



ROUTLEDGE
HANDBOOKS



The Routledge Companion to Military Research Methods

Edited by Alison J. Williams, K. Neil Jenkins,
Matthew F. Rech and Rachel Woodward

THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION TO MILITARY RESEARCH METHODS

This new handbook is about the practices of conducting research on military issues.

As an edited collection, it brings together an extensive group of authors from a range of disciplinary perspectives whose chapters engage with the conceptual, practical and political questions raised when doing military research. The book considers a wide range of questions around research about, on, and with, military organisations, personnel and activities, from diverse starting-points across the social sciences, arts and humanities.

Each chapter in this volume:

- Describes the nature of the military research topic under scrutiny and explains what research practices were undertaken and why.
- Discusses the authors' research activities, addressing the nature of their engagement with their subjects and explaining how the method or approach under scrutiny was distinctive because of the military context or subject of the research.
- Reflects on the author's research experiences, and the specific, often unique, negotiations with the politics and practices of military institutions and military personnel before, during and after their research fieldwork.

The book provides a focussed overview of methodological approaches to critical studies of military personnel and institutions, and processes and practices of militarisation and militarism. In particular, it engages with the growth in qualitative approaches to military research, particularly research carried out on military topics outside military research institutions. The handbook provides the reader with a comprehensive guide to how critical military research is being undertaken by social scientists and humanities scholars today, and sets out suggestions for future approaches to military research.

This book will be of much interest to students of military studies, war and conflict studies, and research methods in general.

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Alison J. Williams, K. Neil Jenkins,
Matthew F. Rech and Rachel Woodward

1

AN INTRODUCTION TO MILITARY RESEARCH METHODS

*Matthew F. Rech, K. Neil Jenkins,
Alison J. Williams and Rachel Woodward*

What's so special about military research methods? And why a whole book dedicated to them? This edited collection aims to comment on and give testament to the specificity of military research and the variety of methods deployed to address it. Military research poses a unique set of practical challenges for researchers working in civilian research contexts – challenges which are seldom found in other spheres of social-scientific research. These might relate to issues of access (to certain spaces, to research participants, to classified or redacted documents), to gatekeeper relations amid a convoluted and often gendered military hierarchical culture, or to the sensitivities of remembrance and the violation of bodies. Our original starting point with this book, informed by our own experiences and those of colleagues investigating a range of military-related topics in the social sciences and humanities, was to explore these sorts of issues in quite practical terms. We feel there is an urgent need for this since, although social science and humanities research into the military and the militarisation of Western democracies has developed and expanded in recent years, there is much more work to do. We argue that this lack of research is due, at least in part, to the unique challenges of developing military research methodologies, and hope that this collection may facilitate new and empirically rich scholarship from critical military perspectives.

This book is also warranted because, in our experience, military research almost inevitably requires some sort of personal engagement with questions about the politics of research, and with positionality. This might entail an explicit statement by the researcher on their attitude towards questions of military power and its consequences, or a more personal, internal negotiation of one's relationship to the military establishment. Reflexive awareness of researcher position means different things to the contributors to this volume. For some, doing military research entails the development or utilisation of a critical distance from the object of critique (i.e. militaries), one which involves an exploration of the myriad social, political and cultural consequences of military forces, militarisation and war-making. For others, it entails a more proximate inspection of the internal dynamics of military institutions and life-worlds through research facilitated by, or perhaps produced for, military organisations themselves.

For still others, military forces or institutions may constitute part of the context for research which, while not explicitly directed at the military, is irrevocably shaped by it. What we hope to show through this collection is that, above all else, there is a specificity to military research which suggests the need for attentiveness to the practicalities of research in military contexts, a reflexivity about that context, and a sensitivity to the ramifications of methods employed whatever the researcher's position.

The outcomes of military research are in part orientated towards the concepts and disciplinary debates which prompt research activities in the first place. However, this book is important, we argue, because room must be made for considerations of military research methods in their own right. Thus, this volume intends to speak to practicalities, politics, positions and complexities in an ever-growing and multidisciplinary scholarly landscape characterised by little consensus but much possibility. Our aim has been to do this in a format which provides insights into the range of topics and approaches for those with little experience of military research. For those with greater experience, we hope to provoke fresh ideas, new responses, and alternative approaches to the diverse conceptual, political and personal issues which military research raises.

In the remainder of this introduction we consider these themes in more detail. First, we focus on a key contextual issue, and foreground a discussion of military research methods by considering debates around the terms 'militarism' and 'militarisation'. We also raise questions about the continued relevance (or otherwise) of the identification of military specificity in methodological terms. We suggest that there is indeed a particularity to research in military contexts and on military topics, and explore the reasons why we believe this to be so. Second, we turn to the relationship between the methodological diversity of contemporary research on military-related topics, and more traditional methods and approaches originating in the social sciences in the post-Second World War period. Looking back, we try to explain the dominance of quantitative methodologies in military research, and point to the possibilities opened up, looking forward, by qualitative approaches, including those inspired by and developed in the arts and humanities. The third contextual issue we discuss concerns the position of the researcher and the scale and focus of inquiry. The 'military researcher', we suggest, often inhabits conflicted and contradictory positions vis-à-vis the politics of research. Drawing upon arguments articulated by critical approaches to military studies (e.g. Enloe, 2015; Rech et al., 2015), we build on this assertion and argue that a serious consideration of positionality here is of much broader methodological relevance than hitherto acknowledged. We conclude this introduction by explaining the purpose and structure of the book, and by introducing each section and its chapters.

Militaries, Militarism and Militarisation?

As noted earlier, what concerns the authors in this book are militaries, militarism and militarisation. In this respect, one of our central contentions is that a lack of methodological rigour, variety and reflexivity in military studies corresponds to the lack of clarity with which scholars in the social and political sciences have conceptualised these phenomena. We can begin to explore this contention by offering a more-or-less clear definition of the terms. First, *militaries* might be defined as the organisations authorised by sovereign powers to orchestrate

state-sanctioned violence. However this traditional, state-centric definition hides complexities, slippages and overlaps (not least between the state and a variety of nonstate, quasi-military actors). It also obscures a fuller understanding of what militaries are, how they operate, and who and what they are composed of.

