

Institution: University of Leeds		
Unit of Assessment: 26		
Title of case study: Making it about peace: changing public perceptions of anti-war activism during the WW1 centenary commemorations 2014-2019		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2007-2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Professor Ingrid Sharp	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of German Cultural & Gender History	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 1989-2020
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact <p>The Centenary of WW1 2014-19 represented an opportunity for researchers to change and broaden public perceptions of the conflict's history. Sharp used her research into women's anti-war activism in Germany and Britain to counterbalance the battle-centric and thus male-centred approach that characterised the planned commemorations. The only researcher working on German resistance to WW1 during the period, she co-founded a national Peace History Working Group to amplify and internationalise peace narratives and bring marginalised stories to the public's attention.</p> <p>Her work has:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> raised the public profile of the anti-war narrative during the centenary; centred women's anti-war activism, raising public awareness of the range of positions taken by women; inspired local history and community groups to explore anti-war activism; changed public understanding of and attitudes to German resistance to war; changed the practice of external partners from the peace activist and engaged arts communities. 		
2. Underpinning research <p>Sharp's research locates and amplifies marginalized and hidden voices, especially those of political women and anti-war activists. Much of her work on WW1 and its aftermath focuses on rebalancing scholarly narratives to take account of the experience of defeated nations and to make the resistance within these nations visible. She argues that including these voices does not simply add to our historical understanding, it fundamentally changes it.</p> <p>Based on archival research conducted between 2004 and 2019, Sharp is sole or co-author of a substantial body of academic publications on women's organised response to WW1 and its aftermath within and beyond Germany. Since 2005, Sharp has attracted RCUK funding to consolidate links between and coordinate the activities of an international network of feminist WW1 scholars, and this is reflected in her co-edited and co-authored publications [1-4].</p> <p>Her 2007 co-edited volume [1] was the first in a series of distinctive comparative works that make Central and Eastern European scholarship accessible to Anglophone readerships through collaboration and co-authorship. It examines women's war activism from 1914 to 1919, with the tight time-frame allowing international commonalities and differences to emerge. A second volume in 2011 [2] extended the sphere of investigation to women's hitherto under-researched transnational activism and organisation in the immediate aftermath of WW1, while a third in 2017 [3] explored women's war activism thematically in chapters co-authored by international teams.</p>		

Sharp also co-authored three Special Issues in 2007, 2016 and 2018, of which [4] reflects on the centenary from an international gender history perspective, finding a common pattern of neglect of women's wartime experiences in most European nations, countered by members of Sharp's feminist scholar network intervening in public narratives [1-4].

Based on ongoing archival research into the German revolution of 1918, [5] is one of the first scholarly articles to make women visible as revolutionary political agents and place them at the centre of the narrative. This moves us beyond the stalemate of historical interpretations based on a very narrow view of the revolution in terms of time, space and sphere of action. It places the events of October - November 1918 within a broader revolutionary cultural context, arguing that without the participation of women in widespread industrial unrest and anti-war protest from early 1915, the revolution could not have spread.

Comparing feminist anti-war activism during WW1 with the principles and implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), [6] examines the legacy of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, founded during WW1 and still active as an NGO today. Together with a cultural history of peace (1815-1920) published in March 2020, this work challenges the periodisation that uses war and conflict as the dominant framework for interpreting the past. Focussing instead on developments conducive to fostering sustainable peace such as campaigns for social and gender justice, food security, public health and democracy allows the underlying continuities in these areas to emerge and radically changes our perspective. Sharp's push to include dissenting and diverse voices in the historical narratives around WW1 is essential to counter persistent claims of national enthusiasm for war in either Britain or Germany.

Sharp's research into marginal voices and scholarship is ongoing, with three further publications forthcoming and a book contract on international revolutionary women with Bloomsbury for submission in 2021.

3. References to the research

Publications:

1. (2007) Fell, A.S. and Sharp, I.E. (ed.) *The Women's Movement in Wartime. International Perspectives 1914-1919*. Palgrave Macmillan. Sharp co-authored the introduction and contributed a chapter on international myths about women's war culpability.
2. (2011) Sharp, I.E. and Stibbe, M (ed.) *Aftermaths of War: Women's Movements and Female Activists, 1918-1923*. Brill. Sharp co-authored the introduction and contributed a chapter on the surplus woman discourse in Germany and Britain.
3. (2017) Sharp, I.E. and Stibbe, M (eds) *Women Activists between War and Peace. Europe 1918-1923* Bloomsbury. Sharp co-authored the introduction and was lead author on a chapter on gendered narratives of national defeat.
4. (2018): *L'Homme, Zeitschrift für europäische Geschlechtergeschichte 1914/18-revisited* 29 (2) eds Christa Hämmerle, Ingrid Sharp, Heidrun Zettelbauer. Sharp contributed to the editorial as well as an article on gendered commemoration of anti-war activism in Britain.
5. (2018) (with Matthew Stibbe) "In diesen Tagen kamen wir nicht von der Strasse..." Frauen in der deutschen Revolution von 1918/19' *Ariadne Forum für Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte* Juli 2018 Heft 73-74 Die weibliche/n Geschichte/n der Weimarer Republik: 32-39.
6. (2013) 'Feminist Peace Activism 1915-2010: Are We Nearly There Yet?' *Peace and Change* issue 2 April 2013 volume 38: 155-180.
[<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/pech.12010>]

