of how and why domestic abuse happened. This involved the development of new language to describe violence against women and new methodological approaches that aimed to empower the women and children whose lives

[6] *Inside the Ivory Tower: Narratives of women of colour surviving and thriving in British academia*, ed. Deborah Gabriel and Shirley Anne Tate (Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books, 2017). Nicola Rollock, *Staying Power: The career experiences and strategies of UK Black female professors* (London: UCU, 2019). Shawanda Stockfelt, 'We the minority-of-minorities: a narrative inquiry of black female academics in the United Kingdom,' *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 39: 7, (2018), pp. 1012–1029. Heidi Safia Mirza, 'Black Women in Higher Education: Defining a Space/Finding a Place' and Naz Rassool, 'Black Women as 'Other' in the academy' in *Feminist Academics: Creative Agents For Change*, ed. Louise Morley and Val Walsh (London: Taylor & Francis, 1995).

[7] Gabriel and Tate, *Inside the Ivory*, p.2.

[8] Rollock, *Staying Power*, pp.4-6.

[9] Elizabeth Wilson, *The Existing Research Into Battered Women* (London: NWAF, 1976), p.20.

were being researched. Centres for the study of violence against women such as the Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit (CWASU) at London Metropolitan University and the Violence Abuse and Gender Relations Research Unit (VAGRRU) at the University of Bradford were established in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These centres became part of a network of researchers studying violence and their objectives were to be outward looking, to work with statutory agencies such as the police and social services, as well as at times collaborating with local and national Women's Aid groups. This was in order to create research that would be useful and relevant to victim/survivors of domestic abuse and those who supported them at grassroots level. There was some concern amongst Women's Aid activists that academic researchers could be too divorced from real life problems. However, several women interviewed for this chapter managed to maintain links to their activist roots whilst also forging successful academic careers. As theoretical understandings of domestic abuse became more sophisticated, there was also a diversification in the type of research undertaken. For example, research into how domestic abuse affected Black women received more consideration from the 1980s onwards, as did the experiences of children. On the whole, researchers were slow to recognise the particular experiences of some groups such as lesbian, disabled and older women, although, there was discussion of these from the 1990s, particularly in the feminist periodical *Trouble & Strife*.

This chapter will begin with an overview of the connection between the WLM and the development of feminist research and academia. This is important in understanding the way in which Women's Aid developed with links both to activist and academic spaces. Secondly, there is a discussion of oral history interviews I conducted with fourteen women and one man whose work in the area of domestic abuse has spanned both activism and academia.[10] In particular, the interviewees' understanding of their own identity as both academics and activists and how this may have complicated their sense of a feminist self is examined. The subsequent section demonstrates the way in which research undertaken at the Chiswick women's refuge and the funding of research by the DHSS intensified the need for Women's Aid to be an alternative voice to research that was being carried out without a feminist analysis. Next, we move into the 1980s to examine how feminist research into violence against women was developing at the same time as a broader feminist academic approach. The final section will explore the diversification of research

[10] Namely, Amina Mama, Claudia Bernard, Fiona Buchanan, Fran Wasoff, Jalna Hanmer, Jan Pahl, Jeff Hearn, Jo Sutton, Liz Kelly, Marianne Hester, Mukami McCrum, Ravi Thiara, Rowena Arshad, Sue Robertson and Uma Kothari.

from the late 1980s onwards, as more recognition was given to the fact that women were not a homogenous group. Black feminism and the theory of intersectionality was influential in the growing understanding that certain groups had particular needs and rights to support. The experiences of Black women in the British academy in the 1980s and 1990s will be explored in this final section through oral history interviews.

5.2 The Relationship Between the WLM, Feminist Theory and Research

An important context for the growth of feminist research was the expansion of higher education in the UK more broadly. The number of women entering higher education increased threefold from 1962 to 1980, by which point 40% of UK students were women.[11] This had been partly the result of the Robbins Report on Higher Education published in 1963, which recommended the immediate expansion of universities. In particular, it recommended opportunities for women and working-class people to be increased.[12] The report was commissioned by the British government which quickly accepted its main recommendations. As more women entered higher education, the culture of those institutions had to undergo considerable changes as feminists began to question the patriarchal structures embedded there. These changes created an environment in which the study of violence against women could begin to gain a foothold in academic institutions during the 1980s and flourished in the 1990s and 2000s.

The legacy of the student movements of the 1960s had created a culture of questioning power structures and breaking down hierarchies within university spaces that continued with the WLM in the 1970s and 1980s. WLM groups often had connections to universities and Bird and David have both cited the location of the first national WLM conference in Oxford's Ruskin College in 1970 as significant.[13] Bird has noted that: 'the origins of the British WLM were… closely connected to left-wing radical intellectual life, and to the revolutionary politics of the late 1960s', while Celia Hughes has examined the 'left milieux' of Labour clubs, socialist and Marxist societies and activist groups that existed in English universities in the late 1960s.[14] The Civil Rights Movement, Black Power

[11] Sue Bruley, 'Consciousness-Raising in Clapham; Women's Liberation as 'Lived Experience' in South London in the 1970s', *Women's History Review*, 22:5, (2013), p.720.

[12] Lord Robbins, 'Reflections on Eight Years of Expansion in Higher Education', *Higher Education*, 1:2, (1972), p.231.

[13] Ibid. David, *Feminism*, p.96.

[14] Hughes, *Young Lives,* pp.103-139. Bird, *Women's Studies*, p.265.

Movement and the Anti-apartheid Movement of the 1960s had all inspired a generation of young people in the UK. Several of the Women's Aid activists interviewed for this chapter mentioned having been involved in various left-wing activist groups before they became active in the anti-domestic abuse movement. Hughes has described 'the fluid connections and intellectual dynamic that came to characterise the VSC' (Vietnam Solidarity Campaign) at UK universities.[15] This type of fluidity between academic and activist spaces also characterised the experience of early feminist academics who were involved with activism whilst researching domestic abuse in the 1970s and 1980s. Moreover, female students often experienced sexism within universities in the postwar period and this could motivate them to create women-only networks as sources of support.[16] Feminist research networks, as we shall see, were significant because they created spaces in which academics and activists could support one another to develop theories of domestic abuse and violence against women.

A significant number of Women's Aid activists had connections to academic networks as students and lecturers. For others, an interest in researching violence against women was sparked by their activism and they entered higher education after being involved with Women's Aid for some time. This can be seen as part of a broader link between the WLM and the development of feminist academia or research. Like much feminist thought of the 1970s and 1980s, theoretical understandings of domestic abuse in the UK developed largely outwith academic institutions. This began in the late 1960s in WLM consciousness raising groups and later, as anti-domestic abuse activism developed, at Women's Aid refuges, offices and conferences. It also occurred in the pages of WLM newsletters and periodicals. As women engaged with victim/survivors in women's refuges and victim/survivors themselves examined their own experiences, they built a clearer picture of what caused domestic abuse. Moreover, by gaining a better understanding of the patriarchal structures that perpetuated violence and abuse it was thought that these could be more effectively challenged through activism. In this way, the relationship between activism and theory was a mutual and interlinked process, with academic research informing feminist direct service provision and consciousness raising, and the experiences and knowledge of Women's Aid activists and victim/survivors informing feminist research.

[15] Hughes, *Young Lives*, p.116.

[16] Ibid. pp.103, 139. Flaherty, *Women's Liberation Movement*, pp.62-63.

This is also true of other strands of feminist thought that developed within the WLM, as historian Lucy Delap has observed:

> Feminist thinkers have been engaged with the big ideas of modern times… yet theory was also produced at the cutting edge of protest, consciousness-raising and campaigning. It has often been intended to be useable in activism, as well as in personal life transformation.[17]

Similarly, in her 'collective biography of academic feminism', David has found that: 'For the budding academic feminists… it was the development of materials outside the university, and often part of a wider political project - the WLM- that first captured their imaginations and became their passions.'[18] It is this balancing of the theoretical and practical that characterised the development of anti-domestic abuse activism and early research. For many pioneering researchers of domestic abuse it was ideas developed in activist spaces that ignited their research. In this way, there was an interweaving of academic and activist networks, as those who developed academic careers maintained their links to Women's Aid. For example, Gill Hague remained involved with Bristol Women's Aid while undertaking academic research. Fran Wasoff and Ellen Malos were PhD students when they established Edinburgh and Bristol Women's Aid respectively. Liz Kelly and Nicola Harwin, on the other hand, both entered higher education after having being involved with Women's Aid for some time, and Hanmer became involved in anti-domestic abuse activism while teaching at the London School of Economics when one of her students asked to do a placement at the Chiswick refuge. Hanmer also supported the founding of Keighley Women's Aid whilst teaching at the University of Bradford.

5.3 Reflecting on Feminist Academic Identities

The women I interviewed who were both former Women's Aid activists and academics constructed their feminist identities as a central component of their sense of self. Lynn Abrams has described oral history interviews with women as at times a 'liberating platform for the articulation of the self and beyond that, a self embedded in a bigger story about the progress of women in the post-war era'. [19] The interviews for this chapter, then, provided an opportunity for reflection not only on the development of a feminist theory of domestic

[17] Lucy Delap, *Feminisms,* p.27.

[18] David, *Feminism, Gender and Universities*, p.96.

[19] Lynn Abrams, 'Heroes of Their Own Life Stories: Narrating the Female Self in the Feminist Age', *Cultural and Social History*, 16:2, (2019), p.206.

abuse since the 1970s but also how the interviewees' own work had contributed to this. For all the researchers interviewed, it was important to them that they be seen as feminists, not just academics or researchers. For example, Fiona Buchanan was a refuge worker and the first National Children's Worker of SWA. She is now a Senior Lecturer at the University of South Australia. Buchanan's academic work has focused on the effects of domestic abuse on mothers and children. When I asked her whether she would describe herself as a feminist she responded: 'Yes, absolutely!... I would call myself, now, a feminist researcher. Yeah, everything that I publish and so on comes from a feminist research perspective'.[20] Hanmer has described herself thus: 'I'm an activist, I'm an activist feminist academic, not the other way around'.[21] Jan Pahl published some of the earliest studies of domestic abuse and women's refuges in the UK and is now Professor Emeritus of Social Policy at the University of Kent. She was also a founding member of Canterbury Women's Aid. Pahl reflected on the idea of the feminist activist academic identity during interview: 'I'm all three. That is my life. Yeah. Um, I sometimes say I'm an activist masquerading as an academic… My research always has policy recommendations and always reflecting issues in the real world.'[22] Amina Mama was the first to publish extensive research into Black women's experience of domestic abuse, seeking help, and staying in women's refuges in England. Mama is a Nigerian-British feminist academic, she is now Professor of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies at the University of California, Davis. While looking back on her career during interview Mama explained: 'I've always believed we have to practice our politics wherever we work… I don't object to being called a feminist academic at all, because I think it's true, and I don't believe academics should be empty of activism.'[23]Mama framed her intellectual activities, like founding the journal *Feminist Africa,* as political projects.

For these women, the feminist activist part of their identities was just as important as their identities as academics or researchers, and usually more so. In defining these identities they were pushing back against a narrative that had been present in the WLM, that academics were self-indulgent or simply superfluous to the 'real' work of direct action. Mama was involved with the Brixton Black Women's Group in London in the early 1980s, whilst studying for her PhD and recalled that Gail Lewis: 'Really thought I was just a

[20] Buchanan, interview.

[21] Hanmer, interview with Jolly.

[22] Jan Pahl, interview with the author, (14th February 2023).

[23] Mama, interview.

bourgeois African student, because she really wasn't an academic then, and she thought it was a bourgeois waste of time… You know, she was a proper, tough Marxist feminist.'[24] There was a sense amongst feminist academics that their work could be perceived as not 'proper' feminism by other activists.

Mukami McCrum, a founding member of Shakti Women's Aid, was interviewing Black women to find out about their experiences of living in Scotland as part of her Masters in Sociology at the University of Edinburgh when she was shocked to find that some women mentioned 'this problem at home' and disclosed experiences of domestic abuse.[25] This sparked a lifelong commitment to campaigning against violence against women. McCrum has since worked for the Scottish Government as a policy manager in Gender and LGBT Equality and Violence Against Women and was the Chief Executive of Central Scotland Racial Equality Council. In interview, McCrum recalled feeling that the development of theoretical understandings were crucial to her activism:

> And this wasn't purely from an academic [perspective], because sometimes people would have thought, because we were all university graduates or we had come together through that channel, it was all a purely navel gazing, academic exercise… No. It was all real for us. We were in those places because we were trying to escape the poverty maybe our parents went through. So we weren't academics who were born with a silver spoon and just enjoying being students. It was survival.[26]

As McCrum and others touched upon during interview, they may have been engaged in research but it was grounded in the 'real'; their research was about real women who experienced violence and how that research could be harnessed to help stop it from happening. Similarly Ravi Thiara, who was a refuge worker at Roshni in Nottingham in the 1980s, and is now Professor of Sociology at the University of Warwick, commented during interview that:

> I hope that the work that I do… is very enmeshed with the real world and practice, and it's applied research. Um, not just doing research for the sake of doing research… and I see it very much as part of my activism, as part of bringing about change and using my position within the academy to be able to, um, do that. Because whether we like it or not, the validity that gets given to

[24] Ibid.

[25] Mukami McCrum, interview with the author, (21st January 2022).

[26] Ibid.

> research done by academics isn't the same as when the organizations are trying to do it themselves.

This idea of research serving a purpose was emphasised in several of the oral history interviews conducted for this chapter. Kelly spoke of the term 'useful knowledge' which was coined by Sue Wise and Liz Stanley in the early 1980s, and how this principle has guided her own research:

> A principle that we've always had is to create useful knowledge and by that we mean knowledge that is useful to survivors, to those who support survivors, to practitioners and beyond there to policy makers, and our last frame of reference is actually other academics… I fundamentally believe in creating concepts that survivors, or perpetrators for that matter, recognise themselves in. That you're creating concepts that are just one step up from lived experience so that you can see yourself within it… there's been a principle within feminism to create accessible knowledge.[27]

Kelly is Professor of Sexualised Violence and the Director of CWASU at London Metropolitan University. Having published numerous books and articles, Kelly is particularly well known for her concept of 'sexual violence as a continuum.'[28] During interview, Kelly framed her own research as part of a wider development of feminist research principles, mentioning Wise and Stanley as particular influences, as well as Jalna Hanmer and Marianne Hester. In this way, feminist activist academics produced life narratives which belied the stereotype of an elitist or out of touch academic.

For some, however, there was a tension between their academic and activists selves. This tension may have come from discourses present in the WLM which were critical of academics; questioning whether research could be feminist. Jo Sutton, the first NWAF National Coordinator, became a lecturer at the University of Bradford in Community and Social Work from 1978 to 1985, she also taught on the Applied Women's Studies course there. During interview, Sutton recalled that there was a suspicion around the academics who were beginning to research domestic abuse in the late 1970s:

> The feeling was that being an academic was a bit parasitical, that's a little strong to say to you, but um, [sighs] because it was living off of other people's work and that's how we thought about it. Sorry to say it, I mean I'm not quite sure that's true anymore, but that was the feeling… Despite everybody's

[27] Kelly, interview.

[28] Kelly, *Surviving Sexual Violence*.

> feelings and mine included, it was really important to have that input [from academics]… I ended up as an academic, I can't complain too much! [laughs][29]

Sutton reflected on how her attitude had changed over time and found the irony and humour in her voicing suspicion of academics whilst also becoming one herself. However, there was a tension perceivable in her pauses and sighs between her younger and present self. Another factor was that she did not wish to offend me as a student conducting academic research, while also attempting to explain the perspective of the times honestly. Sutton's recollection of these suspicions and debates around whether academics were useful to the WLM are borne out through primary source evidence. For instance, in 1976 Elizabeth Wilson wrote of the concern within the WLM that: '"Research" somehow implies white-coated "experts" who know more about battered women than do these women themselves'.[30]

Although the feminist researchers who I interviewed were mostly women, I also interviewed one male researcher, Jeff Hearn. Hearn is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Huddersfield and the Hanken School of Economics. He has researched men, masculinities and male violence since the 1980s. Hearn was also part of the anti-sexist men's movement which involved a men-only consciousness raising and political action group which aimed to discuss how they could better support the women's movement and reflect on their own potentially oppressive behaviour.[31] Despite the fact I wished to highlight women's research in this chapter, Hearn's perspective was important as he delivered a module on masculinities as part of the Applied Women's Studies MA that Hanmer coordinated at Bradford. Hearn has reflected on the positionality of male researchers studying violence against women:

> Substantively, researching violence, especially on men's violence to known women, is a very humbling and emotional experience for men, at different levels of experience… Men's talking to men about men's violence to known women can always be liable to be collusive, heroic, a means of bonding, a show of bravado… At the same time, with men researching on violence, and indeed for men doing anti-violence work more generally, there can be issues of possible dissociation and distancing from 'other men', men's violence and

[29] Sutton, interview.

[30] Wilson, *Existing Research*, p.1.

[31] Hearn, interview.

> patriarchy… Men who use violence can (easily) be subjected to othering, just as the self can be self-othered.[32]

For both male and female researchers, studying violence against women could elicit complicated emotions and connections with people who shared a feminist or 'pro-feminist' perspective was incredibly important. Thus, the fostering of networks amongst researchers was highly valuable. Hearn was emotional during interview when discussing his relationship with Hanmer, explaining: 'My relationship with Jalna well, it still is very, very important… She taught me a lot. I trusted her… Working on the issues of violence, it just obviously takes its toll, probably emotionally. So I feel like kind of the people that you work with become very important.'[33]

Therefore, the researchers I interviewed clearly articulated their feminist or 'pro-feminist' identities as a point of reference for all the work that they did. They also had an awareness that this identity could be overshadowed by their academic careers. In this way, they were keen to impress on me that their feminist principles guided the way in which they did research. In particular, they emphasised the importance of ensuring their research was useful to victim/survivors and those who support them at the grassroots.

5.4 Women's Aid and Early Domestic Abuse Research 1974-1981

From the mid-1970s, Women's Aid activists began to recognise and promote the importance of research for anti-domestic abuse activism. This was partly the result of the convening of the Select Committee on Violence in Marriage in 1974. The Committee mounted a thorough investigation, visiting Chiswick, Newcastle, Cardiff, Glasgow and Edinburgh, and hearing oral evidence at fifteen separate sessions.[34] The Committee listened to evidence and received memorandums from some key figures of the anti-domestic abuse movement, victim/survivors of domestic abuse, as well as representatives from the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS), the police, doctors and other agencies like the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Samaritans.[35] One of the purposes of the

[32] Jeff Hearn, 'Serious emotions: On some emotions in working on men's violences and violences to women' in *Violence, Gender and Affect: Interpersonal, Institutional and Ideological Practices*, ed. Marita Husso et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

[33] Hearn, interview.

[34] 'Report from the Select Committee on Violence in Marriage, Together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Session 1974-75', *H.M. Stationery Office*, (1975).

[35] Ibid.

Select Committee was to investigate the causes of domestic abuse and to survey the research that was already being done in this area. The aims of the study highlight the lack of a gendered analysis of domestic abuse at the time, stating that the Committee investigated: 'The extent, nature and causes of the problems of families where there is violence between the partners or where children suffer non-accidental injury; and to make recommendations.'[36]

One of the researchers who gave evidence to the committee was Dr. Jasper Gayford, a psychologist who worked with Pizzey at the Chiswick women's refuge. Pizzey permitted Gayford to conduct research with 200 women who were staying at Chiswick in the form of interviews and surveys. Gayford presented evidence to the Select Committee that pathologized, patronised and blamed victims of domestic abuse. For example, when asked by the committee about alcohol and jealousy as causes of domestic abuse, he gave the following statement:

> It [domestic abuse] is quite commonly brought on by long drinking bouts, alcoholism and this type of jealousy very commonly go together. You are quite right that there may have been provocative factors on the part of the wife, in other words, there is some shred of evidence for him to hinge his jealousy on.[37]

Furthermore, Gayford published his findings in the *British Medical Journal* as well as another, popularised version, in the journal *Welfare Officer*. It was the *Welfare Officer* article, published in 1976, that became infamous amongst Women's Aid activists due to Gayford's 'Ten Types of Battered Women.'[38] These included 'Go-go Gloria,' 'Fanny the Flirt,' 'Violent Violet' and 'Tortured Tina.' Gayford argued that these personality types explained, at least in part, why these women had been abused by their partners. This article was heavily criticised by Women's Aid activists, most extensively in a pamphlet written by Elizabeth Wilson and published by NWAF:

> The vulgarity of this way of writing about what is a serious and tragic problem for many women and their children needs no comment... It is patronising to its audience of welfare officers and insulting to all women, not just battered ones.'[39]

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[36] Ibid. p.v.

[37] Jasper Gayford, quoted in *Report from the Select Committee on Violence in Marriage*, p.43.

[38] Jasper J. Gayford, 'Ten Types of Battered Wives', *Welfare Officer*, 25, (1976).

[39] Wilson, *Existing Research*, pp.18-19.

Wilson further argued that Gayford blamed victim/survivors instead of focusing on the perpetrators of the violence as the source of the problem.[40] Gayford's paper was even parodied by an anonymous Women's Aid activist who wrote a lengthy paper entitled: '26 Types of Battered Husbands by J.J. Queerford consultant to the Committee for Abused Statistics and Subjectively Biased Research.'[41] This playful but biting criticism condemned the pomposity of academic researchers and suggested that Gayford had manipulated his data. Gayford's research and how to counteract it was discussed by the NWAF's National Coordinating Group, who decided it was a matter to be taken to the annual conference.[42] The group emphasised the responsibility Women's Aid had to be a voice of opposition to researchers like Gayford:

> There was discussion on the problems of distortion of issues by the popular press, but since Gayford's speeches are publicised in this way, it was felt to be important to counter these. Great concern was expressed over the continuing and increasingly frequent pronunciations of Gayford on the results of his 'research' and the need to protest about articles like that.[43]

Gayford's research was remembered vividly by several of the former Women's Aid activists interviewed for this chapter nearly fifty years later. Sutton recalled Gayford's research as one of the reasons she began to feel suspicious of Pizzey's running of the Chiswick refuge:

> So people started saying: 'Well, Chiswick is a little strange.' Erin had people like Gayford, a guy who was a psychologist. He made a career out of writing a book called 'Ten Types of Battered Women' and he had things like 'Go-go Gloria' eh, 'Doris Doormat' eh, I can't remember all the names. They were all totally insulting… So, I mean, Gayford was really, was an alarm bell to a lot of women.[44]

This research undertaken at the Chiswick refuge did indeed act as a kind of alarm bell and intensified the need for an alternative explanatory framework amongst Women's Aid groups themselves. Writing one year after the publishing of the infamous *Welfare Officer* piece, Hanmer wrote that the anti-domestic abuse movement was entering a new phase:

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[40] Ibid.

[41] '26 Types of Battered Husbands' (c.1976), Ellen Malos Archive, (DM2/23/8/) Archive Box 114, Folder 1, Feminist Archive South at Bristol University Special Collections

[42] 'Minutes for Sunday 21st March National Co-ordinating Group'(1976), WAFE Box 03, 1974, 75 and 76, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections,

[43] Ibid.

[44] Sutton, interview.

'We now should expect the focus of interest to shift to its [domestic abuse's] etiology with an intensification of ideological warfare over the next few years. Research will become a major weapon.'[45] The ideological warfare with Pizzey continued into the 1980s and 1990s. In particular, Women's Aid strongly refuted Pizzey's claims that some victim/survivors of domestic abuse were addicted to violence which she laid out in her 1982 book *Prone to Violence*.[46]

In order to monitor the research being undertaken into domestic abuse, and to initiate their own projects, NWAF established a Research Group in 1976. This was one of the first of these NWAF sub-groups to be established, as local groups did not often have the resources to do this work. Local groups did, however, fill out questionnaires to collect data about the women and children who came into refuge. These questionnaires were devised by the Research Group who collated the information to build a national picture.[47] While NWAF positioned themselves as centres of knowledge about domestic abuse, they were not always viewed this way by the state. For instance, NWAF had to fight for funding for an Information Officer for two years before it was granted by the DHSS. According to Hanmer, the appointment of an Information Officer was 'never considered 'proper' research by the DHSS.'[48] However, NWAF did produce some of the earliest information about the needs of victim/survivors of domestic abuse and attempted to banish sexist stereotypes by publishing several reports from their London office in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[49] When WAFE was re-established in Bristol in 1987, the Legal and Research Group was quickly set up by Harwin to continue this earlier work.[50]

During the late 1970s, Hanmer and other Women's Aid activists were particularly concerned that the DHSS, who had been granted funding for research by the Select

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[45] Jalna Hanmer, 'Community action, women's aid and the women's liberation movement' in *Women in the Community*, ed. Marjorie Mayo (London: Routledge, 1977).

[46] Erin Pizzey and Jeff Shapiro, *Prone to Violence* (London: Hamlyn Paperbacks, 1982).

[47] 'Forms for women using refuges', WAFE Box 9, 1977-79, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[48] Jalna Hanmer, 'Papers relating to NWAF National Conference 1976', WAFE Box 03, 1974, 75 and 76, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections,

[49] For instance: *Battered women, refuges & women's aid: a report from the National Women's Aid Federation* (London: NWAF, 1978). *Battered women need refuges: a report from the National Women's Aid Federation* (London: NWAF, c.1977). *Half the sky and still no roof: battered women are still homeless*, (London: NWAF, 1978*). Women you don't have to put up with being battered: How to get an injunction* (London: NWAF, c.1978). *It's just a Personal Problem? The Myths about Battered Women* (London: NWAF, c.1978).

[50] Hague, *History and Memories*, p. 205.

Committee on Violence in Marriage, were funding research projects that focused on individualised rather than societal explanations of domestic abuse. Hanmer wrote an outline of the grievances of the NWAF, which was accepted by the NWAF Conference in 1976, which stated that:

> NWAF knew that they were the major source of information about battered women and their children and they interpreted the failure of the DHSS to consult them about research needs as indications of an intention to sponsor research antithetical to the interests of women.[51]

The main issues were that the NWAF were not consulted by the DHSS on what research should focus on and that all the proposals chosen were from male academics, with the exception of Jan Pahl's research. Pahl was a founding member of the first women's refuge in Canterbury which became the subject of her research. During interview Pahl explained that her husband at the time, the sociologist Ray Pahl:

> Came home with a letter from the Department of Health saying: 'We don't know what to do about this new problem, so called, of domestic violence and refuges and battered women. So, we've made some money available for research.' Uh, and he [Ray] said: 'Why don't you apply?' So, I sort of thought: 'Oh, God, I suppose I could.' So, I put in for that. I was very afraid I wouldn't get the money because I really wanted it, put in for the smallest grant ever.[52]

Pahl got the funding and wrote one of the earliest studies to explore women's experiences of staying in refuge, finding that most people found it a supportive environment that helped them regain their self-confidence, although some did not like the collective organisational approach.[53] However, it is notable that Pahl would not have even heard about the opportunity if it had not been for her husband, given that one of the grievances of the NWAF was that the DHSS only circulated the call for proposals in elite academic spaces, where feminist activist academics were not necessarily present. This resulted in the funding mostly going to male researchers.

These tensions continued at the 1981 DHSS Seminar on Violence in the Family, where the results of these studies were presented. One archived conference programme shows that the words 'family violence' have been scribbled out and 'meaning battered women' has

[51] Jalna Hanmer, *Papers relating to NWAF National Conference*.

[52] Pahl, interview.

[53] Jan Pahl, *A Refuge for Battered Women: A study of the role of a women's centre*, (London: HMSO, 1978).

been written instead, showing that the language choices of the DHSS were called into question by Women's Aid activists.[54] Moreover, members of the NWAF Research Group felt that they were being side-lined, as their request to run a plenary session at the seminar was refused. Sue Gorbing from the NWAF Research Group wrote to one of the conference organisers that:

> Since no one outside the organisation can claim access to anything like this wealth of material, nor attempt to take into account subjective experience of women suffering violence to the same extent as those engaged in refuge work… We therefore re-iterate our request for equal status at the conference with the representative of the academic world.[55]

To some extent the ideas developed by Women's Aid did begin to receive more respect and attention in the academic world from 1980 onwards, as feminist academics gained more influence in higher education institutions. Moreover, collaborations between Women's Aid, academics and statutory bodies on research projects occurred in the next two decades, as will be seen below. For example, NWAF received funding from the Department of Environment for research into the housing needs of battered women in 1978.[56]

In Scotland, Edinburgh and Glasgow Women's Aid were the first groups to work with Russell and Rebecca Dobash, then at the University of Stirling; their pioneering work will be discussed in more detail below. There were also some small scale research projects carried out by local Women's Aid groups independently. For instance, Dundee Women's Aid published the findings of their research in the Scottish WLM newsletter *MSPrint* in 1978.[57] They remarked that while Women's Aid groups were good at collecting statistics they did not often have time for research projects. They interviewed women in refuge to ask them why they thought the domestic abuse had happened, with the emphasis on how the women themselves perceived the situation. Their study took a feminist approach, explaining that, 'the method used was the informal interview because it has the advantage

[54] 'Conference for Researchers Working on Violence in the Family, 28th-30th September 1981', WAFE Box 1, Folder 1, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[55] Sue Gorbing (representative of NWAF research group), Correspondence with A. Blyth, September 1981, WAFE Box 1, Folder 1, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[56] 'NWAF Research Group Report to Conference May 1978', (FAN/CONF/13, Conference Box 13: 1981), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[57] Ingrid Muir, 'Why Do Men Batter? Dundee Women's Aid research into Marital Violence', *MSPrint,* (November 1978).

of not restricting the scope and content of the response'.[58] They also criticised previous research for having too narrow a definition of domestic abuse when they wrote:

> Is there such a clear boundary between physical violence and other forms of cruelty? The woman's own perception of the situation is so rarely taken into account in the search for an objective definition... For obvious reasons Women's Aid groups accept a much wider definition of the term 'battered woman' than most researchers.[59]

By this they meant that Women's Aid did not turn women in need away just because they did not fit a preconceived definition. Discussions of defining violence against women in activist spaces like Women's Aid would become significant for feminist researchers as we will see below and it is important to acknowledge the way in which this thinking had evolved from activist spaces.