Militaries play a complex and adaptive role in the world, and increasingly so. However, in its very essence this expanded role challenges the meaning of 'militaries' implied in a state-centric definition. For example, while militaries are undoubtedly composed of men and women trained to use equipment and techniques which enable them to ensure the security of the state by force of arms, in recent years the rise of private military contractors (PMCs) has radically challenged this notion. Work by Higate (2012a, 2012b, 2013) illustrates that the word 'military' has been appropriated by PMCs to describe a group of trained individuals working to ensure the security of their employers through the threat and use of violence. However, PMCs have no recognised official state-sanctioned mandate, nor are they tethered to the defence of any one nation-state. Rather, the military in PMCs stands for a modus operandi: a set of learned behaviours and skills with weapons and allied equipment that cause civilians to take on the appearance and function of an armed state force, with whom they will often work alongside. PMCs are therefore just one illustration of the slippages that are occurring in the use of military terminologies, but one that also relates to personnel, technology and operations.

Another slippage can be found in much of the work done by traditional, state-run military forces themselves. Humanitarian and emergency relief operations, for instance, are an increasingly common mission for states' military forces, and are carried out in addition to more established roles such as peacekeeping and peace support. British Royal Navy ships now regularly carry humanitarian aid and supplies as standard stores in case of emerging need. Recent deployments by units like these to sites of natural disasters and other emergencies offer a different perspective on what military forces can and might achieve. Yet this diversity of operations causes us to question what a military is and is for in the twenty-first century. What these examples suggest is that our definition of militaries needs to be much more nuanced than the one offered earlier. Take the example of the US military. In 2013, at the same time as one of its aircraft carriers and many of its personnel were deployed to provide emergency relief to the hurricane-ravaged Philippines, other members of its forces were perpetrating drone strikes in the tribal areas along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border – the latter leading Amnesty International and others to accuse the US of international war crimes. Furthermore, sections of the military, at least in the UK, are increasingly involved in skills development and human resource training as part of outreach operations to businesses and universities (Woodward et al., 2015).

Militarism, on the other hand, can be defined in straightforward terms as an ideology which promotes the unproblematic acceptance of militaries and their (often preferential) use in international relations. Related to this, *militarisation* describes the processes and practices which support and enable the (re)production of militarism. Again, these terms are problematic and open to challenge, and a range of scholars have sought to consider and contest their implications (most recently Farish, 2013; Stavrianakis and Selby, 2013). Much of this work has emerged from a burgeoning field of scholarship in critical international relations (IR) and geography around the concept of security and the extent to which this concept (and set

of practices) overlaps with and can be used as a alternative to militarism and militarisation. Indeed, Bernazolli and Flint (2009) have suggested that the terms militarism and militarisation should be replaced by the terms 'security' and 'securitisation', which they argue reflect more accurately the increased arming and militarised activities of police forces, as well as the noncombat operations of military organisations, such as the emergency response deployments noted earlier (see also Barkawi, 2011).

The replacement of 'military' with 'security' also illustrates, we suggest, the unease with which some scholars view military terminology. Given the association of military studies with military institutions (which we discuss in more detail later), there is often an eagerness to use the terminologies associated with security and securitisation in order to disassociate contemporary research from traditional military scholarship. While we recognise that issues around, and practices of, security and securitisation are very much in need of critical analysis (see Neocleous, 2008, 2011; Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, 2015), we reject the call to replace the terminology of military with that of security (see Woodward, 2014). Indeed, we contend that the emergence of a security studies and critical security literature requires us to be even more vocal and explicit about research on military forces, their practices and impacts, and to argue that militarism and militarisation remain vitally important terms if our task is to understand and challenge broader questions of power and politics in contemporary society.

The breadth and depth of (principally contemporary) military activities and deployments also means our spectrum of interest here stretches far beyond *just* war. However, while there are myriad subdisciplines that take the social, gendered and cultural constitution of militaries, militarism and militarisation very seriously, there is still little consensus on what, exactly, critical military scholarship should look like. Although recent developments, including the emergence of critical war studies as a conceptual concern within IR (see Barkawi and Brighton, 2011, and Hurst's Critical War Studies book series) and the publication of a new *Critical Military Studies* journal (see Basham et al., 2015), point to exciting new directions, they also imply a further compounding of the 'disciplinarity' of critical military/war studies. Despite this, in the present volume we have sought to provide a range of interventions that are suggestive of a critical military studies and some of its methodological entry points. But this also goes alongside a commitment to cross- and multidisciplinary dialogue, particularly in this case between the social scientists and artists. We have adopted this position because we recognise that warfare is only one (albeit the most newsworthy) facet of what military forces do, the conditions for which are sustained by a much broader set of everyday and often unexceptional practices.

Thus, in compiling this book we have actively sought to align ourselves with an approach which attempts to account for the manifold phenomena surrounding the preparation for war, but not necessarily including it. We do so in part because this allows us to privilege a focus on militaries, militarism and militarisation, terms and activities which, as we've discussed, are much debated. We also do this because critical war studies, as we see it, often fails to account for the breadth of human experiences implicated in and by militaries and militarism (partly because of its preference for theory). Critical military studies, conversely, foregrounds the empirical, focusing on applied and experiential analysis to uncover the range of encounters with the military that pervade our everyday lives.

It is in this conflicted, although vibrant, scholarly landscape that we site *The Ashgate Research Companion to Military Research Methods*. In order to make our argument and take these debates forward in a meaningful way, we argue for the central importance of *method* and a reflexive understanding of how and why research data is sought, gathered, used and presented. In the following section we discuss how methods for undertaking research on and with the military have developed. We offer a brief critique of more traditional approaches to open up space for a discussion of the range of methods articulated in the chapters of this book.

Military Research Methods: From the Traditional to the Critical

Research on the military and military phenomena is not new, but has arguably been neglected relative to other comparable organisations and phenomena of societal importance. Military research as a topic and a discipline needs reinvigorating, especially methodologically, because consideration of the most appropriate ways to account for these phenomena through empirical investigation has, with notable exceptions, been largely absent. The first attempts to account for and understand the attitudes and actions of military personnel were undertaken during and immediately after the Second World War using the relatively new techniques of statistical analysis being developed in sociology (see e.g. Stouffer, 1949; for an overview, see Boëne, 2000). This connection between quantitative methods and military research is also illustrated in the long history of geography's engagements with investigating military phenomena where, traditionally, the development of the tools and techniques of geographical analysis (such as mapping or remote sensing) was undertaken in no small measure for the benefit of military forces (see Woodward, 2004, 2005).

