

War Risks: Understanding trauma in the War Risk Insurance Claims of American First World War Veterans

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Motivation

- This research will locate and analyze the war risk insurance file claims made by American veterans after the First World War
- By understanding how individuals described their experiences and injuries, this work can illuminate how American veterans coped with injury and trauma, and what care was available to them in the postwar period
- This work will incorporate the United States into the histories of “war trauma” that typically focus only on Europe
- A more historically-grounded understanding of war trauma can inform future care for veterans.

Project Description

- Locate the Bureau of War Risk insurance Files held by the National Archives and Records Administration
- Learn how veterans experienced injury and trauma, and what resources were available to them in the postwar period
- Consider the impact of war and caretaking on American women
- Examine the Bureau of War Risk Litigation Files as part of a longer history of veterans’ mental health in the United States

Context

- The Bureau of War Risk Insurance Files represent an innovative and under-utilized historical resource
- By combining a knowledge of medicine, history, and gender theory, this project will influence interdisciplinary scholarship
- Understanding the long history of war trauma in the United States can provide insight for improving veterans’ care and compensation today



How did **American veterans** cope with **injury and trauma** after **World War One**?

How can **history** **transform** modern **veteran’s care**?



Project Deliverables

- **2 articles for *Nursing Clio* website:**
 - “The Hazards of War”: The Role of Wives and Widows in the American Assessment of War Risk
 - Literally Fire Traps: The Experiences of Veterans in Post-WWI America
- **2 peer-reviewed articles:**
 - American Veterans’ Trauma as Observed in Bureau of War Risk Litigation Files (Working Title)
 - Evaluating American Veterans’ Mental Health Crisis from 1919 to the Present (Working Title)
- Collaboration with local veterans’ groups to develop oral history projects
- Analyze contemporary veterans’ care and insurance policies to recommend updates and innovations using historically-grounded, interdisciplinary methods

Potential Impact

- Identifies and examines previously under-used historic resources
- Reconfigures the history of American research into war trauma by locating it prior to the Vietnam War
- Breaking new ground in American military, medical, and social history
- Illuminates how race, class, and gender norms impacts veterans’ diagnoses care, and postwar treatment
- Expands discourse around Federal responses to veterans’ needs
- Enriches relationships with local veterans’ groups through the collection of oral histories

References and/or Acknowledgements

Nursing Clio;
<https://nursingclio.org/author/bkeown/>

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