‘A glass half full’? Women’s history in the UK

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in Karen M. Offen, University of Stanford, USA and Chen Yan, Fudan University, China,
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ABSTRACT
This article offers an overview of the development of women’s history in the UK over the last twenty years or so. It is noted that over this period women’s history has expanded massively, an expansion that has cut across national boundaries and drawn in scholars from other disciplines than History. Seven themes in women’s history are identified as being prominent during this time – a focus on the modern period (post 1780), a strong empirical bent, a questioning of the dominance of a separate spheres discourse, an interest in life stories and biographies, an interest in the women’s suffrage movement, a ‘religious turn’ and a ‘transnational turn’.

BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

June Purvis is Emeritus Professor of Women’s and Gender History at the University of Portsmouth, UK. She has published extensively on women’s education in nineteenth-century England and on the suffragette movement in Edwardian Britain. Her publications include Emmeline Pankhurst: a biography (2002: Routledge) and Women’s Activism: global perspectives from the 1890s to the present (2013: Routledge), co-edited with Francisa de Haan, Margaret Allen and Krassimira Daskalova. June is the Founding and Managing Editor of Women’s History Review and also the Editor for a book series with Routledge on Women’s and Gender History. She is Chair of the Women’s History Network (2014-18) and Secretary and Treasurer of the International Federation for Research in Women’s History (2015-20). Correspondence to: Professor June Purvis, School of Social, Historical and
In 1995 I published an edited book titled *Women’s History Britain, 1850-1945: an introduction.*¹ In my own chapter in this book I drew upon the work of many scholars as I outlined the development of women’s history in the UK, from a concern with ‘women worthies’ in the nineteenth century, often a political or religious figure of some importance, to the more diverse field that it had become by 1995.² This textbook sold well and has now been complemented by others in the field.³ Since 1995 there have been few attempts to assess the state of the field of women’s history in the UK, particularly over the last twenty years or so, which is why I particularly welcome this Roundtable session.⁴ Although the bulk of the research referred to in this article about British women’s history has been written by women historians living in the UK it is important to remember, as shown here, that scholars overseas – especially from the USA, Australia and Canada - have made important contributions to the field.⁵

This Roundtable has been organised by Chen Yen and Karen Offen who have asked the participants to consider five questions – what have been the achievements of women’s and gender history over the past two decades? To what extent has it succeeded in making women’s history an integral part of historical study than an optional specialist area? What impact has the study of manhood, masculinities and men’s gendered power had on our understanding of women’s lives? What is the relationship between gender studies and new critical histories of colonialism and empire, contact zones, cross-cultural encounters and racialisation? How is new work on cultural geography and spatial categories impacting on our historical understanding of bodily difference?⁶ I shall attempt to answer these questions through a consideration of several key themes which I consider to have been central to the
advance of women’s history in the UK. However, before I do so I would like to say something about the growth of the field before 1995.

It is important to remember that the development of the writing of women’s history in the UK has been inextricably linked to contemporary feminist politics. The organised women’s movement of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth inspired a number of women to research their foremothers in the past. But as the women’s movement fragmented after the First World War these early studies were rarely consulted. However, the advent of the so-called ‘Second Wave’ of feminism in the late 1960s sparked off renewed interest in finding women in History which had mainly been written by men and about men’s activities in war, politics, administration and business. Women were usually excluded or, when made visible, belittled in some way or portrayed in sex-stereotypical roles, such as wives, mothers, daughters and mistresses. Generalisations about humanity in the past had not been either ‘objective’ or ‘inclusive’, but based on a male view of the world.

Restoring women to history and finding their voices therefore involved questioning the gender politics that shaped the writing of the male-centred past. It meant not just making women visible but questioning the way they had been represented, portraying them as actors in the making of history in their own right, not simply as passive beings whose lives were determined. Thus the growth of women’s history from the 1970s in the UK was closely intertwined with the politics of the Women’s Liberation Movement and especially with socialist feminist historians who wanted to write a ‘history from below’, researching the lives of working-class women, such as poorly paid home workers, domestic servants, single mothers, factory hands or political activists.

