

Analyzing for Process

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Studying Processes

- Strong and weak process research (Langley, 2009)
  - Weak: “movement from one state to another”
  - Strong: “ongoing micro-processes that contribute to constituting and reproducing” organizing
- Examples from my work of moving from entities to processes
  - Routines → Generative systems
  - Resources → Resourcing

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What makes process research challenging?

- Theories oriented to entities
  - Change as the phenomenon of interest rather than stability assumes stability
- Methods oriented to entities
  - Identify and compare
- Language oriented to entities
  - Structures, fields, routines, resources

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### Responses to challenges

- Develop and use theories that put things in motion (practice theories, system dynamics)
- Engage methods that disrupt assumptions and generate doubt around entities (heuristics, metatheories, narratives)
- Theorize arrows (put words on arrows as well as boxes)
- Use gerunds and create language (organizing, structuration, habitus, resourcing)

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### Let's look at some data

- Small bit of data from a large research project
  - Research question: *I examine the relationship between the level of stigmatization that deportees encounter and their success in obtaining sustainable employment in El Salvador.*
  - *I specifically analyze whether the reintegration experiences of Salvadoran deportees differ depending upon whether informants were 1<sup>st</sup> or 1.5 generation migrants to the United States.*

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To tell you the truth, I am going to let you know a story. It is kinda short. When I was in fourth grade, in the whole elementary school where I was going, one day I am in my classroom. And, I see that the principal's secretary walks into my classroom. And I saw her, but I kept doing what was on the chalkboard. And all of a sudden, the teacher calls me. She tells me, "(name) come here." And I went to the front of the class and I go yes. And the teacher told me that you are going to accompany the principal's secretary to the office. I go, what did I do? She said you haven't done nothing. You have to go help her out. So, I left with a secretary. When I was in the secretary's office, I see that they are guiding me to the principal's office. What did I do? My mom is going to be pissed off? She is going to knock me out! So, all of a sudden, I walk into the principal's office. He goes sit down!

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Good afternoon! I need you to do me a favor, do you understand what I am telling you? Yes I understand. There is a sick boy who is in the infirmary. He is shaking and he has a high fever. But see, right here in the office and in the whole school, there is no one who can call his mom. His mom does not know English. So, I go "And..." And we got her number at work. We want you call here and tell her that her son is real sick. And if she gives the authorization, then we will take him to the hospital and she can meet us there. So, I dialed it and it was a factory. I asked for the lady and she came on the phone. And I said, hey your son is sick. I am a student and they asked me to call because I know Spanish. Do you give them permission to take him to the hospital? She said yes, yes. I told the principal and she said that she will take him to the hospital and she will meet you over there. Ok, give him a snack and take him back to his class. Imagine that, for a snack! Right then, I knew I would be a fast learner. And even now, thanks to God...

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**Interpretation**

- **Storyline:** The informant tells a story about how he learned English quickly in the United States ... and how he was used as an interpreter for the school principal, to call the mother of a sick classmate. *He uses the story to demonstrate that he is a fast learner.*

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**Entity → Process**

- **Storyteller as entity**
  - Is (state of being)
  - Fast learner (adjective)
- **Moving to process**
  - What could we do about “is”?
  - What role does “fast learner” play in the process?

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## Impact on research?

- What questions might arise as we move from entity to process?
  - *I examine the relationship between the level of stigmatization that deportees encounter and their success in obtaining sustainable employment in El Salvador.*
    - How is stigmatization constituted?
  - *I specifically analyze whether the reintegration experiences of Salvadoran deportees differ depending upon whether informants were 1<sup>st</sup> or 1.5 generation migrants to the United States.*
    - Is there anything about being 1<sup>st</sup> or 1.5 generation that makes this process more likely or more feasible?

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## Process and doubt

*Process data are messy. Making sense of them is a constant challenge.* (Langley, 1999)

- The messiness of process raises questions
  - About your research question and assumptions
  - About epistemology and methodology
  - About theoretical framework
- Questions lead to doubt
  - Doubt can be generative (Locke, Golden-Biddle and Feldman, 2008)
  - Doubt can help you move to that's interesting (for yourself and for your audience)

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## The upside of doubt

In my research, and probably in my life in general, I had treated doubt as anathema to creation, a hurdle at the outset of work and a masochistic afterthought upon its completion. I had not yet approached my project... with any conscious doubt ..., instead trusting in the concepts handed down to me by my faculty collaborator and blindly plummeting into the data with certitude and tunnel-vision. As a result, my work stagnated as I bypassed too many assumptions that a healthy dose of doubt could have broken wide open, illuminating an array of new and exciting directions to explore.

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Rather than vaguely wondering *Is this right? Am I wasting my time? Am I missing something?* I began to ask *Is this rapture? How do I know? Does the soldier agree? How does he know?* I also began to address some more general doubts, re-framed. *Can this information be trusted?* and, *What else is going on there?* changed into, *How is the soldier presenting himself? Why? How could he do so differently?* Questions like these, born of doubt, eventually helped me to delve deeper into the accounts, to consider their contexts, and to imagine how the stories could be told and interpreted differently.

At the end I still had doubts, and many more questions than answers, but I also had the satisfaction of actively engaging my doubts and the sense that I was finally seeing the unspoken world surrounding the accounts that before had been so hazy. ... I [became] ... excited and reaffirmed by feelings of doubt; they were no longer mental stumbling-blocks but indicators of real engagement with the data and hunches for further and deeper analysis. Doubt became good! And even stranger, lack of doubt became an indication that something was wrong!

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