

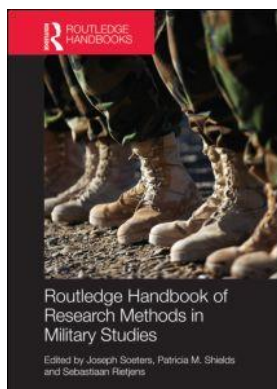
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### **Theory Building in Research on the Military**

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# THEORY BUILDING IN RESEARCH ON THE MILITARY

*Eyal Ben-Ari*

**Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz (1948) “Cohesion and disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 12(2): 280–315.**

This article – one of the classics in military sociology – uses the case of the German Army in World War Two to explore the question of why, despite horrendous losses, its troops continued to fight until the end of the conflict. The authors answer this question by carefully analyzing alternative explanations for soldierly motivation that focused on the following factors: the social structure and dynamics of the organization and especially of small groups, the symbols and ideology that ostensibly moved the troops and the ways in which morale was bolstered or broken, among others by Allied propaganda. By exploring and rejecting alternative explanations, Shils and Janowitz posit that the cause for soldiers’ behaviors and attitudes regarding continued participation in combat was the interpersonal relationships of the primary group within which they were embedded (concretely, groups the size of no more than a company). The article is based on a review of empirical data gathered by the Allied armies during the war: front-line interrogations of prisoners of war, intensive interviews in rear areas, captured enemy documents, statements of recaptured Allied personnel and reports of combat observers. Well aware of the methodological difficulties of using these sources they nevertheless state they can be used fruitfully and convincingly.

Shils and Janowitz conclude that the relationship to the primary group is the strongest predictor of why soldiers went into combat and continued fighting and, in the same vein, why they stopped and surrendered. There are two key arguments here. First, is the extent and manner by which the primary group meets the major personal needs of the individual (including basic organic needs, offering troops affection and esteem from both officers and comrades, providing a sense of power and adequately regulating his relations with authority). Second, primary group behavior, whether deviant or desirable from the organization’s point of view, results from norms formed by primary group interaction. Hence, as long as the primary group, usually the squad or the section, fulfilled their needs, Wehrmacht soldiers were bound by the expectations and demands of its members.

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Theoretically, Shils and Janowitz recognized the impact of secondary groups on individual soldiers, but maintained – in contrast to previous studies – that when compared to primary groups their influence is slight. Their argument, which is akin to the one found in much of the scholarship of the time, emerged out of dissatisfaction with commonly explaining motivation in ideological terms. Their perspective was generalized after World War II when a number of research teams drew attention to cohesion as the primary factor in the motivation of American soldiers (Stouffer et al. 1949). Yet in contrast to a romantic explanation of “a band of brothers” fighting for the military, Shils and Janowitz clearly pointed out that cohesive primary groups may produce behaviors that are not congruent with the goals of the military organization. Thus they showed that units that surrendered as a group were led by “soft-core,” non-Nazi comrades to whom organizational goals were relatively unimportant. To reiterate, the idea at base of their article was to contend with and rule out alternative explanations.

This article has led to many theoretical extensions, critiques and debates (see Ben-Shalom et al. 2005; King 2013; Segal and Kestenbaum 2002; Siebold 2011). Among the critiques directed at it were first that it was difficult to causally demonstrate how cohesion contributes to military performance and effectiveness; second, that it was complicated to conceptualize group cohesion; third, that there is a gap between cohesion under conditions of routine garrison duty or maneuvers and the cohesion that develops under conditions of combat; and fourth, that there are factors contributing to soldierly motivation other than cohesion. Nevertheless this classic essay continues to be part of a long theoretical debate about soldierly behavior decades after its writing and thus persists in the processes by which scholars theorize about the motivation and conduct of troops.