These quantitative methods were innovative in their time and emerged in an academic context where structural functionalism (theoretically) and positivism (methodologically) were in the ascendancy. They were facilitated by the development of practices which enabled the efficient collection of empirical data and the application of statistical techniques for its manipulation through emergent computing technologies. This traditional model of military sociology was, and remains, characterised by a hypothetico-deductive epistemology and a resultant emphasis on positivist methodologies and the development and testing of models of social relations. A number of edited collections give a good introduction to the scope and range of applications of this traditional quantitative sociological approach to the study of the military (see Kümmel and Prüfert, 2000; Caforio, 2003, 2007; Oullet, 2005). That these perspectives have been retained by military sociology over the past four decades, when the social sciences more generally has been marked by a pronounced shift towards methodological pluralism and an increasing scepticism about the claims and limits of quantitative approaches, is notable. For although the legitimacy of qualitative methods as part of the methodological toolbox open to researchers of the military is increasing (see Carreiras and Castro, 2013; Soeters et al., 2014), the fact remains that the study of military phenomena from social science perspectives is dominated by quantitative approaches to a degree unmatched elsewhere. We suggest two possible reasons for this.

First, it is a fact that beyond subdisciplinary areas self-consciously working under the labels of military sociology and military geography, the trend across the social sciences during the post-Second World War period has been for a lack of enthusiasm for studies of

military phenomena (Woodward, 2005). This has been matched by an embrace of conceptual approaches informed by structuralist (primarily Marxist), poststructuralist (including some feminist) and interpretivist philosophies of knowledge (and indeed, conversely, antifoundationalist approaches informed by ethnomethodology), and an orientation in anglophone social science towards the idea of research as a tool assistive of strategies promoting greater social justice. Although it would be overstating the case to see traditional military sociology and military geography as complete intellectual backwaters or dead ends, it is notable that the intellectual drivers of social science from the 1960s onwards have been around topics and theorisations far removed from the study of military phenomena, although this is a trend that is changing.

Second, military sociology emerged as, and has continued to be, a subdiscipline highly attuned to the production, development and maintenance of state military organisations, their management, and the enhancement of their operational capacities. As Higate and Cameron (2006) have noted, military sociology has been dominated by an engineering rather than an enlightenment approach to the study of military phenomena, which has the aim of being of contributory benefit to armed forces and associated government military institutions. Governments and managers with an interest in the possibilities offered by social scientific investigation are notoriously keen on quantitative-based, seemingly definitive, results and less certain about the utility of arguments deploying more culturally nuanced or experiential data. This focus on the numerical representation of reality has probably been reinforced by militarily required assessments of troops and their motivations, which tend to be met with the use of quantitative methods of data collection and analysis.

Moreover, the functionalism of much military sociology has additional dynamics which reflect the nature of the military-academic research nexus (Jenkins et al., 2011). It is notable that many social scientists maintain close working relationships with military institutions by either working within or closely alongside them. Note, for example, the relationship between the RAND Corporation, responsible for much defence and security research in the US, and the US military establishment itself (RAND, 2015). In the UK, the close relationship between researchers at Kings College London, a major centre for military sociology, and key Ministry of Defence and armed forces training establishments is clearly mutually beneficial (KCL, 2015). Many military sociologists working within German, Dutch and Belgian contexts also have close military connections through their bases in the Bundeswehr Institute of Social Sciences, the Royal Netherlands Military Academy and the Royal Military Academy of Brussels, respectively. Alongside sociology, anthropologists also have a history of collaboration with the US military in particular (AAA, 2007) – a situation vehemently pursued by critical scholars, particularly in relation to the Counterinsurgency Field Manual (Network of Concerned Anthropologists, 2009), and the Human Terrain System and Bowman Expedition controversies (Bryan, 2010; Wainwright, 2012).

Leaving aside a broader discussion of the political and ethical issues raised by the military-academic nexus (which are significant but beyond our focus here; see Stavrianakis, 2009), military-social scientific collaboration or interaction – by which we mean work carried out together by military and nonmilitary academic actors whose aim is the co-production of knowledge – has a number of outcomes. First, it facilitates access to data, whether primary or secondary. Second, collaboration involves gatekeepers, who by virtue of their role have

significant authority and power in shaping research trajectories (this applies, of course, to much social scientific research but is more pronounced with ‘total institutions’ like the military). Third, collaboration may require accepting military institutional definitions of acceptable methodologies, conceptualisations of the social world that underpin the development of research questions, and understandings of how research fits a broader national interest dictum. This is evident, for example, in processes surrounding UK Ministry of Defence ethical review of research on topics involving serving military personnel and their families. Summarily, the academic-military nexus in social science facilitates research while shaping the types of research being produced.

To be clear, we are not opposed in principle to quantitative methods in military research, and indeed wonder about the possibility for interventions like critical and feminist Geographical Information Systems (GIS; see O’Sullivan, 2006) to make their way into the military methodological lexicon. Rather, we argue that the predominance of quantitative methods in this field reveals a broader politics of knowledge production that can usefully be challenged by adopting critical qualitative research methodologies (see Jenkins et al., 2011).

Such a shift to the qualitative is vital for military research not just in relation to a politics of knowledge, however. It is also vital because there is a distinct lack of work on militaries, militarism and militarisation engaging with subjectivities, experiences and life-worlds. Within social sciences a range of intensive methods, most obviously interviews, ethnography, biography and the like, offer opportunities to investigate the personal and everyday implications of military activities. These approaches enable us to unpack the complexities of our engagements with military forces in more nuanced ways and across a much greater range of scales, sites, encounters, and perspectives than quantitative data allows. As Basham’s (2013: 8; see also Enloe, 2000) recent exploration of *War, Identity and the Liberal State* rightly indicates, “there is much critical capacity in looking at the ‘humdrum forms’ that militarism and militarisation take,” just as there is in exploring how warfare and war preparedness insinuate themselves into everyday lives. It is to these themes – intimacies, materialities, gendered identities, positionality, and the like – that many of the following chapters speak.

These qualitative approaches thus enable us to dig beneath the surface of the data generated through quantitative inquiry, to challenge the homogeneity of its results and to uncover hidden stories, revealing more nuanced and richer accounts and a more critical understanding of militarisation. However, while these methods lend themselves well to research seeking to explore the implications of military presence and activities beyond the barbed wire of the military camp, they can be more difficult to execute within the confines of military organisations themselves. As some of our authors discuss, these are challenges that provide opportunities to create exciting research encounters and fascinating data, yet they are not without their difficulties and limitations. This book seeks to illustrate the complexities of engaging with qualitative methods as well as considering the utility of the results that can be gleaned from their use.

