

<b>Institution:</b> University of Warwick
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> Sociology
<b>Title of case study:</b> Improving the understanding of domestic violence within the policy community in Wales
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Domestic violence affects one in four women in England and Wales and two women are killed each week by their partner or ex-partner. It is recognised as an important policy issue and women's non-governmental organisations (NGOs) contribute to policy development at different levels of government. Research on gender and political processes in the context of devolution has contributed to campaigns conducted by the Violence Against Women Action Group in Wales, understandings of domestic violence within the policy community in Wales, and debates about women's political representation in the UK. It has informed debates about the use of statistics relating to domestic abuse and contributed to the withdrawal of misleading statistics from public display; raised questions about the gender-neutral definition of domestic abuse adopted by the Welsh Assembly Government and Swansea City Council in their domestic abuse strategies; fed into campaigns by third sector organisations relating to domestic abuse and violence against women; and contributed to and informed the debate on positive measures to increase the political representation of women.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The underpinning research consists of three inter-related projects led by Nickie Charles (Warwick 2005). The main project focused on devolution within the UK, the accompanying increase in the proportion of women political representatives in the new legislatures in Scotland and Wales and the extent to which a gender balance of political representatives influences policy development. Wales was chosen as a case study because the National Assembly for Wales had equal numbers of women and men representatives. One of the policy areas it explored was domestic abuse which linked it to the other two projects: the first of these was an audit of existing provision for survivors and perpetrators of domestic abuse to provide an evidence base for the development of the Safer Swansea domestic abuse strategy, while the second developed a case study of the effect of domestic abuse in the workplace for use by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) (Wales). The main project was carried out by Nickie Charles (PI University of Warwick) in collaboration with Charlotte Davies (Co-I) and Stephanie Jones (research assistant) (Swansea University) between September 2005 and January 2009. Using Wales as a case study, the research explored the effect on political processes and participation of the election of a high proportion of women representatives to devolved government; one of the policy areas it explored was domestic violence. The two smaller projects were carried out by Charles (PI) and Jones and by Charles (PI) and Beecham (Warwick).</p> <p>This research shows that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a <b>gender balance</b> among political representatives affects the way politics is done, the policy issues that are prioritised and the organisational culture of political institutions. Assembly Members experienced the National Assembly as less masculinised than either the Westminster parliament or local government in Wales with less pressure to behave in a competitive 'masculine' way and a less confrontational way of doing politics. Issues such as domestic violence, equal pay and family and child welfare were prioritised in policy development. These differences were linked both to the National Assembly being a new political institution and to there being a gender balance amongst Assembly Members.</li> <li>• a diversity of political representatives facilitates engagement with a greater range of civil society organisations. The <b>positive measures</b> introduced to increase the diversity of political representatives and, in particular, to achieve a gender balance, were not universally supported. Within the National Assembly there was widespread support for positive measures</li> </ul>

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while at local level there was resistance to such measures and a view that they resulted in women being elected who were not 'up to the job'.

- the new political institution was contributing to a revitalisation of civil society and the National Assembly for Wales was more open than local government to those organising around gender-based issues.
- there was a tension between gendered and gender-neutral framing of policy issues in relation to domestic violence and the equalities agenda. For instance a gender-neutral definition of domestic violence, which did not reflect its gendered nature, had been adopted by the Welsh Assembly Government in its 2005 domestic abuse strategy; and statistics suggesting that men were almost as likely as women to experience domestic violence were being used by the Welsh Assembly Government and the Dyn project (a third sector organisation supporting male victims of domestic abuse). This gender neutrality was having a detrimental impact on the stability and sustainability of voluntary sector provision to women and children threatened with domestic violence in some local authority areas.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Jones, S., Charles, N., and Davies, C. (2009) 'Transforming masculinist political cultures? Doing politics in new political institutions', *Sociological Research Online*, 14 (2/3), <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/14/2/1.html>. [peer reviewed] DOI 10.5153/sro.1863

Charles, N. (2010) 'The refuge movement and domestic violence policies in Wales' in E Breitenbach and P Thane (eds) *What Difference did the Vote Make? Women and Citizenship in Britain and Ireland in the 20th Century*, Continuum

Charles, N. (2010) 'Setting the scene: devolution, gender politics and social justice' in Charles N and Davies CA (eds) *Gender and social justice in Wales*, Cardiff University Press, 2010 [peer reviewed research monograph].