At SWA, Morna Burdon became the first Information and Education Officer in around 1980. One of Burdon's jobs was to gather and disseminate research into domestic abuse and this information was shared through the SWA newsletter and conferences.[60] Burdon also wrote a series of 'Information Kits for Agencies' which contained leaflets with advice on working with victim/survivors for the police, GPs, health visitors, social services, casualty departments and others.[61] Burdon further recalled that she bought or rented documentaries about domestic abuse to show to Women's Aid activists from Cinema of Women which was a British feminist film distribution company founded in 1979.[62] As with WAFE, SWA continued to collect data and publish reports on their research into domestic abuse up until the present day, as well as collaborating with other researchers and supporting victim/survivors of domestic abuse to contribute to projects.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, the impetus for research conducted on feminist principles came from activist spaces and was based on grassroots engagement with victim/survivors in refuges. The work of Gayford and later Pizzey, which did not use a feminist analysis, emphasised the important role Women's Aid had in providing an alternative narrative

[58] Ibid., pp.33-36.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Burdon, interview.

[61] *Scottish Women's Aid: Information Kits for Agencies*, (Edinburgh: SWA, 1981).

[62] Interview with Morna Burdon. Julia Knight, 'Cinema of Women' in *Doing Women's Film History: Reframing Cinemas Past and Future*, ed. Christine Gledhill (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

which framed domestic abuse as the result of a patriarchal society and structural power imbalances. The setting up of the NWAF Research Group allowed a network to be formed and the coordination of research. Women's Aid national and local groups, then, made important contributions to lay the foundations for a feminist theory of domestic abuse to be established through research.

5.5 The Usefulness of Research: *Violence Against Wives*

Russell and Rebecca Dobash's *Violence Against Wives,* published in 1979, was to become one of the foundational texts in the study of domestic abuse written from a feminist perspective.[63] Dobash and Dobash were academics with a background in family studies and criminology, who were working at the University of Stirling when they began their research into domestic abuse.[64] Dobash and Dobash's study was of 3,020 cases of domestic abuse in Glasgow and Edinburgh in 1974.[65] They interviewed a large number of women staying in Women's Aid refuges to try to understand what happened before, during and after a domestic attack. They argued that: 'Belief in the sanctity of the family was closely associated with belief in personal privacy and with the rejection of outside intervention in family affairs… Despite fears to the contrary, it is not a stranger but a so-called loved one who is most likely to assault, rape, or murder us.'[66]

The Dobashes were remembered positively by several Women's Aid activists in the interviews conducted for this project and in the Speaking Out project interviews; Hodgkin, who was a founding member of Dundee Women's Aid and National Coordinator at NWAF in the 1970s, recalled that:

> The people who I think had most influence on us were the Dobashes… Rebecca and Russell Dobash. I mean, it didn't, this is going to sound really horrible, it didn't really teach us anything we didn't know but it was so rewarding to see somebody academic actually analysing and putting into words what we were trying to achieve and why we were trying to achieve it.[67]

[63] Dobash and Dobash, *Violence Against Wives*.

[64] Rebecca Dobash, interview with Caroline Lewis, Oral History Interviews, (SWA/4/16), Scottish Women's Aid Collection at Glasgow Women's Library.

[65] Dobash and Dobash, *Violence Against Wives*, p.20.

[66] Ibid. p.7.

[67] Hodgkin, interview.

Kate Kay, who was involved with Bristol Women's Aid and became a National Coordinator of NWAF in the 1970s, reflected:

> I think people like the Dobashes were amazing, it's that, those documents were sort of seminal and they gave that, their research gave Women's Aid right at the beginning the tools to go out and have the argument, it was really vital… Because if you're going to go out and argue seriously you have to make a case, I mean, that's my legal background, you have to make a case; you have to have documents, you have to have evidence, you have to have information.[68]

These two quotes demonstrate that the input from the Dobashes was highly valued for the usefulness of this research to the cause of campaigning against domestic abuse. Several women reflected that they already knew a lot of the information the Dobashes were writing about from their direct work with victim/survivors. However, the Dobashes gave Women's Aid activists solid research to present to the government, local authorities and other funders and supporters. This can be seen as a tool as Kay describes, or as a weapon in the language of Hanmer. As time moved on, Women's Aid would have the resources to do their own research. However, in the 1970s when women's refuges were finding their feet, it was especially helpful to have academics with a feminist perspective onside. As Sutton mentioned:

> It was really important to have that input because at some point you had to, I mean we didn't realise it at the time because we were only just discovering it, that you had to get political input and the politicians were much more likely to talk to the academics than they were to activists.[69]

One example, of the way in which the Dobashes research was used by Women's Aid was the statistic that 25% of violent crime is wife assault. The Dobashes had found this from analysing police reports in Scotland. This statistic can be seen in countless pamphlets, placards and papers used by Women's Aid in their activism well into the 1980s. For example, a leaflet entitled 'To the Police' which was designed for police officers in 1978 reads:

> You may be well aware of the fact that 25% of violent crime is wife assault. In 1974 an extensive study was carried out in Scotland by the Dobashes, who are researchers. They analysed 33, 724 police charges which were processed through the Courts in that year, from which they discovered that wife assault was the second most frequent violent offence. The police are the single most likely agency to come into contact with domestic violence. In the past, all the

[68] Kay, interview.

[69] Sutton, interview.

> police could do was to calm down the situation temporarily. Now, with the existence of over 100 refuges for battered women and the increased police powers under the Domestic Violence Act, the police can play a more positive role.[70]

This research gathered by the Dobashes, then, was not abstract data sitting in an academic paper or report. Striking statistics like these were alive in the sense that they were used and re-used in activism in order to gain support from a variety of people. Despite the fact that the Dobashes study was based in Scotland, and plans to replicate it in England never came to fruition, their research was used by both SWA and NWAF. This above source also predates the Dobashes book, meaning this statistic was disseminated amongst Women's Aid groups prior to its publication.

The Dobashes were not officially a part of Women's Aid and in an oral history interview Rebecca Dobash has commented that it was important for them to maintain some distance from Women's Aid:

> We always thought it was very important to stand as independent researchers, gathering evidence that was going to be brought to these problems, which obviously serviced Women's Aid, but we were not in the service of Women's Aid… Otherwise you lose a certain amount of credibility about your evidence.[71]

Yet, they did become extensively entwined with the Women's Aid network across the UK. In their acknowledgments for *Violence Against Wives* they thank SWA activists like Fran Wasoff, Sue Robertson and Judith Hodgkin for help setting up interviews. They also thank Lou Lavender and Jo Sutton from NWAF for 'painstakingly reading drafts of our papers' and Jalna Hanmer for involving them in her own research networks.[72] They even asked NWAF to write a section for their book.[73] Rebecca Dobash attended some meetings of the NWAF and SWA Research Groups, where directions for future research were discussed.[74] Hanmer acted as a referee for the Dobashes on several occasions, describing them as

[70] National Women's Aid Federation, 'To the Police', WAFE Box 4, c.1978, Feminist Archive North at the University of Leeds Special Collections.

[71] Rebecca Dobash, interview with Lewis.

[72] Dobash and Dobash, *Violence Against Wives*, p.xi.

[73] 'Press, Publicity and Research Groups meeting', (20th June 1976), p.1, WAFE Box 03, 1974, 75 and 76, Feminist Archive North at the Leeds University Special Collections.

[74] Ibid.

'research consultants to NWAF'.[75] The Dobashes were also important because they used their network to put Women's Aid activists in touch with people with similar research interests. For instance, Rebeccca Dobash sent Hanmer a list of people to contact on her trip to the US in 1976.[76] Sutton also recalled the Dobashes putting her in touch with Del Martin, who was an anti-domestic abuse and lesbian rights campaigner from San Francisco and the author of one of the earliest books about 'battered wives'.[77] These connections demonstrate that a strong network of feminists researching domestic abuse was building during the 1970s and that the link between Women's Aid and the Dobashes lead to groundbreaking research and the furthering of knowledge exchange between the early researches in this field nationally and transnationally.

5.6 Feminist Methodologies and Developing a Theory of Violence Against Women

An important context for the development of a feminist theory of domestic abuse was the broader advancement of a feminist academic approach which crossed disciplines but was particularly prominent in the social sciences and humanities. In the 1970s and 1980s, feminist scholars began to take up positions in higher education departments throughout the UK and asked questions of conventional research methodologies, teaching practice, assessment, publishing and student/teacher relationships. The development of feminist research can be partly understood within the context of a shift in social sciences in the post-war years, which has been explored by Mike Savage. Savage places the rise of the interview in the 1950s and 1960s as part of a move towards allowing respondents to define their identities for themselves, rather than judging them based on societal norms of morality.[78] He also argues that this was particularly a phenomenon amongst male social scientists researching upwardly mobile men:

> The masculinity of this story of social mobility was itself a vital aspect of the interview, with predominantly male sociologists being especially important propagators of the technique in the 1950s and 1960s… By the later 1960s academic feminism emerged within the social sciences, linked to the practices

[75] 'Letter to The Rockefeller Foundation from Jalna Hanmer', 6th February 1981. 'Letter to the University of Stirling from Jalna Hanmer', 12th June 1980. Both Jalna Hanmer Collection, FAN/JH/VAGR/11, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections,

[76] 'Letter from Rebecca Dobash to Jana Hanmer', 16th February 1976, WAFE Box 03, 1974, 75 and 76, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[77] Sutton, interview.

[78] Mike Savage, *Identity and social change in Britain: the politics of method,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.186.

> of consciousness raising and using narrative methods as a means of reasserting the power of women talking to other women… The assertion of a distinctive feminist kind of social research, and the need for women to talk to women can best be seen as a counter-mobilization against this current.[79]

Here, Savage rather underestimates the contribution of female social scientists of the 1950s and 1960s. Historians Caitríona Beaumont and Helen McCarthy have noted the considerable influence of female sociologists working in this period such as Viola Klein, Alva Myrdal and Pearl Jephcot.[80] McCarthy has argued that their work 'gained real traction and helped to reframe the terms of debate about married women's work in post-war Britain'.[81] Although, not explicitly feminist in perspective, their work does constitute a kind of pre-history to the academic feminist scholarship that developed in the 1970s and 1980s. In her work on Women's Studies, Elizabeth Bird has noted that sociology departments in Britain tended to be the most open to this new field of study and this was where these courses were often located.[82] Moreover, Savage's argument that the assertion of feminist social research can be 'best seen' as a 'counter-mobilization' against the work of male social scientists taking over the role of interviewer is overstated. Placed in its context within the WLM, feminist social research can be seen as a reaction to the needs and experiences of women, as had been discovered through consciousness raising and political activism. To view the development of feminist research in the bubble of academia limits our understanding of this research as a response to changes in society more broadly and in particular the needs of activist groups for research based on feminist principles.

The power of 'women talking to other women' and the interview as a feminist methodological tool was, nonetheless, a key component of this new feminist academia. In particular, the arguments put forward by Ann Oakley in her influential essay 'Interviewing Women' became a hallmark of feminist research methodology.[83] Oakley argued that the advice laid out in social science textbooks of the time, namely that interviewers should remain objective and offer no personal opinions, or even answer questions from the interviewee, was unsuitable to her project of interviewing women during and shortly after

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Helen McCarthy, 'Social Science and Married Women's Employment in Post-War Britain', *Past & Present*, 233:1, (2016). Caitríona Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens: Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England, 1928-64* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p.195.

[81] McCarthy, *Social Science*, p.273.

[82] Elizabeth Bird, *Women's Studies*, p.267.

[83] Ann Oakley, 'Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms?' in *Doing Feminist Research*, ed. Helen Roberts (London: Routledge, 1981).

pregnancy.[84] This was particularly the case when Oakley was asked questions about pregnancy and childcare by women who were nervous about having their first child.[85] Some years later, Oakley reflected that she decided to go against advice 'on grounds of both ethics and efficiency: refusing to answer was exploitative of interviewees and counterproductive in terms of gaining full and honest accounts.'[86] Oakley's original essay was part of an anthology published in 1981entitled *Doing Feminist Research* which has become a formative text, defining a significant moment when academic feminism began to gain traction within the WLM, and also within higher education institutions. The idea that a researcher could ever be objective was questioned, with an awareness of subjectivities becoming a key component of feminist research. In particular, qualitative research methods, such as interviewing, were considered to be more feminist than social science surveys, although, the idea that quantitative research could not also be feminist was later questioned.[87] In 1994 Mary Maynard and June Purvis wrote of *Doing Feminist Research* that:

> The appearance of this book was significant... at a time when feminism was still treated with open hostility and ridicule in the academy, it indicated that feminist work comprised a serious intellectual pursuit, with important insights to contribute... the debates and arguments are far more complicated than they were fifteen or so years ago. No longer can it be argued that there is a 'right' way of doing things and there is no clear consensus as to what feminist research definitionally might comprise.[88]

Oakley herself has reflected that her essay appeared at a particular moment within 'the context of an emerging feminist social science', which was why it gained such influence.[89] Oakley has since critiqued her naivety in not interrogating the notion of friendship within an interviewer/interviewee relationship and glossing over power differentials between women, explaining that this idea of 'sisterhood' amongst women was a 'particular child of the politics of the time.'[90] Importantly, these ideas also had influence on research projects that were being undertaken outside of academic institutions, for example, in activist

[84] Oakley, *Interviewing Women*, p.40.

[85] Ibid. pp.42-44.

[86] Ann Oakley, 'Interviewing Women Again: Power, Time and the Gift', *Sociology,* 50:1, (2016), p.196.

[87] Ibid. Diana Russell, 'Preface', in *Feminist Perspectives On Wife Abuse,* p.v.

[88] Mary Maynard and June Purvis, 'Introduction: Doing Feminist Research' in *Researching Women's Lives From a Feminist Perspective*, ed. Maynard and Purvis (London: Taylor & Francis, 1994), pp.1-2.

[89] Oakley, *Interviewing Women Again*, p.198.

[90] Ibid.

spaces. In fact, Gill Hague, a feminist academic who was actively involved in Women's Aid, has recently pointed out that there has been much debate around what the concept of 'doing feminist research' means, arguing that 'the strongest feature identified was that it was research that served the cause in some way, research as an activist endeavour'.[91] Therefore, the history of feminist academia was intertwined with the history of feminist activism, as the idea that the research was not just by and about women but *for* women, and would contribute to their liberation, was an important feature.

There has, then, been considerable reflection on the rise of a feminist academic methodology within the social sciences in the UK. However, there has not yet been an examination of where research into violence against women sits within this wider history. The 1980s saw the publication of key texts in the study of violence against women, such as *Women, Violence and Social Control* published in 1987*, Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse* published in 1988 and *Women, Policing and Male Violence: International Perspectives* published in 1989.[92] These early texts both drew from and contributed to the ongoing debates about what it meant to do feminist research or be a feminist academic. They also demonstrated the ways in which these researchers drew knowledge and support from activist spaces. In what follows, two studies, *Well-Founded Fear* by Hanmer and Saunders and *Surviving Sexual Violence* by Kelly, will be considered in more detail to explore the contributions of three women's refuge activists and feminist activist academics who contributed to the development of a feminist methodology for researching women's experiences of violence. These studies were conducted in England, while the influence of the Dobashes study in Scotland has already been noted and transnational influences on research will be discussed in Chapter Six.

Well-Founded Fear: A Community Study of Violence Against Women by Hanmer and Saunders was published in 1984. Hanmer and Saunders were life partners as well as research partners. Hanmer helped to found the NWAF and Keighley Women's Aid, while Saunders founded Jewish Women's Aid in Leeds in 1985. Saunders was not an academic, despite her involvement with research projects, demonstrating the fluidity that existed at this time. The aim of the study was: 'To encourage women's groups to undertake their own

[91] Hague, *History and Memories,* p.200.

[92] *Women, Violence and Social Control*, ed. Jalna Hanmer and Mary Maynard, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987). *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*, ed. Yllo and Bograd. *Women, Policing and Male Violence: International Perspectives*, ed. Jalna Hanmer, Jill Radford and Elizabeth Stanko, (London; Routledge, 1989).

research into violence against women. We will show that good research can be done by non-academics and that it is not always necessary to rely on either academic institutions or the state for funding'.[93] As such, the book included a questionnaire and tips for women's groups to conduct their own studies. The research was undertaken in a relatively small area of Leeds for a low budget. In total 129 questionnaires were filled out during interviews with as many women living in the area as possible.[94]

This study, then, was not published in order to contribute to academic debates but to be used by those working on grassroots community projects. Hanmer and Saunders consulted directly with local women's activist organisations like Women's Aid and Rape Crisis before they began the study.[95] This was most likely a process that came naturally to them as they were both active within these activist networks. Hanmer has reflected in an interview that they got a high response rate for the survey due to the murders of women committed by Peter Sutcliffe (dubbed 'the Yorkshire Ripper' by the media) between 1975 and 1980 which, 'really focussed one's mind greatly and that of, you know, lots of other women and that's why up here…the women were so sensitised and so affected by what was going on over those five years.'[96] Hanmer has suggested that *Well-Founded Fear* was important in inspiring other people to undertake research into violence against women.[97]

The book includes reflections on feminist methodology, with some discussion of interviewing drawing from Oakley's chapter and expanding on some of her ideas.[98] For example, Hanmer and Saunders reflect on the difficulty of asking women about the personal and emotive topic of violence, particularly when women were in need of assistance. Hanmer and Saunders also wrote that it was vital that interviewers were sensitive to the interviewees' emotions and situation:

> The interviewer was sometimes afraid of 'blowing the woman's cover', of further upsetting her, or of starting something the interviewer felt she might be unable to cope with... To ask questions about the incident(s) is to validate her experience... But asking too many questions could cause alarm by raising the experience to a level that produces an unwanted crisis... The interviewer should

[93] Hanmer and Saunders, *Well-Founded Fear*, p.11.

[94] Ibid. p.15.

[95] Ibid. p.22.

[96] Hanmer, interview with Jolly.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Hanmer and Saunders, *Well-Founded Fear*, p.26.

> allow women to dictate the terms of the interview, and give them space within which to manoeuvre'. [99]

Thus, Hanmer and Saunders sought to empower women within the interview situation by giving her a voice but also allowing her to set the terms of the interview. Moreover, they left the definition of 'violent events' up to the women themselves, rather than imposing a pre-determined definition.[100] Women who needed support were advised to contact Women's Aid or Rape Crisis and given information leaflets. A support group for participants was also established.[101] The existence of these organisations was a necessary condition for this type of research to be undertaken in more ways than one. Firstly, these groups had uncovered the extent to the issue through the numbers of women who came to them for help. Secondly, asking women about their experiences of violence in this way, without having any form of safety net to provide support after the interview, would have been unethical. It is understandable that situations arose during interviews that Hanmer and Saunders had not anticipated, after all they were pioneers of this type of research. However, to the modern reader there were safe-guarding and ethical issues that would be addressed more rigorously in research undertaken today. Additionally, perhaps typically of the time, their assertion that: 'The power imbalance automatically built into a social situation where one person interviews another is partly reduced if both parties are women' did not fully account for power differentials between women, somewhat similarly to Oakley's earlier work.[102] One key finding of this research was that violence against women took many forms which contributed to a broader shift in thinking about these as connected rather than individual issues. This approach is exemplified in our next example, which was published four years later.

Surviving Sexual Violence by Kelly published in 1988 was one of the most influential studies of violence against women to emerge in the 1980s. In this book, Kelly laid out the concept of 'sexual violence as a continuum' and critiqued previous research and feminist theory for separating out different forms of violence against women so that the connections between them were not acknowledged.[103] Kelly argued that the idea of a continuum 'enables us to document and name the range of abuse... whilst acknowledging that there

[99] Ibid, pp.19-20.

[100] Ibid. p.22.

[101] Ibid. pp.15-16.

[102] Ibid. p 24.

[103] Kelly, *Surviving Sexual Violence*, p.75.

are no clearly defined categories into which men's behaviour can be placed.'[104] Like *Well-Founded Fear*, Kelly's study allowed women to define their experiences in their own words. Kelly found that women sometimes struggled to see their experiences as fitting into a pre-conceived notion of what a certain type of abuse should look like. The concept of a continuum allowed women to name their experience as abusive without the need to fit a certain framework.[105] Kelly argued that previous research had been wrong to think about a hierarchy of abuse or to try to fit women's experiences into predetermined categories, thereby excluding some forms of violence that did not fit their model.[106] Kelly also found that some forms of sexual violence were extremely common in women's lives and were unlikely to be reported to the police.[107]

These ideas have been influential amongst researchers of violence against women and activist organisations. *Surviving Sexual Violence* has been cited 3105 times on Google Scholar as of 4th November 2022.[108] More broadly, feminist activists, researchers and academics have been important in thinking deeply about the use of language and coming up with new terms or expanding old ones to name women's experiences. This continued the tradition of consciousness raising groups, when women came together to find words to explain what they were experiencing in the context of a society that did not acknowledge many of the forms of oppression in their everyday lives. Sue Bruley has called this the development of 'a language of empowerment'.[109]

Furthermore, Kelly contributed to the evolving discussion around feminist methodology and critiqued the idea that only certain types of methodologies could be feminist. She wrote: 'Research is not feminist simply because it is about women and, equally, feminist research need not have individual women as its subjects. This definition allows for the fact that there is more than one theory explaining women's oppression and that a variety of research methods and sources of data can be, and are, used in feminist research.'[110] Kelly

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[104] Ibid, p.76.

[105] Ibid, p.77.

[106] Liz Kelly, 'How Women Define Their Experiences of Violence' in *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*, p.116.

[107] Ibid. pp.95-96.

[108] Google Scholar Search, <https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=liz+kelly+surviving+sexual+violence&btnG=>

[109] Bruley, *Women's Liberation at the Grass Roots*, p.726.

[110] Kelly, *Surviving Sexual Violence*, p.4.

further criticised the focus on experience as not allowing for differences between women, drawing from the work of bell hooks to argue that understanding one's own experience and the experiences of those similar to them must only be a starting point.[111] By the late 1980s, then, attempts to define a feminist methodology, particularly around the issue of difference and power, had become more complex and nuanced than they had been at the beginning of the decade when the concept was in its infancy.

Kelly also reflected on her connection to the WLM and activism as a founding member of a women's refuge in Norwich. Kelly continued to work at the refuge while researching and noted that:

> It was there that I gained self-confidence skills and an understanding of sexual violence, and it is still the basis for my feminist work and politics... Throughout the research and the writing of this book I remained involved in both my local refuge group and several national campaigning groups. I was not involved in these groups because I was doing research and I did not 'use' them as sources of data. Involvement, did, however, contribute in very direct ways as there was a continual exchange of information, ideas and support.[112]

Kelly sought to gain an audience for her research beyond academic networks and one way in which she did this was to publish a modified version of the first chapter of her book in *Trouble & Strife. Trouble & Strife* was a feminist magazine which was established to showcase the writing of radical feminists, provide a 'widely available' and 'easily readable magazine, discussing in depth issues' as well as to share 'knowledge supportively, not using it to impress or mystify.'[113] It was intended to be accessible to women from different educational backgrounds and relevant to the WLM. In 1983, Hanmer wrote to a friend of her plans to start the journal warning that: 'We will have to guard carefully from being written off as "academic" by the movement.'[114] By publishing two versions of her research Kelly was able to reach a wider audience and contribute to the debates happening within both WLM and academic networks, of which of course there were many intersections.

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[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid. pp. 2-3.

[113] Trouble and Strife Collective, *Trouble & Strife*, 1, (1983), p.2.

[114] 'Letter to 'Kathy'', Trouble & Strife Correspondence and Meetings, (28th February 1983), Jalna Hanmer Archive, Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

5.7 Establishing Feminist Research Networks within the Academy

Maintaining networks through which feminist researchers could share their ideas and find support from peers was important to those working on violence against women in the 1980s. As we have seen, a research group was formed within Women's Aid. Research networks also began to develop within academic institutions. A key event in this story was the 1985 Annual Conference of the British Sociological Association (BSA), which had the theme 'war, violence and social change.'[115] This conference was significant because it saw 'the first major discussions of violence against women at an academic conference in the UK.'[116] The papers from this conference were subsequently published in a book in 1987 entitled *Women, Violence and Social Control*. Hanmer was one of the editors, and several of the contributors also had connections with Women's Aid or women's refuges, including Liz Kelly, Sandra McNeill, Jill Radford and Rebecca and Russell Dobash. Although not exhaustive, the list of contributors for this volume gives a sense of where the feminist academic scholarship on violence against women was happening in the 1980s. Notably, out of seventeen, eleven were teaching at polytechnics or 'new universities' (established after 1960), three were teaching at 'red brick universities' (established in the 19th century), two were international contributors teaching in Australia and the US, and one was an independent researcher.[117] Furthermore, seven of the contributors taught Women's Studies, two taught in adult education departments and four explicitly mentioned being engaged with feminist activism.

The contributors to *Women, Violence and Social Control* would suggest that research and teaching on violence against women in the UK often developed in newer higher education institutions, as opposed to older and more elite universities. It may have been that newer institutions were more willing to take risks and experiment with their curriculum. Dyhouse has noted that: 'The new universities of the 1960s proved particularly attractive to women. They offered broad curricula, particularly in the arts, and carried no tradition of gender segregation.'[118] This history of appealing to women which began in the 1960s, may have

[115] Jalna Hanmer and Mary Maynard, 'Introduction: Violence and Gender Stratification' in *Women, Violence and Social Control*, p.1.

[116] 'Introduction', *Women, Violence and Male Power*, ed. Marianne Hester, Liz Kelly and Jill Radford (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996), p.2.

[117] Hanmer and Maynard, 'Notes on the Contributors', *Women, Violence and Social Control*, pp.ix-xi.

[118] Dyhouse, *Students*, p.100.

been one reason why studies into violence against women flourished in these institutions in the 1980s.

The Women's Caucus of the BSA was one important space in which feminist sociologists could coordinate and was formed at a conference on 'sexual divisions' in 1974.[119] During the 1985 BSA conference, a Violence Against Women Research Group was formed. This group met regularly from the 1980s onwards and published updates in the BSA Women's Caucus newsletter. Key violence against women activists, including figures within Women's Aid, such as Hanmer, Kelly, Saunders and McNeill attended meetings of the group. In an oral history interview, Hanmer remembered the group as a sympathetic space:

> See, the Women's Caucus was incredibly helpful to women. We supported all those students really and students supported each other, it was incredibly supportive environment, to help people validate the importance of their work, their ability to give papers in supportive environment, because there was a lot of this, you know, one-upmanship stuff that went on in these sessions really, of men challenging each other and so on, so it really wasn't the right environment for women to give papers.[120]

These meetings were an opportunity to discuss and develop feminist theory. For example, in 1985, Kelly's idea of a continuum of sexual violence was debated, where it was felt that: 'If it is made explicit that the continuum of sexual violence is a multidimensional continuum rather than a straight line… then the concept has real value.'[121] Claudia Bernard has recalled during interview that this group was the first place she presented her research into representations of Black mothers in child sexual abuse discourses in the mid 1990s.[122] Bernard is now Professor of Social Work at Goldsmiths, University of London, and her work has focused mostly on children and mother's experiences of abuse. Marianne Hester, who is Professor of Gender, Violence and International Policy at the University of Bristol and heads the Centre for Gender and Violence Research, recalled during interview that the group initially met at the office of Rights of Women, a feminist activist group providing legal advice to women.[123] The meetings also had guest speakers, such as two women from Welsh Women's Aid who led a discussion about measures to educate young people about

[119] Marion Kerr and Mary Maynard, 'A History of the Caucus'*, British Sociology Association Women's Caucus Newsletter,* (July 1984), pp.3-4.

[120] Hanmer, interview with Jolly.

[121] 'Violence Against Women Research Group', *British Sociology Association Women's Caucus Newsletter,* (June 1985), p.6.

[122] Claudia Bernard, interview with the author, (20th February 2023).

