

CORPS

The term 'Corps' (pronounced 'core'), is used to describe a wide range of military formations and functions. The most common application of the term internationally defines the coming together of two or more military divisions of ground combat forces as a result of need in times of war; however in the United Kingdom a Corps also refers to a professional branch or skill set such as the Marine Corps or Signal Corps. In its broadest sense, the Corps is an *organised military unit* that are trained to perform specific duties.

Classical approaches to studies of the military and its structure have taken the same shape as other studies of institutions (e.g. prisons and schools) to ascertain distinct features such as the values, behaviours, norms and rules. The military organisation is distinct for many reasons, not least its occupational culture and the use of lethal force which place the soldier in a unique relationship with the State. In order to analyse military corps beyond their specific functions one must first consider the military as an institution.

The military is a social phenomenon that is understood across a range of intellectual traditions, disciplines and sub-disciplines - for instance, sociology, international relations, politics, peace studies, war studies, law, psychology and more recently criminology all consider the military, whilst military sociology and critical military studies take the military as their subject. Higate and Cameron (2006) suggest that this vast literature approaches the military organisation in one of two ways; either they follow an 'engineering' model of analysis or they follow an 'enlightenment' model of analysis.

The engineering model is attributed to traditional military sociology in North America and Europe and is concerned with the functioning of the military and the modes in which military objectives are met. These research projects are positivist by nature that acknowledge the effects of military (and their specific Corps formations) on individuals as variables to be identified, measured and mapped (Winslow, 2007).

The enlightenment model, in contrast, seeks to bring individual subjectivities to the surface that are by and large hidden. This approach comes to know the values, behaviours, norms and rules of military Corps as they are experienced by the regulated subject. This research is inevitably concerned with gendered norms, identities and systems which are carefully constructed 'as a consequence of their positioning in relation to gendered systems of power and privilege' (Woodward and Jenkins 2011, p 255). Armed forces are predominantly male and rely upon conditioned male roles shaped by social constructions of what it means to be a male heterosexual warrior (see Winslow, 2010). The function of any military Corps is to effect military objectives with the division of labour rationalised accordingly. Woodward and Winter (2007) critique these gendered norms as anything but *natural*. Instead these gendered systems are specific and intentional with the potential to use lethal force central at the core of military corps arrangements. As such, any analysis of military formations must understand that gender politics represent not only powerful representations of masculinity and femininity in operations but also serve to reinforce militarism more broadly. When one starts from the premise that state power can be analysed at the micro-level as well as the macro-level new understandings of how that power is enacted, executed and experienced are possible.

To date this sort of research has been able to unpack military masculinities, female integration, sexual behaviours and attitudes, the vulnerability of soldiers as well as how they may exploit their power are further realised through an interpretive scholarship. These new directions not only illustrate the merits of coming to know the armed forces in this way but understand the civil-military relationship in such a way that the very conditions which make militaries possible are understood (Ouellet, 2005).

EMMA MURRAY

See also:

Readings

Caforio, G. (2003) *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military* (Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research) (eds.) New York: Springer.

Higate, P. and Cameron A. (2006) 'Reflexivity and researching the military', *Armed Forces and Society*, 32 (2): 219-33.

Ouellett, E. (2005) *New directions in military sociology* Whitby ON, de Sitter Publications

Winslow, D. (2007) 'Military organization and culture from three perspectives' in G. Caforio (ed) *Social sciences and the military*. P, 67-88 London: Routledge.

Winslow, D. (2010) 'Military sociology and gender'. Available at https://www.fhs.se/.../Gender%20and%20Military%20Sociology_webb.p.

Woodward, R. and Jenkins, N. (2011) 'Military identities in the situated accounts of British military personnel', *Sociology*, 45(2): 252-268.

Woodward, R. and Winter, T. (2007) *Sexing the soldier: the politics of gender and the contemporary British army*. London: Routledge.