Grants:

- PI: AHRC follow-on funding for impact and Engagement scheme (Highlight Creative Economy) Funded a new play and exhibitions telling the hidden story of women's role in the German revolution of 1918-19. Feb 2017 – Dec 2018 (£154,859)

- PI: AHRC/HLF: Social Attitudes to Conscientious Objection. Funded research by English Heritage volunteers into local (Yorkshire) attitudes to anti-war activism as reflected in press reports during 1916. October 2016-2017 (£19,000).
- PI: AHRC/Imperial War Museum CDA on Anti-war activism during WW1. 2014-2017 completed 2017.
- PI: AHRC: Women's Organisations and Female Activists. Funded an international group of scholars to look at female activism in the immediate post-war period 1917-23. 2012-2013 (£35,963).
- Co-I: BA conference grant to support 'The Gentler Sex' conference (with Alison Fell) on international feminist responses to the First World War. September 2005 (£1990).

4. Details of the impact

Sharp noted that dissenting voices and German perspectives, particularly women's anti-war activism, were being overlooked in the UK's WW1 centenary commemorations, and sought to embed them into the public narrative. The main beneficiaries were Sharp's external partners from the peace history and activist community, the creative and heritage industries as well as theatre, conference and exhibition audiences and MOOC learners.

(i) Peace History and Activism: amplifying and internationalising anti-war voices.

Sharp worked closely with leading activists within the peace community, sharing her knowledge of German anti-war resistance and women's role within it and inspiring others to make their own contributions to peace history awareness. This work was informed by her study of the historical roots of contemporary peace organisations and the many continuities that help us understand and measure the effectiveness of anti-war campaigns over time.

The reach and resonance of Sharp's research is reflected in the unusually high number of national and international invitations to contribute to commemorative events beyond the academy, including some high profile international events such as the German Foreign Office (December 2014), the Kiel Maritime Museum (March 2016), the Kansas National WW1 Museum, America's official WW1 museum and memorial (October 2017), the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom centenary conference in Zurich (May 2019), and the Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education, South Africa [1].

Between 2014 and 2019, Sharp's public-facing activities included 53 related talks, interviews, podcasts and lectures locally, nationally and internationally as well as published articles for a wider readership [1]. The scale and scope of the interventions show that Sharp's ongoing and sustained efforts to link her historical research to present-day anti-war and gender activism resonated strongly with the public. In 2016, she organised two public-facing international peace history conferences in Leeds in 2016 (300 delegates from activist and academic communities), that took a comparative approach across several countries to questions of gender and peace history.

In 2014, Sharp co-founded the national Peace History working group, which brought activists and academics together to coordinate and amplify peace history efforts during the centenary. She worked in particular with the Convenor of the Peace History working group and Peace History Conferences at the Imperial War Museum, who is also a member of the First World War Peace Forum, and a Vice-President of the international peace society Pax Christi. For this person Sharp's work 'brought an otherwise missing dimension' to their events, and made it 'impossible to consider planning a WW1 "peace history" event that did not examine the German experience' [A]. She felt that Sharp's inclusive approach 'made a real difference, helping to bridge the gap between academics and campaigners' and thus challenging entrenched hierarchies of knowledge. In particular, it stimulated local groups 'to research the history of opposition to the war in their area, to create exhibitions and local events of their own to mark the centenary – and to make sure the experience of women was included' [A].

(ii) *Women of Aktion*: play and exhibition**Changed Practice**

Sharp worked collaboratively over 18 months with partners Bent Architect Theatre Company (BA), on the *Women of Aktion* theatre project, focused on the Kiel Uprising [E]. BA is a socially engaged theatre company with a commitment to bringing lesser known historical stories to the contemporary stage which brings cultural value to Bradford, a culturally diverse city with a high proportion of economically deprived citizens. Sharp's research and translations of primary sources in German allowed BA to create a historically accurate and ethically justifiable portrayal of the protagonists, which spoke powerfully to the audience's emotions and sense of justice. BA attest that their experience of working with Sharp caused a shift from highly localised, site-specific projects to a more ambitious national and international approach. 'It is the first time we have toured abroad' and 'we reached new and wider audiences with untold history' [D]. Sharp's input enabled a more nuanced, layered historical understanding and gave BA access to German-language materials. 'It's really brought us on professionally, I think it's really changed the way that we will work from now on' [C] 'and opened up a whole new working methodology for us' [D].

