

## BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

**Williams, A., K. Jenkins, M. Rech and R. Woodward** (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Military Research Methods*. New York: Routledge, 2016, 432 pp. \$108 hard (9781472442758)

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**M**ilitary operations, military security intelligence, and post-war social problems are increasingly important topics of study in the social sciences. *The Routledge Companion to Military Research Methods* provides insights into how to design and complete research on such topics, and how advances in qualitative methods are being adopted in military studies. As the editors note in their introduction (4), military studies shares a good deal in common with security studies and the sociology of social control, having developed much in the last decade as innovations in qualitative research are applied to empirical topics related to war, conflict, weapons, and militarization.

The chapters in the first section delve into an analysis of texts in military research. This includes reflections on archival research in separate chapters by Matthew Farish and Emily Gilbert, both of whom argue the archives are full of gaps and silences purposefully created by military organizations. Isla Forsyth as well as R. Woodward and K. Jenkins comment on the issue of biographies, memoirs, letters, and correspondence as data used to explore the “life-worlds of military personnel” (75), specifically how difficult it is to deal with fonds rendered incomplete by self- and government censorship (55, 80). K. Jenkins and Daniel Bos assess the use of news media for examining framing of military events, while John Beck reflects on crossover between military studies and studies of literature on war and death. Somewhat out of place in this section, John Schofield and Wayne Cocroft explain the merits of the archeology of recent warfare using aerial photography and excavation.

The next section offers chapters on militaries and interaction. Jocelyn Mawdsley reflects on the challenges of research that compares military strength using numbers and networks. Ross McGarry comments on difficulties that emerge in doing research with living family members of deceased military personnel, which Sue Jervis does as well though from a psychoanalytic perspective and as the spouse of a soldier (170). Amanda Chisholm analyzes her experiences of doing ethnography in

death zones and dangerous places (141). Specifically, she reflects on how respondents and participants gendered her in ways that she had to negotiate during fieldwork, and on the tension she felt having to invest in militarized ways of being and moving to survive (143). Neil Ferguson comments on his experiences of interviews with loyalist and republican paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland. There are also chapters on how to use ethnomethodology in military research, and how to study normativity (e.g. forms of conformity) and “shameful conduct” (199) in military settings.

The chapters in the third section all take up the issue of experience as an object of analysis, but in different ways. John Hockey’s comments on participant observation and attempts at not being “a nuisance to troops” (211) parallel Kenneth MacLeish’s call to conduct ethnographies of the military. Vron Ware’s then provides an ethnographic account of how recruits and junior soldiers (specifically immigrant and migrant soldiers) are indoctrinated with a sense of British-ness during basic training in the United Kingdom (234). Stephen Atherton provides reflections on interviewing and military masculinities as well as the importance of interview location (246). David Walker offers a similar account except with focus on men about to leave the military and who express vulnerability and perform masculinity during interviews. There are also chapters on auto-ethnography and military research as well as the repurposing of historic battlefields in urban landscapes.

The final section is the most adventurous, dealing with issues of visual and sensual ethnographies of the military. Jane Tynan examines visual culture approaches to researching war with a specific focus on camouflage and bodies, while Ian Roderick describes the contributions of a social semiotic understanding of military action as depicted in military image banks. Daniel Bos reflects on studies of military video games, while K. Jenkins, Ann Murphy and R. Woodward discuss the use of photo-elicitation in military research with “army wives” (350). Reflecting on their own exhibitions, Matthew Flintham and Gair Dunlop assess the ways artistic productions can challenge viewers to think differently about the military.

*The Routledge Companion to Military Research Methods* is a comprehensive text. The scope of the volume is amazing. But no book can do it all. There were a few items I thought could have used more attention. First, other than one page in the chapter by Ross McGarry (133), there are hardly any chapters that reflect on the relationship between theory and research methods. This reproduces a similar problem found in other methods texts. It is difficult to provide instruction on the relationship between theory and research methods, but it needs to be done.

Second, other than a few pages (30-34) in the chapter by Emily Gilbert, I was surprised by how little mention there was of freedom of information (FOI) law. The times I have spent in Ottawa at the National Library and Archives and in Washington DC at the National Archives were full of rich conversations with military historians and researchers using FOI to access previously classified materials. I know it is a trend in military research, so it was odd not to see that fully reflected in *The Routledge Companion to Military Research Methods*. Finally, the editors go to some lengths to ensure maximum coverage from military studies, from archival research to quantitative, to qualitative, and even artistic works that examine interaction, experiences, and the senses. Though Justin Sikore (287) does examine military heritage sites, one empirical domain that does not receive much attention here is military museums; this is odd given that many past and present military personnel curate and staff these sites and that these museums are often housed on former or current military bases. It seems like military memorialization at museums is a topic that scholars involved in military research would not want to miss out on.

Nevertheless, *The Routledge Companion to Military Research Methods* should appeal to all scholars in the social sciences who examine military operations, security intelligence, or the social problems created by conflict and occupation.

University of Winnipeg

Kevin Walby

**Kevin Walby** is Associate Professor and Chancellor's Research Chair, Department of Criminal Justice, University of Winnipeg. He is co-author with R. Lippert of *Municipal Corporate Security in International Context* (2015, Routledge). He is co-editor of *Access to Information and Social Justice: Critical Research Strategies for Journalists, Scholars and Activists* with J. Brownlee (2015, ARP Books), *National Security, Surveillance, and Terror: Canada and Australia in Comparative Perspective* with R.K. Lippert, I. Warren and D. Palmer (2017, Palgrave), as well as *The Handbook of Prison Tourism* with J. Wilson, S. Hodgkinson, and J. Piche (2017, Palgrave). He is co-editor of the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* and book review editor for *Surveillance & Society*.