[123] Marianne Hester, interview with the author, (25th March 2021).

domestic abuse in 1986, demonstrating that a connection between research and grassroots activism was fostered.[124] The group also led to important publications, such as *Women, Violence and Social Control,* and in 1996 the follow-up to this entitled *Women, Violence and Male Power* was published. The group still exists today and Hague has recalled it as an important source of support and intellectual stimulation in the 1990s and early 2000s.[125]

An important development in the entering of WLM ideas and feminist scholarship into academic institutions was the development of Women's Studies. Women's Studies courses often developed outside of elite academic spaces, such as adult education departments, as has been found by Bird:

> The extra-mural departments of universities and community education were often the beginnings of Women's Studies, and seen as safer places and spaces than the more overtly political consciousness-raising (CR) groups and where feminist work could blossom before it was allowed formal entry into university curricula.[126]

In Bristol, classes were originally given in the women's centre.[127] However, in the 1980s Women's Studies began to become a more formally accepted discipline. Bird has traced the history of the first degrees to be offered in Women's Studies; beginning with the University of Kent in 1980, Bradford in 1982, Sheffield City Polytechnic in 1983, Warwick in 1983 and York in 1984.[128] There was some debate within the WLM about how useful Women's Studies was, some argued that it de-radicalised feminism, becoming part of an elitist higher education system and only benefiting the careers of those who taught Women's Studies, with little impact on the outside world.[129] Bird has found that some women experienced anxiety in setting up Women's Studies courses within the academy; one woman she interviewed commenting that: 'There was a lot of guilt around those early courses, we used to sneak off and do them'.[130]

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[124] 'Violence Against Women Research Group', *British Sociology Association Women's Caucus Newsletter*, (March 1986), p.3.

[125] Hague, *History and Memories*, p.208.

[126] Bird, *Women's Studies*, p.269.

[127] Ibid. p.266.

[128] Ibid. p.269.

[129] Mary Evans, 'In Praise of Theory: The Case for Women's Studies'*, Feminist Review*, 10:1, (1982), p.62.

[130] Bird, *Women's Studies*, p.274.

The merits of Women's Studies was debated in the *Feminist Review* in the early 1980s, with Mary Evans arguing that it was important that women be part of intellectual life and the production of knowledge and that she felt she was 'able to work against patriarchal practices within the academy.'[131] Liz Kelly and Ruth Pearson, on the other hand, retorted that the real radical potential of Women's Studies lay outside the academy, as they had seen in their Norwich Women's Studies Group, writing: 'We have not in Evans' terms produced a feminist theory. But we have given many women the opportunity to organize their individual experiences of gender subordination and to relate this to the social and personal subordination of women in general.'[132]

Although it caused considerable debate, important networks of feminist academics and activists sprung up around the teaching and organisation of Women's Studies in the 1980s and the legacy of this can still be found today. These could be international in nature, for instance, the *Women's Studies International Forum* journal was important in coordinating activities around the world. The US was considered a leader in the development of Women's Studies and UK based feminist academics would attend conferences there, such as the National Women's Studies Association Third Annual Conference at the University of Connecticut in June 1981 at which Hanmer spoke.[133] Women's Studies was also a theme at the UN World Conference on Women held in Nairobi in 1985.[134]

Networks were also organised around Women's Studies at the local level, particularly in Bristol where the Bristol Women's Studies Group was formed.[135] The group was made up of nine women who lectured and researched in the social sciences and humanities and taught Women's Studies. All of these women also had a background as activists in the WLM and at least three of them, Ellen Malos, Elizabeth Bird and Jackie West, had some involvement with Women's Aid in Bristol. In 1979, the group published an introduction to teaching Women's Studies entitled *Half the Sky*. The book contained sources, example lesson plans and advice for teaching Women's Studies. Often Women's Studies courses

[131] Ibid. p.73.

[132] Liz Kelly and Ruth Pearson, 'Women's Studies: Women Studying or Studying Women?', 15:1, *Feminist Review*, (1983), p.78.

[133] 'National Women's Studies Association material', Conference Box 13: 1981 (FAN/CONF/13), Feminist Archive North at the Leeds University Special Collections.

[134] 'Nairobi 1985 UN World Conference on Women', Conference Box 19, 1985 Nairobi conference, (FAN/CONF/19), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[135] *Half the Sky: An Introduction to Women's Studies*, ed. Elizabeth Bird et al., (London: Virago, 1979), p.i.

attracted older women who were returning to education and the book encouraged that their life experiences be valued as sources of knowledge and for barriers between students and teachers to be broken down.[136] The book included an extract from the NWAF publication 'Battered Women Demand Control Over Their Own Lives' as a source for discussions on marriage and wifehood.[137] This demonstrates the way in which women who were interested in both academia and activism could bring their interests into the field of Women's Studies and by publishing a book like this one, disseminated some of this knowledge into various institutions where Women's Studies was being taught.

This interest in research into women's lives, paired with a strong connection to Women's Aid, continued in Bristol with the establishment of the Violence Against Women Research Group at the University of Bristol, which has now evolved into the Centre for Gender and Violence Research. The two founding members of this group were Hague and Malos and their continued involvement with WAFE was an important part of the story, as Hague has recently illuminated:

> It was established in 1989/90. But the idea emerged… from meetings of the Women's Aid Legal and Research Group, set up by Nicola Harwin in 1987…. To try to establish a grant-funded research unit through the University of Bristol, which could work closely with the Women's Aid Federation (England)… their head quarters had not long moved to Bristol. We could then conduct research that they needed… Even with this support, though, the Group, was marginalised… it was a challenging journey for the Group to make its mark and to be accepted as important.[138]

Due to the strength of the WLM networks in Bristol, and in particular Women's Aid activists like Hague and Malos, Bristol has become a centre of research into domestic abuse and violence against women more generally. Continued contact with Women's Aid was important, as the connection to Harwin and the Women's Aid Legal and Research Group shows. Although it took time, they have now gained standing in the university and publish a well-respected journal *The Journal of Gender-Based Violence*. At present, the Centre is headed by leading gender-based violence researcher Professor Marianne Hester.

The University of Bradford was also an important centre for research into violence against women, largely due to the work of Hanmer. As with the Bristol example, the development

[136] Ibid. p.273.

[137] Ibid. pp.141-142.

[138] Hague, *History and Memories,* pp.205-206.

of Women's Studies was an important context for bringing violence against women scholarship into academic spaces. Hanmer was instrumental in the development of Women's Studies in the UK, holding the first summer school on Women's Studies at the University of Bradford in 1979.[139] An MA/Diploma in Applied Women's Studies at the University of Bradford had its first intake in October 1982 and was the second degree course to be established in the UK.[140] Hanmer was the course coordinator and Sutton also taught on the course. One of the objectives of the course was that students develop skills 'for more effective intervention in the work and community environments to achieve equality for women' and had both a practical and theoretical focus, hence the word 'Applied' in the course title.[141] There was an optional course for Women and Violence, although violence may have also been discussed in the core courses which were: 'The Family, Welfare States and the Labour Market', 'Feminism – Theory and Practice' and 'Social Research and Planned Intervention'.[142] Hearn taught an option on the course about 'Men and Masculinities' which included discussion of forms of patriarchy, men's power, sexuality, fatherhood and violence.[143] It is perhaps not surprising that there was a real emphasis on the application of what was being learned on this course to improve the lives of women, as several of those who taught on the course had a background in activism. Gail Lewis, for instance, remembered teaching on the course during an interview:

> I then went and I taught on a two year… temporary contract at Bradford in the Social Policy Department… and there what I taught was, I taught both like community studies really and Women's Studies, an MA in Women's Studies… that's my first teaching of Women's Studies and I really taught, very much I taught through activism, that was the point about that, I taught very much through activism.[144]

Hanmer's was the only position devoted to the Applied Women's Studies course, while the optional courses were taught voluntarily. Like Hague, Hanmer has recalled that it was a challenge for the work she was doing at the university to be treated with respect by other

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[139] 'News and Views – Jalna Hanmer', Violence, Abuse and Gender Relations Research Unit, Box 2, (FAN/JH/VAGR/02), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[140] Ibid.

[141] 'University of Bradford Postgraduate Courses in Women's Studies (Applied)' brochure, p.2, c.1985, Violence, Abuse and Gender Relations Research Unit, Box 2, (FAN/JH/VAGR/02), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[142] Ibid. p.4.

[143] 'Option: Men and Masculinities', *Violence, Abuse and Gender Relations Research Unit, Box 2,* (FAN/JH/VAGR/02), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[144] Gail Lewis, interview with Rachel Cohen (2011), Sisterhood and After Oral History Project at British Library, (C1420/14).

academics. For instance, she recalled that the university would not allow more funding to pay the other contributors because 'that was the deal with the university, they let us do it provided it cost them nothing, and otherwise they took no interest in the matter whatever, or any interest they took was hostile.'[145] Hanmer did, however, have support from Hilary Rose who was a Professor of Social Policy at Bradford at the time and Sheila Allen who was Professor of Sociology, who both 'pushed to make it happen' and for the Women's Studies degree to be established.[146]

In May 1990, Hearn and Hanmer established VAGRRU within the Department of Applied Social Studies at the University of Bradford. Hearn has written of the unit's establishment:

> A turning point, personally, politically and theoretically, and emotionally, in grappling with violence more directly was in 1989 when Jalna Hanmer and I sat down one day and decided to work together. Though Jalna and I had neighbouring offices in the university, we had been researching separately over many years different violences… Both Jalna and I were involved in activism: Jalna in Women's Aid Federation of England (WAFE) and feminist reproductive politics, and me in anti-sexism/profeminism. The meeting brought us together, spanning activism, policy and academia: an emotional brew in itself. We resolved to do this formally, institutionally, "properly", and so set up a formal research unit.[147]

One of the aims of the centre was to bring together researchers across the UK working on different aspects of violence against women and act as a base for the organisation of conferences and seminar.[148] Another key objective was to contribute to policy on gender, violence, abuse and crime and work with agencies on their policy and practice. Hague has observed that 'feminist research on violence against women… sits between the women's services, the academic world and other stakeholders like government, not being fully integrated into any of them. Kelly calls it 'working in-between' and operating a critical engagement, not only with the statutory sector and government, but with the women's sector too.'[149] In a similar way to Women's Aid themselves, who at times walked a fine line - working with statutory agencies while remaining critical and separate from the state - feminist researchers had to engage with different agencies in order to influence policy

[145] Hanmer, interview with Jolly.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Hearn, *Serious Emotions*, p.2.

[148] 'Violence Abuse and Gender Relations Research Unit: Unit Information and Research Papers, University of Bradford', p.2., Violence, Abuse and Gender Relations Research Unit, Box 2, (FAN/JH/VAGR/02), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[149] Hague, *History and Memories*, p.205.

whilst maintaining a critical distance. This was something most Women's Aid activists who were also academics grappled with, as we have seen in the above discussion of feminist identities. For Hague, balancing these commitments and values meant not fully integrating with any but holding this in between space.

Although Hague does not discuss VAGRRU herself, the work of the Bradford unit on policing and interagency approaches speaks to her point. Hanmer and Saunders' research into the policing and prevention of violence against women in West Yorkshire made a significant impact on police practices in the area:

> The research report led to substantial changes of policy, organisation and policing practices in West Yorkshire. The Chief Constable, Colin Sampson announced changes to be implemented to policy, training, information processing on crimes against women, advice to victims, liaison with other agencies, and the setting up of specialist units for sexual offences and domestic violence one year after it was received by the West Yorkshire Police Authority in November 1987.[150]

Interestingly, Hanmer and Saunders were strategic in their choice of methodology, while they used the qualitative method of interviews particularly favoured in early discussions of feminist methodology, they argued that 'adopting quantitative research methods was essential given the value decision-makers attached to statistical presentations… The research design and methods, particularly the quantitative, are not necessarily those that would have been adopted had improving services for women not been the major consideration.'[151] Therefore, feminist activist academics were pragmatic in the way that they used research. They knew that the ultimate goal of the research was to influence those in power and thereby improve the lives of women who were victim/survivors of violence and abuse. The research was not an end in itself but was a powerful tool that could be useful in the liberation of women.

Another recommendation based on the research done at VAGRRU in the late 1980s and 1990s, was that an interagency approach should be used to coordinate efforts to support victim/survivors and deal with perpetrators.[152] Partly due to this research, and with the

[150] Jalna Hanmer and Sheila Saunders, *Women, Violence and Crime Prevention* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1993), pxx.

[151] Ibid. p.xxi.

[152] Ibid. and Jalna Hanmer, Jeff Hearn, Cath Dillon, Taira Kayan, 'Violence to Women from Known Men: Policy Development, Interagency Approaches and Good Practice', *Violence, Abuse and Gender Relations Research Unit, Box 2,* (FAN/JH/VAGR/02), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

support of Leeds Women's Aid, the Leeds Inter Agency Project was established in 1991. This project brought together systems of support such as health services, police, criminal justice system, women's refuges and more to improve policies and raise the profile of domestic abuse as an issue across Leeds.[153] Hague has noted that multiagency approaches were subsequently set up in Nottingham, Islington, Hammersmith and Fulham in the early 1990s.[154] This coordinated approach was inspired by the Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Programmes led by Ellen Pence in the US where this approach was pioneered. Other centres for research into violence against women have also collaborated with other agencies. For instance, research conducted at the University of Bristol led to IRIS, an initiative which coordinated collaboration between health workers and women's organisations like Women's Aid to support victim/survivors.[155] In Edinburgh, the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships was established in 2001. One of the founders of the centre was the first National Coordinator of SWA, Fran Wasoff. This centre has also worked closely with statutory agencies such as the NHS and their projects have been funded by the Scottish Executive.[156]

CWASU, originally The Child Abuse Studies Unit, was established in 1987 by two social work lecturers, Mary MacLeod and Esther Saraga, in the then Polytechnic of North London (now London Metropolitan University).[157] Kelly was the unit's first member of staff in 1987 and has been there ever since.[158] CWASU has had a particular contribution to understandings of the links between domestic abuse and child abuse and the criminal justice system. Like the research centres discussed above, CWASU also recommended a feminist interagency approach for child abuse and domestic abuse in the early 1990s and has advocated for Women's Aid to be involved and consulted within interagency coordinating. [159] They have also worked alongside Women's Aid on projects and evaluated the effectiveness of approaches used by Women's Aid groups. For example, in 1993 CWASU researchers critically evaluated Hammersmith and Fulham Women's Aid

[153] *Leeds Women's Aid Timeline of Achievements,* p.2.

[154] Hague*, History and Memories,* p.174.

[155] Ibid. p.173.

[156] 'Fran Wasoff', University of Edinburgh website, <https://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/staff/fran-wasoff> [Accessed 23/01/23].

[157] 'About Us', CWASU website < https://cwasu.org/about-us/> [Accessed 17th October 2022].

[158] Kelly, interview.

[159] Linda Regan, Liz Kelly and Sheila Burton*, Abuse of Women and Children: A Feminist Response* (London: University of North London University Press, 1993).

Childwork Project and in 1996 conducted a broader evaluation of work with children in English refuges.[160]

5.8 The Diversification of Research into Domestic Abuse

Beginning in the 1980s, feminist researchers began to look in more detail at diversity amongst women and how various aspects of their identities affected the way in which they experienced domestic abuse. For example, the first extensive study of Black women's experiences of domestic abuse in England *The Hidden Struggle* was published by Amina Mama in 1989.[161] Mama's research was commissioned by the London Race and Housing Research Unit and focused on London refuges.[162] WAFE in Bristol and the London regional office were both consulted by Mama and a chapter of the book discussed Women's Aid and the refuge provision they provided.[163] Over 100 interviews with Black women who had experienced domestic abuse and with those working to support them were conducted for this project.[164] The methodology used reflected some of the feminist academic principles discussed above but with particular attention to the needs of Black women; for instance 'given the traumatic nature of domestic violence, notions of eurocentric and androcentric research practice were discarded.'[165] This was achieved by all interviewers being Black women and where possible interviewees were matched with an interviewee of the same ethnicity.[166]

The study's main concern was the way in which:

> In the case of black women, male violence in the home is compounded by general societal racism and state repression, to create a situation of multiple oppression and further punishment for those bravely struggling to establish lives for themselves and their children, away from violent men.[167]

[160] Liz Kelly, *Evaluation of Hammersmith and Fulham Women's Aid Childwork Project* (London: Hammersmith and Fulham Council, 1993).

[161] Mama, *The Hidden Struggle*.

[162] Ibid. 'Acknowledgements'.

[163] Ibid. 'Acknowledgements'

[164] Ibid. p.xiii.

[165] Ibid. p.xi.

[166] Ibid.

[167] Ibid. p.xiii.

The study was critical of the role of local authorities and the police. Mama's research found cases where women were questioned about their immigration status, refused accommodation and even subjected to police brutality when they tried to seek help.[168] Mama also cited financial strain on refuges and the privatisation of housing during Margaret Thatcher's government as having been detrimental for women seeking safe accommodation.[169] As well as being critical of the state, Mama also analysed the role of Women's Aid and women's refuges more generally.[170] While she commended the role played by Women's Aid workers, she also found incidents where Black women did not feel comfortable in all-white refuges and recommended that more Black women be involved at every level of the organisation. Although, the number of Black women working in refuges had been increasing during this time, partly due to women who had stayed in refuge applying for jobs afterwards.[171] Mama also found that specialist refuges catering for Black women were receiving less funding per bed space, despite offering additional services and often having more complex cases.[172]

Mama argued that refuges for South Asian women were more likely than refuges for African or African Caribbean descent women to be funded because they were provided on cultural grounds such as language and culinary differences. Mama criticised this approach, writing:

> The culturalisation of race by local state structures can be challenged as a form of hegemony, which actually functions to suppress and deny other manifestations of racism. Indeed, it appears that problems arising out of cultural differences are far more easily accepted and admitted than plain racism.[173]

Mama argued that this viewpoint meant that Black women who were assimilated to British culture were not deemed to need the extra support of separate refuges by the state or WAFE.[174] Indeed, five out of six of the London specialist Asian refuges Mama examined did not accept African or African Caribbean descent women.[175] Mama's point was that all

[168] Ibid. P.xiv-xv.

[169] Ibid.

[170] Ibid. pp.269-296.

[171] ibid. pp282-290.

[172] ibid. p.xvi.

[173] Ibid. p.292.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Ibid. p.293.

Black women needed extra support due to the discrimination they faced from housing departments, police, and other agencies, as well as missing out on the support and solidarity of women of similar backgrounds to them within refuge spaces.[176]

During interview, Mama recalled that while doing her PhD at Birkbeck, University of London in the 1980s she was involved with the Brixton Black Women's Centre and the Brixton Defence Campaign. These experiences gave her an awareness of the issues around race, gender and the state in London and sparked her idea for the research project that led to *The Hidden Struggle*:

> So, all these things brought my, drew my attention to the fact that Black women, not only, Black people, faced violence on the street but then, if they have problems in the family those are compounded by the public and the state's oppressive responses to them because of long term institutionalised racism… most of the fieldwork I did was in depth interviews, so we, three of us, we interviewed 120 women who had been subjected to various types of violence in the home and at the hands of the state. So, that was the data base for the project really.[177]

Claudia Bernard was a social work student when she joined the steering committee for *The Hidden Struggle* project. Bernard recalled this experience during interview as having: 'Just lit something for me about doing research, about helping to make visible hidden voices and marginalized experiences.'[178] Bernard recalled that *The Hidden Struggle* was important partly because it helped to open up a conversation about violence in Black communities, this was done through the dissemination of research findings:

> When we gathered a lot of the data and we did the initial analysis, we did a community event where, we organized an event to share some of the findings and, and get people's thoughts. And the whole idea was to open up a discussion in the Black community about male violence against women, because at the time, the Black feminist perspective was very much hidden. Um, a lot of the work around antiracism was very much focused on race and very little addressed in gender.[179]

Bernard recalled that some of the politically engaged anti-racist men at the event, who were very knowledgeable about issues of racism, did not apply the same critical thinking to

[176] Ibid. p.293.

[177] Mama, interview.

[178] Bernard, interview.

[179] Ibid.

gendered issues and espoused sexist views, demonstrating that it was an important conversation to have at this time.[180]

In an interview, McCrum recalled that Mama's work was influential for her own thinking and that Veronica Hill, a member of *The Hidden Struggle* project steering committee, gave a paper at a Shakti Women's Aid conference in Edinburgh in 1991.[181] This conference was 'a celebration of Black women's achievements and a chance for us to meet and talk about the problems we face.'[182] The panels at the conference were about 'Health and Black women,' 'Employment,' 'Black Women and Law,' 'Education and Training for Black Women,' 'Violence Against Women' and 'Trafficking in Women.'[183] Mukami and Mama were both members of Akina Mama wa Afrika, a pan-African feminist support and organising group, which was based in London from 1985. It was galvanising for women like McCrum working on the other side of the UK to have research to point to when arguing for the needs of Black women in her own locality. Conferences like the one in 1991 also allowed researchers studying Black women's experiences of violence to forge networks of support.

It was some years before another major study of race and domestic abuse in the UK was published. The next substantial piece of research was commissioned by WAFE and undertaken by Ravi Thiara and Dhanwant Rai in 1996.[184] This study examined women's refuges across England through interviews and questionnaires.[185] By this time there were 240 refuges in England and forty of these were specialist refuges.[186] The research was undertaken in consultation with the national WAFE Black Workers Group. Thiara and Rai found that although most Women's Aid groups were committed to anti-racism in theory, 96% had an equal opportunities policy, in practice there still remained a lot of work to be done.[187] For instance, they found that Black workers felt marginalised and recommended

[180] Ibid.

[181] McCrum, interview.

[182] 'Press Release: Scotland hosts National/International Black Women's Conference,' (4th September 1991), Mukami McCrum's personal archive.

[183] 'What's all the shouting about? Black women's national/international conference Programme', (7th-8th September 1991), Mukami McCrum's personal archive.

[184] Ravi K. Thiara and Dhanwant K. Rai, *Re-Defining Spaces: the needs of Black women and children in refuge support services and Black workers in Women's Aid* (Bristol: WAFE, 1997).

[185]

[186] Ibid. p.6.

[187] Ibid., p.8.

that they be actively encouraged to take part in decision making by being appointed to committees and speaking at Women's Aid annual conferences.[188] The presence of Black workers was found to encourage more Black women to seek help, one interviewee who had stayed in refuge mentioned that she: 'Felt easy dealing with a Black woman because I didn't have to explain everything, they know what's going on in the community, they're aware of the issues.'[189] Other issues that were highlighted in the report included under-use of refuges by Black women, racism faced by Black women and children in refuges, when they were re-housed and in schools, immigration law (especially for women whose status was dependent on their relationships), the isolation women felt when they were rejected from their communities and the specific needs of children with mixed parentage.[190]

In both this and Mama's study, it was found that WAFE and Women's Aid groups were committed to putting anti-racist policies in place but that they had not managed to have the same success making the organisation anti-racist as they had with anti-sexism. In both cases, a lot of momentum for the studies came from WAFE and they were clearly eager to learn more. However, given that the first refuges for Asian and Black women were established in the early 1980s, research was quite slow to pick up in this area. The first book focusing on the subject of South Asian women and violence against women, for instance, was not published in the UK until 2010.[191] Other activist groups also published research on Black women's experiences during the 1990s, for example, a report by Southall Black Sisters came out in 1993 and Women Acting in Today's Society (WAITS) in 1995.[192] Patricia Connell also completed a PhD thesis and published work on Black British women of Caribbean descent and their experience of domestic abuse, using a Black feminist analysis in the late 1990s.[193]

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[188] Ibid, p.10.

[189] Ibid. p.29

[190] Ibid, pp.8-9.

[191] *Violence Against Women in South Asian Communities: Issues for Policy and Practice*, ed. Ravi K. Thiara and Aisha K. Gill (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2010).

[192] Southall Black Sisters, *Domestic Violence and Asian Women: A Collection of Reports and Findings* (London: SBS, 1993). Women Acting in Today's Society, *Freedom From Abuse: Domestic Violence in the Asian African and Arab Communities*, (Birmingham: WAITS, 1995).

[193] Patricia Connell, 'Understanding Victimization and Agency: Considerations of Race, Class and Gender', *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 20:2, (1997). Patricia Connell, *Theorising woman abuse through identity : the experience of Black British women,* (unpublished thesis, University of Cambridge, 1998).

Like Mama, Thiara had been involved with activism before conducting research in the area of violence against women. Thiara was involved with setting up Roshni Asian Women's Aid in Nottingham and explained that she 'was quite networked with the specialist by and for organizations' which was helpful for conducting her research.[194] During interview, Thiara reflected on the Women's Studies course she took at the University of Lancaster as part of her Masters in Sociology in the 1980s:

> It was a historic aspect of women's activism but very Eurocentric… Um, there was some capacity at that time, *Ain't I A Woman* [by bell hooks] had come out. Um, Angela Davis's book *Women, Race and Class* had come out. Um, and then there was an interesting book called *The Empire Strikes Back*… So if I was to think about what influenced me, it was those, they were kind of my bible. They were always under my arm.

Bernard also cited Black feminist writers from the US such as Audre Lorde and Toni Morrison as early influences, while Mama reflected that it was often reading done outside of the academy in activist spaces that most influenced her thinking: 'The [Brixton Black] women's group did study, it was a very good study group for me; I remember reading Mao, Marx, not at the university, that never gave me any of the real stuff that I've worked with ever since.'[195] Bernard and Thiara both mentioned Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality as influential to their work. However, Thiara qualified this by explaining: 'I think intersectionality encapsulates the debates that, uh, happened up until that point, really… We were talking about it in terms of multiple oppression. Intersectionality is a term that Crenshaw has devised, but I think some of that thinking existed way before.'[196] Previously, Gill and Thiara have written that the concept of intersectionality is useful in understanding violence against women but have cautioned that 'it is not sufficient to use intersectionality to merely highlight women's different experiences across the major dimensions of power, as there also needs to be an interrogation of systems of power that re/produce subordination.'[197] Thiara emphasised that Black British intellectuals' such as Hazel Carby and Avtar Brah, as well as influences from the Global South and the Caribbean, were just as influential as scholarship from the US in the 1980s and 1990s.[198]

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[194] Ibid.

[195] Mama, interview.

[196] Thiara, interview.

[197] Thiara and Gill, *Violence Against Women in South Asian Communities*, p.42.

[198] Thiara, interview.

Furthermore, Bernard commented that while she was doing a Masters in Gender and Society at the University of Middlesex in the early 1990s, although she found influences in scholars such as Kelly, Dobash and Dobash, Betsy Stanko, and saw Jill Radford as a mentor:

> There was an absence of race… gender was, was the only lens that was being used then in terms of, from, as a feminist, in terms of feminist understanding of violence, gender-based violence and violence against women. So, it was much later on that race started to be really examined in terms of violence against women.[199]

Cecile Wright, Sonia Thompson and Yvonne Channer have found that Black women academics in British universities can experience 'a lack of a sense of belonging, marginalization, and being 'othered.''[200] Mama, Thiara and Bernard all expressed during interview that being Black women entering the academy in the 1980s and early 1990s could be an isolating experience but that they drew strength from like-minded people, often from activist spaces. Bernard recalled that, although she found the University of Middlesex generally a progressive space as a student, she did experience racism from one academic tutor:

> [They] would just overlook me in the class. You know, I'd be, I'd make a contribution, and I, would be ignored… … But I had a voice, so I wasn't afraid to speak. And I was knowledgeable because I used to read ferociously and I was an activist then. I used to be involved, um, in things. I used to be on demonstrations. I used to go to a lot of events, feminist events.[201]

Bernard has also written about her experiences working as an academic, writing that: 'Black feminist insights helped me to cultivate strategies to inhabit the White space of the academy, in situations where I simultaneously felt both hyper-visible and invisible.'[202]

Mama explained during interview that she had 'intellectual colleagues in the Black movement but at the university I was the only Black person in most of my classes, and I had all white, never had, there were no Black faculty in the 80s.'[203] Mama further

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[199] Bernard, interview.

[200] Cecile Wright, Sonia Thompson and Yvonne Channer, 'Out of Place: Black women academics in British universities', *Women's History Review*, 16:2, (2007), p.48.

[201] Bernard, interview.

[202] Claudia Bernard, 'Reflecting On A Journey: Positionality, Marginality And The Outsider-Within' in *Inside the Ivory Tower,* p.82.

[203] Mama, interview.

remarked that she was unable to get a job in the UK after she had finished her PhD, eventually leaving for a job in the Netherlands instead, and felt this had been a common experience amongst Black British academics of the 1980s, commenting that: 'I just don't think the British academy was ready for any of us... I think I could have done a lot for Britain, but it didn't want me.'[204]

Thiara spoke of her experience specifically in violence against women research networks:

> When I was moving in these circles, I was often the only researcher of colour. I was the only Black researcher at that time, for a number of years, actually. Uh, and I would get pigeonholed into, kind of, people would just make the assumption that I'm only doing research on, um, issues that are to do with marginalized, um, groups, when actually so many of the projects that I worked on at that time weren't specific to that.[205]

Thiara further commented that even up until the present day there has been an inequality in funding opportunities for projects researching violence against women which focus on marginalised groups and that these usually involve a lot of 'emotional and free labour.'[206] Thus, while all three women's experiences were different, they all felt a sense of being either pigeonholed, isolated, marginalised or discriminated against due to their race. Nonetheless, they all mentioned the importance of networks built up between feminist, activist and academic spaces which supported them to not only survive but succeed in their academic careers.

As has already been noted, CWASU in London have made a particular contribution to research on children and domestic abuse. The 1990s saw the publication of more research into domestic abuse and children, which sought to establish that children were not just witnesses to their mother's abuse but were victim/survivors themselves.[207] There were also studies which used an analysis of race and gender to understand Black children's experiences of abuse. For instance, Melba Wilson's book examining incest and the work of

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[204] Ibid.

[205] Thiara, interview.

[206] Ibid.