Sheila Rowbotham’s 1973 text *Hidden from History: 300 years of women’s oppression and the fight against it* is usually regarded as the taking off point for women’s history in the UK. Written from a socialist feminist perspective, it emphasised that women’s struggle
against oppression was allied with the class struggle against capitalist exploitation, that
gender and class divisions were closely intertwined.\textsuperscript{9} A particularly influential book in this
genre was \textit{One Hand Tied Behind Us: the rise of the women’s suffrage movement}, written by
Jill Liddington and Jill Norris. It gave an account of the involvement of working-class
women in radical suffragist politics in early twentieth-century Lancashire, emphasising that
the only significant form of struggle was class exploitation and that working-class women did
not march with the supposedly ‘middle-class’ suffragettes of the Women’s Social and
Political Union (WSPU), founded by Emmeline Pankhurst in 1903 to campaign for the
parliamentary vote for women.\textsuperscript{10}

Although socialist feminism was the dominant voice at this time, shaping and influencing
the growth of women’s history it was not the only feminist voice making an impact. In the
1980s, liberal feminists, such as Olive Banks, Jane Rendall and Carol Dyhouse shifted the
parameters in a different direction as they published on middle-class women’s lives in the
feminist movement and in the family.\textsuperscript{11} Radical feminist writers, such as Sheila Jeffreys and
Dale Spender, also made important contributions, discussing issues such as the politics of
sexuality and exposing men’s control over knowledge, a control that effectively erased
women’s creative intellectual thought from the historical record.\textsuperscript{12} Some of these writers,
such as Banks and Spender, were located in academic fields other than History.\textsuperscript{13} Yet despite
the differing emphases of these feminist researchers, perhaps one book in particular
epitomised the feminist approach in the 1980s, namely the \textit{Sexual Dynamics of History},
edited by the London Feminist History Group. The various contributors to this volume
argued that while it was men’s power that shaped women’s experiences, women were not
helpless victims but persons who individually and collectively found ways to challenge that
power and to survive.\textsuperscript{14} All this discussion and debate was, of course, not isolated from what
was going on in the women’s movement elsewhere, particularly in North America, where
women’s history courses were being established in universities. There was a vibrant cross-fertilisation of ideas and exchange of knowledge, which continues to the present day.

By the 1980s, however, it was evident in the UK that not all women’s history was necessarily feminist women’s history. Although women’s history takes women as its subject matter it could be written without feminist sympathies, without a feminist analysis, without a women-centred approach. Nonetheless, the links between women’s history and feminism have been strong. However, during the 1980s in the UK, the women’s movement began to fragment. In particular, black and lesbian feminists raised key questions about racism and ‘compulsory heterosexuality’, pointing out how their experiences had been marginalised. At the same time that these debates were being aired, Women’s Studies was becoming a major growth area in higher education. In some universities, such as the Open University, women’s history became an integral part of the Women’s Studies curriculum, and was not taught in its History department. In others, as at Essex University, it was mainly located in Sociology where Leonore Davidoff, who has made an incalculable contribution to the development of gender history, was appointed to a lectureship in 1975.

But gradually, as Women’s Studies became more theoretical, often being re-named ‘Gender Studies’ to accompany new work on masculinities, women’s history in the UK became primarily located in History departments, and there it remains today. It is now rarely taught on Women’s or Gender Studies Courses and has lost some of its feminist edge. This is a regrettable loss. As the American medievalist Judith Bennett argues, studying women in the past offers a unique and critical contribution to the feminist struggle today, a study that illuminates continuity as well as change. She highlights in particular how ‘patriarchy’ - which usually refers to male domination and to the systematic and individual power relationships whereby men dominate women - was readily talked about by historians of women in the 1970s and 1980s but in the twenty-first century is ‘barely whispered.’