Charles, N. and Jones, S. (2010) Developing a domestic abuse strategy in Charles N and Davies CA (eds) *Gender and social justice in Wales*, Cardiff University Press, [peer reviewed research monograph].

Charles, N. and Jones, S (2013) 'Grey men in grey suits': gender and political representation in local government' in *Contemporary Wales*, 26 (1): pp. 182-204 [peer reviewed]

Charles, N. and Mackay, F. (2013) 'Feminist politics and framing contests: domestic violence policy in post-devolution Scotland and Wales 1999-2007' in *Critical Social Policy* 33 (4): 593 – 615 [peer reviewed] DOI 10.1177/0261018313483488

#### Research Funding

Gender and political processes in the context of devolution, PI Nickie Charles (Warwick), Co-I Charlotte Davies (Swansea), ESRC funded, £250,000, September 2005-January 2009, (graded outstanding);

([http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/rsw/research\\_centres/gender/gppcd/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/rsw/research_centres/gender/gppcd/))

Swansea Domestic Abuse Strategy – an evaluation, Nickie Charles (PI) with Stephanie Jones (Swansea), funded by Swansea City Council, £15,000, 2004-5;

A case-study of the effect of domestic violence within the workplace, Nickie Charles (Co-I) with David Beecham (Warwick), funded by EHRC (Wales), £2,391, 2010.

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

#### Impact on policy debates

The research findings have contributed to and informed the debate on positive measures to increase the political representation of women. Participation in a Government Equalities Office seminar, 'Why Equality Matters: The Representation of Women in Public Life', (London, November

2008) involved a presentation of the research findings on women's political representation and subsequent discussion with local councillors, MPs, civil servants and academics on the best means of increasing the number of women politicians at local and national level. The discussion informed the Electoral Reform Society's submission to the Speakers' Conference on Parliamentary Representation (2009) which cites the research. This impact was achieved through an initial invitation to present the research findings at a conference organised by National Union of Schoolmasters and Women Teachers in London in June 2008 ('One in Five – a one-day national conference on women's participation in the political process' (also addressed by Teresa May)). This led to coverage on Women's Parliamentary Radio ([www.wpradio.co.uk](http://www.wpradio.co.uk)); and invitations to present the research findings to the Government Equalities Office seminar and at The Hansard Society and British Council Scotland seminar 'Has Devolution Delivered For Women? Participation, Representation and Power: Lessons For The Future' in Scotland (January 26th 2010, Edinburgh).

The profile of the research was raised by press coverage in the national media (see section 5) which was linked to the end of award dissemination conference held in Swansea. It attracted 75 conference delegates (30% academic, 15% political/governmental and 45% third sector). Ninety three per cent of those returning evaluation forms rated the event as 'very interesting' or 'interesting', with nearly all comments very positive ('A very informative, educative and empowering session.')

Participating in the conference were representatives of EHRC (Wales) and Welsh Women's Aid as well as Assembly Members and members of local government. In addition two thousand copies of a **research findings bulletin** outlining the main findings (see section 2 above [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/rsr/research\\_centres/gender/gppcd/dissconf](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/rsr/research_centres/gender/gppcd/dissconf)) were distributed to all Welsh Assembly members, MPs, chief executives of local authorities, political parties, councillors in local government, and a range of voluntary sector organisations in Wales; the latter included Welsh Women's Aid, Chwarae Teg/ Fair Play and the Wales Women's National Coalition, as well as the EHRC (Wales), the House of Lords and the National Assembly for Wales Libraries and the European Women's Lobby. The research findings were also presented at the Welsh Institute for Social and Cultural Affairs Seminar, Bangor, March 2008 and at practitioner/academic conferences held during the course of the project.