### **Introduction: Theory construction as process**

There has always been a duality to theorizing within the social scientific study of the military. On the one hand, scholars have treated the armed forces as “just” like any other large-scale organization to be described and analyzed by appropriate theoretical constructs. On the other hand, other researchers have focused on its uniqueness as “the” organization charged with the handling of organized (if at times contested) violence and attempted to create theories pertinent to this character of the armed forces (Boëne 1990). It is this duality that has dictated theoretical developments about the armed forces, specifically the application or testing of theories developed in other areas to the military or the development of theories that specifically relate to its particular violent character. Examples of the latter include studies of soldiers in combat that have been rooted in psychology, social-psychology or organizational science or the sophisticated literature on civil-military relations emanating from the potential of the armed forces to take over politics. The article by Shils and Janowitz that opens this chapter is a good example of developing and testing alternative theoretical formulations about the behavior of troops in battle. But the reason for choosing this publication is also because seen against the background of previous and subsequent research it is an excellent example of the processes – the emergent concepts, unforeseen developments, blind alleyways and debatable contentions – by which theories are created over time.

What is theory? What is theorizing? A good starting point is Weick’s (1989; also Eisenhardt 1989; Layder 1993) definition of a theory as “an ordered set of assertions about a generic

behavior or structure assumed to hold throughout a significantly broad range of specific instances.” Whetten (1989) suggests that a complete theory must contain the following essential elements: the factors (variables, constructs, concepts) that should be logically considered part of the explanation of the social or individual phenomenon of interest; the relations between these factors as they are ordered into patterns or causality; and the underlying assumptions about the (psychological, economic, social or other) dynamics that justify the selection of factors and proposed relationships or patterns. Whetten’s idea is that in essence, theory represents a set of demonstrated relationships between selected variables or constructs. In other words, with a proposed theory, the researcher aims to capture and demonstrate the missing relationship(s) in the observed patterns or regularities or to highlight relationships, connections and interdependencies in the phenomenon of interest (Weick 1989).

In a more practical vein, Shields and Rangarajan (2013) suggest that a theory is a way to organize inquiry: a theory refers to the way ideas are organized in order to achieve a project’s aims. Hence, in a later essay, Weick (1995) suggests that for practical reasons – that is, for social scientists as practicing researchers – it is useful to think of theory not as a product but as a process: a constant unfolding of systematically formulated concepts and contentions, and an active engagement or dialogue among scholars. Cibangu (2012: 98; Campbell 1988) adds that theory constitutes a core body of a discipline’s literature which is criticized, evaluated, and revamped over time in a logically articulated manner. In fact, the processual character of theory building should be understood as taking part on two analytically distinct levels: the wider dialogue in a discipline and the particular study carried out. The construction of concepts, hypotheses, linkages to data or revisions of thoughts are practices that involve – at the same time – ongoing engagements in wider scholarly debates *and* a specific emergent research project. To emphasize, theory construction takes place within an individual research project and the iterative cycles of theory building in which a community of scholars participates.

There are a number of advantages to seeing the processual character of constructing theories. First, we can begin to appreciate that this is not a mechanistic process, but rather involves intuitive, blind, and wasteful elements (Weick 1989). Second, if we understand theory construction as thinking-in-action and reflecting-in-action we can be clearer about how and from where we derive our contentions (Carlile and Christensen 2005; also Sarafino 2005). That is because all observations are shaped, consciously or unconsciously, by cognitive structures, previous experience or some theory-in-use. And third, we realize that much of what we do involves progressively clearer approximations of theory. Indeed, many products that are labelled theories are actually “rough” theory. Merton (in Weick 1995: 385) proposes that approximations may take a number of forms: general orientations in which broad frameworks specify variables to be taken into account without specification of relationships among them; analyses of concepts in which concepts are specified, clarified, and defined but not interrelated; post-factum interpretations in which *ad hoc* hypotheses are derived from a single observation but alternative explanations or new observations are not explored; or empirical generalization in which an isolated proposition summarizes the relationship between two variables, but further interrelations are not attempted. In a closely related manner, categorization can also be seen as a vital part of theorizing. While none of these are full-blown theories, they can serve as means to further *development*.