[207] Alex Saunders, *It Hurts Me Too: Children's Experience of Domestic Violence & Refuge Life* (Bristol: WAFE, 1995). Regan, Kelly and Burton, *Abuse of Women and Children*. *Children Living with Domestic Violence: Putting Men's Abuse of Women on the Child Care Agenda*, ed. Audrey Mullender and Rebecca Morley (London: Whiting and Birch, 1994).

Bernard into Black and disabled children's experiences of sexual abuse.[208] Research into the link between domestic abuse and disability in adults began with the first nationwide study in the UK in 2010 and first published book in 2012.[209] However, there was an awareness raising of the links between domestic abuse and disability by campaigners such as Rachel Hurst and Agnes Fletcher by at least the 1990s.[210]

Furthermore, Marianne Hester and Catherine Donovan have found that research into sexuality and domestic abuse was slow to develop in the UK. This was partly due to the idea present amongst some radical feminists that lesbian relationships were more equal and loving than heterosexual relationships.[211] There was also considerable debate as to whether the theories developed for heterosexual relationships could be applied to same sex relationships.[212] For instance, did the idea of domestic abuse being about power and control apply given that it had been based on the inequality between men and women? Partly for these reasons, although Women's Aid groups did discuss the issue and lesbian women came to refuges for support, there were no in-depth academic publications on the subject until the 2000s. Donovan has further argued that discussions of domestic abuse in LGBT+ relationships were 'almost totally absent' from *Spare Rib,* the leading UK feminist magazine.[213]

However, the radical feminist magazine *Trouble & Strife*, did feature several articles discussing violence in lesbian relationships in the 1990s. In 1991, for instance, Kelly published an article questioning the 'idealisation of women and of relationships between them' and calling for 'a framework which is more than mapping heterosexual theory onto lesbian experience' to understand why domestic abuse occurred within lesbian

[208] Melba Wilson, *Crossing the Boundary: Black Women Survive Incest* (London: Virago, 1993).Claudia Bernard, 'Child Sexual Abuse and the Black Disabled Child', *Disability and Society*, 14:3, (1999).

[209] Ravi K. Thiara , Gill Hague and Audrey Mullender, 'Losing out on both counts: disabled women and domestic violence', *Disability & Society*, 26:6, (2010). Ravi K. Thiara et al., *Disabled Women and Domestic Violence: Responding to the Experiences of Survivors*, (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2012).

[210] 'Violence Against Disabled Women Worldwide', *An International Conference: Violence, Abuse and Women's Citizenship: Book of Abstracts*, (Leeds: VAGRRU, 1996), p.91.

[211] Marianne Hester and Catherine Donovan, *Domestic Violence and Sexuality: What's love got to do with it?* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2014), p.3.

[212] Ibid, pp.11-12.

[213] Catherine Dovovan, 'An Exploration of Spare Rib's Treatment of Violence Between Women in Same-Sex Relationships' in *Re-reading Spare Rib*, ed. Angela Smith, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p.193.

relationships.[214] In response to Kelly's article, Alison Hall published a piece exploring her personal experience of abuse in a lesbian relationship and the difficulties with disclosing this given the 'absences and silences around the issue.'[215] These examples demonstrate the way in which feminist activist publications could be crucial spaces where issues were discussed and theoretical understandings emerged before academic research had been conducted. Indeed, one of the earliest published studies about abuse in same sex relationships was commissioned by the LGBTQ+ rights charity, Stonewall, in 1995.[216] The most comprehensive study to date was published by Hester and Donovan in 2014, this was undertaken in consultation with activist groups including Broken Rainbow and Central Manchester Women's Aid.[217]

Research into older women's experience of domestic abuse has been described as limited and fragmented as recently as 2019.[218] A 2004 study of older women and domestic abuse in Scotland noted that research in this area had mostly been understood as a form of 'elder abuse', and argued that this term 'often excludes domestic violence, is usually gender blind, and relies on a narrow definition of violence.'[219] Research into domestic abuse, on the other hand, has at times invisiblised the experiences of older women, not recognising the particular challenges they face.[220] However, there was concern about older women's experiences of domestic abuse earlier than this, and some research undertaken in this area in the 1990s.[221] For instance, there was a panel on older women and abuse at the International Violence Abuse and Women's Citizenship Conference, held in Brighton in 1996.[222] Therefore, it can be seen that while there had been concern about the experiences of Black women and of children within women's refuges quite early, it has taken some time for extensive research into this to be conducted. Moreover, the experiences of some

[214] Liz Kelly, 'Unspeakable Acts', *Trouble & Strife*, (Summer 1991), pp.13-20.

[215] Alison Hall, 'Abuse in Lesbian Relationships', *Trouble & Strife*, 23, (1992), pp.38-40.

[216] Hester and Donovan, *Domestic Violence and Sexuality*, p.25.

[217] Ibid. 'Acknowledgements', p.iii.

[218] *Violence Against Older Women Volume One: Nature and Extent*, ed. Hannah Bows (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp.1-2.

[219] Marsha Scott, Linda McKie, Sarah Morton, Eizabeth Seddon and Fran Wasoff, '*And for 39 years I got on with it': Older Women and Domestic Violence in Scotland* (Edinburgh: NHS Health Scotland, 2004), p.12.

[220] Ibid. p.15.

[221] Bridget Penhale, 'Bruises on the Soul: Older Women, Domestic Violence, and Elder Abuse', *Journal of Elder Absue and Neglect*, 11:1, (1999).

[222] *An International Conference: Violence, Abuse and Women's Citizenship: Conference Programme* (1996), from Karen Boyle's personal archive.

groups such as older women and people in LGBTQ+ relationships have only received attention in the form of published research in the last twenty years.

5.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen how feminist activist identities remained key to the way in which those working on violence against women within the academy understood their sense of selves and their work. In November 1996, 2,500 people from 137 countries attended the 'International Conference on Violence, Abuse and Women's Citizenship' in Brighton.[223] The Brighton conference brought together activists, academics and survivors working in the area of violence against women and gender-based violence, demonstrating the rich networks that had been forged in this area since the mid-1970s. The conference Steering Group was chaired by Jalna Hanmer and included representatives from a mixture of activist groups, charities and research units such as Action Against Child Sexual Abuse, Akina Mama wa Afrika, CHANGE, Hackney Council Women's Unit, Rape Crisis, Southall Black Sisters, War on Want, WAFE, Welsh Women's Aid and VAGRRU.[224] The conference covered an expansive range of issues, including rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic abuse, pornography, human trafficking, child abuse and 'harmful cultural practices' (which included FGM, conflict and widowhood rites). The plethora of issues and ideas discussed at this conference demonstrated how much thinking around domestic abuse, and violence against women more generally, had proliferated in the preceding two decades. This shows the persistence of the research networks that have been explored in this chapter, reaching across different sectors, that culminated with this extraordinary conference. The Brighton conference's diverse programme supports a key finding of this chapter; that feminist academic activists often found themselves 'working in between' various networks of academics, activists and statutory agencies. These networks were fluid, with those who entered academia retaining tangible links with activist groups and maintaining a dedication to undertaking research that was useful at the grassroots level.

The entering of violence against women studies into the academy formed part of a broader development of feminist research and theory. This included the development of a feminist

[223] 'Postcards from Brighton', *Trouble & Strife*, (Summer 1997), p.16.

[224] Val Balding, Julie Bindel and Catherine Euler, 'Sponsors and The Steering Group', *Violence, Abuse and Women's Citizenship: Final Conference Report* (1997), pp.7-11 from Karen Boyle's personal archive.

methodology to which Women's Aid activists contributed. In particular, they argued for the importance of empowering the women and children whose lives were being researched and allowing victim/survivors to define their experiences in their own language. The strength of these ideas is reflected in the Brighton 1996 conference programme, which included many papers informed by lived experiences. Speakers included women who had experienced violence during armed conflicts in the 'former Yugoslavia', Afghanistan and elsewhere, survivors of FGM, incest and domestic abuse. For example, Meserak 'Mimi' Ramsey gave a keynote paper entitled 'FGM: A National Framework for Action' speaking 'as a survivor of FGM' and at the closing session, Kiranjit Ahluwalia, a survivor of domestic abuse who became a volunteer with the Southall Black Sisters, gave the paper 'From Victim to Resistance.'[225] These perspectives continued to be highly valued by both activists and academics.

An important aspect of the development of a feminist theory of domestic abuse was that in the 1980s more attention began to be given to minoritized groups and the particularity of their experiences. Mama was an early pioneer of this work, publishing her study of Black women's experiences in 1989. Debates around inclusion continued to develop throughout the 1990s and this can be seen in the example of the Brighton conference. There were protests during the conference itself from a group of Black women, lesbian women and disabled women who did not feel their issues had received sufficient attention from the conference.[226] Irish feminist activist academic, Ailbhe Smyth, noted that 'incomprehensibly, and curiously, there were no Black keynote speakers from Britain' and none of the keynote sessions discussed violence against lesbians, although many key speakers were lesbians.[227] Research into the experiences of Black British women and children was represented at the conference. For instance, Patricia Connell delivered the paper 'Black, British and Beaten? Understanding Violence, Agency and Resistance' and Bernard delivered the paper 'Black Feminist Perspectives on Childhood Sexual Abuse.'[228] There were also several sessions dedicated to disabled women and lesbian women, including a key note paper from Margaret Kennedy on 'Sexual Abuse and Violence

[225] Kiranjit Ahluwalia, *Book of Abstracts: Violence, Abuse and Women's Citizenship, Brighton, UK, 10-15 November 1996,* p.2. 'Biographies of the international keynote speakers,' *Press Pack:: Violence, Abuse and Women's Citizenship, Brighton, UK, 10-15 November 1996*, p.4.

[226] Susan Stewart, quoted in *Final Report,* pp.76-77.

[227] Ailbhe Smyth, 'Postcards from Brighton', *Trouble & Strife*, 35, (1997), p.17.

[228] *Conference Programme*, p.11 and p.23.

Against Disabled Women and Children.'[229] Nonetheless, it is true that most of these discussions took place in parallel sessions. This may have been partly due to the desire to have well-known speakers for keynote addresses in order to ensure the conference was commercially viable and attracted participants, given that the conference was funded through a patchwork of sponsors. Funding was an important consideration for such an ambitious international programme in a way it had not been for WLM and Women's Aid national conferences.

Support networks were vital for feminist researchers studying an emotionally challenging subject, especially at a time when it was not respected within academic spaces. Research networks then, were important in providing solidarity and stimulating ideas amongst feminist academics studying violence against women in the 1980s and beyond. The NWAF Research Group, BSA Women's Caucus and later Centres for the research of violence in Bradford, Bristol and London provided important spaces for this. Black female academics researching violence against women mentioned the importance of activist networks, as well as literature, as sources of strength during their careers. Spaces of transnational exchange, like the one held in Brighton in 1996, could provide another opportunity for relationships to be nurtured and networks established. These opportunities to connect to a wider movement beyond the UK were valued by Women's Aid activists for the sense of support and purpose they could offer. This idea of transnational connections and the way in which they could be fostered through personal relationships, texts and spaces will be explored in the next chapter. Ultimately, these overlapping research networks formed a space from which feminist thought could evolve and influence wider societal understandings of domestic abuse and violence against women.

[229] Ibid. p.4.

Chapter 6 Transnational Networks

> I had the luxury and privilege of being able to engage with feminists globally, because of the work that I did, and I miss my contact with those women, I miss just that feeling of solidarity from knowing that you are not on your own. You're not the only woman, you're not the only women's group, that is trying to change the world.
>
> (Lily Greenan, interview with the author, 12th February 2021)

> It was strengthening our resolve. It's back to when you're a minority and the world you're living in is selling you a wrong; it helps to hear other people somewhere else think the same way as you do. You know that you are not insane.
>
> (Mukami McCrum, interview with the author, 21st January 2022)

6.1 Introduction

The most well-known expressions of transnational feminist networking of the late twentieth-century were perhaps the United Nations (UN) World Conferences on Women in Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995. Undoubtedly, feminist action around violence against women has been extremely influential at the level of the UN and international human rights law. However, while acknowledging the significance of the UN, this chapter will argue that smaller scale, activist-led and more intimate forms of transnational connection were equally as important in the lives of anti-domestic abuse activists in the UK. This will be achieved by examining the processes of transnational networking that occurred in and around Women's Aid through informal knowledge exchange opportunities, the forging of personal relationships across borders, and the role of feminist international conferences. Additionally, barriers to transnational exchange, such as communication issues and a lack of resources to travel overseas, will be explored throughout this chapter. The way in which new feminist ideas for understanding and confronting domestic abuse were disseminated internationally through the circulation of publications and letters, as well as during workshops and conferences will be considered. Finally, this chapter will contend that transnational exchange and a sense of belonging to a global community was valuable on a personal and emotional level for activists working to end domestic abuse.

This chapter draws mostly from UK sources and so understanding how women working on the issue of domestic abuse in other countries experienced similar points of connection is beyond the scope of this study. Instead, it offers a detailed insight into the process by which transnational networks were forged and ideas exchanged from the perspective of a

particular country. The UK is a logical place to start for a study into the transnational dissemination of feminist thought around domestic abuse, as Women's Aid activists were thought to be trailblazers in this area. Erin Pizzey was touted as a pioneer of anti-domestic abuse activism internationally due to her considerable mainstream media presence. For example, *The New York Times* published an article about the Chiswick refuge entitled 'The Battered Wives of England' in 1975.[1] Extensive coverage of Chiswick even led some to believe that 'battered wives' were an especially 'English malaise.'[2] Zora Simic has explored the transnational influence of Pizzey's *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours Will Hear* in Australia and the US.[3] Simic opines that Pizzey's ideas influenced feminist activists in Australia and the US but that they 'quickly moved beyond them' to develop their own understandings of domestic abuse.[4] However, while Pizzey undoubtedly dominated the mainstream international media in the 1970s, this chapter will demonstrate the transnational exchanges that flowed through alternative WLM-based networks of Women's Aid activists and feminist researchers. Taking an international perspective felt natural to many early Women's Aid activists who had been involved in other 'New Left' organisations for whom 'internationalism' was a key feature, Celia Hughes has called this 'international subjectivity.'[5]

Local context and global events impacted the dissemination of feminist thought on domestic abuse internationally. This chapter covers the period from 1971, when the Chiswick refuge first opened, to the Violence, Abuse and Women's Citizenship International Conference which took place in Brighton in 1996. There were many changes during this period which affected the way in which violence against women was conceived of on an international level, far too numerous to name in this chapter. Nonetheless, one relevant event included the UK joining the European Community (later the European Union) in 1973, which provided funding opportunities which were sometimes utilised by anti-domestic abuse activists and researchers. Additionally, the increased affordability of

[1] Judith Weinraub, 'The Battered Wives of England: A Place to Heal their Wounds', *The New York Times*, (29th November 1975), p.17.

[2] Michael D. Freeman, 'The phenomenon of marital violence and the legal and social response in England' in *Family Violence: an international and interdisciplinary study*, ed John Eekelaar and Sanford Katz (London: Butterworth, 1978), p.73.

[3] Zora Simic, 'From Battered Wives to Domestic Violence: The Transnational Circulation of Chiswick Women's Aid and Erin Pizzey's *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours Will Hear* (1975)', 51:2, *Australian Historical Studies*, (2020).

[4] Ibid. p.121.

[5] See Daniel Geary, '"Becoming International Again": C. Wright Mills and the Emergence of a Global New Left, 1956–1962', 95:3, *Journal of American History*, (2008). Hughes*, Young Lives*, pp.133-139.

air travel dramatically increased the number of people travelling internationally from 1985 onwards.[6] The fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 led to an increased engagement between anti-violence against women organisations in the UK and Eastern Europe. Armed conflicts such as the war in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s alerted feminists to the issue of sexual violence as a weapon of war. Furthermore, there was a sense from oral history interviews conducted for this chapter that transnational exchanges had lost their feminist roots over time, partly due to the co-opting of international women's issues by large formal structures like the UN. This is reflective of wider concerns about de-politicisation and professionalisation within Women's Aid which have been discussed in previous chapters.

WLM activists' engagement in transnational connectivity in the late twentieth century forms part of a history of individual feminists and women's organisations forging links across nations. The themes explored by Leila Rupp, such as the process by which women from different countries created a sense of community and collective struggle are relevant here.[7] In some ways, Rupp traced a prehistory to this chapter; as she argued that international anti-violence against women activism and the beginnings of the UN Women's Charter had their origins in the 'great transnational organisations' of the early twentieth century.[8] The work of Rupp and Jocelyn Olcott has been useful to this study for its understanding of conflict, not as negative, but as a productive and necessary aspect of forging transnational solidarity. Rupp viewed 'conflict and community within the international women's organizations not as opposites but as part of the same process by which women came together across national borders,' while Olcott identified conflicts as the most 'constructive' and 'significant' aspects of the 1975 UN World Conference on Women and accompanying NGO tribune.[9] During oral history interviews Women's Aid activists recalled tensions within transnational spaces as moments within which their most meaningful epiphanies occurred.

The growing scholarship on transnational and global feminisms informs how we conceptualise the transnational character of Women's Aid activism.[10] The white, mainstream WLM has long been criticised for seeing the West as the origin point for

[6] Simon, Gunn, *The History of Transport Systems in the UK*, (London: UK Government Office for Science, 2018), p.13.

[7] Rupp, *Worlds of Women.*

[8] Ibid. p.225.

[9] Olcott, *International Women's Year*, p.264. Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p.6.

[10] Delap*, Feminisms.* Smith, *Global Feminisms.* Davis*, The Making of Our Bodies.*

feminism and believing it should be spread to 'liberate' women in the so-called 'Third World.' For instance, in 1984 Adrienne Rich chided white feminists in the US for 'the arrogance of believing ourselves at the center.'[11] In recent years, historians such as Lucy Delap have advocated for an understanding of the plurality of the history of global feminisms in order to: 'Chart the rich interweaving of global debates on the relationship between gender and power, at the same time recognizing feminism as a deeply historical and context-specific phenomenon.'[12] To counteract the idea of feminism as something exported from the West to the Global South, Kathryn Gleadle has encouraged us to think of the history of feminism as a non-linear root system, while Delap proposes the metaphor of a mosaic 'built up from bits and pieces available - other movements, committed individuals, actions and ideas.'[13] These concepts have provided a useful lens through which to discern how anti-domestic abuse activists in the UK viewed and interacted with women from the Global South in the context of global power structures, either through in-person interactions at conferences, or in representations in feminist publications.

Kathy Davis' study of *Our Bodies Ourselves* as a transnational feminist epistemological and political project has been particularly influential to the current enquiry.[14] Davis argues that: 'Feminist knowledge and knowledge practices move from place to place and are "translated" in different cultural locations.'[15] Furthermore, the concept of 'resignification' as articulated by Maud Bracke et al is relevant as it explains the way in which 'feminist concepts and theoretical tools are not simply exported wholesale and adopted in their original form' but 'chosen in response to the needs of local activists' and at times 'radically transformed'.[16] This chapter will add to this previous scholarship by demonstrating the process by which anti-domestic abuse activists in the UK both influenced feminist praxis in other countries and appropriated and adapted ideas and ways of doing which flowed into the country through feminist networks.

In what follows, the ways in which Women's Aid activists forged transnational connections through informal networking and ad hoc opportunities will first be explored.

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[11] Adrienne Rich, 'Notes Towards a Politics of Location' in *Blood Bread & Poetry: Selected Prose 1979 - 1985* (New York: Norton, 1986), p.223.

[12] Delap*, Feminisms*, p.17.

[13] Ibid., p.24.

[14] Davis, *The Making of Our Bodies*.

[15] Ibid. p.10.

[16] Bracke, Bullock, Morris and Schulz, *Translating Feminism,* p.4.

Next, international feminist thought on domestic abuse and the means by which it was disseminated through books and periodicals will be examined. Letter writing and the personal connections between activists working on violence against women across borders will then be analysed, both as a source of solidarity and an important means of knowledge exchange. The subsequent section turns to the dissemination of particular frameworks for tackling domestic abuse which spread from the US to the UK through training workshops and literature. Finally, international conferences as transnational spaces of solidarity will be discussed in order to understand the value of attending such conferences for individual activists and organisations, as well as the significance of moments of constructive conflict that occurred at these events.

6.2 Transnational 'Politics in the Cracks' : Informal Networking

For some Women's Aid activists personal trips and holidays were opportunities for transnational exchange and network building. Even when not representing Women's Aid in an official capacity, visiting another country could be a chance to exchange knowledge and make connections with women interested in domestic abuse and feminist activism. During oral history interviews, several former Women's Aid activists explained that in the 1970s and 1980s Women's Aid groups did not often have the resources for transnational projects. For instance, Rowena Arshad, who was a founding member of Shakti Women's Aid explained that there was rarely time for transnational networking, particularly at the beginning, as the refuge was set up by volunteers:

> Don't forget that most of us are also working full time. We all had full time jobs, this was just something we did in addition, many of us also had young families. So we're finding it really difficult to juggle... And so, you were trying to do all of this while having that life and not getting paid for it etc. It's not easy. But we were committed to make it happen.[17]

Historian Kimberly Springer has found that Black women's organisations and other activist groups in the US would often find themselves conducting their 'politics in the cracks' by fitting 'their activism into their daily life schedules whenever possible.'[18] Women's Aid activists would often conduct their transnational politics in the cracks and exchanges could be ad hoc and opportunistic, rather than strategic. For instance, Sue

[17] Rowena Arshad, Interview with the author, (7th September 2021).

[18] Kimberly Springer, *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968–1980* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2005), p.2.

Robertson, who was a volunteer at Falkirk Women's Aid before becoming National Coordinator of SWA, visited Shanghai, Beijing and other parts of China in 1977.[19] Robertson travelled with her husband at the time, who was an academic economist researching communist countries. Robertson took the chance to organise some research on how domestic abuse was responded to in China while she was there. Robertson recalled that she asked her husband's interpreter to set up meetings with several different women's groups, as language could be a significant barrier to the exchange of ideas. Robertson reflected that 'it was kind of a bit of an oddity to them, I mean I think it was quite odd to have, you know, a Westerner coming and asking about it in the first place.'[20] Transnational networking amongst women was not a common practice at this point, particularly between Eastern and Western countries, something that would change somewhat with the influence of UN initiatives.

In another example, Jan Pahl and her then husband the sociologist Ray Pahl travelled to Israel in the 1970s shortly after she had helped to establish a women's refuge in Canterbury. Pahl heard that there was a group of women in Haifa hoping to set up a refuge of their own:

> I went up to Haifa and met this group of women, and it was just wonderful. We talked and talked and talked. We didn't eat all day. We were so busy talking. That was very exciting… A year or two later [Pahl visited Israel again for a conference]… When I got to the conference, I saw a poster saying um: 'Come and visit the shelter'… So, I went along, and I sort of knocked at the door… And they said: 'What's your name?' And I said: 'Jan Pahl'. And they said: 'You realise… You're the spiritual founder of this refuge…Because when you came a year, two or three years back, a year or two, I suppose you enthused everybody so much that we got the refuge going. And here it is!'[21]

Similarly, in 1976 founding member of Bristol Women's Aid, Ellen Malos, travelled to California with her husband, John Malos, who had been offered a year's fellowship at Stanford University.[22] As with Pahl's experience, the importance of academic connections, as discussed in the previous chapter, can be seen here as they could present opportunities for transnational network building. Malos recalled that she was feeling burned out after

[19] Sue Robertson, Interview with the author, (12th October 2020).

[20] Ibid.

[21] Pahl, interview.

[22] Malos, interview with Jolly.

several years of activism, including hosting the first women's refuge in Bristol in her home, and so a change of scene was welcome:

> I was becoming quite tired, quite exhausted, just, you know, that length of time, and doing loads and loads and loads of different things, and I was really feeling, you know, the, the Women's Centre was out there and it was on its own, it was functioning; the refuge was functioning, you know. And I said to John, 'Well let's, let's go somewhere, let's get out of here for a, a year.'… I took the addresses and things of, whatever I could find, including the Stanford Women's Center, and, you know, as soon as we'd kind of settled, I got in touch with them. And, that was fantastically useful and important.[23]

The Bristol Women's Centre acted as a repository of information in this case, as this is where Malos found contact details for the Stanford women's centre and other political groups.[24] Thus, hubs of feminist activity played an important role, not just in the UK WLM movement, but for transnational networking as well. This example shows that at times feminist activists found opportunities for transnational exchange while balancing lives with their partners and children, making space for their own work in the cracks.

Furthermore, trips like these could have a wider impact; Malos disseminated what she had found in California by writing an article for *Spare Rib* about a violence against women conference she attended while she was in California. She wrote that: '1,300 women met in San Francisco… "to hear the past, see the present and cancel the future of violence against women"… women began to talk of the groups who were running or trying to set up shelters, few so far.'[25] Additionally, upon her return to Bristol in 1977, Malos held a discussion in the Bristol Women's Centre about 'The Women's Movement in the States.'[26] In this way, there was a dissemination of ideas and experiences through feminist periodicals and within feminist spaces like women's centres.

In 1988, Kate Arnot, who was involved with developing Aberdeen Women's Aid and Falkirk Women's Aid, wrote a report for *The Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter* about her visit to Danner House, a women's centre and refuge in Copenhagen which had been established in 1979.[27] Arnot wrote that: 'In a moment of consolation last year I suggested

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ellen Malos, 'Refuges Open in US', *Spare Rib*, 55, (1977), p.19.

[26] 'General Meeting: Discussion on The Women's Movement in the States Introduced by Ellen Malos', *Bristol Women's Liberation Group Newsletter*, (27th June 1977), p.1.

[27] Kate Arnot, 'Denmark – July 1988', *Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter*, (September 1988), p.14.

to my son... that we go on holiday to Legoland in Denmark… but I wanted something for me as well - thanks to Scottish Women's Aid's Library… I wrote to Danner House.'[28] Like the Bristol Women's Centre, the library at the SWA office acted as a repository of information. Arnot compared the way in which Danish and Scottish refuges were run and was surprised by how much money Danner House raised through fundraising, writing that 'it's their largest item of income!!!!!'[29] In Scotland, there was an expectation that Women's Aid groups would receive funding from local government. This belief that the state should resource refuges was prominent in the UK but it does not appear to have been a universal expectation. On the other hand, Arnot visited a women's refuge in Elsinore and found that she was 'mainly struck by the similarities of approach' there.[30] In particular, she found that the Danish group used a similar feminist analysis to explain the prevalence of domestic abuse. Despite many shared values, the differences were significant enough to offer Arnot pause for thought:

> If we start from similar feminist analysis but end up with very different structures for groups and refuges, this celebrates our strength in diversity as women and also makes us reconsider... Have we, in fifteen years, created rigid structures which we accept unthinkingly?[31]

Therefore, informal transnational encounters could present opportunities to challenge assumptions and reflect on current practices. Additionally, it could be a welcome break from day to day activism at home, offering a sense of rejuvenation and a fresh perspective. Furthermore, the experiences of individuals could have a wider impact if they were disseminated through discussions and reports.

6.3 'Listen to Our Herstories' : The Spread Of International Feminist Thought Through Books and Periodicals

As well as spaces to report on trips to other countries, feminist newsletters could be sites of transnational influence in themselves. For most women working with Women's Aid in the UK, books and periodicals were the easiest modes by which to gain access to ideas permeating in other countries. Not all women had the time, finances or opportunity to

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid. p.16.

[30] Ibid. p.18.

[31] Ibid.

travel internationally or attend conferences and seminars. Therefore, reading about anti-domestic abuse activism was an accessible way to feel engaged and informed. As we have seen in Chapter Four, Women's Aid activists used feminist newsletters to stay in touch with the WLM. Reading magazines such as *Spare Rib* in the UK and *Off Our Backs* in the US, along with key feminist texts, created 'feminist reading cultures' which spanned across borders.[32] Women's Aid activists were involved in claiming feminist print cultures for themselves and there was a newsletter for both SWA and NWAF, which featured an international perspective. In addition, Women's Aid groups sometimes subscribed to magazines from other countries such as *Manushi*, a magazine about feminist activism in India and *ISIS International Bulletin*, a feminist magazine based in Switzerland. Feminist bookshops such as *Sisterwrite* in London and *Womanzone* in Edinburgh distributed literature on the topic of violence against women from other countries and so contributed to the dissemination of feminist thought.

From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, Betsy Warrior published *The Battered Women's Directory*, which included contact information for women's refuges around the world.[33] This was important because it connected activists and could be used to direct women looking for support to a refuge near them. Warrior was an important figure in the WLM in the US, her article 'Battered Lives' is credited with helping to launch the movement to establish refuges there, inspired by activity in the UK.[34] Women's Aid activists were aware of this directory; for instance, Sue Robertson described it as 'an impressive list of addresses world wide', while Jalna Hanmer reviewed it for *Spare Rib* calling it 'a must for anyone interested in comparing developments and seeking contact with movement orientated women's aid in the US.'[35] Similarly, the *National Women's Aid Federation Newsletter* recommended that those interested in the movement for refuges in the US should get in touch with Warrior, and included her address.[36] In March 1977, Warrior's *Wife Beating* was listed in the 'new publications' section of the *Scottish Women's Aid*

[32] Bracke et al, *Translating Feminism*, pp.18-19.