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It is undoubtedly the case that over the last two decades in the UK women’s history has become less feminist in this hard-hitting sense, less concerned with the sexual dynamics of power between women and men. But we must remind ourselves that the writing of a women centred women’s history cannot be contained by just one mould. Not all historians of women wish to make the sexual dynamics of power a central feature of their analysis. The late Bridget Hill, for example, argued that the belief in ‘the supremacy of patriarchy over all other factors in women’s history … promises to be an arid study’, since it might alienate the male allies that have been won since the 1960s. ‘As women’, she insisted, ‘we will never achieve real equality and the enrichment that quality could bring relationships without carrying men with us.’

This diversity of approaches to the writing of women’s history has enabled the massive expansion of the field over the last two decades, an expansion that has cut across national boundaries and drawn in scholars from disciplines other than History – researchers in film and media, in literary studies, in cultural studies, in human geography, in colonial and postcolonial history as well as scholars located outside the UK. So what broad themes might we identify as characterising women’s history in the UK over the last two decades?

First and foremost, women’s history in the UK has mainly focused on the modern period, from about 1780 and secondly, it has always had a strong empirical focus. Thus in addition to the sources already quoted there are, for example, many studies of women’s work, singleness, the family, motherhood and of old age, as well as research into the gendered dimensions of industrialisation and of social class formations. Not unexpectedly, it is in studies of love and birth control that we see clearly how the study of manhood, masculinities and men’s gendered power has had a profound impact upon our understanding of heterosexual women’s lives. This aspect of daily existence has, of course, been long recognised by women themselves in the past. As Mrs. M. B. Cooke expressed it in 1923, five years after certain categories of women over the age of thirty had been granted the
parliamentary vote, ‘What does it avail a woman that she has the franchise if she cannot call her body her own, and is at the mercy of her husband’s desires and wishes.’

Undoubtedly the strong empirical emphasis in women’s history in the UK partly accounts for the fact that there is much less discussion in our country than in the USA about the field itself, about the very notions of ‘women’s history’ and ‘gender history’. Perhaps too this absence also partly reflects the much smaller number of scholars in the UK researching women’s varied pasts, compared with their North American counterparts. Nonetheless, women’s history and gender history are closely related and co-exist, sharing many common concerns, despite some earlier heated discussions. For example, in 1999, Penelope Corfield implied that gender history was superior to women’s history when she argued that women’s history was ‘broadening fruitfully into gender history’ and ‘enriching historical studies’ (my emphasis), a claim that Amanda Weatherill and I keenly disputed. Amanda and I suggested instead that gender history was a ‘malestream incorporation strategy’ that decentred the study of women as women; such an argument, we felt, was especially relevant in the bleak academic climate of the late 1990s when academic women felt obliged to suppress their feminist politics in order to gain respectability and access to permanent institutional positions. My scepticism towards gender history has mellowed over the intervening years since women’s and gender history have ended up complementing each other more than detracting from each other. I agree with Karen’s position paper that ‘gender history’ is not superior to women’s history, that there is really no choice between ‘women’ and ‘gender’ since both are closely intertwined. As she remarks, the analysis of gender relations has given us the opportunity to revisit and rethink male-centred ‘master narratives’, such as the rise of capitalism in England and Europe, the ‘gender’ of nation-states and of notions of citizenship. And we can see this revisiting and rethinking in the profusion of articles found in journals such as Women’s History Review, Gender and History and History Workshop.
Journal, all located in the UK as well as in the many textbooks commonly used on core undergraduate History courses.

