

Special Issue of *Labor History*: Gender, War and Coerced Labour

Proposals (500 words) due: 15 April 2021

In recent decades there have been growing bodies of literature on gender and war, on war labour, and on various forms and degrees of labour coercion. Yet rarely have these areas – gender, coercion and war labour – been brought together and analyzed as intersecting and interdependent themes. In addition, much of this literature focuses primarily on the 20th century. This special issue will examine these intersecting themes from a broader historical perspective to ask new questions and propose new conceptual frameworks to help understand degrees, forms and sites of coercion and their gendered dimensions in connection with war-related work and labour (military or civilian).

Similar to unpaid work, military service in the modern age has not always been understood as a form of labour. In parallel to how feminist research has shown women's reproductive labour and unpaid household work to be essential parts of modern economies, it is relevant to broadly consider activities related to warfare and militaries as parts of a wider gendered division of labour. By adding the dimension of coercion, we can significantly expand the scope of our understanding of its interplay with gendered war-related tasks as carried out in different spheres, ranging from the armed forces and auxiliary services to agricultural and industrial production, domestic work, and civil organizations. This also enables us to analyze how and why war-related work has often been legally, culturally and materially constructed not as labour but as citizenship obligation, conscription, work duty, punishment or even forms of slavery.

War-related labour extends far beyond wartime itself. The societal impact of warfare begins long before the first shot is fired and does not cease with an armistice. Even during long periods of peace, most societies direct large proportions of its labour force towards preparation for war. In the aftermath of large armed conflicts, the effects on labour and working conditions can be ongoing as infrastructure is rebuilt, veterans – including those with disabilities – are reintegrated into productive work, and women's tasks are again reassigned in the post-war division of labour.

This special issue of *Labor History* will engage with labour and war in its many gendered forms, and will note that much of this labour is indeed coerced to various degrees. The time period is broad, inclusive of the early modern and modern periods, and there are no geographical limitations. Paper proposals for the special issue should address all key themes of (1) gender, (2) war-related labour and (3) coercion. The following text further details the aims of the issue in relation to each of the intersecting themes.

War and mechanisms of labour coercion

This special issue stems from the EU-funded COST Action 'Worlds of Related Coercions in Work' (WORCK), which calls for a radical change of perspective in labour history. It does this by linking stories of work and production with those of violence, expropriation and marginalization. By studying the persistence and transformation of coercion and bondage across gender orders, geographic regions and historical eras, WORCK shifts the focus of

labour history: neither the male-breadwinner model nor the free wage labourer or capitalist mode of production can form the blueprint for this new history of WORCK. Instead, a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of coercion in all work relations throughout history is the pivot of this endeavour (WORCK, n.d. See also de Vito et al, 2020).

War labour provides an excellent case study to explore various degrees, forms and sites of coercive labour relations. Throughout history, women's and men's participation in war-related tasks have included various degrees and forms of coercion, from press-ganged recruits and convicts of early modern armies to war brothels, from universal conscription for men to 'work duty' for women in agriculture or factories in modern total warfare. The use of prisoners of war as industrial labour or the exploitation of the local economy by a foreign occupier for military purposes often differs in levels of coercion only by degree or symbolism. There are various more subtle and informal forms of coercion associated with war labour (including, but not limited to, conditional threats to sign up or be conscripted regardless, and community pressure to 'do one's bit'), which call into question understandings of recruitment and/or extraction of war labour as voluntary or compulsory, free or unfree.

Military service as forms of labour

No matter the degree of volunteerism or force, joining the military has, in the modern period, often been construed as service and sacrifice rather than a form of labour, or even more simply as engaging in acts of violence that serve the needs of the state. Yet whether as a middle-class man desiring to be officer or an unemployed working-class man at the end of the Great Depression seeking a regular wage in the next war, the military has also been viewed as a place for jobs, income and skills development. In the early modern period, soldiering was more generally seen as a way for men to make a living and as a form of menial labour (Zürcher, 2013). This understanding only slowly faded during the nineteenth century as nationalist ideologies constructed the principal system for recruiting and extracting military labour, conscription and military service as a civic and universal male duty, thus camouflaging its role in the labour market as well as its 'interesting position [...] at the crossroads of wage and non-wage labour and free and unfree labour' (Lucassen & Zürcher, 1998, p. 405).