[33] Charlotte Briggs and Jennifer Salmon, 'The Battered Women's Directory as an Organizing Tool for the Shelter Movement', *Battered Women's Directory Project. Records, 1975-1982: A Finding Aid,* Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University.

[34] 'Feminism USA Part Three: the Politics of Women's Aid', *Spare Rib*, 76, (November 1978), pp.26-30.

[35] Sue Robertson, 'Some Comments from People Who are Using "Working on Wife Abuse"', p.7. *Betsy Warrior Collection* (109.01/05) at Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University. Jalna Hanmer, 'Publications,' *Spare Rib*, 76, (November 1978), p.25.

[36] 'American Refuges', *National Women's Aid Federation Newsletter*, (Oct-Mar 1976), p.1, WAFE Collection 1974/5/6 (FAN/JH/WA/WAFE/03) at Leeds University Special Collections.

Newsletter.[37] Lists of publications published in newsletters, then, were one way in which Women's Aid activists could find out about literature published in the US and the inclusion of contact details meant it was possible to seek out connections beyond this.

In the early 1980s, the *Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter* consistently featured information about violence against women internationally and conveyed an awareness of the connectivity of the global fight for women's rights. Morna Burdon, a former SWA National Coordinator, recalled the significance of this:

> That was a very deliberate decision to get an international section in the newsletter… I mean, you knew that you were part of a movement and… it was not just Scottish. I think also research; finding anything, anything, anywhere that tells you that other people are doing something similar gives you strength and solidarity. That does. I think that would be the reason. Would be for support, education, information.[38]

The international section included snippets of articles reproduced from mainstream media such as *The Guardian* and *New Society*. Discussions of the Ministry of Women's Rights in France, abortion laws in Belgium and cohabitation laws in Italy were featured, to name a few examples.[39] Reading these in the context of a newsletter about Women's Aid in Scotland kept in mind the bigger picture that the work of that particular organisation was a part of. However, the brevity of the information meant that they did not paint a particularly nuanced picture of the situation in other countries. This could be especially problematic when it concerned representations of 'Third World' women. For example, in an extract taken from the *Miami Herald*, 'honour killings' of unmarried mothers taking place in Jerusalem were described thus: 'It is pregnancy – which cannot be hidden – that is the death warrant for many women in Arab villages.'[40] Furthermore, an extract about female genital mutilation (FGM) stated that, 'while it may be a culturally accepted practice, its effect is to physically mutilate and oppress women on a scale unknown outside the third world.'[41] The reporting in these articles was sensationalised and rarely featured the voices of the women themselves. These types of extracts were grouped under the heading

[37] 'New Publications', *Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter*, (March 1977), p.4.

[38] Burdon, interview.

[39] *Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter*, (1981-1983).

[40] 'Unwed Arab women flee "honour killings"', *Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter*, (March/April 1982), p.1 (Originally printed in *Miami Herald*).

[41] 'Female Circumcision', *Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter,* (1982), p13.

'Women in the Third World' which had the effect of generalising the experiences of an extremely diverse range of women and cultures.

This type of content could feed into a narrative of women from the Global South as more oppressed; as exotic or 'other'. Although these articles were sometimes juxtaposed with discussions of the oppression of women in Scotland, they still gave the impression that Western women were more liberated. This is perhaps a result of the reliance on mainstream media to find out about the situation in other countries in this period. These findings are reflected by Donna Chambers and Rob Worrall's review of the early portrayal of Black women in *Spare Rib*.[42] Chambers and Worrall found that when so-called Third World women were featured in *Spare Rib* they were often treated as a homogenous group, objectified and written about as subjects, often by a white woman, and rarely featured words from the women being discussed.[43] Similarly, historian Jennifer S. Duncan has found that the French feminist press portrayed FGM in a sensational way and alluded to African women as 'hapless' 'victims'.[44] This Eurocentric view of women from poorer countries was not effective at fostering transnational solidarity and has been criticised by Black British feminists such as Hazel Carby and Amrit Wilson.[45] Carby has argued that when British feminists were not ignoring Black women in other countries they were objectifying them as 'victims of 'barbarous' 'primitive' practices.'[46] In Edinburgh, Arshad, criticised some of these issues in her article 'Is Sisterhood Global?' in a special Scottish Black Women's Group issue of the *Edinburgh Women's Liberation Newsletter*, writing that:

> Very often, one assumes because we are all women, that is enough of a bond for us to unite. More and more women all over are coming to terms with how naïve that assumption is… I do not like the label 'Third World'… The distinction between First and Third World is usually made on the basis of economic indicators which often have little to do with our lives… To you the reader, I would urge, hear the voices of women of other nations, from other cultures and religions… Listen to our herstories, learn and respect, the African, Asian and Caribbean woman is strong, wilful, courageous – Women's

[42] Donna Chambers and Rob Worrall, 'The Frontiers of Sisterhood: Representations of Black Feminism in Spare Rib (1972–1979)' in *Re-reading Spare Rib*, pp.169-172.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Jennifer S. Duncan, 'French feminism's struggle to become global,' in *Women's Activism: Global Perspectives from the 1890s to the Present*, ed. Francisca de Haan, Margaret Allen, June Purvis and Krassimira Daskalova (London: Routledge, 2013).

[45] Chambers and Worral, *Frontiers of Sisterhood*.

[46] Hazel V. Carby, 'White woman listen! Black feminism and the boundaries of sisterhood,' *Black British Feminism: A Reader*, ed. Heidi Safia Mirza, (London: Routledge, 1997), p.50.

> Liberation did not begin in the West as is a popular misconception, it is global and has always been so![47]

Similarly, in her 1984 article, Parita Trived drew from contemporary Indian historiography to point to the long legacy of women's activism in India and used this to challenge the stereotyping of South Asian women in the UK as passive.[48]

The Hidden Struggle, Amina Mama's landmark study of Black women's experiences of seeking support as victim/survivors of domestic abuse published in 1989, is notable here for its international approach. Mama drew from materials which had been generated during the UN World Decade of Women to survey the way in which domestic abuse manifests and is addressed in a number of different countries in the Global South. Mama argued that the theoretical feminist understandings of domestic abuse that had been generated in the UK up to that point were inadequate for understanding Black women's experiences due to their Eurocentric perspective:

> The international material briefly examined here suggests a number of ways in which we can elaborate and develop the definitions of domestic violence, so as to get beyond the ethnocentrism and class bias of existing feminist accounts… This is necessary for the study of domestic violence in general, but most obviously so when working in non-Western contexts, or in black communities in the West.[49]

Mama discussed how the trauma of colonialism, for instance, may have affected the forms that domestic abuse can take, drawing on the work of Frantz Fanon.[50] Similarly, Mukami McCrum, a founding member of Shakti Women's Aid, explained how the knowledge and experience of the members of the Scottish Black Women's Group helped in their analysis of violence against women:

> I think by nature of where we had come from, or maybe the parents of some of the members had come from. I think we had a very international flavour. So, I think there wasn't very much that was influencing us here. We are assisting here and we are using knowledge from there to assist here.[51]

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[47] Rowena Arshad, 'Is Sisterhood Global?', *Edinburgh Women's Liberation Newsletter*, (November 1986), pp.8-10.

[48] Parita Trivedi, 'To Deny Our Fullness: Asian Women in the Making of History'*, Feminist Review*, 17, (1984).

[49] Mama, *The Hidden Struggle*, p.19.

[50] Ibid. p.21.

[51] McCrum, interview.

When compared with the snippets used in the 'international section' of the *Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter,* which could be reductive, reviews of books from outside the UK demonstrated a more active engagement with transnational feminist thought. For example, in 1982 Burdon reviewed Ginny NiCarthy's book *Getting Free*.[52] NiCarthy was a WLM activist in the US, a founding member of Rape Relief in Seattle and ran support groups for victim/survivors of domestic abuse.[53] Burdon praised NiCarthy's book because it was written for, not about, victim/survivors of domestic abuse in a self-help style. Interestingly, Burdon's review is juxtaposed with a review of *Prone to Violence* by Pizzey and Jeff Shapiro.[54] This book was much derided by feminist Women's Aid activists for its individualised, psychological approach and theory that some women return to abusive partners because they are addicted to the adrenaline rush of violence. Burdon described NiCarthy's book as 'everything Ms Pizzey's book is not' and 'a breath of fresh air.'[55] NiCarthy's book acted as an example of an alternative way to engage with the issue of domestic abuse as opposed to the victim-blaming narrative of *Prone to Violence*. Suspicions of psychological explanations of domestic abuse can be seen again in a review of American psychologist Lenore E. Walker's *The Battered Women*.[56] The review questioned whether Walker could write from a feminist perspective, as she claimed, while recommending individual therapeutic solutions to the problem of domestic abuse. The line taken by most Women's Aid activists at the time was that only through the liberation of women at a societal, structural level could domestic abuse be stopped. This has been identified as a key difference between anti-domestic abuse work in the US and the UK.[57] In this way, ideas permeating transnationally could be used to combat ideas in the national context but they could also be rejected if they clashed with Women's Aid's particular feminist principles.

Interviews with women from other countries and re-printing articles from overseas was another way in which feminist activists engaged with ideas. For example, in 1981 the *Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter* printed an article by Susan Schechter, a key figure in the

[52] Morna Burdon, 'And the Good News: "Getting Free", by Ginny Nicarthy', *Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter*, (October/November 1982), p.10. NiCarthy, *Getting Free.*

[53] Ginny Nicarthy, 'Foremothers/Foresisters' in *Feminist Foremothers in Women's Studies, Psychology and Mental Health*, ed. Phyllis Chesler, Ellen Cole and Esther D. Rothblum (New York: Routledge, 2014), p.366.

[54] Pizzey and Shapiro, *Prone to Violence*.

[55] Burdon, *And the Good News*, p.10.

[56] '"The Battered Woman" by Lenox E. Walker', *Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter*, (1982), p.15.

[57] Dobash and Dobash, *Women, Violence and Social Change*, pp.208-210.

movement to establish women's refuges in the US and a founding member of the first women's refuge in Chicago.[58] Schechter's article discussed the need for women's refuge organisations to be both service providers and a political movement. Schechter believed that without the analysis of women's position in society they would not be able to confront the root of the problem. As we have seen in Chapter 3, the anxiety that Women's Aid would be de-politicised was a significant concern for some Women's Aid activists. In this way, it can be seen that there were shared concerns between the movements in the UK and the US, meaning that Schechter's piece was considered resonant and usable in the Scottish context.

Trouble & Strife was a radical feminist magazine established in 1983 and produced by a collective of women, including Jalna Hanmer. It featured regular interviews with, and articles about, activists and researchers working on violence against women from various countries. The magazine itself grew out of transnational exchange, as 'the idea for a magazine came from several of us who had connection with a French radical feminist journal, *Nouvelles Questions Feminists*. We had discussed the possibility of an English language sister publication with them over a number of years.'[59] *Nouvelles Questions Féministes* was established by French feminists Simone de Beauvoir and Christine Delphy and Hanmer contributed to the journal.[60] From 1974 to 1976 there had also been an Anglo-French Seminar Group, which involved Hanmer as well as Diana Leonard, Jo Sutton, Christine Delphy, Dominique Poggi and, Russell and Rebecca Dobash, among others.[61] The first seminar was about the political economy of the family and the second was about violence in male-female relations. At the second seminar held in Paris, Dobash and Dobash presented their findings from police reports of domestic abuse in Edinburgh and Glasgow, Poggi presented on rape as a form of social control, and Hanmer on the role of NWAF in challenging dominant ideologies of the family.[62] Hanmer noted that the discussion was 'valuable as it enabled us to begin to look at the range of phenomena to be included in an analysis of violence in male-female relations as a major dimension in the control of

[58] 'Women's Aid and the Women's Movement,' *Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter*, (1981), p.2.

[59] Trouble & Strife Collective, 'Editorial', *Trouble & Strife*, 1, (1983), p.3.

[60] Jalna Hanmer, 'Violence et contrôle social des femme', *Questions Féministes* (later *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*), 1, (1977), pp.68-78.

[61] Jalna Hanmer, 'Violence in Male-Female Relations: the second meeting of the Anglo French seminar', *Diana Leonard Collection* (FAN/DL/01) Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[62] Ibid.

women.'[63] During interview, Hanmer recalled that French feminists had a more developed analysis of rape in this period, whilst feminists in the UK were more informed on domestic abuse and that this resulted in valuable discussions.[64] This demonstrates early transnational knowledge exchange supporting the development of feminist thought, this time based around academic research networks as the group was funded by the Social Science Research Council.[65]

Trouble & Strife, then, was established partly as a result of these Anglo-French connections and would maintain a transnational perspective. For instance, in 1986 an interview was published with Sujata Gothoskar, founding member of the Forum Against Women's Oppression, about feminist activism against violence in India.[66] Gothoskar explained the campaigns she had been involved with against rape, domestic abuse and for female workers' rights. In 1987, Liz Kelly interviewed Beth Richie, a member of the Women of Color Task Force of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) in the US.[67] Richie described how Task Forces had been successful at building representation of diverse groups into the structure of NCADV, with Kelly showing an interest in how this could be achieved in the UK. In 1994, there was a re-print of an article by Alzira Rufino about the Black women's movement in Brazil.[68] Rufino was a founder of the first Black women's centre in Brazil, Casa de Cultura da Mulher Negra, which offered support and legal advice to victim/survivors of racism, domestic abuse and sexual violence.[69] Interviews and reprints of articles within periodicals were a key way in which diverse feminist ideas could travel transnationally. This medium allowed for meaningful engagement as it centred the voices of these women themselves, in their own words. While perhaps not as memorable as meeting someone in person, this offered feminists interested in anti-domestic abuse campaigns a perspective they may not have encountered elsewhere.

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Hanmer, interview with the author.

[65] 'Application to the S.S.R.C French Programme, for a seminar group in Violence in Male-Female Relations', *Diana Leonard Collection* (FAN/DL/01) Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[66] 'Indian Feminists Act Against Violence,' *Trouble & Strife*, (Spring 1986), pp.15-23. *in the article there is a misspelling of Gothoskar's name as Gothoskat.

[67] 'Coalitions, Leadership and Power,' *Trouble & Strife*, 12, (1987), pp.5-9.

[68] 'Black Women's Movement in Brazil,' *Trouble & Strife,* 29/30, (1994/95), pp.22-24.

[69] Ibid.

Feminist knowledge, of course, does not flow in one direction. For example, two Swedish journalists wrote a book about women's refuges and domestic abuse entitled *Den Man Alskar Agar Man?* (To Love a Violent Man) in 1979, which was partly based on trips they made to NWAF in 1978 and 1979.[70] In the US there was also an interest in anti-domestic abuse activism in the UK. This can be seen in the American violence against women magazine *Aegis*. For instance, in 1978 an article entitled 'Learning from Women's Aid' written by Northern Ireland Women's Aid was printed.[71] Later that year two papers from the NWAF appeared and were edited to make them more relevant to readers in the US.[72] Furthermore, there was an interest in research published in the UK with a review of the Dobash and Dobash's *Violence Against Wives* printed in a 1981 issue.[73] The review is by Margaret Littlewood, who worked for Feminist Alliance Against Rape in Washington D.C. for a year before moving to London. Littlewood acted as a European correspondent for *Aegis,* again, demonstrating how the mobility of individuals could be significant in the creation of transnational feminist networks. In a later issue, published in 1987, there is an article by Kelly explaining her theory of sexual violence as a continuum, demonstrating the flow of feminist theory on violence against women between the UK and the US.[74]

US feminist activist Del Martin took a particular interest in the developments in the UK and even wrote to Prime Minister James Callaghan in 1977 to advocate for Pizzey after she was charged for the overcrowded conditions at the Chiswick refuge.[75] Martin's book *Battered Wives*, published in 1976, demonstrated the significant influence of the UK movement, making the case for a national coordinating body inspired by the NWAF model to be established in the US.[76] This would be realised in 1978 with the founding of the NCADV. Martin provided detailed information of the developments in England and Scotland in the book and thanked Rebecca Dobash as her 'source of information on the British scene.'[77] Further transatlantic connections were made when Hanmer and Sutton

[70] Karin Alfredsson and Ulla Lemberg*, Den man älskar agar man?,* (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1979).

[71] 'Learning from Women's Aid,' *Aegis*, (Sep/Oct 1978), pp.19-22.

[72] 'Women's Aid Federation Speaks Out', *Aegis*, (Nov 1978), pp.36-38.

[73] Margaret Littlewood, 'Violence Against Wives: the Case Against the Patriarchy review', *Aegis*,

[74] Liz Kelly, 'Sexual Violence as a Continuum,' *Aegis,* (Jan 1987), pp.30-39.

[75] Letter from Del Martin to James Callaghan, (19th July 1977), Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin: Beyond the Daughters of Bilitis Collection, San Francisco Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Historical Society, available online from the Archives of Sexuality and Gender.

[76] Del Martin, *Battered Wives*, p.252.

[77] Ibid. p.xviii.

travelled to the US in 1976 to attend the American Sociological Association conference and network with activists working on domestic abuse.[78] The Dobashes helped with this by giving them both a list of American contacts and Sutton retrospectively recalled meeting Martin, exchanging ideas on domestic abuse, and being shown around bars in New York.[79]

The inclusion of international sections in feminist periodicals, therefore, did not necessarily create a sense of in-depth transnational exchange, particularly when the lives of 'Third World Women' were generalised and sensationalised. However, beginning in the 1980s and into the 1990s, there was an inclusion of book reviews, interviews and re-printed articles in which the voices of women from other countries could be centred. Book reviews were usually limited to the English language, which must have considerably impeded the exchange of feminist knowledge. The US as an English speaking country with a similar WLM and global influence is the most prominently featured country in these periodicals. However, *Trouble & Strife* in particular featured regular content with women from around the world and began with a significant connection to French feminists.

6.4 'Send me your thoughts' : Letters and Personal Relationships

One way in which transnational networks were maintained was through the establishment of personal relationships between activists. The examination of letters between anti-violence against women activists can reveal the importance of these relationships. This section will look closely at four different transatlantic relationships between Sue Robertson, Morna Burdon and Ginny NiCarthy, Lou Lavender and Angela Miles, Jalna Hanmer and Diana Russell, and Jalna Hanmer and Andrea Dworkin through letters sent from 1975 to 1984. Letters were exchanged between these women for several reasons: to find out what was happening in the WLM and anti-domestic abuse campaigns elsewhere; to exchange ideas and share experiences; to find out about networking and publishing opportunities; and for emotional support. Letter writing enabled activists to keep in touch across the Atlantic in a time when long distance phone calls were not affordable and emails

[78] 'Minutes of General Meeting of N.W.A.F,' (11th April 1976), WAFE 1974, 5 and 6, (FAN/JH/WA/WAFE/03), Feminist Archive North at the Leeds University Special Collections.

[79] Sutton, interview. 'Letter from Jo Sutton to Del Martin', (22nd April 1976), *Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin: Beyond the Daughters of Bilitis Collection*, San Francisco Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Historical Society, available from the Archives of Sexuality and Gender. Also 'Letter from Rebecca Dobash to Jalna Hanmer with list of US contacts' (16th Feb 1976), WAFE 1974, 5 and 6. (FAN/JH/WA/WAFE/03), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

a thing of the future. Nevertheless, it had its drawbacks as the postal service, miscommunications and delays did not always allow for a free flowing exchange of ideas. In these letters you get a sense of the back and forth of ideas, witticisms and sympathies that went between these activists, perhaps more so than in any other source.

Historian Rebecca Earle has reminded us that 'letters display the signs of the distinct environments in which they were conceived' and of the ever 'changing nature of epistolary convention… as a social and cultural practice.'[80] What then were the epistolary conventions of the WLM? In her study of 'letters in contemporary feminism', from Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp chain letters to emails of the early 2000s, historian Margaretta Jolly has found that one feature of these letters was that they put women's relationships with one another centre stage.[81] The letters under consideration here make clear that relationships between feminists were highly valued and much consideration is given to both the recipient's intellectual ideas and emotional state by the letter writer. Jolly has found that there was an expectation for WLM activists to 'not only seek justice together but to care for one another in doing so.'[82] Campaigning on this issue and providing support for victim/survivors was undoubtedly emotionally challenging and friendships with feminists working on the same issues in a different locale offered a sense of solidarity and support when things at the grassroots level became challenging.

These letters discuss feminist thought and activism as well as more personal matters such as family and friends. Letters were sometimes used to re-affirm bonds made in person such as when Dworkin wrote to Hanmer in 1982: 'After our uproarious evening, it is hard to calm down enough to thank you for the book-- which I do, though not calmly--what a book.'[83] Dworkin was a well-known and controversial radical feminist activist and writer from the US. She is perhaps best known for her campaigns against pornography. Dworkin clearly saw Hanmer as a source of support, as she explained that she was going through a difficult time in her career: 'I am being ignored right into the graveyard, except for

[80] Rebecca Earle, 'Introduction', *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945*, ed. Rebecca Earle, (London: Routledge, 1999), pp.2-3.

[81] Margaretta Jolly, *In Love and Struggle: Letters in Contemporary Feminism*, (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2008).

[82] Ibid. p.94

[83] 'Letter from Andrea Dworkin to Jalna Hanmer,' (29th November 1982),), Jalna Hanmer papers, (FAN/JH/VAGR/11), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

occasional devastating ridicule. I am tired to death of this awful country.'[84] Hanmer offered sympathy and even for Dworkin to stay with her, to which she replied: 'Thank you for yr [sic] invitation: refuge, sanctuary, is what it would be like for me. But I can't do it. It's hard to explain all the reasons why, but thank you.'[85] The sympathy of someone who shared her radical feminist politics, was a fellow American but was somewhat removed from the politics and geography of the WLM in the US, having lived in England for many years, perhaps made Hanmer a safe person to confide in.

Letters often communicated news about significant events pertaining to activism against violence against women. For example, NiCarthy, who was a leading anti-domestic abuse activist in the US, wrote to Burdon and Robertson about the NCADV conference Milwaukie in 1983:

> Dear Sue and Morna, Didn't see much of this city. Too busy talking/listening/feeling at the Nat'l Coalition Against Domestic Violence Conference. An inspiring four days of provocative workshops, and coming together of women of all colors, sexual preferences, classes and backgrounds… The movement took several giant steps back from the recently growing social service direction back to the political roots.[86]

Burdon and NiCarthy had met at a workshop delivered by NiCarthy at the Tavistock Institute in London in 1981. As has already been seen, the concern that anti-domestic abuse activism was becoming de-politicised was shared across the US and the UK.

In the 1980s, Lavender, a founding member of Leeds Women's Aid, exchanged letters with Miles who was living in Canada and was a founding member of a WAVAW group in Toronto. In 1980 Miles wrote that:

> There was a huge 'take back the night' demo here while I was away. It was a quickly organised protest in response to the murder of a young woman (feminist)… The old WAVAW telephone tree …made the quick response possible. And the history of working together in WAVAW with women we

[84] 'Letter from Andrea Dworkin to Jalna Hanmer,' (12th April 1983), Jalna Hanmer papers, (FAN/JH/VAGR/11), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[85] 'Letter from Andrea Dworkin to Jalna Hanmer,' (30th May 1983), Jalna Hanmer papers, (FAN/JH/VAGR/11), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[86] 'Postcard from Ginny NiCarthy to Sue and Morna', (c.1983), Morna Burdon's personal archive.

> would never otherwise have met or worked with has helped make these networks wider + more varied.[87]

These events mirrored the development of WAVAW and reclaim the night marches in Leeds, which were discussed in Chapter Four. Hearing about events like the conference in Milwaukee or the march in Toronto could be a means by which Women's Aid activists in the UK could feel part of a wider movement. In this way, these letters went beyond fostering individual relationships, although these were important, and helped to give a sense of a community of women fighting against violence. Jolly has observed that: 'Technologies of communication and literary cultures have also been crucial to the functioning of protests that aim explicitly to nurture "imaginary" as well as literal community.'[88] Events described in letters from friends living abroad could help activists tap into an imaginary community, temporarily transporting women to the imagined space of the event invoked by the letter. Although this could lead to in person meetings as well, there was a real value in the sense of expansion that feeling part of a community could give activists, helping them to feel less isolated in their struggle for the rights of victim/survivors of domestic abuse. As Earle has opined, it is important not to classify letters as for strictly private or public consumption.[89] The letter from NiCarthy, for instance, was written on a postcard and addressed to the SWA office so was probably displayed in the office where anyone could read it. In this way, the sense of connection to a wider movement could go beyond the intended recipients.

Moreover, letters could be an important site of the exchange of feminist thought transnationally. Those writing and thinking about domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women could exchange the ideas they were developing around these issues. These letters show that there was not a simple transfer of ideas from one country to another but that ideas were negotiated and re-signified across borders. For instance, when NiCarthy was invited to give a workshop in Edinburgh in the early 1980s she paid attention to the local context. Letters between Burdon, Robertson and NiCarthy show a back and forth of ideas for the workshop:

> It seems to me that your refuge workers suffer from much of the same problems as those here: understaffing, under financing, inadequate facilities, high pressure work... In addition U.K workers seem to be more anti-

[87] 'Letter from Angela Miles to Lou Lavender,' (15th May 1980), *Lou Lavender papers*, (FAN/LL/06), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[88] Jolly, *Love and Struggle*, p.128.

[89] Earle, *Epistolary Selves*, p.4.

> professional than here, for good reason of course, but one problem stemming from that seems to be something close to an anti-skills attitude... I find these fascinating areas for exploration and wish I could talk with you about them at great length... but it might be too threatening - especially from an 'alien'... These are some pretty general ideas to kick around. I'd like to know your reactions, additions or subtractions, or whether it seems very feasible at all. Even if the workshop doesn't come to pass, I'd like your reactions.[90]

There is a sense from this letter that NiCarthy is very aware of the differences between the two countries and her own position as a potentially threatening outsider. She defers then to Robertson as an expert in her own locale and seems to be seeking a genuine exchange of ideas, encouraging Robertson to give her opinion on what she proposes.

Similarly, in 1975 Russell wrote to Hanmer to share her ideas for the International Tribunal of Crimes Against Women, which took place in 1976, and thanked her for feedback on Russell's new book.[91] Russell was a feminist activist academic and author of influential books such as *Rape in Marriage* published in 1982 and *Femicide* published in 1992. Russell was born in South Africa and spent time in England but lived in the US from 1961 until her death in 2020.[92] In the letter, Russell included a plan for her new book including questions she had been pondering, such as, of violence against women: 'What is it – how do you compare one form with another (i.e which is worse – infibulation or wife beating), subjective vs objective ill treatment, + how they interrelate.'[93] This question of how to compare different forms of violence against women and the way in which they interacted was an important aspect of developing feminist theory. This has been observed in the previous chapter, with the idea of a continuum popularised by Kelly in the late 1980s.

The literature sent via letters was often intended to be shared and Hanmer wrote a note to herself on Russell's letter to discuss the ideas with her colleague Diana Leonard. By the same token, in 1980 Miles urged Lavender: 'Please do send me your comments and encourage anyone else who reads the thesis to do the same. It is really important for me to

[90] 'Letter from Ginny NiCarthy to Sue Robertson,' (3rd July 1982), Morna Burdon's personal archive.

[91] 'Letter from Diana Russell to Jalna Hanmer,' (July 20, 1975), *Conference Box 5: 1975*, (FAN/CONF/05), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[92] 'Diana Russell Obituary,' *The Guardian*, (23rd August 2020), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/23/diana-russell-obituary> [Accessed 24/02/23].

[93] 'Crimes against women book plan enclosed with letter from Diana Russell to Jalna Hanmer', (July 20th 1975), *Conference Box 5: 1975*, (FAN/CONF/05), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

hear from feminists about the ideas.'[94] WLM activists also sent additional literature like pamphlets, newsletters and articles along with their letters, contributing to the transnational flow of feminist knowledge. For example, Hanmer sent Russell copies of the first issue of *Trouble & Strife* and asked her if she would like to contribute an article in 1983.[95] Meanwhile, Miles sent Lavender leaflets produced by WAVAW.[96]

Personal relationships with those in other countries maintained through letters could also be a way to access local knowledge about networking and publishing opportunities. For example, Hanmer wrote that she had been talking with the Women's Press, a feminist publishing company established in London in 1977, on Dworkin's behalf about the possibility of publishing her latest book.[97] Similarly, Russell wrote to Hanmer for publishing recommendations when she was struggling to publish *Rape in Marriage* in the UK.[98] Likewise, NiCarthy wrote to Burdon and Robertson about the publication of *Getting Free* in the UK: 'Women's Press is finally showing some interest, thanks I think to some prodding by you.'[99] In several letters, contact details for feminist activists with similar interests or opportunities are exchanged or asked for, such as this from NiCarthy to Burdon and Robertson: 'For my London workshop, I'm trying to get someone from W.A. to come in for two hours (paid) lecture/discussion… But I've not been able to keep in touch… Do you have any individual people in London that you think would be good to get in touch with?'[100] Fostering transnational relationships, then, could be a good way to tap into networks for publishing or seminars that they might not be able to without a personal link.