For example, if we look at undergraduate courses in Themes in Modern British History and particularly Themes in Modern European Western History, we find a plethora of textbooks in these areas so that in this twenty-first century it would now be unthinkable for such courses not to have some lectures and seminars on women’s/gender history, even if they are not fully integrated throughout.26 The list of books below, to which must be added the innumerable articles published in the journals named above, is impressive. That has been one of the great achievements of the past two decades, something we should celebrate. In addition to core undergraduate courses in History, most universities in Britain now also offer options and special subjects in women’s/gender history - perhaps on women’s history Britain 1850-1945,27 Victorian women,28 the history of women’s education and intellectual culture,29 sexuality,30 crime,31 the First or Second World War,32 media in the twentieth century,33 gender, culture and society c1920-1980,34 or women’s activism.35 What is offered depends heavily on the particular interests of the lecturer and the students. But it is noteworthy that the parameters of women’s history have expanded in innumerable ways to now include genteel and elite women as well as right-wing women, including women who identified as fascists.36

Thirdly, over the last two decades or so some accepted ‘truths’ in women’s history have also been questioned. For example, the dominance of a ‘separate spheres’ discourse, articulated by Catherine Hall and the late Leonore Davidoff in their highly influential 1987 book Family Fortunes: men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850, has been challenged by amongst others Amanda Vickery, Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson. Whereas Hall and Davidoff focussed on the limitations that separate spheres discourse placed on women located within the private sphere of the home, Vickery asserts that in the course of
the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the activities of genteel women did not diminish but greatly expanded. Similarly, Gleadle and Richardson are sensitive to the nuances, contradictions and tensions within separate spheres discourse, arguing that it did not imply denial of female political identity but rather informed women’s political expression and agency.37

Thus consideration of spatial categories, one of the questions we were asked by Chen Yen and Karen Offen to address, has been central to the development of women’s history and is not a new phenomenon.38 Nonetheless, the advent of cultural geography since the 1980s, with its emphasis upon the relationships between space, place and the construction of identity has impacted on History, especially in the fields of urban, architectural and political history. Women’s history in the UK over the last two decades has not been immune to this changing landscape and has experienced, some would claim, a ‘spatial turn’.39 Timothy Jones, for example, in exploring the resistance of the Church of England to calls for the ordination of women as priests from 1910 to 1930, adopted an analysis that explored the opposition of the male hierarchy to the ‘placement’ of women’s bodies within the gendered spaces of the pulpit and chancel.40

A fourth theme that is evident in the expansion of women’s history in the UK over the last two decades is the interest in life stories, personal narratives, oral histories and biographies. Indeed, Barbara Caine, who was born in South Africa and migrated to Australia, suggests that the turn to ‘biography’ is part of the move away from structuralist approaches and explanations, such as Marxism, that has been evident in the social sciences over the past three or four decades. ‘As questions about the importance of gender, race and class and about experience and representation have come to the fore’, she points out, ‘so too has the recognition that the detailed analysis of individual or collective lives offers one of the best
Certainly biographies of well-known feminists have proliferated in the UK over the last two decades, although they are mainly of white, middle-class women. A fifth theme we may identify in this explosion of women’s history in the UK over the last twenty years is the enduring interest in the women’s suffrage movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, articles about which appear regularly in Women’s History Review in addition to a new wave of books on the topic. This is not surprising, given the interest of present day feminists to find out about their foremothers plus readily accessible sources in The Women’s Library, now housed at the London School of Economics. In particular, since the showing from October 2015 of the feature film Suffragette, directed by Sarah Gavron with script by Abi Morgan, more and more young women are developing an interest in the Edwardian suffragette movement, and claiming the title ‘feminist’, a process that is greatly aided by social media campaigns. Indeed, the very word ‘suffragette’ regularly pops up in public discourse, as a symbol for women’s activism in the present.

Over the last two decades, research in the British women’s suffrage campaigns has challenged many of the earlier assumptions in a constantly evolving, vibrant field. Thus the claim by Jill Liddington and Jill Norris in their influential 1978 text, One Hand Tied Behind Us: the rise of the women’s suffrage movement, that few working-class socialist women joined the Women’s Social and Political (WSPU), the most militant suffragette society in Edwardian Britain has been keenly disputed. June Hannam and Karen Hunt, Krista Cowman and myself all contend that working-class socialist women were active WSPU members, especially in the regions.