Our second point of discussion around critical military research methods concerns cross- and interdisciplinarity. This book is testament to the belief that for a fuller and more critical military studies to be realised (one which adequately accounts for the range of phenomena associated with military life-worlds), we must also consider seriously cross-disciplinary,

arts- and humanities-based methods. As Gair Dunlop describes in his chapter in this volume on artistic methods and (soon-to-be) decommissioned military spaces, ‘conventional’ art is indelibly part of military culture, with renderings of notable victories or regimental colours often adorning the walls of military bases. There is also a growing literature analysing artistic interpretations of military materiel, operations and cultures (see Apel, 2009; Williams, 2014). However, most important for those interested in military research methodologies are the efforts of a number of contemporary artists to engage critically and experimentally with the military establishment (e.g. Paglen, 2009, 2010), with current or past military spaces (see the chapters by Flintham, Dunlop and Wilson in this volume) or otherwise with cultures of militarism and militarisation (Banner, 2004, 2012; Berman, 2004, 2008; Friend, 2013; see also Williams, 2014). The methods these artists employ and the broader possibilities for academic-artist collaborations are, for us, just as important as the art itself. And insofar as arts-based and experimental methodologies are gaining purchase in a range of relevant disciplines (e.g. Driver et al., 2002; Thompson, 2009) we are excited by the possibilities their use by critical military scholars might open up.

In addition to this, we also acknowledge the importance of recognising that military methodologies are not just the preserve of academics. The lived-in worlds of militaries and military cultures are an important and perennial focus for journalists, bloggers, writers of fiction and military memoirists. Archives, reportage, novels and memoirs have long provided the military scholar with a source of empirical material on military campaigns, about specific individuals or both, and will continue to do so. But, of course, academics are not the target audience of these texts, and so the journeys of these materials and their impacts and interpretations within popular culture also offer important opportunities to critically investigate the processes of militarisation that occur in popular cultural worlds. In this volume, we point to the range of methods which might be applied to the outputs of both academic and nonacademic military research activities, along with the possibility for collaborative work with their various producers. In summary, we argue that the study of the military, militarism and militarisation warrants not only multidisciplinary engagements, but also methodological experimentation with and beyond the confines of traditional academic disciplines. In the following section we consider how this vision of critically engaged military methodologies impacts upon the position of the researcher and the scale at which military research is located.

Scale, Positionality and Research Foci

The past ten years or so have seen a marked effort across the social and political sciences to rethink the scale at which scholarly investigation of militaries, militarism and militarisation should take place. The context for this shift can be located in a number of subdisciplines across the social sciences. Pivotal to this enterprise has been the work of Christine Sylvester, whose *Experiencing War* (2011), *War as Experience* (2013a) and *Masquerades of War* (2015; see also the associated book series *War, Politics and Experience*) mark a burgeoning of scholarship which seeks to question dominant frames of analysis, principally those associated with IR but also with sociology (in particular McSorley, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2014; McSorley and Maltby, 2012), geography, anthropology (e.g. Lutz, 2001, 2009) and media and communications studies. As Sylvester (2013b: 671) notes, despite IR’s insistence that it knows war, it is

nevertheless “historically disinterested in probing the vast expanse of war’s ordinary.” A genuinely war-focused IR, she notes, should prioritise “looking at the social aspects of war, people and/in/as war” and by “identifying and taking up the marginalized, excluded or hidden social, interactive, moving and changing participants and discourses of war” (Sylvester, 2013b: 671).

The tenor of these engagements is mirrored by work in the field of feminist geopolitics. Here, scholars such as Jennifer Hyndman (2001, 2003, 2007), Jennifer Fluri (2009, 2014), Joanne Sharp, Lorraine Dowler (Dowler and Sharp, 2001; Sharp, 2007) and others have sought to move beyond a “disembodied space of neorealist geopolitics to a field of live human subjects with names, families and hometowns” (Hyndman, 2007: 36). Although not concerned only with matters of militaries, militarism and militarisation, the feminist geopolitical project has as its context a broader attempt by critical geographers to think through the intimate scales of war (Pain, 2015; see also Cowen and Story, 2013), alternative and nonstate securities (Koopman, 2011), the banality of terror (Katz, 2007), the politicisation of the militarised body and the militarisation of childhood and youth (Hörschelmann, 2008; Rech, 2016). These approaches bring into focus an effort to think across and beyond the global and the intimate (e.g. Pain and Staeheli, 2014 and associated special edition), and enable the nuancing and thickening of scholarship that focuses on the strategic and political elements of military research, providing an insight into how processes of militarisation and the production of military power operate at a range of scales from the individual body to the state.

Apart from providing valuable inspiration for this volume, this multidisciplinary rescaling of critical military studies has two significant implications for us. First, it points very clearly to the importance of highlighting the human stories behind militaries, militarism and militarisation. However, it also means thinking seriously about positionality and the role of the researcher. As many of the chapters in this volume demonstrate, we need to think carefully about situating military research amid the life-worlds of researcher and researched and the difficulties inherent to this. Indeed, as some of our authors illustrate, it can be difficult to separate military research from the biography of the researcher (because of personal interest, political inclination, past military service and the like). These are not insurmountable problems, if they are indeed problems at all, although they cannot be overcome by the imposition of rational quantitative methods. Rather, it prompts us to recognise our positions as military researchers, and the value of thinking about and discussing method in order to situate our practices of knowledge production. However, while recognising our own positionality as an important part of critical military research, it does confront us with the question of *our own* militarisation, as some of our authors note. In recognising the human stories intrinsic to militarisation and the operation of military forces, we have to be aware of our own roles in and around these stories and the recursive processes at work that inculcate us, for example, with military knowledge, with the ability to understand military jargon or the capacity to operate effectively within military landscapes. Thus critical military studies must take account of these intersections, and problematise and resolve them every bit as much as we question the problematic objectivity of quantitative data practices.