There were some barriers to this type of connection; sending packages through the postal service was expensive and sometimes items were lost or damaged, with NiCarthy exclaiming that she was glad her book had 'finally' reached Burdon, and Hanmer writing

[94] 'Letter from Angela Miles to Lou Lavender' (12th May 1980), Lou Lavender Papers, (FAN/LL/06), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[95] 'Letter from Jalna Hanmer to Diana Russell' (28th February 1983), Jalna Hanmer Papers, (FAN/JH/VAGR/11), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[96] 'Letter from Angela Miles to Lou Lavender' (15th May 1980), Lou Lavender Papers, (FAN/LL/06), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[97] 'Letter from Jalna Hanmer to Andrea Dworkin' (28th April 1984), Jalna Hanmer Papers, (FAN/JH/VAGR/11), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[98] 'Letter from Diana Russell to Jalna Hanmer' (10th May 1983), Jalna Hanmer Papers, (FAN/JH/VAGR/11), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[99] 'Letter from Ginny NiCarthy to Morna Burdon' (20th December 1982), Morna Burdon's personal archive.

[100] Ibid.

to Russell that she had never received the copy of *Rape in Marriage* that Russell sent.[101] Additionally, exchanging letters as a form of transnational support and exchange took time and energy. As has been seen, these relationships could be rejuvenating but, as Dworkin put it in one letter to Hanmer: 'Writing letters can constitute a form of overload in and of itself.'[102] Time was not something Women's Aid activists had in abundance as they were often understaffed and under resourced. This can be seen in this letter from Burdon to NiCarthy: 'Sorry this is such a short note but things, as ever are hectic.'[103] Keeping up transnational connections took considerable time and energy and this could be a barrier to exchange for those who were busy with activism, careers and family responsibilities. Nevertheless, at a time when feminist literature was often not widely published, this was one way in which feminist political thought and news of action could travel across borders.

Therefore, an exchange of letters could lead to the solidification of personal relationships between anti-violence against women activists across the Atlantic. Letters could lead to meaningful exchanges of ideas transnationally, particularly when other literature such as books and leaflets were sent with them for comment. These relationships could be a form of emotional support and give women the sense of belonging to a community extending beyond their borders. There was, however, delays and disruptions when communicating by letter and they were not a substitute for coming together in a physical space. It is to the spaces of workshops and conferences in which this was possible to which we will now turn for the remainder of this chapter.

6.5 'Game Changers': Workshops, Training and the Dissemination of Key Frameworks from the US

By the 1980s and 1990s, particular theoretical frameworks for tackling domestic abuse that were developed in the US began to gain influence in the UK. This spread of feminist praxis took the form of both literature, and talks and training workshops. The idea that domestic abuse was primarily about the exertion of power and control, rather than violence itself, was a key concept that began to take root in the 1980s. Although, there was an understanding of this amongst Women's Aid activists in the UK, work by feminist activists

[101] 'Letter from Ginny NiCarthy to Morna Burdon' (15th October 1982), Morna Burdon's personal archive. 'Letter from Jalna Hanmer to Diana Russell' (28th February 1983), Jalna Hanmer Papers, (FAN/JH/VAGR/11), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[102] 'Letter from Andrea Dworkin to Jalna Hanmer' (30th May 1982), Jalna Hanmer Papers, (FAN/JH/VAGR/11), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[103] 'Letter from Morna Burdon to Ginny NiCarthy' (12th July 1982), Morna Burdon's personal archive.

from the US was particularly influential in conceptualising and disseminating this idea. Anti-domestic abuse feminist activists and thinkers drew from various disciplines such as psychology in order to develop their understanding of domestic abuse. These concepts were particularly important because they gave Women's Aid activists tools and language to answer questions which were regularly posed by those unfamiliar with the dynamics of domestic abuse like 'why doesn't she just leave?' This section will examine the work of NiCarthy, who has already been mentioned, and Ellen Pence, a feminist activist from Minnesota who developed the famed 'Duluth model.' The work of Diana Russell was important to the development of theoretical understandings of domestic abuse as well, as is mentioned below. The ways in which these ideas travelled through transnational networks and at training workshops and seminars, as well as the extent to which these ideas were appropriated in the UK will be explored.

These developments are significant as they can be seen as a pre-history to the concept of 'coercive control' which was popularised by Evan Stark in his 2007 monograph of the same name.[104] The concept of coercive control has been extremely influential in recent years; it is now a criminal offence across the UK and has begun to enter common parlance. This concept has been helpful in re-defining domestic abuse as a 'liberty crime rather than a crime of assault' and raising awareness of aspects of abuse that do not involve physical violence but have a severe impact on victim/survivors' psychological state and sense of selfhood.[105] Stark has acknowledged the influence of the feminist activists and theorists who came before him, explaining that Susan Schechter introduced him to the concept of coercive control.[106] However, the contributions of some of these women and their international influence has not yet been adequately acknowledged by historians or society in general.

Ginny NiCarthy

The space created by training workshops could be sites of transnational exchange, offering Women's Aid activists the opportunity to ask questions from people working on domestic abuse in other countries. One example of this is the two-day workshop that was given by

[104] Evan Stark, *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[105] Ibid. p.vii and p.13.

[106] Ibid. p.201.

NiCarthy in April 1983 at Gracemount Youth Club in Edinburgh.[107] As has already been noted, NiCarthy was an activist from the US who had been invited to Edinburgh by Burdon after they met during NiCarthy's workshop in London the previous year. A shorter version of the workshop was given in the same trip for other interested parties, particularly Rape Crisis volunteers, at the Women's Centre in Broughton Street, Edinburgh. The content of the workshop that NiCarthy delivered in Edinburgh reveals the type of ideas that she was introducing to Scotland at this time.

The first part of the workshop involved the 'burnout exercise.' The concept of burnout syndrome was popularised by psychologist Herbert Freudenberger in the 1970s.[108] Freudenberger described it as 'becoming exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources.'[109] Freudenberger applied the concept to helping professionals like doctors but NiCarthy adapted the term to use with victim/survivors of domestic abuse and women's refuge workers. During her workshop, NiCarthy asked the group to remember a highly stressful time in their lives when they had felt 'burned out,' and how they felt, what they said and what they did in this situation.[110] The final question asked why they stayed in their home or workplace despite the stress, and this was used to relate to reasons why women stayed with abusive partners. The exercise was designed to help people empathise with the experiences of victim/survivors and to see that their behaviour was most often a normal human reaction to the situation they found themselves in.[111]

Burnout was not a well known concept in Scotland at this time. Lily Greenan was a Rape Crisis hotline worker when she attended NiCarthy's workshop in 1983:

> What I remember most vividly was the burnout exercise and, and it was busy, there were quite a lot of us in the room… Big room in the front of the basement and it was full, um, we were in a circle, of course, and the burnout exercise was the thing that I came away with. And I suspect, I mean, I spoke to someone else who was around Women's Aid at that time, who went to that weekend, and she said: 'Yeah it was just such a game changer, we hadn't been able to

[107] '"Working with Abused Women" A Two Day Workshop for Women's Aid Groups' programme, from the personal archive of Morna Burdon.

[108] Linda V. Heinemann and Torsten Heinemann, 'Burnout Research: Emergence and Scientific Investigation of a Contested Diagnosis', *The British Journal of Social Work* (1984), p.2.

[109] Herbert J. Freudenberger, 'Staff Burn-Out', *Journal of Social Issues*, 30:1, (1974), p.159.

[110] Scottish Women's Aid, *Women Talking to Women: A Women's Aid Approach to Counselling* (Edinburgh: SWA, c.1988), p.54.

[111] Ibid.

> think about it like that, before.' … [I] *was* feeling overwhelmed and burnt out and, you know, like, just didn't know what burnt out meant at that stage, but I came away from that session understanding that how I was feeling in that moment, was the closest I could get to understanding what a woman living with active domestic violence might be feeling and that, that was what made it hard for her to walk away that, that there's stuff you can't just walk away from. So that had quite a powerful effect.[112]

This example shows the way in which an idea like 'burnout', originally taken from psychology in the context of the US healthcare system, could be adapted by NiCarthy and then have a profound, personal impact on an activist working against violence against women in Edinburgh. Similarly, Burdon recalled NiCarthy's work as having a deep personal impact, describing it as: 'Really, really radical. I don't mean radical in a political way. I mean radical in terms of change within yourself.'[113] Greenan reflected that the workshop was a success partly because NiCarthy was able to create a space that felt safe, despite difficult topics being discussed, commenting that: 'She was a skilled facilitator, I have a sense, I can, I couldn't tell you what she looked like, I don't have any sense at all of what she looked like or how she sounded but I have a sense of it being held really well.'[114] As well as the content of a workshop, then, the facilitation of a temporary space for open discussion was an important factor on the impact of ideas.

The second exercise in NiCarthy's course was termed the 'brainwashing exercise.' This involved listing eight ways in which victim/survivors were controlled or 'brain washed' by their abusers. These was: isolation, disability/exhaustion, degradation, threats, displays of total power, enforcing trivial demands, occasional indulgences and distorted perspectives.[115] During the workshop, the participants would brainstorm examples of this type of abusive behavior. These headings were taken from *Rape in Marriage* by Russell and were originally adapted by her from Biderman's Chart of Coercion.[116] Albert Biderman, a social scientist working for the US Airforce, developed this chart in reference to the tactics that had been used on prisoners of war from the US Army by their Chinese captors during the Korean War.[117] In Russell's book she lists the tactics alongside those used by domestic abuse perpetrators, creating a striking comparison as the similarities

[112] Greenan, interview with the author.

[113] Burdon, interview.

[114] Greenan, interview with the author.

[115] *Women Talking to Women*, p. 44.

[116] Ibid., p.46. Diana Russell, *Rape in Marriage*, (New York: Macmillan, 1982).

[117] Albert D. Biderman, *Communist Techniques of Coercive Interrogation* (Texas: Personnel and Training Research Center, 1956).

between the two are clear.[118] This, along with the Freudenberger influence, demonstrates the way in which anti-domestic abuse activists developed their theories from a variety of disciplines. Furthermore, they used the example of techniques used on prisoners of war to demonstrate the severity of the abuse that victim/survivors of domestic abuse had to endure. This was a strategy sometimes used by feminist activists to convey the seriousness of feminist issues. This is similar to the comparison made by Rachel Pain between terrorism and domestic abuse in her 2014 report for SWA entitled *Everyday Terrorism* demonstrating that it was a model that endured.[119]

The exercises devised by NiCarthy, along with her book, *Getting Free*, had a considerable influence in Scotland. As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, ideas were important to anti-domestic abuse activists in so far as they could be useful in practice. NiCarthy's workshops were highly usable and could be easily adapted for use in training with outside agencies like police and social services. In interview, Burdon mentioned using the burnout exercise in a training session with Lothian and Borders Police officers in her role at SWA.[120] Tools that could be used to explain how victim/survivors felt and how domestic abuse operated were highly valued, as one of SWA's priorities was to change perceptions and convince statutory agencies to alter their practice when dealing with domestic abuse cases. SWA also produced a training book entitled *Women Talking to Women: A Women's Aid Approach to Counselling* which included instructions on how to facilitate the burnout and the brainwashing exercises as they had been delivered by NiCarthy. The book acknowledged her influence, stating:

> Women's Aid in Scotland is indebted to Ginny NiCarthy, whose workshop in Edinburgh in 1982-3 first crystallised for us what it is about Women's Aid that makes our approach distinctive and effective. Much of this chapter is based on those workshops and ensuing discussions.[121]

NiCarthy was not just influential in Scotland and in 1990 a UK version of *Getting Free* was published, edited by the National Coordinator of Welsh Women's Aid, Jane Hutt. This version was a collaborative project between NiCarthy, Welsh Women's Aid, SWA and WAFE. It is interesting to note the adaptations or 'translations' that were made for the UK

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[118] Russell, *Rape*, p.283.

[119] Rachel Pain, 'Everyday Terrorism: How Fear Works in Domestic Abuse', *Progress in Human Geography,* 38:4, (2014).

[120] Burdon, interview.

[121] SWA, *Women Talking to Women,* p.34.

edition. Most obviously, there is the addition of a history of Women's Aid in the UK and personal stories from victim/survivors of domestic abuse who stayed in UK refuges. There is also a note in the introduction to say that: 'Issues such as teen and lesbian abuse were barely being discussed in Britain in the late 1980s but the chapters from the American version have been included to help those who are perhaps now suffering in silence, their abuse still not fully recognized by Women's Aid.'[122] This demonstrates how the exchange of feminist knowledge transnationally could help to push forward thinking around issues that had not yet been examined in the local context. While some adaptations were needed, then, NiCarthy's workshops were useful and impactful in the UK context and helped to influence praxis.

Ellen Pence and the 'Duluth model'

Training workshops and talks delivered by Pence in the UK in the 1990s had a considerable impact on anti-domestic abuse work and offered practical models for action. Pence co-founded the Domestic Abuse Intervention Program (DAIP) with Michael Paymar in 1981 in Duluth, a small city in Minnesota in the US.[123] DAIP worked closely with the women's refuge in Duluth but instead of offering individual advocacy for victim/survivors its role was to coordinate the different agencies involved in domestic abuse cases and to introduce work with male perpetrators.[124] The project was developed from a feminist understanding of domestic abuse, in that Pence theorised that men abused in order to gain power and control over their female partners.[125] DAIP became one of the most imitated anti-domestic abuse programmes and by 1999 they had delivered over 600 training workshops in the US, as well as visited five countries to teach their methods.[126] Several of the anti-domestic abuse activists interviewed for this thesis recalled meeting Pence or seeing her talk at conferences. Pence was remembered with fondness by UK anti-domestic abuse activists, with Gill Hague describing her as: 'Endlessly humorous and one of the great innovators of the violence against women movement.'[127] Greenan, who spent time

[122] Ginny NiCarthy, *Getting Free: First British Edition*, ed. Jane Hutt (London: Journeyman Press, 1990). p.x.

[123] Jan Hoffman, 'When Men Hit Women,' *The New York Times*, (16th February 1992), p.23.

[124] Ellen Pence and Melanie Shepard, *Coordinating Community Responses to Domestic Violence: Lessons from Duluth and Beyond* (London: Sage, 1999), p.7.

[125] Ibid. p.3-4.

[126] Ibid. p.2.

[127] Hague, *History and Memories*, p.174.

with Pence on a visit to Duluth recalled that: 'She was amazing, she was generous with her time and her thoughts.'[128]

Perhaps the earliest connection between the UK and DAIP began with a research trip undertaken by the Dobashes in the early 1980s, when they met Pence and Paymar and were impressed by their work, as they have recalled during an interview for the Speaking Out project:

> [Rebecca Dobash] We invited these people, Ellen Pence and Michael Paymar, who started the batterers' programmes in the US, dedicated feminists, to come and give talks here in Scotland. So, the first ones they gave in Britain were here, in Scotland, [Russell Dobash: first one in Europe, yep].[129]

Due to the Dobashes networking with academics and activists in both the US and the UK they were well placed to introduce new ideas developing around domestic abuse to Scotland, where they were working at the University of Stirling at this time.

As we have seen, feminist thought is rarely exported wholesale and while DAIP has been influential in several parts of the world, Pence and Melanie Sheppard have observed that:

> When the "Duluth model" phrase is used in these different communities, it can take on different meanings. For example, it may be understood as the men's curriculum, the use of a mandatory arrest policy, the use of a tracking system to monitor the criminal justice system, or interagency coordination.[130]

Findings from oral history interviews and archival documents indicate that the three most influential aspects of the DAIP in the UK have been the interagency approach, work with perpetrators and the Power and Control Wheel. There are several examples of this throughout the UK, but this chapter will take the Leeds Interagency Project (LIAP) in Leeds and the CHANGE programme in Edinburgh as examples of how DAIP was adopted in two UK cities.

One aspect of DAIP's coordinated community response model was an interagency or multiagency approach to domestic abuse cases. As Hague and Malos have noted: 'The idea of these approaches is that different agencies, particular areas of work evolve a co-ordinated approach, sharing information, and working closely together to provide a

[128] Greenan, interview with the author.

[129] Rebecca and Russell Dobash, interview with Lewis.

[130] Ibid.

seamless, consistent service.'[131] This is now wide spread in the UK with different local areas taking various iterations of this approach. For example, the practice of convening Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) bringing together police, social services, child protection, probation and domestic abuse charities such as Women's Aid in high risk domestic abuse cases is widely implemented. Women's Aid and other advocacy organisations have been involved in interagency approaches to varying degrees but by the late 1990s there were concerns that they could be marginalised or isolated in comparison to more powerful statutory agencies in some cases.[132]

Some of the earliest examples of interagency work occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Leeds, Wolverhampton, Nottinghamshire, and the London boroughs of Islington and of Hammersmith and Fulham.[133] To take Leeds as an example, LIAP was established in 1990 to improve support services for victim/survivors of domestic abuse and support agencies to develop good practice which centred the empowerment of women and children.[134] LIAP supported agencies to develop new policies and had undertaken two-day training programmes with 600 workers from a variety of agencies by 1999.[135] Andrea Tara-Chand was the first manager of LIAP having previously been involved with the first women's refuge in Newcastle, Ashiana Asian women's refuge in Sheffield and Sahara the Black women's refuge in Leeds.[136] Tara-Chand has explained that Hanmer and Sheila Saunders were involved with setting up LIAP and appointing her as manager.[137] This background demonstrates the way in which interagency work in Leeds had its roots in activism to set up women's refuges, with some key people being involved in both activities. Tara-Chand recalled that DAIP had an important influence on the development of LIAP, in particular, in their work training various agencies in how to approach domestic abuse cases:

> We used the Duluth Minnesota model, in terms of the Power and Control Wheel and that was seminal. That really gave us what we needed and what we

[131] Gill Hague and Ellen Malos, 'Inter-agency Approaches to Domestic Violence and the Role of Social Services,' *British Journal of Social Work*, 28:3, (1998), pp.369-370.

[132] Ibid. p.382.

[133] Ibid. p.371

[134] Andrea Tara-Chand, 'Leeds Inter-agency Project (Women & Violence): A radical approach?' in *The Multi-Agency Approach to Domestic Violence*, ed. Nicola Harwin, Gill Hague and Ellen Malos (London: Whiting and Birch, 1999), p.133.

[135] Ibid. p.134.

[136] Tara-Chand, interview.

[137] Ibid.

> wanted in terms of being able to really impress on people from all agencies whether it was the police or social services or whoever that domestic violence isn't just about a woman being beaten physically, it's about the impact of isolation, it's about the impact of a withdrawal of love, it's about all of the psychological affects and we could start to explain and articulate issues to do with why women don't leave. So, we were starting to pull together this model of training, I mean, we trained hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people... Um, so the Duluth Power and Control was just, um, it just unleashed so much of what we knew but we hadn't got the language to articulate and that was further developed and further developed.[138]

Michelle De Souza who started working for LIAP in 1996 recalled how the training 'really shifted people's understanding of the issue and how complex it was and how it's just really not helpful blaming and judging because there's lots of complicated reasons that somebody might stay.'[139] Several people interviewed for this chapter recalled the Power and Control Wheel (see Figure 6.1) as an important tool. Hanmer commented that the wheel: 'Was a way of explaining how to understand what was going on. That was really confusing initially… That really could explain that it wasn't her behaviour that was the problem. It's his behaviour that's the problem.'[140] The wheel was developed in focus groups with victim/survivors of domestic abuse in Duluth to document the tactics and behaviours most commonly used by male perpetrators, as can be seen from the figure below.[141] Similarly, to NiCarthy's brainwashing exercise, the wheel could be used as a tool while working with victim/survivors and training outside agencies. Additionally, the wheel was useful because it could be easily adapted and there are now many different versions of the wheel including one for the abuse of children, abuse in lesbian and gay relationships, teenage relationships, economic abuse and others.

[138] Ibid.

[139] De Souza, interview.

[140] Hanmer, interview with the author.

[141] 'Understanding the Power and Control Wheel,' *DAIP Website*, < FAQs About the Wheels - Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (theduluthmodel.org)> [Accessed 28/02/23].

Figure 6.1: Power and Control Wheel, 'Wheel Information Center,' Duluth Model Website

The relationship between Pence, Paymar and the Dobashes led to the development of a programme for domestic abuse perpetrators in Scotland called 'CHANGE: men working to end their violence against women.' As well as this external influence, the CHANGE programme was set up as a result of local factors. The Dobashes have explained during interview that SWA was contacted by a judge of the Sheriff Court in Edinburgh who suggested that the perpetrators he came across in court could benefit from a programme.[142] This judge was already utilising court-mandated alcohol abuse programmes and had read about Women's Aid's work.[109] Thereafter, the Dobashes, with the support of SWA, obtained funding from Urban Aid to develop a men's programme.[143] In 1989, Monica Wilson was hired along with David Morran to develop the CHANGE programme. Wilson had been a research assistant on the project that led to the publishing of *Violence Against Wives*, so had worked with the Dobashes before.[144] Wilson recalled that one of the first things they did was to travel to the US to talk with those who were developing men's programmes there, including Pence, and David Adams who founded 'Emerge' in Boston:

> In Duluth, Ellen Pence from DAIP had set up a very busy schedule for us. She had arranged for us to talk to judges involved, we sat in on a police training session and talked to the presenter. We visited and talked to workers and

[142] Rebecca and Russell Dobash, interview with Lewis.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Monica Wilson, Interview with the author, (18th October 2021).

> women in the local women's shelter. We sat in on a session of the men's programme and talked to the session leaders.… It really informed and enthused our practice about where we went from there, just sitting down with different people in different organisations about where they started, the passion they had for it and how people were trying to learn from each other.[145]

Later that year, Hamish Sinclair who ran the Man Alive perpetrator programme in San Francisco ran a week-long training session in Stirling. Additionally, Pence and Paymar came to a conference at the University of Stirling the following Spring.[146] Taking what they had learned from the US based programmes, along with their own reading, Wilson and Morran developed a programme by which abusive men were referred to CHANGE from the court system to take part in sixteen to twenty-two group sessions.[147] Wilson and Morran facilitated these sessions together.[148] The programme had four main goals: to increase men's awareness that their violence and abuse was intentional and that they were responsible for it; to challenge underlying attitudes and beliefs; to develop skills to live in a non-abusive partnership and to monitor individual men's progress through record keeping.[149] Wilson has said that ensuring the safety of women and children should be 'the most important guiding principle' of any programme intervening with violent men.[150]

As has been noted above, feminist praxis is rarely seamlessly incorporated from one country to another and Wilson highlighted this when reflecting on the CHANGE programme:

> We didn't follow Duluth to the letter, we learned from them and we tried to take that knowledge and apply it to a Scottish context… I think it was to do with our understanding of Scottish culture and understanding of Scottish masculinity and using appropriate terms, using appropriate language… to find the right tools, both in terms of practice and exercises and language, so that they could do it, so that it made sense in their terms, what we were asking them to do.[151]

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[145] Wilson, interview and correspondence with the author (13/03/23).

[146] Ibid.

[147] Monica Wilson, 'Working with the CHANGE men's programme,' *Working With Men: Feminism and Social Work*, ed. Kate Cavanagh and Viviene Cree (London: Routledge, 1996), p.35

[148] Ibid. pp.36-37.

[149] Ibid. p.35.

[150] Monica Wilson, correspondence with the author, (13/03/23).

[151] Wilson, interview.

The way in which 'feminist knowledge practices move from place to place and are "translated" in different cultural locations' depending on what is useful in a specific location can be seen here.[152]

There was significant scepticism about men's programmes amongst Women's Aid activists in the UK. Nonetheless, there was one representative from SWA and three from local Women's Aid groups on the CHANGE management committee.[153] Wilson highly valued the presence of Women's Aid activists commenting that: 'They kept us on our toes, we had to always be thinking, "what is the implication for women in what we're doing."'[154] However, after four years of involvement with CHANGE, SWA reviewed their position and decided to withdraw from the programme in 1993.[155] The Dobashes have expressed their disappointment with this during interview.[156] SWA archival records show that opinions of working with men had been 'very mixed, and sometimes polarised' at Women's Aid but that involvement was thought the best course because 'the project would develop with or without us, and if we were not there, no one would be looking out for the interests of abused women and children.'[157] In their review, SWA noted that: 'Decisions which are of crucial importance to us are taken by project workers' although 'on occasion we have put our foot down about something and have been successful.'[158] The review highlights some of the key reasons why SWA withdrew from CHANGE:

> We would retain our 'purity', which would make a strong political stand by reaffirming that our work is with women and their children, and thus has no part in decisions to do with violent men. We would also avoid being identified with a project which may turn out to be doing women more harm than good… we would avoid giving work with men credibility simply as a result of our involvement… there is a real danger of us finding ourselves in competition with men's programmes for funding.[159]

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[152] Davis, *The Making of Our Bodies*, p.10.

[153] Scottish Women's Aid, 'Scottish Women's Aid and our involvement in CHANGE', Scottish Women's Aid Executive meeting document, (August, 1993), p.1, Scottish Women's Aid Archive at Glasgow Women's Library.

[154] Wilson, interview.

[155] Scottish Women's Aid, 'Scottish Women's Aid and our involvement in CHANGE', Scottish Women's Aid Executive meeting document, (August 1993), Scottish Women's Aid Archive at Glasgow Women's Library.

[156] Rebecca and Russell Dobash, interview with Lewis.

[157] Ibid.

[158] Ibid.

[159] Ibid. p2.

These were common anxieties amongst Women's Aid activists in the UK. There was also concern that men's programmes imported from the US would be too therapeutic and individualistic in their approach. [160] Additionally, there was concern about CHANGE at Shakti Women's Aid, after a representative attended a conference organised by CHANGE. They noted that 'it was white male orientated and dominated… issues of race did not come in at all.'[161] Furthermore, they shared the concern that resources would be diverted towards men and away from women.

The example of CHANGE demonstrates how the dissemination of ideas transnationally can be a complicated process and cause tension within the locality they are entering. They can be accepted and adapted by one group whilst ultimately rejected by another. Nonetheless, the influence of DAIP and other men's programmes has been very significant and the CHANGE programme led to the development of a network of practitioners working with perpetrators and, subsequently, the founding of Respect which is a UK-wide network leading on safe work with perpetrators. Moreover, Wilson went on to help develop the Caledonian System, a more sophisticated two-year perpetrator programme which incorporates support for women and children, and the involvement of multiple different agencies. At present, there are plans for the Caledonian System to be put into operation across all local authorities in Scotland.

[160] Wilson, 'CHANGE men's programme', pp.29-30.

[161] Shakti Women's Aid, 'Responding to domestic violence: Practice and Expertise A Conference and Workshop, 29-21 Jan 1992,' *Shakti Women's Aid Annual Report*, p.39. Records of Local Women's Aid Groups, Box 9: SWA/2/EA to SWA/2/GE, Scottish Women's Aid Archive at Glasgow Women's Library.

6.6 'Talk To One Another, Talk To The World': Conferences As Spaces Of Transnational Solidarity

Figure 6.2: NWAF representatives and others in Brussels, Belgium for the International Tribunal of Crimes Against Women (1976), from the personal archive of Elizabeth Woodcraft.

International feminist conferences were valuable spaces of transnational connection and solidarity for Women's Aid activists from the 1970s to the 1990s and beyond. Attending one of these conferences could be galvanising for women working to end violence against women. Talking about the Violence, Abuse and Women's Citizenship Conference in Brighton in 1996, documentarian Helene Rosenbluth has commented that: 'It is conferences like this, where networking on the global level gives women the impetus to persevere in their own communities.'[162] The UN World Conferences on Women in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995) provide an important context in which to view some of the activist-led conferences discussed here, as they acted as a stimulus for further transnational exchanges. For instance, the Tribunal of Crimes Against Women in 1976 was organised as a feminist alternative to the UN conference in Mexico, while the organisation Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) emerged from a planning group for the UN conference in Beijing. Concern by feminists that the UN was co-opting feminist issues can be seen in the example of the Brighton conference, as it demonstrated a desire to hold onto feminist non-hierarchical principles by including talks

[162] Helene Rosenbluth, 'Active Resistance: Domestic Violence Globally', *Hungry Mind Recordings*, radio documentary produced by Helene Rosenbluth, (1996), Available at <http://www.hungrymindrecordings.com/ProductListing.aspx?Id_Category=44>

from victim/survivors and grassroots activists. However, it simultaneously showed the increased ambition and scale of anti-violence against women organising, hosting over 2,500 participants from 137 countries and papers from internationally admired figures like Diana Russell, Ellen Pence, Andrea Dworkin, Jalna Hanmer, Liz Kelly, Beth Richie and Christine Delphy. Twelve of the anti-domestic abuse activists and researchers listed in Appendix 1 attended the Brighton conference, as well as others who have been mentioned throughout this thesis, demonstrating the far-reaching networks which were established from the 1970s to 1996.

International conferences could be challenging; emotions were often high and those in attendance were forced to think hard about their feminist thought and practice. Those who attended the 1996 Brighton conference were especially moved by listening to activists from the frontline of conflict situations talk about their experiences. Marianne Hester, for instance, recalled hearing for the first time from women who had escaped from the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan, while Lily Greenan was 'blown away' listening to a Palestinian and Israeli woman take to the stage together.[163]

There were several factors which restricted transnational connection at conferences, including limited financial resources to attend, language barriers and a lack of childcare provision. Over time, conferences became larger and more formal, although they often retained the WLM conference principle of allowing as many women to speak as possible, rather than focusing on a few key speakers. Conferences on domestic abuse and violence against women became more truly international as time went on. In the 1970s, women from North America and Western Europe were usually overrepresented but by the 1980s there was more of an effort to include women from the Global South. Events such as the fall of the Soviet Union and the war in the former Yugoslavia, precipitated an increased engagement with Eastern European countries in the 1990s.