If women’s suffrage has been a constant theme in women’s history in the UK in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, other emerging trends can also be identified over this period. Thus we come to our sixth theme, a ‘religious turn’. As Sue Morgan and Jacqueline de Vries point out, a resurgence in religion and spirituality ‘would have been
unimaginable in British feminist history circles thirty years ago. As noted earlier, women’s history in the UK has never been isolated from wider debates in the field, particularly in North America, and we can see that influence here, in cross-cultural contacts. Thus the 1998 book edited by North American academics, Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker, titled *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity* included three essays that focused particularly on Britain - Quaker women preachers in the eighteenth-century, the ministry of women in the Salvation Army and preaching and prophecy in the women’s suffrage movement. Further the study by the Angelo-Canadian scholar Joy Dixon on how theosophy – regarded as an ancient religion of the East – became a crucial part of the feminist movement in late Victorian and Edwardian England – received very favourable reviews. Here in the UK, Sandra Holton’s fine study of Quaker women’s kinship networks created by the marriage in 1839 of Elizabeth Priestman and the future radical Quaker statesman, John Bright, included not just an analysis of female participation in the women’s rights movement but also women’s involvement in civil society and radical politics.

The links between East and West, so evident in Joy Dixon’s study, the relationship between women’s studies and the new critical histories of colonialism and empire, contact zones, cross-cultural encounters and racialisation has been particularly pronounced in North American scholarship. And some of this scholarship – such as Moira Ferguson’s study of British women writers and colonial slavery and Antoinette Burton’s text on British feminists, Indian women and imperial culture – has much to say about Britain. A small but growing number of researchers in women’s history in the UK, such as Clare Midgley, Barbara Bush, Sumita Mukherjee and Caroline Bressey are exploring these issues. Thus we come to our seventh theme in women’s history in the UK over the last two decades, namely the ‘transnational turn’, strongly evident in the work of histories of colonialization and empire
and in the studies of women’s transnational activism. Transnational and global histories pose the greatest challenges to the writing of women’s history in the UK. How can we write a global women’s history, a history that keeps women’s voices and experiences central to the analysis? What are the biases of our Western paradigms? What kinds of frameworks and methodology should be used?

Last but not least, we cannot ignore in this twenty-first century the influence of the digital revolution on the development and direction of women’s history. Traditionally we researchers in women’s history have seen ‘the archive’ as a paper archive, a place we love to explore hoping we might find a long lost letter or a document that might provide an answer to a problematic issue. But this is no longer the case. More and more archives are being put online, such as the *Sisterhood and After Project*, involving life history interviews with 60 female activists in Britain from the 1960s to the 1980s, held at the British Library. This widening of access to sources in British women’s history must be welcomed. It can only lead to the growth of interest in our subject.

Overall, as this brief survey reveals, over the last two decades or so women’s history in the UK has been very much at the cutting edge of historical enquiry. However, as one would expect, the developments remain uneven. In particular, the voices of black, Asian and ethnic minority women are very much under-represented amongst our undergraduates, lecturing staff and researchers. While the necessary data is not always available, one source notes that in 2014 there were only four black academic historians of African/Caribbean heritage, two of whom were women, and only six black history PhD students (the gender was not specified). This is a matter of deep concern, and not the only one.