But how does one go about constructing theories? In the following I have set out the various stages of theorizing based on an amalgam of sources (De Jong 2010; Carlile and Christensen 2005; George and Bennett 2005; Jaccard and Jacoby 2010). However, two points are important. First, since the construction of theory is a practical endeavor undertaken by scholars, in what follows I introduce a variety of techniques and procedures – actionable suggestions – that scholars have found to be useful. Second, because research is set of interactive components it is

usually not linear (Creswell 2009): researchers find themselves going back and forth between the different stages even within one project.

### Explication and scholarly positioning

Many of the projects undertaken by researchers emanate or are posed by the military field. Commanders and soldiers may face a variety of problems ranging the whole gamut between soldierly motivation to new challenges for units and on to civil-military ties. In order to find answers to these problems, they often turn to social scientists. As many chapters in this volume show, there is a long history of close ties between the armed forces and researchers in and around problem-driven studies. But at other times, researchers undertake investigations deriving from questions posed within their various academic disciplines or from the data itself, as sometimes happens in qualitative studies. In any case, once a problem has been identified (and may change along the route a study takes) researchers must make sense of it in theoretical terms. It is in this manner that explication should be seen, since it involves identifying the theory or theories researchers intend to use and clarifying their assumptions and causal scheme or interpretative framework.

The aim is to spot their gaps, disparities or surprises so that alternatives can be offered. A useful technique that I have developed for such identification is to clearly think about who or what kinds of assertions one's research is *engaged* with. Accordingly, when teaching (or thinking about) a certain book or article, I often ask students the following (for them at times somewhat odd) question: "Who is the author 'arguing' with?" By such a question I attempt to steer students away from explicating what the author's main contentions are towards understanding the kind of dialogue the author is engaged with in terms of other scholars' concepts, contentions, assumptions, or methods. Indeed, once we are clear about this point the publication's own theoretical contentions are better understood. To be fair, however, many people have told me that such understanding may emerge at a later stage of research when they have a "eureka moment," when they realize who their research is engaged with and what kind of alternative they are proposing.

This move, of making clear our engagement with other scholars' contentions is what underlies the "literature review." The aim of such reviews is not to "ornament" one's text with citations of famous essays in the field. Nor is the aim simply – as one finds in many students' papers or even in doctoral theses – to show that someone is conversant in a pertinent scholarly literature. The aim of such reviews is to clearly position one's research within, and thus to make clear its potential contribution to, a scholarly field: for example, the development of a new concept, testing a key hypothesis, or exploring a hitherto understudied set of phenomena (Whetten 1989). Thus the literature review is aimed at detecting and addressing the disparities, insufficiencies, and weaknesses in relevant literatures to propose newer and tighter conceptualizations of (say) relationships about selected phenomena or to apply existing theories to new populations. Shils and Janowitz do this by arguing with the then prevalent emphasis on the purported power of propaganda disseminated by the Western Allies as the factor that helped disintegrate the Wehrmacht. After positioning themselves vis-à-vis this, the propaganda argument, they then go on to show its deficiencies and offer their own alternative.

This part of theory building cannot be overemphasized. When asked to situate their work within a stream of scholarship, beginning scholars can often recite long lists of articles in "the literature," but may have difficulties in explaining what kind of problem their research is aimed at addressing. In some cases, they may be able to explain that their work exemplifies or demonstrates a concept, relationship or contention proposed by other scholars. But this is not enough,

because for research to be significant it should make clear what is new about it. In fact, this point goes for cases in which researchers apply theory rather than develop a new one because in such cases the application itself – to a new data set, a hitherto understudied group, or a novel aspect, for instance – represents the contribution of the study. On a practical level, the need is to master the expertise of being able to organize citations in a way describing the gaps in prior research, to give readers a sense for how theory has or has not been built or applied to date. Thus the aim is not to provide a simple list of prior research. Rather researchers need to explain why testing hypotheses or applying an already existing theory is important because it concerns a new data set and thus breaks new ground. Or, alternatively, researchers must show that they are interested in new explanations, that is, new forms of linking phenomena (Weick 1995). The process of explication therefore requires a broad-based groundwork in the theories attendant on the key concepts of the selected social science research whether they be qualitative or quantitative projects (Goertz and Mahoney 2013).