The organisers of the Violence Abuse and Women's Citizenship conference in 1996, invoked the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women, which took place in Brussels twenty years earlier, as the 'model' and 'foundation stone' for their own conference.[164] The International Tribunal was organised by Diana Russell and was designed as an alternative to the UN First World Conference on Women which took place

[163] Hester, interview. Greenan, interview with the author.

[164] Val Balding, Julie Bindel and Catherine Euler, *Violence, Abuse and Women's Citizenship: Final Conference Report*, p.5, Karen Boyle's personal archive.

in 1975 and was 'organized by feminists active in the women's movement, rather than by governments or established institutions.'[165] Around 2,000 women contributed to the Tribunal, either by attending or sending a statement of the crimes against women taking place in their own community.[166] The issues covered included 'violence against women', 'forced motherhood', 'medical crimes' and 'economic and legal crimes.'[167]

This was the first international conference that Women's Aid activists were involved with, they were aware of the Tribunal from Hanmer's connection with Russell as has been seen above, and they discussed the crimes they wanted to highlight at the Tribunal at the 1975 NWAF conference.[168] Elizabeth Woodcraft, who was one of the National Coordinators for NWAF, attended the Tribunal along with representatives from two local English Women's Aid groups (see Figure 6.2).[169] Margueritte Russell, who was on the NCG for NWAF, was the UK representative on the organising committee for the Tribunal.[170] The Tribunal was opened with the following statement sent by Simone de Beauvoir:

> Strengthened by your solidarity, you will develop defensive tactics, the first being precisely the one you will be using during these five days: talk to one another, talk to the world, bring to light the shameful truths that half of humanity is trying to cover up. The Tribunal is in itself a feat. It heralds more to come.[171]

The Tribunal did indeed herald more to come and archival research for this chapter has identified twelve international conferences that Women's Aid activists took part in between 1976 and 1996.[172] The contact for these conferences was generally the national

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[165] Diana Russell, 'Report on the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women,' *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 2:1, (1977), p.1.

[166] Ibid.

[167] Ibid. p.2.

[168] 'International Tribunal of Crimes Against Women', Lou Lavender Box 07, (FAN/LL/07), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[169] Woodcraft, interview. Elizabeth Woodcraft, 'Report of International Tribunal' (c.1976), Lou Lavender Box 07 (FAN/LL/07), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[170] Russell, *Report*, p.5.

[171] Simone de Beauvoir quoted by Russell, *Report*, p.5.

[172] United Nations First World Conference on Women, Mexico (1975), International Tribunal of Crimes Against Women, Belgium (1976), International Conference on Women's Refuges, The Netherlands (1978), World Council of Churches Sub-Unit on Women Conference, Italy (1979), Domestic Abuse Conference, France (1979), United Nations Second World Conference on Women, Denmark (1980), Conference on Domestic Abuse, Belgium (1981) United Nations Third World Conference on Women, Kenya (1985), International Women's Aid Conference, Wales (1988), Shakti Women's Aid International Conference, Scotland (1991), Violence Against Women in Eastern Europe, Czechia (1992), Black/ Migrant Women and Health Conference,

Women's Aid organisations. However, women from local groups did attend conferences, indeed, it was a principle within NWAF that different women should be given the opportunity to attend such events. Additionally, individual Women's Aid activists attended conferences in other countries. For example, Kelly mentioned attending NCADV conferences in the US during interview and feminist activist academics regularly attended conferences in other countries.[173] However, this section will focus on conferences that were specifically conceived of as international exchanges with a significant emphasis on activism.

In April 1978, women from ten countries, representing fifty-four women's refuges attended the 'European Conference on Battered Women' in Amsterdam.[174] This was organised by the Dutch group Blijf Van M'n Lijf (BVML), which translates to 'stay away from my body', comparable to the English 'keep your hands to yourself.' BVML opened one of the earliest refuges in Europe in 1974 and was in touch with both NWAF and SWA in the 1970s. The idea for a European conference on battered women occurred at the 1976 American Sociological Association conference in New York which Jo Sutton attended. NWAF and a Belgian women's group helped with the planning of the Amsterdam conference.[175] Yvonne Arnold and Lynda Dean represented NWAF at planning meetings and the conference itself. Arnold had already met the Dutch group at the Tribunal in 1976, which highlights the way in which these events could foster transnational networking.[176] The conference aimed to 'facilitate the sharing of ideas' and 'to work on a feminist analysis on the problem of battered women' and there was a panel on research at the conference.[177] Therefore, there was an interest in discussing the feminist analysis of domestic abuse as well as the practicalities of setting up refuges.

Germany (1993), United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, China (1995) Violence Abuse and Women's Citizenship International Conference, England (1996).

[173] Kelly, interview.

[174] Lynda Dean and Yvonne Arnold, 'Report on the European Conference on Battered Women,' WAFE 1978 and 1977 Box 4 (FAN/JH/WA/04), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[175] Lynda Dean and Yvonne Arnold, 'The Possibility of a European Conference', WAFE 1978 and 1977 Box 4 (FAN/JH/WA/04), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[176] Ibid.

[177] 'Letter from Grietje Bosma to Lynda Dean' June 1977, WAFE 1978 and 1977 Box 4 (FAN/JH/WA/04), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections. 'Report on the European Conference on Battered Women, Amsterdam 1978', WAFE 1978 and 1977 Box 4 (FAN/JH/WA/04), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

Furthermore, Arnold and Dean hoped to 'spread experience and information to the continent so that more refuges are opened… We would also presumably be encouraging them to think of running them [refuges] on the NWAF lines and principles.'[178] At this time, women's refuge provision was still most developed in the UK and there was a sense that the main purpose of transnational engagement was to spread Women's Aid's feminist approach. However, in later decades there was more of a shift to international conferences being viewed as transnational *exchanges*. For example, later conferences, such as the one that took place in Cardiff in 1988 and Brighton in 1996, demonstrated a clear desire to learn from women in other countries. This change of perspective would not have been possible without transnational encounters like the ones described below, along with the knowledge that was gained through reading literature and personal relationships with women from other countries.

Twenty-eight women from England attended the conference in Amsterdam in 1978 and it was reported that they 'expressed feelings of renewed inspiration and solidarity' and commented on the impressive women's centre in which the conference was held which boasted a women's café and bar.[179] The physical space in which an international conference was held could have an impact on the way in which the event was experienced and remembered. For instance, Burdon has recalled the women's centre in which the International Conference on Domestic Violence was held in Brussels in February 1981:

> I mean, the whole house was a women's house, the whole building was a women's building, with a bar… just the fact it was an enormous municipal building, really, that was being used as this women's house. So, somebody had given them that. I don't know where the money was coming from. So that was very, just a different, yeah, just interesting because it made you see possibilities. That's what I *really* remember about that.[180]

Burdon's description of walking into the women's centre demonstrated the way in which entering the physical space and experiencing the scale of the building made her realise what it might be possible to achieve in Scotland. The ability of activists to be able to conceptualise and imagine spaces beyond what they already had was important if their services were to progress. This can be seen as one benefit of international travel, as opposed to sharing ideas via the written word.

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[178] Dean and Arnold, *Possibility of European Conference*.

[179] Dean and Arnold, *Report on the European Conference*.

[180] Burdon, interview.

Robertson attended the conference in Brussels as well and reported that 'it was fascinating to discover the differences in the legal and financial position of women in various countries but also the similarities in the ways we organised and the issues we were debating.'[181] During interview, Robertson recalled that the French feminists at the conference were sceptical of refuges, arguing that it was a 'defeatist approach' because it was not tackling the violence itself. [182] Several of the women interviewed for this chapter mentioned that engaging with an international conference allowed them to gain fresh perspectives and a renewed sense of purpose. Robertson conveyed this when reflecting on her experience in Brussels and other transnational exchanges:

> I think it, it gives you more impetus for what you are doing because you feel part of a shared movement that, you know, at kind of international level and that is always good to have because when you're negotiating with individual local authorities you know it can feel a very localised thing and it's good to have the kind of wider perspective on it.

Dorothy Moss similarly recalled the benefits of attending the Brighton conference in 1996:

> There's cultures around violence against women and it becomes parochial, it can become parochial. It becomes personal and it becomes petty sectarian if it gets too disconnected from the main issue, are you with me? … So bogged down…that you lose sight of the violence, do you know what I mean? So, you have to, you have to have both but looking at it on an international level is, um, you just see the commonalities between people right round the world. You learn that domestic violence takes different cultural forms, but it exists across, you know... It just enables you to not box things, not just see one community as worse or better than another.[183]

Engaging with women from other countries and cultures was a rewarding experience. Nonetheless, it could be challenging when disagreements arose or prejudices were confronted. At the Brighton conference, as has been mentioned in the previous chapter, there were several protests from a group of Black women, lesbian women and disabled women who felt that their issues had been marginalised. Transnational encounters were not always comfortable but conflict should not be seen as a negative outcome but as a vital part of exchange. For Moss, the tensions at the Brighton conference were an important part of the way in which she recalled its significance:

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[181] Sue Robertson, 'International Conference on Domestic Violence Held in Brussels,' *Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter*, (Spring 1981), p.16.

[182] Robertson, interview.

[183] Moss, interview

> I loved that conference, really marvellous, but there was a lot of stuff being thrashed out there, a lot of stuff about race and, um, difficult, you know, things being resolved… I've been to lots of women's conferences since but nothing like that, it was so real, you know, the issues were really current and the debates were, some of them were furious, there were tears, you know? Because there were issues around colonialism and the Second World War and all sorts being addressed and some of it was clashing, yeah? And it's inevitable really, but it wasn't, it was good, I'm sure everyone came away from it feeling it had been important.[184]

Claudia Bernard, who also attended the Brighton conference, recalled that she chaired a group for Black women, including Beth Richie, who protested against a minute of silence for Remembrance Day due to the contribution of Black people who fought not having been acknowledged. Like Moss, Bernard valued the space of debate the conference provided:

> You had the combination of the practitioners, the academics, so it was really rich… It was a very good diversity of women in terms of race, in terms of, um, sexual orientation…It was just such a nourishing environment to be in because it wasn't, I mean, there were lots of frictions, obviously, because the academics, the practitioners, people who worked in the real world, as they say, had their beef with academics who were just perceived as being in their ivory towers. So, there was lots of different factions, but it just meant you had the debates, um, about the whole issue about gender-based violence.[185]

In this way, international conferences created a temporary transnational space in which both solidarity and constructive conflict could be experienced. This was necessary if women from different countries wanted to truly understand one another. In historian Jocelyn Olcott's study of the International Women's Year conference in 1975, she found that: 'Conflicts in Mexico City—what organizers lamented as a failure to achieve unity—were constructive… while often confusing and frustrating to participants on the ground, [conflicts] have fostered dramatic and enduring changes.'[186] Mallika Dutt has reflected on her experience attending the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995.[187] Dutt was forced to confront her own prejudice as a woman from the US when she realised that she was surprised to see how sophisticated, confident and well-organised women from economically less developed countries were.[188] At the Brighton

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[184] Moss, interview.

[185] Bernard, interview.

[186] Olcott, *International Women's Year,* pp.262-264.

[187] Mallika Dutt, 'Some Reflections on U.S. Women of Color and the UN Fourth World Conference on Women and NGO Forum in Beijing, China' in *Global Feminism: A Survey of Issues and Controversies*, ed. Bonnie G. Smith (London: Routledge, 2000), p.306.

[188] Ibid.

conference too, there was the opportunity for anti-domestic abuse activists and researchers from the UK to learn from women from other countries, perhaps on a more equal footing than had been possible before.

One factor which limited the number of international conferences which Women's Aid activists were able to engage with was a lack of resources. International travel was expensive and time consuming for women who received limited funding and were often under-staffed. Nicola Harwin recalled that she was unable to attend the 1995 World Conference on Women which took place during her time as Chief Executive of WAFE: 'I didn't have the time resources, which sounds awful, but it was bang in the middle of us campaigning on the Family Law Act… I would have loved to have gone but I didn't.'[189]

Organising an international conference could take even more time and energy. Shakti Women's Aid activists found this when they organised the What's All the Shouting About? Black Women's National/International Conference, which took place in Edinburgh in September 1991. The intention of the conference was 'to launch a national and an international network of Black women's centres and refuges to enable Black women to campaign and lobby together to influence policy makers at all levels.'[190] Uma Kothari recalled she had taken a trip to the Netherlands as part of her PhD research in the late 1980s and found that there was 'a very progressive Black women's movement' there.[191] Kothari made connections with several Black and migrant women's groups in Amsterdam and one of the women she met there, Anna Venton, spoke at the conference in 1991.[192] In an annual report, Shakti Women's Aid reflected that the organisation of the conference had put a lot of pressure on workers. Fundraising was particularly gruelling as they had written 200 letters and fifty applications to funding bodies.[193]

[189] Harwin, interview.

[190] 'What's all the shouting about? Black Women's National/International Conference?' Shakti Women's Aid Annual Report (1991-1992), p.28, Records of Local Women's Aid Groups, Box 9: SWA/2/EA to SWA/2/GE, Scottish Women's Aid Archive at Glasgow Women's Library.

[191] Kothari, interview.

[192] 'What's all the shouting about? Black women's national/international conference Programme', (7th-8th September 1991), Mukami McCrum's personal archive.

[193] Ibid.

The report of the International Women's Aid Conference in Cardiff in 1988, which was organised to celebrate the tenth anniversary of WWA, captured the challenges and excitement of organising an international conference:

> It really came home to us that the Conference was underway when the first delegation arrived from Tanzania… We had arranged for them to stay in Carmarthen, a small West Wales town… The Women's Aid group there provided hospitality and the sharing of ideas and experiences began. Soon delegates were arriving daily. Many would ring from the airport, having never travelled to Britain before. We had to maintain a 24-hour phone line to reassure arrivals… By now Wales was humming with excitement. Volunteers, workers and visitors were ringing Cardiff constantly. They were inspired by the links they were making and the experiences and goodwill they were sharing. This spurred us on during the last few days of hectic planning and organisation.[194]

The conference brought together 150 women from thirty-six countries to share knowledge of working on domestic abuse. Jane Hutt, who was the Coordinator of WWA and helped to organise the conference, has recalled it as 'an incredible event' where 'women from all over the world came to Wales and shared experiences.'[195] Harwin, who attended the conference, particularly recalled being inspired by the way in which organisations for Māori and Pākehā women in New Zealand worked together, which made her reflect on issues of diversity in England.[196]As the report noted, a considerable amount of work went into obtaining finances for the Cardiff conference. WWA was committed to prioritising the financing of women from the 'Third World' to attend the conference and was not focused on attracting well-known figures in the domestic abuse movement from Europe or North America. Several local Women's Aid groups sent donations to go towards other women's travel costs, rather than attending themselves.[197] See Figure 6.3 for photos of the conference.

[194] Welsh Women's Aid, 'Report of the International Women's Aid Conference' (September 1989), p.4., Welsh Women's Aid Archive at the National Library of Wales, (not catalogued).

[195] Hutt, interview with Jolly.

[196] Harwin, interview.

[197] Welsh Women's Aid, *Report of International*, p.4.

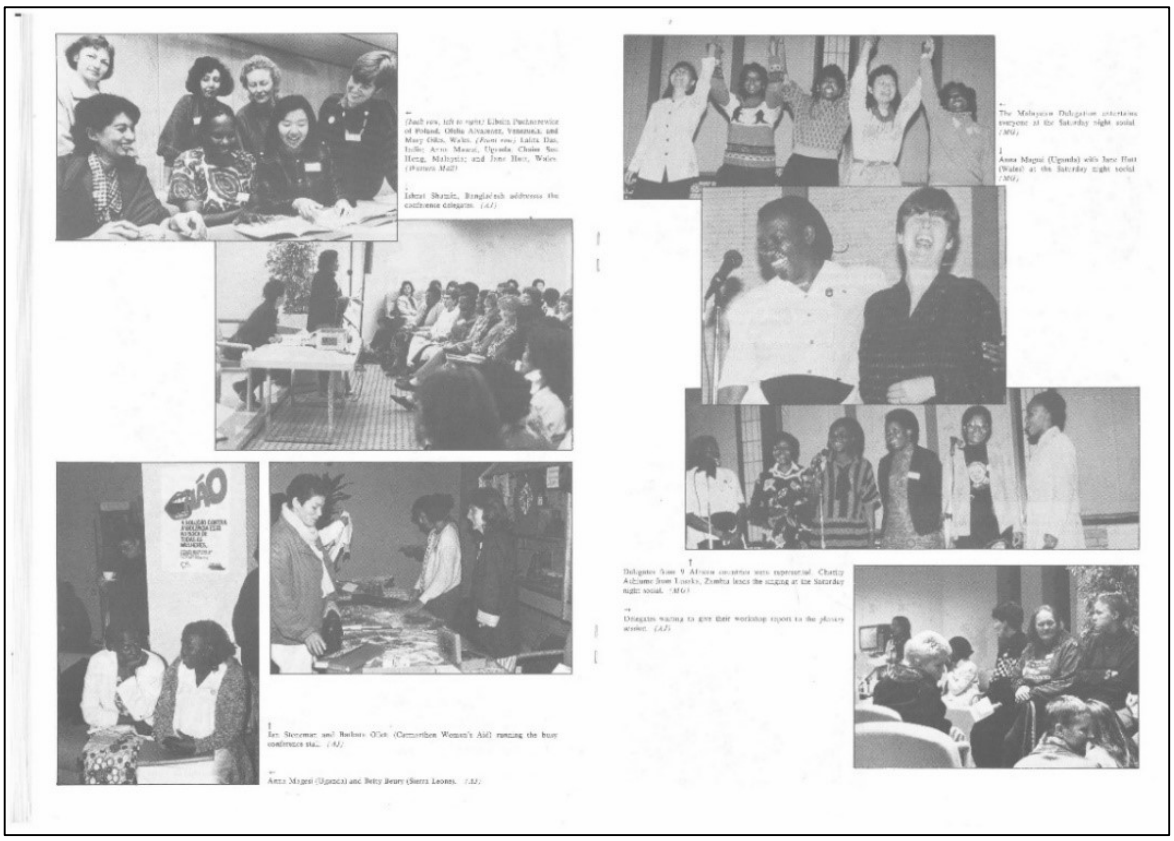

Figure 6.3: Photos from the International Women's Aid Conference in Cardiff (1988), Report of the International Women's Aid Conference (Cardiff, 1988), People's Collection Wales.

Effective communication between women at an international conference could be limited by factors such as language barriers. At the Amsterdam conference in 1978, for instance, it was decided that interpreters would not be needed and the 'whispering in the ear method' would suffice.[198] Dean and Arnold commented afterward that this had not been adequate and that: 'Lots of mistakes and omissions were made in the original minutes... this is where the insistence on English was a mistake though lovely for us.'[199] It must have been difficult for those for whom English was not a familiar language to fully participate in the conference. McCrum has reflected on differences in communication style and how this varies across cultures during a Sisterhood and After interview. McCrum explained that when she first came to Edinburgh she did not speak very much in meetings and conferences because the culture in Kenya was not to speak over others, especially elders. However, she adapted and 'changed to somebody who almost bangs the table to make sure that my, I get to say my piece because I'll not say it if I don't do it.'[200] McCrum explained that since then she has always tried to make space for everyone to speak when acting as a

[198] Lynda Dean and Yvonne Arnold, 'The Possibility of a European Conference', WAFE 1978 and 1977 Box 4 (FAN/JH/WA/04), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[199] 'Report on the European Conference on Battered Women, Amsterdam 1978', WAFE 1978 and 1977 Box 4 (FAN/JH/WA/04), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[200] McCrum, interview with Johnson-Ross.

facilitator. Differences in communication style and language, then, could at times make it difficult for everyone to fully participate in an international conference.

Figure 6.4: Morna Burdon's son with friends at the International Conference on Domestic Violence held in Brussels (1981), from the personal archive of Morna Burdon.

This could also be true of women who brought their children to conferences, if a crèche was not provided. For instance, Arnold commented that she wanted to be part of the planning of the conference in Amsterdam because at the Tribunal in Brussels childcare had not been well organised.[201] As a single mother, Burdon highlighted this issue when she recalled her experience of the Brussels 1981 conference:

> There was one child there and that was my son. So, well, what did that mean? Did it mean that it was women without children that were going there? So, they were free to be there. Did it mean that they had partners who were looking after the children? But it certainly meant that the awareness about the need for childcare at these kind of events was clearly not there. However, people were really helpful, women just took it in turns to take themselves out of the workshops to look after my son.[202]

Although Burdon was supported by the other women at the conference, as can be seen from Figure 6.4, the lack of a crèche must have made it more difficult for her to be fully engaged in the conference discussions. It may even have discouraged some women from attending the conference at all. This issue was not confined to international conferences, Burdon mentioned that there were not always crèches at Women's Aid meetings, although often there were provisions made for children's activities in the 1970s and 1980s. This was

[201] Lynda Dean and Yvonne Arnold, 'The Possibility of a European Conference', WAFE 1978 and 1977 Box 4 (FAN/JH/WA/04), Feminist Archive North at Leeds University Special Collections.

[202] Burdon, interview.

a tradition within the UK WLM, with men having run a crèche at the first WLM conference at Ruskin College in 1970. It would seem that this was not necessarily a practice across borders and this could at times have a negative impact.

Therefore, international conferences could be important spaces for transnational feminist networking, whether they resulted in a shift in perspective, a long lasting personal relationship or the beginning of a formal network. However, there were barriers to participation in conferences of this nature which could result in some people being excluded or marginalised in a conference space. Conflicts and tensions were undoubtedly a feature of international conferences but they provided a space for anti-domestic abuse activists and researchers to debate important issues and learn from one another.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that feminist praxis around domestic abuse often flowed through informal, activist-led and intimate transnational networks from 1971 to 1996. Women's Aid activists and feminist researchers played an important role in forging these connections by creating a sense of community and solidarity between women working to end violence against women across borders. At times, ideas generated in activist feminist spaces were disseminated internationally and significantly impacted the way in which domestic abuse was understood and addressed at a societal level. The way in which ideas were disseminated through books, feminist periodicals, conferences, training workshops and informal networking opportunities has been demonstrated, along with the process by which these ideas were appropriated and re-signified according to their relevance or usefulness in the local context. The support and intimacy that Women's Aid activists found when exchanging letters and sharing space with people working on the same issue in different parts of the world was a valuable source of strength and motivation.

Some early attempts by Women's Aid activists to engage with violence against women in the Global South could result in issues like FGM and 'honour' related violence being sensationalised, particularly when the mainstream media was used as a source of information. However, the voices of women from the Global South were heard through interviews and articles in feminist periodicals like *Trouble & Strife* and in the 1980s and 1990s there was a concerted effort made to ensure women from different parts of the globe were included in conferences such as those in Cardiff in 1988 and Brighton in 1996. Black British feminist activists and researchers working on the issue of domestic abuse, such as

Amina Mama, took inspiration from anti-colonial and anti-racist thought developed outwith the UK to understand how domestic abuse may affect ethnic minority women in specific ways.

Feminist anti-domestic abuse activists from the US had a particular influence on Women's Aid activists because they created theoretical and practical models like the DAIP, Power and Control Wheel, and the brainwashing exercise which were useful at grassroots level for explaining the dynamics of domestic abuse to victim/survivors and statutory agencies during training sessions. Today, the continued influence of some of these ideas can be clearly seen in UK institutions through the use of multi-agency responses, men's programmes and laws against coercive control. Connections with Western European countries such as France and the Netherlands are evident in the 1970s through activist organised conferences and transnational academic networks. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the influence of the UN World Conferences, and the establishment of WAVE there was further engagement with Eastern European anti-violence against women groups.

There were of course limitations to transnational exchange; these included language barriers which may in part explain the strength of transatlantic reference points in the work of Women's Aid activists in the UK. Restraints on time and financial resources meant that only a finite number of women were able to travel for international conferences or informal knowledge exchange trips, which made the further dissemination of the ideas generated in these spaces, through conference reports and other literature, especially important. Forms of transnational exchange became more formalised during this time period; some intimacy was lost as conferences became larger, more structured and more professionalised. The progress of international anti-domestic abuse activism can be seen in the literature from the Brighton 1996 conference, as sophisticated theories and frameworks for understanding many forms of violence against women around the world were discussed. However, the spirit of the WLM continued to be seen through the attempts to retain the feminist principles of centring victim/survivor and activist voices, and the determined resolution to 'never give up' the global fight to end violence against women.

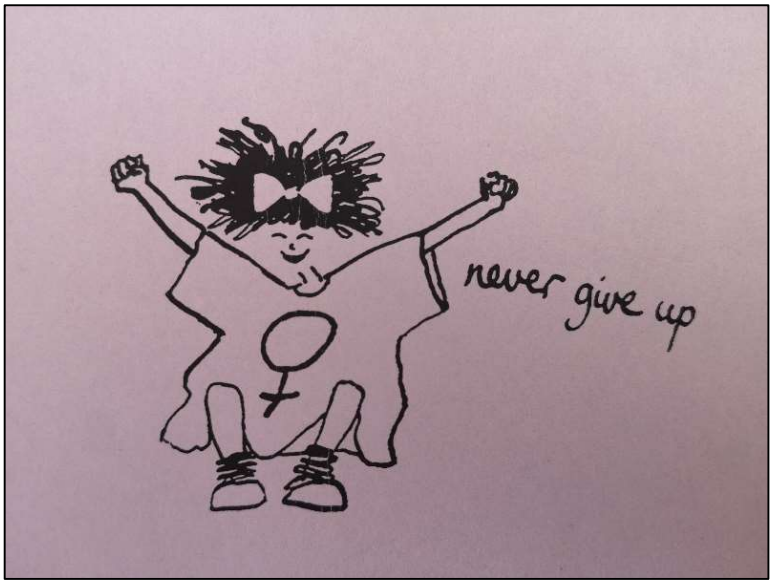

Figure 6.5 'Never Give Up' became the slogan of the Violence, Abuse and Women's Citizenship Conference in Brighton in 1996, this came from this cartoon by Jacky Fleming.

Chapter 7 Conclusions

7.1 Key Findings

The history of feminism has been described as rhizomatic in nature, resemblant of a large and complex root system.[1] In this thesis, we have followed one branch of this system, as it has grown from a fresh shoot inspired by the establishment of the Chiswick women's refuge, spread its roots to establish a foundation of Women's Aid groups across the UK, then reached further into WLM networks, academic institutions and government. It has even spread across borders to entangle with transnational networks. In so doing, Women's Aid activism has connected with a variety of sectors, and both influenced and been influenced by them. Through this examination of one of the most successful activist projects to emerge from the WLM, this study has contributed to our understanding of the nature of post-war feminist activism in the UK. In particular, it has challenged the idea that London was the centre of the WLM by demonstrating the importance of local, national and international networks from the perspectives of Edinburgh, Leeds and Bristol. A detailed picture of the way in which feminist anti-domestic abuse networks were fostered and maintained from the 1970s to the 1990s through national Women's Aid organisations, conferences, periodicals, academic research and personal relationships has been constructed. Following the history of Women's Aid has allowed for a greater understanding of the challenges of developing a grassroots activist project established in the 1970s into an influential organisation by the 1990s. The ways in which this sparked debates about de-politicization and how a connection to feminism and other WLM groups was upheld has been demonstrated. Women's Aid has been positioned in this thesis as part of the WLM but also as connected to a broader milieux of social movements that were active in the UK in the 1970s and 1980s. The significant contributions made by Black feminist activists can be seen clearly in this thesis through debates that took place within Women's Aid, the establishment of specialist refuges for ethnic minority women and the pioneering of research into Black women's experiences of abuse. The case of anti-domestic abuse activism demonstrates the hitherto under-acknowledged scope of the influence of feminist activism in the post-war period, as it has shaped research, academia, statutory agencies, legislation, the third sector, and public understanding of key societal issues.

[1] Gleadle, *Imagined Communities*.

The willingness of Women's Aid activists to work in between and across a variety of spaces has been one reason for its longevity and successes. Women's Aid have held onto many of their feminist values whilst gaining influence amongst statutory agencies of which they are also critical. In this way, they occupy a liminal space and one that has not always been easy to navigate. The spectres of de-politicisation and professionalisation have come up at several junctures throughout this thesis. However, archival research demonstrates the way in which Women's Aid activists consistently re-examined how their practices aligned with their principles and took steps to re-affirm their connection to feminism from the 1970s onwards. Clearly, Women's Aid activists no longer run women's refuges from their basements, and many feel the radical spirit of the original endeavour has been lost. Nonetheless, it is hard to imagine Women's Aid groups that did not adapt with changing expectations and values surviving for fifty years, as they have in some cases.

At its heart this thesis has been about connection; the ways in which the fostering of relationships has led to the establishment of organisations like WAFE and SWA, the exchange of knowledge within the UK and across borders, and communication through the written word from pamphlets to periodicals and academic texts. Many of the women interviewed for this project emphasised how emotionally fulfilling it was to be involved with Women's Aid and made life-long friendships through their activism. The sense of solidarity and belonging that many women felt while attending national and international conferences about violence against women and how highly valued this was by activists has been a key theme. This is significant not just because it is heartwarming or encouraging, although it is that, but because it played a vital part in giving women the impetus to continue with their life-saving activism. The nitty-gritty of everyday refuge and campaigning work was tiring and at times even dangerous and traumatic. Many of the women who I interviewed mentioned burnout as part of their experiences. It was the networks which have been explored in this thesis - be it a European conference, a national Women's Aid conference, a study group or even a feminist newsletter - which gave women the strength and inspiration to carry on their work. Transnational connection in particular expanded activists' ideas of what it was possible to achieve, and this was a multi-directional process, with Women's Aid receiving and contributing to a flow of ideas around domestic abuse, and the way in which to understand and end it.