The expansion of women’s history is losing momentum, especially during this age of austerity when there is roughly an equal gender balance amongst school and university students but more than 60% of academic History staff in UK universities are male and only
20.8% of History professors female. Senior staff who helped to develop the field of women’s history are retiring and not always being replaced. Fewer undergraduates want to study for a PhD when university tuition fees in England of £9,000 per year (and likely to rise), plus living expenses, leave too many with heavy debts at a time when there is contraction rather than expansion in the academic job market. Amongst academic staff, being awarded a government grant or winning research councils grants is becoming increasingly competitive, encouraging perhaps a move towards researching the ‘local’. The result of the Referendum held on 23 June 2016, that the UK should leave the European Union has added to the uncertainty over research funding and the hiring of young talent from around the world. Further, a research assessment exercise, undertaken every five years, assesses not just the quality of publications of those submitted but also, and in particular, whether academics have engaged in ‘impact’ with non-academic audiences. The pressures on academics in this macho work culture, which shows no interest in a reasonable work/life balance is difficult, especially for women academics with small children and/or other dependents. The Gender Equality and Historians in UK Higher Education Report, published by the Royal Historical Society in 2015, identifies a range of continuing barriers to gender equality, both formal and informal, in the historical profession, but it remains to be seen whether these barriers can be, or will be, eliminated. The implications of all these changes in higher education for women’s history in the UK have yet to be played out.

However, such pessimistic circumstances must be tempered by a number of positive factors. In the UK, the Women’s History Network (WHN), founded in 1991, is still going strong and has attained a paying membership of about 400, the highest number since its inception. The WHN Book Prize, awarded each year for a first single-authored monograph in women’s or gender history that is written in an accessible style, is very competitive. The introduction of a £500 Small Grant Scheme, awarded for holding a one day conference on
women’s history organised by teaching or research staff in universities or other institutions of higher education in the UK, or by staff in further education colleges, museums or heritage sites in collaboration with any one such institution, should prove popular. The WHN Community History Prize, initially sponsored by The History Press, attracted an impressive twenty three entries in 2015, all of high quality. The award of such a Prize reveals the WHN’s commitment to public engagement, as well as support for the diversity of women’s and gender history’s many forms. There is an active Women’s History Scotland and an energetic Women’s History Association of Ireland.58  *Women’s History Review*, of which I am the Editor, is attracting an abundance of submission, so that we now publish six issues a year, usually with seven articles per issue.

Further, History has become a part of popular culture in the UK. While many of the programmes on our TV screens are about men’s histories, especially at this time when we are commemorating the centenary of the First World War, there are some spaces for TV and YouTube programmes about women’s lives.59 And there are also some spaces in popular History magazines, such as *History Today* and *BBC History Magazine* for articles on women’s history as well as *Women’s History*, the journal of the Women’s History Network, devoted solely to the field.60 There is a renewed interest in feminism amongst young women in particular, partly fuelled by the social media success of the *Everyday Sexism* project, developed by Laura Bates.61 All indications are that women’s history in the UK is here to stay and that it will continue to be reconceptualised and reformulated as it is communicated in more diverse forms than we could ever have imagined in the 1970s.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Thanks to all the participants for their comments on a first version of this paper when presented at the Roundtable ‘Women’s History at the Cutting Edge’, organised by the International Federation for Research in Women’s History at the 22nd International Congress of Historical Sciences, Jinan, China, 23-29 August 2015. Thanks also to the referees and especially Karen Offen and Sue Morgan for many helpful suggestions. However, any errors or omissions remain my own.


Inevitably in a survey essay such as this, due to limitations of space, I have had to be selective in the references cited. My views on the topic of women’s history in the UK reflect my own location as a white, middle-class woman academic who has taught in higher education in the UK for many years and who would identify as a ‘feminist’. My own research has mainly focused on the education of girls and women in nineteenth-century England and now especially on the suffragette movement in Edwardian Britain, including biographies of the two main suffragette leaders, Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst. See the journals *Women’s History Review* and *Gender and History* in particular, for many articles published about women’s history in the UK.


Chen Yen and Karen Offen (2017), Women’s History at the Cutting Edge, Women’s History Review, FILL IN DETAILS LATER.

Hannam, Women, history and protest, p. 303.


Sheila Rowbotham (1973) Hidden From History: 300 years of women’s oppression and the fight against it (London: Pluto Press)


Olive Banks was a Professor of Sociology at the University of Leicester. Dale Spender, an Australian, was for some time involved in teacher training at the Institute of Education, the University of London before becoming Editor of Women’s Studies International Forum and a full time writer.