In terms of the study of the military a key distinction may be fruitful. Researchers may ask themselves how they are using the case of the military (or cases from the military): are they using it, and data derived from it, for exploring wider theoretical questions (say leadership), or, alternatively, are they using theories developed outside of the military to illuminate the special character of the armed forces and thus extend understanding of its dynamics (leadership in combat and the perpetration of violence, for instance). Thus, probably because of the easy accessibility of soldiers (they are after all, like students in psychology programs a captive population), scholars have often used them to explore various questions developed in a scholarly field. This kind of move has been at the heart of some general studies such as ones about small group dynamics or organizational bureaucracies. But if researchers want to understand the “uniqueness” of the military then they have to show how concepts used outside are applicable (or not) to its context. Thus a reading of Shils and Janowitz reveals that while they were engaged with prior and theorizing about motivation and primary groups, what they developed was a formulation about the *specific* factors promoting motivating soldiers in battle, in a violent environment. Another attempt is Collins’ (2009) chapter on combat in his volume on violence. Explaining that organized violence is part of a small family of human behaviors he goes on to chart out what is unique to the perpetration of violence in battles. Thus when focusing on the armed forces, it may be helpful to ask if the relations of the armed forces to violence is pertinent to the kind of scholarly literature researchers are engaged with and the theorization they are undertaking.

### **Evaluation and integration**

Again keeping in mind that theoretical statements are often approximations, evaluation entails examining the degree to which the theoretical ideas fit the empirical evidence, the data (Carlile and Christensen 2005). But what is good data? The dichotomies of subjective-objective or quantitative-qualitative are often used by scholars to distinguish different types of data – and other chapters in this handbook address this point – but much like theory, the only way to judge the value of data is by their usefulness in helping understand how the world works, identifying categories, making predictions and finding anomalies and surprises (Creswell 2009; Johnson and Christensen 2008). These insights are apt for deductive, inductive and abductive modes of research. In deductive reasoning researchers first move toward the development of a logical explanation or theory and then gather evidence (always based on a literature review) while inductive reasoning moves with a systematic observation of the world and then seeks a logical explanation or theory to develop (Shields and Rangarajan 2013). Abductive reasoning typically begins with an unfinished or partial set of observations and proceeds to the likeliest (or best)

possible explanation for the set under the conditions of incompleteness (Feilzer 2010). While this chapter emphasizes the inductive method, in reality all research involves a continuous circle of deductive, inductive and at times abductive inquiries. For instance, in inductive research, once tentative explanations are created the move back to the empirical data is done in a deductive manner and so on.

The first practical move in inductive processes is to develop abstractions from the messy detail of the empirical data by classifying it into categories. At this stage the classifications are most typically defined by the attributes of the phenomena and are tentative. While we do not have access to the theorizing process of Shils and Janowitz their detailed categorization of modes of disintegration would most probably have evolved over time. Hence, they present a detailed typology of types and categories of military disintegration based on their empirical data and then go on to use it to develop their theoretical contentions. Once such a classification is done, we can think about the relations – our initial ideas about emerging patterns – between the category-defining attributes and the outcomes that have been observed.