Of course, as with any political endeavour, the story of Women's Aid is not without its tensions and debates. As we have seen, Women's Aid activists clashed at times with other feminist groups, such as Wages for Housework, over their interpretation of the causes of

violence against women and their willingness to engage with the police. Issues around race and class could also be flash points at WAFE and SWA national conferences, demonstrating that not everyone found Women's Aid a wholly supportive environment. There was always room for improvement in prioritising the issues of more marginalised groups of women. Attempts to forge connections across borders could also sometimes be thwarted due to language or cultural differences. However, the most significant barrier to exchange and network building was undoubtedly a lack of resources. Time and money were needed to travel across the UK and beyond, and local and national Women's Aid groups were so engrossed in battles closer to home like applying for funding and establishing better services that it was at times impossible to look beyond this. Thus, individuals who had the opportunity to travel, often through involvement with academia or, in the later period, with funding from the state, were important drivers of transnational exchange. The problem with this is that often only the privileged few could be involved with this type of work.

This thesis has explored in particular detail the experiences of women who were involved with Black and Asian women's refuges such as Shakti Women's Aid in Edinburgh and Sahara in Leeds. These specialist organisations were significant due to their position between feminist and anti-racist political thought and practice. The Black women who ran these organisations worked to create spaces where the intersecting nature of multiple forms of oppression were taken into consideration through an awareness of issues ranging from institutional racism to the need for a vegetarian section in refuge kitchens. As was the case for white women in Women's Aid, these organisations were important spaces for Black women to make bonds with one another and develop their political understandings. This is not to say that white and Black women did not work together within Women's Aid as well, indeed Shakti was affiliated to the SWA federation, but oral history interviewees did express how powerful it was to make connections with women with more similar political aims and outlooks. In this way, a distinct yet overlapping network of Black-led groups campaigning against violence against women developed from the 1980s onwards.

Several of the Black women I interviewed for this thesis had a dual interest in academia and activism and published some of the earliest research into Black women and children's experiences of violence and abuse. Looking at research networks revealed how important academic circles were to this story, and how extensively feminist research impacted the field of sociology, research into violence against women and adjacent fields. There was an acute awareness from Women's Aid activists as to the importance of whose ideas were to

prevail and this has fundamentally transformed the way in which our society understands domestic abuse. Although we still encounter victim-blaming narratives today, there is less tolerance to domestic abuse and an increased understanding of controlling behaviour and the range of types of abuse women are subjected to. These changes would have been unthinkable without the pioneering work of feminist activist academics like Rebecca and Russell Dobash, Jalna Hanmer and Liz Kelly, along with their US based counterparts with whom they exchanged ideas, such as Diana Russell and Ginny NiCarthy.

7.2 Approaches to Histories of Anti-Domestic Abuse Activism

As well as answering key research questions, this thesis has sparked ideas for future research. The methodology used here, of following one strand of the WLM, allowed for a broader temporal and geographical focus to be used than in many previous studies of this movement. This has made it possible to appreciate the way in which anti-domestic abuse activism, including both practice and thought, developed over time, spread across borders and burgeoned new projects in a variety of sectors from research to training programmes to legislative change. It may be fruitful to take a similar approach to other branches of the WLM such as reproductive rights, anti-rape or peace activism to see if they evolved in similar or disparate ways. In terms of further research into women's refuges, this thesis has used examples mainly from Edinburgh, Leeds and Bristol Women's Aid groups, all of which had a strong basis in WLM activism and were located in cities. It would be interesting to conduct further research into Women's Aid groups based in more rural or remote areas or those which did not have strong connections to WLM groups. This would allow a fuller picture to emerge of what national and international networks meant to those on the margins of these or whether they were as important in these areas. Furthermore, a study of Women's Aid in Wales and Northern Ireland, although outside the scope of this project, would be valuable in giving us a fuller picture of Women's Aid across the UK.

Discussions of race and ethnicity within Women's Aid, and anti-domestic abuse activism and research more generally, has been focused on Black women in this thesis. However, the history of Jewish Women's Aid remains relatively unexplored, as well as groups set up for people from other specific countries, ethnicities or religious groups. I have also been unable to fully explore how Women's Aid discussed or impacted upon the experiences of other marginalised victim/survivors and activists such as those from LGBTQ+ or disabled communities. Furthermore, this thesis has focused on the perspective of activists, which

gives a specific, perhaps more privileged perspective. It would be interesting for historians to examine women's experience of staying in refuge or receiving support in more depth. This may have ethical implications, however, there are oral history interviews with survivors as part of the Scottish Women's Aid Archive, among other places. Another important group whose experiences were outwith the scope of this project was children who stayed in refuge and the work that Women's Aid activists and researchers have done to foster a greater understanding of children as victim/survivors, not just witnesses of abuse.[2] This is especially important as in fact most of the people who stayed in refuge in this period were children, as women usually brought at least one child with them.

One methodological challenge for historians of the WLM, or of feminist activism in this period, is ensuring that we do not rely on the same networks when conducting oral history interviews. Relying on a snowball technique for locating interviews can lead to the replication of the patterns of exclusion, however unintentional, of the past. For a research project like this one, where many of the activists involved have gone on to have some sort of public profile, it was possible for me to make the effort to identify individuals outside of the friendship networks which had survived since the 1970s or 1980s. Take, for example, my chapter about academic researchers; by surveying some of the literature about domestic abuse produced during my time period I was able to locate relevant people to interview. I did not rely on previous interviewees to tell me who had been the most important person in this field. In so doing, I found I reached people who had a different perspective, some of whom had moved away from the city, or moved into a different type of activism or who simply were not as closely intertwined with WLM friendship networks. This was partly possible due to the remote interviewing method I used which allowed me to interview people who had moved away from the UK.

I found I was also able to reach women from more diverse ethnic backgrounds using this technique, as some of these women were involved in Asian or Black women's refuges, which, as we have seen, constituted a slightly separate network. Amina Mama, for instance, made a memorable contribution to the anti-domestic abuse movement in her pioneering research into Black women's experiences of domestic abuse; she explained, however, that she had not stayed in touch with the people she had known in the UK, after she felt unable to find an academic position in the country. Mama was also more involved

[2] For more on children see Gill Hague, Audrey Mullender, Liz Kelly, Ellen Malos and Thangam Debbonaire, 'The history of work with children in UK domestic violence refuges' in *Home Truths About Domestic Violence* (London: Routledge, 2001).

with anti-racist activist circles as a member of the Brixton Black Women's Group rather than Women's Aid itself and so sat somewhat outside of my 'typical' interview pool. Jan Pahl was also an interesting case, although a founding member of a women's refuge and an early publisher of research into women's refuges, Pahl was not often mentioned in oral history interviews with Women's Aid activists. This may be related to her willingness to work on state funded research projects of which Women's Aid activists were initially suspicious. The perspective of those who were not involved in Women's Aid for a long period or who conducted their anti-domestic abuse work slightly outside of this core network should still be valued, as they help to build up a more complete picture of the legacy and influence of Women's Aid on women's lives. Seeking these perspectives out is not necessarily the easiest route for researchers but it is essential that we try.

7.3 Useful Knowledge, Useable Histories: Learning from the Past

One principle of feminist research is to create knowledge that is useful in the present, rather than conducting research for its own sake. What, then, can the history of anti-domestic abuse activism tell us about the present and future of Women's Aid and similar organisations? I often ended my oral history interviews with a question about the legacy of Women's Aid in the interviewees' own lives and in society more broadly. As with any answer given in the context of an interview, their answers were shaped by contemporary discourses and events. I noticed, for instance, that the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, in particular the media coverage of a reported increase in domestic abuse cases in the early stages of lockdown, along with the abhorrent murder of Sarah Everard in March 2021 by a Metropolitan Police constable, cast a long shadow over interviewees' reflections. Several women demonstrated an ambivalence to whether their work had made a difference. Judith Hodgkin for instance reflected that: 'Sometimes the things you read in the paper, you know, the Sarah Everard case, and other things like that. You just think, was it worth it somehow? But clearly change has happened.'[3] Similarly, Lou Lavender felt that: 'I don't think we achieved very much in terms of violence against women, except that we said that it's not okay... It hasn't stopped women being killed... the statistics throughout the pandemic will have been huge.'[4]

[3] Hodgkin, interview.

[4] Lavender, interview.

Some were more optimistic, several commented that collaborations between Women's Aid and the police in particular were much more positive now. Others observed that common place attitudes in the 1970s, such as the belief that domestic abuse was a private, family matter or that victim/survivors must have done something to provoke violence were no longer tolerated. De Souza reflected that: 'You can see that in some ways, things have improved; the types of conversations that we have and levels of social acceptance, not as much sort of collusion and more condemnation.'[5] Several interviewees expressed the hope that, while women may be abused by their male partners at similar rates, there was at least somewhere to go, meaning they were more likely to leave the situation.

It is difficult to measure how much rates of domestic abuse in the UK have changed over the last fifty years, as data was rarely gathered in the earlier period and today a greater awareness of Women's Aid and domestic abuse result in more requests for help.[6] Nevertheless, it is undeniable that women's refuges and other services for victim/survivors have saved women's lives, as without them many would simply have nowhere to go to escape their abuser. As has been seen at several points in this thesis, state funding at local and national level has been a crucial part of the story of women's refuges in the UK, despite the de-radicalising potential of accepting this. Therefore, it is pertinent to reflect on the continued lack of sufficient funding for women's refuges in the present. WAFE's 2023 Annual Audit and SWA's 2021-2022 Annual Report highlighted some of the challenges currently facing domestic abuse services, these included the cost-of-living crisis, the continued impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, increases in the length and complexity of cases, and the importance of ensuring sufficient, long-term funding.[7] What is more, in 2022, 10,000 women in England were unable to be accommodated due to a lack of refuge spaces.[8] This thesis has shown the importance of specialist services for Black women and providing support to migrant women is particularly challenging in the present day due to women with an uncertain immigration status having no recourse to public funds under the UK's Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. This is detrimental as refuge spaces are usually paid for through welfare benefits and many women's refuges cannot afford to fund

[5] De Souza, interview.

[6] *The Concept and Measurement of Violence Against Women and Men*, ed. Sylvia Walby and Jude Towers (Bristol: Policy Press, 2017).

[7] WAFE*, The Domestic Abuse Report 2023: The Annual Audit,* (Bristol: WAFE, 2023), p.7. SWA, *Scottish Women's Aid Annual Report 2021 – 22*, (Edinburgh: SWA, 2022).

[8] Chaminda Jayanetti and Michael Savage, 'Safe housing denied to 10,000 women in England fleeing domestic abuse', *The Observer*, (April 2023).

victim/survivors with no recourse to public funds due to this. These circumstances are 'curtailing survivors' autonomy' which 'creates conditions in which abuse flourishes.'[9]

A theme throughout this thesis has been the importance of space for network building. It was important that activists had a physical space in which to meet and share ideas, be this in a women's centre, women's refuge or Women's Aid office. Nicola Harwin, Liz Kelly and Uma Kothari both spoke of the visceral and liberating experience of coming together in solidarity during protests or conferences. What does this mean for the digital age when many gatherings are held online? Women's Aid conferences, for example, have been online since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. This method has many benefits, it is more accessible for disabled people and people with caring responsibilities, it also makes it cheaper and easier to form transnational connections online and reach a wider audience. Nonetheless, there is not the same sense of informal, spontaneous connection that occurs when you get talking to someone over a coffee during a break and the disco dancing so vividly described by interviewees is not possible in an online format. Working from home culture also makes it more difficult to imagine the kind of deep bonds developing that Women's Aid workers have described. Encouragingly there is some indication that online conferences can still be revitalising for burned out workers in the way we have seen in several examples in this thesis, with one SWA 2021 Annual Conference attendee commenting afterward that: 'I feel powered up and ready to continue on the fight to end violence against women and girls.'[10] This demonstrates that these traditions are still important today, although they are delivered in a different format.

There was a sense during oral history interviews that, as Jo Sutton expressed it, the WLM of the 1970s was: 'Just a time when one was hopeful… it's changed so much, eh?'[11] This pessimistic view of the present was not surprising given the context of a global pandemic. However, I've reflected on Sutton's statement often since our interview and there is something to be learned from the optimism of this time. Several women expressed during interview that they genuinely felt they could change the world, and in many ways they did. Margaretta Jolly has written of the way in which: 'Memory energizes the relationship between past and present… it can create valuable intergenerational relationships, in which

[9] Maggie Bridge, 'Contemporary feminist imaginings of the refuge-space: implications for Black and 'minority ethnic', migrant survivors in the UK', *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, 4:3, (2020), p.397.

[10] SWA, *SWA Annual Report 2021-2022*, p.25. Available on SWA website https://womensaid.scot/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/SWA-Annual-Report-20212022-final.pdf <Accessed 04/08/23>.

[11] Sutton, interview.

past and present become future.'[12] We should not romanticise the feminist activism of the past, yet we need not dismiss it either. We must cast a critical eye upon both successes and failures of earlier movements, if we are to learn anything from them. As Lucy Delap has argued: 'The past can offer inspiration for ideas and methods… The troubling past, however, should not only provoke renunciation or disillusion. It can be approached for comparison, imaginative reconstruction and historically informed criticism.'[13]

Of course, Women's Aid activists of the past made mistakes, they were, after all, human. Nonetheless, as I have argued throughout this thesis these pricklier moments of tension, when a way of doing or thinking was challenged, were often constructive and helped to move debate forward. The example of Women's Aid offers hope, as a movement that grew from the impetus of a small number of women around the UK who took matters into their own hands and created spaces of refuge, persevering to build organisations with longevity and influence. More than anything, Women's Aid is the result of the women and children who found the strength to leave their homes and seek refuge, often carrying with them little more than their hope for a better future.

[12] Jolly, *Sisterhood*, p.243.

[13] Delap, *Feminisms*, p.342-343.

Appendix 1: Biographies of Key Anti-Domestic Abuse Activists and Researchers

Rowena Arshad

Arshad was born in Brunei, grew up in Malaysia and moved to Britain for her education as a teenager. Arshad settled in Edinburgh and was involved with the establishment of Shakti Women's Aid. Since then, she has become Chair in Multicultural and Anti-Racist Education and Co-Director of the Centre for Education for Racial Equality at Moray House School of Education and Sport at the University of Edinburgh.

Claudia Bernard

Bernard was born in Grenada and came to live in South London at the age of seven. Her interest in research into violence against women was sparked when she was a social work student and became involved with the project which led to the publication of *the Hidden Struggle* (1989). She has published research on the experience of mother's and children of domestic abuse and child sexual abuse. She is now Professor of Social Work at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Fiona Buchanan

Buchanan was born in Dundee, she became involved with Women's Aid after staying in a refuge in Edinburgh to escape a violent ex-husband. Buchanan became a volunteer then Coordinator at Dundee Women's Aid, she then became the first National Children's Worker at SWA. Since then she has become a senior lecturer in Justice and Society at the University of South Australia. Buchanan's research is in the area of gendered violence with a particular interest in children and mothers.

Morna Burdon

Burdon was born in Perthshire, she moved to Edinburgh and studied community work at Moray House and became a volunteer at Edinburgh Women's Aid in 1979. From 1980 to 1986 Burdon worked for SWA, first as the Information and Education Officer and then as Joint National Coordinator until 1986. She is also a theatre singer and performer.

Michelle De Souza

De Souza was born in Leeds, she was on the management committee for Sahara women's refuge in 1985. De Souza was a manager of the Leeds Interagency Project from 1996 to 2020.

Rebecca and Russell Dobash*

Rebecca and Russell Dobash were sociologists originally from the US, they moved to Scotland in 1972 to take up positions at the University of Stirling. They published a landmark study of domestic abuse from a feminist perspective entitled *Violence Against Wives* in 1979 and have since published extensively in this area.

Lily Greenan

Greenan was born in Edinburgh and studied English Literature at the University of Stirling. Greenan became involved with Edinburgh Rape Crisis in 1981 and was a development worker there from 1992 to 1999. Greenan was Chief Executive of SWA from 2006 to 2015.

Gill Hague*

Hague was a key figure in the WLM in Bristol in the 1970s and 1980s, she was a founding member of Bristol Women's Aid. Hague has published extensive research into domestic abuse and is Emeritus Professor of Violence Against Women Studies in the University of Bristol's Centre for Gender and Violence Research, of which she was a co-founder.

Jalna Hanmer

Hanmer was born in Washington in 1931 and moved to the UK in 1956. She was a founding member of the NWAF and Keighley Women's Aid. Hanmer's research was influential for establishing a feminist theory of domestic abuse and changing policing policy in West Yorkshire. She established one of the earliest Women's Studies courses in the UK and the Violence Abuse and Gender Relations Research Unit at the University of Bradford. She also founded the radical feminist magazine *Trouble & Strife*. Hanmer died in 2023.

Nicola Harwin

Harwin was born in Leicester, she was involved with WLM groups in Nottingham and then London in the late 1960s and 1970s. Harwin began working for Bristol Women's Aid in the late 1970s and completed a Community and Social work degree at Swansea University. In 1987, Harwin became the Chief Executive of the newly re-established WAFE and held this position until 2012.

Jeff Hearn

Hearn was born in Woolwich in 1947. Hearn is a sociologist who has researched masculinities and men's violence to women. He was also involved with WLM activism and pro-feminist men's groups in the late 1970s and early 1980s. He was a founding member of the Violence Abuse and Gender Relations Research Unit at the University of Bradford. He is now Professor Emeritus at the Hanken School of Economics in Helsinki and Senior Professor at Örebro University in Sweden.

Marianne Hester

Hester was born in Copenhagen in 1955, she moved to England for her fathers work in 1966. Hester studied politics and economics at the University of Oxford and began a PhD at Leeds University in 1979. Hester was also involved in activism in Oxford and Leeds including Rape Crisis and women's refuge groups. Hester is a Professor at the Centre for Gender and Violence Research at the University of Bristol.

Judith Hodgkin

Hodgkin was born in Hertfordshire and studied social studies at university in Newcastle. Hodgkin moved to Dundee in the late 1960s and became involved with a group to establish Dundee Women's Aid in 1974. Hodgkin became a National Coordinator of NWAF in 1976.

Kate Kay

Kay travelled around as a child due to her father being in the Airforce but she attended boarding school in Bath and went on to study psychology at the University of Bristol. After this Kay became a social worker and was involved with the WLM in Bristol in the mid-

1970s. Through her involvement with Bristol Women's Aid Kay became a National Coordinator for NWAF in 1976. Kay spent time campaigning for changes to legislation in the late 1970s and decided to retrain as a solicitor.

Liz Kelly

Kelly was born in Manchester in 1951. She became involved in the WLM in Norwich and established the first Women's Aid group in the city in 1974. Kelly was the regional representative to NWA from East Anglia in the late 1970s. Kelly obtained a PhD from Essex University and began working at the Child and Women Abuse Studies Unit at the London Metropolitan University in 1987, she has been there ever since and is now the Director and Professor of sexualised violence.

Uma Kothari

Kothari was born in London in 1960. She moved to Edinburgh to do a PhD in Sociology and Geography at the University of Edinburgh in 1985. Kothari was involved with establishing Shakti Women's Aid. She is now Professor of Migration and Post-colonial Studies at the University of Manchester.

Lou Lavender

Lavender was born in the Midlands, she was involved with the WLM in Leeds from 1969 onwards. Lavender helped to established Leeds Women's Aid in 1972. She also worked as a school teacher.

Ellen Malos*

Malos was born in Victoria, Australia in 1937. She moved to the UK in 1962 and became an important figure in the Bristol WLM, her basement became the first women's centre and refuge space in the city. She helped to establish the Centre for Gender and Violence research at the University of Bristol. She died in 2023.

Amina Mama

Mama was born in London in 1958 and grew up in Nigeria. She attended the University of St Andrews before doing a Masters and PhD at the University of London in organisational

psychology. Mama was involved with the Brixton Black Women's Centre in the 1980s and wrote the pioneering book *the Hidden Struggle* (1989) about Black women's experiences of domestic abuse and the support they received. Mama is now Professor of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies at University of California, Davis.

Del Martin*

Martin was born in San Francisco in 1921. She was a feminist and gay rights activist, often working alongside her wife Phyllis Lyon. Martin published an early book on the emerging issue of domestic abuse Battered Wives (1976), drawing inspiration from Women's Aid in the UK. She died in 2008.

Mukami McCrum

McCrum was born in Kenya in the late 1940s and moved to Scotland with her husband in 1970. McCrum studied sociology at the university and was a founding member of Shakti Women's Aid and served as its Coordinator until 1991. She went on to become a policy manager in the Equality Unit of the Scottish Government.

Dorothy Moss

Moss was born in Bradford and did a placement at a women's refuge while she was studying for a degree in Social Administration at the University of York. Moss worked for Leeds Women's Aid from 1982 to 1984. She became Lecturer in childhood studies at Leeds Beckett University.

Ginny NiCarthy*

NiCarthy was born in San Francisco in 1927, she was a WLM activist who was a founding member of Rape Relief in Seattle and ran support groups for victim/survivors of domestic abuse. Her self-help book for victim/survivors *Getting Free* (1982) was influential for Women's Aid activists in the UK.

Jan Pahl

Pahl was born near Dumfries in 1937. Pahl was a founding member of Canterbury Women's Aid in 1975 and was one of the earliest feminist researchers of women's refuges

and domestic abuse in England. Pahl is Professor Emeritus of Social Policy at the University of Kent's School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research and is known for research into the allocation of money within the family.

Erin Pizzey*

Pizzey was born in China in 1939 where her father was a diplomat. Pizzey founded of the first women's refuge in Chiswick in 1971, this developed into the charity known as Refuge. Her book *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours Will Here* (1974) helped to bring international attention to the issue of domestic abuse. Pizzey is no longer involved with Refuge and has become a men's rights activist.

Sue Robertson

Robertson was born in Carlisle and grew up in Cumbria. She attended university at Oxford from 1968 to 1971 and was involved in WLM activities there. Robertson was a lecturer in Economics at Stirling University when she helped to establish women's refuges in Falkirk, Stirling and Clackmannan. Robertson became the National Coordinator of SWA around 1978 until the mid 1988.

Diana Russell*

Russell was born in South Africa in 1938, she moved first to England and then to the United States in 1961. Russell was a feminist writer and activist perhaps best known for her book *Rape in Marriage* (1982) and popularising the term femicide. She also organised the International Tribunal of Crimes Against Women in 1976. She died in 2020.

Pramila Sashidharan

Sashidharan was originally from India and had worked with women in rural communities before she moved to Britain. Sashidharan became a volunteer with Edinburgh Women's Aid in the mid-1980s and became involved with the establishment of Shakti Women's Aid. She has since worked as a community development and policy officer for Birmingham City Council.

Jendayi Serwah

Serwah was born in Bristol, he began working as a coordinator for Bristol Women's Aid in 1986 and then moved to WAFE to work as a Child Worker Resources Coordinator. Serwah has since worked as a community worker and activist in Bristol, focusing particularly on African liberation and reparative justice.

Jo Sutton

Sutton was a social work student at North London Polytechnic when she began working at the Chiswick women's refuge in 1973. Sutton went on to help found the NWAF and became the first National Coordinator in 1975. In 1978 Sutton became a Lecturer in Community and Social Work at the University of Bradford before moving to Cananda to start an organic farm in 1985 where she still lives.

Andrea Tara-Chand

Tara-Chand was born in Chesterfield in Derbyshire in 1954 and lived in India for the first ten years of her life. She became involved with anti-domestic abuse activism through a women's refuge in Manchester and was involved with Ashiana Asian women's refuge in Sheffield before becoming the coordinator of the Leeds Interagency Project in 1990 and then the Chair of Sahara women's refuge in Leeds. She is now Lecturer in Criminology at Coventry University.

Ravi Thiara

Thiara was born in Punjab in North India and moved to England when she was nine in the late 1960s. Thiara helped to establish an Asian women's refuge in Nottingham in the late 1980s. Thiara obtained a PhD in Race and Ethnic Relations from the University of Warwick in 1993. She is now Professor of Sociology at the University of Warwick.

Fran Wasoff

Wasoff was born in New York in 1945, she completed a PhD in Mathematics at the University of Pennsylvania before moving to Edinburgh in 1971. Wasoff joined the Edinburgh Women's Liberation Workshop and was a founding member of Edinburgh Women's Aid and became the first National Coordinator of SWA in 1976. Wasoff has

since researched in the area of family law and social policy, she is an Associate Director of the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships.

Monica Wilson

Wilson was born in West Sussex, she studied Sociology at the University of Stirring and was a research team on the project that led to the publication of *Violence Against Wives* (1979). Wilson was involved with the design of perpetrator programmes in Scotland including the CHANGE project in 1989 and more recently the Caledonian System.

Elizabeth Woodcraft

Woodcraft was born in Essex and studied philosophy at the University of Birmingham and then became a teacher. Woodcraft became a member of the Leicester Women's Aid support group in 1974, she then became a National Coordinator of NWAF and campaigned for the passing of the Domestic Violence Act of 1976. These experiences led her to retrain as a barrister. She is also a published novelist.

*These people were **not** interviewed as part of this project.

Appendix 2: Timeline for anti-domestic abuse activism in the UK (1971-1996)

1971 – First women's refuge in UK opens in Chiswick, London by Erin Pizzey.

1973 – the first women's refuge in Bristol opens in Ellen Malos' basement, this later becomes the Women's House Project and then Bristol Women's Aid. This space also acted as a women's centre.

1973 – Leeds Women's Aid opened first women's refuge after a year of planning,

1973 – Edinburgh Women's Aid open the first women's refuge in Scotland.

1974 – 1st Women's Aid National Conference in London.

1974 – Select Committee on Violence in Marriage is convened.

1975 – 2nd Women's Aid National Conference, split occurred in the movement and decision to form NWAF taken. Jo Sutton is the first national coordinator and they are based in London.

1975 – Peter Sutcliffe begins to kill women in West Yorkshire, he is arrested 1981.

1976 – Scottish Women's Aid is established in Edinburgh. Fran Wasoff is the first National Coordinator and Ruth Adler is appointed as secretary.

1976 - Scottish Women's Aid Newsletter begins (continued until 2004)

1976 – Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act passed.

1976- The International Tribunal on Crimes against Women takes place in Brussels.

1977 - The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act, gave priority need to victims of domestic abuse.

1977 – Edinburgh Women's Centre opens.

1977 – Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland is established.

1978 – Welsh Women's Aid is established.

1978 – Leeds Rape Crisis opens.

1978 – Edinburgh Rape Crisis opens.

1978 – First International Conference on Women's Refuges held in Amsterdam.

1979 - *Violence against Wives: A Case against the Patriarchy* by Rebecca and Russell Dobash was published

1980 – National Women's Aid Federation change their name to Women's Aid Federation England.

1981 – Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act. Gave women the right to stay in their homes and strengthened power of arrest for breaches of interdict.

1983 – Ginny Nicarthy visits Edinburgh.

1984 – Women's Aid Federation England is closed.

1987- Women's Aid Federation England is re-established in Bristol.

1987 – Shakti Women's Aid is opened.

1987 - Scottish Women's Liberation Conference: Working Against Violence Against Women was held in Glasgow

1987 - The Child Abuse Studies Unit was at Polytechnic of North London (now London Metropolitan University).

1988 - International Women's Aid Conference is held in Cardiff.

1989 – CHANGE programme working with violent men begins in Edinburgh.

1989 - Violence Against Women Research Group was established (now Centre for Gender and Violence Research).

1989: *The Hidden Struggle: Statutory and Voluntary Sector Responses to Violence Against Black Women in the Home* by Amina Mama was published.

1991 – Leeds Inter Agency Project established.

1989 – Marital rape recognised as a crime in Scotland for the first time.

1990 - The Violence Abuse and Gender Relations Research Unit is established at the University of Bradford.

1991 – Marital rape becomes a crime in England and Wales.

1992 – Zero Tolerance anti-violence against women poster campaign begins in Edinburgh.

1994 - Rape Crisis Scotland established. (Rape Crisis England and Wales was not established until 2007)

1996 – Violence Abuse and Women's Citizenship International Conference is held in Brighton.

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- Women's Aid Leeds Collection
- Diana Leonard Collection

Feminist Archive South at Bristol University Special Collections

- The Ellen Malos Archive
- The Bristol Women's Aid Collection

Arthur & Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard University

- Betsy Warrior Collection
- Papers of Susan Schechter

Private Collections

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- Lily Greenan's Personal Archive
- Jan Pahl's Personal Archive
- Elizabeth Woodcraft's Personal Archive

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- *WIRES*
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Digital Resources

- https://www.gale.com/intl/primary-sources/archives-of-sexuality-and-gender
- https://www.bl.uk/sisterhood
- Feminist Archive (feministarchivenorth.org.uk)
- https://womenslibrary.org.uk/discover-our-projects/speaking-out/
- https://www.peoplescollection.wales/discover/tags/60690
- https://feministarchivesouth.org.uk/