These positional complexities lead us to the second implication of rescaling critical studies of the military. This concerns the issue of criticality, and specifically, whether being critical of militaries, militarism and militarisation can and should necessitate an antiwar and/or

antimilitary stance on the part of the researcher. As we noted earlier, some scholars have actively sought to distance themselves semantically from military research through the adoption of critical war studies or a security studies frame. For those of us who have sought to adopt a critical military studies perspective, the drive to ensure we are not associated with traditional military research can result in or be driven by an a priori antimilitarist stance. In the field of critical geography, a similar move to radically dissociate contemporary scholarship from geography's imperial and military past has led some to offer a distinctly nonviolent vision for critical geopolitics (Megoran, 2008). Although geographers point out the often entangled and conflictual nature of antimilitarism (e.g. Davis, 2011; Woon, 2013) and peace-building (McConnell et al., 2014), it is clear that some in the discipline are committed to "destabilizing, contesting and challenging a killing society . . . [and to building] a broad coalition of academics and activists who are focused on positive peace building practices . . . and on alternatives to war and militarism" (Tyner and Inwood, 2011: 453). What this 'broad coalition' might look like is arguable. However, there are clear opportunities in the field of popular culture where, in the spirit of Ingram's (2011) work, scholars profile the work of dissident artists, hackers and culture jammers (Martin and Steuter, 2010; Stahl, 2010). Engagements with activists and in activism could also offer a productive avenue too, perhaps as part of scholarship around counter-military recruitment (Allison and Solnit, 2007; Harding and Kershner, 2011; Friesen, 2014). Adopting an antimilitary positionality towards topics needs also to be examined reflexively as part of the methodology in the same way that any promilitary inculcation needs to be.

However, while this critical and antimilitarist work offers significant insights, we suggest that it is equally important to recognise the ability to adopt a critical stance that also advocates *working with* militaries (as many of our contributors have done), rather than shunning them, in order to create opportunities to develop the nuanced, rich and intensive methodological engagements discussed throughout this volume. We adopt this stance because we believe there is room to influence change in military institutions – or at least to try and open up possibilities for this – via research and collaboration. This sort of work would necessarily have to be reflexive about positionality, critical about military organisations and practices, yet alive to the complexities and nuances of military forces and processes of militarisation, many of which can only be unpacked and critiqued through close and collaborative engagement (Rech et al., 2015).

The Structure of the Book

In the remainder of this chapter we introduce each of the four sections of the book and the chapters therein, illustrating how this critical approach to military research can be adopted through the use of a variety of methods and from a range of disciplinary positions.

Section 1: Texts

The first set of chapters focuses on how social science and arts and humanities scholars engage with military-related texts, ranging from official archives to personal memoirs. Each of the chapters sets out to discuss a particular methodological engagement and to critique and

reflect the author's experience of working with these documentary sources. The first three chapters in Section 1 focus on different experiences of using archival material as a basis for military research. Matthew Farish (chapter 2) begins with a set of reflections on being a civilian social science researcher working with official US and Canadian military archives, often located on active military bases. He discusses a range of challenges, including the practical issues of gaining access to repositories on closed military sites, to intellectual concerns with the partiality and bias of these collections. Emily Gilbert (chapter 3) takes up these ideas through a focus on access to potentially sensitive records. Her work profiles the difficulties faced when attempting to extract information from the US military's financial transaction records relating to death payments to civilians in Iraq. Gilbert succinctly illustrates some of the key issues that research on military texts brings to the surface: freedom of information requests, redaction of material, and the partiality of record-keeping. Completing the focus on the utility of the military archive, Isla Forsyth (chapter 4) discusses the opportunities offered by archival records and the detective work that is required to make best use of these collections. Subsequently, Forsyth reflects on producing biographies for people who, despite not being on the front lines of military operations, nonetheless impacted military policy and practice.

The next three chapters in the Section 1 take us in different directions and focus on published textual material. K. Neil Jenkins and Daniel Bos (chapter 5) describe their experience of using UK newspapers to conduct research on the town of Wootton Bassett (made famous because it was the host for a number of roadside ceremonies which marked the repatriation of the bodies of British service personnel between 2007 and 2010). Jenkins and Bos discuss the complexities of using online search tools, both specialist newspaper databases and specific newspaper search engines, to amass a set of source material that could be analysed for the project. Their chapter provides useful insights into the issues and opportunities that textual methodologies offer. Next, Rachel Woodward and K. Neil Jenkins (chapter 6) discuss the utility of and processes for using published military memoirs as a research tool. Drawing upon extensive experience, they offer reflections on how researchers can engage with these mass-market media, the caveats that must be borne in mind when using this source material to gain insights into military operations, and how these books offer a view into information not available in official military histories. John Beck (chapter 7) discusses how fictional literature has engaged with and represented war and militarism. He offers a unique perspective, suggesting how such works of literature can be analysed to understand how ideas of militarism permeate fictional worlds.

The final chapter by John Schofield and Wayne Cocroft (chapter 8) documents how archaeological work on twentieth-century military sites has not only generated insights into military activities across the century, but also informed archaeological practice more broadly. Military archaeological practice, they argue, offers a broader framework for understanding armed conflict, and suggests how the ground can be read as a text.

Section 2: Interactions

Section 2 brings together chapters under the theme of interactions. The scene is set by Jocelyn Mawdsley (chapter 9), who makes the case for an interpretivist approach to data collection

and analysis. Mawdsley illustrates some of the problems that arise when using large-scale data sets to investigate military activities. This is contrasted with a discussion of some of the benefits of using case studies of the relationships between and activities of military research participants. Ross McGarry (chapter 10) recounts a study of the repatriation of the bodies of British service personnel through the small English town of (now Royal) Wootton Bassett. These repatriations emerged as a significant phenomenon in recent British military culture; events which McGarry frames as happening in a 'liminal' space facilitated and sustained by the townsfolk. McGarry makes a differentiation between research at 'long' and 'short' ranges and makes the case for the importance of ethnographic investigations. Amanda Chisholm (chapter 11) then gives a personal and practical account of undertaking an ethnography of private security contractors as a multinational community in Afghanistan. She illustrates the practicalities of gaining and maintaining access in a war zone where issues of race and gender are both embodied in the practices of the researcher and researched, but also constantly negotiated through interactions with gatekeepers and participants and in the requirements of personal security. Chisholm demonstrates that interaction within and beyond straightforward fieldwork activities constitutes reflexive data in itself, and may also be the context in which other data is made meaningful.

Neil Ferguson (chapter 12) turns to the Troubles in Northern Ireland and offers an introduction to the nature of the conflict and the origins of participation in it for paramilitary members on both sides of the sectarian divide. Ferguson's use of an interpretative phenomenological analysis relies on interviews with both open and semistructured phases. This required the utmost discretion with regards to the security of both the interviewers and the participants, highlighting the sensitivity required when dealing with topics of sectarian and political violence. Ferguson notes the stresses placed on all concerned, in terms of access and topics covered, and the benefits of a small team to minimise their impact. The psychological orientation of some research methodologies is also illustrated by Sue Jervis (chapter 13), who broadens the notion of a 'participant' in military institutions in her investigation of military service spouses (a category which includes her) and their relationship to military environments. She explains practical issues such as negotiating access, but also outlines the psychologically informed reflexive research method she adopted involving questionnaires, interviews and participant case studies.