In the last few years, however, there have been signs of increasing interest amongst labour historians in conscription as well as military labour more generally (see, for example, the European Labour History Network's Military Labour History Working Group, 2020). This expansion can be taken even further when civilian labour is considered as serving the needs of the military – from early modern camp followers or industrial work during wartime to translating and interpreting by the occupied for the occupier during military occupation. When the scope of what constitutes military work is widened, it expands not only definitions of war labour but further exposes the gendered division of labour in the military sphere.

Gender as a central framing device

Gender, thus, should be considered as a 'central framing device' (Sharoni, Welland & Steiner,

2016, p. 26) for understanding war and its legitimacy, and for the organization of war labour. In the early modern period, soldiering was considered a men-only task, yet we know women were a large and integral part of army campaigns as providers and merchants of goods and services (Hacker, 1981; Sjöberg, 2011), and that women occasionally enlisted as soldiers while disguised as men (van den Pol & Dekker, 1989). As stated above, from the end of the eighteenth century military labour became more connected to ideas of male honour and male service to the state or nation. Gender historians have argued that military conscription of men reinforced and further polarized existing gender concepts, with male soldiers embodying the nation state (Frevert, 1996; Hagemann et. al., 2010). But even after war labour in the modern period came to be regarded as a male duty, women were increasingly mobilized, with various degrees of force, to support war efforts in, for example, the sanitarian and industrial sectors.

Examining war and the military in history through the lens of gender over the last few decades has resulted in many key texts. Initially, historical gender research focused on making visible women's experiences as both victims of and participants in warfare. For example, Hacker's (1981) study of women camp followers shed new light on military institutions and the organization of campaigns in early modern Europe. Damousi and Lake's *Gender and War* (1995) interrogated and challenged the dominant masculine narrative of war in Australia. Research has expanded to gender men and masculinities in relation to warfare, highlighting such topics as ideals and counterimages of manliness, male citizenship and military comradeship in relation to conscription, military training, patriotic mobilization and warfare (Mosse, 1996; Frevert, 2001; Hagemann, 2002; Dudink, Hagemann & Tosh, 2004). Dawson (1994) gendered soldier men in his study on masculinities in nineteenth-century popular imperialism. Despite these gains, uniting gender and war research with that on labour and coercion is a continuing project.

Themes and time periods for paper proposals

The special issue, then, will weave together and build upon the above scholarship. It welcomes paper proposals that address and historicize the intersections between all key themes: gender, war labour and coercion. The time period is roughly the 17th-21st centuries and there are no restrictions on geographical area.

Some general examples of how contributions might address all key themes include:

- Gendered and racial dimensions of prisoners of war labour camps
- Men, masculinities and compulsory soldiering (conscription, devshirme, press-ganging, veterans, postwar disabilities etc)
- The meanings of voluntarism and coercion in women's war labour
- Intersectional approaches to conscientious objection and/or desertion
- Forms and degrees of coercion in reproductive war labour
- Gendered sites of forced war labour
- Demobilization from coercive war labour

Proposals and timeline

Please send your **500-word proposal** to the editors (contact details below) by **15 April 2021**. Ensure your proposal addresses the intersections between all three key themes (gender/intersectionality, war labour and coercion). The editors will review the proposals and advise of the outcome by **May 2021**. If you are invited to submit a full paper for further review, the paper will be due by **January 2022**.

Contact details for further information and to send your proposal:

- Anders Ahlbäck (Åbo Akademi University, Finland, & Stockholm University, Sweden): anders.ahlback@historia.su.se
- Christine de Matos (The University of Notre Dame Australia) christine.de.matos@nd.edu.au
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- Fia Sundevall (Stockholm University, Sweden and the Swedish Labour Movement's Archive & Library): fia.sundevall@ekohist.su.se.

Information about *Labor History* can be found here: <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/clah20/current>.

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