### Impact on third sector organisations

The findings relating to domestic abuse and gender inequalities were drawn on by the End Violence Against Women campaign in Wales (launched in 2009 and now the Violence Against Women Action Group), through the Wales Women's National Coalition (before its demise) and Welsh Women's Aid. They were used to **develop campaign material** by the End Violence Against Women Group in Wales and by Welsh Women's Aid. In collaboration with Welsh Women's Aid, Charles produced an **information leaflet** on the misleading use of statistics about the gendering of domestic abuse. This leaflet and the widely publicised **research findings bulletin** contributed to an **enhanced cultural understanding** of how domestic abuse relates to gender and to the withdrawal of misleading statistics formerly found on the Welsh Assembly Government website and on other websites (for example, Swansea City Council, the Dyn project). They also raised questions about the gender-neutral definition of domestic abuse adopted by the Welsh Assembly Government and Swansea City Council in their domestic abuse strategies.

This impact was achieved in the following way. The research pointed out that a gender-neutral definition of domestic violence could reduce resources available for women and children escaping domestic violence because of the alleged need for an equal level of provision for men in similar circumstances. Such a gender-neutral definition was present at the all-Wales and local level in domestic abuse strategies. An early draft of the chapter by Charles and Jones, 'Developing a domestic abuse strategy' later published in Charles and Davies (eds.) *Gender and social justice in Wales*, Cardiff University Press (2011), which discussed the research findings, was circulated and discussed within the End Violence Against Women group in Wales in 2009. As a result of these discussions a campaign was initiated for a gendered definition of domestic abuse and an information leaflet was drafted. A strategic decision was taken in 2009 not to press this issue but to wait for the results of the consultation process on the development of a Welsh Assembly

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Government (WAG) strategy to end violence against women and girls in Wales. This resulted, in 2010, in the launch of the new WAG strategy on violence against women which includes a gendered definition of violence against women.

By means of these discussions and the development of position documents by the End Violence Against Women group and Welsh Women's Aid, the research findings contributed to campaign materials used by organisations working to end violence against women in Wales. These campaigns fed into the development of the Welsh Assembly Government's first violence against women strategy, *The Right to be Safe* (2010), which adopts the United Nations definition of violence against women as well as clarifying that violence against women is an equality and human rights issue.

The director of EHRC (Wales) had been on the project's advisory group. Subsequently (2010) the EHRC contacted Charles to develop a case study on the effects of domestic violence at work which she did in collaboration with Beecham. The case study, Bridget's story, showed how a supportive workplace is vital in ensuring that routes to safety are achievable. It also provides evidence based costs for providing support to individuals within the workplace. It was used as part of EHRC Wales's campaigning material on the need to develop workplace policies on domestic violence in Wales. Subsequent impact evaluation carried out by EHRC (Wales) showed that the campaign had helped to raise awareness of domestic abuse in the workplace; 35 devolved organisations had a domestic abuse workplace policy, covering 180,032 staff in Wales, and 8 devolved organisations were developing policies which will cover 29,422 staff. The case study: 'Domestic abuse is your business: Bridget's story – the business case for having a workplace policy' is available online at [www.equalityhumanrights.com/yourbusiness](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/yourbusiness).

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- Electoral Reform Society site research;  
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/167/167we60.htm>
- Interview on BBC Radio Wales, 30/1/09
- BBC News 30/1/09, Women 'transform Welsh politics'  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/7859373.stm>
- BBC News 30/1/09, Women AMs 'making a difference'  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/7859639.stm>
- *South Wales Argus News* 29/1/09, Assembly helped by gender balance  
[http://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/4086678.Assembly\\_helped\\_by\\_gender\\_balance/](http://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/4086678.Assembly_helped_by_gender_balance/)
- *Evening Leader* (Flintshire) 2/2/09 'Women AMs have transformed the political scene in Wales' by Michael Youds and Matt Sims
- *South Wales Evening Post* 19/2/09 'Women at the heart of change' by Alex Brown

**References can be sought from:**

- 1) A former Plaid Cymru AM can testify to the influence the research findings bulletin had on the use of misleading statistics in WAG publicity about domestic violence.
- 2) The Business Development Manager of Chwarae Teg/Fair Play can testify to the wide dissemination of the research results.
- 3) Assistant Children's Commissioner for Wales can testify to the effect of the research findings on discussions about gendered definitions of domestic violence.
- 4) The former Policy and Campaigns Officer at Welsh Women's Aid can testify to the contribution of the research findings to Welsh Women's Aid and End Violence Against Women (Wales) campaign material.
- 5) The Research and Foresight Officer at the Equality and Human Rights Commission can testify to the use of the workplace case study by EHRC (Wales).