Christopher Elsey, Michael Mair, Paul V. Smith and Patrick G. Watson (chapter 14) look at interaction directly in their ethnomethodological and conversation analysis study of an incident of so-called friendly fire during the second Gulf War. Here, the interactions analysed were those captured on cockpit video and taken from transcripts from a subsequent court martial. Not only do they make the case for a conversation analysis methodology, but they also illustrate the problems of using secondary data without understanding the nature of the interactional practices which go into the production and collection of data. They also suggest that what data is said to be and show might fruitfully be investigated through an understanding of how research participants themselves interpret their own conversational data. Finally, Aaron Belkin (chapter 15), in an impassioned piece, asks us to look at a broader interactional context for military research, and specifically the relationship between citizens and their militarised governments. Using the case of the US, he argues that a normalisation of structured contradictions allows the US government to pursue militarism and militarisation,

the barbarity of which, he argues, is portrayed as a noble activity. Belkin urges us to use our research to reveal such structures, and in doing so reminds us that while attending to methodology we should also commit to a dissident and relevant critical military studies.

Section 3: Experiences

Section 3 examines the lived experiences of doing military research. It includes chapters by authors from a range of disciplinary backgrounds who have widely varying personal biographies and equally differing research intentions. The section begins with John Hockey's (chapter 16) reflections on fieldwork conducted with a British infantry platoon, in which the challenges of participant-observation and the ethnographic encounter are explored in reference to both his conceptual framework and personal experiences of military service. This includes a discussion of the presentation of the self in the field, and of the negotiation of this self with research participants. Kenneth MacLeish (chapter 17) uses his experiences as an anthropologist working in Fort Hood, again using ethnographic methods, to tackle quite explicitly what ethnographic writing can bring to wider frames of knowledge about military institutions, and particularly the politics of knowing and understanding. Vron Ware (chapter 18) tells the story of her involvement as a sociologist researching the recruitment of Commonwealth personnel in the contemporary British Army. This includes a discussion of the challenges of writing about military forces and their activities, including a negotiation of the different assumptions and expectations of her diverse readership. Stephen Atherton (chapter 19) considers how, in his research on military masculinities and the places and practices of domesticity, the dynamics of interview encounters generated insights into the role of emotion and ethics in the production of knowledge. David Walker (chapter 20) explores how his engagements with the idea of 'insider-ness' shaped his approach to researching the exit strategies of career soldiers, and uses his experiences of empirical data collection to reflect on the possibilities and limits of insider perspectives.

The final two chapters engage with rather different sites for research. Matthew F. Rech and Alison J. Williams (chapter 21) reflect on attending airshows, and interrogate their personal motivations as critical military researchers *and* willing participants in these military cultural events. Justin Sikora (chapter 22) concludes the section by offering an account of heritage issues on historic battlefields. Specifically, he explores the paradoxes apparent in negotiating sites which, despite their military past, bear scant traces of that military imprint in the present.

Section 4: Senses

In Section 4, the authors consider how various sensory faculties are enrolled by military researchers (and by research participants), and the accompanying politics of sense-making. Beginning with a piece which denotes the breadth of possibility for a multisensory approach to military research, Jane Tynan (chapter 23) investigates the militarised body and uniform design, and implicates the researcher in a complex set of inquiries into representational, visual and material worlds – a theme which recurs throughout the section. In chapter 24, Ian Roderick offers an insight into the multiple (and multiplying) representational spaces in

which the military researcher is often implicated, and in doing so provides thoughts on the social semiotics of US Department of Defense military image banks. Next, Daniel Bos (chapter 25) and K. Neil Jenkins, Ann Murphy and Rachel Woodward (chapter 26) demonstrate the porous and unstable boundaries of 'representation'. Bos's chapter explores the on- and off-line worlds of military gaming and the intricacies of player engagement with a simultaneously discursive and material phenomenon. Jenkins, Murphy and Woodward explore the utility of image-elicited interviews, and demonstrate how photography is particularly suited to revealing the British military's visual culture.

Matthew Flintham's chapter (27) on visualising military airspace is the first of four artistic interventions into military research methods offered also by Gair Dunlop (chapter 28), Neal White and Steve Rowell (chapter 29) and Louise K. Wilson (chapter 30). Each chapter explores sight, sound and haptics in different ways, and speaks, notably, to invisible, off-limits or secret military and ex-military spaces. Gair Dunlop explores the methodological strategies he adopted in his work documenting military base closures, which are often protracted periods in which processes of remembering become shared between military and civilian populations. White and Rowell describe a range of research projects under the banner of 'The Office of Experiments' – an artists' collective exploring the relationship between culture and the techno-scientific and military-industrial complexes – offering a photoessay on their overt methodological practices in extraordinary, sometimes off-limits military spaces. Louise K. Wilson, in perhaps the most polemical treatment of the 'sovereign sense' in military research, engages auditory perception and deals with the militarised soundscapes of Cold War Britain. This section, therefore, deals in large part with the senses as the researcher enrolls them methodologically. But it also asks how the senses are often themselves militarised, and how regimes of sense-making are co-opted by the military establishment. However, and while we do not engage with this in the present volume, these chapters reflect the fact that senses of pleasure, enjoyment, thrill, desire and their corresponding sensory faculties should be more seriously considered in critical military research. As Joanna Bourke (2000: 1) reminds us, the characteristic act of war is killing – something which is prosecuted by "individuals [who in so doing are potentially] transformed by a range of conflicting emotions – fear as well as empathy, rage as well as exhilaration." Therefore, along with 'fear, anxiety and pain', a focus on senses also implies an equivalent interrogation of 'excitement, joy and satisfaction' (Bourke, 2000), as experienced both by research subjects and military researchers.

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SECTION 1

Texts

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2

REFLECTIONS ON RESEARCH IN MILITARY ARCHIVES

Matthew Farish

In the summer of 2008, I travelled to Alaska for the first time. Since World War II, the territory – and then state – has been the scene of tremendous activity for the US military, and I was seeking sources on the Cold War–era radar construction and environmental research conducted by the Air Force. While I made plans to visit several libraries and archives, including the exceptional northern collection at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, a key purpose of the trip was to work in the 3rd Wing History Office at Elmendorf Air Force Base, not far from downtown Anchorage.¹ Gaining entry to the base was surprisingly straightforward. Before landing in Alaska, I had corresponded with an archaeologist whose office was at Elmendorf. One morning, she picked me up at my university residence in her Subaru station wagon, and vouched for me as we passed through the gates of the base. At the small History Office, my exchanges were almost exclusively with one friendly staff member who had previously worked for the National Park Service. These interactions were small reminders that the US Department of Defense, the subject of most of my research over the last decade, is a vast and complicated institution.

