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# Seminar on the Practice of Systematic Qualitative Fieldwork – Part II

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Calvin Morrill  
Department of Sociology  
University of California, Irvine

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# Orientation to Data analysis

- Recall the pyramid of successful qualitative fieldwork:
    - Data collection via systematic and sustained fieldwork
    - Detailed and organized fieldnotes
    - Systematic data reduction and analysis
    - Writing that is both empirically and theoretically compelling
  - Third aspect (data reduction and analysis) is often the “black box” of qualitative fieldwork and the most difficult
  - Important for analysis begin while you are in the field:
    - Data analysis is both retrospective and prospective with respect to fieldwork
    - Begins more concretely and then moves to the theoretical or policy levels
    - Early in fieldwork periods, most of the time is spent in the field; gradually the ratio of time in the field to doing data analysis reverses
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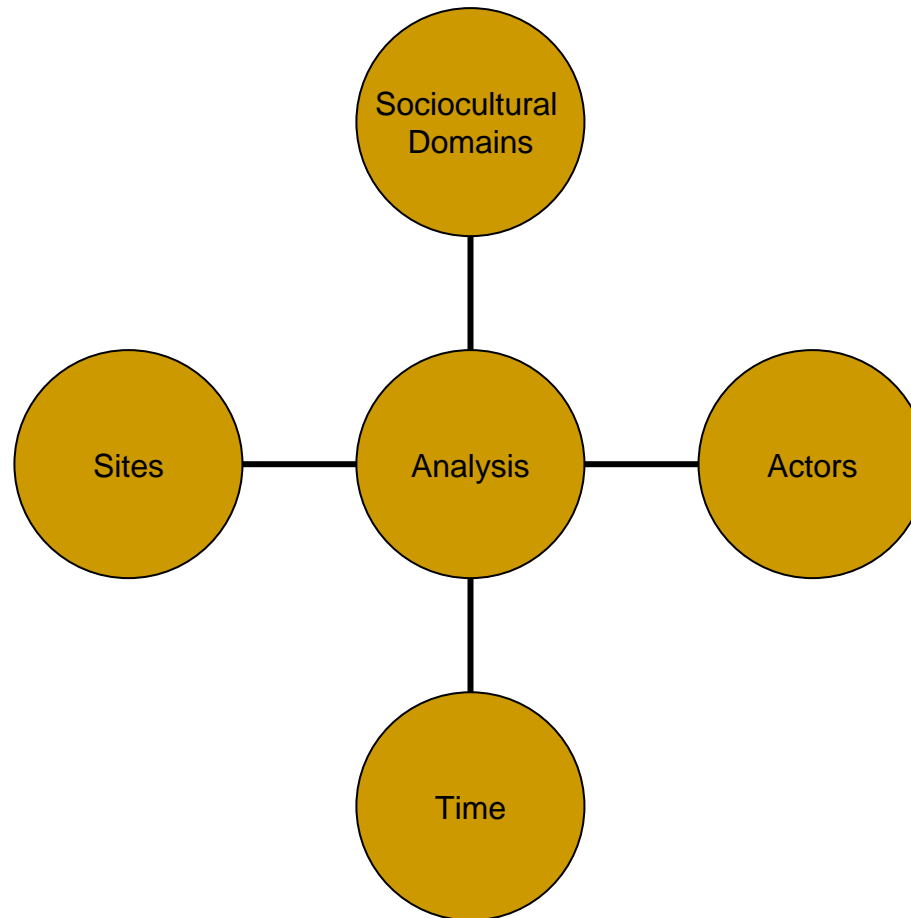
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# Basic Data Analysis Strategies

- Grounded theory
    - Building from the data out to a substantive theory
  - Analytic induction
    - Search for negative cases
  - Extending and refining existing theory
  - These can be used in combination
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# How can you start your analysis?

Can start  
with generic  
sampling  
categories  
and research  
questions



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# Data Analysis Stages

- Open coding – guided by research questions, generic sampling categories, other sources (both emic and etic)
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  - Focused coding
    - Taxonomic analysis
    - Componential analysis
  - An example from the School Rights Project
    - Multi-site, multi-method, team fieldwork project
    - How can a large project coordinate its analysis in a systematic way?
    - Team meetings, collective/consistent protocols, and use of qualitative software
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# Examples from the School Rights Project (SRP) – Qualitative Data Coding Schemes\*

## ■ **Central Research Questions**

- RQ 1: How do law and other authority matter in the everyday activities and routines within and around schools?
- RQ 2: How do school actors (students, teachers, and administrators) understand and interpret law, rights, and other forms of authority in schools?
- RQ 3: When and how do school actors mobilize (or do not mobilize) their legal rights?

## ■ **Master Coding Categories**

- (SRP short-form coding scheme - proprietary)

## ■ **Two examples**

- (SRP long-form coding scheme - proprietary)
- Atlas.ti

\* The faculty researchers on the SRP are: Richard Arum (New York University), Lauren Edelman (UC Berkeley), Calvin Morrill (UC Irvine), and Karolyn Tyson (University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill)

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# Moving from Analysis to Writing

- **Broad Issues:**

- What does one use from the mountain of data one has? (typical, deviant, and critical examples)
- Organizing the text: chronologically / narratively / typologically
- Crisis of representation

- Multiple moments of writing in qualitative fieldwork:

- Field jottings  $\leftrightarrow$  fieldnotes  $\leftrightarrow$  data analysis  $\leftrightarrow$  analytic memos  $\leftrightarrow$  write-ups
- Fieldworkers “write” back and forth across field jottings, fieldnotes, data analyses, memos, and write-ups
- There are intensive, recursive relationships between the latter four moments of writing that involve interpretation and translation, and, in effect, “figuring out the story”

- Some pragmatic issues to remember when writing:

- Importance of fieldnote excerpts and informant voices
  - Importance of theoretical themes being developed consistently through the data – must see the argument in the data
  - Importance of being able to recount one’s methods – how do you know?
  - Conventions and expectations of different styles of ethnographic writing
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# Presenting Qualitative Fieldwork

- Difficult because of time and attention constraints
  - My approach:
    - Give a strong sense of how your project was done, including its systematic nature
    - Be clear on your research questions and their theoretical, policy, and/or empirical motivations
    - Be clear on the theoretical implications of your findings for discovery, refinement, and/or extension
    - Intersperse compelling/illustrative fieldnote and interview excerpts with multiple representations of analytic patterns in the data (figures, tables, photos, recordings, etc.)
    - Be clear about how you selected your fieldnote excerpts and other examples (i.e., whether they are typical, deviant, or critical)
    - Avoid (both in writing and presentations) being “pseudo quantitative”: Provide counts for quantitative inferences, bearing in mind the quality of the data you’re counting (especially how what you’re counting made it in to your data set both in data collection and analysis)
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