In the end one ends up with a sort of hierarchy of categories that looks like a picture of an organizational tree – with this sub-category answerable to that and so on (Carlile and Christensen 2005). And this is exactly the type of tree that one finds in Shils and Janowitz. More generally, the idea is to recognize and make as clear as possible what differences in attributes and magnitude of these attributes, correlate most strongly with the patterns in the outcomes of interest. In quantitative studies, techniques such as regression analysis are often useful in defining these correlations although they are generally only probabilistic statements of association representing average tendencies. In qualitative oriented work or interpretative studies similar techniques are used, for example, linking the observed phenomena to interpretative hypotheses and then placing them in sort of provisional models that are then tested back against the data. Making these linkages is a form of theorizing in that researchers seek to connect this with that, to look for patterns.

Now researchers can begin to integrate findings, classifications and conjectures. Often during this process the concepts that emerge will still not be well-defined elements of an explicit theory. Rather they will take the forms of “sensitizing concepts” (Blumer 1954 in Hammersley and Atkinson 2004: 180) that are often an important starting point for theorizing. As various analytical categories emerge, researchers try to build or fit them into a theoretical scheme – to integrate ideas. At the same time, along the whole process, researchers should be on the lookout for anything that is surprising, unusual or stands out; whether there are any conflicts and contradictions between the various results obtained (Hammersley and Atkinson 2004). This is the stage where integration takes place: namely that phase when researchers try various explanations (in an often messy and time-consuming process) to make things come together, to put together separate, if cumulative, analyses. Indeed, the juxtaposition of conflicting results forces researchers into a more creative, framebreaking mode of thinking than they might otherwise be able to achieve. The result can be deeper insight into the emergent theory and the conflicting literature, as well as sharpening of the limits to generalizability of the focal research.

### **Emendation and application**

Theory begins to improve when researchers continuously cycle between the empirical data, its classifications and the more abstract contentions about the relations between them. The improvement sought is when initial formulations are corrected and approximations are made clearer. This is done by continuously trying to further “test” the hypothesis that had been inductively formulated (Carlile and Christensen 2005). This most often is done by exploring

whether the same correlations or patterns exist between attributes and outcomes in a different set of data than the data from which the hypothesized relationships were induced. If researchers find that the attributes of the phenomena in the new data correlate with the outcomes predicted or expected, then this “test” confirms that the theory is of use under the conditions or circumstances observed. When they don’t, researchers need to think further about their explanations. In this way surprises or anomalies – or unexpected connections between phenomena – continue to be valuable throughout the process of building theories. In Shils and Janowitz we see remains of this process in the way they begin with data and contentions about the regular units of the Wehrmacht and then need to explain the much higher rates of desertion among members of the units comprising soldiers (Czechs, Yugoslavs, Poles and Russians, for example), who were coerced into the Wehrmacht. They explain the higher desertion rates of these units as being due to the multiple languages used by these troops and the obstacles this situation created for creating cohesive groups. Alternatively, they explain that the Germans in the Channel ports fought for much longer than those on the mainland since there were constantly with each other and not seconded or amalgamated constantly into new units. This is a very good example of the application of theory because in this way their initial formulations are further tested in regard to other data and their theory is extended.

To continue, when researchers use statements of association or causality to predict what they will see, they are often surprised since they observe something that the theory did not lead them to expect; thus identifying an incongruity, something the theory could not explain. Becker (1998: 95) suggests that if we reach an impasse, it would be worthwhile to use the following procedure: try to find the question that goes with the answers, information or patterns you already have. In fact, he proposes that for theorizing to be fruitful that researchers should deliberately look for extreme cases that are most likely to upset their ideas and predictions. It is these discoveries that force theory builders to cycle back into the categorization stage with a problem such as “there’s something else going on here” or “these two things that we thought were different, really aren’t.” As Weick (1989) puts it, a disconfirmed assumption is an opportunity for a theorist to learn something new. The results of this constant effort at cycling back between explanation and data can typically include more accurately describing and measuring what the phenomena are and are not: changing the definitions by which the phenomena or the circumstances are categorized; adding or eliminating categories; and/or articulating a new theoretical statement of what is associated with, or what causes what and why, and under what circumstances (Carlile and Christensen 2005). The objective of this process is to revise theory so that it still accounts for both the anomalies identified and the phenomena as previously explained. However, many times researchers who aim to “prove” a theory’s validity are likely to view the discovery of an anomaly as a failure. Too often in quantitative projects they find reasons to exclude outlying data points in order to get more significant measures of statistical fit. There typically is more information in the points of outlying data than in the ones that fit the model well, however. Understanding the outliers or anomalies is generally the key to discovering a new categorization scheme.