Still, I recall a distinct sensation of estrangement at Elmendorf. Having been raised in a large Canadian city, in an upper-middle-class neighbourhood, with a distant American cousin as my sole connection to the armed forces, I knew remarkably little about military affairs before I entered graduate school. As a child, I wasn't permitted to possess military-themed toys, although I managed to see my share of violent American films, from *Missing in Action* (1984) and *Predator* (1987) to *Navy Seals* (1990) and *Under Siege* (1992). But these mediocre movies did not fully prepare me to encounter Elmendorf's 'mall', complete with the large retail store, off-limits to visitors, known as a Base Exchange, or BX. I saw a kiosk selling bumper stickers with slogans like "I didn't fight my way to the top of the food chain to eat vegetables." At the nearby Burger King, one of the few options for lunch, I ate my veggie-burger while surrounded by tables of uniformed personnel, as Fox News blared on several wall-mounted televisions. (I remember initiating a conversation with my host about the relatively unknown governor of Alaska, Sarah Palin; weeks later, she was chosen by

Senator John McCain to be his running mate in that year's presidential election.) It was my first encounter with what Chalmers Johnson called the "base world": a combination of familiar and dramatically unusual, little-known elements that I encountered again the following year in Alabama, and one – as Johnson stressed – that is present in hundreds of additional US facilities around the globe (Johnson, 2004; Gillem, 2007).

The same uncanny condition clouded my research practices at Elmendorf. My tasks and habits resembled those I have performed in other, nonmilitary repositories. I sat at a table in a reading room, sifting through and occasionally photographing documents pulled from a set of filing cabinets arrayed around the outside of the room, and making steady notes on my laptop. With the exception of detailed internal histories of the Alaska Air Command, the material I saw was of a recognizably scattered sort: folders stuffed with newspaper clippings, perfunctory letters and memoranda, and reports on individual operations or the construction of facilities.

Occasionally, unsure of the History Office's scope or sequence, I would pose a question to my host. As is the case in many small archives, I was the only visitor present that week, and he was able to respond quickly or point me to a new set of documents. But the reading room was adjacent to another room holding classified or more sensitive materials, and I was not permitted to enter that space. Most archives are premised on layers of access, but there was something notably palpable about this arrangement. Working in military facilities induces immediate and unavoidable confrontations with the making, sharing and storing of knowledge, and the hierarchies that make this knowledge available to some and not to others.

Research at Elmendorf, then, was meaningfully if not completely distinct from my time at other, nonmilitary archives, including state and university repositories. While my tenure on the base was inevitably unique, owing to my project and my identity, I suspect that I am not the first scholar to encounter such differences. Despite a growing body of what can broadly be called 'critical' research on militaries, militarism and militarization, and despite a wealth of sophisticated writing on archives, reflections on military archives – on their origins, mandates and the experiences of encountering, reproducing and analyzing the knowledge they store – are rare. In part, this is due to the lack of interest in methodological or even philosophical questions for one strain of military historian, but that no longer seems like much of an excuse. Military archives are of course themselves state archives, and this chapter is preoccupied with the parallels and intersections between military and state records, but also the discontinuities.²

My time at Elmendorf and other similar sites suggests that the distinguishing features of official military archives are limited access to material for visitors lacking clearances and narrow collections that are nonetheless made to seem *definitive*. These qualities are not unique to military repositories, but the corresponding fences and walls of bases themselves, and the secondary but substantial arrangements of secrecy and security within those bases, signal their specific profundity. For researchers, the result, I propose, is a feeling of inconsequentiality, but also a sharp sense of one's own self in relation to the subjects and politics of research. In my case, working at military archives has, among other outcomes, led to additional reflection on my own privilege and the frustrations inherent in critical research on military geographies. What follows is therefore less of a primer than an invitation for further assessment – of my own words, and more importantly of military archives themselves.

Productions of Violence

It is now widely acknowledged that archives are just as multifaceted and idiosyncratic as any other context for fieldwork. Even so, there is no escaping the role of archives as both a locus and a reflection of authority, a role so obvious that it should dispense any belief that archives contain “raw” data (Withers, 2002: 304). In an effective, elegant assessment of the archive as a “place,” Miles Ogborn notes that treating archives as sites (within networks) where knowledge is “produced, stored and reused” means that their histories are inextricable from histories of modern “state formation.” These latter histories concern the exercise of power and control within states, but also beyond their nominal limits. Colonial histories, of course, traverse these boundaries (Ogborn, 2011: 89).

All of this temporal and spatial confusion is another reminder that rather than expelling conflict to an external, international realm, or drawing firm lines between violent and peaceful times and spaces, it is the “normalcy of war,” or the “military normal,” that should be considered (Cowen and Gilbert, 2008: 6; Lutz, 2009). With respect to military archives, these circumstances require two seemingly contradictory moves on the part of researchers: a recognition that such archives and their missions have, like other facets of militarization, been made to seem ordinary; and a refusal, meanwhile, to treat them as merely strange or even irrelevant sites of study. Only by acknowledging the scope of militarization’s normalcy – its presence at the heart of social life in countries like the United States – can this militarization be troubled. As I argue later, however, normalcy does not equal visibility. Militarization thrives on a profoundly spatial combination of presence and absence (MacDonald, 2006; Forsyth, 2014), and archives are both part of this mixture and potential sites for its analysis.