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23 Compare, for example, the content of the American based *Journal of Women’s History* with that of the UK based *Women’s History Review* and *Gender and History*.


25 Chen Yan & Karen Offen (2017), *Women’s History at the Cutting Edge*, *Women’s History Review* PUT IN DETAILS LATER.


45 Hannam & Hunt, Socialist Women; Cowman, ‘Mrs. Brown is a Man and a Brother!’ and Purvis, Emmeline Pankhurst.
The focus in women’s history has been on gender, there has always been a recognition that gender is not enough to explain the complex histories of women’s lives which is why some scholars today prefer to use the word 'intersectionality', a term more commonly used by those working in sociology and gender/cultural studies. Although intersectionality has now become a ‘buzz’ term it is also an important theoretical concept for the multiple forms of simultaneous domination experienced by women and men in the past and how these influence historians’ reconstructions. Myra Marx Ferree (2006) Globalization and Feminism: opportunities and obstacles for activism in the global area, in Myra Marx Ferree & Aili Mari Tripp (Eds) (2006) Global Feminism: transnational women’s activism, organizing, and human rights (New York and London: New York University Press), p. 10 states that ‘intersectionality means that privilege and oppression, and movements to defend and combat these relations, are not in fact singular. No one has a gender but not a race, a nationality but not a gender, an education but not an age. The location of people and groups within relations of production, reproduction, and representation (relations that are organized worldwide in terms of gender inequality) is inherently multiple.’ Linda Gordon (2016) ‘Intersectionality’, Socialist Feminism and Contemporary Activism: musings by a Second-Wave socialist feminist, Gender and History 28 (2), pp. 340-357 notes that the basic concept that multiple forms of domination interact and even fuse into new forms has a long history in Left feminism and anti-racist, anti-nationalist and anti-colonial discourse, and that ‘intersectionality’ is used today by many activist groups.


54 Sisterhood and After: the Women’s Liberation Oral History Project, British Library Sound Archive. The Women’s Liberation Movement in Britain, including its relationship to men, appears to be a growing field of research interest. See, for example, Eve Setch (2002) The Face of Metropolitan Feminism: the London Women’s Liberation Movement, 1969-1979, Twentieth Century British History, 13 (2), pp. 171-190; Jeska Rees
55 Hakim Adi & Shantelle George (2014) Letter to the Editor of the Times Higher Education Supplement, 30 October, and Hakim Adi email to me, 14 August 2015. Baroness Amos, appointed in 2015 as the Head of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, is the first black woman to lead a UK university, Baroness Amos, ‘I was taken aback when I found out I was the first black female head of a university’, The Observer, 19 July 2015.


57 Royal Historical Society Report, Gender Equality, p. 3.

58 Women’s History Scotland was founded as the Scottish Women’s History Network in 1995 and became Women’s History Scotland in 2004. The Women’s History Association of Ireland, which encompasses scholars from the Republic of Ireland and from Northern Ireland, was founded in 1989.

59 See, for example, the series titled Shopgirls: the true story of life behind the counter which traced the history of Britain’s shopworkers and consumer cultures from 1860 to the present and was presented on BBC TV in 2014 by Professor Pamela Cox, Department of Sociology, University of Essex; the series Suffragettes Forever! The story of women and power which explored, in three programmes the struggle for women’s political rights in Britain, a battle fought over many centuries before the foundation of the suffragette movement in Edwardian Britain, presented in 2015 on BBC TV by Professor Amanda Vickery, Department of History, Queen Mary, University of London; Sophia: suffragette princess, the story of Sophia Duleep Singh, born into India royalty, presented on BBC TV in 2015 by her biographer Anita Anand (see note 52), and Fallen Women, a short moving film by Lily Ford about the unmarried mothers who had their babies taken in by London’s Foundling Hospital in the nineteenth century https://youtube.com/watch?v=04T3nG55ysA


61 See http://everydaysexism.com