In this respect, scholars have found many techniques to be useful for the processes of emendation and application. C. Wright Mills (1959), in what has turned into a classic volume, proposed a number of practical suggestions as to how to stimulate our (sociological) imagination. Here I only provide a few examples. First, try rearranging your files (today electronically): disconnected folders placed side by side, or mixing up contents and then sorting them out again may lead to unforeseen or unplanned linkages. Second, and admittedly this may be more difficult, is to undertake an attitude of playfulness towards the words and phrases with which various issues are defined. One of my personal favorites is using a thesaurus (or technical dictionary) to



look up synonyms or antonyms for each of my key terms. Doing this, I have found, prods me to elaborate the terms of the problem and hence to define them more precisely, because only if you know the several meanings which might be given to a term can you select the exact one with which you want to work. A third example from Mills is placing all of your contentions in a comparative perspective: that is actively looking for comparable cases, parallel situations or historical instances (even based on secondary literature).

Becker (1998) in another highly recommended text about “tricks of the trade” offers other techniques. For example, describing the information researchers have without using any of the specific words found in the data. I adopted his idea and when teaching (or thinking) about a certain publication, I ask students to come up with a new title that, while not using any of the words used in the existing name, describes the key components of the idea at base of the article or book. Another favorite of Becker is what he calls the “machine trick.” The idea is to think of all of the parts of a phenomenon one wants to explain and then take out each part in turn to see if the whole “machine” still remains. Another technique that I often use is to purposely try to explain a phenomenon using different theories: conflict them. My favorites are classic sociological theories of functionalism and conflict theories. Because they have very different assumptions they can explain or make sense of different aspects of the same social phenomena. To reiterate, all of these techniques can be used once researchers reach an impasse or anomaly that gets them “stuck” in the process of theorizing.

### Validity and generalization

Now take a step back from the process of constructing theories to two questions that bear upon the value of the constructs researchers are building. Yin (1984; also Carlile and Christensen 2005) sums up the scholarly consensus about two types of internal and external validity of a theory, that is, the criteria used to appraise its power for explaining or interpreting a variety of phenomena. In general, validity has to do with the strength of conclusions made about research, but both kinds of validity are not all-or-none, present-or-absent dimensions of a research design. Validity varies along a continuum from low to high. A theory’s internal validity is the extent to which its conclusions are logically drawn from its premises, and researchers have dealt with all plausible alternative explanations that may explain the relations between the phenomena researched. Much of this chapter has been devoted to issues related to this point, to the various procedures or practices through which we examine the events, behaviors, or texts we are studying through the lenses of as many analytical viewpoints as possible. In short, researchers have made every effort to show the negation or limitation of alternative accounts.

The external validity of a theory is the extent to which a relationship that was observed between phenomena and outcomes in one set of circumstances applies in different circumstances as well. In other words, the extent to which researchers can generalize to other contexts or populations. When researchers have defined what causes what or what is related to what (*and why*) and that the causal mechanism or interpretative link differs by circumstance, then the scope of the theory, or its external validity, is established. As Carlile and Christensen (2005) explain, one can only say that a theory is externally valid when the process of seeking and resolving anomaly after anomaly results in a set of categories that are collectively exhaustive and mutually exclusive. At the same time, Weick (1989) urges prudence because theorists often write trivial theories because their process of theory construction is hemmed in by methodological structures that favor validation rather than usefulness. Too much validation takes away the value of imagination and selection in the process. Hence, he argues, a theorizing process that produces lots of conjectures is better than one producing only a few.