Imperial archives, Ogborn adds, do not simply store the records of empire; they are the *products* of empire, started as states sought to create, manage and hold knowledge concerning colonized spaces and societies (Ogborn, 2011: 89–90; see also Richards, 1993; Hevia, 2012). They were, as Ann Laura Stoler has subtly argued, both registers of colonial anxieties and sites for the literal containment of those anxieties, “arsenals” that could be “reactivated to suit new governing strategies” (Stoler, 2009: 3). While the intentions and actions of militaries might be distinguished from the broader spectrum of colonial government, military archives do affirm two intertwined ‘certainties’ that conceal similar anxieties: a state’s naturalized obligations of defence, and the need, often couched in terms of this defence, to roam violently abroad – and in some cases to stay there at a scale approaching permanence. The military globalism practiced by the United States during and after World War II was accompanied by feverish, haphazard attempts, resonant of earlier colonial efforts, to collect extant information on strategically vital places, and to generate new information, destined for the same collections, on those places (see Barnes, 2005; Farish, 2005). Material remnants of these archival efforts exist in places like the library at Air University on Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama.³

In light of their associations with colonial archives, it is worth noting that the records held in military archives are, to a substantial degree, mind-numbingly detailed and replete with technical language that for visitors verges on the incomprehensible. In many collections, individuals often exist only as signatures on reports or letters, as generic participants in military exercises, or more interestingly, as elusive authors of reports on experiments, enemies, environments and equipment. Military archives do house personal papers, but these tend to

belong to prominent officials, and their content can seem equally anodyne. Across the collections I have studied, few hints of daily life in military spaces, of the emotions of soldiers, of the nuances of war's human geographies and of acts of killing, are present. I am generalizing, to be sure. Regimental diaries and logs from ships and planes are obvious counter-examples that have been thoroughly and skilfully used by many scholars (even as the respective limitations of these sources must also be acknowledged).⁴ My suspicion, however, is that in military archives, the consolations of historical distance are particularly pronounced, and this distance directly permits a greater diversity and a greater number of available sources. In the United States, this situation is unquestionably related to the vast apparatus of secrecy associated with the Cold War (and specifically the nuclear) security state, a condition – in which some information is infamously “born classified” – that shows no signs of ceasing (see Galison, 2004).

The sources I have encountered in and extracted from military archives are rarely valuable alone. Even when subjected to a seemingly sophisticated reading, they benefit, in terms of their positions in narratives and arguments, from juxtaposition with other texts, including media stories, oral histories, memoirs, forms of popular culture and period publications written by scholars conducting military-sponsored research. At intervals I need to remind myself that these other texts are *proximate* to the endless unit histories or operations reports held in military archives.⁵ Moreover, the prosaic qualities of the latter are, one might say, calculated; they are effective devices for the separation of militaries from civilian realms on the one hand, and the reduction of military activity to bureaucracy on the other.

Authority and Visibility

In addition to their functions as “venue[s] for the localization of knowledge,” archives also serve as proving grounds for those who wish to reproduce and reposition that knowledge in another validated form. Part of the authority of archives, in other words, lies not just in what they hold, but the potent demand that researchers should or must use these holdings to justify claims about the past (Ogborn, 2011: 88, 92). This is a sobering reminder for those who approach archives, especially military repositories, intending to work against the grain in some manner: it is crucial to deliberate on the compromises made just by entering a facility, reading its records and incorporating them into one's prose.⁶ After all, these records amount to histories of violence, however obliquely represented, and to employ this history can be a source of professional credentials. Some of my own publications have been commended by peer reviewers for my use of unusual sources – sources that are rare, at least, within my immediate intellectual community. In part this is due to the intriguing and quite stark separation of military geography, and militaries more generally, from the various spheres of professional geography – since the middle of the twentieth century, at least (Farish, 2009). But if the use of unfamiliar sources ultimately engenders ‘expertise’, questions linger: what sort of proficiency does this amount to, and at what cost?

Excruciating silences populate military archives. Stories of the dead and wounded are omitted, restrained or romanticized, depending on who those individuals and communities were. But in addition, as Ogborn suggests, discussions about saving, destroying or ordering material invite yet broader queries: “what ideas of permanence, and what stability of material allow the archive to come into being?” If stories need to be “stilled in order for them to be

effectively archived,” and if these stories are then granted *regularity*, the very premise of a military archive, and the use of that archive, is fraught (Ogborn, 2011: 89; see also Withers, 2002: 304).

For example, the Canadian Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH), a Department of National Defence entity rather ambiguously separate from the National Archives, is “mandated to preserve and communicate military history,” but also to “foster pride in a Canadian military heritage.” This double obligation is not altogether distinct from the efforts of state archives, although it would be erroneous to conflate nationalism with military ‘pride’. But the history recorded and produced at DHH has another purpose: “to deepen professional knowledge of policy evolution, grand and military strategy, operations, and tactics, in the contexts of social, technological and infrastructure change.”⁷ What is a researcher with different intentions to make of this objective, in relation to the prose that she hopes to produce? If, as the critic Scott McLemee (2013) claims, users of archives learn “to frame questions that the archive knows how to answer,” while hopefully “remaining open to . . . secrets and surprises,” sites like DHH, by design, permit a slender range of questions, contain few surprises and essentially dare visitors to produce work that lacks military utility. This does not mean that different pathways are unavailable to creative researchers. Ogborn reminds us that it is easy to overemphasize archival systematicity or a simple relationship between archives and “projects of power” (Ogborn, 2011: 91; see also Withers, 2002: 305). But in military archives, where even disorder can come to seem deliberate, the challenge is steep – and this predicament is too often ignored.

The ambition of DHH to shape ‘Canadian identity’ seems primarily to refer to the activities of its employees. If I ruminated on this sweeping premise at all in 2004, when I first visited the facility, a nondescript building in a rather desolate part of southern Ottawa, I did so in a different vein. Still, it was impossible to ignore the preponderance of traditional military historians working there. I stood out, a student employee informed me, simply because I was a geographer, even if I was requesting similar documents. Military history, like military geography, often seems severed from the rest of its host discipline. This is presumably because of the work that military historians do, or are understood to do. But as with military geography, military history certainly continues to be produced, often in institutions that (like the work itself) are dismissed or ignored by other academics. This dismissal is a mistake on three counts: (1) such scholarship can be more nuanced than is initially presumed; (2) it is invariably connected to other fields, such as environmental history and political geography; and (3) put simply, facilities like DHH should not be left to military historians alone.

The last plea became especially acute after the arrival in 2006 of a federal government in Canada led by the Conservative Stephen Harper (who finally won a majority of seats in 2011). All such governments are keen to shape national identity, but Harper and his associates directly approached this task through the language and symbolism of military heritage. The instances are multiple, from a revised citizenship ‘study guide’ to celebrations of past wars as arduous but ultimately redemptive instances of nation-building (see Mackay and Swift, 2012). For me, the most intriguing example was the prime minister’s annual trip to various locations in the Canadian north, a journey coordinated to coincide with a major ‘sovereignty exercise’ called Operation Nanook (Dodds, 2012; Farish, 2013b). This was not just a demonstration of military efficacy. Nanook’s designation as an expression of sovereignty