Changed Understanding

The play has won critical accolades as a piece of theatre ([H/i] 'What's on Stage Top Pick' 30.10.2019) that was 'powerful, funny and taught me loads!' [H/iii] and successfully 'sneaks research into an engaging and entertaining show.' [H/iii] It toured in theatres in the UK and Germany, with 17 performances reaching a total audience of 1,000. Audience responses recorded on film [C] and social media show empathy with the characters' suffering, admiration for the women and surprise, even anger, that these powerful stories had been suppressed [H/iii]. This was especially important in the German city of Kiel, where the city's role in the revolution has historically been forgotten or considered shameful [F] and the commemoration privileged male accounts while erasing women's history. One viewer commented: 'The actors play their roles with such appealing energy that you can't help sharing their outrage at being left out of the history of the revolution.' [H/iii]

Sharp also worked with the Chair of the Bradford Peace Museum to produce an exhibition entitled *Women of Aktion* informed by her research insights into women's contribution to the Kiel Uprising of November 1918. The exhibition has so far been displayed at the Bradford Peace Museum, a pop-up shop in Bradford city centre, MShed Bristol, Manchester Central Library, Manchester Working Class Library, Leeds City Museum, Glasgow Women's Library and Richmond Barracks, Dublin, mostly accompanied by public talks. Commenting on the Bradford iteration, the Museum Chair noted that 'For a largely British audience, used to a male, military, patriotic and establishment analysis of that time, it was revelatory to engage with narrative and critique that were female, civilian, German and revolutionary' and that Sharp's input had 'changed the historical understanding and perception of all who engaged with it' [B]. Responses elsewhere have included emotional engagement and identification with the revolutionary women: '[t]he rallying call of revolutionary German foremothers echoes down the century' [H/iv] (Tweet 30/08/2019).

Further plans to exhibit as part of the Newington Green Revolutionary Ideas since 1708 festival in April-May 2020 were interrupted by COVID-19. The project has an accessible database [G] that offers a template for academics wanting to work effectively with creative partners, reflections on the project and teaching materials including mini-lectures, worksheets and summaries for schools and colleges wishing to follow up on topics raised by the project.

(iii) MOOC: *Changing Faces of Heroism*

Sharp led the Leeds bid to work in partnership with the BBC, culminating in the BBC/Futurelearn MOOC 'Changing Faces of Heroism'/'Heroism through Art and Culture'. This reached a global audience (39,172 participants from all inhabited continents registered from October 2014 to December 2018) and attracted highly positive evaluations and 22,550 unique participant

comments, 2,344 specifically on Germany [J]. Sharp's transnational anti-war activism research was prominent in the course, challenging dominant attitudes to heroism coded as masculine and nationalist.

Participants' comments and engagement reveal that they thought more comparatively and critically about a wider range of heroic figures, including women, war resisters and German nationals as the course progressed. E.g. 'Where have I been all this time! I have been giving the women who took part in the war very little consideration and got swept along with the attention given to the men' [J] (comment ID 2555400).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

A. Two letters from the Convenor of the Peace History working group, Peace History Conferences at the Imperial War Museum, member of the First World War Peace Forum, and Vice-President of Pax Christi (26 September 2016 and 26 August 2019).

B. Two letters from the Chair of the Bradford Peace Museum about the impact of Sharp's research on museum activities and visitor responses (6 October 2016 and 21 February 2019).

C. Film capturing responses to *Women of Aktion* (2018): <https://vimeo.com/293756641>

D. Report from the Directors of Bent Architect Theatre Company (15 August 2019).

E. Script of the play, *Women of Aktion* (2018).

F. Letter from Kiel History Society supporting the Women of Aktion project (1 November 2016).

G. The project database. It contains teaching materials, mini-lectures and reflections on the collaborative process:

http://archive.researchdata.leeds.ac.uk/view/collections/Kiel_Uprising=3A_Women=27s_activism_and_the_German_Revolution_November_1918.html

H. Collated responses to the *Women of Aktion* play and exhibition (reviews, interviews, tweets, Facebook responses).

I. List of public-facing interventions by Sharp on German anti-war activism and women's perspectives on war, 2014-2018.

J. Statistics and comments from *Changing Faces of Heroism / Heroism through Art and Film* MOOC 2014-2018 including 22,052 unique comments, and end-of-course evaluation data.