This last point is related to the kind of generalization researchers are interested in: generalization to theory or to populations. In other words researchers need to be clear about explaining if and why their research question is better addressed by theory building rather than theory-testing research. A useful way to understand this distinction is via Eisenhardt and Graebner's (2007) discussion of a strategy of theory building from cases. Such a strategy involves using one or more cases to create theoretical constructs, propositions, and/or midrange theory from case-based, empirical evidence. What is crucial to understand is that in such case studies, the theory building process occurs via recursive cycling among the case data, emerging theory, and later, extant literature. Although sometimes seen as "subjective," well-done theory building from cases is surprisingly "objective," because its close adherence to the data keeps researchers "honest": The data provide the discipline that mathematics does in formal analytic modeling (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007).

Along these lines, when using data within such a research strategy, researchers must explain that they are generalizing to theory rather than to populations. This entails clarifying why the research question is significant, and why there is no existing theory that offers a feasible answer to it. This is also the logic of theoretical sampling: we choose cases because they are particularly suitable for exploring certain theoretical questions. Just as laboratory experiments are not randomly sampled from a population of experiments, but chosen for the likelihood that they will offer theoretical insight, so too are cases sampled for theoretical reasons, such as revelation of an unusual phenomenon, replication of findings from other cases, contrary replication, elimination of alternative explanations, and elaboration of the emergent theory (Eisenhardt and Graebner's 2007). In regard to the study of the military these distinctions are important. In statistical research that has long been dominant in the study of the micro-sociological or psychological studies of the armed forces, the interest is often generalizing findings to a universe or a population. But in the field of civil-military relations where so many studies are based on a single case or a small number of multiple cases, case studies do not produce statistically representative data but are used in order to develop or extend theory. Theory then can be used to address new research questions, structure future empirical investigations, understand phenomena, resolve problems and perhaps inform policy.

For all of this, however, one must not confuse the logical presentation of "theory-data-conclusions" as they appear in publications with the actual process of theorizing. What may appear in published texts as a linear presentation or delineation of theoretical deficiency followed by a justification of a case or multiple cases or an explanation for the reasons of studying a population may in reality have worked the other way. Researchers at times find themselves with findings "in search of a question" as I have detailed above.

### **Conclusion: Never-ending processes**

This chapter has argued that researchers take *building* or *applying* theory seriously, as a set of practices and techniques that are actively (and constantly) used in the process of *theorizing*. Constructing theories is a practical endeavor. Building of theory is undertaken both within a specific project – and hence the constantly shift between the different stages of the process – as well as within a wider community of scholars that deliberate and contest the most appropriate theory for explaining distinct phenomenon (consequently the importance of constantly clarifying researchers' position within a scholarly field). While the armed forces have been (and continue to be) used to explore wider theoretical questions, the particular character of the military as the legitimate handlers of organized violence has colored all the theories particular to this field. As explained, this point does not mean that external theories should not be applied

to explanations or interpretations of the military but rather that in applying such frameworks researchers take into account the uniqueness of the armed forces. More generally, if we take a long-term view of theory construction we can appreciate that it is never ending. The ways in which we continue to debate about and dialogue with the classic essay by Shils and Janowitz attest to this point. Weick (1995: 35) has the final word here:

The process of theorizing consists of activities like abstracting, generalizing, relating, selecting, explaining, synthesizing, and idealizing. These ongoing activities intermittently spin out reference lists, data, lists of variables, diagrams, and lists of hypotheses. Those emergent products summarize progress, give direction, and serve as placemarkers. They have vestiges of theory but are not themselves theories. Then again, few things are full-fledged theories. The key lies in the context – what came before, what comes next?

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